



Doctoral Program in English and American Literary Studies

Utopias, Travels and Insularity

**Doctoral Workshop with Jean-Michel Racault
(La Réunion), 8-10 May 2014**

A definition of utopia is not an easy task, but a distinction seems obvious between two very different meanings. One may call *utopia* the longing for a social and political new order resulting in the future into a more perfect society than the present one. The word utopia can also apply to a literary genre describing as a present reality some spatially remote society shown as altogether different from ours.

Starting from a “spatial” conception of utopia which fits better our intended programme (mainly texts from the 16th to the 18th century), but never forgetting that both meanings can never be entirely dissociated, the workshop will deal logically with the relationship between classical utopian literature and the various forms of travel literature. Special attention will be paid to the motive of the island considered as its favourite configuration. Some literary forms closely related to the utopian genre such as imaginary voyages, robinsonades, and pastoral novels will also be considered.

The sessions of this three-day workshop co-organised by the English Department and the Department of Romance Languages will be held partly in English, partly in French. Although some of them may deal with minor or little known authors, no special knowledge of the period is required, except a survey of the general bibliography and a very close reading of the few excerpts used as illustrations. A previous knowledge of the major classical works is taken for granted, but a re-reading is of these texts is advisable (cf. the section on preparatory reading).

Jean-Michel Racault is Professor Emeritus at the University of La Réunion.



Thursday 8 May (Zürichbergstr. 8, D-31)

6.15-8 pm Lecture and discussion: "Utopie et mondialisation de L'Utopie de More (1516) au *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* de Diderot (1772-1796)"

8 pm Apéro

Friday 9 May (Plattenstr. 47, PLH-105)

2-4 pm Lecture and discussion: "Utopian experiments, travel books and literary piracy: Defoe's fiction and the Republic of Libertalia"

4.30-7 pm Workshop

Saturday 10 May (Plattenstr. 47, PLH-105)

10-12 am Lecture and discussion: "Le mythe de l'île-paradis. Tentative et échec de réappropriation de l'Eden dans *Paul et Virginie* de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre"

2-5 pm Workshop



Preparatory reading:



- Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516)
- Cyrano de Bergerac, *L'autre monde* (*Voyage dans la Lune*; 1657)
- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)
- Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Book 4 (1727)
- Denis Diderot, *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (1772-1796)
- Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie* (1788)

General knowledge of the above texts will be expected. In addition, a selection of excerpts that will be discussed in detail is available for download on OLAT.* A very close reading of these excerpts in preparation for the workshop is expected.

All interested students, members of staff and other guests are cordially invited to the workshop. Please register by sending an e-mail to Johnny Riquet (johannes.riquet@es.uzh.ch) by 3 May.

*Search for "Workshop Jean-Michel Racault" or use the following link:

<https://www.olat.uzh.ch/olat/url/RepositoryEntry/10175676420?guest=true&lang=de>