



# More's *Utopia*: Fact and Fiction

## Narrative Structure: *Concerning the Best State of a Commonwealth and the New Island of Utopia*

- 1) i) Dedications [FACT]
- ii) Prefatory Epistle (More's real friend, Peter Giles)
- iii) [FACT] Verses (To the reader) [FACT]
- iv) Para-textual evidence for the mock-travel narrative (Maps and Alphabet) [FICTION]
- 2) More's letter to Peter Giles [FACT + FICTION]
- 3) Hythloday's recollection of his discussion [FICTION] with Cardinal Morton [FACT] and friends of the way things are in England [FACT]: Enclosures; increase in thieves and elsewhere: expansionist princes, untrustworthy [FACT] advisors etc.
- 4) Hythloday's description of Utopian society [FICTION]
- 5) More and Peter Giles [FICTION] discuss the practicability of Utopia in this world [FACT]

The ambassadors of the nations that lie near Utopia, knowing their customs, and that fine clothes are in no esteem among them, that silk is despised, and gold is a badge of infamy, used to come very modestly clothed; but the Anemolians, lying more remote, and having had little commerce with them, understanding that they were coarsely clothed, and all in the same manner, took it for granted that they had none of those fine things among them of which they made no use; and they, being a vainglorious rather than a wise people, resolved to set themselves out with so much pomp that they should look like gods, and strike the eyes of the poor Utopians with their splendor.

Thus three ambassadors made their entry with a hundred attendants, all clad in garments of different colors, and the greater part in silk; the ambassadors themselves, who were of the nobility of their country, were in cloth-of-gold, and adorned with massy chains, earrings and rings of gold; their caps were covered with bracelets set full of pearls and other gems—in a word, they were set out with all those things that among the Utopians were either the badges of slavery, the marks of infamy, or the playthings of children. It was not unpleasant to see, on the one side, how they looked big, when they compared their rich habits with the plain clothes of the Utopians, who were come out in great numbers to see them make their entry; and,

“Though, to speak plainly my real sentiments, I must freely own that as long as there is any property, and while money is the standard of all other things, I cannot think that a nation can be governed either justly or happily: not justly, because the best things will fall to the share of the worst men; nor happily, because all things will be divided among a few (and even these are not in all respects happy), the rest being left to be absolutely miserable.