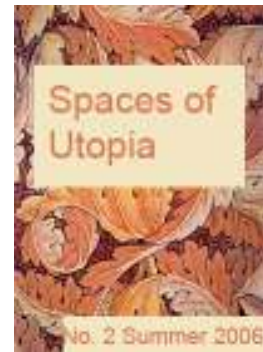


Hythlodæus' Female Heir:

Transformation of the Utopian / Dystopian Concept in Gioconda Belli's *Waslala. Memorial del Futuro* (1996)

Susanna Layh

University of Augsburg, Germany



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*NOPLACIA was once my name,
That is, a place where no one goes.
Plato's Republic now I claim
To match, or beat at its own game;
For that was just a myth in prose,
But what he wrote of, I became,
Of men, wealth, laws a solid frame,
A place where every wise man goes:
GOPLACIA is now my name.
(More 1965: 27)*

In this motto preceding the first book of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) the author not only introduces and explains the ambivalent nature of his neologism utopia for the first time, but also refers to antiquity and places his *Utopia* in the tradition of Plato's *Republic*. More states his intention of reviving Plato's mere philosophical construct of a not-place as a fictitious well-place thereby starting a literary game, a *ludum literarium* that can be seen as the starting point of the long tradition of the genre of literary utopia until now. As it is well known, the literary utopia has undergone decisive changes and variations since the 16th century, indeed: The static nature of the utopian societies of the early modern times has become as obsolete as the totalitarian concepts in the anti-utopias of the 20th century as for example in Samjatin's *My* (1920), Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) or Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* (1949). But despite the ever so often proclaimed death of utopia the necessity of utopian thinking as a means

to envisage the future seems to be unbroken. The plethora and variety of literary utopias and dystopias in the 1980s and 1990s reflects the dialectics of utopian hope and dystopian pessimism in recent literature as well as the general need to criticise the world-wide political developments and the modernisation process in the real world.

With Gioconda Belli's *Waslala. Memorial del Futuro* I chose one literary example to show this transformation of the traditional utopian and dystopian concept. This paper is supposed to be a cross-reading of the 20th century novel with the classical pretext of early modern times intending to show that Belli takes up the thread of a literary game that More has already started then. When Don José in *Waslala* picks up the pun on the literary namesake of one of Belli's main characters by saying: "Qué cosas, ¿verdad? Se llama Raphael. El personaje de Tomás Moro, el que descubre la isla llamada Utopía, se llamaba Raphael también ..." (Belli, 1996: 41) [Strange, isn't it? He is called Raphael. The one in Thomas More, the one who discovered the island, was called the same ...],¹ Belli picks up the pun on More himself, on his text and his humanistic game. As More places his *Utopia* in the tradition of Plato's *Republic*, Belli places her novel in the tradition of More's *Utopia* overtly announcing the intention to de- and reconstruct it. Belli's text pays tribute to the origin of utopia in the Old World by relying on Thomas More's *Utopia* as a framework of motifs, ideas and characters. In its essence it's a revision and rewriting of the early modern times' "original" by the inclusion of a feminist, anti-capitalist and ecological perspective.

With the discovery of the so-called New World, colonisation and imperialism offered new possibilities of expansion and itinerary utopias such as More's *Utopia*, Campanella's *La Città del Sole* (1602/1623) or Bacon's *Nova Atlantis* (1624) – to name but a few – imagined unreachable islands as an unspecified setting for their vision of the ideal state. But Belli is one of the authors of the 20th century who shows us that the former exotic paradise has

changed due to exploitation and abuse. The Empire is writing back now. Belli's *Waslala* opens a postcolonialist discourse and a dialogue with the political history of the Latin-American continent as well as with literary tradition.

Utopia, dystopia and anti-utopia always emerge in times of crisis and change reacting to contemporary conditions and criticising it by means of estrangement. More's *Utopia* critically comments the situation at the beginning of early modern times. The text is dialectically structured: In the first book the example of the Tallstorians serves as an alternative to the system of criminal justice in England; the examples of Nolandia and Happiland² serve as criticism of the politics of conquest of the European rulers. Raphael Hythlodæus' report about the island of Utopia in the second book is the most extensive outline of an alternative society of all.

Similarly, in Belli's *Waslala* the process of modernisation and globalisation and the possible ecological and political effects it might have in the future is criticised from the perspective of a fictitious Latin-American country in a not too distant future. It shows the continuity of the struggle in Latin-America replacing the Spanish *conquistadores* by American and European capitalists and thereby deconstructing the connection between power and violence. Its general criticism of 20th century problems such as poverty, hunger, social disintegration and the effects of massive migration and war could not only be applied to different countries in Latin-America, but also to regions in some parts of Africa or Asia. But nevertheless, apart from that, the specific references in some parts of the novel to Nicaraguan politics in the 1990s, shortly after the defeat of the Sandinists at the general election, are only thinly disguised and the close connection to contemporary political debates in Nicaragua give the book an explosive political dimension.³

The frame of *Utopia* consists of a discussion between the Dutch humanist Peter Gilles or Petrus Ägidius, the traveller to Utopia called Raphael Hythlodæus and the fictitious author and publisher of Raphael's report,

Thomas More. Fact and fiction, reality and imagination are consciously blurred here, autobiographical elements are mixed with fictional ones and none of the three participants in the discussion can be viewed as a merely fictional character. This narrative strategy is strengthened by the two letters preceding the first book in which the fictitious Thomas More explicitly emphasises that his *Utopia* is only a reproduction of Raphael's report:

You knew that in this work I didn't have the problem of finding my own subject-matter and puzzling out a suitable form – all I had to do was repeat what Raphael told us. There was no need to bother very much about the wording, since his style wasn't particularly polished – the whole thing was improvised on the spur of the moment, (...). So the closer I could get to his simple, off-hand way of expressing himself, the closer I'd be to the truth, which in this case is all I'm worrying about, and all I ought to worry about. (More 1965: 29)

The fictitious Thomas More refuses the role of the author of the text hiding behind the function of a mere listener who has the primary aim to inform the readers about the characteristics of Utopia and the way of living of its inhabitants by means of Raphael's report: "My present plan is merely to repeat what he said about the laws and customs of Utopia. I must start by recording the conversation which led up to the first mention of that republic" (*idem*, 41). In the following conversation Raphael criticises harshly the contemporary social conditions in 16th century England thereby forcing the reader to relate his criticism to the description of the ideal world of Utopia. The overt contrast between the real and the ideal world makes the reader focus on the deficits of the contemporary society.

In contrast to that Belli abandons the concept of the fictitious author and publisher, but picks up More's play with fact and fiction and reverses it by adding two real author's notes at the end of the novel. Here she reveals the authentic background of the terrifying nuclear "accident" described in the novel: In September 1987 two people searching in the waste found a metal pipe at a waste disposal site in the Brazilian city Goiania:

lo vendieron a un negociante de chatarra, que lo abrió a martillazos con la esperanza de vender el envase de plomo. En su interior encontró un fabuloso polvo azul que brillaba en la oscuridad. Fascinado por la novedad, regaló vasitos llenos del polvo a sus amigos y parientes. En el cumpleaños de una de ellas, un niña de seis años, pusieron el polvo sobre la mesa del comedor y apagaron las luces. (Belli 1996: 329)

[They sold it to a scrap dealer who opened it with a hammer intending to sell the lead. Inside he found a strange blue powder glowing in the dark. Fascinated by this novelty he gave little bottles filled with the powder away as presents to his friends and relatives. At the birthday party of one of them, a six-year old girl, people spread it on the dining room table and turned off the light.]⁴

Belli then quotes the Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano who describes the incident in his article *Palabras que quieren olvidar el olvidado* [*Words that want to forget forgetfulness*] as following: "Quien se frota la piel, brilla de noche. Todo el barrio es una lámpara. El pobrerío, súbitamente rico de luz, está de fiesta" (*apud* Belli 1996: 330) [The ones who rub that powder on their skin are glowing in the dark. The whole quarter turns into a single lamp. The poor, suddenly rich of light are celebrating]. But the blue powder was cesium 137, radioactive material:

Se contaminaron 129 personas; 20 fueron hospitalizadas con quemaduras, vómitos y otros efectos de la radiación. Siete murieron. Entre ellos, la niña del cumpleaños (...). (*ibidem*)

[129 people were contaminated. 20 of them were taken to hospital with burns, nausea and other radiation injuries from the contamination. Seven of them died, amongst them the little birthday girl (...).]

That was the worst nuclear "accident" in Latin-America ever. It only happened one year after Tschernobyl. But as Galeano describes it: "Chernóbil resuena cada día en los oídos del mundo. De Goiania nunca más se supo. América Latina es noticia condenada al olvido" (*apud ibidem*). [Tschernobyl is still present every day. Almost nobody has heard of Goiania ever again. Latin-America is news condemned to oblivion.]

Whereas More uses what anachronistically could almost be called a metafictional and self-referential narrative strategy emphasising the conscious construction of the text to create space for his social and political criticism, Belli stresses the authentic roots of her text by means of this appendix for the same reason. Both authors therefore intend and create the same effect, Belli forcing the readers as well to relate the fictitious incidents described in her novel to contemporary reality.

Thus, whereas More contrasts the contemporary conditions with the outline of an ideal, perfect society, Belli's fictitious country called Faguas is presented at the "iconic register of the text"⁵ as a terrifying dystopian vision of the future only extrapolating tendencies already existent today. This fictitious Latin-American country resembles contemporary Nicaragua in many respects, but Belli extends the characteristics of Faguas to a global metaphor for any Third World country today. Old polarities may have disappeared, but new structures of power have substituted the old ones. The gap between the privileged and the underprivileged, between the First and the Third World has widened. In Faguas centuries-old wars – having been started because of foreign intervention – endlessly circulate without obvious reasons destroying the country. Peace, social equality and economic balance don't exist. People are suffering because of epidemics, famine and poverty. Thinking back Don José can only remember vaguely when and how it all started:

No le era posible definir con exactitud el momento en que el desarrollo de Faguas empezó a evolucionar y el país inició su retorno a la Edad Media, perdiendo sus contornos de nación y pasando a ser (...) reducidas a selvas, reservas forestales, a función de pulmón y basurero del mundo desarrollado que las explotó para sumirlas después en el olvido, en la miseria, condenándolas al ostracismo, a la categoría de *terras incognitas* (...). (Belli 1996: 23)

[It wasn't possible to define the exact moment of degeneration when Faguas began to return to the Middle Ages losing its outline of a nation, not existing anymore (...) thrown back on its jungles and tropical forests, reduced to the function of the lung and the waste disposal site of the developed world exploiting them and then leaving them to oblivion and misery, banned to the offside, branded as *terra incognita* (...).]

The technologically highly developed First World tries to ignore and forget about countries such as Faguas only using them for their own profit and advantage. Technical innovations and inventions have made life very easy in the countries of the First World. By means of technology, automation and specialisation they have reached the utopian aim of More, Campanella and others to reduce working hours considerably and create human working conditions. But in an ironic dystopian reversal of the utopian ideal the reduction of working hours to a three-day week, the abundance of spare time and inactivity have only evoked boredom and the feeling of uselessness:

Es absurdo. La robótica avanzó demasiado rápido. La gente no se ha podido adaptar todavía al ocio. Y si sumamos a eso el hecho de que la esperanza de vida se prolonga cada vez más, no es de extrañar que proliferen los viajes suicidas. (Belli 1996: 32)

[It's absurd. The automation has developed too quickly. People are not able to adapt to idleness yet. And if one also takes into consideration the fact that the life expectation is prolonged more and more it is not surprising that suicide trips proliferate.]

A kind of death tourism – "[t]urismo de la muerte" (*ibidem*) – has become trendy. Ships packed with people who only want to die in peace leave the ports for a "crucero de lujo, sólo que no hay regreso" (*ibidem*), a luxury crusade without return. The painless collective death has become big business and the voyages are always sold out. Meanwhile on the other side of the planet people are struggling for survival and More's utopian ideal of a world without money has become dystopian reality as the plethora of wars has destroyed the economy and money hasn't much value any more.

In traditional utopian literature such as Thomas More's *Utopia* the "alternative world imagined by the author" (Moylan 1986: 36) is central to the text, "the idea" as Tom Moylan puts it, becomes "the hero" (*idem*, 37)⁶ of the text:

What in the realist novel would be considered “mere” background setting becomes in traditional utopian writing the key element of the text. (...) [T]he utopian setting becomes the primary place for the text's exploration and exposure of the historical situation. The world as we live it in history is revealed or manifested in the world as we read it. The alternative world tends to absorb many of the actions and causations normally reserved for characters in a realist narrative. (Moylan 1986: 36, 37)

Therefore the extensive description of the political and economic structures of the ideal state, of religion and philosophy of the Utopians as well as the description of every aspect of daily life such as family structures, marriage, reproduction, education, etc. determine Raphael's report. Belli's *Waslala*, however, bears in many respects the characteristics of what Moylan has defined as critical utopia:

(...) [T]he critical utopia at the level of the iconic register, in which the image of the alternative society is generated, breaks with previous utopias by presenting in much greater, almost balanced, detail both the utopian society and the original society against which the utopia is pitted as a revolutionary alternative. (Moylan 1986: 44)

Belli contrasts the dystopian reality of Faguas with the myth of the utopian enclave of Waslala, a supposedly existing utopian community, hidden somewhere in a time gap, and at the beginning of the novel no one seems to know any more how to get there. But Belli dismisses the black and white scheme of a bad society and its ideal alternative. The presentation of society at the iconic register of the text is much more differentiated with various communities existing within the dystopian society and the utopian community revealing itself as imperfect and with limitations.

In Faguas the state doesn't exist any more: The country is divided into two competing sides with conflicting values and aims: On the one, the privileged societal side there is the narratological transformation of More's 16th century landowners into the Espada brothers who control a big part of the country with their own army and keep the armed conflicts alive to secure their

power. Their business is based on the trade with arms and the export of drugs which are the invisible, but most important connections to the technologically highly developed world.

On the other, the underprivileged societal side there is the “20th century version of the poor” personified in the comunards under the leadership of their female general Engracia living on a huge waste disposal site. Their strategies of survival are based on the adjustment to the requirements of international powers and the economy of waste reprocessing. In contrast to the Espada brothers and their violent dictatorship of terror and torture the comunards strive for a peaceful life. Dependent on the international environmental authority they try to solve their conflicts by making arrangements.

Apart from those two big communities there is a co-existence of different little worlds and microcosms struggling for their existence in Faguas. One of them is the world behind the river, home of Don José and his granddaughter Melisandra. Don José, modelled on the great Nicaraguan poet José Coronel Urtecho, has been one of the founders of Waslala.⁷ Belli intertextually refers here to the already described frame of *Utopia* consisting of the discussion between the Dutch humanist Peter Gilles, Raphael, and the fictitious Thomas More. They debate the question of how politics and moral can be combined in a state thereby going back to Plato's and Cicero's questions about the essence of justice and the possibility of the philosopher ruling the state. All these questions reappear in *Waslala* in a transformed shape extrapolated to the contemporary conditions of the 20th century. But Belli not only modernises this centuries-old debate thematically, she also reconstructs utopia on the self-referential generic level creating the character of Don José as one of a group of poets and philosophers who once wanted to make the impossible possible: To actually build More's *Utopia*, to bring it into existence and make it real. Thereby Belli actually tells us the story of the poet/philosopher becoming ruler of his or her

own state reviving Plato's and More's discourse and transforming their subject of theoretical mind games into political practice.

First Waslala is only a dream, a vision, the topic of many discussions of some intellectuals in Faguas. But when some of them become fugitives of yet another war they go out to search the Holy Grail, the Promised Land and actually find it: Waslala. The Arcadian idyll, the Garden of Eden is hidden in a time gap bearing all the features of the traditional Utopia such as isolation, selection and ideality and resembling More's utopian island in more than one respect. They actually build their own utopian paradise living in peace and happiness according to all the principles utopian visionaries of all ages have ever dreamt of: Freedom, democracy, equality, solidarity, respect, tolerance, non-materialism, etc. – a small world of male and female thinkers and writers as an experimental cell intended to be the germ for a new society in which the greed for power and money as well as violence, the bad in general would be eradicated.

Once the utopian model society is actually functioning, Don José goes back to get his family, but when he reaches the place where Waslala had been, it had disappeared – "Waslala había desaparecido" (Belli 1996: 65). He never finds it again and goes back to the world behind the river. Years later history repeats itself. His daughter and son-in-law have to escape from the totalitarian authorities and decide to make their way to Waslala leaving behind their little three- year-old daughter Melisandra. Nobody ever hears of them again.

The world behind the river is a remote, relatively safe and rural place, separated from the rest of Faguas, dominion of the old writer, of intellect and humanism. People rarely come here and the ones who do are either smugglers or curious adventurers. At the level of the discrete register, the level generating plot and character, there is a decisive change compared to the utopias of the

early modern times characterising *Waslala* according to one of the principles Tom Moylan coins as a critical utopia:

In the new utopia, the primacy of societal alternatives over character and plot is reversed, and the alternative society and indeed the original society fall back as settings for the foregrounded political quest of the protagonist. The visitor becomes the hero, or in some cases the anti-hero. (...) [F]urthermore, in the critical utopia the more collective heroes of social transformation are presented off-center and usually as characters who are not dominant, white, heterosexual, chauvinist males but females, gay, non-white, and generally operating collectively. (Moylan 1986: 45)

More's set of literary figures discussing utopia in the garden – the locus amoenus – is transformed into an illustrious group of travellers arriving at Don José's hacienda, all of them having different motifs for their journey.

There is Raphael, the contemporary namesake of More's Hythlodæus and not the only one in the novel with a telling name which is also a utopian tradition More starts. More's seafarer reporting from the hence unknown island is in *Waslala* transformed into an American journalist pretending to be on the search for Waslala but actually writing a story on Philin, the new mysterious drug supposedly produced in Faguas. There is also the contemporary version or rather ironic transformation of the Dutch humanist Peter Gilles into the lesbian Dutch couple Krista and Vera who are coming from a matriarchal community intending to adopt an orphan. Also part of the group are Morris, the black scientist who is responsible for the examination of the waste arriving in Faguas and therefore searching for toxic content with his artificial arm, Hermann, the German gold trader and Maclovio, the Argentinean storyteller who turns out to be a drug dealer.

Of course, most of them are more types than characters representing specific political positions and utopian strategies depending on the role they have got on the stage of the novel. In the tradition of the travel or seafarer story – we remember Hythlodæus in More's *Utopia* is presented as a companion of Amerigo Vespucci – they all set out on a journey into the unknown that turns

out to be a literal Odyssey through various utopian or dystopian models or microcosms.

In contrast to More's static description of the Utopian society, "the visitor becomes the hero" in *Waslala*, indeed (Moylan 1986: 45); plot is foregrounded by Belli's effective genre blurring of utopian and dystopian narrative, quest narrative, adventure and travel novel, elements of crime story and fairy tale. Thereby the most obvious modernisation of More's *Utopia* can be seen in Belli's feminist revision of gender roles. Although showing some 'revolutionary' ideas compared to the contemporary society – such as the model of the extended family, communal meals etc. – More still outlines a patriarchal society. The patriarchal family is the social core of the society of the Utopians being hierarchically structured: "Each household (...) comes under the authority of the oldest male. Wives are subordinate to their husbands, children to their parents, and younger people generally to their elders" (More 1965: 80). Although women have access to education and are obliged to work and military service, they still have the same status of political immaturity as the children in Utopia. Equality of man and woman is not a utopian goal for More, patriarchal gender roles are not questioned. Ultimately, there are no equal rights and women are excluded from political processes and power. Belli, however, deconstructs the image of the patriarchal family by showing different ways of living together such as the homosexual couples, the matriarchal communities called "matrias" (Belli 1996: 33) or Engracia's communards. Moreover, Belli outlines three strong female protagonists: Melisandra as an educated female transfiguration of the beau sauvage, her mother, the utopian traveller, and especially Engracia, powerful mother figure and the leader of the muchachos of the waste dump. They represent different facets of femininity, but all of them are breaking with traditional rules and patriarchal roles striving for equal rights and gender equality.

There could be much more said about what I call the “implicit More” at the iconic and discrete level of Belli's text, not only concerning the feminist revision of gender roles, but also concerning sexuality and love being rewritten into tropes of utopian desire and utopian hope.

As in many literary utopias More discusses sexuality as a means of reproduction and therefore being important for the preservation of society. Reproduction is not as strictly regulated as in Plato or Campanella, but, of course, only thinkable in marriage: "Any boy or girl convicted of premarital intercourse is severely punished, and permanently disqualified from marrying (...)" (More 1965: 103). Sexual/physical attraction seems not only to be existent in Utopia, but also important as "[t]he prospective bride (...) is exhibited stark naked to the prospective bridegroom by a respectable married woman, and a suitable male chaperon shows the bridegroom naked to the bride" (*ibidem*). As in More's own contemporary society love or even marrying because of love remains a matter that is not discussed.

Belli ironically plays with that topic when the founders of Waslala discuss the idea of giving up reproduction for a while to purify their little utopian community, but cannot find any consensus on that subject-matter. Instead, Belli openly presents heterosexuality as well as homosexuality as antithesis to the dystopian conditions surrounding the protagonists, as an element of power, passion and liberation. When Melisandra, Raphael and Morris reach the realm of Engracia, the already described tragic nuclear ‘accident’ finds its literary expression. The muchachos find some blue powder glowing in the dark, contained in an old machine for chemo therapy. Rubbing it on their skin they celebrate an archaic and anarchic feast with Engracia until Morris appears educating them about what they have done and the effects it will have. Raphael and Melisandra can only react with frantic love-making to the catastrophe trying to find consolation in each other's arms. From the beginning they instantly feel connected with each other and at the end of the novel they represent the

almost too smooth personified ideal of sexual freedom and love unifying various dichotomous oppositions. And Morris, for example, motivated by despair and ultimate love for Engracia commits suicide contaminating himself voluntarily with the cesium to share Engracia's fate.

Belli uses this tragic incident to develop further the presentation of the different co-existing utopian strategies and concepts in the text. Condemned to death, Morris, Engracia and the muchachos finally dare the step of revolutionary change. With a bomb attack they commit suicide in the headquarters of the Espada brothers, eliminating the dictators and their centre of power at the same time. The concrete utopia, the liberation of Faguas presents itself as a reincarnation through death.

In the post-revolutionary situation of chaos, helplessness and hope the myth of Waslala is revived. Melisandra is becoming the bearer of utopian hope for a whole society. In the "classical" manner of the female quest narrative she transforms from utopian companion into traveller setting out to search for the lost utopian paradise and her lost parents at the same time. Her story therefore also becomes the daughter's tale in search of her lost mother which is, as Lacan puts it, also a journey into the realm of the imaginary.

Some of the characteristics I outline here are, of course, only reflecting the characteristics of the critical utopias of the 1960s and 1970s such as Russ' *Female Man* (1975) or Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) and, admittedly, *Waslala* has its limits at the generic level. But as I try to show, it is a highly intertextual text which steps into direct dialogue with the pretexts of its forefathers and thereby fulfils yet another of Tom Moylan's definitions of the critical utopias that they "(...) keep the utopian impulse alive by challenging it and deconstructing it within its very pages. (...) [I]n the twentieth century it has become necessary to destroy utopia in order to save it" (Moylan 1986: 46).

Melisandra magically finds Waslala and her mother as well only to realise that the former well-place has become a deserted place, a dead place and therefore a not-place. The Arcadian village is only a memory of itself. The ideal of actually constructing More's Utopia and bringing it alive has failed, women couldn't bear children there and the old poets and philosophers strangely wilted like flowers. They just faded away. So people left the former paradise. Melisandra's mother being the only one to be left behind trying to keep up the myth of Waslala for the outside world:

La razón por la que yo sigo aquí es porque pienso que Waslala, como mito, como aspiración, justifica su existencia. Es más, considero que es imperativo que exista, que vuelva a ser, que continúe generando leyendas. Lo más grande de Waslala es que fuimos capaces de imaginarla, que fue la fantasía lo que, a la postre, la hizo funcionar. (Belli 1996: 319)

[I stayed here, because I think that Waslala as myth, as hope justifies its existence. Moreover, I believe it must exist, it must come back into being, continue to create legends. The most important of Waslala is that we have been capable of imagining it, that it has been the imagination making it function at last.]

This of course is Belli's metafictional discussion of the highly disputed and criticised death of Utopia. The fading away of the old poets might be seen as a metafictional device that the founders/writers of utopia such as More, Campanella, Bacon, etc. and the static nature of their utopian concepts are dead. But she doesn't believe in the failure of utopia as an idea. When Melisandra asks her mother what to tell the people in the outside world, her mother advises her to tell them that Waslala really exists: "Waslala existe. El ideal existe. Fueron sus sueños los que hicieron realidad la existencia de Waslala. Sus aspiraciones la mantuvieron y mantendrán viva" (Belli 1996: 320). [Waslala exists. The ideal exists. It has been their dreams making the existence of Waslala real. Their aspirations keep it alive.]

The ambivalent open ending with Melisandra leaving her mother and Waslala behind suggests the necessity of the co-existence of different utopian concepts. Melisandra can only picture herself in the "real world" of Faguas

representing for her the possibility of the concrete utopia and therefore the future. But at the same time the Principle of Hope, the dream of the utopian Waslala represented by her mother has to be kept alive to make the survival of Faguas possible: "(...) la razón de ser de Waslala era ser Waslala, la utopía, el lugar que no era, que no podría ser el tiempo y el espacio habitual (...)" (*idem*, 321). [The reason of being for Waslala was to be Waslala, the utopia, the place that was or could not be the normal time and space.]

With the failure of the construction of Waslala Belli deconstructs and destroys utopia but she also reconstructs the utopian imagination and revives utopia as an idea. Waslala is demystified, but a new dream of its revival is already starting to grow. The appendix as a contemporary version of More's fictitious publisher's note, which strengthens that argumentation, appeals to the implicit reader to fill the gaps and reconstruct the utopian impulse.

Notes

¹ As Belli's *Waslala* is not translated into English, the translation of this quotation as well as of all the following taken from Belli's novel are my own.

² I use the English terms used in the above cited edition. See Turner's explanation of the origin of the names in the glossary (More 1965: 153, 154): Tallstoria is "the country of the *Polyleritae*", Nolandia equals the "*Achoriorum populus*" and Happiland the "*Macarenses*".

³ For an explicit discussion of the reference to Nicaraguan politics see: Dröschner 2004: 160-163.

⁴ Belli presents this paragraph as a quotation taken out of James Brooke's *New York Times* article "Tourism Springs from Toxic Waste" (3rd May, 1995, A6). She probably translated it from English into Spanish herself, but as I don't have access to the article myself I cannot tell how much of it is paraphrase or actual translation of the quotation. I therefore used Belli's text translating it back into English for better understanding, but my translation might differ from the original.

⁵ I'm borrowing the term of the "iconic register of the text" as well as the later following term of the "discrete register" from Tom Moylan in the sense he uses and defines it in *Demand the Impossible*: "In examining the utopian text, three operations can be identified: the alternative society, the world, generated in what can be termed the iconic register of the text; the protagonist specific to utopias – that is, the visitor to the utopian society – dealt with in what can be termed the discrete register; and the ideological contestations in the text that brings the cultural artifact back to the contradictions of history" (Moylan 1986: 36).

⁶ Moylan refers to Kingsley Amis here who states the same phenomenon in science fiction.

⁷ Belli emphasizes the resemblance between her characters Don José and his wife Doña María and José Coronel Urtecho and María Kautz in the second note of her appendix (Belli 1996: 441).

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