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Cultural bias in European translations of Thomas More's *Utopia*

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Introduction

The ambiguity of Thomas More's *Utopia* has fueled academic debate for over the five hundred years since its publication in 1516. The work is divided into two books. Book I is a dialogue about philosophy, society, and travel between three characters; Book II is a description of the island of Utopia, which means "nowhere" in Latin.¹ Numerous theories about the purpose of *Utopia* have developed. Quentin Skinner, a professor and historian, jokes that "...over the centuries it has acquired almost as many interpreters as readers".² Regardless of More's motivation for creating *Utopia*, it has had a tremendous impact on historical study. Utopia was originally written in Latin, which was considered a universal language and was popular among intellectuals similar to More. However, as Fátima Vieira, chairperson of the Utopian Studies Society, stated, "...although More used Latin because it was the language of international communication and scholarship of his time, the fate of *Utopia* was established, right from the beginning, by its translations into different languages".³ In addition to interpreting the text, many translators add paratextual materials like introductions, backgrounds, notes, and essays. These paratexts surround the original text and often influence the reader's understanding of the work. While they sometimes help a reader comprehend a text, paratexts may alter the meaning of the original source.

Utopia has challenged translators from the sixteenth through the twenty-first century to interpret its complex satire, political messages, and humanist undertones. But not all translations are created equal. Different versions of the text possess contrasting and oftentimes contradicting messages. The elusive nature of *Utopia* had led to interpretations that tend to say more about the interpreter than the book itself. Many translators have modified the text to propagate their cultural agendas. Gilbert Burnet used *Utopia* to restore More's image after the English reformation; Stanislaw Klonowicz depicted More as an early radicalist during the socialist movement in Poland; Kazimierz Abgarowicz aligned More with the Polish Catholic Church a mere thirty years later; Gerhard Ritter altered *Utopia* to appeal to his largely nationalist German audience after World War I. These examples illustrate the power of interpretation and the complex history of More's enigmatic book. The various translations and paratexts of Thomas More's *Utopia* show how cultural bias affects historical transliterations, which demonstrates how the present influences our perception of the past.

Background

Thomas More may be one of the most well known yet least understood historical figures of sixteenth century England. He was born February 1478 in London, England to John More and Agnes Graunger. His father was a prominent lawyer and judge but little is known about his mother. While working for the Third Duke of Buckingham, his father likely first met John Cardinal Morton; Morton was "...Henry VII's intimate councillor, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Lord Chancellor".⁴ The relationship between More's father and John Cardinal Morton greatly benefitted young Thomas More. At the age of twelve, he became a page for Cardinal Morton. More proved successful in this role and became popular with the Cardinal. Morton decided to sponsor the young boy's enrollment at Oxford University, where he was the Chancellor and a prominent patron. Historians believe that Thomas More found Cardinal Morton to be a political and religious inspiration. This is evident within the text of *Utopia*. While it is a work of fiction, Book I contains a discussion about real events, places, and people: like Cardinal Morton. Hythloday, a fictional sailor and main character in *Utopia*, shares his experience in England and his encounters with the Cardinal. Hythloday states,

[John Cardinal Morton] was a man... as much respected for his wisdom and virtue as for his authority...the King depended greatly on his advice, and he seemed the chief support for the nation as a whole. He had left school for court when scarcely more than a boy, had devoted his life to important business, and had acquired from many changes of fortune and at great cost a supply of wisdom, which is not soon lost when so purchased.⁵

This description of the Cardinal demonstrates More's admiration for him and his accomplishments. In addition to praising him, More followed in his political and religious footsteps. In 1510 More was appointed as an undersheriff of London and served in government for eight years. In 1518, he joined the royal service. More would become a councillor to the King, and was ultimately appointed as Lord Chancellor in 1529.⁶

In addition to being a public servant, More was a passionate academic who believed in using his knowledge to improve society. As a prominent renaissance humanist he valued classical studies along with civil engagement. The humanist movement began in Italy during the fourteenth century before spreading across Europe. Many renaissance humanists were Christian, including More. Humanism was the rediscovery of Latin and Greek texts that expressed comfort and enjoyment in life, an outlook than was far different from that of the Middle Ages. Finding these ancient texts inspired people to seek happiness and to immerse themselves in the arts. Members of this movement studied works of antiquity, developed their moral character, and used

their education to benefit society. More was a passionate humanist who valued the academic, virtuous, and religious aspects of the movement as evident in his work and writings.

Cardinal Morton created a humanist learning environment for students, including More, at the University of Oxford during his Chancellorship. Author John Guy explains Morton's influence on the curricula at Oxford and, therefore, on More's education. He writes, "Under Morton's patronage, Oxford was becoming a centre for the cycle of learning known as the *studia humanitatis*". This new program of study inspired Thomas More's "...passion for the study of classical texts..."⁷ *Utopia* is influenced by classical Greek and Latin works and More's humanist beliefs. *Utopia* itself was originally published in Latin, which leads many historians to believe it was intended for a humanist audience. The educational values of Utopian society are the same as those of renaissance humanists. More writes, "Instruction in good manners and pure morals is considered just as important as the accumulation of learning. From the very first [the Utopian priests] try to instill in the pupils' minds, while they are still young and tender, principles which will be useful to preserve the commonwealth"⁸ Many aspects of humanism can be seen in this excerpt. Utopians value both moral character and academic success. Priests are teachers, and students are taught to use their academic and moral knowledge to benefit the larger community. Appreciating the roots of More's humanist values is crucial to understanding Thomas More's character and *Utopia*.

Writing was a fundamental part of being a humanist. More drafted letters to his fellow humanists, translated many classical works, and wrote books. More wrote *Utopia* in 1515 and it was published in 1516. *Utopia* is divided into Books I and II. Book I is a dialogue between Morus, Peter Giles, and Raphael Hythloday. Morus is a somewhat fictionalized version of Thomas More; Peter Giles was a real person and friend of More; and Raphael Hythloday is a fictional sailor whose first name translates to "the healing of God", but whose last name means "well learned in nonsense"⁹ Book I begins with Morus travelling to Bruges, Belgium to settle some differences with the Prince of Castile on behalf of Henry VIII. During an extended adjournment of the negotiations, Morus visits the city of Antwerp where he meets Peter Giles. He describes Giles as being "...a man of high reputation". He continues "His conversation is so merry, and so witty without malice..."¹⁰ Giles eventually introduces Morus to Raphael Hythloday. Morus was intrigued by Hythloday's sailing expeditions, so the three of them "...sat down on a bench covered with turf to talk together"¹¹ Their discussion covered many topics: Hythloday's travels, the corruption of English government and royal service, the faults of European society, and the island of Utopia. Book II is Hythloday's detailed description of Utopia

with sections such as “The Geography of Utopia” and “Their Work Habits”, which outline Utopian life.¹² Hythloday compares and contrasts Utopia with England throughout Book II. He concludes his description by stating: “Now I have described to you as accurately as I could the structure of that commonwealth which I consider not only the best but the only one that can rightfully claim that name”.¹³ Hythloday believes that Utopia is the ideal society because there is no money or private property. In Book II asserts, “...in Utopia no men are poor, no men are beggars. Though no man owns anything, everyone is rich”.¹⁴ Excerpts such as this seem strikingly modern for More’s time. Some translators chose to only translate Book II, which made it seem as though More wrote *Utopia* as a blueprint for the ideal society. Translators who chose to only transcribe Book II often held socialist or communist beliefs that they wanted others to adopt as well. Their selective translations exhibit how bias influences the transliteration of historical works.

Utopia begins with a lively discussion among the three characters about Hythloday’s world travels and the knowledge he has gained from exploring other countries. Peter Giles suggests Raphael Hythloday should consider joining the King’s service, but Hythloday states that he does not want to be “enslave[d] by any king”. Giles replies, “...I do not mean you should be in servitude to any king, only in his service”, to which Hythloday retorts, “The difference is only a matter of one syllable”. In Latin, “service” and “servitude” are “servias” and “inservias” which explains Hythloday’s play on words.¹⁵ Wordplay such as this can be seen throughout *Utopia* in the dialogue, character names, and landscape of the island. Another sailor is named “Tricuis Apinatus” which translates to “Mr. Silly Nonsense” and the major river on the island is called “Anyder” which translates to “waterless”.¹⁶ More’s play on words is omitted by many translators, yet it reveals the satire in some parts of *Utopia*. Excluding More’s wordplay alters the reader’s understanding of the text and leads to very different interpretations of the work.

Catholicism was important to Thomas More though, like other humanists, he criticized some aspects of the Catholic Church. Unlike other humanists, such as Martin Luther, he did not support a radical attack on Catholicism. In his early years, More was a benevolent and understanding Catholic. However, the onset of the English Reformation shifted More’s religious beliefs from relatively open minded to fully intolerant. He persecuted Protestants during his time as Lord Chancellor and claimed that heretics were “the devil’s stinking martyrs”.¹⁷ His hateful attitude toward Protestants contributed to his isolation from mainstream British society.

In 1527, King Henry VIII began to express concern about his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Catherine was getting older, and they had not yet had a son to inherit the family name.

Additionally, there was a lady-in-waiting named Anne Boleyn who had captured the King's attention. Henry VIII attempted to divorce Catherine in 1527, but Pope Clement VII did not grant him permission. The King decided to separate from the Roman Catholic Church and establish the Church of England in 1533.

England's separation from the Roman Catholic Church and Henry VIII's intention to annul his marriage with Catherine of Aragon led to More's resignation as Lord Chancellor in 1532. More was a devout Catholic, and was likely shocked by his country's transition to Protestantism. He refused to attend Anne Boleyn's coronation in 1533, which, in combination with his public disapproval of Henry VIII's behavior, resulted in his imprisonment. In April of 1535, More was held in the Tower of London where he was "...awaiting trial and execution on a charge of high treason..." for not recognizing King Henry VIII as the Supreme Leader of the Church of England.¹⁸ He was eventually executed on July sixth of the same year.¹⁹ *Utopia* continued to circulate after More's death. It was translated into many languages, and continues to be read by people around the globe.

The Purpose of *Utopia*

Historians are still debating why More wrote *Utopia*-- more than five hundred years after its publication. A popular theory is that More was suggesting ways to improve, but not necessarily perfect, the quality of life in sixteenth century England. Lyman Sargent, a leading scholar of Utopian Studies, is an advocate for this theory. He writes, "*Utopia* describes a better society than actually existed in 1516, but there is no pretense that it is perfect".²⁰ This thesis is supported in the text of *Utopia*. To conclude the book, Morus reflects on Hythloday's description of Utopian society. He muses, "I cannot agree with everything [Raphael Hythloday] said. Yet I confess there are many things in the Commonwealth of Utopia that I wish our own country would imitate".²¹ This statement shows that More's purpose may have been to encourage his sixteenth century readers to ponder how some aspects of Utopian society could be implemented in England.

Another theory proposes that More wrote *Utopia* as an allegory to criticize humanism. This is supported by More's wordplay and the format of the book. As John Guy states, "...*Utopia* is More's acknowledgement that the humanist enterprise is destined for failure. It rests on a fallacy, encapsulated by the asymmetry of Books I and II". Since "Utopia" translates to "nowhere", More's book does indeed rest on a fallacy.²² This thesis states that More meant to

contrast the reality of humanism with the world humanists were striving for. In Book I, Morus states,

‘If you cannot pluck up bad ideas by the root, if you cannot cure long-standing evils as completely as you would like, you must not therefore abandon the commonwealth... You must strive to influence policy indirectly, handle the situation tactfully, and thus what you cannot turn to good, you may at least-- to the extent of your powers-- make less bad. For it is impossible to make all institutions good unless you make all men good, and that I don’t expect to see for a long time to come’.²³

This argument applies to the humanist movement as a whole. If More did indeed write to critique humanism, then it is likely that he saw *Utopia* as the perfect-- yet unattainable-- society.

The intent of Thomas More’s *Utopia* may never be agreed upon, but that does not lessen its significance. As Robert Adams states in his preface to *Utopia*, “...whatever the book ‘really’ meant when it was written, one aspect of it that our materials do not properly emphasize... is the enormous influence it had on men's minds”.²⁴

Utopia in England

Gilbert Burnet’s 1684 translation of *Utopia* altered the text in order to appeal to both Catholic and Protestant readers after the English Reformation. Gilbert Burnet was born in 1643. Burnet considered himself a latitudinarian: someone who supported the adoption of the Anglican church but placed little importance on the details of church conduct.²⁵ He was also an English statesman and historian. His intent was to incorporate More into mainstream English history. His translation of *Utopia* and his paratexts depicted More as a “proto-reformer” and a “seduced papist”.²⁶ Burnet’s version “...allowed both for a vigorous condemnation of More as a papist and for full praise of More as a royal servant and as a virtuous... Englishman”.²⁷ By acknowledging More’s successes and ignoring his failures, Burnet crafted a version of More that was easily incorporated into British history. In the preface to his *Utopia*, Burnet created a simple narrative of Thomas More’s life. He omitted many complexities of More’s character, and gave seventeenth century historians a document that incorporated selected aspects of More into popular English history. Burnet took many liberties in his translation in order to support his idea of More as an intelligent Englishman who was deceived by the Roman Catholic Church. Burnet’s vision created an interesting-- though inaccurate-- historical narrative that he used to further his career as an English historian.

The preface to Burnet’s *Utopia* fails to address some critical aspects of the book and its author. John Logan, in his article about Burnet’s translation, writes: “Conspicuously absent...

was any mention of the Utopian religious practices or of the relation of More as an author of *Utopia* or More as a papist... Burnet portrayed... a More acceptable to both Protestant and Catholic readers”.²⁸ Burnet understood that More had the potential to be a mainstream historical figure if portrayed in a certain way. He realized that in order to incorporate More into popular British history, he would need to fortify the idea that Thomas More was a benevolent man who was met with an unfortunate fate. Burnet’s preface contains no mention of More’s persecution of Protestants during his Chancellorship. Instead, Burnet writes: “...the Great Seal was delivered to Sir *Thomas*, on the 25th of *October*, 1530, and he was then declared Lord High-Chancellor of *England*; in which laft Office, no Perfon ever before him behaved more uprightly, or more to the Satisfaction of the People”.²⁹ Not only did Burnet disregard More’s history of persecuting Protestants, he claimed that More had been the best Lord Chancellor ever seen by English citizens up to that time. Burnet’s omission of key facts is an example of cultural bias, which Professor C. Behan McCullagh defines as, “...a historical inference, description, or explanation [that] is later found to be untrue or unfair, relative to the evidence available, because of a culture-wide interest in information of one kind rather than another”.³⁰ Omitting certain details about More’s religious beliefs and his history of persecuting Protestants allowed Burnet to alter the historical significance of the text to make it more appealing to British readers and historians.

Burnet’s translation compels contemporary historians to examine how accurately past historians documented the Reformation and how their biases affected their work. Burnet’s version of *Utopia* demonstrates how paratextual material can significantly alter the reader’s interpretation of a text. He adapted More’s *Utopia* in order to support his latitudinarian beliefs and appeal to both Catholic and Protestant readers.

Utopia in Poland

The contradicting opinions of *Utopia* are present in the various Polish translations. Within a thirty year period, *Utopia* was used to portray More as an early socialist and a Catholic icon. Stanislaw Klonowicz and Kazimierz Abgarowicz, in their respective transliterations, demonstrate the influence of cultural bias on the translations and paratextual content of More’s *Utopia*.

During the rise of socialism in Poland, *Utopia* was translated to establish More as a social reformer. In the early twentieth century, before Poland became independent in 1918, tensions were growing between the government and the citizens. This led many working class people to join socialist groups. Dr. Edward Lewinski-Corwin states:

The fact that a large percentage of the business capital in Poland was foreign and the government was intensely inimical to the process, was responsible for the... exploitation of the working masses. Unable, on account of the government prohibitions, to organize themselves into trade unions for bettering their conditions, the workmen formed secret societies, chiefly of a socialistic nature.³¹

In 1917 Stanislaw Klonowicz published a selective translation of *Utopia* that appealed to these socialist groups. Artur Blaim, an English Professor at the University of Gdansk, writes “Selected passages from *Utopia* were included in Stanislaw Klonowicz’s ‘*Utopja*’ *Tomasza Morusa* (Thomas More’s *Utopia*), where More was depicted as the first socialist”.³² Passages that describe the communal nature of Utopian society would have appealed to these socialist groups. In his introduction, Klonowicz states that the aim of his translation was “to establish a link of historical tradition between More, who witnessed the birth of the capitalist system, and the innumerable masses of workers, who, fulfilling their historical mission, are today burying that system”.³³ Translated texts from the past are influential because many reader’s assume that the translated version is the same as the original version. In Klonowicz’ transliteration, this was not the case. His selective translation of *Utopia* omitted essential elements such as Morus’ distrust of communal living and the satirical undertones, which significantly altered the meaning of the work. Klonowicz modified *Utopia* to propagate his own ideological beliefs and to inspire socialist thoughts in the Polish working class during a time of political upheaval.

Klonowicz chose to only transcribe sections of *Utopia* that depicted More as an early socialist. He carefully selected passages that supported his socialist ideals and persuaded others to join the movement. The translator emphasized More’s passages on communal living, such as: “The doors... open easily and swing shut automatically, letting anyone enter who wants to-- and so there is no private property”.³⁴ Another section describes how the Utopians obtain goods. More writes,

Every city is divided into four equal districts, and in the middle of each district is a market for all kinds of commodities... Here the head of each household looks for what he or his family needs, and carries off what he wants without any sort of payment or compensation. Why should anything be refused to him? There is plenty of everything, and no reason to fear that anyone will claim more than he needs. Why would anyone be suspected of asking for more than is needed, when everyone knows there will never be any shortage?³⁵

This Utopian system would have appealed to the Polish working class. In the Commonwealth of Utopia, everyone has access to the same resources; in Poland during the early twentieth century this was not the case. Klonowicz only included passages that advocated for socialist practices to

draw a connection between Thomas More and the Polish working class. This demonstrates how Klonowicz' present bias influenced his translation of a work of the past.

Since Klonowicz only presented sections that were aligned with his own beliefs, it is logical that his audience accepted *Utopia* as one of the the earliest socialist works. Seeing More as a social reformer during the sixteenth century, a time of extreme capitalism and corruption, would have inspired many Polish people to join the socialist movement in order to overcome the same forces within their own era. If More was speaking out against capitalism during his time, the Polish working class would be more likely to do the same.

Klonowicz left out many elements of the original text that did not coincide with his beliefs. He presented More's condemnations of private property, social hierarchy, and material goods without the contradictions, satire, or dialogues that are critical to a deeper understanding of the book. If Klonowicz had translated all of *Utopia*, his audience may not have viewed More as an early socialist. Throughout *Utopia* Morus remains skeptical of many Utopian practices, especially their communal lifestyle. In Book I, Morus says to Hythloday: "I for one cannot conceive of authority existing among men who are equal to one another in every respect".³⁶ While Hythloday, a fictional character, supports communal living, Morus does not. Morus may be interested in hearing about the island of Utopia, yet he is unconvinced that their societal model would succeed in Europe. The translator disregarded Morus' mistrust of communal living and focused only on Hythloday's support of the Utopian lifestyle to make it appear as though More himself was an advocate for extreme social reform.

Stanisław Klonowicz translated *Utopia* to promote socialism. His agenda is evident within his selective translation, where he disregarded Morus' doubts about socialism and emphasized Hythloday's support of it. His readers would have perceived Thomas More as being a fundamental socialist fighting to radically transform sixteenth century England. This biased depiction of Thomas More and his *Utopia* exhibit how contemporary perspectives affect historical interpretations.

Another Polish translation was written by Professor Kazimierz Abgarowicz, a prominent teacher and translator of primarily religious texts.³⁷ His version of *Utopia*, written in 1947, was skewed toward a Catholic audience. At the time Poland was controlled by a communist government, yet the Polish Catholic Church was still prominent in society. Author Elizabeth Valkenier states: "In Poland... Communist policy toward the Church [from 1945 to 1955] has been largely cautious and at times even conciliatory".³⁸ The Communist Party did not attack the Catholic Church, instead they sought to bring it under the government's control. Regardless of

their “conciliatory” actions, the communists understood that they were competing with the Church for power over the people. During this time period approximately ninety-five percent of Polish citizens were Catholic.³⁹ The Catholic Church had a considerable following, but they were unsure of their future under a communist regime. In an attempt to maintain a strong Catholic culture in Poland, Abgarowicz’ translation “reclaimed” More’s *Utopia* for the Church. The translation and paratextual material of Abgarowicz’ 1947 edition reflects the uncertainty felt by Catholics during this time.

Abgarowicz translated *Utopia* Books I and II and included a foreword by Maksymilian Rode, a Catholic priest and theologian. The publishing company used by Abgarowicz was well known for its religious printings. Professor Katarzyna Pisarska writes, “...this translation originates from Christian circles. It was published by Instytut Wydawniczy ‘Kultura’ in Poznan, which was also the publisher of many works of a religious nature”.⁴⁰ Abgarowicz’ edition of *Utopia* shows the struggle between Polish communism and Catholicism during the mid twentieth century.

This struggle is apparent within the paratextual material of Abgarowicz’ translation. The foreword, written by Maksymilian Rode, emphasized “More’s personal qualities and his devotion to the teachings of the Catholic Church”.⁴¹ In order to connect *Utopia* to the political situation of his time, Rode states that communism in Utopia is a “communism of coexistence and cooperation... pervaded with theism, a belief in God, in an immortal soul, in an afterlife, while the Christian religion stands out among other religions”.⁴² Rode’s introduction to More’s *Utopia* demonstrates the efforts of Polish Catholics to preserve their presence during a time of political uncertainty. By translating *Utopia* with an emphasis on More’s Catholic beliefs, Abgarowicz and Rode attempted to fabricate a narrative of More that aligned with their religious views. They believed if More was regarded first as a Catholic and secondly as a social reformer it may inspire Polish citizens to value the Catholic Church above the communist government.

Within Poland, the various translations of *Utopia* were used to support socialism and Catholicism. Stanislaw Klonowicz’ 1918 version emphasized Utopian communal living practices, while Kazimierz Abgarowicz’ translation published a mere twenty-nine years later, portrayed More as a deeply religious man who had no intentions of inspiring a communist revolution. Both of these translations exhibit the elusive nature of *Utopia*. The translations of More’s book in Poland illuminate the influence of cultural bias; furthermore, they capture how different historical moments connect with different translations of *Utopia*.

Utopia in Germany

Gerhard Ritter, a German historian and nationalist, published his 1922 translation of *Utopia* in order to satisfy his cultural bias against British imperialism. Author Robert Adams notes that “Shortly after World War I, and probably under its inflammatory influence, a group of German scholars began polemicizing against *Utopia* as... an *apologia* for British imperialism”.⁴³ He emphasized the imperialistic elements of *Utopia* and ignored the subtle satire that accompanied those passages. During the time of Ritter’s translation Germany was suffering from a loss of power due to the outcome of World War I. In accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was forced to relinquish its colonies. Article 119 of the treaty states: “Germany renounces in favour of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers all her rights and titles over her oversea possessions”.⁴⁴ In addition to surrendering their colonies, Germany had to pay large reparations to both France and Britain.⁴⁵ These debts pulled the country further into poverty and left many Germans with feelings of resentment toward all imperialist powers, especially Britain. These Germans blamed Britain for the outcome of the War, which led to a surge in German nationalism. Gerhard Ritter translated *Utopia* with this current political climate in mind and he emphasized Utopian colonization to further the connection between current British imperialism and that of the past. Gerhard Ritter made it seem as though Thomas More wrote *Utopia* as an “...example of British liberal justification of colonialism”.⁴⁶ This portrayal of *Utopia* appealed to and encouraged German nationalism.

Ritter was known for his conservative political opinions. His historical works had a “characteristic note of immediacy and combativeness”, and he believed “that historians bear a political responsibility toward their own generation...”.⁴⁷ The sense of combativeness in Ritter’s work encouraged blame of British imperialists for Germany’s economic failures which gave rise to German nationalism. His translation exhibits cultural bias because his position as a German nationalist directly influenced his rendering of the text.

Ritter emphasized sections of *Utopia* concerning colonialism and foreign relations. German professor Nicole Pohl, states: “Ritter took More’s *Utopia* at face value, ignoring the satirical form of the book, and read it as a document of imperialism...”.⁴⁸ Since he omitted the satirical elements of the text, *Utopia* was interpreted literally, which made it seem as though More was supporting British colonization. In Book II, under the “Social and Business Relations” heading, Hythloday describes how the Utopians avoid overpopulation on the island. He states, “...if the population throughout the entire island exceeds the quota, then they... plant a colony under their own laws on the mainland near them, wherever the natives have plenty of unoccupied

and uncultivated land... But if the natives will not join in living under their laws, the Utopians drive them out of the land they claim for themselves, and if they resist make war on them". He continues, "The Utopians say it's perfectly justifiable to make war on people who leave their land idle and waste, yet forbid the use of it to others who, by the law of nature, ought to be supported from it".⁴⁹ The idea that the natives are not capable of maintaining their own land was believed by every imperialist power in world history.⁵⁰ During the time of Ritter's translation, his audience would have easily assumed that More was attempting to defend British colonization through his writing.

The imperialistic elements of *Utopia* likely resonated with Ritter and other German nationalists. In his translation, Ritter emphasized these passages, and, in doing so, left out much of More's satire. Without understanding the satire throughout *Utopia*, including More's mockery of English customs, Ritter's readers would have viewed the book as a futile attempt to rationalize British imperialism. His translation was influenced by his political objective to portray *Utopia* as More's defense for British colonization. This encouraged German nationalism by casting blame on Britain for Germany's economic failures. He translated the work with an overt, nationally influenced agenda: to make *Utopia* appear to be an apologia for British colonization.⁵¹

Conclusion

Throughout the modern age translators have altered *Utopia* to confirm their biases, support their opinions, and reinforce their nation's ideals. Versions of the text tend to say more about the person, place, and country of publication rather than the actual book itself. The paratextual materials provided by these translators impact their reader's perception of the text itself. Burnet's 1684 edition of *Utopia* illustrates the power of paratexts. His portrayal of Thomas More as a misguided Catholic and his disregard of More's actions as Lord Chancellor not only altered the perception of *Utopia*: it altered the perception of Thomas More himself. Klonowicz demonstrates in his version how selective translations lead to historical misunderstanding and simplification. The beauty of More's *Utopia* lies in its complexity, which Klonowicz omitted from his 1918 transliteration. He made it seem as though More, a sixteenth century Catholic government official, was an outspoken socialist icon. While the island of Utopia is communal in nature, More himself did not necessarily believe in communist policies. Klonowicz translation dismisses the satire, contradictions, and intricacy that make *Utopia* one of the most intriguing books in human history. Just twenty-nine years later, Abgarowicz published his Polish translation, which was in distinct contrast to Klonowicz' version. Abgarowicz emphasized the

religious elements of *Utopia*, which reflected the struggle between the Polish Catholic Church and the communist government during his time of publication. Rode's introduction portrayed More as a devout Catholic who did not intend to inspire socialist ideas. This assertion elucidates the connection between the original text, the past translations of the text, and the current translation. With each interpretation comes a new objective, perspective, and voice that create a unique version of the original *Utopia*. Gerhard Ritter made *Utopia* appear as a justification for British imperialism. He showed how national allegiances influence cross cultural translation. Ritter's transliteration indicates the dangers of cultural bias in the translation of historical documents.

Thomas More's book has been used to support the English Reformation, Polish socialism and Catholicism, as well as German nationalism-- four vastly different national viewpoints. The translations of *Utopia* have reflected many cultural, political, and social movements across national boundaries. There are not many texts, outside of scripture, that have been claimed as widely or as passionately as Thomas More's *Utopia*. The paratextual material that accompany these versions attempt to justify More's alignment with the translator's social or religious group; therefore impacting the reader's understanding of the text.

At first glance, *Utopia* seems to be either a critique of sixteenth century England or renaissance humanism; however, the text has exceeded its original purpose. *Utopia* is now a unit of analysis to study how cultural bias can influence our perception of history. It offers historians a way to compare and contrast how history has been adapted to support different national agendas. With every distinct reader, society, and nation comes a unique perspective-- and a unique *Utopia*.

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