

In this paper I would like to address the question of the status of fiction in the emerging book market of Elizabethan England, while concentrating on three themes: The impact of the growing interaction between England and the new-world on the literature of the era; the nature of literature as representation of reality; and finally, the status of authorship within the book market, and the relation between authors and their counterparts (patrons, printers and the readership as a whole).

To do so, I will analyze two works from the 16th century: *A Margarite of America*, by Thomas Lodge (1596), and *Utopia*, by Thomas Hobbes (1516). Although 80 years apart from one another, both works are involved with the discovery of America and were both published in the atmosphere of the rising book market of late 16th century London (the English version of *Utopia* was not published until 1551). In my analysis I will not only be concentrating on the texts, but also on the Para-text (dedications to the readers and patrons). Such dedications were common-place at the time and were often used by the authors in order to reveal details about the writing process and address their counterparts.

Lodge – the son of a wealthy family of London merchants, and a well known member of London's literary circles – published *A Margarite of America* after returning from a privateering journey to South America. There are many references and suggestions to the fact that the plot takes place in South America, namely Peru, but its precise locality remains unclear. The plot centers on the rivalry between the kingdoms of Mosco and Cosco, the armies of which are about to engage in battle in the opening scene. At the moment of collision, a wise old man interferes and delivers a lengthy speech, criticizing the follies of war. Both Kings are convinced and decide to strike a peace treaty – in which the Prince of Cosco, Arsadachus – is to marry the Princess of Mosco, Margarita. While Margarita is portrayed as the figure of righteousness, loyalty and beauty, Arsadachus is the embodiment of tyranny, cruelty and deceit. Upon his arrival in Mosco – he begins courting Margarita's best friend, Philenia – all the while declaring his devotion to Margarita with poetry and soft words. After Philenia rejects his advances and marries her love, Minecius, Arsadachus and his entourage set an ambush for the couple and try to rape Philenia. The couple resist and are brutally murdered by the entourage. One of Arsadachus' men flees back to Cosco, thereby assuming sole blame for the murder. But Philenia's father, Arsinous, discovers the truth and demands that Arsadachus be brought to justice. The prince of Cosco, however, manages to persuade the King of his innocence and it is Arsinous who finds himself banished from Mosco. He vows to take revenge. Arsadachus returns to Cosco, allegedly to confront his murderous servant. Before he leaves Margarita gives him a jewel, given to her by Arsinous, who told her to give it to her loved one when he goes away. In Cosco, Arsadachus takes another lover, who bears him a son. His cruelty grows until he finally goes mad: he mutilates his father, savagely opens his lover's chest and eats her heart, and finally smashes his son's head against the wall.

Meanwhile, Margarita remains devoted to her lover, and decides to search for him. On the way to Cosco, she meets Arsinous who reveals that the jewel he gave her is bewitched: if the lover is true – the jewel will make him return, if he is false – it will drive him mad. The two proceed to Cosco and enter the city just as Arsadachus ends his murderous attack.

There are many suggestions in the text and the Para-text to the fact that the plot takes place in South America. The title itself suggests as much, along with the fact that the author writes that he has composed it during a journey to the straits of Magellan. Arsadachus' Kingdom also bares the Native American name of Cosco. Yet in no way is it clearly stated where the plot takes place and the many references to ancient Greek people and places suggest a European context. This, I believe, is not coincidental. Describing the tyrannical cruelty of Arsadachus, Lodge wanted the readers to remain uncertain regarding the cultural source of this savagery. By doing so, he was stressing the main argument of his work, which was that the European quest for riches and loot, spurred by the discovery of the new world, had a savage undertone to it.

In the forward to the reader we already learn that the voyage during which the book was written was not a positive experience for the author. The strains of sea-fare are depicted with graphic detail, while the captain of the ship (a Mr. Candish) is described as one "whose memorie if I repent not, I lament not" (p. 1). Lodge also uses the speech given by the wise old man in the opening scene in order to confer to the reader his argument, that greed is the true objective behind warfare. "If for covetousnes ye hunt after conquests" (p. 3), says the old man, "how vaine are you, labouring like mad men to lay more straw on your houses to burn them, and cast more water on the sea to drowne it? Covetousnes is an affection that hath no end, an extreame that hath no meane, a profit full of prejudice". (p. 3)

Lodge's criticism of greed is also manifested through the judgment he casts over Margarita, who is naïve enough to think that "all that glitters is gold" (as he remarks again and again). This refers to the Princess' inability to see beyond Arsadachus' sweet words, but also hints at the promises of gold which drew English sea-men to the shores of South America. Finally, the title itself offers a word play