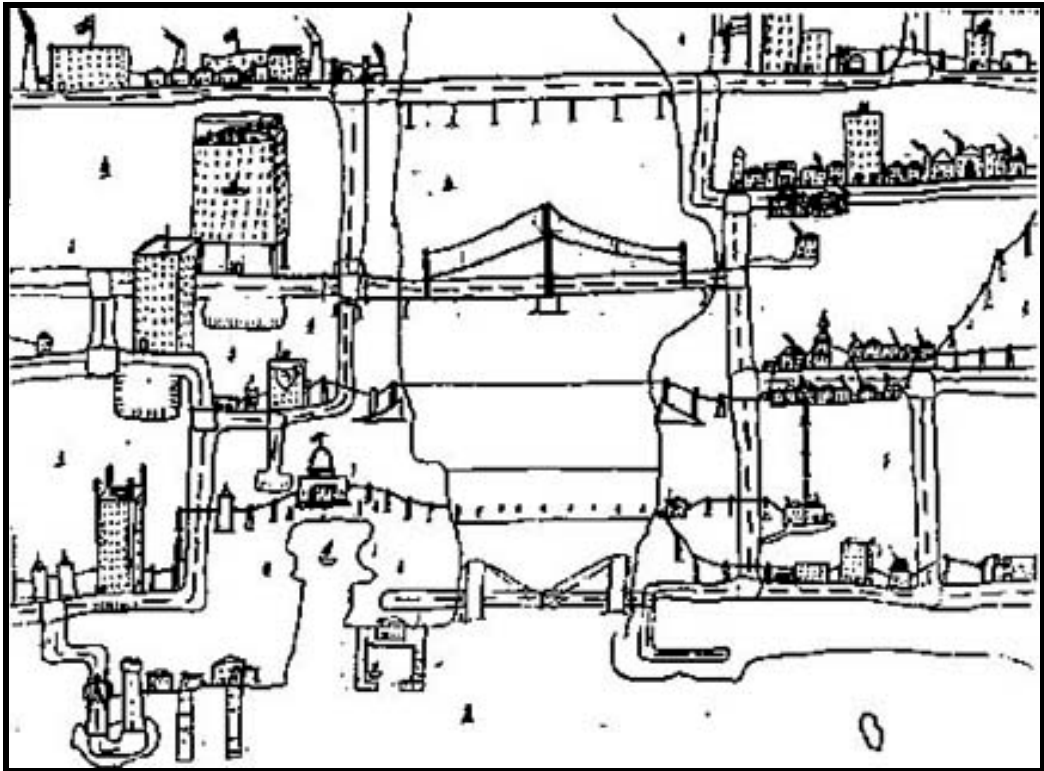
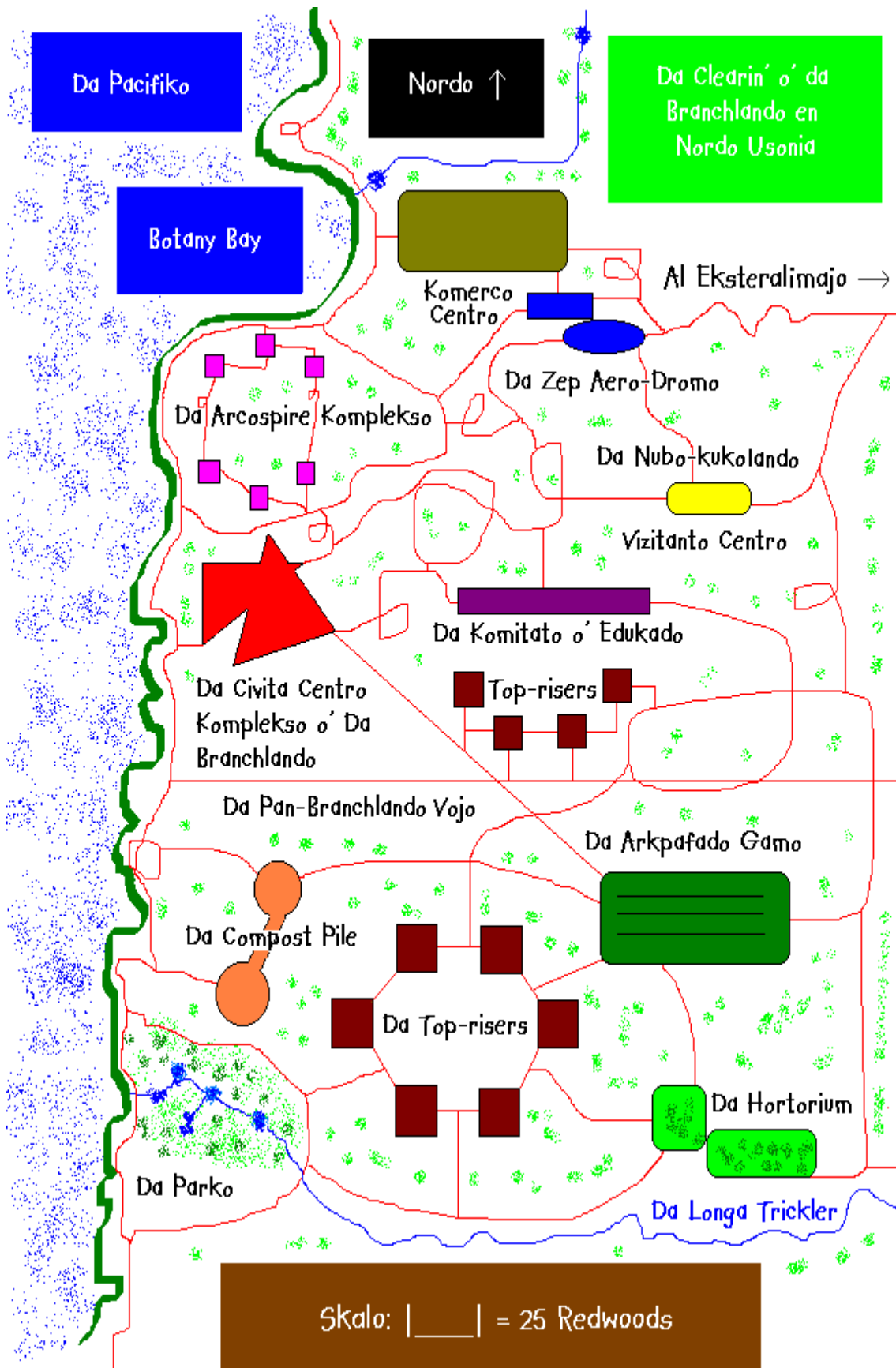


Introduction to Arboretum

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Where Da Longa Trickler Do Be Meetin' Botany Bay, Da Clearin' (41 P.F.) by Palpe Brumilo, a 9 year-old Arboretian child enrolled in a 'top-riser' school



Map of Arboretum (Da Branchlando)

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'Life is a novel which takes place in the future, because its story is not yet past'.

—*Ships without Harbors*, in Martin Grzimek's *Shadowlife*

This is contemporary America: a land of diversity where no one tolerates difference; a land of bizarre eclecticism where everyone must know their place.

—Guillermo Gómez-Peña, in *The New World Border*

It's like a jungle sometimes,/ It makes me wonder/ How I keep from going under.

—Grandmaster Flash, "The Message"

"Be branchin' 'n liftin'!"—a dictum from a manuscript from the future? A year ago my friend, Laura, was cleaning up studio loft-space she'd leased in Pilsen, an area southwest of Chicago's famed Loop, when she found on the top shelf of a very tall built-in bookshelf a bloodstained manila envelope. It was addressed to a "J. A. Ellis" (no Mr., Ms., or Mrs.) from Alfred Knopf-Abbeville publishers; its postal cancellation was dated June 20, 2054! *Curious*, she thought, *but probably another one of those postal mistakes that make certain postage very valuable*. She opened it. Inside she found a signed manuscript, some artwork, photographic prints (pin-hole and digitized), a very small computer diskette like none we've seen, and a handwritten rejection letter: "We regret that . . . Your manuscript is *very very* curious, but your use of secret C.I.A. material . . . It's *too* politically correct for most readers in Usonia. . . . The Committee for a Drug-Free Usonia would roast us. . . . The Citizens' Un-Usonian Activities Committee might call us in. . . . Your method of putting together philosophical discussion on the one hand, and imaginative narrative on other, create a shot-silk texture that . . . Your effort here recalls to mind several lines from Umberto Eco's novel *Foucault's Pendulum* [Eng. trans., 1989]: 'Here was a man who had said, with his wan smile, that once he realized that he would never be a protagonist, he decided to become, instead, an intelligent spectator, for there was no point in writing without serious motivation. Better to rewrite the books of others, which is what a good editor does.' *By the way, you want a job here?* . . . You might try to *increase* the amount of the blatant plagiarism in your future endeavors. . . . This text is not theoretical enough for advanced VerPoMo [*presumably, Very-Postmodern*] academics, yet too theoretical for our debased readership."

Well, I guess postmodernism increasingly intensifies its grip on world-culture, propelled by anti-Ellul pan-capitalism, she thought, echoing the gist of Arthur Kroker and Michael Weinstein's book *Data Trash: the theory of the virtual class* (1994) which she had recently read for a theory class. Midway through sweeping the loft-space, she sat down to briefly rest, flipping through the text which she expected

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to be an amateurish sojourn into tedium; to her surprise, she found she couldn't put it down. Her studio didn't get swept that day.

Upon returning home, Laura plopped the text in my lap and launched into a hurried monologue by travestyng a phrase coined by Noam Chomsky in *Syntactic Structures*: "Why it's green ideas furiously awakened. . . . You've got to find out who this Ellis fellow is and whether the story is fiction or not; if not, the person is some kind of, well, time-traveler!" I nearly dropped my glass of Amontillado.

"In the text," she continued, "the author gives his name as John Avery Ellis, but that might as well disguise the first name of 'Joan' for all we know. What I do know is that this stuff's hot shit. There's sex—bi-, same-, and straight. There's politics—utopia contra the 'Bunker State' with its 'rétro-fascistic,' 'pan-capitalist' economy rooted in an all-pervasive, autonomous 'technique' as defined and critiqued in Jacques Ellul's prescient book *The Technological Society*. There's rétro-aesthetics—'excremental culture' or 'recombinant' modernism," Laura rattled off a litany of Krokerian terms. "There's odd behavior—Bokononism (the belief that humanity is organized into teams that do the work of the Great Maybe without ever discovering what they are doing),¹ mind-reading (an idea possibly copped from Edward Bellamy's short story "To Whom This May Come" [1891]), countercultural wigged-outness, and paradoxical delinquency. Esotericism—The Knights Templars, a Society of Friendliness to All, sacred squirrels and the evil snake. Literary shenanigans—a wonderful travesty of a passage from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* titled here '*Recherché*' on page 250 [page 288 in this text], and a hunt for information concerning a bizarre manuscript (a text-within-a-text) written by someone named after a tea made from a South American tree. Transportation—hot-air balloons, mountain bikes, and for the daring it's tandem-unicycles. Cuisine—the Bombshelter Breakfast, an idea copped from Carol Spearin' McCauley's novel *Happenthing in Travel On* [1975], and the Korean dish Dol-Sot-Bee-Bim-Bob. Architecture—shrub-covered domes and vine-encrusted high-rises

¹ Bokononism originated on the Caribbean island of San Lorenzo, founded by Bokonon (Lionel Boyd Johnson). It was, to the best of my knowledge, first given international attention by Kurt Vonnegut in *Cat's Cradle* (1963). A Bokononist team is called a *karass*; the instrument of bringing this team together is called the *kan-kan* (in this text it is 'Ms Kudzu'), and the tendrils that hold it together—the *karass* ignores national, institutional, occupational, familial, and class boundaries—are referred to as *sinookas*; a *wampeter* is the pivot or a hub of a *karass* (at any given time there is always a waning and a waxing *wampeter*) and whatever it is (in this text it's Ellis himself) members of the *karass* revolve around it in a majestic chaos of a spiral nebula. The first sentence of Bokonon's proto-postmodern text, *The Books of Bokonon*, reads: "All of the true things I am about to tell you are shameless lies." It is probable that Basco-o'-da-Weird-Ear in Pau D'Arco's *Basco's Dilemma* (1996)—a text Ellis is writing a monograph on—was an unwitting Bokononist, for in spinning, ear alert, on his swivel barstool in his cockloft, he was doing what Bokonon invited his followers to do: "Around and around we spin,/ With feet of lead and wings of tin . . ." Bokononism touts that good societies could be built only by pitting good against evil, by keeping this tension high at all times. Probably why 'Ms. Kudzu'—a Bokononist and Ellis's unwanted travel companion—sojourned to Arboretum, a good society in tension with its evil host land, Usonia proper.

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in the 'Planto-Moderna' style—that evolved as a compromise between Mies van der Rohe's minimalism and Friedensreich Hundertwasser's eco-organic architecture.² There's theory—the notions of arborescence and rhizomativity, majoritarian versus minoritarian discourse. Botany—superb sequoias, great ginkgos, that wonderful weed *Cannabis sativa*, but extinct is the Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*) due to fungus; Gaian ecology replaces the 'struggle hypothesis.' Linguistics—'Ar(bor)got,' a 'hodpod slanguage' of ebonics, pidgin Esperanto (lit., 'one who hopes,' a utopist, it functions as a 'centripetal,' unifying linguistic force), 'Nova-Vorto' (neologism) and 'Slango' (both which fuel the anarchic prodigality of their language), and ancillary, 'centrifugal,' basilects spoken by counterculturalists); this makes it possible to recognize the ideological contours of a main social discourse ('da trunko') by outlining it against other branching discourses ('da divers brankoj'). Why," she continued, "these are themes futurologists—aren't we *all* futurologists at heart?—should find fascinating. And there's plenty of references to past utopian novels for the *aficionado*. And his proposed cover design—the ideogram for Emptiness—jives with the notion of utopia as 'no place'." By now, Laura was wholly out of breath.

I took the offensive. "But despite these references—maybe also because

² Friedensreich Hundertwasser (Austrian, b. 1928) touts the renewal of architecture by decay, the principle of erosion, the rejection of the straight line, the right to rear animals and love plants and trees in and on the house, spiraloid and fluidoid forms. His Lowengasse/Kegelgasse Public Housing Complex, in which he adopts a honeycomb-like structure, is discussed by J.F. Mathey in *Hundertwasser* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1985): 87.

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of the C.I.A. documents the author copped—the publisher rejected the text." "So maybe the author, discouraged, just left it where I found it."

"Or was abruptly taken back to his time and couldn't retrieve it." I said, smiling condescendingly at her thinking this text actually hailed from the future. I asked her if she'd put her research skills (she's into genealogy) to work alongside mine first thing in the morning to see if we could trace this mystery author. She was skeptical that we'd find this person, in our era anyway. Of course, I still believed the postal cancellation date was a simple mistake, not an authentic anachronism that challenged one's conception of the possible.

I read the book in two days. My initial response was not as rhapsodic as Laura's. The author's prologue was prolonged with an extensive citation from an odd text (an appendix might have served better). Ellis often writes in a more demotic argot, some of it recalling late-20th century hacker jargon:



Digi-pic: Arboretian recumbent tricycle

Hackerisms

Automagically—automatically in a way too complicated to explain.

Blargh—an exclamation of unhappiness.

Bletch—term of disgust.

Bogotify—to make bogus; to become completely disorganized.

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Bozotic—demented, wonky, ludicrously wrong, clownish.

Choad—synonym for “penis.”

Creeping elegance (‘Creepin’ eleganteco’ in Ar[bor]got)—a tendency for parts of a design or plan to become elegant past the point of diminishing return at the expense of the less interesting parts.

Hysterical reasons—indicating something was done in some stupid way for the sake of backwards compatibility.

Ping—to verify the presence of; to get the attention of; a quantum of happiness; “pingful” is what exudes happiness. Ellis’s use of **Plinko** may also be a corruption of this term

Since time T equals minus infinity—a long time ago.

Also, Laura had forgotten to mention that ten pages were missing from the manuscript, missing from a tantalizing scene concerning an intellectual debate between opposing Arboretian factions. Moreover, there seemed to be a page or two missing from the end of Ellis’s narrative—I couldn’t access that small diskette either.

“Even if this text *is* a fabulation,” argued Laura, “it is a clever *extrapolation* from the here-and-now. It’s *predictive*, as that Frenchy Jacques Ellul would’ve understood it.”

“But Laura, Ursula LeGuin in her ‘Introduction’ to *The Left Hand of Darkness* says that it should be ‘descriptive,’ that extrapolative works of sci-fi usually arrive somewhere between the gradual extinction of human freedom—prophesied by Jacques Ellul’s study of technique—and the total *Kaputness* of terrestrial life.”

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A Usonian spy-satellite digipic made on September 9, 2051 depicting a unicycle accident (since attributed to structural failure) that occurred in Da Clearin', Arboretum, North Usonia

“But,” Laura continued, almost anything carried to its logical extreme becomes deeeeeeeepressing, if not plain carcinogenic, and this book is hardly depressing—its damn funny! ‘Ya grok’?” she said echoing a recurring colloquialism used in—whether fictional or real—“Da Branchlando.”

I went on to explain to her that Ellis’s text exhibits a classic balance between “showing” and “telling,” not to mention that his method is passive, akin to the narrator in a nineteenth-century utopia, “an individual who looks back, all

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passion on spent, the narrator has mastered the world and tells a civilized company of listeners about a series of events which now can be composed and named."³

She countered that Ellis's style pushed metafictional conventions to the point they bent back upon themselves into the production of a profound truth. "Look at all the intertextual references Ellis uses," she said, "even to the point of weird hybrids like copying the name "Berzilius "Buzz" Windrip" for the Usonian President from Sinclair Lewis's vision of a fascist American in the classic book *It Can't Happen Here*, but dropping the "Buzz" and replacing it with "Coach."⁴

"Why 'Coach'," I asked.

"In his bizarre novel *The Tunnel* William Gass speculates that the first dictator of this country will be called 'Coach'."

Too back up her argument, she inaccurately cited the prestigious authority of an Italian theorist. "Umberto Eco, in his novel *Foucault's Pendulum*, has his character Diotallevi comment: 'Not bad, not bad at all. . . .To arrive at the truth through the painstaking construction of a false text'."⁵

"*Reconstruction*," I corrected, not "construction."

"Pedant! Efficient anti-Ellulian!"

I ignored this slander.

In relation to us readers, Ellis has an insider/outsider status *vis-à-vis* Arboretum, giving him—as German sociologist Georg Simmel observed in his famous essay on the stranger—the status of a privileged social observer. The stranger stays, but he is not settled. He is a potential wanderer. That means that he is not bound as others are by the local proprieties and conventions. Frederick J. Teggart in his *Theory of History* confirms that the stranger, ". . . views his relation to others with less prejudice; . . . he is not confined in his action by custom, piety, or precedents."

What Ellis observes after his Lévi-Straussian probing to the deep structure of Arboretian society is, to borrow a term from French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, that society's *habitus*, that is, the dynamic intersection of individual and society that grounds social being in a tacit, largely unconscious plane. As language is, for Bourdieu of, prime importance to *habitus*—"The fate of groups is bound up with the words that designate them . . . [*but*] the order of words never exactly reproduces the order of things"—⁶ it should come as no surprise that Ellis focuses on Arboretian

³ Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975): 195.

⁴ William H. Gass, *The Tunnel* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996): 155.

⁵ Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989): 381.

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979; reprint 1984): 481.

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language. This gap between words and things as sketched by Bourdieu is a site for struggle over representation; hence, Ellis's interest in the 'slanguage' of this socially marginalized section of "Nordo Usonia" and, within that state itself, the jargon of the socially marginalized groups such as "Da Hobos" and "Da Skins" who employ symbolic violence (witness the paragonnage, various types and sizes of type within a single word, and other typographic excesses on pages 344a and 344b) against symbolic violence, resisting what Bourdieu calls "the somatization of social relations of domination."⁷ Ellis's fore-grounding of Ar(bor)got might aimed at rousing us from our own doxic slumber.

But, as H.G. Wells observed about such utopian literature, "There must always be a certain effect of hardness and thinness about Utopian speculations.... That which is the blood and warmth and reality of life is largely absent; there are no individualities."⁸ Partially circumventing, partially succumbing to such sketchiness, Ellis's text yet grew on me. Social circumstances in the United States in the mid-1990s—an increase in violence, a backlash against feminism, the fashionableness of racism, the renaissance of fascism, the heated debates concerning the aesthetic and political direction of our Country, the fate of Generation X and the dismal future of Generation XXX, and fact Ellis *may be* a cyborg (see footnotes 89 and 92)—all seemed to make Ellis's text more apropos than ever for Arboretum has arisen in the wake of, and in reaction to, what cultural theorists Kroker and Weinstein term "The Bunker State" where "recombinant fascism," "the will to virtuality" and "the recline of the west" are ubiquitous.⁹ This contrast of a beneficent, Ellulian Arboretum to a noxious, technofetished Usonia mimics sharply contrasting images of the future as propounded by the ancient Greeks. For instance, Plato in his *Timaeus* and *Critias* juxtaposes utopia/counter-utopia, and a fragment of Theopompus's *Philippica* envisions the peaceful city-state of Eusebes as inhabited by wise and perfect men devoid of material technology who stand opposed to the rich, warlike, power-mad city-state of Machimos. But it also seems that this contrast is not absolute. Ellis's report on these two polities points out deficiencies in Arboretum as well.

Liberal Arboretians—influenced by Jacques Ellul and Kroker/Weinstein via the teachings of such *arborologi* as Charles Forester, the dissident Native Arboretians "Ale Crow," "Forta-Root" and his son "Armajo Arbara," as well as author and radio personality "Inda Penso"—have rejected virtual reality and a culture

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, "La domination masculine," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 84 (1990) as cited by Loïc J. D. Wacquant "Toward a Social Praxeology: The Structure and Logic of Bourdieu's Sociology," Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 24.

⁸ H.G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1967): 9.

⁹ Arthur Kroker and Michael A. Weinstein, *Data Trash: the theory of the virtual class* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994): 87, 41.

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"reduced to a standing reserve of prosthetic devices."¹⁰ The fascination with technotopia's product-line—*Genie, Prodigy, CompuServe, Virtual Vision, Microsoft*—has been replaced with the Arboretian love of trees, squirrels, magic, marijuana, "synthtabak," and cesium. Concerning the last item, cesium, the Arboretians project a power-concept onto it akin to the fiery glow of the *haoma*, the Persian conception of divine grace. When this liquid metal is set off by exposure to water, the Arboretians cry out the Polynesian term for spiritual wonderment: "*Mulungu!*" Touting an extremist version of this Elluliberalism, an "ultra-modernist-chaoist" theoretical bent, the avant-garde Arboretians champion an anarcho-magicalism celebrating a "paramount reality," which they turn to their own subjective interests, a process they call "turning paramount reality into a playground," the state of being that in "Slango" is termed "Da Rompero Room."¹¹

(This interest in magic could be understood as an attempt to overthrow the organization, efficiency, and determinism of modern *technique*; an Arboretian "Skin" (Native American), philosopher-prophet known as 'Ale Crow,' has written profoundly on the topic, saying that "En magio [*In magic*] we do be seein' only tipless nova [*endless new*]beginnin's." Yet, far from wholly escaping technique, a close-reading of Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society* will show he persuasively argues—citing Masson-Oursel—that magic *preceded* technique, is the first expression of such: "magic is basically a 'scholasticism of efficiency' which man employs as an instrument against his environment; that magic is pragmatic, yet has a precision that must be called objective."¹² No mention of this, or that ecstatic and rebellious states are structurally necessary to a technological society by Ellis.)

Turning paramount reality into a playground—this is what Ellis (or founder Charles Forester) accomplished when he turned the staid architecture of a "paramount" utopian text—Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*, 1975—into a "Rompero Room" by travestyng its conception of an ideal society, even naming one of the towns after the Ecotopian city of "Alviso." As for the many instances of plagiarism and intertextual references (especially among "Da Hobos"), it can be chalked up to one (maybe two) of three possible reasons:

¹⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹¹ A pun. "Romper Room" was a popular mid-twentieth-century children's TV program in which a playful attitude was attached to learning, and, in Esperanto, *rompi* is the verb "to break," *rompo* is the noun "break," and *rompero* adds the suffix *-er*, which signifies the small particle of the whole, "short break." In the context of discussing 'da ludigrundo,' 'rompero' refers to the short or small break out of the Reality Principle and the assertion of the Pleasure Principle.

¹² Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964): 25.

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- 1) Arboretum exists in our future and its founder had a marked penchant for pastiche which he passed on to his successors; or,
- 2) Ellis simply lacks literary imagination; and/or,
- 3) Ellis asserts a willful postmodernist textual scavenging that may have even extended to conducting computer raiding parties on the Internet to such odd-ball newsgroups as: "soc.religion.bahai," "alt.angst," "soc.-culture.squirrel," "alt.sport.darts," "alt.cesium," "talk.-religion.newage," "alt.magick.chaos," and "alt.discordia."

This penchant to scavenge among the textual detritus remained, however, insufficient to excite the Knopf-Abbeville functionary, but sufficiently *simpático* with my own aesthetic—I'm a sucker for parasitic texts, reportage or no. So I pressed Laura into a collaboration to uncover this mystery author. We divided the tasks by conventional gender expectations, then reversed them. I did the phone work. She did the leg work. We initially went on the assumption the name was genuine and that Ellis was an academic as he claims; indeed, he pedantically uses the word "podia" for "podiums," "adumbrate" for "foreshadowing," "denominate" for "naming," and peppers his text with the Latin word "*ergo*." But the leasing agency responsible for the loft-space had no records of an "Ellis" on file, the space having been previously let to a ceramicist by the name of O'Hara. On the off chance that someone was not telling the whole truth, we called every "Ellis" listed in the Chicagoland White Pages; we ran a Unix "finger" search on the Internet; we ran ads in the personals of major dailies and in several art, photography, and writing magazines, assuming "Ellis" had used the loft as a studio—no luck. We checked neighboring floors and buildings, but being all businesses and not residences, we also drew a blank there. Our last resort was to review the obituaries from around the time Laura had leased the loft—again *nada*. Of course, it was quite possible the name was a *nom de plume* or maybe an anagram of the author's real name, maybe "Jaselli" or "Sallie J.?" Finally, Laura hit upon a possible solution to the mystery.

"Pronounce the name quickly," she said one day while we were chatting over espresso, "making the initials read as integral with the last name."

I did; it sounded like *jealous* or even *Ellul's*. "Just a coincidence," I offered.

"No, I think not," she replied, "because if he or she travestied Callenbach's book, maybe it was due to the fact that he or she was *jealous* of it, of Callenbach's fame, skill, and his tenured teaching post at UC-Berkeley."

"But that would mean the text is a fabrication! So you've capitulated? You think the book is a hoax?" I went on to say that she was grasping at straws.

Laura reminded me that, "This was just what Derrida's Deconstructionist 'unravelysis' [*Laura, like the Arboretians, likes neologisms*] and Julia Kristeva's notion of *la sémiotique* were based upon—the pun and the far-fetched. Although, it isn't too farfetched that a future society might actually base itself upon an earlier

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utopian text, since society is really one text writ large. We can still assume Ellis's report to be—ah—*veridical*," she said, flexing her philosophical vocabulary, trying out a term she learned in George Dickie's "Theory of Knowledge" seminar.

What could I say? She convinced me. We would never find out who wrote this text and just *maybe* this Arboretum did—er—will exist in the future.

One thing is certain, the mystery author, or the society he reports on, is fully conversant with Kroker and Weinstein's theories, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's writings, and George Steiner's thoughts on language. Ellis, or the social architects of this society, have borrowed from such social utopists as Charles Fourier (e.g., the Arboretians' "butterflying" daily schedules, their fondness of zebras and ostriches); they've been inspired by utopian architectural schemes, such as Le Corbusier's "Contemporary City for 3 Million" (1922) and Frank Lloyd Wright's utopian vision of a new America based on his Broadacre City proposal which envisioned a radical democracy divided into three main zones, New England, North and South Usonia. The utopia/dystopia literary genres have been plundered—Niels Klim's odd *Journey under the Ground* (1741); G. A. Ellis's *New Britain* (1820); Thomas Chauncey's *The Crystal Button* (1891); Condé B. Pallen's *Crucible Island* (1919), and, especially, Étienne Cabet's *A Voyage to Icaria* (1840) are among those either the author, or the social engineers he reports on, borrows from at will. The latter is particularly interesting because Cabet actually founded a utopian communistic colony in Nauvoo, Illinois (about four hours south and west of Chicago) and some of its members sojourned to the San Francisco Bay area founding Icaria Speranza (a locale not too far from Arboretum and a name that might have influenced the author's, or the dictator Solan's, choice of Esperanto as a language). This daughter community died of prosperity as the land values climbed so high they couldn't resist dividing it up among the members, who then sold it at a handsome profit; thus, the members unanimously rejected communism to return to the capitalist fold. Similarly, "da branches" (Arboretian citizens) reject Solan's communism in favor of a quibbling democratic capitalism.

The author seems particularly conversant with the writings of H.G. Wells and Aldous Huxley. So it is no surprise that *Arboretum* (assuming for a moment it is fiction) follows the three characteristics which distinguish the utopia from other forms of literature or speculation: it is fictional, describes a particular state or community, and its theme is the political structure of that fictional state or community.¹³ A utopia may be speculative or satiric; the former takes a positive view of the ideal of society, the latter takes a negative, dystopic view of the future;¹⁴

¹³ These three characteristics are sketched out by Glenn Negley and J. Max Patrick in *The Quest for Utopia: An Anthology of Imaginary Societies* (New York: Henry Schuman, Inc., 1952): 3. This text may have served as a source for J.A. Ellis's plagiarisms.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

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Enlargement of a digi-cam portrait of the recently elected Solan Aceae (as travestied by 'Da Hobos') taken during his State visit to Usonia's White House just before his famous "Voice, Disloyalty, Exit" speech to Usonia's UnUsonian Activities Committee

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however, as an author may tinge—as does Ellis—the speculative construction with irony or pathos, a clear distinction between a benign dream and a nightmare may become difficult. Moreover, one person's utopia is another person's dystopia; thus, for the pedant, the library with its stale odor of knowledge and yellowing paper may be pure utopia, yet for the undergraduate it may be a dryasdust dystopian hell to be suffered only under the force of a term paper's fast-approaching deadline.

"For every ten readers who'll hate it," I said, "I suppose there's bound to be another ten who'll like it! But what about the author's copyright?"

"So publish it," Laura urged, "and see if you can flush out the author; he or she will either sue you for royalties or praise your taste—either way, your cottage-industry publishing venture will be on national news and you'll be famous!"

And so I did. But I chopped down Ellis' original eleven-word title—which he had wrought into an amateurish attempt at concrete-poetry, shaping the wordy thing into a tree—down to a single, elegant branch—er—word. I then insisted on sharpening Ockham's Pruning Shears, using them on the text's forest of trivial, oftentimes redundant, detail. I axed one too explicit sex scene, along with several irrelevant branches, from the main trunk of the plot. Thus pruned to conciseness, the text grew into a clarity honoring the name of Arboretum's capital, "Da Clearin'," a name that might have been copped from philosopher Martin Heidegger's notion of "the clearing" as expressing the understanding of being: "In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing . . ."15 I have, however, retained all the author's footnotes as rendered in the standard numbered notation he used and did not see fit to change his penchant for avoiding spelling out numbers, even when this occurs in the dialogue, for by the year 2053 this oddity may have become grammatically correct. Finally, ellipses indicate where I've omitted text and any commentary by this editor is signified by italics enclosed in brackets: [. . . (Ed.)].

As for the peculiar "slanguage" spoken by the Arboretians, I decided not to alter the way the author permits his utopians to actually speak their lingo; with translations in parenthesis or brackets, the reading goes slower, but how much better it is to savor the expressions of these unusual people firsthand.

Concerning utopia and language, H.G. Wells, in *A Modern Utopia* (1905), remarks insightfully that, "The language of Utopia will . . . be brought into the same phase, into a common resonance of thought, but the language they will speak will still be a living tongue, an animated system of imperfections, which every individual man will infinitesimally modify. . . . I fancy it will be a coalesced language, a

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971): 35.

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synthesis of many."¹⁶ Such a hodgepodge is "Ar(bor)got," the tongue of "Da Branchlando," a recombinant language that can be seen as a result of pidginization and creolization akin to that which produced British Jamaican Creole. Moreover, as British Jamaican Creole is viewed by some linguists as consisting of an unbroken continuum from English to Creole,¹⁷ so it seems Ar(bor)got is expressed in various shadings between ebonics-influenced Angla on the one hand, Esperanto on the other, and mediated by Slango and Nova-Vorto expressions, all of which complexify the *reflexification* (vocabulary substitutions between languages) in Ar(bor)got. Although they can't actually be separated so neatly in practice as given in the recipe below, the following classifications might be helpful for a fuller appreciation of either the prodigality of this utopian tongue, or the pedantic wit of Ellis-the-fabulist:

1) **Angla**—a transgressive lower class English, which substitutes "Da" for "the" (e.g., "Da Bulls," referring to the famous Chicago basketball team), shortens "of" to "o'," "-ing" to "-in'," replaces "is" by "do be" and "-ed" by "-'d" or often maintains the present tense when the past would be more appropriate (a truly utopian desire to reject the past?);

2) **Esperanto**—a simplified, pidgin form of this artificial language, which can be attributed to the influence of the Arboretian socialist dictator, Solan, who wished to unify his domain by forcing all his subjects to speak a common artificial language, but only managed to partially accomplish this task. Arboretian Esperanto adheres to many of the standard rules of that language which produce meaning by variations upon a root word: infinitives are made by adding "-l" to the root word, gerunds by adding "-anta" (but Ar[bor]got uses the shorter -ant in violation of good grammar), the present tense is signified by an "-as" ending, past tense is denoted by "-is," imperatives by "-u," conditionals by "-us," nouns by "-o," adjectives by "-a," adverbs by "-e," and so forth. For instance, verbal forms: *luni* = to moon, *lunant* = mooning, *lunas* = he/she moons, *lunis* = he/she mooned, *lunu* = moon!, *lunus* = he/she will moon; noun (singular and plural): *luno* = moon, *lunoj* = moons. Refer to an Esperanto dictionary—J.C. Wells's *Concise Esperanto and English Dictionary* (Chicago: NTC Publishing Group) is an excellent choice—or to the Esperanto web-site at

¹⁶ Wells, 21-22. For an excellent essay on this point of synthesized language, see Leon Bollack, "La Language Française en l'an 2003," in *La Revue* (15 July 1903).

¹⁷ See David DeCamp's "Towards a generative analysis of a post-creole continuum," in D. Hymes (ed.) *Pidginization and Creolization* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1971): 349-370.

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<http://www.tios.cs.utwente.nl/esperanto> for a more detailed explanation of the prefixes and suffixes that modify the meaning of the root word.

3) **Slango**—odd usages, it often reapplies botanical terms to other domains ("short-prun'd" for "short-hemmed," "branches," for "citizens," "parchin' " for "death"), or makes spotty use of Orwellian "Newspeak" in conjunction with Esperanto ("doubleplus bona" for "very good"), or makes use of angla slang with Esperanto ("heap bona" for "very good"), or prunes words to succinct abbreviations ("synthtabak" for "synthetic tobacco," "Pollyanna" for "Polyanastylene," and "D.C." for "Da Clearin"); or, as found in "Hobo Toki-Toki," a basilect using doubled words and the enclitic -ee.

4) **Nova-Vorto**—neologism, which invents or cops neologisms (such as "grok" for "know" or "understand," which was taken from Robert A. Heinlein's novel *Stranger in a Strange Land* where it was a Martian word meaning "to drink" or "to be one with"), or combines Esperantian terms (agglutinating words as in German) to produce portmanteau words ("donasioalalia" for "give something to another"), or melds 'angla' with Esperanto ("vojoish" = "waylike"). Usonian

All such oddities reflect the ever-changing nature of language, language as a site of aesthetic/political struggle; an aspect not always addressed by earlier utopian writers, as feminist theorist Julia Kristeva explained: "the text is a practice that could be compared to political revolution: the one brings about in the subject what the other introduces into society."¹⁸ Or, as French writer Philippe Sollers has more succinctly put it, "Grammar is already a question of the police."¹⁹

Speaking about a revolution in language, this Mark Twainian posting by Joseph L. Bradley of the University of Texas Lab for Intelligent Processes and Systems was down-loaded from the Internet:

¹⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University, 1982): 17.

¹⁹ Philippe Sollers, cited by Mary Ann Caws, "Text and revolution," *Diacritics* (Spring 1975): 2.

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EUROPE ADOPTS ENGLISH—WITH CHANGES

Having chosen English as the preferred language in the European Union (EU), the European Parliament has commissioned a feasibility study to improving efficiency in communications between Government departments. European officials have often pointed out that English spelling is unnecessary and difficult; for example: cough, plough, rough, through and thorough. What is clearly needed is a phased program of changes to iron out these anomalies; it would be administered by a top level staff of participating nations.

In the first year, for example, the committee would suggest using 's' instead of the soft 'c'. Certainly, civil servants in all cities would receive this news with joy. Then the hard 'c' could be replaced by 'k' since both letters are pronounced alike. Not only would this clear up confusion in the minds of clerical workers, but typewriters could be made with one less letter.

There would be growing enthusiasm when in the second year, it was announced that the troublesome 'ph' would henceforth be written 'f'. This would make words like 'fotograf' twenty percent shorter in print.

In the third year, public acceptance of the new spelling can be expected to reach the stage where more complicated changes are possible. Governments would encourage the removal of double letters.

We would all agree that the horrible mess of silent 'e's in the language is disgraceful. Therefore we could drop these and continue to read and write as though nothing had happened. By this time it would be four years since the scheme

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began and people would be receptive to steps such as replacing 'th' by 'z'. Perhaps the function of 'w' could be taken on by 'v', vitsh is, after all, half a 'w'. Shortly after this, the unnecessary 'o' could be dropped from words containing 'ou'. Similar arguments could be applied to other combinations of letters.

Continuing this process year after year, we would eventually have a reasonably sensible written style. After twenty years there would be no more troubles, difficulties and everything would finally be easy to understand each other. The dreams of the Government would finally have come true.

—Joseph L. Bradley, University of Texas Lab for Intelligent Processes and Systems

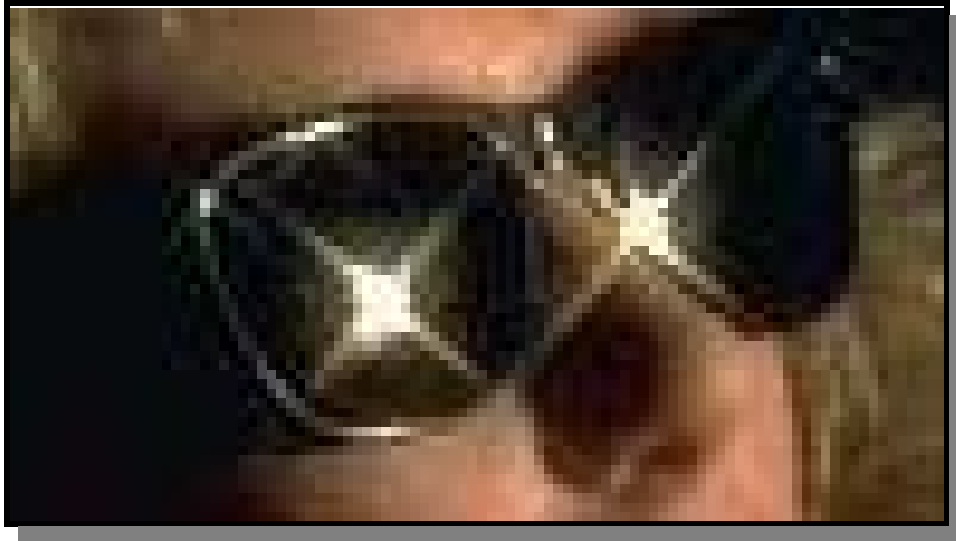
"Ar(bor)got" is at once more conservative in its use of 'angla', but more radical in its collage of disparate argots. And there are often several ways of saying the same thing, a diglossia of fancy-talk (e.g., 'rodo-pasteco,' see page 273) and baser expression (e.g., 'vojo-pizzo,' see page 88) both meaning 'road-pizza.' This "slanguage" turns every Arboretian into an inventive and simultaneous polyglot. Possibly Ellis (or the Arboretians) read and took heed of postmodern fabulist John Barth's favorite quotation, a gem attributed to Khakheperresenb, an Egyptian scribe of the Middle Kingdom (circa 2000 B.C.) who had already lamented an exhausted language: "Would that I had phrases that are not known . . . in new language that has not been used, free from repetition, not an utterance that has grown stale, which men of old have spoke."²⁰

The ambiguity of the Arboretian's "slanguage" carries on over to the ambiguity of Ellis's response to Arboretum as a society. The irony in the text is so extensive that one often cannot decide when the author is serious or is just poking fun; like the paradoxical criminals in the narrative, Ellis seems to be both serious and funny at the same time, a state of mind that Kroker and Weinstein denominate as "spasm"; moreover, to complicate matters, humor is a serious thing which may, in turn, view being serious as quite funny. It can't be mere coincidence that Laura also discovered a copy of William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* lying flat on

²⁰ Cited by Peter Schwendener, "Postmodernism with a heart: A new collection of essays from 'romantic formalist' John Barth," Book Section, *Chicago Tribune* (Feb. 25, 1996): 3.

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that top shelf. That important text had originally been published in Britain in 1930, but this copy was a reprint from New Directions dated 1995, yet it was extremely well-thumbed, and the pages were yellow and brittle. Curious! I am aware that air-pollution levels are higher on the south-side of Chicago, but high enough to turn a book into such a state in a single year?



Arboretian Eyes Protected by Taco Bell Ray-Ban UV-Glasses

This book was found lying between Ellis's manuscript and a very dead squirrel who had, given the state of Ellis's manuscript, already eaten through the envelope and was starting to nourish itself upon the contents. Was it *that* contents that killed it? Could that squirrel, either discarded as an unwanted pet or accidentally trapped in the loft, be akin to the *welten eich-hoernchen*, the "world squirrel," which runs up and down the Great Tree that symbolizes the *Axis Mundi* in German mythology? Up and down this tree, its roots in Niefelheim and its branches in Asgard, the squirrel runs, Wotan communicating with the world through the agency of this scurrying animal in that ancient sanctuary, the *nemus* or grove. Might this not explain why squirrels are made pets, counted avidly by surveillance teams, and viewed by the Arboretians as just as sacred as the trees in "Da Forest?"

Ellis mentions this myth in his text through a project conceived by a talented and gifted Arboretian child who has set upon a study of the Kabbalah and a regimen of self-enlightenment to locate such a marvelous tree. Although Ellis does employ the ancient Kabbalah's four stages—Origination, Creation, Formation, Expression—that lay between Nothingness and the Material Universe to structure his utopian narrative, he yet misses key aspects of "Da Branchlando's" mystical and emotional relationship to the plant world. Events and rituals are mentioned in passing, but he never develops an *analysis* of the mystical aspects of the vegetal

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***Be Ne Tossin' Us Da Bone, Be Just Be Leafin' Us Da Heap Alone* (felt-tip pen on chalko-tabulo, 40 P.F.) per Susano Ressler, Arboretian Social Protest Poster Attacking Usonian Economic 'Free Raid Agreement' Overtures to Arboretum**

in Arboretum, the religious dimension where "the rhythms of vegetation simultaneously reveal the mystery of life and creation and the mystery of renewal, youth, and immortality."²¹ An oversight, considering that Arboretum's foundational ideology as voiced in Charles Forester's writings and speeches—"Good methods be bringin' 'bout good structures"—²²might hint that the *Sequoia gigantea* be regarded—like the *ashvatha* in India—as a sacred tree (although an Arboretian talented and gifted child's scholarship detailed herein suggests that this tree might be what Lewis Carroll referred to in *Alice in Wonderland* as the "Tumtum tree"). Forester seems to have intuited that these massive redwoods owe their privileged situation to the fact that they incarnate the archetype, the paradigmatic image of vegetation, and that having fallen they, upon sectioning, become cosmic clocks "telling time" via dendrochronology, the study of their growth rings. He appears, then, to reject

²¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1959): 150.

²²This saying of Forester's has since been Ar(bor)gotized into: "Bona metodoj rezultigas bona strukturoj," which in turn has been travestied by "Da Hobos" into the mocking abbreviation: B.M.R.B.S. ("Branchlandoish methods are bull-shit").

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scholarship that suggests that a *Ginkgo*—a most-ancient tree with superb medicinal properties as an anti-oxidant and improver of blood flow—is the World Tree.

Apropos this topic of time, we finally come to the \$64,000 Question. Was this document really left behind by a time-traveler? Laura insisted I'd missed seeing that postal cancellation for what it was, not of our time. It was lozenge-shaped, like a Piet Mondrian canvas, with a rectangle inscribed within; inside that rectangle the cancellation date read: "New Yorsey, June 20, 2054," and below, running along the bottom edge of the rectangle, was the slogan, "ARM(OUR) CHILDREN."

"Only a society," Laura, argued, "with postmodernism as its official culture would think up *that* kind of a blurb, using a *parenthesis* in a postal cancellation. The parenthesized '(OUR)' suggests," she speculated, "a double-reading as: 'ARM OUR' and 'ARMOUR.' Very postmodern."

I had to agree. This contraction of New York-New Jersey certainly jived with the contraction of Chicago-Gary to "Chicagary" referred to in the author's prologue and, yes, that odd slogan was too bizarre to attribute to contemporary postal authorities. Moreover, the publishing house of Knopf-Abbeville doesn't exist—yet. Very strange indeed! And then there was that Empson text dated 1995, yet looking every bit more than fifty years old. Moreover, one must consider Ellis's structural anthropological approach to his object of study (pages 98 -101). So closely does it echo Claude Lévi-Strauss' famous narrative of exotic travel in *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) that Ellis might easily have titled his text *Triste Futur*. Ellis has even gathered together a body of facts and texts compiled as five appendices; in the first, he details a list of statistics/data *vis-à-vis* Arboretum from Usonia's C.I.A. files; in the second, he provides an accurate calendar and a chronology of events; this is followed by a transcription of an inflammatory speech by Armajo Arbara, son of Forta-Root (both radical "Skins"), excerpts from the curious notebooks of Andreo R., a child-genius who is seeking The World Tree in Arboretum, and, finally, the covers of the four key Arboretian texts—'Da Kvarivium' (The Quadrivium) required reading for all new citizens.

As a coda to the whole production, Ellis includes "Be ne trompis" ("Don't be deceived") gum-backed bumper-stickers—a cottage industry artifact, we must assume, of Arboretum's counterculturalists, "Da Hobos." These "hobos" are rétro-heretics from Arboretum's official culture; they've taken the Italian Futurists' slogan "Down with moonlight" and reversed it for their purposes to read: "Up with moonlight," for during full moons cesium-flaring fireworks are most plentiful. They've taken to being dressed in rétro-fashion, "en rétro-garb." Such rétro-dressing con-temporary theorist Kaja Silverman defends because, "it inserts its wearer into a complex network of cultural and historical references . . . by putting quotation marks around the garments it revitalizes, it makes clear that the past is available to us only in a textual form, and through the mediation of the present. . . . It is thus a highly visible way of acknowledging that its wearer's identity has been shaped by

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decades of representational activity, and that no cultural project can ever 'start from zero'."²³

From Ellis' description, official Arboretian utopianism is rooted in a communitarian ideal where persons are in unity with one another in a shared whole—why Solan attempted to force Esperanto onto the populace—but as such it denies and represses social difference; this polity cannot be thought of as a unity in which all participants share a common background, experience, and values. Somehow, group difference must be more easily asserted and this seems to be a point of friction in Arboretum where marginalized groups—"Da Skins," "Da Broz," "Da Hobos," and "Da Malaks"—represent an unassimilated otherness that is perpetually travesty-ing official culture.

What with their peculiar propensities—rétro-sensibilities like "Rev-Garb" and "playin' Jarism," the practice of the occult, etc. and their belief (copped from Ursula LeGuin's novel *The Dispossessed*) that, "Da Rev do be en da spirito o' da individuo branch, or it do be nenie [*nowhere*]"—"Da Hobo-Skin-Broz" brand of utopianism jives with Richard Rorty's notion of "liberal utopianism" whereby we "must drop the demand for a theory which unifies the public and private" and be "content to treat the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable."²⁴ This is a utopianism where, in Rorty's opinion, it is the "agents of love and diversity" that still call our attention to the heterogeneous types of persons that have been left outside the definition of the "we."²⁵ Claiming to maintain Forester's original vision of society as a state of equilibrium produced by conflict—an idea culled from John Locke's view of society at large and later developed by sociologist Norton Long in his essay "The City as an Ecology of Games" in *Urban Government*, 1969—"Da Hobos" et al. perceive their type of revolutionary as "da cos" (he/she) who describes and redescribes things in new forms and offers new vocabularies to his/her community as alternatives for comprehension and self-comprehension, while suggesting other ways of thinking, acting, and being.

Thus, Arboretian society, according to this "hoboish" ideal, would come to reject rule by rhetoric and be a society in which the domains of public and private would be clearly differentiated, a society making possible to every "branch" and "grupo" the free pursuit of the different sorts of "malgranda stufoj" (little things)

²³ Kaja Silverman, "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse," *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986): 150-151.

²⁴ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989): xv.

²⁵ Richard Rorty, *Philosophical Papers I: Objectivity Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 206.

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around which they center their fantasies ("da lundigrundo") and their lives. In other words, a "Branchlando" would be "Hoborealeyes'd" in which the role of social law is reduced to a set of neutral rules guarding this freedom of self-creation by protecting each individual from violent intrusions into his or her private space—and nothing else. An anarchist's dream.

One can imagine the hoopla the ultra-conservative Arboretian "Tap Roots" would put up in opposition to such a scheme. Even the chagrin of those mainstream "branches" enamored of Gaia-inspired meditations on the biosphere, such as Stephanie Kaza's paeon to Zenecology in *The Attentive Heart: Conversations with Trees*,²⁶ and who are in the thrall of Joseph Beuys' rescue of a rare text by Carl Linnaeus from a Nazi book-burning, and his famous pro-ecology tree installation at the Seventh Documenta in Kassel, Germany (1982). So until this ideal is met, the opposing discourses of margin versus center—what French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's term "minoritarian" versus "majoritarian," or unofficial versus official discourse, what Ellis quaintly dubs "alt.chaos" versus "officialdumb"—must clash.²⁷

This is a point Ellis has made—er, will make?—by including several instances of "Hobo" travesties of official scripto-visual documents. On the verso of one of these documents—a before-and-after pairing of an official Arboretian public service message poster and its re-rephotographic 'hobo' travesty—Ellis has cited these two thinkers' text, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980), suggesting the theoretical frame with which we are to decode "Da Skins," "Da Malaks," and "Da Hobo's" countercultural activities. The cursory mention of Latinos in Arboretum may be due to their assimilation into the politics and hybrid cultural life these three aforementioned groups as Ellis freely uses a smattering of Hispanic *Borderismos* when talking about his own society that suggest a very different development, *amigoization*, has increasingly penetrated Usonia proper:

²⁶ Stephanie Kaza, *The Attentive Heart: Conversation with Trees* (New York: Fawcett Columbine Books, 1993; Arboretian edition 4 P.F., Arboretian "angla" edition 40 P.F.). In 1979 James Lovelock published his "Gaia" hypothesis, named after the Greek idea of Mother Earth. Edward Goldsmith in "Gaia and Evolution," *The Post-Modern Reader*, ed. Charles Jencks explains that the earth is a living organism: "According to the Gaia thesis, the biosphere, together with its atmospheric environment, forms a single entity or natural system. This system is the product of organic forces that are highly coordinated by the system itself. . . . she must be seen as a vast cooperative enterprise, very much as nature was seen by the Natural Theologists of the nineteenth century" (405).

²⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin in "Freudianism: A Critical Sketch," in Pam Morris, ed., *The Bakhtin Reader* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1994): 46 claims: "In a healthy community and in a socially healthy personality . . . there is no discrepancy between the official and the unofficial conscious." It would then seem Ellis detects a less than health socius in Arboretum.

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Borderisms

- Amigoization**—the Mexicanization occurring in Usonia’s Southwest.
- Art-mageddon**—the end of the art world, defunding, etc
- Culti-multuralism**—an esperantic Disneyworldview in which all cultures, races and sexes live happily together.
- Desmodernidad**—from the Spanish noun *desmadre*, meaning being motherless, or living in permanent chaos.
- Free Raid Agreement**—the Bunker State’s mode of international trade.
- Funkhuatl**—the Aztec God of Funk.
- Gringolatrán**—the land of those who adore gringos; derived from *gringolatra*; the name of a Chicagary art gallery.
- Gringostroika**—grassroots movement advocating the reform of pan-capitalism.
- Jalapeño pusher**—a petty criminal who sells chiles on the streets to intoxicate innocent Usonian children.
- Krishnahuatl**—the Aztec god of karma.
- Maquiladora art**—the mode of art production whereby Mexican and Chicago artists provide raw talent, while gringos administer the operation. It is opposed by “Anti-Maquiladora art” that challenges and comments upon the exploitation as sketched above (see page 214b).
- Ménage à trade**—trade dealings akin to the infamous 20th-century NAFTA agreement.
- Mexkimo**—a polar Mexican living in a cold climate such as Chicagary’s.
- Othercide**—the murder of otherness.
- Pene-trading**—the act of trading with a smaller and weaker country or person; e.g., Usonia “pene-trades” with Arboretum.
- Post-CNN Chicano art**—a new techno-rascuache aesthetic fusing epic rap poetry, performance art, interactive television, holographic radio, and computer art with a chicanocentric perspective and a sleazoid bent.
- Pus-modernity**—the infected modernity of Usonia.
- Sexual democracia**—a Latin American version of democracy in which political decisions are made according to sexual desire.
- Vatoman**—a Chicano Batman-type.²⁸

Since Ellis cites from the original 1980 French edition, we must assume the translation is his own and assume his mastery of French, English, maybe some German, and an increasing facility with “Ar(bor)got” due to his previous familiarity with Esperanto and Spanglish.

²⁸ These definitions were in part culled from Guillermo Gómez-Peña, “Glossary of Borderismos,” *The New World Border* (City Lights: San Francisco, 1996): 240 - 244.

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Throughout the text, Ellis is at pains to describe the two principles—broached by Deleuze and Guattari—that are mutually interactive within Arboretian society’s superstructure: “arborescence,” a hierarchical mode of structuring that Arboretians call “arboreco”, and “rhizomativity,” a radical, decentered mode of interconnecting they term “rhizomateco.” They might be better understood as mutually-implicated antitheses akin to anthropologist Victor Turner’s concepts of “structure” and “*communitas*”; the former is cognitive, provides a model, classifies, and is expressed in the Lacanian Symbolic; the latter is existential, a potential, reclassifies, and is expressed in the Lacanian Imaginary. Turner wrote: “Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or ‘holy,’ possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured or institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency.”²⁹ I assume that the Arboretian “Hobos” (both branches, see below), “Skins,” and “Malaks” would agree with this definition and, touting “rhizomativity,” would cast their lot for *communitas*. These countercultural groups—celebrating a *communitas* rooted in what Mikhail Bakhtin would identify as “carnival”: ritual spectacles, comic verbal compositions, and various forms of billingsgate (curses, oaths, popular blazons)—intuit the paradox that if the Revolution started by Forester is seen as having any end, it will have never truly begun.

Yes, it all *seems* so legitimate. However, I pointed out to Laura, I still thought these oddities to have some rational explanation, perhaps a hoax. After all, how was one’s examining, hermeneutic consciousness to maintain the usual tension between the historical consciousness of the *past* and the strictly *present* horizon when the text to be interpreted was from the *future*? And then, the author stresses the *narrative* quality of the text by introducing each section with the words “And then,” E.M. Forster’s notion of story sequence. Moreover, there was some textual *aporia* that undercut the credibility of the text as reportage:

- 1) the author mentions that Poland was largely wiped out by a nuclear power-plant accident, but then later has the Bosnian War continuing with the Serbs overrunning Hungary and attacking Poland;
- 2) it is mentioned that “dead” languages are not taught to the general populace, yet the Arboretian flag’s motto (*Uti Non Abuti*) is in Latin;
- 3) it is claimed that cesiumophiles ingest cesium, thus suffering a prolonged degenerative condition gradually ending in insanity and death,

²⁹ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co, 1969): 129.

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yet cesium is regarded as *fairly toxic* with a lethal dose to rats expertly calculated as: $LD_{50}(Cs_2CO_3, \text{oral rat}) = 2333 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}$;

4) further into the text, despite numerous strip-searches and frisking by trained security personnel, the author still manages to conceal a banned mini-disc recorder in his sock and innocently carry a Swiss Army “Wristodefensofon,” mini-Claymore personal defense mine-watch-communicator (unbelievable in itself as technology) into Arboretum where a breakfast companion notices it and a ruckus follows.

Although this latter oversight *could* happen, it does seem as unlikely as having the Arboretian merchant marine ship excrement inside hollow logs for the dual benefit of wood and fertilizer for South Sea Islanders. On second thought, the latter does seem more ecologically sound than how Glasgow has rid itself of its toxic stews since 1910: sludge boats, such as the *Garroch Head*, ferrying waste down the river Clyde out to the sea halfway between the islands of Bute and Arran where some 82.6 million tons of it now inhabit the seabed at ninety fathoms. A practice the European Union has said must cease by 1998.

Thus, whether this is a profoundly real document or a document of a really profound fiction—a “fake performative” with “pretensions to ‘realism’” as theorist Roland Barthes would put it—Laura and I remain divided. Even ignoring the epistemological status of the text, we differed over which sections we preferred. I enjoyed how food and photography were combined in Arboretum where long-exposure pin-hole camera food-photography is a popular hobby. I got a chuckle out an Arbo-French dish, probably most popular around Christmas (see page 225), “Da Français Babe Boeuf,” consisting of beheaded and grilled grey squirrels, which was named after the beheaded French Social Utopist François Noël Babeuf.³⁰ But I drew the line at the infamous “Discordian Squirrel Soup” recipe (see page 234).

Laura, instead, was intrigued by the fact that Ellis, the writer-disguised, entered Arboretum under false pretenses: “He seems,” she said, “akin to the New England poet in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* who is accused of entering the utopian community in the story—rather like the famous Brook Farm—in order to ‘turn the affair into a ballad’. Ellis seems to be reliving past utopias.”

I countered, “Ellis was, or will be, merely another pedant in search of more grist for the academic mill; witness his search for more obscure data to include in his monograph on Pau D’Arco’s text *Basco’s Dilemma* (1996). He does not want his professorial competitors to beat him to it, hence the secrecy.”

I found it refreshingly non-sexist that Arboretian women’s bust size was specified in centimeters as “DBH” (diameter at breast height), a forestry term used

³⁰ François Noël Babeuf (1760 - 1797) declared his socialistic rebellion against The Directory in his journal *Tribun du peuple*; he was beheaded for his conspiratorial actions.

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to measure the diameter of tree trunks. But Laura countered that *that* was still sexist, equating women with nature. Laura, however, did approve of the discussion on Arboretian education, Arboretian women's art, and how fork-painting replaces finger-painting in the lower grades; she was fascinated with the burgeoning social underground of "da hobos" with their penchant for inventive dialect, for that basilect (devalued speech) known as 'Toki-Toki.' Even more conventional Slango—such as the phrase "raedan da beeches," which is a distant linguistic root for our more modern "reading the books"—held her interest. Their magnificent forests inhabited by verbally precocious "branches," she said, recalled Charles Baudelaire's poetic insight from *The Flower of Evil: Nature is a temple where living pillars/ Sometimes emit confused words*.

I had read with fascination about these "Hobos' " forbidden passion for mixed drinks—like "O.J.'s Bronco," a drink that was, Ellis claims, once very popular in "Da Uitland"—which has in 2053 A.D. become as nostalgically *rétro* for these "Hobos' " as the vinyl records they horde. This "amo de malnova' (love of the past) is demonstrated by their delight in wearing *rétro*-revolutionary garb, as well as, their tearful endearment to the early speeches and writings of Charles Cane Forester.

This marginalized group—itsself split into two contending factions, those owing allegiance to Paul Hines and Ale Crow and those tracing their heritage to Basco Da Lemma's Society of Friendliness to All (SOFTA) whose principles were set forth in Pau D'Arco's arcane book *Basco's Dilemma*—a marker of difference nesting within a utopian group further nested within a Usonian 'Uitland' that is devoted to dystopian ideals. This cultural embeddedness may be—besides the obvious ecocidal threat of this geographical nesting from Asian gypsy-moth infestation, ozone depletion, and acid rain—both Arboretum's greatest strength (potential for change) and its greatest weakness (potential for disruption from within and without).

Most utopias have assumed a greater stress upon identity than upon such difference. In his *A Modern Utopia*, H.G. Wells's remarks upon this: "If we are to have any Utopia at all, we must have a clear common purpose, and great steadfast movement of will to override all these incurably egotistical dissentients. Something is needed wide and deep enough to float the worst egotisms away. The world is not to be made right by acclamation and in a day, and then for ever more trusted to run alone. It is manifest that this Utopia could not come about by chance and anarchy, but the coordinated effort and a community of design."³¹ But this also the utopian vision of the Grand Inquisitor which Robert C. Elliott in *The Shape of Utopia* said "is the product of 'the Euclidean mind' (a phrase Dostoyevsky often used), which is obsessed by the ideas of regulating all life by reason and bringing happiness to man whatever the cost." As corrective, Elliott speculated that: "If the word [*utopia*] is to

³¹ Wells, as cited by Mark Hillegas, "Introduction," xiv.

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be redeemed, it will have to be by someone who has followed utopia into the abyss which yawns behind the Grand Inquisitor's vision."³² It seems, with his discovery of "Da Hobos, Da Skins, 'n Da Malaks," that Ellis has dipped into that abyss—his subterranean dream at the end of the text may refer to just this and be simply an obvious reference to subterranean themes in earlier utopian writings.

The unanswered questions then are: Can the conventional Arboretian citizens eventually come to see their rationalist utopia as a power trip, a mono-arboreocracy, as do "Da Skins," "Hobos," and those irascible "Malaks?" Can Arboretum's 'splittin' branches' (dissenting members) and Arboretum's 'raspy' (touchy relationship) with its host land, Usonia, find common enough ground to prevent violent conflict in the future? Is the Arboretian's use of marijuana and the cocaine-loaded soft-drink they call "Jolt" sowing the seeds of Arboretum's inner-dissolution? (So prevalent is the use of the "infernal weed" by the Arboretians and so affectionately do they "play Jarism" with John Barth's texts that I was tempted to change *Arboretum's* title to *The Pot-Weed Factor*.)³³ And they probably light those "joints" with *Pale Fire*, so frequently do they travesty lines from Vladimir Nabokov's novel. As the text ends, we are left with a final question: Will Ellis eventually return to Arboretum like H.G. Wells's hero in the film *The Time Machine* who goes back to the future to help the Eloi build a new society? Ellis, after all, does toss his "farewell-'n-hope-to-return" bouquet back across the border as he departs. And, finally, given the sources of pollution and infestation outside Arboretum, can this little experiment in Gaian ecology hope to escape eventual ecocide?

Despite our differences, Laura and I did manage to find a common ground of interests. Having taken turns reading Ms. Kaza's *The Attentive Heart: Conversations with Trees* to each other before we retired every night, we saw in Arboretum a society that could easily be envisioned by Kaza in a blissful dream: "Teaching children, adults, and undergraduates about the serious state of affairs for trees left me deeply disturbed about human-tree relationships. . . . I followed with dismay the politics and economics of old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest, watching the checkerboard pattern of clearcuts take over more and more mountaintops. . . . I could not make moral sense of the enormous waste and misuse of trees for consumer products. . . . I began to realize that the social ethics of industrialized culture did not include any thoughtful basis for mutually respectful relations with trees. The predominant Western economic philosophy identifies trees

³² Robert C. Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970): 100. The reference is, of course, to "The Grand Inquisitor" episode in *The Brother's Karamazov* where Dostoyevsky, *contra* the Grand Inquisitor's notion of utopia, asserts (like "Da Hobo's") that humanity ("hermanitree") is irrational, capricious, refusing to be catagorized and limited ("prun'd" precisely because he or she is human ("herman").

³³ Cf. John Barth, *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960).

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primarily as objects for human use—whether for building, making paper, creating recreation sites, or producing toothpicks.”³⁴ With good reason, we suspected that *she* might be Ellis writing under a *nom-de-plume* for, in addition to the obvious ecological sympathies of both, Kaza had lived in Oregon and touted Douglas firs, Oregon blue oaks, and ginkgo trees alike—but the writing styles were too dissimilar. But we never did obtain handwriting samples requested of Ellis Cowling, associate dean for research at North Carolina State College of Forest Resources, and so could not definitely clear him as a possible candidate for authorship.

We both got a kick out of the motto printed on the bottom of the letter Ellis supposedly received from the Arboretian Immigration Service (page 41): “Alta to nun, survivin’ do be preventin’ us from livin’,” Ar(bor)got for the French Situationists’ slogan: “Up to now, surviving has prevented us from living.” Arboretians—given their penchant for the hodgepodge and rhizomatic patterns—might have just as well copped the Situationist phrase: “The path to simplicity is the most complex of all.”

Speaking of complexity . . . Laura and I found another common agreement on the mystery author’s treatment of gender issues: how their word for “humanity” was described as in transition from the earlier sexist Slango term “hiswoman” to the more recent feminist “herman,” and how the gendered pronouns “his” and “her” were being replaced by the increasing use of the gender-neutral Slango substitute “cos” (a term either Ellis or the Arboretians copped from Carole Spearin McCauley’s novel *Happenthing in Travel On*). Laura and I both found the “play” (in French theorist Roland Barthes’ sense of the term) in their hodgepodge lingo, Ar(bor)got, intriguing. For instance, the plural in Ar(bor)got is produced in two entirely different ways: either as in Esperanto (tabulo, “board, becomes “tabuloj,” boards) or in English (adding a “s” as in the plural, “kigados,” for dome-structures); most often the agreement between adjectives and nouns is dropped (“Bela floroj” instead of “Belaj floroj,” for “Beautiful flowers”); the active present participle is rendered inaccurately, the -ant- suffix added to the root simply becomes -ant (“floranta,” flowering, is written as “florant”); moreover, ambiguous meaning is further fostered by the deletion of all diacritical marks in the Esperantian words they’ve adapted to “Ar(bor)got.” A rigid, artificial language is thus transgressed and becomes ambiguous, much to the chagrin of an Esperantist who tried to convince me to grammatically tidy up the Ar(bor)got. Given the “da rev-wrack” (revolutionary thought) of the Arboretians, *that* would have been a travesty-of-a-travesty!

In keeping with this theme of ambiguity, I will let the reader “coself” (him- or herself) speculate on the text’s origins, its veracity, and encourage “cos” (him or her) to argue with friends over its literary value. I venture to recommend it (in the

³⁴ Kaza, 4.

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Forester Ranger Guiding ‘Da Malgrandvojago,’ a short-tour for Uitlanders in ‘Da Clearin’,’ Arboretum (10 P.F.), digi-cam photograph showing ‘Da Top-risers’ in the background;caption reads: “Forest Ranger I.M.A. Mensogulo describes the size of the trout that are commonly caught in the pure, rushing streams of ‘Da Catkins’ in northern Arboretum.” Photograph courtesy of the Northern Usonia Posthistorical Society, Seattacoma, N. U.

words of sci-fi writer/utopist Ursula K. Le Guin) “to persons with mild inner-ear disturbances and those who want very badly to be branch reference librarians,”³⁵ despite the appropriateness *vis-à-vis* Arboretum of Sir Thomas More’s observation, via his protagonist Raphael Hythlody, of his ideal society in *Utopia* (1516): “There is much in this society for which one may wish rather than hope.” Yet, I think you’ll agree that reading Ellis’s book is time better spent than watching TV talk-shows, although, if those talk-show hosts *are* going to become our politicians as Ellis reports . . .

Meanwhile, I’ve been detoured. Laura has accused me of using this verbose introduction as a smokescreen to *obscure* the text at hand, so I shall set

³⁵ Ursula K. Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989): 253.

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aside my pen. Now I'm off on a (Sisyphusian?) search for a copy of Monsieur Pau D'Arco's oddball biography, *Basco's Dilemma*, just in case it really does exist. After all, if "Literature is a search for the book hidden in the distance that alters the value and meaning of the known books,"³⁶ then reading more of this prior text most certainly will unlock aspects of *Arboretum* that are still opaque to Laura and I. So far no computer search of library holdings has turned it up. While I was searching out this text, Laura prepared a cross-word puzzle (see page 403) based on Ellis's text. I thought it in keeping with the Arboretian penchant for appropriation.

—James Hugunin, Chicago, Illinois

³⁶ Italo Calvino, "Literature as Projection of Desire," *The Uses of Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1986): 61.