

The location of utopia

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Thomas More's coinage "utopia", as it is well known, literally means no-place, which might seem to imply that spatial aspects cannot be important in utopian writing. However, in some utopias the location definitely has cultural significance, and the very isolation of most imaginary utopian communities, as well as the global/local divide one can usefully apply in the categorization of utopias, draw attention to spatiality. Thomas More put his utopia in the South Atlantic, but the imaginary geography of the island does not seem to have any importance for social construction, since More's Utopia does not seem to have anything South American. However, King Utopus's founding gesture already included the modification of the spatial structure when he made a peninsula into an island.

The geographical and temporal orientation of European and non-European utopias seem to be different in many aspects which carry a politico-cultural significance. The articles in the current thematic issue of *WORLD LITERATURE STUDIES* approach the problem of the location of utopia from a variety of theoretical angles. The joint studies by Yiping Wang/Ping Zhu and Xiangchun Meng/Lirong Zhang, as well as that of Libor Marek focus on the cultural environment in which the utopias they analyse were written and investigate the influence of that location (China or different places inside China, and Moravia, respectively) on the content of political reasoning. Their results suggest that some special traits of the locality get inscribed in the imagined better society. Utopians usually imagine a perfect society elsewhere than in the context of their own culture, or even as extended to the globe or beyond. Several analyses in this volume, however, prove that the national and cultural (even religious) determination remains still discernible. These results, on the one hand, testify to the attention paid to the issues of nationalism, colonialism, or religious imperialism in utopia studies (as in the joint paper by Seval Şahin/Didem Ardalı Büyükarman and in the papers by Péter Hajdu and Sándor Hites); on the other hand, an interplay between the culture of origin and the local/cultural otherness of the imagined elsewhere allows for an imagological approach to utopias, as proposed in the articles by Johannes D. Kaminski and Péter Hajdu.