

THE HUNGARIAN HISTORY OF EARLY MODERN ENGLISH UTOPIAS

The present monograph offers a detailed inquiry into the literary-historical contexts of the utopian genre, focusing primarily on the early modern English tradition. The *Introduction* starts with an initial glance at some instances of the Hungarian reception of the genre and the term, followed by a detailed historiographical overview about the emergence of the field known today as Utopian Studies. The goal of this survey is to establish the critical position of the monograph, a position stressing the importance of finding a balance between “literary” and “non-literary” (historical, philosophical, politico-historical etc.) approaches. While the current volume focuses on utopias as a unique literary mode, it also takes the actual cultural-historical context of the works into account. In the rather long period of investigation addressed here, English history encountered several cataclysmic changes, which also exerted a profound influence on literary history in general. And since utopias are by their very definition particularly interested in social and historical issues, they are not merely reflecting changes in the course of early modern history, but they often try to actively influence or even initiate some of these changes. Therefore, the study of utopian texts in this volume is inseparable from at least a brief look at their respective contexts.

The first chapter, *The Clergy and Europe under Critique. The Medieval Antecedents* is more of a transition between the introduction and early modern utopias, somewhat overstretching the chronological boundaries of the book. Yet, it seemed crucial to at least briefly discuss the medieval antecedents of the genre, partly because of more recent critical results in medieval literature, but because of the predominant tendency in Utopian Studies to overemphasise the ground-breaking importance of *Utopia*. The discussion of certain medieval texts and motifs (Cokaygne, Mandeville, The Land of Priest John) universally present in European medieval

culture but also connected to the English tradition promises a more refined understanding of the conventionally perceived isolation of the English genre. Investigating both verse and prose renderings of the ideal commonwealth topic, on the other hand, already suggests the importance of generic hybridity and continuity.

The chapter *Paratext, dialogue, instability. Thomas More's Utopia (1516)* continues where most surveys of English utopias begin. The section starts with a textual history of the eponymous text and identifies certain historiographical trends in the extensive relevant critical literature. The discussion focuses on the self-reflective poetic-literary considerations which can be reconstructed from the paratextual elements and the main text as well, but also briefly touches upon certain aspects of the early phase of English humanism, the primary literary context of the book. From this perspective, the often-noted contradiction is particularly important: the most popular product of the period's English literature was written in Latin, in cooperation with European humanists, while compared to other vernacular translations its English version was rather belated. In tackling the question, the connection between English printing and the period's translation culture is also explored to some extent.

The chapter *Utopia and Polemics, National Identity and Dialogue in the Elizabethan Period* starts with an overview of the reception of More's work, thereby trying to challenge the notion of a 'gap' between the first translation (1551) and the first imitations (1579). After a review of several allusions and references, these first imitations are discussed, focussing on the dialogue form that they all seem to emphasise. The central case study for the subject is Thomas Nicholls *A Pleasant Dialogue. betweene a Lady called Listra, and a Pilgrim*. The discussion calls for a brief inquiry into the historiography of the long-neglected Tudor dialogue form, which is performed in the context of certain literary trends developing from the unique way of English reformation, creating a rich dynamic between increasing national identity and literature. The period in question cannot be discussed without references to travel writing and translation, for which a unique example of Hungarian relevance can be brought into play. Therefore, the chapter closes with a look at possible utopian aspects in the works of the Hungarian peregrine Stephen Parmenius of Buda.

The chapter on *Travel, Satire and Dystopia in Joseph Hall's works* tries to counterbalance the relative neglect of an author plainly popular in his own times. Although in our region, Joseph Hall was known primarily for his religious-devotional works, Hall was also the author of what could possibly be regarded as one of the first English dystopias, *Mundus alter et idem* (1605). While modern scholarship tends to downplay the utopian aspects of the work and disregard it as a somewhat trivial satire, the book enjoyed huge success in its own time, and it is also clear that contemporary readers saw a definite connection between More's and Campanella's utopian works and *Mundus*. Hall's greatest achievement, and a focus of the discussion here is the powerful mixing of the Latinate humanistic tradition with certain vernacular trends. The resulting unique hybrid fits well into the bilingual context of late-Elizabethan literature, and as a consequence, the text, together with its English translation (which was remarkably quick to follow) also sheds light on the energetic bond between early modern English and Latin literature. Besides translation, an important element of the discussion here is the late-sixteenth, early-seventeenth century discourse on the profitability/futility of travel.

The chapter *New Science, New Politics, New Fiction. Utopias from Francis Bacon to the English Revolution* discusses several texts, thereby already signalling the proliferation of the genre in the mid-seventeenth century. All the texts to be discussed here show the influence of the earth-shaking changes in the domain of sciences. Obviously, the first work under scrutiny is Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, the discussion of which concentrates on the place of poetics, literature, and mythology within Bacon's philosophical system. Bacon's utopia is used here as an example for the unique and mutually productive relationship between science and literature in the early modern period. Francis Godwin's work on lunar literature (*The Man in the Moone*) is informed by the very same interrelatedness of science and the letters, and yet, the outcome is completely different – the text is studied here in the context of lunar literature, but Godwin's unique literary technique as well as the generic influences reflected in his writing are also discussed. The final text in the section shifts focus to the political-historical context, and through an analysis of Gabriel Plattes's *Macaria*, examines the impact of the English

Revolution on literature in general, and on the development of utopias in particular. Besides the expansion of the genre, the most important observation concerns the increasing self-awareness of texts, and the splitting of the tradition into a more serious and a more "literary" line. The former is explored in the framework of the exploding pamphlet culture of the period.

The next chapter, *The Emerging Public Sphere: Utopias after the Restoration* discusses two texts which are produced after Charles II. is restored to the throne of England. Although there are significant differences between Maragaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* and Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines*, both reflect a more critical, almost sceptical attitude towards the concept of utopia. Cavendish's work is not only interesting as one of the first female utopias but also as a text exhibiting an almost self-torturing extent of criticism against the genre, mainly focusing on utopias' lacking agency in the extraliterary world. Neville's work is interesting not only as a utopia turned dystopia heavily criticising the resuscitated patriarchal monarchy, but also as a peculiar media event of the mid-seventeenth century. The discussion focuses on the emerging coffee-houses and their unique culture, which gives rise to the genre of 'sham' to which the text is linked here. Both works shed light on changing trends in the public sphere emerging in the course of the Civil War, an aspect also briefly considered.

The final chapter, *In Lieu of a Conclusion: the English Novel and the Utopian Tradition* is more like a proposal for further research, where the previous observations regarding the literary facets of utopias are connected to the question of the emergence of the novel. Here I reiterate the most important finding of the monograph, namely that early modern English utopias are not only important as social-political-philosophical models of the ideal state, but they are also constantly exploring and testing the possibilities and limits of fiction, and their unique ontological position contributes to the development of a more refined understanding of fictitious narrative literature.

Although the primary focus of the volume is the English tradition, it also urges a more thorough exploration of the Hungarian and Transylvanian reception of the genre. Comprehensive studies on the impact of early modern utopian literature fail to move beyond the scope of West-

ern Europe, and the volume proposes at least some initial areas for investigation. Wherever possible, Hungarian references or analogous literary phenomena are mentioned, with authors like Jacobus Palaeologus, András Valkai, Stephen Parmenius of Buda, and Albert Szenczi Molnár invoked, and the unique situation of sixteenth-century Kolozsvár is also emphasised. These findings are primarily intended as encouragement of future work on the subject.