

The Prefatory/Postscript Letters to St. Thomas More's *Utopia*: The Culture of 'Seeing' as a Reality-Conferring Strategy

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Abstract

The article discusses the significance of on-the-spot observation and eye witnessing as powerful scientific tools for establishing the real in the early sixteenth century. In particular, I argue that the simulation of such tools in the paratextual material to *Utopia*, especially the prefatory/postscript letters, enhance, preemptively, the verisimilitude of the Utopian society as well as the materiality of the island at hand. If eye witnessing is reality-conferring, then, the powerful Renaissance act of reading a text as a simulation of eye witnessing is reality-conferring too. In this light, to read *Utopia* through the paratextual letters is to place one's trust in the literal existence of Utopia insofar as *reading* simulates the act of *seeing* with one's own eyes and bearing witness to a palpable reality.

Keywords: Eye Witnessing, Humanism, Paratext, *Utopia*, Verisimilitude

1. *Paratext, Utopia and Liminality*

Nearly five hundred years after its first publication in 1516, Thomas More's *Utopia* continues to spark endless discussions in relation to its potential meanings or its exact nature.¹ More could not have written *Utopia* at a better time. As Alistair Fox maintains, when he sat down to write it in 1515, 'His imagination had been excited by the discoveries of Cabot and Vespucci in the New World... the momentum of Erasmian reform was approaching its height; and he had the stimulating company... of Cuthbert Tunstal, Busleyden and Peter Giles, humanists with interests and ambitions similar to his own' (1984, 53). The publication of *Utopia* was accompanied by paratextual material (at times called *parerga*) – maps, illustrations, verses as well as a number of letters written by friends or acquaintances from the wider humanist continental circles. By fervently supporting the project, this paratextual material – which was altered to a great degree from edition to edition, thus also constantly reshaping readers' reception of *Utopia* – worked towards legitimising More's endeavour, establishing its truthfulness, and announcing beforehand its acceptance by early sixteenth-century readership.²

'Paratext' in literature covers everything that lies *around* a text. Gérard Genette has famously called paratext 'a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*' between the author(s) and the public, or 'the most socialized side of the practice of literature' (1997, 1, 14).

This 'transaction' is even more conspicuous in early modern texts where, for instance, prefatory material frequently proves to be not just a typical introduction but, rather, an integral part to the main text, a point of liminality at which fictional text and nonfictional reality intersect.³ In the case of *Utopia*, the paratextual material of the five main Latin editions published in More's lifetime (along with the translation of that material into vernacular languages after his death in 1535) performed an even more decisive role as it enhanced the mobility of the text across different cultures, thereby effecting diverse modes of knowledge transfer and cultural exchange.⁴ I will limit the scope of the essay to the analysis of the prefatory/postscript letters appended to the early Latin editions of *Utopia* rather than expand on the entire paratext of the project.⁵ This, of course, does not mean that the paratextual value of, say, the Utopian map will not come up in the development of the case I am making.

In this essay, I embark upon the significance of on-the-spot observation and eye witnessing as powerful scientific tools for establishing the real in the early sixteenth century. In particular, I argue that the simulation of such tools in the paratextual material to *Utopia*, especially the prefatory/postscript letters, enhance, pre-emptively, the verisimilitude of the Utopian society as well as the materiality of the island at hand. If eye witnessing is reality-conferring, then, the powerful Renaissance act of reading a text, as a simulation of *eye* witnessing, is reality-conferring too. In this light, to read (or 'witness') the paratextual material of *Utopia* is to place one's trust in the literal existence of Utopia insofar as *reading* simulates the act of *seeing* with one's own eyes and bearing witness to a palpable reality.

Visibility performs a crucial role in authenticating Utopia, and more generally in Renaissance epistemology, in the sense that sight is gradually replacing the medieval practice of hearsay – rumour, conjecture, small talk. In 'The Medieval Travel Narrative', Paul Zumthor and Catherine Peebles assert that 'from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, sight replaces hearing' in the sense that the invention of such 'technological' artefacts as the book and the map (or even the telescope later in the seventeenth century) enabled human beings to see for themselves and realize the existence of things they had only heard of before, or things only rumoured to exist (1994, 817). 'Seeing' in the Renaissance constitutes a method of mapping out a reality as well as *constructing* one.⁶ Denise Albanese affirms that in the early Renaissance 'the epistemology of sight... serve[s] the emergent ideology of science: what is known through seeing is reconfigured as more real, and... tale-telling is replaced by an optical warrant whose signs are themselves available to be seen, read, and hence believed' (1990, 521).

In such a climate, on-the-spot observation and eye witnessing are beginning to be considered reliable scientific methods, therefore, because of people's increasing confidence in the new technological era, as representing reality accurately. Therefore, 'I believe because I have seen' becomes the

prevalent motto frequently repressing its religious other – 'I see because I believe'. What is of importance, though, is that the objectivity attributed to the 'scientificity' of sight/witnessing spread also to the terrain of the written word. The advent of the book culture and the technological dissemination of knowledge via typography led to a reification of reading and the building of trust in the knowledge conveyed by the text.⁷ We now consider something real and true not only because we have heard it or seen it with our own eyes but also because we have read it or, rather, seen it written down on paper (or even read that someone *else*, a humanist friend perhaps, has seen it).⁸ In such a case, writing constructs rather than merely reflects reality, while reading, as an artificial mode of eye witnessing, simulates on-the-spot observation.

2. *Humanism and Friendliness in the Utopian Letters*

The prelude and postlude letters contribute immensely to situating *Utopia* culturally and intellectually, but they also produce additional authorial voices collaborating in the work and interfering with the very nature of the island of Utopia, namely its supposed 'verisimilitude'.⁹ George M. Logan, Robert M. Adams, and Clarence H. Miller argue that More may have written *Utopia* but the publication itself must have been 'heavily dependent on Giles and Erasmus' work as editors, agents, publicists and commentators, and buttressed by the... interpretative letters and poems of a number of other humanists' (1994, 276). The humanists' interpretative letters serve not only to interpret (or *misinterpret*) the meanings of *Utopia* but also to bear witness to the materiality of the island, thus authenticating, somehow, its *real* dimension.¹⁰

Humanism, and more particularly Erasmian humanism, moulded the character of what would become the independent intellectual.¹¹ Still, no matter how 'independent' they might be, the humanist scholars involved in advertising *Utopia* were implicated in the process of disseminating knowledge about the work (or information about the island) through their culture and practice of *friendship*, which created mutual trust as well as confidence in the plausibility of each other's arguments about *Utopia*.¹² The verisimilitude of the work depends largely upon the credibility of the humanists who endorse it and who ask their own (humanist) friends to act likewise.¹³ Furthermore, the credibility of the reports on *Utopia* was largely connected with the social stature of humanist 'friends' which created trust in their sayings.

In his prefatory letter to Thomas Lupset, exclusive to the 1517 and 1518 editions of *Utopia*, Budé attests to the crucial role of humanist friendship, formed within the so-called 'Republic of Letters', in taking More seriously and *Utopia* literally.¹⁴ As he affirms:

It was the testimony of Peter Giles of Antwerp which caused me to have full faith in More, who of himself carries weight and relies on great authority. I have never known

Giles in person – I am now passing over the recommendation given his learning and character – but I love him on account of his sworn friendship with the illustrious Erasmus, who has deserved exceedingly well of sacred and profane letters of all kinds. With Erasmus himself, I have long ago formed an association of friendship sealed by an exchange of letters.¹⁵

Hythlodæus, who was an eyewitness to the Utopian society, supposedly gave Thomas More, in the presence of Peter Giles, a full account of his experiences on the island. We can gather from the excerpt above that Budé is reluctant to take More at his word but he finally accepts the truthfulness of his narrative for the sake of Giles who, too, has heard Hythlodæus' oral account and who is considered a reliable witness 'given his learning and character'. Budé, however, is also quick to add that he has never met Giles in person, yet he trusts him fully on account of the latter's close friendship with Erasmus with whom Budé seems to have actually 'formed an association of friendship' via their common humanist background. Budé, therefore, claims to have been able to bear witness to the materiality of Utopia not because he is an eyewitness himself but, rather astonishingly, because he can testify to the credibility of Erasmus' friend (Giles) as well as to the authenticity of *Utopia* as text *and* country. In a sense, he has borne witness to the veracity of the words that he, or someone else, has read with regard to the Utopian society rather than actually seen for himself the physical reality of Utopia. At stake is a fictional re-enactment, on the part of friends, of the (pseudo)scientific method of on-the-spot observation, whereby reading simulates seeing or witnessing. Given that visibility, in a way, authenticates the real, then, by association, a visible (that is, legible) text, whether it be literary or historical, does establish the real too, on account of its being read, witnessed, thereby taken at face value. The text of *Utopia* as artifice and material entity seems strangely entangled in the articulation of the allegedly 'natural' reality outside it.

The notion of friendship is a recurrent motif in Budé's letter and comes up a lot in other *Utopia*-related letters too. Erasmus always believed that knowledge can only be secured, played with, or negotiated within an ambience of friendly reciprocity:

His greatest pleasure is to praise absent friends to friends present. Since he is greatly loved by so many men, and that too in different parts of the world, because of his learning and most charming character, he tries earnestly to bind all men together with that same affection which all have for him alone. And so he constantly mentions each one of his friends individually to them all; and to insinuate them into the friendship of all the others, he constantly talks about those qualities each one has that deserve affection. (Surtz 1965, lxiii)¹⁶

In his letter to John Froben, added to the 1518 editions of *Utopia* (but not to the first two editions), Erasmus invokes his quasi-brotherly affinity with

More and close friendship with other humanists to convince him (Froben) of the high quality of *Utopia*: 'Now, however, I see that all learned men unanimously subscribe to my opinion and admire the man's superhuman genius...' (Surtz 1965, 3/5-7). In case his invocation of the respected authority of More fails, and as a fallback option, Erasmus resorts to commendations of Froben's publication house as well as refers to his own kinship with Froben himself – Erasmus is the godfather of Froben's child – in order to ensure, through flattery, the publication of *Utopia*. His final exhortation regarding his godson's learning is the icing on the cake: 'so mind that he is trained in all good learning' (Surtz 1965, 3/30-1). It appears almost as if Erasmus were bullying Froben into publishing More's text, as if anything else except publication would be unacceptable.¹⁷

The reality or fictitiousness of the Utopian land is endlessly negotiated by the humanists in the introductory and postscript letters to the project, not only as a way of working out the nature of what we call reality but, perhaps just as importantly, as a way of maintaining an inside joke in the 'ongoing spirit of gamesmanship on the part of its [humanist] formulators regarding not only their sixteenth-century readers but also readers in the distant future' (Freeman 2007, 14). In his letter to Lupset, Budé, jokingly or not, has indubitably taken *Utopia* at face value:

I personally, however, have made investigation and discerned for certain that *Utopia* lies outside the limits of the known world. Undoubtedly it is one of the Fortunate Isles, perhaps close to the Elysian Fields, for More himself testifies that Hythlodæus has not yet stated its position by giving its definite bearings... We owe the knowledge of this island to Thomas More, who has made public for our age this model of the happy life and this rule of living. The discoverer, as More himself reveals, is Hythlodæus, to whom he ascribes the whole account. On the one hand, Hythlodæus is the one who has built their city for the Utopians... [o]n the other hand, beyond question it is More who has adorned the island and its holy institutions by his style and eloquence... [even though] he has claimed for himself only the role of an arranger of materials.¹⁸

Budé employs the discourse of scientific investigation ('I have made investigation') to express his certainty of the real existence of *Utopia* and his astonishment at the moral integrity and incredibly virtuous conduct of its citizens. Nonetheless, as soon as the reader is convinced that Budé's enthusiasm about *Utopia* is based on real facts and tangible evidence, Budé suddenly shifts towards giving More all the credit, not only for the actual knowledge of the island but also for the literary configuration of the Utopian society. What he does is fuse the literal element – *Utopia* is for real – with the literary: it is More who has created *the island* itself, not just the book about it. By the end of the letter we are at a loss trying to figure out whether the book is literal or just 'literary'. The answer arises out of leaving the problem unresolved, thereby giving birth to the island as simulation, which evades the reality/non-reality

dichotomy altogether to such an extent that the exact meaning of Budé's letter utterly eludes the reader. The entire Utopian project broaches the question of the truthfulness of simulation by playing the real and the fictional against each other without meaning to resolve the issue by harmonizing the two. Does Utopia exist, or is it a figment of imagination? Regardless of whether it exists or not, is it the blueprint of an ideal (or dystopian) society that can or cannot be realized in the future?

3. *Simulation as Reality in Utopian Correspondence*

Contemporary criticism has commented on the simulating nature of the work: 'More manages to evade one of the most thorny questions of Renaissance imitation – that is, whether art or nature was the principal object of mimetic practice – by hopelessly confusing the status of the "original"', argues Marina Leslie (1999, 77). To 'confuse the status of the original' is to have recourse to simulation. One of the workings of simulation is the overproduction of artificial signs that eventually point to the lack of any real referent.¹⁹ Likewise, one could claim that the overabundance of details and the plethora of information (or the lack of it) about Utopia within the prefatory letters allude to the possibility that a game concerning the nature of the real is on. More particularly, there seems to be an overlap between the fake and the real, given that Utopia, 'after all, is a fantasy; and – many of the difficulties in interpreting the book result from this – fantasy itself dwells where the boundary between dreaming and waking, imagery and actuality, is not a sharp line but a broad, indistinct twilight region' (Surtz 1965, Ixxviii).

The mentality of the letters on Utopia apparently springs from such a twilight region where actual fact and illusion become one. Budé's letter to Lupset privileges the written account of the island over Hythlodæus' own oral description. In this case, the latter's account is already a copy of a distant reality, while More's text is *literally* a copy that is more 'counterfeit' than Hythlodæus' own copy/representation. The question of which of the two – More or Hythlodæus – is the author, the artificer of the island of Utopia, is disregarded in favour of a resistance to imitation. Each takes turns authoring *Utopia*, this resulting in an ambiguity at the level of distinguishing the original from the copy, the model from the reproduction.

Peter Giles' letter to Jerome Busleyden, printed with all five early editions of *Utopia*, demonstrates the power of the written word as a materiality and its influence on the reader's mind as an accurate representation of reality. It is through Raphael Hythlodæus that we have access to the Utopian society. Hythlodæus is the only one who has allegedly been to the island of Utopia, therefore his narrative (his speech) ostensibly exhausts all the possibilities of representing the island accurately. However, although truth and reality should normally be conveyed by Hythlodæus' mouth, Giles does not seem to think so:

Most excellent Busleyden, the other day, Thomas More, the greatest ornament of this age of ours, as you too can testify because of your intimate acquaintance with him, sent me his *Island of Utopia*. It is known as yet to few mortals, but it is eminently worthy of everyone's knowledge as being superior to Plato's republic... [A] man of great eloquence has represented, painted, and set it before our eyes in such a way that, as often as I read it, I think I see far more than when, being as much a part of the conversation as More himself, I heard Raphael Hythlodæus' own words sounding in my ears. And yet this Hythlodæus... so described his subject as to make it readily apparent that he was not repeating what he had learned from the accounts of others but telling what he had taken in directly with his own eyes and what he had long experienced personally.²⁰

Albeit present throughout the conversation between More and Hythlodæus, Giles thinks of the latter's sayings as less vivid than More's writings. Vividness, at this point, is associated with accuracy, transparency and representability – 'I see far more than... I heard Hythlodæus' own words.' In simpler terms, More's words are 'truer' than Hythlodæus' sounds, regardless of Raphael's indubitable rhetorical ability in putting his point across and depicting Utopia. However, truthfulness, according to Giles, is not an issue of the dichotomy 'writing-speaking' or 'words-sounds'; far from positing simplistic dualities, it is witnessing/gazing at the material space of the text itself that retains the privilege to formulate reality; an act of *seeing* as mapping out, as contrasted to merely *hearing* stories. On the other hand, Giles does not wish to dissipate the reliability of Hythlodæus' oral account. Hythlodæus is not repeating the accounts of others but, rather, describing what he actually saw and experienced while in Utopia, which entails that the island does exist insofar as he was an eyewitness himself! More's written reproduction of the account may be more vivid and accurate, yet it is based upon presumably authentic, palpable, personal experience which ratifies the actuality of Utopia.

As we have already mentioned, in the sixteenth century we move from a culture and ethics of hearsay to a culture of sight that gives off an air of objectivity: seeing for oneself or on-the-spot observation translates into illustrating realistically, or better, simulating realism, insofar as the method employed – close inspection – appears to be leading to 'scientific' truthfulness (it has the appearance of verisimilitude) therefore imparts knowledge and information which is, at least ostensibly, objective and realistic.²¹ In his letter, Giles employs the same method of witnessing (rather than hearing), only this time it is artificially presented as it constitutes a simulation of the 'scientific' method of seeing. He supposes that 'we tell more effectively what we have seen than what we have heard' (Surtz 1965, 23/1-2) but, at the same time, twists the argument in such a way as to include himself as someone who witnesses the text about Utopia rather than hears the story. Therefore, he is assuming the role of a reliable witness to the Utopian way of life despite the fact that he, like More, has never been anywhere near the island. He can testify to the

unquestionable ontology of... the Utopian text, that is, the simulacrum of the society at issue. What is more, he seems to believe that the royal way to the exposure of reality is More's book which, at best, represents Utopia at second or even third remove from the 'real thing' – More re-enacts Hythlodæus' own representation of the real Utopia. One can infer that the representation is given priority over the authentic (?) description by Hythlodæus (which is a representation too), or that the simulacrum, however artificial, precedes reality and establishes its own truth.

The priority of the book as a truthful simulacrum that *constitutes* Utopia is potentially reinforced by an interesting detail from More's family circle. Allegedly, six months after the publication of *Utopia*, More's brother-in-law John Rastell attempted an expedition not to Utopia but to the New World. This project, which was a failure, had probably resulted from 'his proximity to the More household'; but it might just as well have been his own idea all along the line (Geritz 1999, 40). Yet, it is likely that Rastell's desire to literally seek out new tangible worlds was intensified by the possibility of discovering exotic, Utopian, lands just like the one More was talking about. In a way, the fictional world of literature and the real world of sixteenth-century colonialist politics had merged into each other via the figure of the simulacrum. Indeed, Rastell might have testified to the possibility of the existence of the Utopian island (and, by extension, of other real worlds) insofar as he *read* (or *saw*) More's text 'with his own eyes' and placed his trust in More's sayings about Utopia.²²

One should not overlook Giles' insight that 'in all the five years which Raphael spent on the island, he did not see as much as one may perceive in More's description'.²³ This is an extraordinary statement. To claim that More is much more of an expert of description and rhetorical argumentation than Hythlodæus would be quite an understandable statement. More might have been better at writing than Hythlodæus at narrating and there is nothing strange about this possibility. However, it is one thing to say that there is more to be seen in Thomas More's written account than in Raphael's oral depiction of Utopia, and quite another to say that there is more in More's account than Raphael himself can have seen. The former case implies an improvement upon Hythlodæus' narrative imperfections – More is more meticulous in representing – whereas the latter confuses the written word with objective truth – Hythlodæus' 'real' experience and testimony. Leslie notes how 'strikingly, Gilles [sic] associates sight... not with Hythlodæus' first-person experience or reportage but with the experience of reading More's representation of that account' (1999, 75).

It follows from Giles' claim that the written word, namely the book called *Utopia*, aspires not only to reconstruct real experiences but also to construct brand new, 'tangible' ones. Raphael Hythlodæus' eyes have seen many things in the real world of Utopia, Thomas More's pen has written even more, while the reader, in turn, simulates the (pseudo)scientific method of literally bearing

witness to the Utopian ways through More's own textual universe but also through Erasmus' and Giles' own critical additions to his text; because it is already known that Giles admits to having, himself, appended a poem of four lines in the Utopian vernacular, which Hythlodæus produced strangely only *after* More had left: 'There was only a poem of four lines... which... Hythlodæus happened to show me. This verse, preceded by the Utopian alphabet, I have caused to be added to the book' (Surtz 1965, 23/22-25). Giles also confesses to having appended his own commentary on the margins of More's text. As has been suggested by critics, 'a text we now associate immediately with Thomas More associated itself, in the initial period of its formation, with a range of humanists whose letters introduce the dialogue, many of whom were directly tied to Continental printing houses' (Trevor 2001, 748).

4. *Overhearing and Memory Lapse as Legitimizing Tactics*

The prefatory material of *Utopia* provides significant examples of the fragile analogy 'seeing/hearing'-'writing/speaking'. In fact, Giles' letter contains one of the funniest, yet cogent, arguments against the representational potential of the act of hearing somebody speak; an argument hinted at by More himself in his first prefatory letter to Peter Giles – printed with the original edition (Luvain 1516) of *Utopia* (as well as with the rest of the early Latin editions) – wherein he expresses his uncertainty as to how the location of Utopia escaped his attention or his memory despite the fact that many other less important details did find their way into the text: More says: 'We forgot to ask, and he forgot to say, in what part of the new world Utopia lies. I am sorry that point was omitted, and I would be willing to pay a considerable sum to purchase that information, partly because I am rather ashamed to be ignorant in what sea lies the island of which I am saying so much...'.²⁴ Paradoxically, More's (feigned) inability to locate the island authenticates his story and renders him a sincere and reliable witness. By contrast, pretending to know *where exactly* Utopia lies would probably sound too good to be true, thereby compromising the society's non-real identity. At any rate, Peter Giles, in his letter to Jerome Busleyden, provides us with the cause of More's distraction or memory gap:

While Raphael was speaking on the topic, one of More's servants had come up to him to whisper something or other in his ear. I was therefore listening all the more intently when one of our company who had, I suppose, caught cold on shipboard, coughed so loudly that I lost some phrases of what Raphael said. I shall not rest, however, till I have full information on this point so that I shall be able to tell you exactly not only the location of the island but even the longitude and latitude – provided that our friend Hythlodæus be alive and safe.²⁵

The geographical spot of the country is probably one of the most significant pieces of information one can disclose with regard to Utopia; only, it is the

one that fails to be disclosed due to a... whisper in More's ear and also to some colleague's flu.²⁶ Such an absolutely functional detail as its exact location – 'where in the world is Utopia' – falls prey to the whimsical nature of oral narration. It takes a whisper to 'silence' an entire country, while it takes a cough to erase the name it goes by. Furthermore, should there be a need to consult Hythlodæus regarding the island's position one would find oneself in a deadlock since there have been various rumours about him either being dead or back to Utopia.

It is difficult to believe either Thomas More or Peter Giles when they resort, though humorously, to such extravagant excuses in order to keep the island untraceable, undiscoverable. Of course, it would seem unnatural if the entire conversation with Hythlodæus were written down exactly as it was carried out, despite More's contention, in his first letter to Giles, that it was really perfectly easy to write down what he had heard, because

I had only to repeat what in your company I heard Raphael relate. Hence there was no reason for me to take trouble about the style of the narrative, seeing that his language could not be polished... Therefore the nearer my style came to his careless simplicity the closer it would be to the truth... Since, it remained for me only to write out simply what I had heard, there was no difficulty about it.²⁷

More's allegation that he did not refine or elaborate Hythlodæus' oral account – an allegation made also, except in an ironic way, by Beatus Rhenanus in his postscript letter to Willibald Pirckheimer from the 1518 edition – is obviously a way to insulate his written narrative from the charge of partiality and personal intervention in the telling of the story.²⁸ In short, he pretends to objectivity as to how he represents Hythlodæus' own oral narrative. Insofar as More's 'objective' and presumably accurate narrative is based upon the oral account of a man who is not imaginary but absolutely real as well as 'superior even to Ulysses himself in his knowledge of countries, men and affairs' (Giles to Busleyden, Surtz 1965, 21/30-31), it follows that *Utopia* and its accompanying letters simulate, indeed constitute, on-the-spot-observation, the act of seeing as literally testifying to the actual existence of the Utopian society. In an oblique way, the reader is asked to believe that the textual material is authentic and turn a blind eye to the fact that its 'authenticity' is established only retrospectively, through the loss or lack of a crucial detail: the exact location of the island.

Paradoxically, it is the lack of this detail that, in essence, preserves (or rather constructs) the memory of a real Utopia. Albeit already suspicious of Utopian reality, the reader is coerced into believing that the island exists even though it is hard to say where. Supposing that More and Giles do have the right answer but for some reason hide it from us, it is probably an effective way of retaining Utopia in its Utopian, placeless location, its non-topos. Forgetting

where it lies is a sufficient pretext for not bringing its people and the Europeans together, which would result in the colonisation of the former by the latter. In his first letter to Giles, More addresses, perhaps mockingly, the possibility of visiting Utopia 'for the purpose of fostering and promoting our religion' (Surtz 1965, 43/9). To bypass the question 'where is Utopia?' is to respect the island by preserving its unrepresentability. Forgetting its exact location allows it to exist, somehow. The deliberate, or not, memory gap invents a history and geography for the island to the extent that it reconstructs, *a posteriori*, something that had never been constructed, that never *was*, in the first place.

The fake, or not, respect for the unrepresentable locus of Utopia has kept the country impervious to the eye. The non-verbal act of coughing or whispering subverts the communicability of oral communication – speaking, hearing. On the other hand, the act of recording the episode through writing transforms the whole scene into something 'natural' therefore meaningful. To the reader, *writing about* the cough in the prefatory letters seems less irrational than the cough itself as an extravagant but *real* cause of interference in the discussion. Writing has rendered the scene credible. The very elaboration of the incident makes it seem too detailed (or too 'perfect') to be unreal – 'one could not possibly have made all that stuff up', we are led to think – thereby creating a precedent for prefabricating the authenticity of subsequent accounts.

Giles' hilarious idea that the details regarding the exact position of the island were missed because he had a fit of coughing comes as a playful response to More's own letter, in which, as E.E. Reynolds says, 'in a matter-of-fact fashion' he asks Giles 'to get some further information from Hythlodaye [sic] about the dimensions of the bridge at Amaurote...' (1978, 105). More declares that Hythlodaeus may have been mistaken about the exact length of the bridge and asks Giles to help him out since he cannot bear telling lies: 'Please recall the matter to the mind. If you agree with him [Hythlodaeus], I shall adopt the same view and think myself mistaken... I beg you, my dear Peter,... to reach Hythlodaeus and to make sure that my work includes nothing false and omits nothing true.'²⁹

Without doubt, the feigned (?) attempt to correct fallacies and eradicate internal contradictions reinforces the verisimilitude of the story and moulds retrospectively the trustworthiness of More as well as the reliability of the humanists assigned to testify to the truthfulness and value of *Utopia*. On the other hand, the reader is left in the lurch as to figuring out how close *Utopia* is to the truth, given that we do not know exactly what 'truth' means in early modern Utopian literature.³⁰ The problem lies in the fact that we lack the 'original' (Hythlodaeus and his oral narrative) which would be able to tell us what the 'copy' is like. We only have a vague idea either about the actual content of Hythlodaeus' story or about whether he even exists. In fact, Giles mentions to Busleyden the rumour that 'he died during his travel' or 'made his way back again' to Utopia (Surtz 1965, 25/2-5), which is later contradicted

by Thomas More's own declaration in his second letter to Giles – printed exclusively with the second edition (Paris, 1517) of *Utopia* – that 'neque enim adhuc mortuus est' ('he is not yet dead'; Surtz 1965, 250/30).

Even if More is sincere, which is doubtful, how can we have access to Hythlodæus, who is cunningly associated with Greek rather than Latin scholarship? Erasmus' and Giles' intention (both playing a significant role in the final Utopian product) is to render Utopia (the book or the land) less accessible to the general public and more targeted towards the *really* learned, namely those who had acquired a more than superficial knowledge of Greek, as they knew that, during that age, 'expertise' in Greek was mainly limited to sheer name-dropping rather than signified profound and true knowledge of Greek.³¹ In that spirit, they changed the original title in Latin – *Nusquam* – to fit the Greek model of increased difficulty or sophistication. The work was now called *Utopia*. More himself reveals that *Utopia* is 'the product of a person who, as you know, was not so well acquainted with Latin as with Greek'.³² It is highly likely that Hythlodæus *is* Erasmus, after all. The former is the guiding spirit that tells us everything with regard to Utopia; the latter ushers into early sixteenth-century Europe the Greek intellectual mentality underlying what is now known as 'Erasmian Humanism'. Hythlodæus (or Erasmus) epitomises the invaluable Greek 'original' whose absence leads directly to the playful dissipation of the discrepancy between authenticity and its opposite, or reality and fiction, and the spawning of inexhaustible ambiguity surrounding *Utopia*.

In his letter to Thomas More, printed with all early editions of *Utopia* (1516-1519), Jerome Busleyden grapples with the issue of the intrinsic inaccessibility of the Utopian project as 'truly a wonderful and rare felicity, which is the rarer the more it jealously withholds itself from most and gives itself only to a rare few'.³³ In other words, *Utopia* is not for everyone to comprehend. The Utopian knowledge is a privilege of the Republic of Letters, those special humanists who have no problem going beyond dichotomous thinking (which, by definition, prioritises either the real over the fictional or the fictional over the real), favouring instead the ideal of the simulacrum, the fantastic but not utterly fictitious, or the 'quasi-fictional' (Chordas 2010, 10).³⁴ Busleyden, from within that humanist circle of friends, dismantles the 'fake/authentic' polarity by calling the Utopian island 'absolutissimumque simulacrum' (Surtz 1965, 32/30). He names *Utopia* a 'simulacrum' because it constitutes a written reproduction/representation of a remote original – the island of Utopia itself. It is the copy of a supposedly authentic, palpable, object. However, that authentic object is highly unlikely to exist; the society at issue is more fictional than real. Thereby, we are not dealing with a copy of an original but rather with a copy of another copy. There seems to be no real original, no reality outside More's text. Busleyden names the simulacrum 'absolutissimum' since it is not only an accurate representation of a fictive society, but, more

importantly, the ultimate simulacrum that displaces the bifurcated logic of the question 'is it real or not?' and establishes its own reality: the reality of simulation. One only needs to *read* the simulation to be able to *see* for oneself and bear witness to the full materiality of Utopia.

5. *The Game of Verisimilitude and the Utopian Reality of Letter Writing*

The prefatory/postscript letters sometimes give the impression of trying too hard to convince of the Utopian society's verisimilitude. As already said, by commenting extensively and with too much precision upon the work, the humanists authenticate, in advance, its truthfulness as well as relatedness to urgent political matters. After telling Giles – in a letter which appeared only in the first two editions (1516, 1517) of *Utopia* – that there is a need for European theologians to 'betake themselves' to the island to promote the Christian faith and bring home 'the customs and laws of the Utopian people' (Surtz 1965, 29/2-5), the rhetorician John Desmarais (whose other name was Joannes Paludanus or Jean de Palude³⁵) turns to the good old humanist game of Utopian authorship:

Utopia owes much to Hythlodæus who has made known a country unworthy of remaining unknown, [but i]ts debt is even greater to the very learned More whose pencil has very skilfully drawn it for us. In turn, not the least part of the thanks which are due to both must be shared with you: it is you who will bring into public view both Hythlodæus' discourse and More's written account.³⁶

It appears as if the further away we went from the original source of knowledge about the Utopian island – Hythlodæus – the closer we got to the real meaning of 'copyright' in the humanist context. Hythlodæus is given credit for initially yielding information on the existence of the island, More for illustrating it, but, even more importantly, Giles for going public with it by combining More's and Hythlodæus' insights. Giles ends up getting most of the credit for *Utopia*, even though he only publishes the written account which, in turn, is based upon the prior oral account of an eye witness.

In his second letter to Peter Giles, printed exclusively with the (Paris) 1517 edition, Thomas More addresses the interdependence, or interaction, of the real and the fictitious, an interaction frequently permeating early Modern Utopian discourses. Referring to a specific reader who wondered whether the account is real or fictional, More affirms that

I do not pretend that if I had determined to write about the commonwealth and had remembered such a story as I have recounted, I should have perhaps shrunk from a fiction whereby the truth, as if smeared with honey, might a little more pleasantly slide into men's minds. But I should certainly have tempered the fiction so that... I should have prefixed some indications at least for the more learned to see through our

purpose. Thus, if I had done nothing else than impose names on ruler, river, city, and island such as might suggest to the more learned that the island was nowhere... [it] would have been much wittier than what I actually did. Unless the faithfulness of an historian had been binding on me, I am not so stupid as to have preferred to use those barbarous and meaningless names, Utopia, Anydrus, Amaurotum, and Ademus.³⁷

More insists on the accuracy of his description of Utopia. The island is, as he claims, not fictional, otherwise why use such meaningless names as 'anydrus' or 'ademus' if he could just as well have employed more aesthetically appealing and semantically correct ones? That is a plausible argument; except, he is withholding from the reader the information that those 'meaningless' names are not at all meaningless or outlandish to a genuine reader of Greek. On the other hand, he unknowingly might be telling the truth to the extent that those 'meaningless' names were not given by him but, rather, by Erasmus and Giles. It is those two who, in fact, provided leads for the learned scholars to follow, even though More claims responsibility. More's words sound both serious *and* humorous, or ironic. According to C.S. Lewis, this is typical of Renaissance humanists who 'simply did not recognize an incommensurability between a light, ironic style and serious content' (1954, 3). In such a semi-comical climate, More acknowledges that so-called 'truth' should always come with a touch of fiction, so that it 'might a little more pleasantly slide into people's minds'. In other words, he admits to fusing fact and fiction and subsequently presenting it as 'the truth'. It could be argued that the figure of the simulacrum, as elaborated earlier, is adjacent to such a conscious or unconscious fusion, in the sense that simulation points to the fact that the fictional or imaginary is so real-like that it ends up engulfing the real, identifying with it, and eventually replacing it.

In his letter as well as in the main text of *Utopia*, More utilises such literary devices as litotes to cast a shadow over the Utopian construct and also conceptualise the simulacrum: 'Employing a litotic strategy of negating the opposite of what he affirms, More engages in a process of denial that bears all the markings of humanist satire and understatement' (Freeman 2007, 20).³⁸ For example, he argues 'I do not pretend... I should have perhaps shrunk from a fiction' in order to make the truth more palatable, which means that he is definitely willing to use fiction if that serves his purpose well. What is more, it is not necessarily a question of pretense on his part, since, as already stated, early modern truth is almost 'naturally' contaminated by fictional story telling. After all, Utopian discourse (and that certainly includes the commendatory letters at hand) is, by nature, a combination of the real and the fictional or the 'ideal'. It is 'a genre whose status as fiction is not as clear-cut as might seem at first glance: in spite of being considered fictional, it has a long and well-documented career in the material world, beginning with More's *Utopia* itself'. It occupies the 'middle ground' between fiction and nonfiction (Chordas 2010, 21).³⁹

It is unclear whether More is trying to trick the reader into believing that the island does exist or simply refraining from disclosing more details on the nature of his narrative. Without doubt, he is pointing to the symbiotic heterogeneity of antithetical propositions. Towards the end of his letter, More classifies himself, Giles and Erasmus under the category of 'simple and credulous folk', to quickly add, however, that the three of them were not the only 'credulous' persons around when Hythlodæus was recounting the story: there were other witnesses too. Not all eye witnesses, therefore, can be charged with incredulity or naivety, since 'Raphael told his tale... to many other respectable and worthy men... If these unbelievers will not believe them either, let them go to Hythlodæus himself'.⁴⁰ More is, at this point, going to great lengths to persuade the reader of the authenticity of the Utopian narrative. To this purpose, as he implies, if his own authority or social stature is not to be invoked, at least other humanists' authority and stature might. In this light, what he is asking the reader to do is rely on the expertise and trustworthiness of those other people who allegedly testified with their own eyes to the materiality of Utopia through *hearing* Hythlodæus' words or *reading* his own written text.

In the early sixteenth century, trust in what an authority or humanist 'friend' has observed with his own eyes is a prerequisite for some 'truth' or reality to be established. Trust lends, in an artificial, retrospective mode, validity to one's words and anticipates the verisimilitude of the stories and episodes to be narrated. In this context, what I have generally argued in this essay is that sight 'almost' creates the real in the early Renaissance. More specifically, I have talked about how the simulation of the epistemological methods of eye witnessing and on-the-spot-observation in the prefatory/postscript letters to More's *Utopia* reinforces, in advance or retrospectively, the verisimilitude of the Utopian society and the materiality of the island. If eye witnessing produces the real, then, the act of reading a text, as a simulation of eye witnessing, produces reality too. In that sense, to read *Utopia* and the related letters amounts to placing one's trust in the literal existence of Utopia insofar as reading simulates seeing with one's own eyes and bearing witness to a palpable reality.

¹ In this article, I am using the 1965 Yale edition of *Utopia*, edited by Edward Surtz and J.H. Hexter, not only for its excellent translation of the Latin original but also because it comprises the entirety of the paratextual letters published with the early editions (1516-1519) of the text. The Yale edition will hereafter be identified as 'Surtz 1965'. All references to the work will be to this edition, unless otherwise stated.

² The early Latin editions of *Utopia* were five: Louvain, 1516; Paris, 1517; Basel, March 1518; Basel, November 1518; Florence, 1519. The March 1518 edition was the last in which Thomas More had a direct hand. The first edition contained a 'woodcut of Utopia' by an anonymous artist, a 'Utopian alphabet', 'the Tetrastichon', 'Hexastichon Anemolii', 'Giles' letter to Busleyden', 'Desmarais' letter and poem', 'Geldenhauer's poem', 'Schrijver's poem', 'Busleyden's

letter to More', and 'Praefatio: More's letter to Giles'. The second edition was enriched with a letter by the French scholar Budé as well as a second letter by More to Giles, but there is no map of Utopia, an alphabet, or a Tetrastichon. The third edition (March 1518) presents a mixture of the first and the second, but with a few additions. Herein we will find Erasmus' first prefatory contribution in the form of a letter to Froben, the woodcut of Utopia (which was left out in the Paris edition) in its more sophisticated version by Hans Holbein, another woodcut of the interlocutors in *Utopia* and the newly reinserted Hexastichon, Utopian Alphabet and Tetrastichon. Nonetheless, what is missing is More's second letter to Giles – a letter that was exclusive to the second edition. This time, there is a postscript section which includes Busleyden's letter to More as well as the poems (or, rather, epigrams) by Gerhard Geldenhauer and Cornelis de Schrijver. One can surmise that the third edition aspires to produce a more comprehensive outlook of Utopia's status and a more convincing picture of the island's verisimilitude, while Erasmus' complicity in the evocation of an atmosphere of realism and scientificity is obvious. The fact that this edition does not retain More's second letter to Giles may be symptomatic of the former's gradual withdrawal from the work as its primary 'author' and perhaps a way to demonstrate how Utopia was not 'created' by an 'author' but constantly negotiated by the different editors. The fourth edition of *Utopia* was identical to the third one, while the fifth edition (Florence, 1519) followed in the footsteps of the third (March 1518), except that it omitted both Erasmus' and Budé's letters as well as the woodcuts and the Utopian alphabet.

³ For example, it is worth looking at the work done on the paratextual category of the 'prologue' in early modern drama by Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann in their *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre. Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (2004). Bruster and Weimann investigate prologues as blurry thresholds or rites of passage that are indispensable for entering the specific world of a play. See my review of this (Aretoulakis 2006). Genette distinguishes between 'epitext' and 'peritext', the former supposedly fulfilling the promotional needs of a book and the latter encompassing everything that is not *strictly* textual. He, however, concentrates upon the functions of 'those peritexts that open the book, collapsing the paratextual into the prefatory', according to Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (2011, 6). In my essay, I want to focus on the peritextual dimension of the letters accompanying *Utopia*. Those letters define or determine the reader's awareness of the cultural specificity of the text, but they also initiate an experiential procedure: that of reading *Utopia* as a simulation of an actual land. How this 'simulation' operates will be analysed later on.

⁴ The recent study *Thomas More's 'Utopia' in Early Modern Europe: Paratexts and Contexts* by Terence Cave (2008) demonstrates that the powerfulness of *Utopia's* paratexts lies in their (re)moveable quality and their ephemerality: a new edition of the work usually came with novel paratextual material or a rearranged one. According to Cave, the transportable nature of More's project created inexhaustible possibilities of knowledge transfer. The transportability of *Utopia* was also associated with the fact that it was translated in many different European languages during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The translations usually affected the content of the paratextual material. In 1548, both books I and II of *Utopia* were translated for the first time in a vernacular language – in Italian. Anton Francesco Doni and Ortensio Lando, editor and translator respectively, removed much of the original paratext in the Italian version printed in Venice – then, the printing 'capital' of the European continent. *Utopia* was translated into English for the first time by Ralph Robinson in 1551. This first English version was divested of most of the original paratext. It was only accompanied by More's first letter to Peter Giles as well as by a letter dedicating the translation to William Cecil who was, at the time, secretary to Edward VI. *Utopia's* adaptability to historical and political conjuncture is also revealed by the fact that in the second English edition, in 1556, there is no such letter to Cecil but to the 'general reader', while other paratextual material is also included. According to Cave, the withdrawal of the letter to Cecil reflects the transformation of the political and religious regime in England from Protestantism to Catholicism during the reign of Queen Mary. See also Pincombe and

Almasi (2012, 11), on the question of the inherent transitoriness of the Utopian paratext through the continuous act of re-editing and re-translating the work. An important contribution to the more general question of the *material* letter in Early Modern England is made by James Daybell (2012), who treats the letter in its pure physicality, as an object with physical features that have to be investigated thoroughly, but also more broadly, as a 'social materiality (or "sociology") of texts' encapsulating 'the social and cultural practices' of letters and the 'material conditions and contexts in which they were produced, disseminated and consumed'. Daybell is less interested in the strict literariness of (manuscript) letters than in their physical and social situatedness as objects of a wide range of transactions; he argues that letter-writing was a 'layered, collaborative, multi-stage process' rather than a simplistic 'two-way exchange between sender and reader fixed to a historically specific moment' (230). This idea helps better conceptualize Cave's insight that the prefatory letters to *Utopia* are important *precisely* in their (re)moveability, ephemerality, as well as physical locatedness rather than in their allegedly inherent literariness and content.

⁵ It is important to state here that there was no postscript (or 'postludial') paratextual material in the very first edition of *Utopia*: in the beginning all the material was prefatory.

⁶ Marchitello (1997, 73) elaborates the role of maps as means for establishing truths by insinuating also that reading could be viewed as a simulacrum of 'scientific' testimony: 'In fact, precisely because maps are *texts*... reading maps is a highly technical and artificial activity... Maps never simply *mean* anything but rather mean something only by virtue of being read. Reading scientific maps, then, is an act of interpretation.' Refer also to Harley and Woodward (1987) and McKenzie (1986). Poststructuralist criticism (Harley 1989) has discussed the centrality of cartography in the articulation as well as perpetuation of Renaissance power.

⁷ By contrast to the Renaissance, medieval Europe was basically an oral culture, which means that speaking and hearing were the dominant means of communication and knowledge: 'What we now call medieval literature was produced... for a "hearing not a reading public". Reading often took place aloud' (Briggs and Burke 2002, 10).

⁸ It was not only the emergence of typography but also the religious reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that contributed to the dissemination of reading and the growing popularity of the reading practice as a trustworthy vehicle of information and truthful meaning. Protestantism associated book reading with the holy act of reaching out to God. See Cavallo and Chartier 1999, 31-32; Parkes 1991, 259-262; Kintgen 1996; Eisenstein 1993.

⁹ Yoran (2005, 10) argues how 'prominent northern humanists, including Erasmus, Guillaume [William] Bude, Peter Giles... understood Utopia as a work that represented the basic humanist values... [while their] comments tended to underscore the verisimilitude of the work'. See also Allen 1963, 99-107. Judith P. Jones explains that 'the involvement of so many prominent European scholars in the publication of *Utopia*... reminds us that the humanist scholars of the early sixteenth century constituted a literary network very much interested in perpetuating itself' (1979, 60). In this sense, by commenting upon the work they were actually commenting upon themselves as members of an 'inherently elitist' rhetorical culture of *reading* and learning (Betteridge 2005, 106).

¹⁰ Humanism, both in its Italian civic form as well as later in its Christian version in Northern Europe, shifted away from medieval scholasticism and the Aristotelian conception of science that favoured the reduction of reality to universal ideas, and espoused instead a vision of the world as an autonomous entity contingent upon the individual activity of interpretation or communication. However, there are many differences between Italian humanism and its northern European ramifications. As Crane suggests (2003, 13-26), Italian humanism, which appeared 'much earlier than its first beginnings in England', is frequently seen 'as "pagan" in contrast to the Christian humanism of the northern Renaissance, because it grew out of opposition to the logical, exegetical and stylistic practices of the late medieval church and because it advocated a return to classical texts without sharing to the same extent northern concerns to make them compatible with Christianity'.

¹¹ Alistair Fox (1983, 4) provides essential details on the humanism wave: 'From as early as 1488, Erasmus... had systematically promoted a program for reform based on the ideals and practices of Renaissance humanism... The term *humanist* was used to refer to teachers and students of classical learning and literature, particularly to those who favored a new curricular emphasis on grammar, rhetoric, ethics, history, and poetry as studied in the classical texts of Greece and Rome rather than the old Scholastic emphasis on logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics.' See also, Kinney 1986; Wooden and Wall 1985; Camporeale 1972.

¹² W.T. Cotton (2003, 45) touches upon humanist friendship when he talks about a 'near-conspiracy of letter writing' and a game play with regard to More's project. It is necessary to state here that humanist friendship was probably not unconditional, because it 'only ever really existed between educated, wealthy men', 'despite the humanist insistence that social position and wealth had little to do with true friendship' (Betteridge 2005, 106).

¹³ John Freeman (2007, 3) refers to the Latin motto 'a friend is another self' to explain how between 'friends' there is no point in trying to decipher *Utopia*'s real authorship.

¹⁴ The 'Republic of Letters' flourished within the 'sociointellectual space' of Erasmian humanism, which gave it 'a considerable measure of independence', whereas most other humanist groups were connected to a social or a political establishment... reflect[ing] a hegemonic ideology', like in 'monarchical Naples', 'theocratic Rome', and later 'in the great monarchies of northern Europe' (Yoran 2005, 27).

¹⁵ 'MORO autem homini per se graui, & autoritate magna subnixo, fidem plane ut habeam, efficit Petri Aegidij Hantuerpiensis testimonium, quem uirum nunquam coram a me cognitum (mitto nunc doctrinae morumque commendationem) eo nomine amo quod ERASMI clarissimi uiri ac de literis sacris, profanis, omneque genus meritissimi, amicus est iuratissimus, quicum etiam ipso iamdiu societatem amicorum contraxi literis ultro citroque obsignatis' (Surtz 1965, 12/29-14/7).

Budé's contribution to the second edition constituted a very strong recommendation for *Utopia* given that his 'reputation, at this time, far outstripped that of any of the previous contributors...' (Allen 1963, 97).

¹⁶ Erasmus is the glue that sticks international educated men together; the lynchpin of the northern humanist republic of letters without which apparently no friendship, interaction and, eventually, letter exchange would have been possible. But Erasmus also appears to be a man who is cunningly working on friendship formation as a platform for networking, which allows for the creation of retrospective trust: between friends, that is, anything can be argued or believed, even if that involves the scenario of testifying to the real existence of a fictional country, or, more radically, distorting the status of the real itself. Richard Whitford, Erasmus' and More's common friend, had made, even before 1506, a remark on how similar those two were to each other, 'such that twin brothers could not more closely resemble one another' (Surtz 1965, Ixxiii). Erasmus 'made a career out of networking, strategic publication and friendships with other prominent humanists all over Europe (including John Colet and Thomas More in England)' (Crane 2003, 17). Refer also to Jardine 1993.

¹⁷ Erasmus' explicit contribution to the third edition of *Utopia* in the form of a letter to Froben, a very well-established printer in Northern Europe, is important because 'by 1518 Erasmus was the most famous, most respected, most sought-after scholar in Europe...' (Allen 1963, 98).

¹⁸ 'uerum ego Vtopiam extra mundi cogniti fines sitam esse percunctando comperi, insulam nimirum fortunatam, Elysij's fortasse campis proximam, (nam Hythlodaeus nondum situm eius finibus certis tradidit ut Morus ipse testator)... Eius igitur insulae cognitionem THOMAE MORO debemus, qui beatae uitae exemplar, ac uiuendi praescriptum aetate nostra promulgauit, ab Hythlodaeo, ut ipse tradit, inuentum, cui omnia fert accepta. qui ut Vtopianis ciuitatem architectatus sit... MORVS certe insulam & sancta instituta stilo orationeque illustrauit... etiamsi in ea opera nauanda sibi tantum partes structoris uendicauit' (Surtz 1965, 12/1-21).

¹⁹ Postmodern theory has posited the substitution of the sign for any so-called 'natural' reality behind it. The simulacrum, or simulation, exemplifies such an attitude. The French thinker Jean Baudrillard talks about the possibility of taking as an allegory of simulation a Borges tale where 'the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory... [which] no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory' (1983, 1-2).

²⁰ 'SUPERIORIBUS hisce diebus ornatissime Buslidi, misit ad me THOMAS ille MORVS, te quoque teste, cui notissimus est, eximium huius aetatis nostrae decus, Vtopaim insulam, paucis adhuc mortalibus cognitam, sed dignam in primis, quam ut plusquam Platonice omnes uelint cognoscere, aliquanto plus mihi uidere uidear, quam cum ipsum Raphaelem Hythlodaeum (nam ei sermoni aequae interfui ac MORVS ipse) sua uerba sonantem audirem. Etiam si uir ille... ut facile appareret eum non ea referre, quae narrantibus alijs didicisset, sed quae cominus hausisset oculis, & in quibus non exiguum tempus esset uersatus' (Surtz 1965, 20/15-26).

²¹ 'The quest for knowledge becomes at the same time the quest for the *seen*... The methods of this epistemology came to valorize the *demonstration* over the meditation or philosophical speculation' (Marchitello 1997, 12). This excerpt actually refers to the early seventeenth century, but traces of demonstration-valorizing visualism can already be found in the early sixteenth-century discourse of *Utopia*. In fact, the transition from the very simple anonymous woodcut of Utopia in the first edition to a much more sophisticated and detailed map in the third edition is typical of prioritising seeing and individual perspective. At the bottom left-hand corner of Holbein's map one discerns two figures talking, Hythlodaeus and More, observed from afar by another, probably John Clement, who stands on the right. Whereas in the 1516 anonymous map there was sheer, unwitnessed, territory, in the 1518 map there are people narrating what is simultaneously being shown in the background. This subjective human narrative reminds the spectator of the importance of the eye and individual perspective in the interpretation of geographical representation. The presence of the humanists in Holbein's map plays a central role in the production and conveyance of the reality of Utopia. For an analysis of the differences between the first and the second map, see Kinney 2005, 35. In any case, the existence of a map of Utopia is meant to signify that there has got to be a place by that name.

²² For more information on *Utopia's* potential impact on Rastell's mind, see Geritz and Laine's biography of John Rastell 1983, Devereux 1976, 119-123 and Knapp 1992. Knapp may actually be going too far by jumping to the conclusion that 'More's overtly fictional new world inspired Rastell to seek a real one' (21). For information on the credibility of reports on the New World as well as the interference of fiction with such reports, refer to Campbell 1991 and 1999.

²³ '... Raphaelem ipsum minus in ea insula uidisse per omne quinquennium quod illic egit, quam in MORI descriptione uidere liceat' (Surtz 1965, 22/5-7).

²⁴ 'Nam neque nobis in mentem uenit quaerere, neque illi dicere, qua in parte noui illius orbis Vtopia sita sit. Quod non fuisse praetermissum sic... quo in mari sit insula de qua tam multa recenseam...' (Surtz 1965, 40/33-42/4).

²⁵ 'siquidem cum ea loqueretur Raphael, adierat MORVM e famulis quispiam, qui illi nescio quid diceret in aurem, ac mihi quidem tanto attentius auscultanti, comitum quispiam, clarius, ob frigus opinor, nauigatione collectum, tussiens, dicentis uoces aliquot interceptit. Verum non conquescam... si modo incolumis est noster Hythlodaeus' (Surtz 1965, 22/25-32).

²⁶ Giovanni Della Casa (1953, 342) makes note of the base quality of 'some kind of men that in coughing and sneezing make such noise that they make a man deaf to hear them', a statement that is not exactly praising More's and Giles' company. Apparently Giles and More are playing on the notion of the 'serious' gentleman or 'humanist'.

²⁷ '... cui tantum errant ea recitanda, quae tecum una partier audiui narrantem Raphaelem. quare nec erat quod in eloquendo laboraretur... & mea oratio quanto accederet propius ad illius neglectam simplicitatem, tanto future sit propior ueritati, cui hac in re soli curam & debeo & habeo... uti sic simpliciter scriberentur audita, nihil erat negocij' (Surtz 1965, 38/7-22).

²⁸ Rhenanus' letter reads: 'Quod diceret ea omnia ex Hythlodaei ore excepta, & a Moro tantum in literas missa' (Surtz 1965, 252/26-27), ['... all More said was taken from the mouth of Hythlodaeus and merely written down by More'].

²⁹ 'Ego te rogo rem ut reuocēs in memoriā. Nam sit u cum illo sentis, ego quoque adsentiar & me lapsū credam... te oro mi Petre... compelles Hythlodaeum, atque efficias, ne quicquam huic operi meo, aut insit falsi, aut ueri desyderetur' (Surtz 1965, 40/23-25-42/14-17).

³⁰ *Utopia* is quite similar to sixteenth-century travel narratives. However, if More's work is so convincing in presenting a fake society as if it were absolutely true and authentic, the question arises as to whether 'real' early modern travel narratives' claim to objectivity and truth is justified, given that '[t]rauellers may lie by authority' according to William Parry, a man who supposedly travelled to Persia towards the end of the sixteenth century and recorded his experiences in a book (1601, sig. A3').

³¹ '[I]t remained true in Italy as well as in England that claims about the importance of Greek learning often exceeded actual knowledge of the Greek language and its literature' (Crane 2003, 15).

³² 'non perinde Latine docti quam Graece' (Surtz 1965, 38/11-12).

³³ '... raraque felicitas, ac plane eo rarior, quo magis ipsa sese inuidens plurimis, non praebet nisi raris' (Surtz 1965, 32/21-23).

³⁴ Chordas employs the term 'quasi-fiction' to talk about forms that, 'though clearly fictional, nevertheless masquerade as "verite"' (2010, 10). The notion of simulation may be bordering on the 'quasi-fictional'.

³⁵ It is unclear why Paludanus'/ Desmarais' letter was left out of the third edition of *Utopia*. It has been argued that the reason was that the more 'exciting' names of Erasmus and Budé were preferred. See Allen 1963, 96.

³⁶ 'Multum debet Vtopia Hythlodeo per quem innotuit indigna quae nesciretur. Plus erudissimo Moro, cuius penicillo nobis tam scite depicta est. porro quod vtrique debetur gratiae, eius non minima pars tibi secunda est, qui & illius sermonem, & huius scriptum in lucem emisit... (Surtz 1965, 28/3-8). Desmarais' previous injunction that the island be christianised, and thus colonized, resembles an epigram to *Utopia* by Cornelis de Schrijver in which the author puts the work in colonialist and fully materialist perspective by representing the newly discovered world as a country that needs to be gazed at for its marvels to be discerned: 'Do you want to see new marvels now that a new world has been discovered not long ago?' ('Vis noua monstra, nouo dudum nunc orbe reperto'); Surtz 1965, 30/11). Schrijver is straightforwardly inviting the reader to witness the new marvels with his own eyes, by means of seeing/reading the book as a way of simulating on-the-spot-observation. Reading the book amounts to actually bearing witness to, and believing, its represented reality. The injunction to 'see new marvels' increases the believability of More's text, given that *Utopia* is located in the New World, America, which was actually 'discovered' by Columbus twenty-five years before the publication of *Utopia*. In this light, if America is real, so must *Utopia*.

³⁷ 'Neque tamen inficias eo si de republica scribere decreuissem, ac mihi tamen venisset in mentem talis fabulae, non fuisse fortassis abhorriturum ab ea fictione qua velut melle circumlitum suauiuscule influeret in animos verum. At certe sic temperassem tamen... Itaque si nihil aliud ac nomina saltem principis... non sum tam stupidus vt barbaris illis vt nominibus & nihil significantibus, Vtopiae, Anydri, Amauroti, Ademi voluissem' (Surtz 1965, 250/5-18).

³⁸ For the use of litotes in *Utopia* refer to McCutcheon 1971, 107-121 and Nagel 1973, 173-180.

³⁹ Even the fictional More, the character inside *Utopia*, 'makes explicit the notion that reality or truth is a kind of fiction, a "fabula"' (Perlette 1987, 248).

⁴⁰ 'Raphael non mihi modo ac tibi illa sed multis preterea honestissimis viris atque grauissimis nescio an plura adhuc & maiora... quod si ne hijs quidem increduli isti credant Hythlodaeum adeant ipsum licet' (Surtz 1965, 250/26-30).

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