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The Fall and Rise of an Antipodean Utopia: Brisbane, Australia

WILLIAM (BILL) METCALF

Abstract

This article describes and discusses a late-nineteenth century utopian text, *The Curse and Its Cure*, set in the city of Brisbane, capital of the state of Queensland, Australia. The first half of this book by Dr. Thomas Pennington Lucas posits how Brisbane was utterly destroyed in the early twentieth century so that by the time at which the story is set—in the year 2000—little remains of the abandoned city except scattered ruins overrun with weeds and vermin. In the second half, Lucas postulates how, by the year 2200, Brisbane had become the New Jerusalem in the South Pacific, a true Utopia leading the world to morality, affluence, peace, and sanity.

The Curse and Its Cure has long been out of print and, as far as can be discovered, only one full copy and one partial copy remain, both held by the John Oxley Library, Brisbane. I uncovered it as part of my research into Australia's utopian literature. Although other Australian scholars such as Nan Albinski, Vincent Buckley, Verity Burgmann, Andrew Milner, Bruce Scates, Richard Trahair, and Robyn Walton (as well as an American academic, Lyman Tower Sargent) have all written about the prodigious amount of Australian utopian literature, none of them discovered Lucas's text.

Background to Brisbane and Queensland in the early 1890s

When *The Curse and Its Cure* was published in 1894, Brisbane, with a population of 125,000 and as capital of the British colony of Queensland, was a society in political, cultural, and economic foment. During the American Civil War, Queensland's economy had boomed because of cotton exports to Britain, and then it had collapsed with the peace. Gold discoveries kept the economy going but on a shaky footing, until it again boomed during the 1880s when high levels of foreign investment and immigration led to a frenzy of debt-financed land speculation and financial chicanery.

The early 1890s, in contrast, was marked with recession, bank closures, high unemployment, and widely held fears of sexual immorality and opium addiction because of Chinese miners, union activism, and labour un-

Utopian Studies 19.2 (2008): 189–211

rest. What has become known as “The Shearers War” (a strike by sheep-shearers that was violently suppressed by property owners with military support) pushed Queensland close to civil war in 1891 and again in 1894 (Svenson). Much of Australia was in the throes of social unrest and cultural uncertainty—a twilight zone of utopian dreams and of dystopian fears, an era in some ways similar to the United States in the 1840s, and Great Britain in the 1840s and 1890s.

The imported works of utopian writers such as Henry George, Edward Bellamy, William Morris and Ignatius Donnelly were widely read in Brisbane with some being serialised in local newspapers. They were widely discussed. Brisbane, for example, had a “Bellamy Club” as well as several “Sociology Clubs” where utopian and dystopian texts (including the English translation of Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital*) were avidly dissected and discussed, and their analyses applied to local conditions.

These imported utopian ideas and ideals were complemented and localised by a range of Australian authors such as Henrietta Dugdale and Catherine Spence, both writing from a feminist, suffragette perspective; William Lane, David Andrade, William Astley, and Horace Tucker from a Socialist, Nationalist, and liberating-the-workers perspective; Joseph Fraser and Robert Potter from a science-fiction perspective; Alexander Johnston, Austin South, and Hugh Jones from a Single Tax plus science-fiction perspective; Francis Hogan and Samuel Rosa from a bucolic/romantic perspective; and John Andrews from a militant anarchist perspective.¹ The well-read Dr. Thomas Pennington Lucas was obviously well-informed about these utopian texts when he wrote his own dystopian/utopian work in 1894.

Also during the early 1890s, politicians within all the eastern Australian colonies introduced schemes to promote, or at least facilitate, rural communes, many of which had utopian elements. In 1893, the Queensland Government, responding to ideological foment and political unrest, created, promoted, and supported twelve rural communes with over 2000 members (Metcalf, *The Gayndah Communes*). Similar government-sponsored utopian communal schemes were developed in South Australia, Tasmania, New South Wales, and Victoria. Indeed, Australia in the early 1890s was briefly one of the world’s most dynamic societies in terms of radical social experimentation (Metcalf, “Australian Utopias”).

Background of Dr. Thomas Pennington Lucas

Dr. Thomas Pennington Lucas, a Brisbane physician, was born in Scotland in 1843, the son of a Wesleyan Methodist minister and 'gentleman-scientist' who supplemented his stipend by providing geological and fossilised specimens to scientists such as Charles Darwin. The Lucas family was caught up in the contradictory cultural movements of modern science and Methodist revivalism (Metcalf, "Dr. Thomas Pennington Lucas: Queensland Scientist, Author, Doctor, Dreamer and Inventor"). Following a serious illness, young Thomas Lucas developed the belief that God had spoken to him and had chosen him for great things: "You have some work to do for humanity. Your life would not have been so miraculously spared, only for some great purpose" (Lucas, *Domestic Medicine, How to Live, and How to Avert and Cure Diseases* 10).

Thomas Lucas graduated as a medical doctor in Edinburgh in 1870 and emigrated to Australia in 1876. Several near-death experiences made him ever more convinced that God had chosen him to lead humanity from depravity and suffering into an ideal world. In Brisbane, Dr. Lucas immersed himself in his medical practice and wrote several books condemning surgery and promoting holistic medicine (*The Laws of Life and Alcohol; My Hospital Campaign: Or Reasons against Prescribing Indiscriminately Alcoholic Beverages for the Sick; Domestic Medicine; The Terrors of the Knife: Operative Surgery or Science Falsely So-Called; and The Most Wonderful Tree in the World: The Papaw*). He promoted a range of social, cultural, and political "betterment" projects (*Cries from Fiji and Sightings from the South Seas: Crush out the British Slave Trade; Shall Australasia Be a Nation?; Sacred Songs and Nature Pieces; and Dr. Lucas's Papaw Treatment versus Kaiser Culture*). He explored and responded to theological debates (*Creation and the Cross: The Harmony of Science and Revelation; Which is the True Religion?: or Entire Cleansing; Is Queensland Methodism, Wesleyan-ism, Youngman-ism, or what-ism?; A Search for the Soul by the Aid of Nature's Flashlight; A Restatement of the Atonement as Interpreted from the Holy Scriptures and from Nature; and Great Mystery: Interpreted by Moral Philosophy*), and he showed how humanity could be perfected through love, pure living, and avoiding masturbation (*Do Thyself No Harm: A Lecture to Men; and John Wilholm's Class Meeting, or, the Forward Movement: Christ-like Christianity*). In addition, Lucas was an avid natural historian and pub-

lished numerous scientific papers in Australia and overseas.

Background to Lucas's *The Curse and Its Cure*

Having read in the field of utopian literature from around the world, Dr. Thomas Pennington Lucas decided to reveal his God-given, utopian wisdom. In 1889, he published a short book entitled (*John Wilholm's Class Meeting, or, the Forward Movement: Christlike Christianity*) about how Methodism brought utopia to a mythical village, Abergelbie. This was a poorly thought-out and even more poorly written text, but it gave Lucas his first taste for the genre of utopian literature.

Five years later, Lucas had read more deeply and had greatly refined his thoughts and his literary skills, so he decided to use the common literary format of a visitor discovering a dystopian disaster that is later transformed into a utopia. In 1894, Lucas published this work as *The Curse and Its Cure*. The first section of this book he called *The Ruins of Brisbane in the Year 2000*. In it, he describes Brisbane's destruction during the early twentieth century. The second section Lucas called *Brisbane Rebuilt in the Year 2200*. In this, he describes his utopia.

"Utopia" is used here with Ruth Levitas's simple definition of a "desire for a better way of being and living" (7) while "dystopia" is used with Levitas's definition of "fear of what the future may hold if we do not act to avert catastrophe" (165). Presumably, Lucas sought to demonstrate to his fellow Brisbane citizens the diabolical outcome of continuing on the current path (dystopia) as well as the utopia that could result if only people would follow his divinely-inspired guidance. Lucas was not unrealistic or naïve in writing this dystopian/utopian text. Instead, he was using the common literary device of showing us how bad things could become if we do not change our behaviour — and how good they could be if we do.

This attitude is consistent with Krishan Kumar's important work that points out the interdependence of dystopia (which he calls anti-utopia) and utopia. Kumar sees them as two sides of the same coin; one repels while the other attracts. He offers examples of other authors using a dystopian/anti-utopian perspective to highlight the advantages of utopia.

Thus More paints a bleak picture of Tudor
England, against which the colours of Utopia

stand out the more brightly. Rousseau's *Social Contract* is the utopian response to his own anti-utopia in the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*. Bellamy's awakened sleeper, Julian West, has the constant jarring memory of nineteenth-century Boston to contrast with the glowing new world of 2000. . . . In many of H.G. Wells's utopian novels, such as *The World Set Free* and *The Shape of Things to Come*, the misery and disorder of the contemporary world leads [sic] to breakdown and chaos, out of which there gradually emerges a world order reconstituted along utopian lines. (105)

Lucas explained his motivation for writing *The Curse and Its Cure*:

The world is upside down. Every thinker acknowledges the fact. Everybody is dissatisfied and unhappy because it is so. All intelligent observers are satisfied that the world cannot be at rest until it is again righted. . . .

The Anarchist yearns for things to be righted. He yearns until he goes mad. The self-styled Socialist yearns but lacks all solid foundation of true reform. The Christian yearns. God yearns.

In this volume endeavour is made to ferret out and explore those Juggernauts of selfishness which are crushing and ruining the people. .

..
Selfishness is fast ruining the world. . . . Let us lay ourselves on the altar, dedicated to the most noble of all callings, the slaying of a world of selfishness, the creation of a world of love. (*The Curse* a5)

Lucas explains that while "Brisbane is chosen as the ideal city [but] with local variations the story includes all the cities of civilisation" (*The Curse* a5). *The Curse and Its Cure* is a satire and condemnation of life in late-nineteenth century Brisbane, a warning about what will ensue if moral and political life does not change, and a vision of the ideal life that we can enjoy if we

follow the author's idiosyncratic ideas.

Synopsis of Section A, Ruins of Brisbane in the Year 2000

The narrator in Lucas's novel, Joshua Jenkins, sails up the Brisbane River in the year 2000 looking for the ruins of the fabled city of Brisbane. He finds a wasteland, utter devastation overgrown with lantana and thorny vines. Using weeds as a metaphor for corruption, Jenkins comprehends how the

impenetrable thicket of lantana calls up the mistakes and the sorrows of the past. The lantana . . . is in tropical countries as the briars and thorns in colder climes. It is one of those weeds which . . . worry the people who defy the Creator. It was introduced into Brisbane as a beautiful flowering shrub. It quickly overran any scrub land which came within its reach. It eventually . . . rooted up trees and everything else before it. . . . It may be taken as the symbol of all the policy of the rulers of Brisbane. (*The Curse* a12)

Brisbane was destroyed because "neither science nor art flourished . . . cash and bawbees, whisky and cigars, is a descriptive gauge of Brisbane's ruling aspirations" (*The Curse* a19).² Jenkins locates the centre of the ruined city—now overrun with weeds, vines and vermin—where previously "dwelt the boomers of property and special foes to Queensland's prosperity" (*The Curse* a63). At the site of Queensland's Parliament House "among the ruins . . . we disturbed three large snakes." These symbolise Lucas's blunt impression of politicians of his day (*The Curse* a65).

Jenkins learns from an elderly survivor how Brisbane came to be destroyed. Politicians could not agree on what to do about the moral decay in Brisbane, and they ignored God and His divine rules. As a moral and financial crisis deepened, politicians, "who were best at drink, vice and fisticuffs," squabbled while ignoring the coming doom (*The Curse* a117). Brisbane at the end of the nineteenth century was so corrupt that it had become a blight upon civilised, Christian society and offensive in the eyes of God.

According to Lucas, because of sexual immorality, persistent alcohol abuse, and the use and abuse of black labour (Kanakas) recruited from South

Sea Islands, the Christian governments of Victoria and New South Wales combined to raze Brisbane. The allied troops from those colonies were under the command of General Churchill, who

had learned that the officers of the Queensland army patronised lady parachutists in the Sunday entertainments. He therefore, on this information, engaged the services of half a dozen well-trained, pretty looking parachutists. They were to have £800 a-piece on condition that they successfully, and without suspicion, entertained the Queenslanders. (*The Curse* a119)

Lucas developed the notion of the immoral impact of “Lady Parachutists” through a real incident that had occurred in Queensland when an American entertainment group, under the direction of “Professor” Park Van Tassel, performed on Sunday, 22 June 1890.³ On that day a “lady parachutist,” Gladys Freitas, soared skywards suspended under a smoke-filled balloon, then leapt off and descended safely thanks to her parachute. This performance was watched by almost the entire Queensland Defence Force, including several hundred young cadets. It became a major political scandal because, it was alleged, the soldiers and cadets were mesmerized by looking up at the scantily-clad performer. Lucas and other critics feared that the soldiers and cadets would be beset with an outbreak of masturbation that would ruin their collective manhood (Metcalf, “Lady Parachutists”).

In Lucas’s novel, these “lady parachutists” are central to the clever plot hatched by General Churchill, leader of the allied New South Wales and Victorian armies. At the appointed time, the “lady parachutists” go up in a hot-air balloon to 600 meters, then leap out over Brisbane’s military headquarters, Fort Lytton. The soldiers and their officers are, as predicted, mesmerised by the sight of these young ladies in their ballooning skirts, during which time the southern army overruns the Queensland soldiers and captures Fort Lytton.

The defeat, subjugation, and destruction of the rest of Brisbane happens quickly, with residents, being steeped in sin, largely responsible for their own fate:

By noon next day, four thousand men of the Southern armies had taken possession of Brisbane. They had met with practically no opposition. . . . The Houses of Parliament were summoned to surrender. For reply they fired at the allied troops. . . . The invaders brought up some large pieces of cannon, and in a marvellous brief period, the place was in ruins.⁴

As evening came on, matters got worse and worse. Before the invaders could lay hold of the reins of government, the working men of the town had seized the public houses. General Churchill was notified that the mob were drinking heavily. He calmly replied, "let destruction work its own ruin." He sent round a notification to the few respectable inhabitants of Brisbane to flee . . . as he feared a riot of the populace. . . .

As the grog shops were being emptied, the working men were being filled. A sort of frenzy seemed to seize the people. Queen Street was on fire in three places, other incendiary fires flamed forth, and before twelve at midnight the city was in flames in all directions.⁵

There was some desultory fighting, but Queensland was crushed. (*The Curse* a125–126)

Those who did not die in the fighting and subsequent fires abandoned Brisbane, and most of these survivors developed moral, Christian lives in the countryside. Lucas concludes his dystopian allegory: "Such was Brisbane, such was Queensland, in all her national executive in the nineteenth century,—rottenness and corruption" (*The Curse* a142).

Synopsis of Section B, *Brisbane Rebuilt in the Year 2200*

In the preface to this second section, Dr. Thomas Pennington Lucas laments, "Man has brought the world to ruin. He is helpless to transform the chaos into order and beauty. As long as selfishness is existent, it must destroy. The world is too selfish to create itself unselfish." He then asks the rhetorical question, "Is there no cure?" (*The Curse* b5).

Not surprisingly, Lucas knows precisely how to overcome the immoral situation that led to Brisbane's destruction, and his wisdom and insight, if followed, will see Brisbane reborn as utopia. Lucas's solution is simple: "All men must become brethren. None must seek his own in low grovelling selfishness. But each will find his own in caring for the general good, the individual progress, prosperity and happiness to all" (*The Curse* b5). People must follow God's teachings, abandon selfishness, and love each other as brothers and sisters. Then, with a few administrative changes in line with Henry George's Single Tax policies, utopia will emerge almost automatically. Henry George had developed the idea of the Single Tax, that is taxation only on land, and had argued that it would solve most social and economic problems. George's 1890 tour of Australia, including Brisbane, saw him hailed as almost a new messiah, and his ideas were widely discussed in the popular press and within parliamentary circles. Dr. Lucas almost certainly met with Henry George when the latter was in Brisbane in May 1890.

Lucas warns readers that there is little time to waste; they must act quickly to avoid the doom previously described and to achieve utopia: "Ours are momentous times. . . . Heaven and hell are pressing forward to the struggle. . . . Anarchy and revolution threaten our lives and homes. Bloodshed in class and national strife threaten our very existence as nations. . . . Let us rise up, and drive back the foe already in our midst (*The Curse* b5). Lucas reassures us that he has "the ideal policy, which alone must lead to, and help to bring about the prosperity, the peace, and the happiness, which our souls pant after." Admitting that his utopian "picture is imperfect," he implores "every citizen [to] rise in true manhood or womanhood to save the world" (*The Curse* b5).

Lucas's narrator, Joshua Jenkins, finds himself transported to the year 2200 and a glorious Brisbane that has become the universally accepted Mecca for political and sacred events of global importance. All people are happy in Brisbane in 2200 because land has been nationalised, alcohol has been banned, rational dress has been adopted, and Christian brotherly-love reigns supreme.

When Jenkins asks about one of the scientific-religious debates of the nineteenth century, creationism vs. evolution, he is told that Darwinism was only an "artistic sophistry of human invention [which] appealed to small selfs of learning. It captivated precocious minds. It substituted stilts for legs.

It invented bi-cycles [sic]" (*The Curse* b24). Just what Lucas saw as the connection between Darwinism and bicycles remains unclear; however, there was concern at the time that young women riding bicycles were unladylike and that the practice might promote sexual immorality.

Jenkins, in 2200, is "pleased to note the improvements in the Brisbane River . . . neat houses with their farm homestead, and small holdings, demonstrated a degree of prosperity I had not expected to find. . . . Many of the public buildings, as seen from the river, were elegant and ornamental" (*The Curse* b60). He observes "large warehouses and manufactories. . . . The streets were wide, straight, and laid out at right angles to each other. After crossing three or four, we invariably came to a square, with gardens, green grass reserves, and shade trees" (*The Curse* b61–62).

As a physician, Dr. Lucas was concerned about women constricting themselves in over-tight corsets. He was a promoter of "rational dress" so, in this book, the narrator tells us how Brisbane women in 2200 wear dresses that are

plain, but . . . give the idea of comfort and grace. Narrow waists were not the fashion. Yet the bodices of the dress well and gracefully became the wearer, without pinching, nipping, and squeezing the liver into torturous shape . . . the countenances of the people were perfect. Youth shone in beauty. Middle age was strong in vigour. Old age was lovely in silvered locks.
(*The Curse* b66)

Unlike most utopian writers of the time, including fellow Australians such as Austin South, Joseph Fraser, and Horace Tucker, Lucas does not imagine dramatically different technology. In 2200, public transport is still horse-drawn or steam-powered although Lucas does include one small science-fiction element when he describes broadcast music: "by an elaborate telephonic preparation, these sounds were all conveyed and were being reproduced to twenty large assemblies in other churches and halls in the city" (*The Curse* b66).

Recalling that in the late nineteenth century, Brisbane had been beset by "communism, nihilism, red-republicanism, agnosticism, levellism, scepticism, and unbelief [which] swayed millions of men and threatened universal

anarchy,” in Brisbane of 2200 selfishness, gambling, drunkenness, licentiousness, violence, ignorance, and jealousy have been eliminated because “love is triumphant” (*The Curse* b70–71). Brisbane’s “Men serve the Lord, in living the glorious brotherhood of humanity. . . . We live in peace and plenty. Our hearts greatly rejoice” (*The Curse* b72). God directs nature to respond to this utopia by eliminating droughts and floods: “the early rains and the latter rains bless the land” and “we never have floods now” (*The Curse* b61). In addition, “Our Father [God] restricts the enemies of our fruits and crops” (i.e. weeds and insects) so that “abundance is everywhere” (*The Curse* b72). In utopian Brisbane, because “love is triumphant,” legal disputes rarely arise but if they do they are resolved through Christian Justice in “Equity Hall,” a gracious building designed to be welcoming rather than a place to dread. It is a place where God’s will prevails (*The Curse* b73–84). Brisbane’s hospitals are staffed by beautiful nurses who are “superior women” noted for “tact, patience and gentleness.” Wards are “large and airy”; the patients “happy and contented”; and the doctors wise, highly skilled and well paid.⁶ Anyhow, most diseases have been eliminated since “we cure cancer. We have chased away many of the virulent diseases consequent on lack of sanitary measures, and others the sequents of immorality” (*The Curse* b98).

Two pillars underpin Lucas’s utopia: strict Wesleyan Methodist Christianity, with the elimination of drunkenness, gambling and fornication; and—building on the teachings of Henry George but going further—land nationalisation that eliminates financial speculation. The narrator describes how “the nation is the landlord. . . . Farms are leased on life tenure . . . to suitable applicants” (*The Curse* b110). Showing an interest in state-supported rural communes that were developing in Queensland at the time (Metcalf, *The Gayndah*), Lucas describes “Workmen’s Colonies” where

the Land Board proclaim, say a thousand acres of good land for special cultivation. . . . Some forty volunteers are chosen as bona-fide farm workers. The government leases the land, and pays a wage of one pound a week to each man. They find working capital, horses, cows, tools, sheds, etc., as the case requires. The whole is under an experienced overseer. Once a week the men all meet . . . to take counsel with and advise the overseer. No idler

is retained. . . . The men work collectively for ten hours a day . . . as adjudged by the whole committee of men. (*The Curse* b110–111)

In utopian Brisbane, Lucas presages the Orwellian language of twentieth-century communist states:

everyone is happy. The State is the great family. The citizens are the members. . . . No healthy workmen can be allowed to remain idle. Each is encouraged in healthful competition to do his or her best. . . . We seek to uplift each one as high as possible. Talent is cradled. Property and individual rights are respected inside those of the community. (*The Curse* b144)

Social security is assured from the cradle to the grave: “We look after the people in life. We arrange their affairs in righteous behest in death.” The economy is centrally controlled: “all our markets are regulated to prices, to the supply of produce, and to the condemnation of the bad.” Similarly, work and commerce are closely regulated:

Our hours of employment for heavy manual labour are eight, from seven in the morning to four in the afternoon, less the dinner hour. Shops are open from nine to seven, but each assistant is allowed dinner and tea hour. Wednesday afternoon is a holiday. All wages are paid on Thursdays. . . . Prices are fixed and a legalized profit allowed. Wages are fixed, and a share of profits encourages the workman to most able effort. (*The Curse* b144)

“Uplifting” entertainment is provided: “Meetings in the churches, socials, concerts, mutual improvement classes, lectures, sermons, and other means and methods for general improvement and social intercourse are spread over the week evenings.” As a result, “money has lost its faddish fetish. Each person is judged by moral worth, spiritual earnestness, and intellectual endowments.” Wealth and prosperity mean that Brisbanites “are able to assist others. . . . In all our intellectual, spiritual, and social relations, Queensland is a heaven. . . . In happiness, we are by education and endeavour aspiring to

that eternal immortality which is prepared for all those who are wise" (*The Curse* b145). To explain the basis for this utopia, an old man places his right hand on his heart and his left on his brow and says "heaven is here! heaven is here! heaven is here! Completely expel the carnal man, keep him dethroned, and the Eternal God, in the divine humanity, will fill the heart. In His abiding, the streams of life, light, and love create an inward heaven" (*The Curse* b150).

The book finishes with Lucas revealing what a personally ecstatic experience has been his divine revelation of utopia: "My whole body was in dense perspiration. I felt completely exhausted. But, oh, what peace filled my soul. I felt I had seen Jesus. I felt that I had seen heaven." He ends by urging readers to "empty all the carnal selfishness out of self. Get filled, increasingly filled with Christ . . . as I did in this vision. . . . In this spirit and power only will you be able to bless and reform the world" (*The Curse* b159).

Discussion of Lucas's Dystopia and Utopia

Clearly Lucas did not seriously expect Brisbane to be eliminated by the year 2000 then reborn as utopia by 2200; rather, he intends this work to be taken as an allegory. As Ruth Levitas points out, "the main function identified for utopia is as an ideal which, while strictly speaking impossible to realise, nevertheless (in some unspecified way) helps history to unfold in a positive direction" (34). Lucas's first section may be seen as his warning about the dire consequences if people continue along their unchristian path while his second section demonstrates how people can live the perfect life if they follow his wisdom.

In the first—dystopian—section, with Brisbane citizens driven from their homes and killed, one can identify Lucas's image of a wrathful, Old Testament, God. People are punished and killed by God for their greed, stupidity, alcohol abuse, unchristian thoughts and, most importantly, sexual immorality. Although the agency for this destruction is the armies of New South Wales and Victoria, it is facilitated by the "loose" women who display their bodies while entertaining as Lady Parachutists. These women are as central to Brisbane's destruction as are greed, selfishness, and political cant. Lucas follows a Garden-of-Eden image of woman, whose non-virtuous actions lead to man's downfall. The image of Brisbane being utterly destroyed and its population decimated reflects the well-known biblical story of Sodom and Gomor-

rah (Genesis 19:24–25). Even more, it resembles Zephaniah (3:6): “I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without people, without inhabitants” (*New Revised Standard Version Bible*). Such bloody images of wanton violence and mass killings can be found in other Australian utopian/dystopian works of the time such as those by Lane (“White or Yellow, A Story of the Race War of A.D. 1908”), Andrade, Andrews, and Rosa.

In Lucas’s second section, the influence of Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty*, Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, and William Morris’s *News From Nowhere* is obvious. As in these three texts, women are almost invisible in Lucas’s utopia and, when they do appear, it is in a passive, stereotypically feminine guise as the person to whom something is explained or who serves food or cups of tea. In Lucas’s text, only the Lady Parachutists are active agents when they lure Queensland soldiers to defeat. There are Australian utopian writers of the time, such as Dugdale, Spence and Finklestein for whom gender issues are paramount and women the active agents of utopia, but Lucas couldn’t countenance that (Metcalf, “Dr. Thomas” and “Lady Parachutists”).

Just as most utopian writers vainly believe they have found the panacea, so does Lucas. He assures us that he has “the ideal policy, which alone must lead to, and help to bring about the prosperity, the peace, and the happiness, which our souls pant after” (*The Curse* b5). A key political element in developing utopian Brisbane is—through land nationalisation—eliminating financial speculation. Lucas loosely bases this idea on the Single-Tax theories of Henry George but asserts that his own ideas are better. He writes: “Henry George, an American, saw the social evil of his time, and attempted to rectify it, but, in allowing his sympathies to overcome his judgements, he became monomaniacal on the land question.” Lucas alleges that George’s teachings are not sufficiently Christian, and argues: “the American’s views [were] wrong. In practically ignoring the first law of political economy, failing to acknowledge the position of the *Great Capitalist* [i.e. God], the relations of the *Great Loaner* to men” (*The Curse* b102).

In Lucas’s utopia, industrial production and distribution are organised and managed on a centralised scale as they are in Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* with its industrial army. Lucas has people labouring in factories but for shorter hours and for better returns because manufacturing makes full use of machines to reduce toil, again as in *Looking Backward*. Unlike

Looking Backward, however, in which capital is centrally controlled by the state, Lucas limits the state monopoly to land and allows capital to be in the hands of small-scale investors, self-employed craftsmen, and rural communards. While Bellamy's utopia evolves peacefully, Lucas's and Morris's utopias develop after extensive violence and death. While Bellamy may have sought to "Americanise Marxism" (Neville-Sington and Sington 223), Lucas can be seen to be Christianising and Australianising Marxism and Henry Georgism. Lucas describes land near Brisbane being cultivated by yeoman farmers living in neat cottages, a description which reflects a return to the bucolic virtues of small-scale agricultural production. Where larger-scale agricultural production is needed, Lucas posits self-managing rural communes. Morris, Bellamy, and George, on the other hand, all oppose communal living or see it, at best, as "a desperate measure for desperate times" (Neville-Sington and Sington 68). Lucas's Arcadian imagery is similar to that of Morris's *News From Nowhere* with agricultural production and consumption taking place on a local scale and work a pleasurable, creative activity. Morris posits a market place without money where people simply take what they need. Lucas assumes that money will still be used but only as a tool of exchange alongside barter and gifting. Both Morris and Lucas see art as being crucial in utopia with urban areas resembling open-air art galleries.

In *Looking Backward*, Bellamy posits a "Religion of Solidarity . . . a ragbag of Transcendentalism and socialism," which "exalts the triumph of public spirit over excessive individualism" (Neville-Sington and Sington 225). This Religion of Solidarity provides "the psychological substructure on which the utopian society . . . is built" (Bellamy 13). In Bellamy's economic "machine," every person is an integral cog—and happy to be so. It never occurs to people to take advantage of the system because each is worker, owner, and consumer all rolled into one, and to be idle would be against one's own best interests which, anyhow, are coincidental with everyone else's interests. Similarly, Lucas assumes that dissent is unthinkable in utopia because it would be against one's own interest and, more critically, against the manifest will of God.

William Morris propounds a sort of "religion of arts and crafts" whereby every individual is a producer, consumer, and artist. In Morris's utopia, unlike in Bellamy's, individual idiosyncrasies are cherished as enriching the well-being of everyone. All are happy in their own peculiar ways. So, in

Lucas's utopia "everyone is happy. . . . Citizens are . . . encouraged in healthful competition to do his or her best. We have no levellism. We seek to uplift each one as high as possible. Talent is cradled" (*The Curse* b144).

Both Morris and Lucas take humorous digs at politicians, with Morris having London's Parliament House being used for storing manure while Lucas has snakes inhabiting the ruins of Brisbane's Parliament House. Both authors talk about a withering away of politicians and central government, with Morris imagining only local concerns interesting local councils while Lucas anticipates theocratic governance, with diffused power. While Lucas freely incorporates the ideas of international writers such as George, Bellamy, and Morris, he studiously ignores the works of his two fellow utopian writers in Brisbane at the time. Austin South posits a science-fiction, utopian Brisbane in 2000—with flying machines, air conditioning and robotic servants—all facilitated by the miracle of electricity. William Lane's 1888 dystopian/utopian image of Brisbane riddled with racial tensions and violence from which, after "ethnic-cleansing" of the Chinese, a pure white race emerges is also ignored by Lucas, who avoids racial issues. It is inconceivable that within the small city of Brisbane these three writers would not have known each other, but Lucas ignores their competing literary utopias. Lucas clearly sees himself first and foremost as a Christian of the Methodist persuasion, and we can identify his political stance as being an idiosyncratic form of Christian Socialism. Lucas opposes capitalism but thinks that socialism can work only within an all-inclusive, all-pervasive Christian culture. Lucas's utopian Brisbane includes many ideas from fellow writers, filtered through Wesleyan Methodism.

Neville-Sington and Sington argue that Edward Bellamy's

Looking Backward has had a lasting influence in America. When Bellamy's Nationalist [party] supporters were absorbed into the Democratic Party, they took with them many of the planks of their reformist platform. These ideas resurfaced a generation later, during . . . the Great Depression of the 1930s. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's response, the New Deal, was planned by a staff of intellectuals . . . many of whom were influenced by Bellamy. (229)

Similarly, Henry George's principles can be found, to a certain extent, wherever municipal taxes are levied on the unimproved value of land, where land is held as leasehold rather than freehold, and wherever public access to land is seen to be a fundamental right. William Morris influenced architects and planners throughout the Western world and, along with George and Bellamy to a lesser extent, informed and underpinned Ebenezer Howard's popular Garden City Movement in Great Britain (Fishman; Morris & Kross; Meltzer; and Hardy). Ebenezer Howard, writing in 1898, was appalled by urban life as presented in *Looking Backward* (which he regarded as dystopian). He wanted Garden Cities to be the antidote. The ideas of Morris, Bellamy, and George underpin a range of contemporary interests such as town planning, affordable housing, appropriate technology, communal living, and a spate of back-to-the-land, intentional communities including ecovillages and cohousing, even though few members would have heard of these men (Meltzer; and Metcalf, *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality: Cooperative Lifestyles in Australia* and *Shared Visions, Shared Lives: Communal Living around the Globe*).

On the other hand, while Lucas's late-nineteenth century dystopian/utopian work is of considerable literary and historical interest, and represents one of Australia's most readable, best thought-out, wittiest, and most sophisticated literary efforts in this genre, with an amusing, even if implausible, plot line, good character development, and dialogue, there is no evidence that it had a significant impact on Brisbane residents at the time or since.

From Utopia to Panacea

Early in the twentieth century, Lucas concentrated on exploring and developing the curative properties of fermented papaw (papaya). "Lucas Papaw Remedies" could treat epilepsy, tapeworms, uterine problems, hydatids, difficult childbirth, cancer, constipation, burns, removal of bullets and slivers of wood or metal, infections, blood poisoning, diphtheria, and quinsy. It could be swallowed, applied as ointment, inhaled or gargled, and with equal curative power for humans and farm animals. Lucas replaced his dreams of utopia with a pharmacological panacea (*The Most Wonderful Tree*). Lucas' Papaw Ointment is still manufactured in Brisbane by his descendants, who closely guard their secret recipe. Lucas' Papaw Ointment is used around the world as a treatment for skin afflictions ranging from diaper and nettle rash to corns

and bunions, and is gaining prominence in major hospitals for treating severe burns (<http://www.lucaspapaw.com.au>).

Conclusion

Dr. Thomas Pennington Lucas died on 15 November 1917, and today lies in a vandalised grave in Brisbane General Cemetery, his tombstone overgrown with weeds, forgotten by Brisbane citizens whom he hoped to transport to utopia. Perhaps his real monument is his pharmacological panacea, the many thousands of tubes of Lucas' Papaw Ointment serving people around the globe.

Endnotes

¹ "Austin South" was a nom-de-plume, most likely for Austin Douglas Graham (1869–1941), a Brisbane barrister, poet, dramatist, and artistic man-about-town.

² Bawbee is an old Scottish term referring to small coins or loose change. It implies a preoccupation with money at the expense of religion and culture.

³ Park Van Tassel was not a professor but a bartender and showman from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Born in 1853, he was an early exponent of balloon flights, and in 1883 set a record by travelling 450 kilometres by balloon in 6 hours and 45 minutes.

⁴ Lucas based this event on an incident on 24 October 1888 when Captain Henry Townley-Wright, of the Queensland naval vessel *Gayundah*, in a drunken rage trained his guns on Parliament House and threatened to destroy it. Lucas's house overlooked the site, and he was no doubt a witness.

⁵ Queen Street, now a pedestrian Mall, still marks the core of Brisbane's Central Business District.

⁶ Throughout his medical career, Dr. Lucas frequently complained about the poor quality of nursing staff and the low pay he received for his hospital services. So, these comments would have been aimed at Brisbane's Hospital Board.

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