

Abstract Research Project (<https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/404354183>)

Latin America as European Utopia. Communities and Unstable Orders

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The project deals with alternative communities based on the topos of "Latin America" in German texts of the 19th and 20th centuries. These texts reoccupy the subcontinent imaginatively in the context of European experiences of crisis. So far, reconstructions of Western discourse on Latin America have focused on the representation of alterity, with the idea of "Europe" being formed in contrast to the Americas since the conquest. However, it remains to be analysed to what extent constructions of Latin America are not only counterpoints, but also spaces that contain the outlines of an imaginary other Europe, or rather utopias of alternative communities. Throughout history, a specific sensitivity to the relationship between colonialism and the European present can be detected in authors excluded from their national communities. Their representations of the Other often conceal fantasies of political (dis)order. Soon after the conquest, the Americas became a target for European projections and, as the research has shown, also for specifically German fantasies and representations. In view of the significance of the Americas as an imagined place, the aim is to identify discursive nodes in a number of exemplary texts in which the "Old" and the "New World" break through established attributions of colonizer and colonized and carry new concepts of community and coexistence. The analysis of the fictional and non-fictional texts is linked to postcolonial theories, which are based on the assumption of mutual entanglements in the process of cultural appropriation, even if these may run counter to enduring colonial discourses. America is not only a subject of the European imaginary, but also an agent in its formation. The selected texts will be analysed in a diachronic process as well as in their respective discursive contexts in order to determine the horizon of the historical imagination beyond the nation: While Heinrich Heine tests an enlightened concept of history through the inversion of the Old and the New World, B. Traven inscribes the condition of the Western stateless in the image of the indigenous, and Stefan Zweig defines the hybrid Brazilian society as a "land of the future". Alfred Döblin experiments with a utopian form of colonialism in the metaphor of Indian Canaan, and Vilém Flusser relates the transition from exile to migration in Brazil as a conscious self-situation in homelessness. The analysis of prose, essays and poems by the above-mentioned authors will further develop transnational approaches in German Studies, and the category of the imagined community, which has until now been largely focused on the idea of the nation, will be explored in view of its productivity for literary studies.