The Intertextual Reading of the Utopian Discourse in English Travel Literature

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ABSTRACT

More and more criticism is interested in the utopian travel mode of writing because of the popularity it is gaining. This art is rediscovered in new modern forms such as: science fiction dystopias, anti utopian space odysseys and apocalyptic dystopias, these neological genres of utopia are flourishing in arts. Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1535) is considered as the founding text of the utopian travel literature and it is often read as a pretext deeply inspiring dystopian texts written after. Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Lewis Carol’s *Alice in Wonderland*, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* are regarded as travel narrative directly or indirectly inspired by the concept of utopia. This inspiration and influence was controversially investigated by critics. This research workk analyses the intertextual relationship between Thomas More’s *Utopia* a set of popular utopian travel texts throughout the history of English travel literature. The many studies done on this issue have generally examined this relationship through thematic comparative studies conducted in terms of similarities and differences between the two texts. However, the study below has attempted to go beyond mere thematic comparison and traces the genetic link between the selected narratives. In other terms, the extent to which these texts owe to *Utopia* has been examined in relation to the generic link between the utopian mode of writing and some of its literary derivations. This has been done through an intertextual reading of the works, where similarities and differences are reconsidered from the assumption that *Utopia* and its descendent narratives belong genetically to the same literary genre. Tracing the intertextual link between the utopian travel texts from this perspective, reveals that Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Lewis Carol’s *Alice in Wonderland*, *Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe* and Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* rely on the dynamics of
the utopian literary genre as established by More in *Utopia*, and make it undergo reformulations, readaptations and reshapings contributing by that in the cloning of new utopian literary genres genetically deriving from utopia.

**Keywords:** More’s *Utopia*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, Lewis Carol’s *Alice in Wonderland*, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe and* Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim, Gulliver’s Travels*, *Utopia, Dystopia, Fantasy, Colonial utopia, Intertextuality*
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