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Utopias

The Un-Placed in Language
and Politics

Utopie

Non-luoghi del linguaggio
e della politica

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ABSTRACTS

THOMAS SCHÖLDERLE, *Paths of Utopia. On the History of Utopian Thought*

Utopias are resonance forms of social crises. However, they are also «impossible possibilities that make possible possibilities visible» (Martin Seel). They go beyond the critical moment in order to conceive counter-worlds that hold up a mirror to the present. This essay attempts to sketch certain paths and partings of ways in the history of utopias, and also to point out some dead-ends and mazes. The trail begins with the quest for the birth-hour of utopia in the early modern period and antiquity; it extends from the flourishing of the classical literary model in the Renaissance, via nineteenth-century ramifications and convergences, all the way to dystopian, ecological, and feminist variants in the twentieth century.

PIERRE MACHEREY, *The Reality of Utopia*

The purpose of 'Utopia' is to give the world a new organization, opposed to an unacceptable *status quo*. This essay focuses on the paradox of Utopia, which is at the same time a critic of reality and a need arising from reality itself. Therefore, it should not be interpreted as an opposition to reality, but as a deepening, as a claim to establish a reality that's more real. Thus the author advocates for the political and philosophical role of Utopia.

MAURIZIO CAMBI, *Instructions on How to Write a Utopia. Tommaso Campanella and the Città del Sole*

In a passage from the *Questione quarta sull'ottima repubblica*, Campanella described the way he constructed the model of the ideal community that inhabits the *Città del Sole*. By removing all the defects inherent in the traditional theories of utopian States, the author is convinced to create a perfect model of society. However, the persistence of crime and sins among the *Solari* shows the ineffectiveness of the strategy adopted by Campanella.

NICOLE POHL, *Of Balloons and Foreign Worlds: Mary Hamilton and Eighteenth-Century Flights of Fancy*

This paper focuses on the imaginary voyage in women's writing of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries. It introduces a hitherto unpublished manuscript novel by Mary Hamilton, author of the utopian novel *Munster Village* (1778). In her unpublished text, *A Manuscript* (1784), Mary Hamilton abandons the domestic utopia of *Munster Village* in favour of speculative fiction. Aided by a Faustian pact with a Demon, the narrator balloons to another planet where he discusses natural sciences, politics, and ethics with the local Royal Academy and a Chief Minister modelled on William Pitt the Younger.

RAMÓN ÁLVAREZ LAYNA, *Robert Owen: History, Language and Thought*

In the first part of our study, the reader will have the opportunity to become familiar with Robert Owen, and also with the Western historical context where Owen must be studied. In the second part of the text, we begin to explore the figure of Robert Owen from historical sources and from books. Furthermore, in the third part of this essay, we continue with an introduction to the importance of the New Lanark and New Harmony developments, two projects that will be analysed in terms of Owen's central concern with the problem of rationality-irrationality. Finally, one of our main contributions regarding Robert Owen is that of seeing the way in which the author evolves in relation to history, language, reason and Western history

VINCENZO VITIELLO, *Es ist Zeit. The 'Utopian' language of poetry: Paul Celan*

As in the philosophy of Heidegger, the meaning of Celan's poetry must be sought in a loss. But, unlike the philosopher, who remains tied to traditional language names (*Namen-Sprache*), the poet, in order to overcome the loss of language, reverses the Biblical tradition which attributed to Adam the power to name things. It is only through this inversion, which comes close to the natural language of the Earth without sacrificing the historical language of man, that language can be saved.

LISA BLOCK DE BEHAR, *Borges: Some of His Unexpected Encounters in an Endless Utopia*

If time tends to be recognized as Borges' primordial preoccupation, the obstinate subject to which he devoted the most profound disquisitions in his writings, it is in fact to the variations on space that he seemed to have consecrated his imagination from his earliest books – those which, after published, were forbidden because of his own and definite decision. From his literary beginnings, Borges may have

ciphered his expectations also in space, as Louis-Auguste Blanqui conceived his astronomic hypothesis and as he himself suggested so as to give poetics clues to find out a hopeful way. Perhaps, as a poet, he trusted alliteration, rhyme, anaphora, and other poetic resources that justified his faith. Like those names that name and deny at the same time to which Borges has often recurred, he could foresee a spatial loss that history confirms, a decrease where, between literary fantasy and current technology, his utopia might be situated.

XIN MAO, *Utopia in Levinas: Null-site as Reduction from Said to Saying, from Politics to Ethics*

This essay proposes to examine the concept of utopia in Levinas as *non-lieu* (null-site) and investigate the political significance of it. Utilized in his major work *Otherwise than Being or beyond essence*, *non-lieu* signifies the ethical subjectivity and humanity as nullification of the inter-essence movement of ontology which is also seen as a certain egology. Basing on the concepts of said, saying and reduction from said to saying, Levinas shows the alliance between ontology and politics in western tradition where politics is fixed in a 'said' and becomes the indifferent ontological system that encloses itself to a totality. To break this alliance, Levinas suggests a process of reduction that nullifies the totality of politics to a *non-lieu* where each moment regains its ethical significance. Hence, Levinas's philosophy as reduction offers politics other way of reasoning than ontological rationalism, that is, termed by Levinas, a reasoning of proximity, of peace.

MANUELA CERETTA, *The Language in Dystopia, the Languages of Dystopia*

The theme of language and its manipulation has been central in the Nineteenth century dystopias. In order to investigate the abuses of power in the 'short twentieth century', dystopias explored the disturbing power of language, which builds dystopian universes and highlights at the same time its intrinsic liberating potentialities. As explicitly pedagogic literature, dystopias speak a language that merges Alfred Hirschman's 'intransigency rhetoric' with 'warnings', and by doing so it invites us to keep in mind that the poetic capacity of the utopian tradition, which coincides with human history itself, can bring, at the same time, emancipation and disruption as well.

FATIMA VIEIRA, *Philosophical Utopia and Political Reality*

This paper argues that the concept of philosophical utopia, although it does not entail a definite political plan, has important and practical political consequences insofar as it stimulates reflection on the need for change and leads the individuals

to take action and explore new political paths. The paper starts with a revisitation of the old question of the death of utopia, describing it as a false question, given the anthropological dimension of the utopian thought. It proceeds to discuss the concept of philosophical utopia and its interaction with the real in order to stand for the idea that the best way to describe utopia to the contemporary audience is by referring to its *function* rather than to its *content*.