

Creating settings: Thomas More and the imagination of places

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Abstract

Despite the scholars' interest for the topography of the island of Utopia, place descriptions are often overlooked in favor of narration.

Nevertheless, the study of these secondary topographies enables a deeper understanding of Thomas More's major work.

In this paper, we will first analyse how the author constructs such places and highlight their functions in the general structure of *Utopia*, building a bridge between reality and fiction.

We will do so in the light of Thomas More's formation as a humanist, which made him aware of literary traditions that take roots in classical literature and develop through the Middle Ages into the 16th century.

Thus, the Polylerites and Zapoletes' homelands, as well as the desert surrounding the equator, correspond to traditional commonplace scenery whose symbolism has to be pointed out in order to fully understand their importance.

We believe that the lack of interest in these fragments is due, at least partly, to this affiliation which could be considered a lack of originality, a question we aim to discuss in the last section.

Keywords: topography, space, literary traditions, *topoi*.