

Utopia: between *Eutopia* and *Outopia*

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THOMAS MORE'S work is the archetypal utopia that established a literary genre. While the name coined by the English chancellor (*ouk-topos*—non-place), just as the other similar toponyms and ethnonyms (Amaurot, Anyder, Anemolia, Achoria, Macarians, Poyerites, Alaopolitans, Nephelogetes, etc.), claims to connote the unreality of the antipodal world, this disclaimer is less of a mark of skepticism regarding the theoretical possibility of Utopia, than a rhetorical flourish and a satirical witticism pointing at Europe. More's famous closing sentence ("I would like, rather than expect to see"¹) is not so much a denial of the practical feasibility of the utopian model, as a bitter, ironical arrow directed at himself and his contemporaries. On the one hand, it expresses the author's disenchantment with his own possibility to correct the attitude of the establishment (the king and his court) and of society in general (it is the self-criticism of the wise man who has the modesty of accepting himself as a 'fool'); on the other hand, it works as a challenge cast at all the readers and social actors (like, for instance, Henry VIII), who, having assimilated the utopian demonstration of the text without doing anything about its implementation, place themselves in the awkward moral and logical situation of keeping up evil after finding out where the good lies.

Denying the fictional consistency of utopia can also have a metafictional design. In this case it connotes the metadiscourse that doubles Thomas More's utopian narrative; if the plain narrative primarily envisages the connection between the real world and the possible world, between Europe and Utopia, the metanarrative aims at the link between the text itself and those of its predecessors (Plato's *Republic*), or of his contemporaries (Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*). In contradiction with Jean-François Mattéi's statement that Utopia is not a Platonic model (*paradigma*), but an idol, a degraded copy and thus inconsistent and illusory², Nell Eurich thinks that the ambiguity of the name itself denotes its status as an 'ideal utopia,' i.e. the abstract model that could not possibly be³. Whatever the case, it seems that Thomas More would like to suggest that his world assumes the status of a 'theoretical' construction, in contrast with the 'pragmatic' condition of the contemporary historical world.

Nevertheless, the denial signified by the Greek prefix *ou(k)*, whether its design be satirical, self-critical, metatextual or intertextual, does not infringe upon the nature and internal consistency of the utopian universe. If we apply Saul Kripke's operators of modal

logic to Thomas More's fictional *topos*, it appears that almost all the constituting components of Utopia are in the mode of the possible. The chancellor's invention has nothing fantastical, supernatural, unacceptable or impossible about it, nothing that could not be inserted within the framework of likelihood. Unlike a lot of later utopias that evoke sceneries (the inner Earth, planets, distant future), creatures (hermaphrodites, immortals, thinking horses or speaking trees, etc.) and magical, fairy-world objects and artefacts, the island of Utopia is perfectly possible according to a 'pact of truthfulness.' If Thomas More had not described a better possible, achievable world, accessible through appropriate reforms, if, for instance, he had imagined a perfect society built by angels, his text would have lacked its challenging pedagogical design. A utopian proposition can only serve as a model to its contemporaries inasmuch as it does not infringe upon the limits and the abilities of human nature and is posited as an aim able to be reached by any human being. It is its very feasibility, or at least its logical possibility that makes Utopia into a 'good place,' a *eu-topia*.

The ambiguity between statement and denial in Thomas More's text is not homogeneous, it does not involve an Aristotelian contradiction between two equal terms; on the contrary, it is heterogeneous, built as it is upon two different levels of discourse. On the textual level the author introduces a convention of truthfulness. He borrows an episode from the by then famous *Letters of Amerigo Vespucci* (published in the volume *Cosmographia Introductio* of 1507)⁴, in order to place Hythloday's journey in the history and geography of the time. Unlike the fabulous journeys of the Middle Ages, whose 'credibility' was underpinned by the authority of tradition, Thomas More introduces the reading code using the certifying criterion of the new pragmatic vision of the explorers. In his wake, especially after the appearance of Francis Bacon's empirical philosophy, the authors of extraordinary voyages and utopias will frequently use the conventions of the real travel writings in order to create a realistic reading pact⁵.

In exchange, on the metatextual level, Thomas More makes use of names (toponyms and ethnonyms) as disclaimers in order to deny the empirical reality of Hythloday's journey and to stress its satirical, self-critical nature, on the one hand, and its theoretical and intertextual nature (the scholarly, witty dialogue with Plato, Erasmus and the whole humanist tradition), on the other hand. Thus if, at the literal level, *Utopia* has a fictional ontological consistency that makes it into a *eutopia*, at the metadiscursive level its truthfulness is undermined by a witticism characteristic of the age of Early Modernity, to the extent that it changes from a suggestion of social reform into a chimera, namely, an *outopia*. However, this metadiscursive questioning does not affect the consistency of the fictional universe, which maintains its intrinsic characteristics as a possible truthful world.

Since *Utopia* is a starting point, the archetype of the genre to which it gives its name, we are going to bring out the methods through which any utopia (be it a *eutopia* or an *outopia*) is constructed. One of Thomas More's explicit purposes, even though this aspect has not really been the primary focus of commentators, is to take up the medieval tradition of 'textbooks' for the use of princes. In keeping with the new humanist spirit, More offers a pedagogical text that combines direct advice (the little controversy between Thomas and Raphael on the monarchs of Europe) with teaching by means

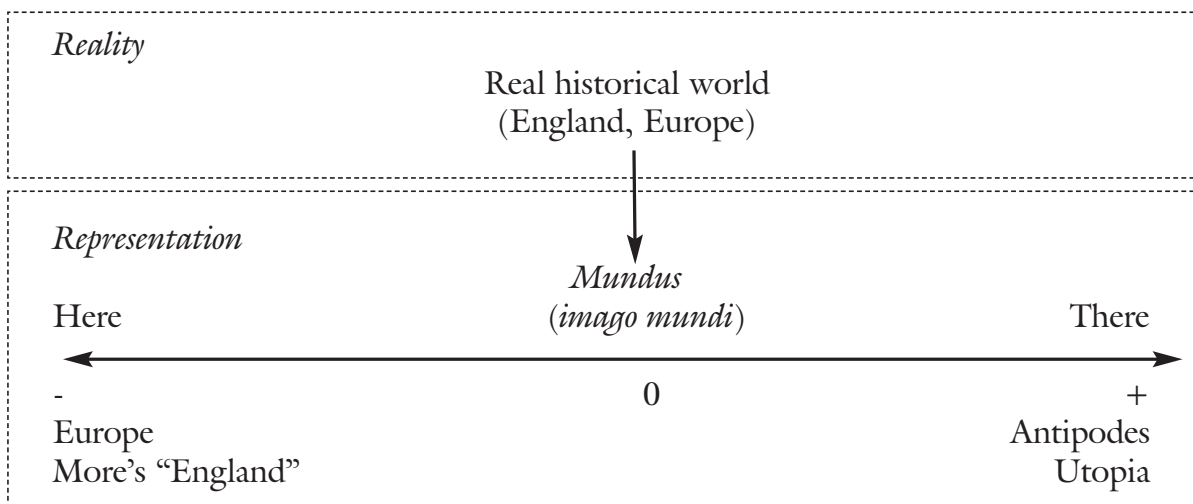
of allegory (the description of Utopia). A few years later, another text, the *Relox de príncipes* by Antonio de Guevara (1532), was to uncover more fully the relationship between the ‘mirror-for-princes’ genre and the utopian one. Taking up the saga of Alexander the Great, so dear to the readers of the Middle Ages, the Spaniard uses the theme of the extraordinary voyage only to imagine a physiocratic Oriental utopia, whose actors will be Indian Brahmin⁶.

More, on the other hand, situates his utopia in a different geographical location, not in the East of the medieval Marvels of the Orient, but in the West of Christopher Columbus and the great discoveries of the Renaissance. As a matter of fact the geographical location of Utopia is not so far from the Asian community of gymnosophists. Indeed one has to remember that by his tentative circumnavigation of the earth Columbus intended to reach the Indies, or, according to the quizzical comments of his contemporaries, he was looking for the east by way of the west (*buscar et levante por el poniente*), and was not expecting to encounter a new continent in between. At the time when Utopia was being written, the explorations had not marked the limits of the New World (Magellan would only travel around the world in 1519-1522) and the geographers were still thinking that the Atlantic Coast of North America was the eastern extremity of Asia. Thomas More must have thought that his island of Utopia lay somewhere in the China Sea, where Marco Polo and John Mandeville were counting some five or seven thousand different isles. In the blur of this geographical vision it is not at all strange that Thomas More attributed to Utopus a Persian origin and that the Utopians should initially have worshipped the god Mithras.

Europe and Utopia lie, therefore, on the first Renaissance maps, at the antipodes of the globe. To the readers of the time, this contrastive positioning was to trigger the dual, strictly polarized imagination of the theme of the *mundus inversus*, the upside-down world. Our world and their world were situated at two opposite poles suggesting not just a geographical and climate opposition, but also an axiological and moral one. The sheer presence of these two extremities was a nudge to isolate and regroup, in a process of discursive ‘electrolysis,’ the components of the civilization taught to the princes. It remains to be seen how this separation is put to work and what the distribution of the ‘cathode’ and of the ‘anode’ was.

In the introductory conversation between Thomas and Raphael, the former expresses the wish that the latter might impart his wisdom accumulated during his journeys to the princes of the European kingdoms. By playing the part of the naïve one, Thomas (More’s *persona* in the dialogue) defends the idea that the European monarchs are good princes who “let a people’s welfare or misery flow in a stream as from a never-failing spring.”⁷ But Raphael is reticent to the proposal of becoming counsellor to the prince and sketches a portrait of monarchs that, one by one, turns the qualities and the excellence that Thomas attributes to them upside down. Thus, instead of providing for the well-being of their subjects and promoting peace, princes “apply themselves to the arts of war.” Instead of lending an ear to upright, wise counsellors, they prefer the lying praise of corrupted courtiers. Moreover they only appreciate the authority of tradition, thus they are retrograde, and disregard novelty, even if manifestly better and likely to be conducive to progress.

The order of things is thus exposed: against Thomas More's naïve advocacy, Raphael Hythloday places the European kingdoms under the sign of evil. Thus he joins Erasmus' satirical position, who, in turn, sounded most ambiguous praise for the folly of his contemporaries. But if our world is upside down, where is the upstanding world to be found? In the logic of the 'globes' of the time, the immediate answer was: at the antipodes. So, the map of the world is polarized between two centers, one of evil and folly (Europe) and the other one of goodness and wisdom (Utopia). A separation (or electrolysis) device is thus activated: the two parts of the book are from now on ready to receive the bad elements (the 'cations'), and the good elements (the 'anions') respectively, detached from a neutral *mundus* (the 'real historical world'), and to create two worlds, a reprobable one, that the author would like to correct (England), and a worthy one, that he offers as a model (Utopia).



Let us start with the first *topos*, the bad one, England, described in the first part of the book. The criticism of the European princes is amplified by Raphael by examining the state of things in England, which he claims to have known directly and to judge impartially. On the occasion of a luncheon offered by Reverend John Morton (here is a story within a story: a banquet narrated during a banquet), a new character, "a layman, learned in the laws of England,"⁸ enthusiastically praises the severe treatment (expeditious hanging) that the English state applies to thieves. This case is, to Hythloday, the Archimedes point that will allow him to begin mounting his critique of English society.

If there are a lot of thieves, Hythloday suggests, it is because the general poverty pushes people to perpetrate such desperate deeds. Instead of punishing thieves harshly, the State should ensure the bare necessities of everybody's life. The true culprits are not the poor people but the "great many noblemen who live idly like drones off the labor of others, their tenants whom they bleed white by constantly raising their rents."⁹ The fallen gentry is accompanied by other parasitical social categories, such as fired veterans, henchmen, mercenaries, servants. Mercenaries, for instance, as they do not respond to any patriotic ideal, as soon as there is no more war and they are no longer paid, become the worst rogues and robbers of the countries they are supposed to defend. Princes, the gentry, the regular soldiers are the main promoters of war.

As far as the economy is concerned, Hythloday attacks the capitalist evolution of the country and the weaving industry, which have destroyed the open cultures in favor of enclosures, transforming the farmers who depended on family production into unemployed people. The small properties have been absorbed into the ample *latifundia* and vast herds, which have allowed the great owners to control prices and install their monopoly, in fact an oligopoly. Social differences have increased greatly, so that to the indigence of the common people correspond the luxury, greed and the taste for spending of the upstart. Money, 'the eye of the devil,' according to Christian ethics, functions, in the England described by Hythloday, as an electrical 'cathode,' the negative pole that draws together all the moral sins and social evil: "the cook-shops, the bawdy houses and those other places just as bad, the wine-bars and beer-houses ; all the crooked games of chance like dice, cards, backgammon, tennis, bowling, quoits."¹⁰ Complementing the corruption of the rich, there is the decline of the poor, who become starved, sick, thieves, vagrants. Punishing this behavior by death would not only be inefficient, but it would also increase social and moral evil: legislating the death penalty, that God has expressly forbidden, would be the same as "legalizing rape, adultery and perjury."⁹

So, the polarizing process of good and evil, the disjunction of the 'neutral' image of the *mundus* into complementary pairs, ends by condensing in the image of England all the reproaches that More addresses to his contemporaries. At the same time, it also makes evident, by reversion, the possible 'remedies' to these shortcomings. That is why, while the negative features of England appear in the mode of the 'real,' the positive features appear only in the mode of the 'possible' and of the desirable: "Banish these blights, make those who have ruined farmhouses and villages restore them or rent them to someone who will rebuild. Restrict the right of the rich to buy up anything and everything, and then exercise a kind of monopoly. Let fewer people be brought up in idleness. Let wool manufacture be revived, so there will be useful work for those now idle, whether those whom poverty has already made thieves of those who are only vagabonds and layabouts now."¹¹

This is a whole social program, a kind of anti-capitalist reform that suggests a return to the medieval system of family farming and stopping the economic evolution of the great pastures, of the weaving industry, of the free market and monopoly. Was Thomas More really hoping to be able to convince his prince, Henry VIII, to apply these measures, against the interests of the landed gentry, of the new class of producers and merchants and of the high clergy? *Mutatis mutandis*, one can only take his famous wish: "I would like, rather than expect to see" for an answer.

At any rate, in the first part of the book, all the elements of a utopian project to be reunited in the second part are already allusively present. By turning England into a kind of economic, social, moral, etc. 'cathode,' More condensed the negative features in the contemporary here and now, and gathered the positive features into a conglomerate that no longer finds its place, tending to be pushed back into the virtual, in a desirable, albeit quite unlikely future.

It is to this conglomerate of 'anions' that Thomas More offers a place to exist in the second part of his book. Expelled from England, the positive traits of the *mundus* will be regrouped in the island of Utopia. This is the process that literary criticism calls utopi-

an extrapolation. The antipodal land is a true ‘anode’ of the world vision, gathering the English chancellor’s economic and social projects, his dreams of moral and human reform, organizing them in an alternative fictional chronotope. More’s ‘new world’ is a social dream that becomes consistent and materializes in a fictional world. If Plato failed to place his ideal Republic in Europe, in Syracuse, Hythloday claims to have discovered such a land outside the *oikoumèné*, in the austral seas.

The utopian reconstruction of society must start with the head of State. Hythloday criticizes the monarchs of Europe for their opacity of spirit and their lack of openness to new ideas. The respect for tradition, inherited prejudice and stereotypes, nurtured by inept counsellors, hinder them from devising and introducing the reforms needed by their peoples. It is true that, to the governments stuck in ‘*philosophia scolastica*,’ according to Raphael, More opposes the new princes, educated at the pragmatic cynical school of Machiavelli. Nevertheless, Hythloday treats statesmen who practice *Realpolitik*, if not as upstarts, at least as ‘fools’ who “while trying to cure others of madness, [end up] raving along with them themselves.”¹² One cannot help but notice here the self-criticism of the chancellor addressed to his own performance as ‘*morus*’ at his sovereign’s side?

Be that as it may, Hythloday opposes to the monarchs of Europe Utopus, the first king of the austral kingdom, an enlightened despot and artisan of reforms who, by combining respect toward tradition, wisdom, spirit of innovation, resolution and the desire to provide for the good of the people, has brought about the establishment of a model society. If Thomas More, as character of the dialogue, seems to accept his failure as chancellor to the English monarchy (but not without an irony that conceals hope for a possible change of the state of things), he constructs in Raphael Hythloday the *persona* of a witness to and spokesperson for an alternative civilization, one in which the improvements that he suggests for Europe could finally be implemented.

As commentators have been quick to notice, the isle of Utopia copies the geography of England. Thomas More doubles up his country’s map, copying its insular status, its crescent shape, its climate and natural landscape, its flora and fauna, etc. In order to suggest that he is on the virtual level, he supplants the real names by privative toponyms: London becomes Amaurot, the Thames, the Anyder, etc. It is on this alternative map of the world that Hythloday’s narrative begins to gather the positive features expelled from the *mundus*. For, if in Europe geographical vagaries simply happened to create lands, towns and villages, the central field of Utopia, with its circular mountains, concentric rivers and central bay, allowed for a rational use of the land, with 54 (a Pythagorean number, multiple of 9, an expression of harmony) almost identical towns, symmetrically distributed according to subtle grid references. Thus, random neighborhoods, that have stirred among European countries so many wars and so much abuse, have been avoided in Utopia due to its insular isolation and its natural defenses that warrant its fort-like security.

The system of property is the starting point for Thomas More’s polarization of the *mundus* mass between the electrodes of Europe and Utopia. By invoking Plato, More opposes private property in Europe (with its “heavy and inescapable burden of poverty and anxieties”), to the community of goods, ‘equality of possessions’ in Utopia¹³. In each of the two antipodal worlds, these alternative systems create opposite couples of features:

great private property / lands possessed and worked in common; free competitive economy / planned economy; market and fiscal economy / family, mutual-help economy; hierarchical social classes / republican equality; monarchy and oligarchy ('conspiracy of the rich') / elective democracy; oppressive judicial apparatus / fair and at the same time surprisingly strict laws; (proto)capitalist ethics / elevated morality free of whims and vices, etc.

Utopia's series of positive characteristics extrapolated from *mundus* creates an undeniably superior image to that of contemporary England and London: standardized urbanism, functional architecture, effectiveness of services (food, pipe-system, hospitals), commodities (parks, canteens, restaurants), work ensured for all (with shorter 6-hour working-days), enlightened Constitution and simple, correct law-code, meritocratic commonwealth and public institutions, culture-of-wisdom spirit, moderate satisfaction of pleasures, altruistic morality, and so on. Undoubtedly certain regulations, judged to be eudaemonic by More, might seem restrictive, levelling, totalitarian to the readers, especially nowadays, according to the quip: "One's utopia is somebody else's dystopia": standardized clothing and uniform outfits, absence of private life, limited freedom to travel, controlled demography and compulsory monogamy ("they punish adulterers with the strictest form of slavery"¹⁴), xenophobia, even colonialism of those who practice other forms of government, punitive slavery, etc.

Complementary to the positive characteristics, there is a whole series of negative features that lacks in Utopia and appear only in Europe: chaotic towns, destitute lands, disease-stricken areas, food shortages, epizooties, inflation, violence, drunkenness, murders, rape, laziness, luxury, debauchery, plotting, greed, cruelty. Thomas More chooses for his ideal place only the positive features of the 'historically real world,' visibly leaving out the negative ones: "So you see there is no chance to loaf or kill time, no pretext for evading work; there are no wine-bars, or ale-houses, or brothels; no chances for corruption; no hiding places; no spots for secret meetings." Consequently Hythloday logically concludes that: "Such customs must necessarily result in plenty of life's good things, and since they share everything equally, it follows that no one can ever be reduced to poverty or forced to beg."¹⁵

The division of reprehensible and desirable features between Europe and Utopia is equally visible in the matter of religion. Just like the Native American and Asiatic populations discovered by the explorers of the Renaissance, the Utopians are not Christian. Their original religion, in agreement with their Persian descent, is that of Mithras (which reminds us of Franz Cumont's famous statement that if Europe had not converted to Christianity, it would have certainly been Mithraic).

Nevertheless it is not a question of pagan polytheism, but a reasoned religion, a deism within which, for lack of a direct revelation and by resorting uniquely to their common sense, the Utopians have come to the conclusion of the existence of "a supreme power, the maker and ruler of the universe."¹⁶ In order to remain 'theologically correct,' More hastens to say that having had access, due to Hythloday and his companions, to the revelation of Christ, "no small number of them chose to join our communion and were washed in the holy water."¹⁷ It is this opening towards Christianity that was to inculcate in Guillaume Budé the impulse to imagine a Christian improvement of Utopia, its uni-

fictionation in the community of saints, a monastery-society: Hagnapolis, the City of innocence, the City of the pure, indeed a new Heaven and a new Earth, a promised Jerusalem¹⁸.

Thomas More takes advantage of the bipolar structure of his narrative in order to bring about a ‘catalysis’ of the Christian practice and doctrine. By resorting to his common sense and his enlightened judgment, he therefore proceeds to sifting through the rituals and beliefs of his time. Thus, to Europe he attributes fanaticism, religious persecution and wars, while he marks out Utopia for tolerance and ecumenical opening, with everybody having the freedom to profess one’s own faith of choice. Some of the elements of the Christian dogma of Europe are admitted into Utopia as well (the world does not move at random, but is led by providence, the soul survives the death of the body, rewards and punishment await it beyond, animals are not destined for paradise, auguries and other means of divination are forbidden); other elements, deemed to be heretical by the Church, but commonsensical by the humanists, are introduced in the utopian city (rejoicing in death, incineration of the corpses, small number of churches and priests, iconoclasm, etc.).

Generally the utopian character of the antipodal country is constructed, as though in a large laboratory, by the imaginary development of a social model alternative to the one established in Europe. The principle of the community of goods, opposed to the one of private property, is subjected to a figural modelling that takes it to its ultimate consequences (at least according to Thomas More’s reasoning). Consequently Utopia can bring together institutions, practices and ‘mores’ that the western civilization, based on a different system, has made unlikely in Europe. What has become impossible here resurfaces in a utopian somewhere-else. The criticism of the contemporary world has isolated, to counter this effect, the lost characteristics regretted in England and has gathered them in an antipodal eutopia.

The main process that forms Utopia is therefore the utopian extrapolation and what can be termed a ‘reduction to the positive.’ Nevertheless, to underline the excellence of his invention, Thomas More also resorts to some inversions that function by reduction to absurdity. This means that he not only separates and extrapolates in Utopia the positive features of the *mundus*, but he also reverses some of its negative features. Such is for instance the case for the use of gold, silver and precious stones. In the chancellor’s reasoning, in Europe, within the framework of a market economy, money is the main means of accumulation of private property and capital, as well as the cause of all the evils this brings about. In Utopia the community of goods and free access to all the necessary objects (houses, tools, food, clothing, etc.) make money and fiscal policy useless. Gold, which is the monetary standard and symbol of richness in Europe, becomes futile. In order to satirize the uselessness of the precious metal, More gives it a derisory usage: for “their chamber pots and all their humblest vessels,” as well as for “the chains and heavy fetters of slaves.”¹⁹

This is an image worthy of the caricatures of the time representing the *mundus inversus*: men doing household work and women who go to war, thieves who offer money to their victims, earthenware table dishes and gold chamber pots, prisoners chained with jewelry. Although Columbus and other explorers reported the relative indifference of the Native Americans to precious metals, the uses Thomas More puts gold to

in Utopia surpass the principle of likeliness. It is unlikely that the author had seriously suggested such an inversion of the symbolism of gold, from ostentatious opulence to dirty ignominy. Unlike the utopian extrapolation, which selects possible and likely positive features of the *mundus*, inversion turns current positive images into their contrary and generates grotesque, absurd and consequently unlikely figures.

The Utopians' foreign policy is also imagined by reduction to absurdity. Realizing the inconstancy and futility of peace treaties between different nations, in his ideal republic, More draws a radical conclusion: "While other nations are constantly making, breaking and renewing treaties, the Utopians make none at all with anyone. What for?"²⁰ He therefore admits that, unlike the European countries, where popes guarantee by their sanctity the inviolability of agreements, at the antipodes there is nothing to compel princes to loyalty and good faith. But this disclaimer is not serious, here the chancellor playing the card of irony and satire: "Just as the Popes themselves never promise anything that they do not scrupulously perform, so they command all other princes to abide by their promises in every way."²¹

The radical inversion also touches on the belligerent practices of the Utopians. Although they do not like wars and sincerely attempt to avoid them, when they are obliged to wage war they do not hesitate to put into practice most effective strategies that could be considered immoral and deceitful. Before reaching an armed confrontation, they hire assassins and offer exorbitant amounts of money for the heads of the enemy princes. If this "manner of putting a price on the enemy and making him a trading object" does not give results, they "stir up dissensions" and ill-feeling in the enemy countries, they break uprisings and intestine battles²². If the war continues, though, they hire at great expense (because they only hoard gold and silver for such occasions) mercenaries to fight (and die) in their place. It is only as a last resort that they engage in battle and, well-armed and with good chiefs and tacticians, they attempt to wage war rather in the foreign lands, in order to avoid the destruction of their own country. Although it might have seemed appropriate at a time when local conflicts raged, this strange admixture of Machiavellian pragmatism and humanist concern for one's own people is based on unusual inversions of the good practices of war, inversions that were perfected in Thomas More's laboratories of Utopian modelling.

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Translated from the French by LILLIANA POP

Notes

1. Thomas More, *Utopia. Concerning the Best State of a Commonwealth*, eds. George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams, trans. Robert M. Adams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 111.
2. Jean-François Mattéi, *Platon et le miroir du mythe* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), 272.
3. Nell Eurich, *Science in Utopia. A Mighty Design* (Cambridge MA: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 62, 80.

4. See Albert Ronsin (ed.), *La fortune d'un nom : America. Le baptême du Nouveau Monde à Saint-Dié-des-Vosges. Cosmographia Introductio* (translated from Latin by Pierre Monat), followed by *Lettres* by Amerigo Vespucci, (Grenoble: Editions Jérôme Millon, 1991).
5. See Corin Braga, *Les antiutopies classiques* (Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2012), chap. "Le pacte de vraisemblance."
6. Antonio de Guevara, *Relox de principios*, estudio y edición de Emilio Blanco, (Madrid: ABL Editor, Conferencia de Ministros Provinciales de España, 1994)
7. More, *Utopia*, 14.
8. More, *Utopia*, 15.
9. More, *Utopia*, 16.
10. More, *Utopia*, 22.
11. More, *Utopia*, 21.
12. More, *Utopia*, 36.
13. More, *Utopia*, 39.
14. More, *Utopia*, 83.
15. More, *Utopia*, 60-61.
16. More, *Utopia*, 96.
17. More, *Utopia*, 96.
18. Letter of Guillaume Budé, in André Prévost, *L'utopie de Thomas More*, présentation, texte original, apparat critique, exégèse, traduction et notes, Préface de Maurice Schumann, Paris, Mame, 1978. See Corin Braga, *Du paradis perdu à l'antiutopie aux XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2010), 241-244.
19. More, *Utopia*, 63.
20. More, *Utopia*, 86.
21. More, *Utopia*, 86.
22. More, *Utopia*, 90.

Abstract

Utopia: between Eutopia and Outopia

The paper starts from the observation that Thomas More's seminal work *Utopia* stands between two modal categories of fictional worlds, the possible and the impossible. On the textual level, the author is careful to comply with a convention of truthfulness in order to place Hythloday's journey within the history and geography of the time. On the metatextual level, Thomas More uses names (toponyms and ethnonyms) as means of denying the empirical reality of Hythloday's journey and emphasizing its satirical, self-critical nature, on the one hand, and its theoretical and intertextual dimension (the scholarly, witty dialogue with Plato, Erasmus and the whole humanist tradition), on the other hand. Thus while at the literal level, *Utopia* has a fictional ontological consistency that makes it a pragmatic utopia or, in other words, a *eutopia*, its truthfulness is undermined at the metadiscursive level by a witticism that is typical of the age of Early Modernity, to the extent that it changes from a suggestion of social reform into a chimera, namely an *outopia*.

Keywords

Thomas More, *Utopia*, utopian genre, utopian extrapolation, *reductio ad absurdum*.