



UTOPIAN CHAIRS by Rosemary Mayer, excerpted from *Utopia*, by Bernadette Mayer, United Artists Books, 1984.

Each person who wants them ought to be guaranteed eight chairs—enough for rollicking dinners with friends and, if more chairs are needed for more friends, simply borrow some from all the groups of eight chairs everyone would have on hand. A side thought is the guarantee of a big, sturdy table and, of course, a big, firm bed.

Varieties of chairs would be available: chairs with firm, supportive backs and arms for those who need or want that sort of chair; wooden chairs and metal chairs, depending upon preference; stuffed upholstered chairs; cushions for chairs and footrests for those who need or like to raise their feet.

Different wood and different colors would be available; different ornamentation or the total lack of it. And finally, chairs of different weight, so that those with less strength or a bad back need never feel intimidated by the place a chair is in as opposed to where they would like it to be.

Old-Time Chairs

In the world before Utopia, chairs were hard to come by if you had a merely moderate income. Perhaps they are the most valuable furniture. Certainly many collapsed under their sitters and no one could afford to replace them. People would search the shops selling used goods, or the refuse in the streets, for chairs. In the last stages of declining capitalism in North America, chairs were often a topic of desirous conversation: “Oh, I would have dinners with all my friends, but I can’t afford the chairs.” After a while, none were to be found cheap in used goods stores, or in the trash in the streets. And more and more chairs, collapsed, as I said, under old friends and even the light bodies of young children.



Once in the declining phases of late capitalism in North America I found a fine, sturdy, wooden chair upholstered in green cloth. In that time it was a rare find. The chair was in the garbage container outside an old municipal office building which was about to be demolished to make way for a condominium loft residence. I called a friend to help me carry the chair to my roof. There I sprayed it with insecticide and let it sit in the sun for five days. Then I had a good chair to sit in.