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DIALOGUE AND DIDACTICISM: THE INFLUENCE OF LUCIAN ON THE
FICTIONAL WORKS OF SIR THOMAS MORE AND ERASMUS

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Otago, Dunedin,
New Zealand.

The literary debt which Erasmus and Thomas More owed to Lucian has been often acknowledged, and its influence on their major fictional writings has been explored. Too often, however, it has been assumed that the nature of his influence was the same in both cases. This thesis argues that, in spite of the evident similarities between the writings of the two men, they ultimately had radically different approaches to literature, and that these can be seen in their differing responses to Lucian.

Chapter One argues that Lucian's most characteristic works exhibit the sly irony with which he is usually credited, but possess also a form of structural irony which has not had the attention it deserves, and which affects the way in which we read him.

Chapter Two deals with the translations which More and Erasmus made from Lucian, and shows that they were responding to different elements of his work. Erasmus responds first of all to his humour, and sees in him a model for using satirical fiction as a means of teaching. More sees the implications of Lucian's structural ironies and the subtlety of his use of the Menippean persona more clearly than does Erasmus.

Chapter Three looks at Erasmus' Colloquies, and argues that the influence of Lucian is confined to the use of comic and satirical dialogue as a way of exposing the folly and vice of the age.

Chapter Four examines The Praise of Folly, and suggests that while the influence of Lucian may lie behind Erasmus' use of complex irony, this type of irony is not employed consistently. It gradually gives way to satire, first of all, and then to an appeal to the philosophia Christi which, while expressed ironically, is more reminiscent of the Enchiridion than of the work of Lucian.

Chapter Five turns to More's History of King Richard III, and argues that the form of that work owes much to More's attempt to
develop a complex irony which would allow him to explore the meaning of historical events without committing himself to a definite statement of his views. Many elements of the work are derived, directly and indirectly from his reading of Lucian, although the process of composition did not allow him to realise fully his apparent intention.

Chapter Five argues that *Utopia* is a work of Menippean satire which fully utilises the lessons learned from Lucian. Hythloday is a Lucianic persona who cannot be taken at face value, and More has used this and other devices of complex irony to prevent *Utopia* being read principally as a work of prescriptive political theory.

Both More and Erasmus created fictional works which far surpass Lucian in their intellectual scope and literary value. For both, however, in their different ways, their encounter with Lucian was of importance in determining the form and content of those works.
PREFACE

All citations from the works of More are from the Yale edition, and references are by page and line number. In referring to the English version of The History of King Richard III, I have silently expanded contracted words. Citations from Erasmus, unless otherwise stated, are to the Amsterdam edition of the collected works for the Latin, and references are by page and line number. English translations are from the published volumes of the Toronto edition unless otherwise stated. Citations from the letters are from the Allen edition, and references are to the number of the letter and line number, except in the case of the letter to John Botzheim, where reference is by page and line number. Citations from Lucian are from the Loeb edition. English titles are taken from this edition; abbreviated Latin titles follow the usage of Liddell and Scott’s Greek Lexicon. In Greek quotations, final ‘sigma’ was unavailable, and has, unfortunately, had to be replaced by the initial and medial letter.
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**Opera omnia**

**Opera omnia** Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami recognita et adnotatione critica instructa notisque illustrata (Amsterdam, 1969–)

**Opera omnia** 1,1 Luciani compluria opuscula optimis ab Erasmo et Thoma Moro interpretibus optimis in latinorum linguam traducta. Ed. Christopher Robinson (1969)

**Opera omnia** 1,2 De puere ac liberaliter instituendis and De ratione studii. Ed. Jean-Claude Margolin (1971) vii
Opera omnia 1,3 Colloquia. Ed. L - E. Halkin, F. Bierlaire and R. Hoven (1971)

Opera omnia 2,5 Adagiorum chilias tertia. Ed. Felix Heinimann and Emanuel Kienzle (1981)

Opera omnia 2,6 Adagiorum chilias tertia. Ed. Felix Heinimann and Emanuel Kienzle (1981)

Opera omnia 4,1 Institutio principis Christiani. Ed. O. Herding (1974)

Opera omnia 4,3 Moriae encomium id est styliitiae laus. Ed. Clarence H. Miller (1979)

INTRODUCTION

The influence of Lucian on the writings of Sir Thomas More and Erasmus is a question of considerable significance for the history of English literature. The fact of their acquaintance with the Greek satirist is well attested, and the existence of a literary debt on their part has been often acknowledged and its nature explored.

Too often, however, it has been assumed that the close friendship between the two men and the similarity of their interests and preoccupations is an indication of a fundamentally similar reading of Lucian. In part, this assumption is based on a misreading of the nature of much of Lucian’s work.

Criticism of Lucian has taken two general views of his work. One approach treats him as a glib and naive ironist of no profound originality; the other subsumes him under the category.


3. Graham Anderson, Lucian: Theme and Variation in the Second Sophistic (Lugduni Batavorum, 1976); Albin Lesky, A History
A careful reading of his work reveals, however, an ironist more subtle than at first appears, and one sufficiently aware of his own limitations to be able to turn them to literary account. He wrote in a period of cultural exhaustion, when the most characteristic literary activity consisted of reworking the topoi found in literary handbooks and used as the basis of teaching in the schools. Little originality was evident in literature, rhetoric or philosophy.

Lucian, however, is an exception to the general rule. Perhaps because he was by birth a Syrian, and therefore on the margins of Greek culture, his attitude is one of independence from the prevailing cultural norms, an independence that is suggested by what little can be reconstructed of his biography.

After receiving the standard school training in philosophy and rhetoric, he became one of the tribe of travelling orators who composed the Second Sophistic. He practised his craft in Greece, Gaul and Rome. He appears, however, to have become dissatisfied with the limitations of the sophistical declamation, which was more concerned with style than substance, and, as a result of this dissatisfaction, to have turned to a study of


8. van Groningen, p.56.; Hall, p.36.
dialogue, particularly the works of Plato. He was also well acquainted with both Old and New Comedy, and it was by combining these sources that he evolved the wholly original form of the comic dialogue. This combines the attitudes, and some of the stock figures, of the Greek and Roman Comedy with the dialogue form, hitherto used as a vehicle of serious philosophical debate. Although his use of this form has occasioned much debate about the extent of his debt to the Cynic satirist, Menippus, a review of the evidence makes it certain that this innovation was his own. The presence of Menippus as a character in many of these dialogues, together with Lucian's acknowledged indebtedness to him, has led to this form and its many variants being called Menippean satire, a term also applied to the characteristic attitudes expressed.

The generic characteristics of the form have been discussed by Northrop Frye, who discusses such traits as 'the setting of ideas and generalisations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain', and the preference of practice to theory, metaphysical theory in particular. Lucian can be seen expressing this attitude in Menippus, where the motivation for Menippus' journey to the underworld is the perplexity caused by the contradictory answers given to his questions by the philosophers. The Menippean norm arising as a response to this is expressed in the same dialogue by Teiresias:

13. Ibid., pp.230-231.
The life of the common sort is best, and you will act more wisely if you stop speculating about heavenly bodies and discussing final causes and first causes, spit your scorn at all those clever syllogisms, and counting all that sort of thing nonsense, make it always your sole object to put the present to good use and to hasten on your way, laughing a great deal and taking nothing seriously (c.21).

Frye also says that 'Menippean satire deals less with people than with mental attitudes' and it is in this context that the philosophus gloriosus makes his appearance: 'the Menippean satirist sees [evil and folly] as diseases of the intellect, as a kind of maddened pedantry which the philosophus gloriosus at once symbolizes and defines'. The philosophus gloriosus, the philosopher whose proud boast to have solved the riddle of human existence is disproved by reference to the complexities of experience, is perhaps the commonest figure in Lucian. His boastful philosophers were to have a lengthy literary progeny, including Raphael Hythloday, the central character of Utopia.

More recently, F. Anne Payne has listed exhaustively the distinguishing features of Menippean satire, including some not mentioned by Frye. She points to the use of simultaneous unresolved points of view, so that the meaning inheres in the form, parody of other genres, a variety of styles and tones,

14. Ὄ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν άριστος βίος, καὶ σοφρονέστερος παυσάμενος τοῦ μεταφρολογείν καὶ τέλη καὶ ἀρχά τοιούτως ἐξικοπεῖν καὶ καταπτύσσοντας τῶν σοφῶν τῶν μυσάγων συλλογισμῶν καὶ τα τριάδα τα λέγον τῆς ἡγομένους τότε μόνον εἰς ἀπαντός θηράση, ὡς ὁ παρὸν εἰς τὸν μέγερον παραδράμη γελῶν τὰ πολλὰ καὶ περὶ μηδεν ἐσπουδακως.

15. Frye, p.309.
16. Ibid., p.309.
17. F. Anne Payne, Chaucer and Menippean Satire (Wisconsin, 1981).
18. Ibid., p.4.
and the dialogue between a know-all and a more ordinary human being. The dialogue form is favoured because of its capacity to remind us of the presence of alternatives and of the uncertainty of final answers.

This use of the dialogue form points to a complexity which critics have not always noticed in Lucian. He utilises the comic dialogue to dramatise not only the standard Cynic themes of the futility of human activity but the poverty of intellectual activity in his own day -- a criticism from which not even the Cynic heroes, Menippus and Diogenes, are exempted. He himself proved to be unable to escape the limitations of the contemporary cultural torpor, with the result that much of his work has been thought of as a mere pastiche of his literary heritage. It seems, though, that the form which his dialogues finally, after a period of experimentation, settled on, was in part derived from a desire to expose and parody this very element in contemporary cultural activity. His use of an extensive comic framework for his dialogues is designed to provide a context in which the more serious material is set and apart from which it cannot adequately be judged.

It is in this light that we should consider Frye's comments on Lucian's use of the device of the 'other world' which 'appears as an ironic counterpart to our own, a reversal of accepted social standards'. In Lucian, this is found in The Downward Journey and Charon (and, one might add, Dialogues of the Dead); it is a world in which the 'simple equality of death is set against the complex inequalities of life' and in which the

19. Ibid., pp.7-10.; see also Hall, p.466, n.1.
20. Ibid., p.11.
22. Anderson, passim.
complexities of experience are cancelled. In Lucian, this cancellation is shown to be deceptive, since it is set in a dramatic context which makes it difficult for the reader to take it at face value. The seemingly inconsequential frame of the dialogue qualifies one's attitude towards the content; the desire to cancel complexity is itself subject to ironically complex interrogation.

This form could also be used as a vehicle for satire, and the pages of Lucian are full of satirical attacks on philosophers, charlatans, superstition and folly of all kinds. In the most characteristic dialogues, however, this satire is contained within a complex form that makes it difficult to take a simple attitude towards the ostensible theme of the dialogue. This double focus of the Lucianic dialogue was to result in the quite different readings of Lucian which we can find in the works of More and Erasmus.

Although Lucian's work was not unknown to the Middle Ages, it was not until the late fifteenth century that his writings became widely disseminated. They began to be printed and translated, and he became one of the most popular Greek authors. His style, if impure by classical standards, was nevertheless simple; combined with the appeal of his subject matter, this made him a natural choice for pedagogy. It may also have been these combined attractions that led Erasmus and More to settle on Lucian for their joint translations of 1506.

The friendship of More and Erasmus, their history of co-operative literary effort, and their common activity as humanist reformers have led to an a priori assumption of the identity of their reading of Lucian. A close reading of their prefaces to their translations shows, on the contrary, that they were responding to different elements in Lucian. Further, it can be shown that they were responding to the two different ways of reading a Lucianic dialogue outlined above. With this in mind, it

can be seen that a consideration of their respective debts to Lucian is not merely a question of tracing literary influence; their respective responses to Lucian are symptomatic of different views on the nature and function of literature. Lucian becomes a touchstone by means of which the nature of Erasmus' and More's fictional works can be differentiated.

For the joint volume of translations of 1506, More translated four pieces, Erasmus ten long pieces as well as eighteen shorter ones. In addition to the translations, both men wrote a mock declamation in reply to Lucian's *The Tyrannicide*, and both included dedications giving their reasons for making the translations. Erasmus continued to publish additional translations and dedications until as late as 1517.

It is these dedications that first interest us, containing as they do Erasmus' comments on the material he was translating. *Toxaris* concerns friendship, an institution fallen into desuetude amongst Christians, but which ought to be better observed; the dialogue is therefore 'frugifer' as well as 'iucundus' (422/26). In *Alexander*, Lucian shows himself as one

_than whom no-one is more useful at detecting and exposing the impostures of those who, even now, impose upon the people with magical wonders, feigned religion, pretended pardons and other tricks of that sort._

Erasmus is clearly stressing the utility of Lucian both as a satirist of impostors and as a purveyor of instruction; such an attitude to the pagan classical authors had been utilised at

26. *Opera omnia* I.i, 370.

27. Ibid., I.i, 371-2.

28. '... quo nemo sit utile ad depraehendendas coarguendasque quorundam istorum imposturas, qui nunc quoque vel magicis miraculis, vel ficta religione, vel adsimulato condonationibus aliiisque id vel genus praestigiis, vulgo fucum facere solent' (449/7-10). (My translation).
least since St. Jerome, so that Erasmus belongs to a lengthy tradition of Christian apologists for pagan literature. In the case of these two dialogues, at least, such an attitude is applicable. Not all of Lucian’s works, however, are amenable to such an interpretation. When Erasmus comes to write a dedication to The Dream, or The Cock, the limitations of his approach become apparent. Lucian, he says, best exemplifies the Horatian precept of mixing profit with pleasure (470/24-26). In the dialogue, Lucian censures Pythagoras as an impostor and a cheat; he laughs at the haughtiness and bearded wisdom of the Stoics; he teaches that the life of the rich and of kings may be barren and hateful; in contrast, he teaches that poverty is unencumbered, cheerful and content with its lot.

All these elements are present in the dialogue, but nowhere does Erasmus take account of the interpretative complications caused by the extensive comic framework. The element of utility in the dialogue is subordinate to other elements.

Erasmus’ reasons for translating Lucian are, as Robinson says, threefold: it was a useful exercise for improving his Greek; style, language and content made him a suitable author for children; and he could be interpreted simply as conveying moral instruction. 30

The case of More is superficially similar. In his prefatory letter to Thomas Ruthall he begins by using Lucian as an exemplar of the familiar Horatian precept that literature should be utile et dulce. When, however, he discusses individual dialogues, he draws conclusions wilfully at variance with the content of the dialogue. In The Cynic, he says,

29. ‘Pythagoram velut impostorem ac praestigiatorem taxat; Stoicorum fastum et sapientem barbam ridet; diiutum ac regum vita quantis sit erumnis obnoxia docet; contra, quam expedita res paupertas hilaris suaque contenta sorte’ (471/18-21). (My translation).

30. Opera omnia I.1, 365-7.
the severe life of the Cynics, satisfied with little, is defended and the soft, enervating luxury of voluptuaries denounced, by the same token Christian simplicity, temperance, and frugality, and finally that strait and narrow path which leads to Life eternal are praised (5/2-6). 31

The atheistic Lucian is thus made to preach Christian ethics, but the dialogue does not support such an interpretation. The Cynic is that typically Menippean figure, the philosophus gloriosus; his method of argumentation is exposed by a naive interlocutor, a Menippean eiron. That More did read the dialogue in this way is confirmed by his more complex reworking of the same method in Utopia. 32 Similarly, his account of Menippus points to the obvious elements in the dialogue. Its wider and potentially more subversive implications are passed over in silence. 33

Erasmus’ interpretation of Lucian can be verified from his comments on literature in such works as De ratione studii, Institutio principis Christiani, and De pueris instituendis. In the Institutio of 1516, we find Erasmus saying that the lessons of virtue must be inculcated in the prince ‘nunc sententia, nunc fabella, nunc exemplo, nunc apophthegmate, nunc proverbio’ (Opera omnia IV.1, 140/145-146). He should be taught Aesop’s fables as pleasurable stories, then should be taught their real morals (146/7, 142/189-194). Similarly, in the plan of study which Erasmus put forward in De ratione studii, he stresses the moral utility of literature:

And so it will come about (assuming mental agility on the teacher’s part) that if some passage is encountered that may corrupt the young, far from

31. ‘... paruoque contenta Cynicorum uita defenditur, mollis, atque enerusata dedicatorum hominum luxuria reprehenditur? Nec non eadem opera, Christianae uitae simplicitas, temperantium, frugalitas, denique arcta illa atque angusta uia, quae ducit ad uiam, laudatur’ (4/2-6).

32. Fox, p.136.

harming their morals, it may in fact confer some benefit, namely by concentrating their attention, partly on annotation of the passage, partly on loftier thoughts (CWE 24, 683/21-25).

As Sr. Geraldine Thompson has shown, Erasmus' method here is founded upon the exegetical tradition in the interpretation of Scripture. Although he utilises all four levels of interpretation, his role as a teacher leads him to stress the tropological or moral level of meaning. What we find in Erasmus is the application of this tradition of exegesis to works of fiction; this will be of particular importance in discussing the structure and meaning of The Praise of Folly.

The combination in Erasmus of the traditions of irony and exegesis is exemplified in the Colloquies. These were begun in 1497/1498 as exercises to instruct Erasmus' pupils in Paris in the writing of Latin, but their utility as a vehicle for instruction led Erasmus to add many new dialogues until the edition of 1532. The form itself, as well as the content of many of the pieces is indebted to Lucian, but in none of them is the irony as complex as that to be found in The Praise of Folly. Their method has been well described by Sr. Thompson:

In most of the dialogues, some wrong-headed opinion is tabled and given either ironic or straightforward consideration until its absurdity.

34. 'Atque ita fiet (si modo sit ingenii dextri praeceptor) vt etiam si quid inciderit quod inficere possit aetatem illam, non solum non officiat moribus, verumetiam vutilatem aliquam adferat, videlicet animis partim ad annotationem intentis, partim ad altiores cogitationes auocatis' (Opera omnia I.2, 139/2-5).


or iniquity is obvious -- obvious to the gull if there is a gull, to the reader in any case.\footnote{38}

The dramatic situation is normally dwelt on only briefly by comparison with Lucian, the interest lying in the satirical attack on a range of vices and follies, or in the exposition of an alternative to these. Even in those which owe an explicit debt to Lucian -- \textit{Charon, Exorcism, or The Spectre, Alchemy, A Pilgrimage For Religion’s Sake} -- the irony is not complex; it rarely extends further than presenting a figure who unknowingly puts forward foolish views, while there is normally, as in \textit{The Seraphic Funeral}, a reliable interlocutor on hand to help the reader to see the other’s foolishness.

The avowed purpose of these dialogues, then is didactic, and in the accompanying piece \textit{The Usefulness of the ‘Colloquies’}, Erasmus is explicit about this:

\begin{quote}
this little book, if taught to ingenious youth, will lead them to more useful studies, to poetry, rhetoric, physics, ethics, and finally to matters of Christian piety (633).
\end{quote}

This was written in 1526; the consistency of the views expressed here with those expressed twenty years earlier is notable.

This consistent emphasis on the utility of literature makes \textit{The Praise of Folly} a seemingly uncharacteristic Erasmian work. In contrast to the \textit{Colloquies}, where the irony was, for the most part, straightforward and non-problematical, that of \textit{The Praise of Folly} is altogether more complex. In part, of course, this is due to the rhetorical method that Erasmus is following, that of the paradoxical encomium, which is designed to praise trivial or

\footnote{38. Sr. G. Thompson, 1973, p.105.}

\footnote{39. \textit{Atqui hic libellus, si tenerae pubi praegatur, tradet illos ad multas disciplinas magis habiles, ad poeticien, ad rhetoricon, ad physicen, ad ethicen, demum ad ea quae sunt pietatis Christianae} (\textit{Opera omnia} I.3, 749/283-285).}
foolish things. Erasmus explicitly acknowledges this model in his preface (68/22-33).

The Praise of Folly, however, is more complex than any of these models, and this in itself poses problems of interpretation. More specifically, it raises question about Erasmus' use of Lucian, which is more complex here than in the Colloquies. It is no surprise to find Lucian being used to support local sallies of Moria's ironical and satirical wit, but he shares this distinction with a great number of other writers. The use of the Lucianic metaphor of life-as-a-play, however, has more than merely local significance; it occupies a pivotal structural position in the work, and interpretation of the metaphor and Erasmus' elaboration of it is crucial to the interpretation of the work as a whole.

The main critical divergence as to the interpretation of The Praise of Folly may be said to turn on an analysis of the structure of the book. It is generally agreed that the structure is tripartite, and that the first section, at least, is a piece of complex irony, which has been defined by Leonard F. Dean:

in a continued irony, several different attitudes are kept in balance to produce a meaning that is

42. Analysis of The Praise of Folly as a formal oration on the model of either Quintilian or Aphthonius produces a more complex structure, but one that is seemingly superimposed on the tripartite division under discussion. For rhetorical analyses, see The Praise of Folly, translated from the Latin, with an essay and commentary, by Hoyt Hopewell Hudson (Princeton, 1951) and Walter Kaiser, Praisers of Folly (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963), pp.35-50; and for a criticism of their views, Wayne Rebhorn, 'The Metamorphoses of Moria's Structure and Meaning in The Praise of Folly, PMLA, 89 (1974), 463-476 (p.463).
larger than and in a sense more precise than that produced by a narrowly direct statement.\textsuperscript{43}

Opinions differ as to whether this description is adequate for the whole work. Some, notably Dean and Rosalie Colie,\textsuperscript{44} maintain that this is the case. For others, the meaning of Folly changes from section to section, and while this may give its own unity to the book, it does not necessarily mean that the Folly of the first section is identical with that of the other two.\textsuperscript{45}

This tripartite structure reveals the tendency of Erasmus' work to move from the ironical to the didactic. As the Colloquies had employed, for the most part, local ironies in conveying their didactic intent, so Erasmus here begins with the ironical complexity of the opening section, where it is not always an easy matter to decide whether Folly speaks in jest or in earnest. As the tone becomes more serious, the mode alters from irony to satire and the satire itself becomes progressively darker as it 'winds its way up through the social and religious hierarchies'.\textsuperscript{46}

From this, she moves to the short section on the Folly of the Cross. For all that one section dovetails neatly into that following, it is difficult to maintain that Folly has the same character throughout the work. Erasmus' tendency to concentrate on the moral level of discourse has taken him far beyond his Lucianic starting point. From a position which is recognisably complex irony, Erasmus moves to one that is closer to the point


\textsuperscript{44} Dean, passim.; Rosalie Colie, Paradoxia epidemica (New Jersey, 1966), pp.18-20.


\textsuperscript{46} Sylvester, p.138.
of view expressed in the *Enchiridion* -- and it is to be noted that he claimed to teach the same message in both works (Allen II, 337/86-94). In effect, Folly has become the sky-man whom she had earlier criticised for being too ready to strip the masks from the actors and reveal the illusions of life for what they are.

This tendency of Erasmus to abandon the implications of the complexity of his work shows again his response to one side of the Lucianic equation. More’s response, in both *The History of King Richard III* and *Utopia* was of another kind. The *History* is generally acknowledged to belong to literature as well as to history and given the considerable prima facie evidence for More’s contact with the medieval and classical idea of history as an exemplum teaching useful truths, it is scarcely surprising that some critics have felt the work to be primarily didactic, a kind of dramatic treatise on the nature of tyranny. On close examination, however, More’s history resists easy classification in any such genre. Its purpose is seen to be a consideration of the way in which an individual can act historically without being compromised by contact with evil. The method used to explore this possibility is that of complex irony, and it is in this that we feel the presence of Lucian. Alison Hanham, indeed, has argued


that the entire work is a Lucianic, irreverent comment on the
craft of writing history. 49

More's purpose, however, runs deeper than mere parody, and
the Lucianic elements in the work go to the heart of this
purpose. More was struggling with the problem of the conditions
under which one can enter royal service. If the atmosphere of
ever hangs so heavily over courts, how can one engage in
political action without becoming tainted by it?

Specific Lucianic elements in the History raise this problem
locally. Buckingham's speech on sanctuary uses a range of
sophistic tricks and specious logic that remind one of, for
example, the speaker of The Tyrannicide. 50 Clerical opposition
collapses in the face of this sophistical tour-de-force: is this
the condition of courtiers when princes wish to impose their
will? The farcical episodes concerning the proclamation of
Richard as king bring forward Richard and his chief supporters
naked, as it were: how can men who act so ludicrously be so
dangerous?

The metaphor of the stage, drawn from Lucian, crystallises
what has been emerging, especially when the pun upon 'scafoldes'
unites the notions of politics as theatre and as the most serious
and dangerous thing in the world. In this sense, the tone of the
History can justifiably be called tragi-comic. 51 More's
attitude, however, is not that of the people watching this farce:

And so they said that these matters bee Kynges
games, as it were stage playes, and for the more
part plaied vp on scafoldes. In which pore men be
but the lokers on. And thel that wise be, wil medle
no farther. For they that sometyme step vp and
playe with them, when they cannot play their

49. Hanham, p.159.

50. Patrick J. Sullivan, "The Painted Processse": A Literary
Study of Sir Thomas More's History of King Richard III'
(unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of California,

51. Fox, p.93.
partes, they disorder the play & do themself no good (81/6-10).

His own answer to the problem of how one can be simultaneously involved in and detached from the conflicts of history is suggested in the final episode of the English version of the History, through Cardinal Morton's subtle incitement of Buckingham to rebellion. The balance achieved here between detachment and involvement is more complex than the attitude of the narrator, and forms an instructive contrast with the attitude of Erasmus in Institutio principis Christiani, where much less acknowledgement is given to the real complexities of political discourse.52 Unlike Folly/Erasmus, More could not take the option of taking no part in the play; nor would he simply strip away the masks.

The paradox presented in the metaphor of politics as theatre and dramatised in the scene between Morton and Buckingham is explored again, in more depth and greater complexity in Utopia -- and in that work, too, Morton is presented as the pattern of political action that More wished to imitate.53 As in the History, too, Utopia utilises the lessons derived from Lucian, while far surpassing that author in its intellectual and artistic complexity.

Utopia is concerned with similar public themes to the History, and, like the latter work, utilises existing genres for a wholly original purpose -- in this case, the genres of travel literature and the imaginary ideal commonwealth.54 Like the

52. Sullivan, p.113.
53. Fox, p.76.
History, it dramatises the issues with which it is concerned, and does so in a way which makes it difficult to say which side of the question More favoured. 55

It is even more indebted to Lucian than was the History. The island of Utopia owes much to Lucian's True History; Lucian is mentioned by name as one of the favourite authors of the Utopians; the Lucianic metaphor of life-as-a-play again has a centrally important function; its use of dialogue is more indebted to Lucian than to either Plato or Cicero 56 and, most importantly, the narrator, Raphael Hythloday, is a version of the Lucianic philosophus gloriösus, while his interlocutor, Morus, is the Lucianic ingénue. 57

More extends this prototype far beyond its Lucianic origins, nor is he detached and uninvolved as Lucian usually is. Emphasising the Lucianic features of Utopia is, however, necessary in order to correct an older view that the work was written primarily as a serious political treatise. 58 That


different critics have taken diametrically opposing views on exactly what More was espousing is itself evidence of the danger of trying to extract a political philosophy from *Utopia*.

More was too sceptical in temper to commit himself wholly to his vision of an ideal commonwealth. Even as the book stood before the creation of Hythloday, Utopian institutions were not intended to be adopted uncritically. Following the writing of Book I, the vision was entrusted to a spokesman whom we can never fully trust, and it becomes apparent that More was concerned chiefly to debate the principles on which good and sound government should be conducted rather than to recommend a particular political and social ideal.

The contrast with Erasmus is again evident, particularly when one compares their uses of the metaphor of life-as-a-play. Where Erasmus, in *The Praise of Folly*, had withdrawn from some of the implications of this metaphor, More uses it to express his sense of the complexity of human affairs, specifically, political affairs. Morus' hard-won grasp of reality must be balanced against Hythloday's moral fervour, and the conclusion of Book II is deliberately open-ended and ambiguous. The debate which More holds with himself is without parallel in the 'political' works of Erasmus.

The fictional writings of Erasmus and More, then, so often uncritically assumed to be of the same type, can be shown to exhibit fundamental differences in approach. These differences, having their source, no doubt, in the personalities of the two men, can be compared in terms of their radically different edition, (London, 1869), p.347; Edward Surtz S. J., *The Praise of Pleasure* (Harvard, 1957) and *The Praise of Wisdom* (Chicago, 1957). For a recent re-statement and modification of this view, see Logan, op. cit.

approaches to the work of Lucian. The Greek satirist and ironist, himself not especially profound, becomes a touchstone for two contrasting approaches to literature, so that his influence on More and Erasmus becomes an important fact of English Renaissance literature.
CHAPTER ONE

LUCIAN: A REINTERPRETATION

Criticism of Lucian has generally failed to account for the essential ambiguity of his satirical dialogues, contenting itself with regarding him as a mere entertainer with neither depth nor complexity. His satires upon religion, philosophy and charlatanism of all kinds have been distorted by isolating them from the context in which they occur. In part, this is due to a failure to appreciate the ambiguity of his relationship to the chief literary and cultural tendency of his age, that movement known as the Second Sophistic. Only by placing Lucian correctly in his historical setting can his literary techniques be properly evaluated.

The roots of the Second Sophistic were firmly embedded in the traditional literary education of the classical era, but, as van Groningen notes, it was so firmly tied to a mechanical system of rhetorical education that literary life was 'no more than a prolongation of the school'. ¹ and second century literature was 'a museum of fossils'. ² In public speaking, verbal arrangement, sound and rhythm were more important than knowledge. 'No effort was demanded of the audience; neither originality of thought nor sincerity of feeling were pursued nor expected'. ³

A cultural vacuum of this sort gave rise to the figure of the sophist. It is, as Bowersock notes, sometimes difficult to distinguish between the orator and the sophist ⁴ but it is certain that the sophists represent a category within a broad

2. Ibid., p.52.
3. Ibid., p.47.
group of orators, practising their art in a more or less
dilettantish fashion: ‘The sophist was an virtuoso rhetor with a
big public reputation’. He was a public speaker declaiming on a
range of themes from Lucian’s fly and Dio’s parrot to Aristeides’
praise of Rome and the more ‘philosophical’ themes of Dio
Chrysostom. The essential element was the love of display and the
desire to please an audience.

It would be misleading, however, to place all the literary
figures of this age on the same level as the vulgar practitioners
recorded in the pages of Philostratus, and one who stood apart
from the general tendencies of the age and mercilessly exposed
its follies was Lucian. Little is known for certain about his
life. Apart from his own works, we have chiefly a ‘wretched
derivative notice in a Byzantine lexicon’, although prior to
this we can trace non-biographical notices in Lactantius and
Eunapius. The notice in the Suidas tells us that he was born
under the Emperor Trajan, which would place his date of birth no
later than A. D. 117, and that he was torn to pieces by dogs
because of his opposition to Christianity and blasphemy of
Christ. This certainly owes more to Christian hostility than to
fact, and Baldwin notes that the same fate was said to have been
shared by Euripides and Heraclitus. The chronicler of Lucian’s
age, Philostratus, makes no mention of him, no doubt because he
was not a public figure in the same sense as Herodes Atticus,
Pollux, Favorinus and Dio Chrysostom, nor was he, unlike other
sophists, a noted public benefactor.

This paucity of information leaves us heavily dependent on
what Lucian said of himself, and the literal accuracy of much of

5. Ibid., p.13. For a view that stresses the importance of the
holding of public office for the sophists, see E. L. Bowie,
‘The importance of sophists’, Yale Classical Studies, 27
8. Suidas 683.
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this is questionable. He was born in Samosata (Hist. conscr.24; Pisc.19), and described himself as a Syrian (Bis. Acc.14; Adv. Ind.19). After leaving school, he was apprenticed to his uncle as a sculptor, with notable lack of success (Somm.); he then went to Ionia in pursuit of education and probably entered a school of rhetoric (Bis. Acc.), where he learned the art of oratory. We do not know when he learnt Greek, but even if he had some knowledge of the language before entering the school, it was almost certainly here that he acquired his fluency in the classical literary language. Helm cites Rh. Pr.8 as evidence that Lucian acquired his education only with difficulty but the passage occurs in the context of an allusion to a much-used literary topos and can hardly be meant as literal truth.

Suidas has it that after he finished his education he practised as a lawyer in Antioch, abandoning this due to his lack of success. Lucian himself says nothing of this, unless Bis. Acc.32 should be taken as a reference to it. Bowersock accepts this as a reference to forensic rhetoric, but surely goes too far in stating that 'There is nothing, indeed, to suggest that he ever ranked (or practised) as a sophist'. The numerous prolaliae and meletae, as well as his own account of his success in Gaul (Bis. Acc.27), all militate against this view.

A career as a public orator led him to Italy (Herod.5) and Gaul, in which latter country he claimed to have achieved notable popularity and success (Apol.15). As Baldwin notes, Oratory glosses over Lucian's career in Ionia and Greece and it may be that he found success harder to come by in these areas because of his Syrian accent (Bis. Acc.27; Adv. Ind.4; De. Mer.24).

11. All quotations are taken from the Loeb edition of the works of Lucian, 8 vol., (London and New York), 1913-1967.
15. Ibid., p.114.
He says that he visited Rome (Nigr.2) and his meeting with Nigrinus may have been influential in his decision to abandon rhetoric for philosophy (Nigr.38). He also visited Macedonia (Herod.7; Scyth.8), and in the middle of his career he seems to have spent a considerable amount of time in Antioch (Pr. Im.; Im.), Athens (Eun.) and Corinth (Hist. Conscr.). This period, A.D. 162-165, is that of the Parthian wars and Lucius Verus’ residence in the East, and it would be interesting to know if Lucian was trying to court Imperial favour, perhaps presenting himself to the co-Emperor as a potential official war historian, unlikely as this seems. Late in life, he was translated into the Imperial service in Egypt, but the details of this episode are vague. He later seems to have lost this position and to have resumed his oratorical career (Herod.7; Bacch.7). The exact date of his death is unknown, but a reference to Marcus Aurelius shows that he was still alive at about A.D. 180 (Alex.48).

Such is the skeletal information we possess on Lucian’s career. There are critical problems involved in much of this, since in The Dream or Lucian’s Career, The Double Indictment or Trial by Jury and Nigrinus the literary form in which he has chosen to give details of his autobiography suggests that his several conversions may contain more imaginative than literal truth. Yet in the first two examples cited, there is clearly a basis of fact which makes it difficult to agree with Anderson’s statement that these conversions, like those of Dio of Prusa and Justin Martyr, are merely ‘bookish’.

We should rather say that these are sufficiently real events given a literary and bookish turn of expression.

Lucian twice records the fact of his abandoning rhetoric (Nigr.38; Bia. Acc.31-32), and the second of these references points directly to the ambiguity of his relationship with the Sophistic. He had made a success of his professional career as a

17. Helm, 1725-1726.
sophist but became disgusted with the vulgarities of many of his fellow practitioners. Yet, as Putnam notes, he utilised the common techniques of the sophists at all phases of his career. 20 The few early, purely sophistic works which are still extant show his mastery of academic forms as the suasionia (Phalaris I and II); the controversia (The Tyrannicide; Disowned); the encomium (The Fly; My Native Land); ecphrasis (Herodotus; The Hall; Hippias or the Bath); and the prolaia, a short piece serving as an introduction to a longer speech (The Scythian or the Consul; Harmonides; Amber or The Swans; The Dipsads). That some of these prolaiae, notably Dionysus, Heracles and The Dream or Lucian’s Career can be assigned definitely to a late period of his career is evidence that Lucian never wholly abandoned sophism.

At first sight it appears that by using sophistic forms and techniques while attacking sophism Lucian has laid himself open to a charge of inconsistency. This, however, is not wholly true, and the charge can be refuted by examining the precise use he made of these forms and the literary contexts in which he did so. His charges against the sophists are set out explicitly in three works, A Professor of Public Speaking, Lexiphanes and How To Write History.

The first of these is in ironic form, being advice from a teacher of rhetoric to a pupil on the easiest way to achieve literary success. There are two roads to Rhetoric: ‘one of them is but a path, narrow, briary and rough, promising great thirstiness and sweat ... The other, however, is level, flowery and well-watered’ (Rh. p. 7). 21 The guide to the rough road will point out the indistinct footsteps of Demosthenes, Plato and one or two more, and urge one to follow them. This man the teacher describes as an ‘antediluvian, who displays dead men of a bygone

21. ἢ μὲν δραματόστις ἐστι, στενὴ καὶ ἀκανθώδης καὶ τραχεία, πολὺ τῷ δίγοσφο ἐμφαίνοντα καὶ ἱδρύτα ... ἢ ἐτέρα δὲ πλατέια καὶ ἀνθηρὰ καὶ εὔνοδος.

...
era to serve as a pattern, and expects you to dig up long-buried speeches as if they were something tremendously helpful' (c.10).

The other road has for a guide 'a wholly clever and handsome gentleman who is able to make one an orator without effort' (c.11). The novice need not worry about having gone through all the rites of initiation preliminary to rhetoric (c.14). He needs only ignorance, recklessness, effrontery, shamelessness and gay clothing (c.15), fifteen or twenty Attic words to sprinkle in whenever he speaks, as well as a heap of obscure words and new monstrosities coined by the speaker himself (c.16-17). He must read, not the classics, but 'the speeches of the men who lived only a little before our time, and these pieces that they call "exercises"' (c.17).

Similar thoughts are found, cast in a non-ironic form, in the dialogue Lexiphanes, which ridicules fashionable linguistic affectations, and in which Lycinus gives to Lexiphanes advice the obverse of that imparted by the teacher of rhetoric. If Lexiphanes wishes to be praised for style, he must read the best poets and orators, Thucydides and Plato, and take from them all that is fairest (c.22). In a phrase explicitly recalling A Professor of Public Speaking, Lycinus advises him: 'please remember not to imitate the most worthless productions of the Sophists, who lived only a little before our time' (c.23).

Both these treatises contain what J. W. H. Atkins rightly calls 'a ruthless analysis of the sophistic manner' and a fuller treatment is given to the same subject in How To Write History, which attacks contemporary historians who 'think it is

22. Κρονίκος ἄνθρωπος, νεκροῦσ' ἐν μίμησιν παλαιόν σπρεπείς καὶ ἄνορέστειν λεύτους λόγους πάλαι καταφρονυμένους ὡς τι μέγιστον ἀγαθόν.
23. πάγιαφόν τινα καὶ πάγιαφόν ἄνδρα.
24. τούτων ἰδίων πρὸ ἡμῶν λόγους καὶ ἐὰς φασίν ταύτας μελέτας.
25. ἐκείνοι μέμηνεσκαὶ μὴ μιμεῖσθαι τῶν ἰδίων πρὸ ἡμῶν γενόμενον σοφίστῶν τὰ φαινόμενα.
perfectly simple and easy to write history, and that anyone can
do it if only he can put what comes to him into words!’ (c.5).27
These people neglect the distinction between history and
panegyric (c.7), and between history and poetry (c.8). They court
‘private whim and the profit they expect from their history’
(c.13).28

They indulge in absurd imitations of Thucydides (c.15), and
are full of faults of expression and of arrangement of their
material (c.24). In this treatise, as in the other two, we have,
as Atkins says, ‘the sophists as they lived and spoke and wrote’,29
and we easily recognise them as the people attacked in The Double
Indictment 31 as the lovers of rhetoric. We can surmise, then,
that when Lucian says in The Double Indictment that he left
rhetoric for philosophy, he meant that he had set his face
against the more vulgar manifestations of the Second Sophistic.

The gravamen of his charge against the sophists is that
they neglected to cultivate an appreciation of literary
tradition, and it is by appeal to tradition and to the doctrine
of mimesis that Lucian balances his criticisms with positive
precepts. The concept of mimesis or imitation has had a long
history in literary criticism. It has been discussed in many
different senses by writers from Plato onwards, but the fullest
discussion, and the one most immediately relevant to Lucian, is
to be found in Quintilian’s Institutio oratoris, completed some
twenty-five years before Lucian’s birth. Quintilian writes that a
significant part of art consists of imitation: ‘And it is a
universal rule of life that we should wish to copy what we
approve in others’.30 His cardinal principle, says Atkins, was

27. οἷονται ... πάνυ ῥατον καὶ πρόχειρον καὶ ἀπαντος ἢ ἦν ἰστορίαν συγγράφει ἣν τις ἐρμηνεύσαι τὸ ἐπελθὸν δύνηται.
28. τὸ ίδιον καὶ τὸ χρειῶσαι ὦ τι ἀν ἐκ τῆς ἰστορίας εἰλήφσοι θεραπεύωντες.
30. omnis vitae ratio constat, ut quae probamus in alis facere ipsi velimus (X.2.2.).
that it was above all necessary to imitate with understanding, and with a clear sense of what was good and bad in style’.  

In *How To Write History*, Lucian puts forward a theory of imitation similar to that found in Quintilian, and opposes this to the vulgarities of many of his contemporaries. It is 'not strictly perhaps a treatise on writing history, so much as a discussion on sane writing in general’, although it should be noted that even regarded as a treatise on historiography it exposes contemporary historians to scorn and ridicule in the light of precepts drawn from Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon.  

Lucian writes that one of the supreme qualities of the best writer of history is 'power of expression’, which may come through practice, toil and imitation of the ancients (c.34). He invokes both Herodotus and Thucydides explicitly (c.42, 57), as examples worthy of imitation, as he had invoked Plato and Thucydides in *Lexiphanes*. It is by falling short of such standards -- indeed, by ignoring them altogether -- that the worst writers of the age express their ignorance. In putting forward such precepts, Lucian was 'one of the last exponents of classical doctrine’, and was clearly attempting to recall his contemporaries to the traditions of earlier times. The idea of mimesis, though, did not stop at mere slavish imitation of ancient models. In the expression given to it by Quintilian, it showed itself capable of allowing for originality. Imitation should not be limited to one style, nor be regarded as a mere matter of words. 'What was really to be imitated was the methods of this or that writer: his judgement, his arrangement, his appeal to the emotions ...’. Nor is imitation alone enough:

32. Ibid., p.338.
34. δύναμιν ἐρμηνευτικήν
35. Atkins, p.342.
36. Ibid., p.280.
The first point, then, that we must realise, is that imitation alone is not sufficient, if only for the reason that a sluggish nature is only too ready to rest content with the inventions of others. 37

He joins Horace in insisting that 'its real function lies not in the reproduction of earlier models of expression, but in conducing to the discovery of new effects and the development of style in general', 38 and insists that 'It is a positive disgrace to be content to owe all our achievement to imitation'. 39

Because of the impossibility of complete and exact imitation, it was not to be followed as an end in itself, but 'rather as a means to further artistic advance, an incentive to improve on earlier achievement'. 40

However generous the conception was at its best when related to personal reading of ancient authors, both the theory and the practice of mimesis degenerated when refracted through the distorting media of rhetorical schools and handbooks. As J. Bompaire points out, 'Pour les esprits expéditifs, en tout cas ces manuels tiennent lieu de littérature'. 41 Not only was classical education literary in nature so that reading was the basis of imitation -- this is so even in Quintilian -- but reading itself could consist of extracts culled from ancient authors with regard to beauties of style and subject-matter. Such a practice clearly made it difficult to avoid mechanical copying and attain to genuine imitation in the spirit of the original, let alone to originality.

The doctrine of mimesis, then, not only made allowance for originality, but tended towards it as its highest end and ultimate expression, although for one as fastidious in matters of

37. Ante omnia igitur imitatio per se ipsa non sufficit, vel quia pigri est ingenii contentum esse iis, quae sint ab aliis inventa. (Inst. Orat. X.2.4.).
38. Atkins, p.280.
39. Turpe etiam illud est, contentum esse id consequat quod imiteris (ibid., X.2.7.).
literary taste as Lucian, there was a risk of being tainted with the same kind of novelty as that of the sophists. In honouring absurd new subjects and indulging in stylistic mannerisms designed to please an audience, they had degraded genuine originality to the status of mere novelty and confused the creative spirit with subservience to fashion. Consequently we find Lucian both aware of the originality of his comic dialogues and concerned lest his fidelity to literary tradition be overlooked.

His most extended discussion of this problem is to be found in Zeuxis or Antiochus in which he tells us that members of a recent audience of his had noisily praised him: 'The substance of their approbation was the strangeness of the thought in my composition and the degree of freshness it displayed!' (c.1). Their praise caused him, he says, considerable annoyance, and he reflected:

So this is the only attraction in my writings, that they are unconventional and keep off the beaten track, while good vocabulary, conformity to the ancient canon, penetration of intellect, power of perception, Attic grace, good construction, general competence perhaps have no place in my work (c.2).

In a similar vein he writes in To One Who Said 'You’re a Prometheus in Words':

I am not at all satisfied to be thought an innovator with no older model to father this work of mine. No, if it were not thought graceful as well, I should certainly be ashamed of it, believe me, and trample it under foot and destroy it. The originality would be no help, as far as I am

42. τὸ δ' ὁν κεφάλαιον αὐτὸς τῷ τὸ ἢν ... τὴν γνώμην τῶν συγγραμμάτων ἐζήνην ὅσαν καὶ πολὺν ἐν αὐτῇ τῶν νεωτερισμῶν.
43. οὐκόν τούτῳ μονον χάριν τῶν ἐμῶν ἐνεστύν, ὅτι μὴ συνήθη μπεδε κατὰ τὸ κοίνον μαθίζει τοῖς ἄλλοις, ονομάτων δὲ ἀρα καλῶν, ἐν αὐτῶς καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄρχατον κανόνα συνεκμείγνυν ἡ νῦν ἄξιοι ἡ περινοτάς τινος ἡ χαρίτος ἀττικής ἡ ἄριστος ἡ τέχνης τῆς ἐφ' ἀπασί, τούτων δὲ πόρρω ὑπεστοίμων.
concerned, to prevent the ugly thing's being obliterated (c.3).

Yet c.6 of the same work shows that he still took considerable pride in his hippocentauric creation.

This odd combination of pride and diffidence goes some way to accounting for the ambivalence we feel in reading Lucian’s dialogues. It is, not however, the whole explanation, for which we must turn to another aspect of his relationship to the Second Sophistic. One of the salient features of the movement was its lack of originality. Even the best of its literary artists were content to use old forms, and none of them, Lucian included, could be called original thinkers. What passed for thought in the movement was a collection of clichés and commonplaces from rhetorical handbooks or from the platitudes of the various philosophical sects, and in this context Graham Anderson has correctly stressed the common bonds between Lucian and the sophists: ‘The second century was the age of the Halbphilosoph, the rhetorical writer who concerned himself with moral (and very often religious) commonplace. Lucian has the repertoire and outlook of such a person’. A strictly limited number of themes and tropes was endlessly varied and elaborated upon in something akin to the art of fugue. Lucian seems to have fully realised the impasse to which classical culture had come but was incapable of suggesting any way out. His dissatisfaction found its expression in a literary form which took as its content those weary, over-used clichés and variations and by a subtle use of literary context exposed their hollowness. Not only that, but in the very works in which he mocked the shallowness of

44. ἐμοὶ δὲ οὐ πάντα ἴκανον, εἰ καίνοποιεῖν δοκεῖν, μὴ δὲ ἔχοι τι λέγειν ἀρχαῖότερόν τι τοῦ πλάσματος οὐ τούτῳ ἀργογόνῳ ἐστιν. ἄλλα εἰ μὴ καὶ χάριν φανότο, αἰσχυνομίμην ἄν, εὐ ισθι, ἐκ' αὐτῷ καὶ θυματήσας ἄν ἰδο- ανίςαμι.
46. Bompaire, p.113.
contemporary culture, Lucian himself fully participated in it. 47 He too was an entertainer, reading his dialogues to an appreciative and admiring audience. His strategy is rescued from the charge of cynicism by its fantasy, irony and humour.

This simultaneous awareness of the limitations of contemporary culture and participation in some of its most characteristic forms is crucial to an understanding of Lucian's literary art, yet its implications have rarely been noticed by critics, or, if noticed, not pursued. Anderson is content to regard him as a virtuoso sophist. In Lucian, he writes, 'whatever the subject and whatever the genre, we are dealing with ingenious variations on a handful of themes'. 48 His endless self-repetition results in 'a literary texture dense with self-pastiche'. 49 This is partly a result of his rhetorical training. No orator could afford to forget his elementary training in the practice of variations on a theme.

It is clear from Philostratus' Vitae sophistarum that the second-century sophists were professional entertainers competing regularly for the loyalty of audiences who expected constant novelty within a very limited range. The virtuoso had every temptation to exploit his successes as resourcefully as he dared; and the fashion for extempore public speaking made it still more advisable to have one's personal repertoire at the ready. Lucian could sneer at the professional upstart who drew on his own storehouse of clichés; but no-one did so more persistently than Lucian himself.

This is an admirably succinct statement of literary conditions and methods in general, but hardly an adequate account of Lucian's response to them.

49. Ibid., p.1.
50. Ibid., pp 3-4.
Robinson, too, stresses the use of stock types drawn from handbooks, or from comedy and diatribe. 51 'The same characters, the same settings, the same themes, the same examples recur in works whose compositional features are quite unlike'. 52 As for the activities and problems with which Lucian's characters concern themselves, these rely heavily on 'the moral commonplaces of Cynic diatribe' and 'lists of topoi in manuals'. 53 He reaches the same conclusion as Anderson: 'Clearly ... it is not themes and characters, stock types all, which maintain the satirical interest. More important still is the skill with which Lucian varies their presentation'. 54 In spite of this, Robinson goes on to say that these works 'play with the audience's awareness of their literary antecedents ... In fact, what we are dealing with is an excellent example of literary irony'. 55 Finally, he points out that 'The theme of the satires is not, in a sense, their ostensible subject-matter, but the fact of imitation itself'. 56 This is valuable, but Robinson fails to extend it as a critical principle to Lucian's practice of variation on a theme, and his use of topoi and commonplaces. The theme of the satires is not imitation alone, but the restricted type of imitation practised by the sophists.

Bompaire goes close to the heart of Lucian's method by drawing a distinction between rhetorical and literary creation. He traces nearly everything in Lucian to rhetorical elements, and writes:

Le monde lucianesque adopte pour l'essentiel les personnages de la declamation, avec les données qui les situent dans le temps et l'espace. En outre, dans sa totalité, le monde dont Lucien pose les

51. Christopher Robinson, Lucian and his Influence in Europe, (London, 1979), p.9ff..
52. Ibid., p.14.
53. Ibid., p.16.
54. Ibid., p.39.
55. Ibid., p.44.
56. Ibid., p.44.
He notes the mass of borrowings of all types in Lucian and makes the valuable comment:

(elles) ne sont pas une fin en soi, elles s’insèrent dans une ensemble ... elles constituent l’étape premier de la création, l’écrivain réservant son talent pour les étapes plus subtils de l’ironie ou de la fantaisie.

The writing which does not rise above its sources and its borrowings is what Bompaire calls ‘rhetorical’ creation. Literary creation, on the other hand, is close to what Quintilian meant by the best type of mimesis, that which imitates not the letter but the spirit of the ancients, and is thus capable of originality on its own account. In Bompaire’s words:

Dans la création littéraire, la Mimesis trouve son expression parfaite: l’assimilation profonde se substitue à l’utilisation immédiate ... et la place est libre pour une recréation du modèle.

In a similar vein he writes that in reading Lucian we ought not to stop at mechanical borrowings, exploitation of simple readings and received ideas:

Il ... faut ... saisir le moment où le procédé rhétorique, loyalement appliqué, n’est déjà plus qu’une mystification, où la virtuosité du souvenir devient resurrection du modèle.

And finally:

La Mimesis, loin d’être une charge est la condition même de cette originalité. Disons encore que

58. Ibid., pp.235-236.
59. Ibid., p.547.
60. Ibid., p.741.
To any reader of Lucian, originality can mean only the creation of the comic dialogue. We know little of the process by which he came to create this form, and the explanation of Helm, that he simply took it over from Menippus, is quite inadequate, there being no evidence that Menippus ever used it. Lucian himself twice explained his new creation, but in terms that leave many questions still unanswered.

In *The Double Indictment*, Dialogue complains that she was formerly dignified, pondering upon the gods and the nature of the universe, but Lucian (appearing as The Syrian in the dialogue) gave her a comic mask and penned her up with Jest, Satire, Cynicism, Eupolis and Aristophanes. Finally, 'he even thrust in upon me Menippus'. As a result she has been turned into a monstrous blend, 'neither prose nor verse, but (I) seem to my hearers a strange phenomenon made up of different elements, like a Centaur' (c.33). In reply, Lucian says that when he found Dialogue he was dour, 'and had been reduced to a skeleton through continual questioning' (c.34). Lucian forced him to smile and paired him with Comedy so as to procure for him great favours from his hearers. Dialogue, he says, had been used to quibbling over subtleties. 'Reflection is sweet to him, and he sets great store by himself if they say that not everyone can grasp his penetrating speculations about "ideas"' (c.34).

In *To One Who Said, 'You're a Prometheus in Words'*', Lucian says:

Dialogue used to sit at home by himself, and indeed spend his time in the public walks with a few companions; Comedy gave himself to Dionysus and

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61. Ibid., p.742.
62. καὶ Μένιππον, τινα . ἐπειδηγήσαν μοι.
63. ὡς ὑπερεπαγόραν διήνυσεν τι καὶ ἐξέθεν φάσμα τοῖσ ἰκούσισ.
64. καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν συνεχῶν ἐρωτήσεων κατεσκληκτόνα.
65. τὸ φρόντισμα ἢ ὅποι αὐτῶ δοκεῖ καὶ μέγα φρονεῖ ἦν λέγεται ὡς ὁ παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐστι συνιδεῖν ἀ περὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν ἑξοδορκεῖ.
joined him in the theatre, had fun with him, jested and joked ... Dialogue's companions she mocked as "Heavy-thinkers" and "High-talkers" and suchlike ... Dialogue, however, took his conversations very seriously, philosophising about nature and virtue. So, in musical terms, there were two octaves between them from highest to lowest. Nevertheless, I have dared to combine them as they are into a harmony, though they are not in the least docile and do not easily tolerate partnership (c.6).

These are fine descriptions of his achievement, but neither tells us why he decided to combine Comedy and Dialogue. He was clearly dissatisfied with the limitations of sophism, and steeped in the literature of the Greek past. His temperament naturally inclined towards all forms of comedy, and Plato presented him with a living example of dramatic dialogue. Most importantly, he was steeped in the best traditions of mimesis, which stressed eclecticism and borrowing the best parts of one's models so as to create something new. If his creation was original, the possibility of and need for originality were both sanctioned by tradition, and his yoking of comedy and dialogue amounts to something more than the rhetorically-sanctioned combination of old forms for new effects spoken of by Putnam. If we abandon the notion of Lucian as merely battening upon tradition and learn to think of him as a genuine creative artist in exactly the same sense as his predecessors, then it is easy to see him creating the comic dialogue as a response to the cultural and artistic impasse in which he found himself.

66. Διάλογος ... οίκοι καθ' έαυτόν καί νη Δίω ἐν τοῖς περιπάτους μετ' ὅλων τὰς διατριβὰς ἐποίεσεν, ἢ δὲ παραδοθὰ τὰ διονύσω εαυτὴν θεάτρῳ ὅμιλε καὶ ξυνεπαίζε καί ἐγελωτοποιεῖ καί ἐπέσκωπε ... τοῦ δὲ τοῦ διάλογος ἐπείρουσ εχλεύαζε φοντιστὰς καὶ μετεωρελέχαι καὶ τὰ τοιαύτα προσαγορεύομεν ... διάλογος δὲ σεμνοτάτῳ ἐποίεσεν τὰς συνουσίας φύσεως τέρι καί άρετὴς φιλοσοφῶν. ὅπερ, τὸ τῶν μυσικῶν τούτω, διὸ δὲ πάσῳ είναι τὴν ἁρμονίαν, ἀπὸ τοῦ ρεχτάτου ἐστὶν τὸ ρατύτων. καὶ όμοιο ἐπισυμμέρχετο ἡμεῖς τὰ ὁμοών ἔχοντα πρὸς ἅλλα ξυναγογεῖν καὶ ξυναρμόζεις οὐ πάντως πειθόμενα οὐδέ εὐμαρῶς ἀνεχόμενα τὴν κοινωνίαν.

67. Putnam, p.163.
Unlike Athena, comic dialogue did not spring fully armed from the head of its creator. There was a period of experimentation during which Lucian was obviously under the influence of Platonic dialogue, although he invariably gives this an individual flavour. Even earlier than this, he had introduced snatches of dialogue into such purely sophistic works as *Amber*, or *The Swans*, while *The Dance* and *Toxaris,* or *Friendship* are written entirely in dialogue. The first, a treatise on dancing, involves 'no real contact of personality'; while the second merely uses dialogue as a frame for pairs of tales on friendship. *Nigrinus*, too, is clearly sophistic in spirit. Its numerous sophistic traits have been listed by Putnam, and it again merely uses a frame dialogue, while its burden is carried by a lengthy narration.

These early efforts are a long way from the spirit and technique of the later dialogues, and the 'Platonic' dialogues are equally experimental in character. Of these, *The Parasite* is an ironical praise of parasitism, based on the discussion in Plato's *Gorgias* of both cookery and rhetoric as arts of flattery. *The Carousal,* or *The Lapiths* is barely a dialogue at all, consisting as it does of a long narrative of how representatives of various philosophical sects had made fools of themselves at a banquet, the whole being introduced by a short dialogue in which the narrator, Lycinus, converses with a friend. The setting is based on Plato's *Symposium,* and may also be indebted to a *Convivium* attributed to Menippus, but in spite of the humorous exposure of charlatans, a recurrent motif in Lucian, the dialogue lacks any subtlety.

*The Parasite* and *Hermotimus* or *Concerning the Sects* are linked together as explorations of the Socratic method. *Hermotimus* is Lucian's most extended treatment of philosophical questions, and he conjoins the method of Socratic enquiry to a
thoroughly sceptical point of view in order to reduce his Stoic interlocutor to perplexity. Tackaberry has shown Lucian’s debt to scepticism in this dialogue. 71 and this dedication to sceptical formulations no doubt explains why the pursuit of philosophy is taken to a reductio ad absurdum — although this may possibly be more indebted to a desire to parody the Socratic method. In any case, the dialogue is, for our taste, too long, overly repetitive, and shows that close examination of a philosophical question, even in a humorous spirit, was not Lucian’s forte.

Both The Lover Of Lies, or The Doubter and Anacharsis, or Athletics can be seen as developments of this early group. Both show a definite advance in dramatic ability, and Anacharsis is the first occurrence in a Lucianic dialogue of the philosophus gloriosus, although Solon is here treated not as a philosopher, but as an eloquent citizen of Athens. Among the techniques used to deflate Solon are an involved rhetorical simile which ‘shows up the wisest man in Athens as a glib but unconvincing sophist’ 72 who is forced to justify athletics by comparing it to cock-fighting (c.37). These techniques will recur frequently in later dialogues.

The Lover Of Lies is another dialogue which is essentially a narrative set in a frame of dialogue, and, like The Carousel, is an exposure of charlatans. Its introduction uses a quasi-ironical setting, since if respectable poets and cities are allowed to lie (c.2-3), perhaps that is some slight mitigation in favour of the philosophers present at the banquet. Each of the stories told is progressively more incredible, and the ironic interruptions of Tychiades are not taken seriously. In each of the tales, Lucian exhibits a considerable talent for comic invention, but the dialogue lacks the ironic tension between setting and content which is one of the characteristics of the later works.

72. Anderson, 1976, p.11§.
The remaining dialogues all, for one reason or another, fall into the group classified as 'Menippean', although this term actually begs more questions than it answers; as a Menippean satirist, Lucian is very much sui generis. That he rather than Menippus was the inventor of the comic dialogue has been indisputable since Barbara P. McCarthy's masterly review of the evidence. In view of his eclectic approach to the literature of the past, it is not difficult to see him as having utilised Menippus as one source among many.

The relation of the four series of miniature dialogues to those of fuller length is difficult to determine, although Dialogues of the Gods and Dialogues of the Dead in particular share many points in common with the longer pieces. Dialogues of the Courtesans owe their inspiration to New Comedy, and are skilful character sketches with an occasional satirical bent (e.g. D. meretr.1; 11). Yet even these, short as they are, provide Lucian with an opportunity to conflate sources and repeat material and situations used elsewhere in his work. The same can be said of Dialogues of the Sea-Gods, fifteen brief portraits of various sea-gods. Whimsically humorous rather than satirical and full of real charm, they contain fine examples of the exercise of ecphrasis (15.3), and in their vividness show that they are more than mere imitations of their several sources. But they contain little hint of criticism or mockery, and, exquisite as they are, they remain outside the mainstream of Lucian's work.

Dialogues of the Gods brings us closer to that mainstream, if only because several of the situations recur in more extended dialogues. Although they are not always markedly satirical, the rationalist base of the humour was capable of further extension. More importantly, the casual way in which the gods talk of their affairs -- in a manner reminiscent of Plautus -- contains an implicit valuation of their worth as gods which will recur in many later dialogues. Although this is not their main point, we

surely do not feel that these debased anthropomorphic deities are worthy of much respect, let alone devotion.

Similarly, in Dialogues of the Dead it is impossible to feel that the setting of Hades is to be taken literally. It is compounded of a variety of literary sources and traditions and is essentially metaphorical -- that is, it is a convenient setting, sanctioned by tradition, for examining men's attitudes and behaviour. In Lucian's mind it has no more reality than his Olympus. He used it because it was universally known and required no explanation.

The first thing to notice in these dialogues is the frequent occurrence of Cynic spokesmen such as Menippus, Diogenes, Crates and Antisthenes, all with more or less interchangeable opinions. Menippus is no more important than the other three, in spite of making rather more appearances. This is surely an argument in favour of the opinion advanced by Bompaire that Menippus has no special importance for Lucian other than as a representative of the Cynic sect. 74

It is noticeable, too, that on one occasion in these dialogues, Menippus' position, as usual a Cynic cliché, is ironically undercut by Hermes. On being shown the skull of Helen of Troy he asks: 'Was it for this that so many Greeks and barbarians fell and so many cities were devastated?' (D.mort., 5.2). 75 Hermes replies: 'Ah, but you never saw her alive, Menippus, or you would have said yourself that it was forgiveable "they for such a lady long should suffer woe" (ibid.)'. 76 Menippus' reply that the Achaeans 'did not know for what a short-lived thing they strove' does not fully recover his position. The Cynics, no more than the Stoics, are exempt from the implied charge of viewing life through a philosophical haze. Menippus'

75. ἐίτα δεί τούτο αἱ χάλιαι νήπια ἐπηρώθησαν ἐξ ἀκάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ τοσοῦτοι ἔπεσον ἐλπίνεσ τε καὶ βαρβαροί καὶ τοσούτα πόλεις ἄνακται γεγόνασιν;
76. ἀλλ' οὐχ ἐλέες, ὦ Μένιππε, ἡδέαν τὴν γυμναίαν ἔφης, γὰρ ἂν σὺ ἀνεμέσῃν εἶναι "τοιῷδε ἡμῶν γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἁλγεὰ πάσχειν".
attitude here is paralleled by himself and other Cynic spokesmen throughout most of Dialogues of the Dead, in all the full-length underworld dialogues, and in the other ‘episcopic’ dialogues. In these larger pieces it is ironised by setting and context; here, notable irony occurs only in the place cited, an indication that these miniatures are indeed early pieces.

Because they are early, they form a useful introduction to many characteristic Lucianic themes. In Hades, the rich and the tyrants can be distinguished only by their groans (1.1); Menippus is continually ‘laughing and generally mocking those hypocritical philosophers’ (1.2); the rich waste their time in piling up gold which they cannot take with them (1.3); there is no physical beauty left in Hades but ‘all with us ... is one and the same dust, skulls bereft of good looks’(1.3). These themes recur constantly in Lucian, and it is interesting to see so many of them being crowded into one short dialogue. Obviously designed to introduce the series of miniatures, it stands equally well as an introduction to a significant part of the Lucianic corpus.

From the third dialogue onwards, the themes touched upon by Diogenes are elaborated by Menippus and other Cynic spokesmen. He insults dead rulers who, when alive, ‘expected people to worship (you), treated free men with contempt, and forgot all about death’ (3.2). He insults the Homeric heroes and historical figures such as Croesus, Midas and Xerxes, and philosophers such as Empedocles (6). Both he and Diogenes make fun of the seers Amphilocus and Trophonius (10), the god Heracles (11), and the deified hero Alexander (13).

Dialogue 20 makes a sustained attack on a philosopher: ‘an august personage, to judge by his appearance, and a proud man’, with ‘haughty eyebrows, thoughtful mien, and bushy beard’ (20.)

77. χειλα δ' αει και τα πολλα τους αλαζόνας τούτους φιλοσόφους ἐπισκόπει .
78. ἅλλα πάντα μία ἡμίν κόσμησις, ἑαυτής κρανία γνωμα τοῦ κάλλος .
79. προσκύνησας αξίωματος καὶ ἐλεέθεροις ανδράσις ἐντυπωσάτο καὶ τοῦ θανάτου παράπληκτον οὐ μηνομυχόντες .
80. ὁ σχεδὸς δὲ οὕτως ἀπὸ γε τοῦ σχηματὸς καὶ βρεφωθήμενος, ὁ τῷ δόρῳ ἐπηρκὼς, ὁ ἐπί τῶν φροντίδων τὸν καθίστων , ὁ τῶν βαθῶν πάλαμον καθεμένος.
Menippus calls him an 'impostor, full of talk of marvels', and he is found to be concealing beneath his cloak hypocrisy ... ignorance, contentiousness, vanity, unanswerable puzzles, thorny argumentations, and complicated conceptions ... yes, and plenty of wasted effort, and no little nonsense, and idle talk, and splitting of hairs, and ... gold ... and soft living, shamelessness, temper, luxury, and effeminacy' (20.8).

This is a reasonably comprehensive indictment, and in its details and general attitudes agrees with what Lucian says elsewhere about philosophers.

In general, these miniatures give notice of themes -- even phrases -- found constantly in the later Lucian. It is noticeable that the characterisation of Menippus exhibits three different tendencies -- the rude name-caller, the quizzical questioner of mythology, and, briefly but significantly, the eiron ironised. Evidently Lucian was still feeling his way to some more general statement of his views, and, in general, the artistic and intellectual effects of the longer Menippean dialogues are quite different from those of the miniatures. Since the ethical and philosophical opinions put forward are the same in both cases, the critical task is to ask why these effects differ, and what implications this has for a consideration of Lucian as artist and satirist.

It is customary to divide the longer dialogues into groups, according as their main influence is thought to be Old Comic or Menippean, and elaborate schemes have been proposed for identifying the 'Menippean' dialogues. Yet an examination of

81. ὃσπιν μὲν τὴν ἀλαξονεύτων κομίζει, ὡσπὶν δὲ ἀμαθίαν καὶ ἔριν καὶ κενοδοξίαν καὶ ἐρωτησία ἀπόροια καὶ λόγοις ἀκανθώδεις καὶ ἐννοίας πολυπλοκοσ ἀλλὰ καὶ ματαιοκονίαις μᾶλλα πολλὴν καὶ λήρον ὅφελος καὶ θέλος καὶ μικρολογίας, νὴ! Δία καὶ χρυσὸν γε τούτῳ καὶ ἑδυμάθειαν δὲ καὶ ἄναιοχύντια καὶ ὁργὴν καὶ τρυφήν καὶ μαλακίαν.

the dialogues suggests that such schemes are arbitrary, and that all the dialogues are united by a common technique.

This technique is exemplified in the obviously paired dialogues, Menippus, or The Descent Into Hell and Icaromenippus, or The Sky-man. In both of these, although the central figure is Menippus, it is clear that he is not intended for our unqualified admiration, and that he has much in common with the ironised figure of Dialogues of the Dead 5.

Menippus is thought to be based on a lost Menippean original known as Necyia, 83 and Helm argues that it is merely a redaction of this work, citing as evidence the verse/prose mixture, the Cynic tendency, the metaphor of life as a play, exempla drawn from diatribe, historical exempla taken from the fourth century B.C., and parallels with Seneca’s Menippean satire, Apocolyptosis. 84 All this really proves is that if Menippus did write a Necyia Lucian had probably read it and used such elements of it as fitted his general outlook. But there is no proof that Menippus ever wrote in dialogue, and, as McCarthy has put it, the influence may well be confined to the actual narration put in the mouth of Menippus. 85 She further says:

The narratives in the Necromanteia and the Icaromenippus probably reflect Lucian in their general form. But the elaborate technique of his dramatic dialogues is Lucian’s own development. 86

This technique is more subtle that Anderson allows when he writes:

He claimed to have blended Dialogue, Comedy and ‘Menippus’ together, and took some satisfaction in his technique. And he was faced with the problem of arranging these diverse sources, along with the inevitable rhetorical clichés, in a way which would avoid monotony.

84. Helm, 1750.
85. McCarthy, p.20.
86. Ibid., p.23.
This is true if we view Lucian, as Anderson does, as a mere entertainer, but if we ask ourselves whether he may have had a more serious purpose, then we are forced to draw different conclusions about his use of his sources.

In his introduction to the Loeb edition of Menippus, A. M. Harmon writes: 'The unity of the dialogue is badly marred because Lucian has given it a double point, aiming it not only at the philosophers but at the rich'.\(^{88}\) This defect, he believes, arises from imperfect adaptation of the Menippean original which 'must have been a satire against wealth and power' which 'Lucian parodies and turns against the philosophers'.\(^{89}\) In fact, it is one of the characteristics of Lucian's personae that they allow themselves to be distracted, to attack more than one target at a time. Something of this sort was done in Dialogues of the Dead 1, and we shall see it again in Icaromenippus.

The opening of Menippus exhibits the mixture of prose and verse which is regarded as characteristic of the genre, but it is noticeable that both here and in Zeus Rants there is really very little verse, and that in both dialogues the speaker drops it after criticism. It is far less prominent in these pieces than in Seneca's Apocolyptosis so, again, we may legitimately doubt the extent of Menippus' influence on Lucian.

The impulse for Menippus' journey to Hades was his discovery that the laws contradicted what the poets said about the gods, and forbade 'adultery, quarrelling and theft' (c.3). Not knowing who was in the right, he decided to consult the philosophers, begging them 'to show me a plain, solid path in life' (c.4).\(^{90}\) This is the 'mean and sure estate' said by Wooden to be one of the classical bases of the Menippean position.\(^{91}\) In Lucian, it is not quite as simple as that. Menippus finds that the

88. Lucian vol.4, p.71.
89. Ibid., p.71.
90. τινα ὁδὸν ἡπιλήν καὶ βέβαιον ὑποδείξαι τοῦ βίου.
philosophers were even more ignorant than other men, giving him contradictory advice which amounts to a clichéd survey of the various schools (c.4). Worst of all, their practice directly opposed their preaching (c.5).

Oddly, Menippus makes no mention of the question he had originally intended to put to the philosophers -- that is, since the laws and the poets are mutually contradictory, who is in the right? Indeed, the question is no sooner put than it is dropped in favour of the all-embracing attack on the philosophers. And after this, the task becomes to find out from Teiresias 'what the best life was, the life a man of sense would choose' (c.6). What is the cause of this shift of focus? Is it the result of artistic incompetence, or is it an indication that we should look more carefully at the content of the dialogue? It is one of the characteristics of Menippean irony that it uses surface incongruities to stimulate the reader to look further, to seek the reason for these incongruities.

But what is it to which Lucian is inviting us to pay attention? Since the character of Menippus is the focal point of the dialogue, is Lucian asking us to scrutinise carefully his claims and attitudes? In Dialogues of the Dead 5, Menippus, by simplistic attitudes and rhetorical clichés, had laid himself open to the charge of preferring those clichés to reality. And so it is here. What, after all, is the gravamen of his attack on the philosophers? It is merely that different sects have different opinions, and that is not something that can be taken as the basis of a serious criticism of philosophy. Menippus is the master of the trite and sweeping generalisation -- and not Menippus alone, but all of Lucian's satiric personae.

The episode of Mithrobarzanes is a further example of the way in which Lucian distances himself from Menippus. He is, to be sure, poking fun at the mystery religions, but some of the irony rubs off on Menippus himself. We have already been prepared for this in the introduction. Menippus' costume of 'a felt cap, a
lyre and a lion-skin' (c.1)\(^3\) is as ridiculous as the verse he
spouts, but the details are not arbitrary. As Bompaire points
out, they evoke respectively Odysseus, Orpheus and Heracles.\(^4\)
All three made descents to the underworld, but all call up quite
different associations. Odysseus evokes epic, Orpheus religion
and Heracles heroism, legend and, through Aristophanes’ Frogs,
comedy.

What is the purpose of this bizarre assemblage of allusions?
Is it here only for comic effect, or as a virtuoso exercise meant
to evoke our admiration of the author’s literary skill? Or is it
one more of Lucian’s warning signs, meant to make us hesitate
before assenting to any of Menippus’ opinions? In fact, it serves
both ends, and is both an indication of Lucian’s essential
ambiguity and a source of the prevalent misinterpretation of him.
Of course it was intended to entertain, and no doubt did so as
well then as it does now. But it was also intended to raise
questions about the figure of Menippus. Surely his attack on the
philosophers is too glib, consisting of attitudes too easily
struck, to be taken altogether seriously?

Menippus’ tendency to multiply the point of the dialogue is
evident again when, in Hades, he pays most attention to the fate
of the wealthy, dwelling in detail on Minos’ harsh judgement upon
them. After his review of the inhabitants of Hades in which he
concludes that all are alike in death (c.15), he breaks into an
elaborate metaphor in which human life is compared to a pageant
directed by Fortune:

> For a brief space she lets them use their costumes,
> but when the time of the pageant is over, each
> gives back the properties and lays off the costume
> along with his body, becoming what he was before
> his birth, no different from his neighbour (c.16).\(^5\)

93. πῆλος καὶ λύρα καὶ λεοντῆ.
95. καὶ μέχρι μὲν τίνος ἔσσε χρήσθαι τῷ σχήματι ἐπειδὴν δὲ
δὲ τῆς ποιμῆς καιρός παρέλθῃ, τηνικαῖτα ἐκαστὸς ἀποδοῦσ
τὴν σκευὴν καὶ ἀποδυσάμενος τὸ σχῆμα μετὰ τοῦ σκώματος
ἐγένετο οὐδόπερ ἥν πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι, μηδὲν τοῦ πλησίουν
diaφέρον ἔ.
This is drawn straight from the rhetorical textbooks and the clichés of the Cynic diatribe, as are the similar examples at Icaromenippus 17 and Charon 18-19. Are we to take this as Lucian’s own point of view or should our opinion of the characterisation of Menippus cause us to ponder on its truthfulness and appropriateness? In all probability, we are intended to question not so much the sentiments expressed as the manner of their expression.

After these peregrinations and digressions, Menippus is recalled to the point of the dialogue, narrates the decree passed against the rich, and finally consults Teiresias about what sort of life is best and is told:

The life of the common sort is best, and you will act more wisely if you stop speculating about heavenly bodies and discussing final causes and first causes, and spit your scorn at those clever syllogisms, and counting all that sort of thing nonsense, make it always your sole object to put the present to good use and to hasten on your way, laughing a good deal and taking nothing seriously (c.21).

This answers to Menippus’ original reason for going to consult the seer, but is so similar to his own attitude that one can see the sense in Payne’s remark that ‘all his efforts teach him only what he already knows.’ Further, since most of the dialogue has been a digression from this central point, Teiresias’ comments serve to remind us of the essentially episodic nature of Menippean narrative, the shifting of the focus of attack from one object to another so that what is finally satirised is not just the specific people and attitudes listed by Menippus, but the characteristic attitude of the persona in thus scattering his

96. οἱ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν ἁριστος βίος, καὶ σωφρονέστερος παρασκευής ὑπερευθυνός, καὶ τελικά καὶ ἄρχει οἰκονομίαν καὶ καταρτισμόν τῶν σκέψεων τούτων συλλογισμόν καὶ τὰ τρία τάτα λήρον ἡγεμόνος τώτῳ μόνον εἰς ὕπαρξις θηρασίαν ἡπίων τῷ παραθύρῳ ἐθέμενος παραδομήν γελών τὰ πρότα συνειδητά μηδὲν ἐσπουδασμένον.

97. Payne, pp.51-52.
shot and applying to each target the cliches of the textbook and the diatribe.

Icaromenippus is quite clearly a companion piece to this, but its structure is a little clearer, so that we can see more easily what use Lucian was making of the figure of Menippus. In relation to this piece, Bompaire makes some valuable remarks, contrasting its nonsense form and edifying foundation. He traces the rise of this type of dialogue to the collapse of philosophical dialogue in the Hellenistic era and says:

sa valeur intellectuelle et morale serait faible et beaucoup plus net son role de divertissement, sa parente avec la Comedie ancienne, a la fois parodique et fantastique ... ce qui dans le dialogue socratique est un cadre amusant devient chez elle une grosse farce.

These comments are correct as far as they go, but are really only a description of Lucian’s technique, not an explanation of it. Nevertheless, the distinction between the nonsense form and the edifying foundation is valuable, although this is less a matter of contrast between the two than a matter of one modifying the other, the nonsense form providing an ironic context for the more serious matter.

The structural parallels between Menippus and Icaromenippus have been noted by Anderson, who also notes that in Icaromenippus, Lucian is simply exploiting a preconceived pattern of comic dialogue; he is a ‘literary Procrustes’. This point, and those mentioned by Bompaire, are integral elements of Lucian’s satirical technique. The opening dialogue of Icaromenippus is similar to that of Menippus, and the attack on the philosophers is couched in identical terms (c.4-10). The ascent of Olympus through one eagle’s and one vulture’s wing is as improbable as the descent to Hades through the agency of

98. Bompaire, pp. 551-552.
100. Ibid., p. 149.
Mithrobarzanes. It is also equally redolent of literary associations, in this case Aesop and Icarus, and Trygaeus in Aristophanes' Peace. The satirical function is also the same -- that of placing Menippus as a literary figure, the complex and contrasting associations of the allusions making us uncertain which of his literary forebears Menippus is most supposed to recall. We are thus wary of taking anything he may say at face value.

The tour of Hades is replaced by Menippus as episcopos, viewing human life from his vantage point in the moon. What he sees is a panorama of vice, crime and varied human activity, which causes him to produce a rhetorical metaphor similar to that at Menippus 16. This time he compares human life to a choir whose members sing different tunes (c.17), and to a swarm of ants (c.19). None of this has much to do with the original purpose of his journey, and the fantastic setting makes it difficult for us to accept his conclusions. Thus the inter-relation between form and setting is much more complex than allowed for by Bompaire.

With the scenes in Olympus, the episodic nature of the genre is again apparent, and the treatment of the gods is similar to that of Mithrobarzanes. In the walk with Zeus and the hearing of prayers, Menippus must accept everything at face value, but Lucian hardly expects us to do likewise. Zeus' perplexity at being expected to provide beneficial replies to mutually contradictory prayers is one of Lucian's criticisms of contemporary religion, but it is not expressed by Menippus, whose presence in Olympus is merely a pretext for this criticism.

Finally, Zeus' attack on the philosophers, made from a different standpoint from that of Menippus, is similar in tone, as was that of the moon earlier. But if a personified heavenly body and a father of gods whose existence we cannot take literally can make this kind of criticism, does that not seriously compromise Menippus' earlier attack? Does he, as the apparent central norm, have any more status than Zeus or Selene? Zeus, of course, does not solve Menippus' original difficulty, so
that we can agree with the editor of the Loeb volume that 'what Menippus brings back is nothing but moonshine'. 101

The two dialogues so far discussed are essentially narratives with a dialogue frame, and connected to these by reason of its location in Hades is a more 'genuine' dialogue, The Downward Journey or The Tyrant. Unlike the other two, it is not centred on a single protagonist, although many of the attitudes expressed are of the same order as those discussed above. Apart from the obvious debt to Aristophanes' Frogs, it contains elements indebted to the comic agon and the rhetorical law-suit, and the combination of these with elements from Old Comedy and dialogue reminds us that the formal base of the Menippean satire is thoroughly eclectic.

The 'ethical' centre of the dialogue is the satire on the tyrant Megapenthes, who comes up with a variety of reasons for having his doom reversed and being allowed to stay on earth a little longer. The point of the dialogue is summed up neatly and wittily when, in reply to his question 'Who shall dare to pass judgement on a tyrant?', 102 Hermes says: 'On a tyrant, no-one, but on a dead man, Rhadamanthus' (c.13). In opposition to the tyrant, the cobbler Micyllus is only too glad to have died and to have joined Megapenthes in Hades, where both will have equal rank (c.15).

Although this dialogue contains no eiron who will in his turn be ironised, it does contain several elements that suggest that this, too, is a debate whose basic terms are literary and rhetorical. For one thing, as Harmon points out, it is unusual for the Fates to be assigned functions in the underworld. Further, the businesslike tone adopted by Charon in lamenting that Hermes' delay in bringing bodies to the ferry means that 'it is almost dusk and I haven't earned a single obol yet' (c.1), 105

102. Καλὶ τὸς μείωσαι κατ᾽ ἀγάδρος τυράννου ψήφου λαβεῖν;
103. Κατὰ τυράννου μὲν οὐδείς, κατὰ νεκρὸν δὲ ὁ 'Ῥαδαμανθέως.
105. καὶ σχεδόν αμφὶ βουλεύτων ἔστιν, ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐδὲν ὡδὲ ὡμολὸν ἐμπεπολήκαμεν.
is an indication that the mythological setting is not to be taken seriously.

The description of the tyrant and his deeds is entirely conventional, in spite of the characteristically humorous tone in which it is treated. In the same way, Micyllus' description of the joys of poverty when compared to the woes of the tyrant (c.15) is indebted entirely to literary and rhetorical sources. By setting this debate in a highly improbable Hades and by endowing it with a comic tone and absurd ending, it seems that Lucian is implying that debates couched in such conventional terms are a futile exercise. It is not that Lucian is necessarily disagreeing with any of the sentiments expressed; what he disapproved of was the type of expression given to them, the pretence that this type of debate was in any way an original or valuable contribution to human thought and culture.

We can now see that Lucian's technique in these dialogues was to satirise his own bêtes noires in terms that were as conventional as those of any sophist, while simultaneously distancing himself from the almost platitudinous conventionality of their expression. The same technique can be seen at work in Charon or The Inspectors and in The Dream or The Cock.

Charon covers much of the same ground as the dialogues already discussed. It includes the two underworld characters of Charon and Hermes, and, like the other two dialogues, uses an elaborate rhetorical simile. Here again we find edifying material enclosed in a comic frame and set in an ironic context, while the piling of Ossa upon Pelion performs a similar function to the bird feathers of Icaromenippus. This is the functional sine qua non of what follows, while simultaneously being so absurd in itself that it is necessary only to recall the physical situation of Hermes and Charon in order to adjust one's expectations of the value of their discourse.

The world portrayed is that of the sixth century B. C. as recorded by Herodotus, and the stale and weary exempla add force to the equally unreal reflections of Charon and Hermes.
Hermes lists the ills that attend mortal life and the folly of men's not reflecting on what fate finally awaits them. Charon supplies a Cynic simile comparing the life of man to bubbles in a stream, some of which burst quickly, others over a longer period. After more reflections on the futile activities of men and a brief survey of famous cities fated to extinction, Charon concludes:

How silly are the ways of unhappy mankind, with their kings, golden ingots, funeral rites and battles -- but never a thought of Charon! (c.24).

As in other dialogues, everything points to the ethical discussion in Charon having been placed in an ironical context in order to devalue it. This is even more apparent in The Dream or The Cock, where the technique approaches something akin to schematisation. The Loeb editor calls this piece a 'Cynic sermon in praise of poverty', a description whose inadequacy can be seen by reflecting that the 'sermon' occupies just six of the dialogue's thirty-three sections. This discrepancy has been noted by Anderson, who concludes that much of the material in the dialogue is superfluous to the plot. In a later article, Anderson expands on this by suggesting that Lucian puts his Old Comic material first and last, so as to leave the middle for a virtuoso display of moralising, and that 'he is simply putting the more inventive and memorable parts of his creations in the right place from the audience's point of view'. The analysis of other dialogues suggests that this disparity may not be as inartistic as a bare statement of the facts suggests, and that the sheer bulk of the 'superfluous' material means that Lucian was now so confident of his technique that he could give full

106. οία ἐστι τὰ τῶν κοκκοδαμίμων ἄνθρωπων πρᾶγματα- βασιλεία, πληνθοὶ χρυσαῖ, ἐπιτύμβια, μάχαι χάρωνος δὲ σωσέλα λόγος.
reign to his talent for comic invention and leave the 'meaning' of his dialogue to look after itself.

The credibility of everything in the dialogue depends, of course, on our acceptance of the wildly comic and implausible talking cock, and it is necessary to remember throughout that the Cynic sentiments are spoken by this creature. As for the fact of a talking cock, he himself cites excellent classical precedents, mainly from Homer. If we take Homer seriously why not Lucian's talking cock? Even more astonishing, the cock claims to be a reincarnation of Pythagoras (c.4). Well might we say with Micyllus 'This story is not quite plausible or easy to believe ...' (c.4).110 Yet if the doctrine of transmigration can be taken seriously, what is inherently improbable in the master coming back in this form?

The fantasy element in the cock's adventures in his various incarnations is integrally related to the advice he gives to his master, since it is on the basis of his experience in so many lives that he can talk with authority on the relative happiness of rich and poor. Micyllus is forced to agree that the life of the poor is indeed better and more carefree than that of the rich, although he still requires to be shown that he is better off than his wealthy neighbour (c.27-28).

The ironic setting of this short sermon raises the question of whether everything in the dialogue is tainted with the irony applied to Homer and Pythagoras. That Lucian was capable of writing diatribe in a serious vein can be seen from On Funerals and On Sacrifices. Clearly, Lucian was applying to this sermon the same irony as he elsewhere applied to Menippus and other personae. The content of what the cock says may be 'correct', but its expression is so stereotyped that it has lost all power to move or persuade. Once again we can see that there are two possible ways of reading Lucian and that while neither necessarily excludes the other, one is more inclusive and capable of being made yet more complex and flexible in the hands of a more subtle and penetrating intellect.

110. οὐ πιθανὰ γὰρ ταῦτα οὐδὲ πάνυ πιστεύσαι ἐξ ἁία.
It is one of the disadvantages of Lucian's use of the jargon of contemporary culture that it prevented him from realising the full potential of the form he had created, and perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the two dialogues dealing with the classical philosophers. The first of these, Philosophies For Sale, may be based on a Sale of Diogenes attributed to Menippus. It consists of representatives of various philosophical sects being auctioned off by Hermes and Zeus. Neither the circumstances of the auction nor the involvement of the two gods are explained by Lucian, nor, indeed, is there any explanation of how so many people who were far from being contemporaries have come to be gathered together in this fashion. Immediately we are faced with a series of those surface incongruities that are a mark of Lucian's style. If we accept this, then the sale itself appears less fantastic, and if we keep the setting constantly in mind -- as we are virtually compelled to do -- then it has its effect on the way in which we view proceedings.

The representatives of the various creeds are presented by the minimum amount of their philosophy needed to identify them, the Stoic alone being dealt with in any detail. Lucian is dealing in caricature rather than exposition. His attitudes to all these sects can be paralleled in other works, and here he is openly proclaiming the satirist's superiority to the philosophical schools in terms that imply that he does not consider the matter to be of much consequence. The usual Menippean preference for practice over theory is strengthened by his distrust of the shallow way in which such matters were commonly debated in his time.

Even so, there are good grounds for the belief that his own knowledge of philosophy was not especially extensive: his one attempt to deal relatively seriously with the subject in Hermotimus is by no means an unqualified success, and for one who

professed himself to be a lover of philosophy, it is anomalous to treat the topic in the same manner which he uses for such canards as the Olympian gods. This impression is strengthened by *The Dead Come To Life or The Fisherman*, his ‘apology’ for the previous piece. The framing of the serious matter of the dialogue between comic scenes, and the use of surface incongruities such as the behaviour of the philosophers are familiar aspects of his technique. Here, however, they serve to throw doubt on his claim to be a genuine lover of philosophy, and this suspicion is reinforced when we find that his defence is composed of clichés of the same type as he so often satirised in others.

In effect, Lucian was trapped by his participation in a culture he so evidently despised. Having created the new genre of the comic dialogue, he was an insufficiently profound thinker to bring it to its full potential. This is shown in the dialogue *Zeus Catechized*, which centres on the issue of free will and predestination. It is an amusing exposure of a crudely reductivist view of predestination, but never manages to suggest that the problem can be posed in other than sterile rhetorical terms. The unexplained presence of Cyniscus in Heaven indicates that Lucian is merely playing with traditional concepts of the gods, and that the terms of the debate have little reality for him. The absurdity of the traditional conception of the gods seems so self-evident to him that both Stoics and their Cynic and Epicurean opponents are taking part in a sterile debate couched in the clichés of the handbook. As often, the form and setting chosen by Lucian allow him to lend apparent support to the Cynic viewpoint while subtly underlining the shallowness of culture which allows a debate to be conducted in such terms.

In the course of the debate, Zeus agrees with Cyniscus that the Fates control everything, including the actions of the gods (c.4). In that case, why do men sacrifice to the gods? Zeus responds by accusing Cyniscus of getting his questions from the sophists, and the reply that ‘they did not put me up to ask you this, but our talk itself as it went on led somehow or other to
the conclusion that sacrifices are superfluous' (c.6), is deliberately disingenuous. For both his questions and his method are sophistic and Lucian is drawing our attention to the fact to ensure that while we may sympathise with Cyniscus in the argument, we are also aware of his limitations. The rest of the debate follows similar lines as Cyniscus easily overthrows any argument Zeus can bring against him — so easily, in fact, that we wonder whether his questioning is as spontaneous as he claims. The frequent references by Zeus to Cyniscus as a sophist have a double function. On the one hand, they show that Zeus is conscious of the weakness of his position when it is exposed to critical examination. On the other hand, the term 'sophist' was not one of approbation in Lucian, and Cyniscus is to be judged by what Lucian thought of sophists in general. In spite of the superficial correctness of his arguments, he is a creature of rhetoric, with the result that the debate is academic, not vital. There is no real meeting of minds in this or any of Lucian’s dialogues. They display attitudes towards various problems without enquiring deeply into them.

The related dialogue Zeus Rants is much more clearly ironical. The opening prose/verse mixture does more than merely point to possible literary antecedents: it at once establishes Zeus as a purely poetic conception so that whatever the content of the following dialogue may be, we are from the outset disinclined to believe in these gods.

The substance of the debate is the same as in Zeus Catechized, whether or not the gods are still to be honoured (c.3). A debate between the Stoic Timocles and the Epicurean Damis on Providence, suspended from the previous day, is about to recommence, and the gods are naturally interested in its outcome. An assembly of the gods is called, but, curiously, it is their statues who attend. This is a splendid piece of irony on Lucian’s

113. οἱ χεῖρες ἀναπείθεις ταύτα σε ἡρώτησα, ὁ δὲ λόγος αὐτὸς οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ὡς ἡμῖν προίων εἰς τότο ἀπέβη, περιττὼς εἶναι τῶι θυσίας.
part since it ensures that the unreality of the gods is before our eyes even as they discuss that very issue! As Coenen puts it:

Die Gleichsetzung der Götter mit ihren Statuen ist nicht nur als Polemik gegen die Verehrung der Götterbilder zu verstehen. Vielmehr soll damit wohl eine weit radikalere Folgerung nachgelegt werden; Diese Götter sind tatsächlich mit ihren Statuen identisch; sie haben keine andere Existenzweise; d.h. sie sind Menschenwerk.

As if that were not irony enough, Lucian has Momus prefigure almost the whole of Damis' argument. He then represents the gods as being incapable of deciding how to respond to their dangerous situation. Their impotence is demonstrated even before the debate resumes. This use of structural irony suggests that the entire affair is academic.

If evidence is needed that Lucian is being ironical at the expense not merely of a particular argument, but of the whole rhetorical tradition, it is found in an examination of the arguments of both protagonists. Timocles' argument from the order of nature in c.38 is by no means original with him, most of his points being found in, for example, Cicero's De natura deorum.115 Damis' attack on the poets (c.40) and his reference to the 'consensus gentium' have an equally long history. Both men are indebted to a sterile rhetorical tradition, and although Damis is allowed to 'win' the argument, his particular arguments are no more profound or original than those of his opponent. In this, as in other dialogues, the irony has a double focus. Within the debate it is directed chiefly against Timocles. The debate, however, occupies only the latter half of the dialogue, and is set in an ironic context which includes the arguments of both protagonists as well as the idea of the debate itself.

115. A list of parallels can be found in Coenen's notes on this section.
There is one further Lucianic dialogue requiring discussion, although its inclusion in the canon is still a matter for debate. This is *The Cynic*, a discussion of which is necessary if only because More was sufficiently convinced of its authenticity to include it in his translations from Lucian. It consists of a cynic defending his sect from the criticisms of Lycinus. It lacks the elaborate setting of the best of Lucian's dialogues, but there is nothing in his ironic deflation of the Cynic that is radically inconsistent with his treatment of other personae. In response to questions from Lycinus, the Cynic expounds his philosophy. He attacks extravagance (c.2), praises the virtues of self-sufficiency by proving that his body is in no worse condition than that of Lycinus (c.4), praises temperance and attacks greed (c.6-10), and finally gives a long explanation of the Cynic philosophy.

There are several elements in this which make one wonder whether this Cynic should be taken at face value. The discussion about the state of his feet (c.4) seems like a *reductio ad absurdum*; he frequently fails to understand the force of Lycinus' objections; under pressure he abandons dialogue in favour of monologue; and his final comparison of himself to the gods because of his mode of dress reads like comic exaggeration. In sum, the Cynic unwittingly portrays himself as an arrogant boaster, a *philosophus gloriösus*, and has at least that much in common with other Lucianic personae. If this dialogue is not by Lucian, it was certainly written by a competent imitator.

Lucian is not the mere entertainer for whom he is so often mistaken. He shared much -- perhaps too much -- in common with the sophists and cultural showmen of his time, but possessed a spirit of critical independence which others lacked. His dissatisfaction with the vulgarity of much of what passed for culture in his age led him to create a new literary form. His creation of the genre of comic dialogue was in the best spirit of the classical tradition, and allowed him to express his ambivalent relationship to the prevailing literary trends. His
personae appear in carefully created ironic contexts, and neither they nor their opinions can be isolated from those contexts without incurring the risk of misrepresentation.

The brilliance and wit of his writing drew attention to the propositions put forward by his personae, and all too often, their opinions and attitudes have been mistaken for those of their creator. Erasmus, for example, seems to have been drawn to the moral commonplaces expressed by the Lucianic personae, while More was attracted by the way in which the full range of Lucianic irony could be used to create a simulacrum of intellectual and creative detachment. Their different ways of reading Lucian led them to create works of their own which, while being Lucianic in spirit, are utterly different in their final effect.
CHAPTER TWO

THE FIRST ACQUAINTANCE: TRANSLATIONS OF LUCIAN

Lucian was one of the most popular classical authors in the Renaissance, with more than 270 printings of both the authentic and spurious works made before 1550.¹ The first edition of the complete Greek text was published at Florence in 1496, with that of Aldus Manutius appearing in Venice in 1503.² It was after the publication of this edition that Lucian became widely known north of the Alps.³

Among those who made translations from Lucian were Thomas More and Erasmus, whose joint volume of translations appeared from the press of Badus Ascensius at Paris in 1506. It was partly these translations which helped to introduce Lucian to a wider audience.⁴ Later eminent translators included Pirckheimer, Melanchthon, Ulrich von Hutten, Hans Sachs and Peter Mosellanus.⁵ No doubt Erasmus and More were not single-handedly responsible for this interest in Lucian, although Erasmus' translations were

1. C. R. Thompson, 'The translations of Lucian by Erasmus and St. Thomas More', Revue Belge de philologie et histoire, 18 (1939), 855-881 (i.e. 1-27), p.4; 19 (1940), 5-35 (i.e. 28-58).


3. Ibid., p.xxviii. n.2.

4. C. R. Thompson, 1939, p.15.

reprinted more than forty times between 1506 and 1550 -- occasionally with those of More, occasionally in an incomplete edition. 6 But in England at least, and within the More circle in particular, the influence of their translations is easily traceable. More himself was the first Englishman to translate Lucian into Latin, and his were the first printed versions by an Englishman. They were reprinted in his lifetime more frequently than any of his other writings, at least nine times before 1535. 7

Within the More circle, his brother-in-law, John Rastell, printed and probably wrote an English translation of *Menippus*. 8 Sir Thomas Elyot is the possible author of an English translation of *Cynicus* dated c.1530. 9 and evidence for its having been translated from More’s Latin is the naming of the Cynic's interlocutor as Lucian rather than Lycinus. 10 Elyot may also have been the author of a dialogue entitled *Hermathena*, dated 1532, which is an imitation of Lucian. 11

The influence of Lucian, though not specifically of More’s translations, can be seen in the plays of John Heywood, the husband of More’s niece, Joan Rastell. Of *The Play of the Four PP’s* Pearl Hogrefe writes that it ‘has qualities of Lucian -- imagination, fantasy, satire, other humorous details and lively dialogue ... in developing it, John Heywood writes in the spirit of Lucian ...’. 12 Further, a passage from Lucian’s *Icaromenippus*

6. Ibid., pp.365-366.
7. CW 3.1, p.xxv.
is generally recognised as the source of *The Play of the Weather*, evidence of a similarity of taste in More, Erasmus and Heywood.

It is, then, evident that the interest of More and Erasmus in Lucian had a substantial role to play in spreading his influence in Northern Europe and England. Their translations would be important for that reason alone, even had they not influenced their own original works in certain significant ways; and it is with that which we are now concerned.

Erasmus was acquainted with Lucian as early as 1499, when he referred to *A True History* (*Allen I*, 88/27-28). An early attempt to translate *Gout* was abandoned, with Erasmus being 'strongly deterred by the epithets with which the choruses abound; I had no hope of imitating in Latin the felicity we find in the Greek expressions'. Similar evidence for More's early interest is lacking, although he had at least begun to learn Greek by 1501. By 1505, the date of Erasmus' second visit to England, both men were proficient in Greek, and the project of a joint volume of translations was decided upon. Which of the two first suggested the project is uncertain, and the reference by Erasmus -- 'I began to write Latin declamations at the urging of Thomas More' -- should probably be taken as referring only to the writing of declamations in reply to *The Tyrannicide*. At any rate, the volume which eventually appeared contained, besides

13. Ibid., p.305.
15. potissimum deterritus epithetis, quibus abundant chori; in quibus non erat spes in Latinis assequi compositionis felicitatem, quam videmus in Graecis dictionibus (*Allen I*, p.7/1-3).
17. 'Latine declamare coepi, idque impulsore Toma Moro' (*Allen I*, 191/3; IV, 21/254-256).
18. CW 3.1, p.xxvii, n.2.
these declamations, four translations by More and, by Erasmus, translations of ten full-length pieces, and eighteen of the miniature dialogues.19

It is convenient to deal with Erasmus first, since his attitude to Lucian is demonstrably quite different from that of More, and because More, in his prefatory letter, pretends to be reading Lucian in the same way as his fellow translator. Erasmus' comments on Lucian are contained principally in the various prefaces he wrote for the edition of 1506, and his way of reading seems odd, occasionally even perverse, until it is realised that it is of a piece with his general views on literature. In particular, what he says of Lucian, and the way in which he can be shown to have read him, must be taken alongside his views on literature as set out in De ratione studii (1511), Institutio principia Christiani (1516) and De pueris instituendis (1529). Although all of these are dated later than the prefaces to Lucian, they reveal a consistently held view of literature which is of crucial importance in helping us to understand his approach to the Greek ironist.

What is common to the first of these two works and to the prefaces to Lucian is an interpretation of the Horatian maxim utile et dulce in which the element of utility -- primarily of moral utility -- is of paramount importance. The pull towards didacticism and its relationship to irony and satire will be of importance in determining the relationship of The Praise of Folly to Enchiridion, and can be seen clearly in these pedagogic works. In De ratione studii, a disquisition on the method of teaching literature to schoolboys, Erasmus writes that, in reading a text, one should pay attention to the relevant parts of the passage under discussion, and point out the pleasure and benefit to be drawn from a particular author (CPE 24, 682/20). After paying attention to relevant linguistic points, the teacher

should turn to philosophy and skilfully bring out the implications of the poets’ stories or employ them as patterns ... And so it will come about (assuming mental agility on the teacher’s part) that if some passage is encountered which may corrupt the young, far from harming their morals it may confer some benefit, namely by concentrating their attention, partly on annotation of the passage, partly on loftier thoughts (CWE 24, 683/17-25).

He then provides an interpretation of Virgil’s second Eclogue, which he calls ‘a symbolic picture of an ill-formed friendship (CWE 24, 686/26-27), and concludes by saying

If, then, he prefaces his remarks in this way, and thereupon shows the passages which indicate the boorish and mistaken affections of Corydon, I believe the minds of his audience will suffer no ill-effects, unless somebody comes to the work who has already been corrupted (CWE 24, 686/34-687/3).

This may be a legitimate method of interpretation, but it was not what Virgil intended. His eclogue seems, rather, to be a complaint about unrequited love, but because of his determination that literature should contain uplifting moral truths, Erasmus cannot countenance such an interpretation.

Similar comments are found in Institutio principis Christiani, a treatise on the correct way of educating a prince. Literature has a role to play in this. Because of the dangers to

20. ‘Postremo ad philosophiam veniat, et poetarum fabulas apte trahat ad mores, vel tanquam exempla, ... Atque ita fiet (si modo sit ingenii dextri praecceptor), vt etiam si quid inciderit quod inficere possit aetatem illam, non solum non officiat moribus, verum etiam vtilitatem alium adferat, videlicet animis partim ad annotationem intentis, partim ad altiores cogitationes auocatis’ (Opera omnia I.2, 138/6-139/5).

21. ‘Haec, inquam, si praefetur, tum autem locos demonstratorios perperam et bucolice a rustico affectatos indicet, nihil opinor turpe veniet in mentem auditoribus, nisi si quis iam corruptus accesserit’ (Opera omnia I.2, 142/13-15).
which he is exposed by his exalted position, 'the prince must be
more sincerely strengthened by the best of principles and the
precedents of praiseworthy princes' (Inst., 146). 22 These
principles 'must be impressed, crammed in, inculcated, and in one
way and another kept before him, now by a suggestive thought, now
by a fable, now by analogy, now by example, now by maxims, now by
a proverb' (Inst., 144-145). 23 A comment on Aesop's fables shows
the relationship of utile to dulce in Erasmus:

When the little fellow has listened with pleasure
to Aesop's fable of the lion and the mouse or the
of the dove and the ant, and when he has finished
his laugh, then the teacher should point out the
new moral: the first fable teaches the prince to
despise no one, but to seek zealously to win to
himself by kindesses the heart of even the lowest
peasant, for no one is so weak that on occasion he
may be a friend to help you, or an enemy to harm
you, even though you be the most powerful
(Inst., 146-147).

The same type of interpretation can be applied to the fable of
the eagle and the beetle, the story of Phaethon, and the tale of
Ulysses' blinding of the Cyclops (Inst., 148). In the course of
this instruction, 'If there are any stories that seem too coarse,
the teacher should polish and smooth them over with a winning

22. 'Quo diligentius erit optimis decretis, laudatorum principum
exemplis aduersus haec praemuniendus' (Opera omnia IV.1,
141/176-177).

23. '... infingga sunt, infulcienda sunt, inculcanda sunt et
alia atque alia forma renouanda memoriae, nunc sententia nunc
fabella nunc simili nunc exemplo nunc apophthegmate nunc
proverbio;' (Opera omnia IV.1, 140/144-146).

24. 'Vbi libenter audierit puellus Aesopicum apologum de
leone muris beneficio vicissim seruato, de columba
formicae opera incolumi, vbi satis arriserit, tum
praecceptor adicet eam fabellam ad principem attinere,
ze quem omnino despiciat, sed infimiae quoque plebis
animos sibi benefactis studeat adiungere, quod nemo sit
adeo imbecillis, quin et per occasionem prosede quet
amicus et nocere inimicus idque potentissimis etiam'
(Opera omnia IV.1, 142/189-194).
manner of speech’ (Inst., 148). This is the method Erasmus had used in his interpretation of Virgil, and it suggests that in the interests of inculcating moral principles, it may on occasion be necessary to distort the literal sense of a passage. In a similar vein he states in De pueris instituendis:

Is there anything a boy would rather listen to than Aesop’s fables, which present serious moral lessons in the guise of humorous sketches? The stories told by other ancient authors offer similar benefits. When a child hears how Ulysses’ comrades were changed by Circe’s magic into swine he will find the story amusing, but he also learns one of the basic principles of philosophy, that persons who refuse to be guided by the dictates of right reason but instead allow themselves to be swept along by the whims of the passions are not truly human but are only brutes. Could a Stoic sage proclaim this truth more seriously? Yet here it is taught by a story designed to amuse (CWE 26, 336).

And:

The essence of comedy is portrayal of character, but it leaves an impression even on children and the uneducated; here, too, an immense amount of moral teaching is imparted by means of humour (CWE 26, 336).

25. ‘Si qua videbantur acerbiora, ea formator orationis iucunditate leniat atque edulcet’ (Opera omnia IV.1, 142/211-212).

26. ‘Quid libentius audiat puer quam apologos Aesopicos, qui tamen per risum in locum tradunt seria praecepta philosophiae, qui fructus est in caeteris veterum poetarum fabulis. Audit puer socios Ulyssis arte Circe versos in suas aliasque formas animantium. Ridetur narratio, et tamen interim discit puer, quod in morali philosophia praeceptum est, eos qui non gubernantur recta ratione, sed affectum arbitrio rapiuntur, non homines esse, sed belus. Quid Stoicus diceret grauius? Et tamen idem docet ridicula fabula’ (Opera omnia I.2, 66/21-28).

27. ‘Quid comoedia dulcius? quae quem θετησι constet, mouet et imperitos et pueros. At hic quanta philosophiae pars per lusum discitur?’ (Opera omnia I.2, 67/1-3).
Further, he writes: 'Yet there's nothing which prevents usefulness from going hand in hand with pleasure, and integrity with enjoyment' (CWE 26, 338). 28

In these three treatises, written over a period of eighteen years, is found essentially the same view of literature. The method is neither individual to, nor original with, Erasmus. Its essential elements can be traced back to the patristic tradition of Scriptural exegesis. 29 The principal Erasmian text for this is De ratione concionandi. Here he explains that there are four senses to be distinguished in the classification of writing, and these he names the literal, the allegorical, the tropological and the anagogical. 30 Definitions are provided for the use of teachers: tropology is close to the literal sense, applying scripture to the morals to be taught; allegory accommodates the text to Christ and the Church Militant; anagogy transports one from here to the Church Triumphant, beyond which there is nothing further. 31 Erasmus is at his best in interpreting the moral sense. 32

Further light is shed on the exegetical method in St. Augustine's De doctrina Christiana. This was written to expound the correct method for interpreting Scripture, but many of its ideas are demonstrably comparable to the way in which Erasmus read secular literature. Not that he did so with this work in mind, but he was working within the exegetical tradition which Augustine had helped to form. For the humanists, as for the patristic writers, there were difficulties involved in the use of classical authors who, in spite of their not having the benefit

28. 'Nihil autem vetat quo minus voluptati comes sit utilitas et iucunditati iuncta sit honestas' (Opera omnia I.2, 69/8-9).
30. Ibid., pp.26-27.
31. Ibid., p.27.
32. Ibid., p.28.
of the Christian revelation, often expressed profound and significant moral truths. Augustine deals directly with this problem:

If those who are called the philosophers, especially the Platonists, have said things which are indeed true, and are well accommodated to our faith, they should not be feared; rather, what they have said should be taken from them as unjust possessors and converted to our use. 33

There was, then, excellent precedent for Erasmus' extraction of these truths from the pagan writers and their application as Christian maxims to contemporary circumstances.

Further justification for the Erasmian method could be found in Augustine's distinction between literal and figurative meanings in a text:

There is a miserable servitude of the spirit in this taking of signs for things, so that one is not able to raise the eye of the mind above things that are corporeal and created to drink in eternal light.

Thus the literal acceptance of certain passages in the classical authors is not only not necessary, but may obscure a figurative meaning of far more profound significance. This is so even in Scripture itself, in which there are many passages of seemingly vicious meaning. These, however, are said to be figurative:

33. 'Philosophi autem vocantur, si qua ... vera et fidei nostra accommodata dixerunt, maxime Platonici, non solum formidanda non sunt, sed ab eis etiam tanquam injustis possessoribus in usum nostrum vindicanda/ (III.60.2). English translations are taken from Saint Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, translated by D. W. Robertson Jr. (New York, 1958).

34. 'Ea demum est miserabilis animi servitus, signa pro rebus accipere; et supra creaturam corpoream, oculum mentis ad hauroindum aeternum lumen levare non posse' (ibid. III.v.9).
Those things which seem shameful to the inexperienced, whether simply spoken or actually performed by the person of God or by men whose sanctity is commended to us, are all figurative, and their secrets are to be removed as kernels from the husk for the nourishment of charity.  

This is clearly reminiscent of the passage from Virgil's second eclogue and the method of its explication. Erasmus has taken from Augustine both a justification of the use of pagan authors as teachers of moral truths, and a method of obviating any difficulties that arise from such a use of classical texts.

There is clearly a set purpose in his sifting out the allegorical and moral meaning of a text, and it will be seen that in the application of such a method, the ironical context of a passage is not of prime importance. This raises the question of the purpose of irony, satire and literature in general:

For Erasmus, certainly, all satire, perhaps all fictional writing, is just as good as, and no better than, its capacity to effect or sustain good thoughts and godly living.

The urge to better his fellow men is paramount, and irony gives way to the direct statement or direct exhortation. Such a view can be exemplified by a study of his prefaces to his translations of Lucian, which show clearly that in the early Erasmus, the Erasmus who is the companion of More, the vein of Lucianic satire cannot be dissociated from the reforming motive.

35. 'Quae autem quasi flagitiosa imperitis videntur, sive tantum dicta, sive etiam facta sunt, vel ex Dei persona vel ex hominum quorum nobis sanctitas commendatur, tota figurata sunt: quorum ad charitatis pastum enucleanda secreta sunt (ibid.III.12.18).

36. Sr. G. Thompson, p.5.

37. Ibid., p.6.

38. McConica, p.15.
'It is not possible to read them and mistake the work for a purely literary exercise'.\textsuperscript{39} They have explicit application to contemporary religious decay. Nor is it accidental that in the catalogue which he compiled in 1523-1524, he assigned his translations of Lucian to those works which concern literature and education, and also to a fourth volume consisting of works which contribute to the building of character (\textit{Allen I}, p.38/26-39; p.39/33-35).

He seems to have had three types for reasons for venturing on these translations. In the first place, it was a useful exercise for improving his Greek: 'I was forced to become my own teacher, to translate many pamphlets of Lucian, so that by this method I read Greek more attentively'.\textsuperscript{40} He thought Lucian a suitable author for the novice in Greek, because of the grace of his language and the attractiveness of his content -- and not its attractiveness only, but its mixture of levity and seriousness, \textit{dulce et utile}.\textsuperscript{41}

In \textit{De ratione studii} he recommends Lucian as a author whose refined diction and charming subject-matter make him especially suitable for using to teach Greek to schoolboys (\textit{CWE}, 24, 669/5-6). On both stylistic and linguistic grounds, Lucian is particularly suitable for the beginner in Greek, and pre-eminently suitable for children. He is valued also for his moral instruction, and as Robinson writes of Erasmus: 'His own prefaces leave us in no doubt that his principle in selecting the dialogues was that of '\textit{utile}''.\textsuperscript{42} -- even to the point of

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p.16.

\textsuperscript{40} '... coactus ipse mihi praeceptor esse, verti multos Luciani libellos, vel in hunc vsum, ut attentius Graece legerem' (\textit{Allen I}, pp.7/24-8/1). (My translation).

\textsuperscript{41} Robinson, p.365.

\textsuperscript{42} Robinson, p.366.
assuming that Astrology must have a moral content, since 'Lucian was not accustomed to undertake anything trivial'.\textsuperscript{43}

It is primarily the edition of 1506 that can be said to contain prefatory material of any importance. As a guide to the interpretation of Lucian, some of these prefaces present fewer problems than others, since such works as Toxaris and Alexander lack the structural ironies of the 'Menippean' dialogues, and Erasmus easily transfers their moral lessons to evils of his own day. Thus Toxaris shows that friendship was something so sacred that it was once worshipped among the most barbarous nations. It has completely fallen into disuse amongst Christians, so that not just the traces but the essence of the thing exists in no-one.\textsuperscript{44}

H. A. Mason, to be sure, thinks that this indicates a certain moral coarseness in Erasmus;\textsuperscript{45} in fact, it indicates an ability to draw an uplifting moral from an unedifying source. In a similar vein he says of Alexander:

\begin{quote}

nobody is more useful for detecting and exposing the impostures of those who, even now, impose upon people with magical wonders, feigned religion, pretended pardons and other tricks of that sort.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{43} 'a Luciano nihil ferre triuale solet proficisci' (Allen I, 267/20).

\textsuperscript{44} 'rem adeo sanctam vt barbarissimis etiam nationibus olim fuerit veneranda. Nunc Christianis vsqueado in desuetudinem abit, vt non dicam vestigia, sed ne nomen cuidem ipsum extet' (Opera omnia I.1, 423/20-22). (My translation).


\textsuperscript{46} 'nemo sit utile ad deprehendendas coarquendaszque quorundam istorum imposturas, qui nunc quoque vel magicis miraculis vel ficta religione, vel adsimulatis condonationibus aliisque id genus praestigiis, vulgo fucum facere solent' (Opera omnia I.1, 449/7-10). (My translation).
The exegetical procedure is justifiable in these cases, but the same method is applied to more problematic pieces such as The Dream or The Cock and Timon. In his preface to the first of these, Erasmus writes of Lucian that 'he mingles serious matters with trifles, trifles with serious matters, so he speaks the truth while he laughs and laughs while speaking the truth', and takes the opportunity to attack philosophers: 'What is more hateful, what is less bearable than dishonesty tricked out in the guise of virtue?' In the course of the dialogue, he says, Lucian taxes Pythagoras with being an impostor and a cheat, laughs at the Stoics, and opposes poverty to riches. Such a view of the dialogue is seriously misleading. The mixture of comic and serious material is so heavily biased in favour of the comedy that to regard it as merely a sugar-coating for a didactic pill leads one to suggest that Lucian's artistic procedure in the dialogue is seriously flawed. That is not the case, since the actual function of the comedy is to cast the 'serious' material in an ironic light.

Yet it is not the case that Erasmus failed to recognise Lucian's irony -- rather, he was primarily concerned with the moral utility of literature, and its pleasurable elements were a means to this end. The same can be said of his comment on Timon: 'Hardly another dialogue of Lucian is more pleasant or more useful to read than this'. The comment is not amplified, but in the light of what has been said about The Dream or The Cock, it is likely that Erasmus read Timon as a satire on wealth, although the elaborate comic/ironic setting makes such an interpretation difficult to sustain.

47. 'seria nugis, nugas seriis miscet; sic ridens vera dicit, vera dicendo ridet' (Opera omnia I.1, 471/12-13). (My translation).

48. 'Quid enim odiosius, quid minus ferendum, quam improbitas virtutis professione personata?' (Opera omnia I.1, 471/4-5). (My translation).

49. '... est Luciani dialogus quo vix alius lectu vel utilior vel iucundior' (Opera omnia I.1, 488/10-11). (My translation).
The attitude to Lucian which Erasmus exhibits in these prefaces can also be seen at certain points in the *Adagia* where he quotes from Lucianic texts. In the third Chiliad of the completed work there are some forty-six references to or quotations from Lucian, most of which, since they do not appear in ironic contexts, call for no comment. As is characteristic of the *Adagia*, texts are extracted from longer works to illustrate a moral or pedagogic point.

In *Adagia* 2331, he quotes from *The Dream or The Cock* to show that the cock, as being crested and armed, is sacred to Mars. In c.3 of this work Lucian is repeating, in part, a story from the *Odyssey* (8.300-366), but the context in which he repeats it and adds the details about Alectryon make it doubtful that he intended the tale to be taken wholly seriously. When Ares was having his affair with Aphrodite, he used to leave Alectryon outside the door to tell him when Helion rose, lest the sun should warn Aphrodite's husband, Hephaestus. On one occasion, Alectryon fell asleep, Hephaestus was warned and the lovers trapped. The angry Ares then changed A lectryon into a bird. This is one of a number of precedents cited by Lucian in order to have us suspend our disbelief about the improbability of the dramatic situation he has created. Yet in spite of the evident comedy and irony of the original, Erasmus' citation of the tale does not distort its literal meaning.

The same can be said of his quotation from *Alexander 8* in *Adagia* 2428. Lucian, in describing the beginnings of the rogueries of Alexander and Coconnas, quotes humorously the phrase 'Here beginneth the war', from the commencement of Thucydides' narration of the Peloponnesian War. The comic disparity between the two contexts is obvious, and Erasmus' listing of various uses to which the quotation has been put does not distort Lucian's

50. *Opera omnia* II.5.

51. *Opera omnia* II.5.
humorous use of it. In a similar vein, in No.2436, he quotes from *How To Write History* another Thucydidean citation used in an ironical context — ‘War is the father of all things’, including the current plethora of historians. Again the comic disparity between the two contexts is obvious, although in giving the text an interpretation which opposes it to the philosophers’ ideas on the origins of things, Erasmus makes it serve as a pretext for a serious reflection.

The exegetical method can raise problems of interpretation. The citation of Timon at *Adagia* 2602 to support the idea that wealth is ‘omnia formidantem nullique fidentem’ is itself supported by other quotations from Juvenal, Aristophanes and Euripides. Yet it is questionable whether Lucian intended his elaborate metaphor to be taken wholly seriously. The personification of Riches; the detailed description of the conversations of Riches, Hermes and Zeus; the journey to earth; Timon’s improbable conversion; and the farcical dénouement all serve Lucian’s purpose of setting a commonplace literary and philosophical topos in an ironical context. The last thing he intended was a sermon on the uncertainty of the possession of wealth. Yet that is clearly the way in which Erasmus read the dialogue. One must begin to question whether his application to fiction of the method of Scriptural exegesis is an appropriate response to a work of irony.

The same limitation of the Erasmian method can be seen in No. 2702, where he cites a Homeric quotation — ‘No god am I, why liken me to them?’ — in support of a Plutarchian moralisation on pride. But its use by Lucian in *Icaromenippus* is quite clearly ironic. Menippus is startled to meet Empedocles in the moon, and the philosopher uses the quotation to reassure

52. *Opera omnia* II.5.

53. *Opera omnia* II.5.

54. *Opera omnia* II.5.
him. Unless Erasmus' word 'Usurpatur' to refer to this quotation is intended to imply that its context was ironical, then he has misinterpreted the quotation and its context.

Two more of the Adagia provide even clearer examples of the limitations of Erasmus' method when applied to the ironically-structured dialogues of Lucian. No.2523 is a discussion of the phrase 'Paries dealbatus' quoted from Acts 23: 3, an attack on Ananias 'because he was much different within from what his external appearance proclaimed'. This is supported by reference to the 'sepulchra dealbata' of Matthew 23: 27, and to The Cock 24ff. in which the cock, recounting how he used to rule over a great country, says that the troubles that surround rulers make it folly to envy their wealth and pomp. Rulers are compared to the colossi made by Phidias, Praxiteles and Myron:

each of which outwardly is a beautiful Poseidon or a Zeus, made of ivory and gold, with a thunderbolt or a flash of lightning or a trident in his right hand; but if you stoop down and look inside you will see where bars and props and nails are driven clear through, and beams and wedges and pitch and clay and a quantity of such ugly stuff housing within, not to mention numbers of mice and rats that keep their court in them sometimes. That is what monarchy is like (The Dream or The Cock 24).

Erasmus then quotes similar sentiments from Plato and Seneca, but it is clear from the analysis of The Cock that none of its apparently lofty moral sentiment is susceptible to such a straightforward interpretation as Erasmus here supplies. To

55. 'quod lange alius esset intus, quam cultu habituque externo prae se ferret' (Opera omnia II.6, 358/226-227).
56. κάκεινον γὰρ ἐκαστὸς ἐκτοσθεν μὲν Ποσείδων τις ἡ ζεῦς ἐστι πάγκαλος ἐκ χρυσίου καὶ ἐλεφαντος συνειργασμένος, κεραυνὸν ἢ ἀπράπτην ἢ τρίας κατ' ἐνετίῳ. Ἁν δὲ υποκύπτω ἤδη τὰ γ' ἔνδον, οὔτε μακρούσ τίνις καὶ γόμφωσ καὶ ἠλος διημπαξ πεπερνημένοις καὶ κορμοῦς καὶ φόνης καὶ πίπταν καὶ πηλὸν καὶ τοιαύτην τινα πολλὴν ἐμορφάτα ὑποκουφοῦσαν ἐδώ λέγειν μιᾶν πλήθος ἢ μυγαλῶν ἐμπολειπόμενον αὐτοῖς ἐνίοτε, τοιοῦτον τι καὶ βασίλεια ἐστίν.
ignore the structural ironies of the piece is to miss the double
meaning which Lucian gives to such commonplaces, quoting them
simultaneously as worthwhile and valuable sentiments, and as
examples of trite and trivial philosophising. It is apparent that
Erasmus sees no great contextual difference between this
quotation and those from the New Testament. Even if the
difference in literal meaning is disregarded, it is clear that to
overlook the ironic context of the Lucianic quotation is a
serious critical error.

Similar strictures can be applied to his citation of
Icaromenippus 10 in Adagia 2601.57 This is the lengthy adage
entitled Scarabeus aquilam quaerit. It is supported by Lucian's
use of the Aesopic fable, but again the context in Lucian is
clearly ironic. Menippus, in describing how he came to go on a
journey to heaven, tells how he put on a vulture's and an eagle's
wing, saying 'the story-teller Aesop had something to do with it,
for he made Heaven accessible to eagles and beetles and now and
then even to camels'. Erasmus' references to Aesop in Institutio
principis Christiani and De pueris instituendis show the way in
which he read this writer. Lucian, however, is plainly using the
fable for ironic effect, as a way of distancing himself from
Menippus. In The Praise of Folly, Erasmus made effective and
memorable use of this technique, but in this instance he has
chosen to put it to one side as irrelevant to his immediate
didactic purpose.

An example of a different type occurs in No.2251, where
Erasmus cites Dialogues of the Sea-gods not in a direct
quotation, but in summary of the content of the dialogue. In
Lucian's dialogue, the sea-nymphs Doris and Galatea converse
about Galatea's lover, Polyphemus. Much is made of the contrast
between Galatea's beauty and the wild and hairy appearance of the
Cyclops. The whole is conducted in a tone of light banter. The
interpretation given to this by Erasmus strains credulity:

57. Opera omnia II.6.
You cannot at the same time follow such diverse callings as letters and money, pleasure and glory, the world and Christ. For there is no harmony between the river Galatea and the waves of the sea. This is made plain in Lucian’s dialogue between Galatea and Doris.

Plainly, Lucian’s dialogue can be made to yield no such meaning. As it stands, it is a harmless piece of pleasantry, and Erasmus’ outlandish interpretation is of a piece with his treatment of Virgil’s Eclogue. Nor is it going too far to suggest that the fastidiousness which could force ‘interpretations’ upon such harmless passages as these is of a piece with the moral earnestness which could draw lessons from Lucian’s Menippean dialogues while ignoring the all-important context.

When Erasmus writes of Lucian’s mingling of the trifling and the serious he clearly considers that Lucian’s humour and irony is little more than pleasantry, designed to make moral instruction more palatable. The potentially more subversive ironies in Lucian are not his principal interest. This attitude was to have important consequences for The Praise of Folly Erasmus’ most extended ‘Lucianic’ piece.

The way in which Erasmus can be said to have read Lucian is only superficially similar to the reading given by More -- this in spite of the frequently met notion that More was in agreement with Erasmus’ estimate of Lucian’s substance and style, and that ‘the identity of language they used to justify their joint work’ extended to an identity of critical opinion on Lucian. The evidence for More’s contact with and response to Lucian is slighter than in the case of Erasmus. We have only the four

58. Non potes idem diversa sequi velut litteras et pecuniam, voluptatem et gloriam, mundum et Christum. Nam Galateae fluuiio male conuenit cum marinis fluctibus. Declarat hoc Luciani dialogus inter Galateam ac Doridem (Opera omnia II.5, 214/170-173). (My translation).

59. CW 3.1, p.xli.

60. Mason, p.67.
translations and preface of 1506, and a small number of epigrams translated from the Palatine Anthology. Nor are the latter very helpful in assessing his response to Lucian. No. 25 concerns a Cynic who refused radishes and leeks at dinner ‘lest — he said — his virtue became his belly’s slave. But when he had glimpsed a snowy-white onion he shed his character of unyielding wisdom, asked for it, and with unexpected relish gobbled it all up. “Onions”, he said, “do virtue no harm”. No. 58 informs us that ‘the only true riches are those of the mind which values itself above its possessions’. No. 157 asks: ‘If an untrimmed beard makes a philosopher, why could not a bearded goat be a Plato?’ In the earlier Progymnasta, No. 5 enjoins us to enjoy wealth as though death were at hand, and spare our wealth as if we were to live all over again. In all, More translated only seven of the twenty-five epigrams which the Anthology attributes to Lucian, and the sentiments expressed in these are so utterly commonplace, their expression so lacking in vigour and wit compared to other Lucianic pieces that it is difficult to think of them as having exercised any strong and lasting influence on More.

The joint translations with Erasmus are a different matter, since much of what More learnt from Lucian was later to be applied in The History of King Richard III and Utopia. It is not so much the translations themselves that are of interest as the prefatory letter to Thomas Ruthall. What More found in Lucian —— and what Erasmus overlooked —— is exemplified in this Letter:

a form of dialogue that dramatised ambiguity as a function of meaning, a demonstration that all aspects of human experience could be comprehended within an ironic view of life, and an active

61. CW 3.2, p.125.
62. Ibid., p.143.
63. Ibid., p.201.
64. Ibid., p.83.
response that was non-despairing, even though it originated in a view of things that was as sceptical as More’s own.  

The letter itself is ‘provocatively disingenuous’, and is, at least in part, aimed at securing Lucian’s admission into polite society. It is, in fact, a piece of irony, and all the more deceptive for superficially expressing the same sentiments as the Erasmian prefaces.

Lucian, says More, was among the foremost who fulfilled the Horatian maxim and combined delight with instruction (CW 3.1, 3/5-6). He non-dogmatically and wittily censured human frailties. More then gives his account of the three dialogues he has chosen to translate. The Cynic had been approved by St John Chrysostom:

And not without reason: for what should have pleased that grave and truly Christian man more than this dialogue in which, while the severe life of Cynics, satisfied with littleg is defended and the soft, enervating luxury of voluptuaries denounced, by the same token Christian simplicity, temperance, and frugality, and finally that strait path which leads to Life eternal, are praised? (CW 3.1, 3/33-5/6).

More must have realised that the dialogue was more subtle than this. Our sympathy remains with Lycinus (significantly retitled

65. Fox, p.36.
66. Ibid., p.36.
67. ‘qui Horatianum praeceptum impleuerit, voluptatemque cum utilise coniunxerit’ (CW 3.1, 2/5-6).
68. ‘Neque id immerito. Quid enim placere magis uiro graui, uereque Christiano debuit, quam is dialogus, in quo dum aspera, paruque contenta Cynicorum uita defenditur, mollis, atque eneruata delicatforum hominum luxuria reprehenditur? Nec non eadem opera Christianae uitae simplicitas, temperantia, frugalitas, denique arcta illa atque angusta uia, quae ducit ad vitam, laudatur’ (CW 3.1, 2/29-4/6).
'Lucianus' by More) because of the style of argument employed by the Cynic. He is arrogant and overbearing, resistant to close questioning, and pays no real heed to reasonable objections raised by Lycinus, such as that Nature and the gods have given us things to enjoy, and to deprive oneself of the fine things of life is madness (CW 3.1, 13/22-15/4). In response, the Cynic launches into a lengthy disquisition on temperance giving Lycinus no chance to respond. Much of what he says is perfectly reasonable, but, as always in a Lucianic dialogue, the context must be kept firmly in mind.

His physical appearance is absurd. He has a beard, long hair, and no shirt; he abuses his body by inflicting on it what it likes least; and he sleeps on the ground (CW 3.1, 19/1-6). He contradicts himself by comparing the Cynic way of life favourably to both animals and gods. One may wonder about the propriety of wishing to have feet no different from horses' hooves, of needing no more bedding than the lions do, and no more extensive fare than the dogs (CW 3.1, 19/35-37). His final comparison of himself to the gods because, as represented in statues, they have long hair and beards and wear no shirts neatly reveals his egotism. This had already been indicated as his argument for temperance became more intemperate, and in the way in which he addressed Lycinus as 'you', accusing him of various vices, although he can know nothing of him personally. So spellbound is he by his own rhetoric and his eloquent defence of Cynicism that he is unable to engage in genuine dialogue. In a later, Morean incarnation he was to become Hythlodaeus.

We can see, then, that The Cynic is susceptible to a much more subtle reading than that ostensibly given to it by More. It is not that Lucian necessarily disagreed with the sentiments expressed by the Cynic, but that he did disagree with his manner of expressing them, and with his tendency to turn dialogue into monologue. By causing us to question the Cynic's manner of argument, Lucian invites us to examine the truth of what he says. This is not simply to be rejected, but to be scrutinised
carefully, without allowing oneself to be carried away by a torrent of words. The dialogue exists, not to advocate a particular point of view, but to stress the need for intellectual openness and the careful testing of a variety of attitudes and assumptions about life. Just as the character of the Cynic was to be writ large in Hythlodaeus, so the method of the dialogue was to be writ large in Utopia.

The second dialogue discussed by More is Menippus, sive Necromanteia, (wrongly given in the Latin as Necromanteia). Of this More writes 'how wittily it rebukes the jugglery of magicians or the silly fictions of poets or the fruitless contentions of philosophers among themselves on any question whatever!' (CW 3.1, 5/8-11). As a description of the dialogue this is wilfully inadequate. The value More saw in it resides on two levels. If one takes at face value the simile of life as a play and the final pronouncement of Teiresias, then the dialogue can indeed be read as a corrective to a misreading of The Cynic: life is too problematic to be reduced to one set of attitudes, no matter how superficially attractive these attitudes may be. The view of man as the unresisting plaything of Fortune is, of course, impossible to reconcile with the teleological assumptions of Christianity, and it is doubtless for this reason that More makes no explicit reference to this central 'meaning' of the dialogue. Yet the omission is so startling as to draw the reader's attention ineluctably to these passages. By this means, More ensures that the reader notices what is important in the dialogue without incurring the risk of having to answer charges raised by those who considered Lucian an atheist.

But there is a further level of irony in the dialogue, not mentioned explicitly by More. It did not, however, escape his attention, as can be seen from his use of the same type of

69. 'quam salse taxat, uel Magorum praestigias, uel inania Postarum figmenta, uel incertas quaeis de re philosophorum inter se digladiationes' (CW 3.1, 4/8-10).

70. Fox, p.41.
structural irony in *Utopia*. The elaborate Menippean simile and the pronouncement from Teiresias are both set in an ironic context which makes it impossible to accept them unquestioningly. Again, it is not so much a matter of disagreeing with what is said as of refusing to admit any unexamined premisses. As elaborated in *Utopia*, this method becomes one of refusing to grant the status of 'truth' to any one proposition, and of dramatising the conflict of ideas in such a way that the meaning of the dialogue resides, not in any part of its content, but in its form as dialogue. This is what Lucian had done in *Menippus* and other dialogues of the same type, and it was a method that More eagerly seized on as providing an artistic solution to the problem of expressing contradictory impulses in his own character. But this is to anticipate. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that the ways in which Erasmus and More read Lucian were not only different but quite incompatible. That More was not wilfully over-reading Lucian is shown by his recognition that the third dialogue, *The Lover of Lies*, can be read as a simple moral lesson: 'which ... is entirely concerned ... with ridiculing and reproving the inordinate passion for lying' (*CW* 3.1, 5/12-14). The dialogue, as More says, will teach us

\begin{quote}
that we should put no trust in magic and that we should eschew superstition, which obtrudes everywhere under the guise of religion. It teaches us also that we should live a life less distracted by anxiety; less fearful, that is, of any gloomy and superstitious untruths (*CW* 3.2, 5/22-25).
\end{quote}

And in Erasmian fashion he goes on to apply the lesson to those

\begin{quote}
71. 'totus uersatur ... in ridenda, coarguendaque metiendi libidine (*CW* 3.1, 4/12).

72. '... ut neque magicis habeamus praestigijs fidem, & superstitione careamus, quae passim sub specie religionis obrepit, tum uitam ut agamus minus anxiam, minus uidelicet expauescentes tristia quaepiam ac superstitionosa mendacia' (*CW* 3.1, 4/18-21).
\end{quote}
who think they've done a great work, and put Christ in their debt forever, if they've feigned a story about a saint or a horrendous tale of hell to drive some old woman to tears, or to make her tremble with fear (CW 3.1, 5/34-37).

More, then, was quite capable of distinguishing between Lucian's dialogues on the basis of their technique and the type of irony employed.

Erasmus, however, was not wholly devoid of subtlety in his reading of Lucian, and he, along with More, noticed the slight irony employed in Lucian's The Tyrannicide, and both employed the same technique in their reply to it. The passage referred to in the original comes after the claimant to the reward has described how he killed the tyrant's son and left the sword lying near the corpse so the grief-stricken father would kill himself. He then says:

> Therefore I request that you give me the reward which is my due, not because I am greedy or avaricious, or because it was my purpose to benefit my native land for hire, but because I wish that my achievements should be confirmed by the donative and that my undertaking should escape misrepresentation and loss of glory on the grounds that it was not fully executed and has been pronounced unworthy of a reward (CW 3.1, 199/36-42). (My emphasis).

The emphasised words may or may not have been intended to cast doubt on the claimant's motives, but they are certainly capable of that construction, and it was this sly irony that both More and Erasmus noticed and applied in their own declamations. More introduces this in two ways. First, his declaimer says:

> When I considered the meagre resources of our treasury, the present scarcity of funds, and the

73. '... qui se tum demum rem magnam confecissesse putant, Christumque sibi deuinxisse perpetuo, si commenti fuerint, aut de sancto aliquo uiro fabulam, aut de inferis tragœdiam, ad quam uetula quae piam aut delira lachrymetur, aut pauida inhorrescat' (CW 3.1, 4/29-32).
fact that many occasions of necessary expense confront us, I could not bear it that the state be drained of money by this extra, unnecessary expenditure (CW 3.1, 99/23-27).

Is he the man of principle he pretends to be, or is he simply trying to avoid the state's paying out a legitimate reward? The main point of his counter-argument follows:

Besides, since this slaying of the tyrant came about only by the mercy of the gods, who, so often implored, at last took pity on our calamities and pleased to liberate us from the yoke of that cruellest of tyrants and restore us to freedom, it would in my opinion be intolerable if the city withheld homage and gratitude owed to the gods and gave them instead to a man who does not deserve them (CW 3.1, 99/35-101/2).

He then demonstrates that it is improbable that the claimant's case can be sustained and returns to his claim, based on even less evidence, that the tyrant's death was the work of the gods. More has taken what was a tentative suggestion of unworthy motives and given his speaker equally suspect motives bolstered by an appeal to specious reasoning and unprovable assertions.

Erasmus omits the imputation of unworthy motives to his speaker, but includes the claim that the city's liberation is owed to the gods (Opera omnia I.1 517/6-10). Certainly both More and Erasmus demonstrate the 'false premises and vicious logic',

74. 'nempe quum uiderem satis tenues aerarij nostri prouentus, & praesentem pecuniam nimis exiguam, tum instare multas necessarij sumptus occasiones, non ferebam uti ciuitas hoc insuper non necessario sumptus multcarentur' (CW 3.1, 98/20-23).

75. 'Praeterea quum hoc tyrannicidum sola deorum clementia prouenerit, qui toties inclamatii calamitatum tandem nostrarum miserti, crudelissimi nos iugo tyranni soluere, ac libertati reddere voluerunt, non ferendum putaui ut ciuitas honorem gratiamque dijs merentibus ablatam, homini non merenti tribueret' (CW 3.1, 98/31-100.1).

76. C. R. Thompson, 1940, p.40.
of the speaker, but their own protagonists — more so, perhaps, in More’s case — exhibit the same faults.

Apart from this, both replies cover the same ground, so that there may be some truth in the notion that the two had decided beforehand what points were to be covered. Yet it is notable that Erasmus’ reply is far longer than that of More, and that he makes extensive use of all rhetorical means of amplification. He includes a lengthy speech declaring that a praiseworthy end does not justify illegal means and that the laws must always be obeyed. That there is no such speech in More points again to the contrast in the literary method employed by the two men: where More dramatises, ironises and, not infrequently, hedges, Erasmus is more inclined to be quite explicit if he has something of importance to say. As Erika Rummel puts it:

Erasmus’ buffo version with its comic exaggeration gives the court performance the character of a charade, while More’s plain translation preserves some of Lucian’s deadpan humour, as he applies grave arguments to a ludicrous business.

The very style of the two replies suggests the same conclusion. As Thompson says of Erasmus’ style compared to that of More: ‘It is more florid, more elaborate, more copious, (he) adds details, repeats charge, and expands figures of speech. He has two or three illustrations where More is content with one. He has an abundance of literary and mythological allusions’. Similarly, Erika Rummel, in comparing the Latin style of the two declamations, concludes that Erasmus is the more likely to expand on the original text, and to use an elaborate sentence structure;
Erasmus, she says, is long-winded to a fault, More succinct to the point of falling short of the meaning of the Greek. 80

Does this suggest anything of importance about their attitude to literary matters? Keeping in mind that these pieces were, in effect, *jeux d'esprit*, exercises not intended to be taken seriously, it may not be going too far to say that the copious fulsome ness of Erasmus' style is paralleled in the elaborateness and ornateness of Folly, while More's comparative reticence may perhaps be connected to the subtle understatements of his brand of irony. Probably not too much should be read into what were, after all, pieces of entertainment, but the differences are surely not entirely accidental. They can be seen as confirming our sense of what each man learnt from Lucian, and as suggesting what each would subsequently make of these lessons in his own writings.

80. Rummel, pp. 64–65.
CHAPTER THREE

THE PRESENCE OF LUCIAN IN ERASMUS' 'COLLOQUIES'

In view of the interest shown by More and Erasmus in Lucian, it would be odd if some trace of his influence had not made itself felt in their own fictional works. Erasmus' indebtedness is clearly seen both in The Praise of Folly and in the later Colloquies. His use of Lucian in these works confirms what was said in Chapter Two about the way in which he read him. Both The Praise of Folly and the Colloquies, considered as Lucianic works, clearly show the double nature of Erasmus' response to Lucian, and to fictional and mimetic literature in general. If he was a lover of good literature, we must qualify this by reminding ourselves that his natural inclination and preference, even in fictional works, was towards the didactic: literature may be both utile et dulce, but ultimately its utility is of more importance. This is more readily apparent in the Colloquies, where there is no attempt at the kind of ironical complexity which makes the opening section of The Praise of Folly at the same time Erasmus' most brilliant and most atypical piece of fictional writing. It is in the Colloquies that we see Erasmus responding to the moralistic and satirical elements in Lucian most directly and most simply, and for that reason it is easier to consider these first before moving on to the far more intractable and complex problems raised by The Praise of Folly and its status as a piece of complex Lucianic irony.

The date of the Colloquies lends sanction to this procedure. They were conceived in their original form as Latin exercises for Erasmus' pupils in Paris in 1497-1498. The speakers in the
earliest dialogues are Erasmus himself, Christian Northoff, one of his students, and Augustine Caminadius, a friend of both master and pupils. In his preface to the edition of March 1519, he speaks of their date as 'ante annos plus viginti' (Allen III, 909/8). They had never been intended for publication, and the edition of 1518 was therefore unauthorised (Allen III, 909/20-28). Not until the Froben edition of March 1522 was any new material added to the book.

In this edition and that of August 1522, 'the character of the book began to change fundamentally ... The reason for this must be that Erasmus had come to take the book more seriously and saw its possibilities'. It now contains dialogues rather than sets of formulae:

No longer a book providing only a collection of phrases and idioms for young students of Latin speech, the volume now offered dialogues that might serve boys as models of speech and writing both, and would appeal to men as much as boys; it became a book of colloquies instead of exercises.

'Further, 'the colloquies provided Erasmus with an admirable medium for commenting freely but informally on any events, customs or institutions that interested him'. This material treats themes which recur throughout Erasmus' career, a fact that demonstrates the essential consistency and unity of his thought.

From satire on monks, theologians and soldiers to the full expression of the philosophia Christi, the final edition of 1532 shows remarkable continuity with The Praise of Folly of 1509; moreover, it shows these strands of Erasmus' thought free of the

2. Ibid., p.xxv.
3. Ibid., p.xxv.
4. Ibid., p.xxv.
5. Ibid., p.xxvi.
complex structural irony which makes the earlier work much more
difficult to understand and interpret. Furthermore, we see
Erasmus working in a literary form -- satirical dialogue -- which
had hitherto been almost exclusively used by Lucian, so that
comparison of the dialogues of the two will lend substance to our
interpretation of Erasmus' reading of Lucian. When we see that
his response to Lucian over a period of some twenty-five years
was consistently straightforward and non-ironical, it will make
the far more complex response of The Praise of Folly that much
more enigmatic.

There is, in fact, a remarkable continuity of tone between
the prefaces to Erasmus' translations of Lucian and his defence
of the colloquies in The Usefulness of the 'Colloquies'. It was
added to the edition of 1526 as a defence against attacks on the
book, and makes it clear that his purpose was primarily didactic.
The form of dialogue has been adopted to 'allure the young' and
Erasmus cares not how 'childish' it seems so long as it is useful
(CE 625). His purpose in this defence is to illustrate the common
utility of the Colloquies (CE 134) and he goes on to expound the
meaning of many of the dialogues. He says also that 'this little
book, if taught to ingenuous youth, will lead them to many more
useful studies: to poetry, rhetoric, physics, ethics, and finally
to matters of Christian piety' (CE 239). 6 This explicit
didactic intent is consistent with all of Erasmus' remarks on
literature, and marks him as having intentions different from
those of Lucian.

It is true -- and it would be strange if it were otherwise
-- that several of the Colloquies show the direct influence of
Lucian, although none utilise his particular brand of complex
irony. Of these, some -- Echo, Non-sequiturs and The Imposture
are linguistic _jeux d'esprit_ in the manner of Pseudosophista, A
_Slip of the Tongue in Greeting_ and others, but others have a more

6. 'Atqui hic libellus, si tenerae publi praelegatur, tradet
illos ad multas disciplinas magis habiles, ad poeticon, ad
rhetoricen, ad physicen, ad ethicen, demum ad ea quae sunt
pietatis Christianae' (Opera omnia I.3, 749/283-285).
serious content. *Pseudodocheus* and *Philetymus* reminds one of *The Lover of Lies* in its subject matter, although this particular piece shows none of Lucian’s talent for comic invention, and of *The Parasite* in its talk of an ‘art of lying’ (CE 134). Both *The Cheating Horse-dealer* and *The Ignoble Knight* deal with the type of brazen charlatan met in *Alexander*. In both, the thrust of the satire is clear and there is no hint of ironic ambiguity.

Similar considerations apply to *Alchemy* and to *Exorcism*. There is, of course, no dialogue on alchemy in the works of Lucian, but Erasmus’ view of the alchemist as charlatan is similar to the view that Lucian takes of such figures as Alexander of Abnoteichos and Peregrinus Proteus, although Erasmus is not exposing a particular individual and lacks Lucian’s savage denunciation. There is no pretense that this is a study of alchemy or the issues raised by it: from the outset, interest in it is labelled as ‘a notorious disease’ (CE 239). The bulk of the dialogue is taken up with the exposure of the alchemist’s imposture and the matching gullibility of Balbinus, while the alchemist is significantly linked with sexual immorality.

On a similar theme — imposture and gullibility — is the dialogue *Exorcism, or The Spectre*. Its Lucianic source is the dialogue translated by More, *The Lover of Lies*, but in Erasmus’ piece the imposture is a practical joke played on an exorcist. The matter of the dialogue is narrated, not exhibited directly, in a way which allows Erasmus to predetermine the reader’s attitude. In the introductory talk, Anselm says: ‘I’ve just heard the most delightful story. You’d swear it was a comic fiction if I weren’t as familiar with the characters and the setting and the whole affair as I am with you’ (CE 231).\(^7\) Polus is characterised as ‘naturally fond of playing tricks on people’s stupidity’ (CE 231)\(^8\) and the dialogue consists of a lengthy


narration of one of these tricks. The narration is vivid and moves swiftly, with Erasmus showing a considerable talent for comic invention, but we are never in doubt as to what attitude we are to take to the events narrated. This is broad comedy presenting no perplexing intellectual problem; nor is it as overtly concerned with exposing a contemporary evil as many of the other dialogues certainly are. The possible identification of Polus and More lends an added interest, but its primary purpose, apart from the general exposure of superstition, is entertainment, and as such it succeeds brilliantly.

The two other dialogues which can be termed 'Lucianic' require to be discussed at greater length since, in their subject-matter, they are more closely aligned with the principal satirical and ethical tendencies of the Colloquies. Charon is 'plainly Lucianic in form and manner', and its attack on the military life was a life-long preoccupation of Erasmus. Unlike its Lucianic prototype, there is no ambivalence about the subject matter, although the strong vein of irony and realistic humour catches much of the tone of Lucian. Yet when Charon launches into an attack on 'the three rulers of the world' and their wars that have embraced all Christendom (CR 391), it is apparent that Erasmus' satire is more pointed and particular than that of Lucian. He feels none of Lucian's ambivalence about his material, and for that reason the satire is more vital while the element of ironic ambiguity is completely missing. The direct statement of satire is more congenial to Erasmus than the obliquity of complex irony.11

A Pilgrimage for Religion's Sake also owes a debt to Menippus. It has three friends meeting after a long separation; the narrator is dressed in a fantastic costume: 'You're ringed

10. Ibid., p.388.
with scallop shells, choked with tin and leaden images on every side, decked out with straw necklaces, and you've snake’s eggs on your arms’ (CE 287). If his appearance is kept in mind, we are unlikely to place much credence in anything he might say. His interlocutor, Ogygius, keeps up a string of ironically deflating comments, as do several of Lucian’s characters; and the idea that devotion has grown cold, with St. James receiving fewer offerings than before, recalls the plight of the gods in, for example, Zeus Rante: it is not impossible that Erasmus intended to equate the two types of worship as similar forms of superstition. Ogygius is a naïf of the Lucianic type who, on his visit to the tomb of St. Thomas, fails to understand the irony of his companion Gratian. The latter, commenting on the wealth of the shrine, suggests that the saint ‘would rejoice that, even after death, too, he could relieve the wants of the poor by his riches’ (CE 307). When the custodian becomes angry, Ogygius assures him that Gratian was only joking, whereupon Menedemus explicitly points the moral about the wealth of the church. The discussion springs from a clearly ironical comment, then modulates into a non-ironical statement in which Menedemus may be taken as representing the point of view of Erasmus.

As we should expect, the didactic intent is taken up in The Usefulness of the ‘Colloquies’: pilgrimages may be ‘conceded, of course, to men’s whims, but for these people to arrogate holiness to themselves from all this is intolerable (CE 631). In spite of the presence of a large number of Lucianic elements, the dialogue lacks Lucian’s characteristic double focus: in the

12. ‘obsitus es conchis imbricatis, stanneis ac plumbelis imaginibus oppletus vndique, culmeis ornatus torquibus, brachium habet oua serpentum’. (Opera omnia I.1, 470/11-13).

13. ‘Ego, inquit, plane confido sanctissimum virum etiam gauisurum, quod mortuus quoque suis opibus subleuaret inopiam pauperum’. (Opera omnia I.3, 489/696-698).

direct satiric attack and the more oblique questioning of the mode of attack. It lacks, that is, ironic ambiguity, so that although it possesses real dramatic qualities and robust humour, both its purpose and effect are ultimately didactic.

If Lucian's ironic ambiguity is not found even in those dialogues which owe him a specific debt, it is certainly not to be expected in those in which the influence is more general. Among these we may class those which use satire to correct the vices of the age, of which the majority are on religious topics. Three early dialogues, too short to allow much scope for artistry, are of interest for their elaboration of views treated at greater length in other works. Military Affairs is one of Erasmus' frequent criticisms of war and its unchristian character. A soldier who has gone to war has come back laden with sins rather than booty, and is convinced that 'Nothing's more wicked or ruinous' than a soldier's life' (CE 13). He follows a calling that involves him in 'burning houses, looting churches, violating nuns, robbing poor people, murdering homeless ones!' (CE 14). Views such as these had been elaborated more fully in the earlier Complaint of Peace, The Praise of Folly, and Dulce bellum inexpertis; they were discussed again in later colloquies such as The Soldier and the Carthusian and Charon.

Rash Vows and In Pursuit of Benefices are also short and artistically uncomplicated. The latter of these is somewhat marred by an overlong opening section which appears only obliquely related to the real subject of the dialogue. This subject was stated in The Usefulness of the 'Colloquies': 'I reprove those who rush off to Rome to hunt for livings, frequently with serious loss of money and morals both' (CE 627). Rash Vows concerns pilgrimages, and the tone is set early with

15. 'incendere domos, diripere templa, violare sacras virgines, spoliare miseros, occidere innoxios'. (Opera omnia I.3, 156/1005-1006).

16. 'taxo eos, qui Romam cursitant, venantur sacerdotia, crebro graui iactura tum morum tum pecuniae ...' (Opera omnia I.3, 743/95-96).
Arnold saying that people are drawn to pilgrimages by folly (CE 5). Cornelius, disillusioned by his experience on a pilgrimage, supports him, saying that in Jerusalem, 'some monuments of antiquity are pointed out, every one of which I thought faked and contrived for the purpose of deceiving naive and credulous folk' (CE 5).  

The dialogue ends with Arnold saying that on a pilgrimage of his own, one of his fellow pilgrims had a purse bulging with indulgences: 'he pinned his whole hope of salvation, so to speak, on a piece of parchment instead of on a moral life' (CE 7).  

The dialogue is sketchy, but since it includes no criticism of the views of either speaker, they can be taken as being identical with those of Erasmus. In The Usefulness of the 'Colloquies', Erasmus devoted a long defence to this short dialogue, an indication, perhaps, that he felt keenly about the message conveyed. He says that in it 'is exhibited the superstitiousness and shameful fancy of some folk who think the essence of holiness is to have visited Jerusalem' (CE 625).  

Further, 'the name of religion is used as cover for superstition, faithlessness, foolishness, and recklessness' (CE 626).  

Finally, he writes:

"Therefore, considering the irresponsibility, ignorance or superstitiousness of many folk, I thought I should do well to warn youth on this subject, and I don't see who could be offended by..."

17. 'Ostenduntur quaedam monumenta vetustatis, quorum mihi nihil non videtur commenticium, et excogitatum ad alliciendos simplices et credulos'. (Opera omnia I.3, 147/715-717).

18. 'salutis suae proram, vt aiunt, ac puppim in membrana collocarat, potiusquam in correctis affectibus'. (Opera omnia I.3, 150/800, textual note).

19. 'cohibetur superstitiosus et immodicus quorumdam affectus, qui summan pietatem esse ducunt vidisse Hierosolymam'. (Opera omnia I.3, 742/36-37).

20. 'et interim superstitioni, inconstantiae, stultitiae, temeritati praetexitur religionis titulus ...' (Opera omnia I.3, 742/42-43).
the warning, except perhaps those who put profit above righteousness (CE 627).  

Here again, we find Erasmus stating explicitly that the purpose of the *Colloquies* was didactic. This is, in any case, readily apparent in these examples from the edition of 1522; they form, perhaps, a transitional stage between the Latin exercises which the *Colloquies* originally were, and the later dialogues which have more aesthetic merit without being less didactic and expository in intent and execution.

Two further dialogues need to be considered before we pass on to those in which satire plays no part. These are *The Soldier and the Carthusian* and *The Shipwreck*, both initially published in 1523. The former of these two dialogues is, in part, an attack on the military life with the monk saying, in characteristically Erasmian fashion, that the soldier was 'hired for a trifling wage to cut men's throats' (CE 131).  

Aspects of the monastic life are also brought into question, and the Carthusian ably defends it against the soldier’s charge of unworldliness. Indeed, the picture of the monastic life here given is idealised to an extent unusual in Erasmus. This may be by way of contrast with the life of the soldier, or it may be because Erasmus respected the Carthusians above other monastic orders. It is notable that one of the main attractions of the monastic life is the opportunity for study (CE 130), and, as C. R. Thompson notes, 'The monk in the colloquy ... virtuous as he undeniably is, is a Carthusian of Erasmian principles and tastes'.  

21. 'eoque considerata multorum vel leuitate vel ignorantia vel superstitione, visum est super ea re monere iuuentutem, neque video quos offendere debeat haec admonitio, nisi forte quosdam istos, quibus charier est quaestus quam pietas'. (*Opera omnia* I.3, 743/84-86).

22. 'profisceris in militiam vili salario conductus ad iugulandos homines ...' (*Opera omnia* I.3, 317/104-105).

23. C. R. Thompson, p.128.
not intended to make us suspend judgement in our valuation of
them; the life of the Carthusian is undoubtedly to be preferred.
Even in this dialogue, where there is room for some complexity in
the point of view, it is not introduced. In spite of Erasmus' later writing that the life of a Carthusian was 'inevitably
gloomy and dismal unless accompanied by devotion to studies' (CE 629), it is less subject to criticism than the military life.
Again, the didactic purpose does not allow Erasmus the freedom to
develop his dialogue in the direction of complex irony.

The Shipwreck is markedly satirical, being another attack on
religious superstition. The account of a shipwreck and the
reaction of the passengers and sailors to their situation
provides the material for Erasmus' satire. He describes

the sailors singing Salve Regina, praying to the
Virgin Mother, calling her Star of the Sea, Queen
of Heaven, Mistress of the World, Port of
Salvation, flattering her with many other titles
the Sacred Scriptures nowhere assign to her (CE 141).

Other passengers promise to go the Virgin of Walsingham and
other shrines; some promise to go on pilgrimages. Adolphus, who
says 'I don't make deals with saints' (CE 142), prayed
directly to God, since 'no saint hears sooner than he or more
willingly grants what is asked' (CE 142). As a piece of
dramatic literature, this has been deservedly popular, and is all
the more effective for having its points presented dramatically

24. 'quae sine studiorum amore non potest non esse tristis et
inamoena'. (Opera omnia I.3, 745/157-158).

25. 'Nautae canentes: Salve regina, implorabant matrem
Virginem, appellantes eam stellam maris, reginam coeli,
dominam mundi, portum salutis, aliisque multis titulis
illi blandientes, quos nusquam illi tribuunt sacrae
literae'. (Opera omnia I.3, 327/71-74).

26. 'Quia non paciscor cum diuis'. (Opera omnia I.3, 329/119).

27. 'Nemo diuorum illo citius audit aut libentius donat, quod
petitur'. (Opera omnia I.3, 329/130).
and emphasised with brief comments. Nevertheless, the intention and the artistic methods of even the best Erasmian dialogues are far removed from those of Lucian. That is not to say that either type of dialogue is inferior to the other, but where the intention is different the dramatic means must differ accordingly.

In all the satirical dialogues, even in those specifically indebted to Lucian, Erasmus makes no use of ironic ambiguity. In dialogues whose avowed intention was the teaching of a lesson, irony, however skilfully employed, could be no more than a means to an end. Accordingly, it is no real surprise that some of the colloquies employ no irony at all, but are straightforward expositions of Erasmus’ views on religious questions. Yet this group contains some of the best colloquies, considered purely in dramatic and artistic terms. They represent the positive pole of Erasmus’ thought and treat of subjects which were, perhaps, too serious and too important to be treated with any admixture of irony and satire.

The Profane Feast was one of the earliest pieces, and bears unmistakeable traces of its origin as a piece designed to teach good Latin. Much of the conversation consists of variations on a phrase, such as we find under the heading ‘It makes no difference what colour it is’ (CE 595). The pedagogic origin of the Colloquies is here clearly evident, although there is in it material which Erasmus considered sufficiently important to be mentioned in The Usefulness of the ‘Colloquies’. Here he says:

I do not condemn the ordinance of the Church concerning fasts and choice of foods, but I expose the superstition of certain persons who attach excessive importance to these matters while neglecting those that contribute more to godliness ... If, now, one will consider what a blight on true godliness this produces among mankind, one will grant that scarcely any other admonition is more urgently needed (CE 628).

28. ‘non damno constitutiones Ecclesiae de ieiuniis ac delectum ciborum, sed indico superstitionem quorundam, qui his plus tribuunt quam oportet, negligentes eorum,
Since the material here referred to occupies only a small part of the dialogue, we can see how Erasmus’ conception of the purpose of these dialogues changed after their original publication.

The theme of the appropriate type of religious observance is taken up again in the longest of the colloquies, A Fish Diet, whose theme is the Pauline one of Christian liberty against Judaic legalism, or the contrast between Law and Gospel, letter and spirit. The length at which these matters are discussed is an indication of the importance Erasmus attached to them, just as the character of the two speakers -- one a butcher, the other a fishmonger -- is a constant reminder of his view that theological matters were, at heart, simple enough to be discussed by all manner of people, not just learned and over-subtle specialists. It is stated that Christ’s new covenant abrogated the Jewish distinction of foods, so ‘the Jews were not so much emancipated as weaned from the superstitious reverence of the law’ (CE 321). In spite of this, Christians now have more laws on fasting than did the Jews (CE 322). Further,

there are a great many who take places, vestments, foods, fasts, gestures, and chants to be the essence of religion and judge their neighbour by these, contrary to gospel commandment (CE 324).

29. ‘Itaque non tam manumissi sunt Iudaei, quam a legis superstitione ... depulsi’. (Opera omnia I.3, 502/240-242).

30. ‘Rursus audio videoque plurimos esse, qui in locis, vestibus, cibis, ieiunis, gesticulationibus, cantibus, summam pietatis constituant, et ex his proximum iudicant contra praeciputum Evangelicum’. (Opera omnia I.3, 505/343-346).
Much later in the dialogue, it is said that the 'world is full of pharasaical men who can prove their holiness only by such trivial observances' (CE 342).31

Erasmus said of this colloquy that he was trying to persuade those with different views on human ordinances to exercise moderation and to enquire as to the origin and status of such ordinances.

These topics I have treated at some length to provide learned men with an opportunity of writing on them more correctly; for what they have published to date does not satisfy inquirers (CE 631)32

Whatever his motivation in writing this dialogue, it is clear that when he was engaged in setting out his views on a matter of such importance, as distinct from attacking various forms of vice and corruption, he found no use for irony of any form, let alone the complex irony that suspends judgement on the issue in question.

The same characteristics are found in The Godly Feast, which in setting and characterisation is one of the real dramatic achievements of the Colloquies. The combination of Christian and classical themes marks it as an excellent document of Christian humanism; yet in spite of the occurrence of the famous phrase 'Saint Socrates', the tone of the dialogue is much more Christian than classical. No real dialogue between the two positions takes place, and Erasmus' practical, ethically-oriented Christianity simply subsumes the best ethical precepts of the classical writers. Of course, ethical philosophy was a strong undercurrent of the classical tradition; but it is curious that in culling

31. 'deinde mundus est plenus pharasaicis hominibus, qui non alia re sibi possunt vindicare sanctimoniam, nisi talibus observatiunculis ... ' (Opera omnia I.3, 522/988-990).

32. 'Haec ideo quoque tractavi copiosius, quo doctis suppediitarem occasionem accuratius hisce de rebus scribendi. Nam quae adhuc prodierunt non satisfaciunt curiosis'. (Opera omnia I.3, 747/228-230.)
these precepts, and in works such as *Adagia*, Erasmus was making a highly selective use of classical tradition. The Christian-humanist fusion could be achieved only by abandoning many of the strands that made up classicism.

In Erasmus' case, this led him to a type of dialogue that was more indebted to Cicero than to Lucian. If his dramatic talents are higher than those of Cicero, he, no less than the Roman, uses dialogue as a means of persuading us to a particular point of view, as a method of exposition that is more congenial to the young than a serious scholastic treatise. Fortunately, his literary merits are such that this is never felt as crude propagandising. He has chosen a medium well-adapted to his purpose and his audience, and in view of his belief that theology should be accessible to all, it is a medium in which his religious convictions and artistic instincts mesh perfectly.

In *The Godly Feast*, as C. R. Thompson says, the 'blending of classical and Christian themes offers us an unequalled illustration of the spirit of Christian humanism in literature'.

The garden setting has respectable classical antecedents in Cicero and Horace; the door to the house carries a portrait of St. Peter and Biblical injunctions in Latin, Greek and Hebrew; the chapel carries similar inscriptions. The fountain and even the herbs in the garden are given typological significance. After all this, it is not surprising that the dinner to which the guests are invited should be an allegory of the Last Supper, and that the conversation at the table should consist of exegesis of a text of St. Paul. Eusebius sums up the spirit of Christian humanism when he says:

> Sacred Scripture is of course the basic authority in everything; yet I sometimes run across ancient sayings or pagan writings -- even the poets' -- so purely and reverently and admirably expressed that I can't help believing their authors' hearts were moved by some divine power (*CE* 65).

33. C. R. Thompson, p.47.

34. *Sacris quidem literis ubique prima debetur autoritas,*
There is more of this combination of Christianity with the best classical precepts in *The Epicurean*, the last dialogue to be written. More had earlier made the attempt to reconcile Christianity and Epicureanism in *Utopia*, although the ironic context of that work makes it difficult to disentangle his views from those of Hythloday. The identification of the higher pleasures of Epicureanism with those of Christianity had also been suggested in Erasmus’ early work *De contemptu mundi*, and the final section of the *The Praise of Folly* had mingled Christian and neo-platonic views on the ultimate reality. As C. R. Thompson says of this dialogue: ‘the colloquy is an example of how, according to the convictions of Erasmus and all other Christian humanists, the teachings of ancient philosophy are immeasurably enriched by the addition of Christian insights’. 35

We can also accept his statement that

The real interest of the proposition Hedonius purports to demonstrate lies in its representative character as an argument that Christian and classical values are not mutually exclusive or totally irreconcilable, but that classical values must be tested and refined by Christian knowledge before their full potentiality can be realised. 36

Perhaps the significant difference between Erasmus’ treatment of this subject and that of More lies in their respective literary strategies: by placing the debate in a context of complex irony, More treats it in a double fashion, as an assumption on the part

35. C. R. Thompson, p.535.
36. Ibid., p.536.
of Hythloday, and as a subject for inquiry on the part of author and reader. More merely suggests the possible identification; Erasmus states it as a positive conviction. Again, this is due to their differing use of the dialogue form. More was utilising the complex irony he had learnt from Lucian; Erasmus was using the form, in the fashion of Cicero, for exposition.

These 'Ciceronian' dialogues are far removed from anything that is recognisably Lucianic, yet Erasmus' use of Lucian has not left us totally unprepared for a development along these lines. Both in the translations he made from Lucian and in the prefaces he wrote for them, and in his use of Lucian in the Colloquies we see him responding to the moralistic and satirical elements and neglecting the more subtle element of ironic ambiguity. In his defence of the Colloquies he drew attention consistently to their didactic elements, and although this is no doubt partly attributable to the need to defend himself and his book as best he could, it nevertheless represents a strong and consistent element in Erasmus' thinking about literature. What irony is employed is largely confined to those colloquies in which he is attacking vice and corruption; when it comes to putting forward the positive views of The Godly Feast and The Epicurean irony is dropped in favour of direct exposition, albeit still in the form of dialogue. Evidently, the philosophia Christi was felt to be too serious a matter to be laid open to misinterpretation.

It would be going too far to identify completely the philosophia Christi with the folly of the final pages of The Praise of Folly, but it can be said that The Godly Feast and The Epicurean stand in the same relation to the satirical pieces as the section on Christian folly stands to the account of the followers of Moria. They express the positive ideal for which one ought to strive, while the satire shows the consequences of neglecting to strive for it.

The Colloquies repeat matter already touched upon in the earlier work. In The Praise of Folly, all of these matters are introduced in a unified work of fiction and one suffused with
irony. Since the Colloquies represent Erasmus speaking directly, without disguise or artifice, our knowledge of the opinions and attitudes expressed there may be of considerable help in guiding us through Moria's labyrinth. Finally, what has been already said about Erasmus' response to Lucian in other works must be kept in mind when considering the more complex response exhibited in The Praise of Folly.
CHAPTER FOUR

'THE PRAISE OF FOLLY': THE IRONY OF A CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

The Praise of Folly is rightly regarded as the most sophisticated and complex work of irony of the early sixteenth century. Commentators have laboured to explain the relationship between the dazzling paradoxes of the opening section, the bitter satire of the middle section, and those final, somewhat mysterious pages on the Folly of the Cross. Erasmus himself points out the analogue with Lucian, but what we have seen of his use of Lucian in other works, and of his general attitude to literature, suggests that, regarded as a Lucianic work, The Praise of Folly will be problematic.

In fact, the internal coherence of The Praise of Folly can best be demonstrated by regarding it in the light, not just of the influence of Lucian, but also of the Enchiridion militis Christianae. This little book, published in 1503, was intended as a guide to Christian living, and the point of view expressed here can be regarded as one pole of Erasmian thought, the other being


his love of classical literature. It is Erasmus' attempt to reconcile the Christian and humanist strands of his thought which results in that amalgam known as Christian humanism. It finds expression in the doctrine of the *philosophia Christi*, the idea that Christ is to be regarded as an ethical teacher, comparable but vastly superior to the pagan philosophers.\(^3\) Considered in this light, *The Praise of Folly* can be seen less as Lucianic than as the outcome of the tension between two aspects of Erasmus' personality. From a generic point of view, much of its interest resides in Erasmus' success, or lack of it, in creating a perfect fusion of the Christian and the humanist.

The genesis of the work is itself uncertain. In the prefatory letter to Thomas More, Erasmus gives an account of its origins which has not been universally accepted. He says he conceived the idea of writing a praise of folly while returning from Italy to England on horseback in 1509. Although Kaiser claims that this is a lie\(^4\) Erasmus, as Miller points out, says only that it was on this journey that the idea occurred to him,\(^5\) not that this was when he wrote the book. Further information was given in a letter to the Louvain theologian Martin Dorp in 1515, a letter subsequently prefixed to all editions of the work. Erasmus says that after his return from Italy, he stayed with More in England, and was without his books. Since illness prevented him from undertaking more serious studies,

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\(I \text{ began to amuse myself with a eulogy of folly,}
with no idea of publication but simply as a
distraction from the pain of my complaint. Once
started, I let some friends have a close look at
what I'd done, so as to add to my amusement by
sharing the joke (218).\)

\(^3\) This idea is perhaps most simply expressed in *Paraclesis*, LB.V.139D, 141F.

\(^4\) Kaiser, pp.31-32.

\(^5\) *Opera omnia*, IV.3, p.14, n.2.

\(\text{'Coepi per ocium Morias encomium ludere, nec in hoc}
sane vt aederem, sed vt morbi molestiam hoc velut
They enjoyed it and urged him to do more: 'I did as they asked, and spent a week, more or less, on the job: too long, I'm sure, for such a lightweight subject' (218). His friends then published it in France, but from a faulty and incomplete copy. It went through seven reprints, with the first authorised edition being published in Paris in July 1512.

This edition, however, did not represent the final state of the text. Extensive additions were made in the Strasbourg edition of November 1514, while Froben's Basel edition of 1515 included, as well as some 54 new sidenotes, the commentary of Listrius, itself partly written by Erasmus. The Froben edition of 1516 was the first to contain the letter to Dorp, as well as the last long added passage. It can be regarded as representing Erasmus' final intentions. Any study of The Praise of Folly must take account not only of this final text, but also of its differences from the text of the first authorised edition. The alterations in the text, plus the content of Listrius' notes, can yield valuable information about which sections of the text he wished to revise and emphasise.

In the letter to Dorp, Erasmus not only explained the circumstances of the work's composition and original publication, but replied to a number of specific criticisms made by Dorp, and went on to explain how The Praise of Folly was related to his other works:

7. 'Obsecutus sum, et in hoc negocii septem plus minus dies impendi; qui sane sumptus mihi pro argumenti pendere nimius etiam videbatur' (Allen II, 337/134-6).

8. Opera omnia IV.3, p.42.

9. Ibid., p.43.

10. Ibid., p.45.

11. Ibid., p.46.
My aim in *Folly* was exactly the same as in my other works. Only the presentation was different. In the *Enchiridion* I simply outlined the pattern of Christian life. In my little book *The Education of the Prince* I offered plain advice on how to instruct a prince. In my *Panegyric* I did the same under the veil of eulogy as I had done elsewhere explicitly. And in *Folly* I expressed the same ideas as those in the *Enchiridion*, but in the form of a joke. I wanted to advise, not to rebuke, to do good, not injury, to work for, not against the interests of men (215).

It is most unlikely that the whole of *The Praise of Folly* has struck any reader as saying the same thing as the *Enchiridion*. Erasmus, it seems, is attempting to draw our attention to what he considered to be the most important elements in the work, and, in terms of the comparison with *Enchiridion*, these are most obviously the platonised Christianity of the final section -- although, as we shall see, there are other parallels that are equally significant. The importance of this view of the work to Erasmus is confirmed by its placement in his list of his works. It is assigned to a fourth volume of works 'quae faciunt ad morum institutionem' (*Allen I*, p.39/33), and is listed thus: 'The Praise of Folly, a book which jokes so that it may treat serious matters, so don't wonder at its being included in this volume'. Erasmus clearly regarded its didactic element as constituting the work's *raison d'être*.

If Erasmus regarded the work as being one of instruction, then what is the purpose of the opening section? The prefatory

12. 'Nee aliud omnino spectauimus in Moria quam quod in caeteris lucubrationibus, tametsi via diuersa. In Enchiridio simpliciter Christianae vitae formam tradidimus. In libello De principis institutione palam admonemus quibus rebus oporteat esse instructum. In Panegyrico sub laudis praetextu hoc ipsum tamen agimus oblique quod illic egimus aperta fronte. Nee aliud agitur in Moria sub specie lusus quam actum est in Enchiridio. Admonere voluimus, non mordere; prod esse, non laedere; consulere moribus hominum, non officere' (*Allen II*, 337/86-94).

letter to More confuses matters further, since the statements there as to the character of the work are peculiarly pertinent to the first section. It should be noted also that this letter is dated 1518 -- that is, three years after the date of the first authorised edition. Miller suggests plausibly that, since this date was first added in the Froben edition of 1522, Erasmus' memory was faulty when he supplied the information to his publisher. 14

He further concludes that the 'hypothesis that Erasmus sent to More a manuscript copy of the Moria, with the dedicatory letter prefixed, from some residence in the English countryside in 1510 is plausible and simple'. 15 Whatever the correct dating of this letter, it still stands as an introduction to Erasmus' view of what he has done in The Praise of Folly, so that an examination of its contents may usefully preface an examination of the work as a whole. As Miller says of this letter: 'the conventional explanations and defenses given in this letter are intended for the public, not for Thomas More...'; 16 a consideration which serves to make more interesting the letter's failure to account for the work as a whole.

Erasmus tells us how he came to conceive of his jeu d'esprit, and anticipates criticism of its frivolousness and sarcasm (68/23;57). He invokes the analogies of Lucian, Old Comedy, Homer, Virgil, Ovid and others (68/24-33;57). He says that learning, like other walks of life, needs its relaxation and invokes the kernel and shell defence when he writes that

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Jokes can be handled in such a way that any reader who is not altogether lacking in discernment can scent something far more rewarding in them than the crabbed and specious arguments of some people we know (59).
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14. Opera omnia IV.3, p.15.
15. Ibid., p.15.
17. "atque ita tractentur ludicra, vt ex his aliquanto plus
Further:

Nothing is so trivial as treating serious subjects in a trivial manner; and similarly, nothing is more entertaining than treating trivialities in such a way as to make it clear that you are doing anything but trifle with them (59).

Notably in this letter, Erasmus does no more than hint that his work contains a serious message, concealed beneath all the joking; nowhere does he give any indication of what this message might be. He does, to be sure, draw attention to the satirical passages, but the problematic nature of the letter stems from the list of analogues provided. Commenting on this, Miller writes that many of the examples cited belong neither to paradoxical encomium or even to its genus, the epideictic oration.19 Sr. G. Thompson notes that the list of precedents comprises no work as complex as his own 'which contains all the qualities of all the works Erasmus lists'.20 He combines and fuses them with each other and with his critical purpose so that they become satire.21 Erasmus has described his work as a paradoxical encomium, and the triple pun of the title lends support to this. But if we accept the definition of that genre offered by Arthur S. Pease as a species of oration in which 'the legitimate methods of the encomium are applied to persons or objects in themselves obviously unworthy of praise, as being trivial, ugly, useless, frugis referat lector non omnino naris obesae, quam ex quorundam tetricis ac splendidis argumentis?' (ibid., 68/37-39).

18. 'Vt enim nihil nugacius, quam seria nugatorie tractare, ita nihil festiuius quam ita tractare nugas, vt minus nihil quam nugatusuisse videaris' (ibid., 68/42-44).


20. Thompson, p.53.

ridiculous, dangerous or vicious, then we may legitimately question whether such a description is applicable to the whole of The Praise of Folly. It certainly applies to the first section, but Erasmus is misleading in his implication that the whole work can be so described. Whether he is deliberately misleading the reader in order to arouse expectations that he will later undermine, or whether he is using the term rather loosely to describe, not so much the content of his work as its apparent looseness of structure, is a question which cannot be fully answered until the whole work has been examined.

In order to see how the tripartite structure and the irony work in practice, it is necessary to analyse the content of The Praise of Folly. We need to know what constitutes Moria’s original point of view; how, when and why her mask is allowed to slip; and what the transitions are between the various sections.

The title of the work is what first commands attention. The Praise of Folly. As it has been explained by Walter Kaiser, Erasmus’ great originality ... was to make Stultititia both the author and the subject of her encomium, and to conceive of ‘Moriae’ as being simultaneously both objective and subjective genitive. Thus ‘The Praise of Folly’ only translates half of the title; it might be more accurately rendered as ‘Folly’s Praise of Folly’.

Further, the praise of folly being a mock praise, is, in fact, the censure of folly; but if Folly is thus censuring folly, wisdom would presumably praise folly. In the final section, this is precisely what happens.

23. Kaiser, p.36.
24. Ibid., p.36.
The dazzling paradoxes of folly make it necessary, as Wayne Rebhorn notes, to modify the view of H. H. Hudson and Walter Kaiser that the book follows an elaborate rhetorical pattern. In a formal sense, this is true enough. It is after all, cast in the form of a piece of extemporaneous rhetoric, and must therefore make structural and logical use of the formal parts of a speech. But to grasp this aspect of the book is not to understand the book as a whole, since the actual content of the speech is of much more importance than literary analogues of any sort. In this sense, Kaiser provides a useful way into *The Praise of Folly* with his detailed analysis of the first sentence. A speech designed to destroy illusions opens with 'Vtcunque de me vulgo mortales loquuntur' (71/5), placing Moria in opposition to common opinions which are 'stultissimos' (71/6). Moria insists on her intelligence: 'neque enim sum nescia' (71/5); her uniqueness: 'hanc, inquam, esse vnam' (71/6-7); her popularity: 'hunc coetum frequentissimum' (71/8); and her superiority: 'meo numine deos atque homines exhilaro' (71/7). The argument is clinched with a dubious proof which yet has some validity -- the audience is obviously laughing at her, yet they are laughing.

We have at once been made aware of Moria's slippery logic, her use of classical allusions to bolster her position, and her boastfulness -- all characteristics that mark the first part of her speech. Erasmus next has her associate herself with sunshine, vernality and pleasure -- associations that are maintained consistently, just as her opponents are associated with their opposites.

Moria also outlines the general character of her speech, setting it off from academic exercises:


27. Kaiser, pp.41-42.
From me you're going to hear a speech which is extempore and quite unprepared, but all the more genuine for that (66).

None of you need expect me to follow the usual practice of ordinary rhetoricians and explain myself by definition, still less by division (66-67).

Such a procedure would limit her divinity and would be superfluous: 'when I am here before you, for you to look at with your own eyes' (67). Again, she employs ambiguity and paradox. On one level, what she is doing is a game not worth a serious answer; on another level, she positively claims value in naturalness and truth in spontaneity. Furthermore, although Moria's tone here may be jocular, later attacks on the schoolmen and their rhetoric are much more in earnest. Erasmus is introducing themes that he will later develop in more detail. It is these levels of ambiguity in much of what Moria says that make her speech so elusive.

Having thus attacked the rhetoricians, she goes on to announce herself as 'the true bestower of good things, called STULTITIA in Latin, MORIA in Greek' (67), adding that the mere sight of her prevents her from being taken for wisdom. This stressing of her foolishness serves Erasmus' purpose of overturning accepted definitions of wisdom and foolishness. Once overturned, they can be redefined on a new, more transcendent level. The existence of a strategy such as this seems to be confirmed by another attack on philosophers 'who lay special

28. 'A me extemporariam quidem illam et illaboratam, sed tanto veriorem audietis orationem' (74/50-51).
29. 'At ne quis iam a nobis expectet vt iuxta vulgarium istorum Rhetorum consuetudinem meipsam finitione explicem, porro vt diuidam, muito minus' (74/57-58).
30. 'cum ipsam me coram praesentem praesentem oculis intueamini' (74/62).
31. 'vera illa largitrix, Ἐκάνω quam Latini Stulticiam, Graeci Ἐκάνοιç appellant' (74/63).
claim to be called the personification of Wisdom ... However hard they try to keep up the illusion, their ears stick up and betray the Midas in them' (67-68).

Erasmus seems, then, to be heading towards a relatively simple reversal of terms, in which 'wisdom' would become 'foolishness' and vice versa. But at this point he complicates the matter by introducing doubts as to the trustworthiness of his persona. He has Moria embark on a digression to attack rhetoricians who

think it a splendid feat if they can work a few silly little Greek words, like pieces of mosaic, into their Latin speeches, however out of place they are. Then if they still need something out of the ordinary, they dig four or five obsolete words out of mouldy manuscripts, with which to cloud the meaning for the reader.

But this is a fair description of much of her own procedure, as the digression ends with her quoting two Greek proverbs!

Is this merely a local witticism, or is Erasmus consciously involving Moria in her own irony? If so, to what purpose? He could, of course invent an untrustworthy persona as a matter of self-protection: from a speaker such as this, who could take seriously the later satirical catalogue of followers? Alternatively, the use of such a persona might be intended to dislocate and numb the reader, so as to prepare him for the later radical redefinition of wisdom. Or Erasmus may be inviting us to scrutinise closely what Moria is actually saying, lest we get carried away by her cheerful manner and genial good humour. In

32. ‘qui maxime Sapientiae personam ac titulum sibi vendicant ... Quamuis autem sedulo fingant, tamen alicunde prominentes auriculae Midam produnt’ (74/70-73).

33. ‘praeclarum facinus esse ducunt latinis orationibus subinde graeculas aliquot voculas velut emblemata intertexere, etiam’si nunc non erat his locus. Porro si desunt exotica, e putribus chartis quatuor aut quinque prisca verba eruunt, quibus tenebras offundat lectori ... ’ (76/78-82).
fact, Erasmus has invented a **persona** under whose auspices he can throw out suggestions and ideas which he himself does not necessarily accept. Through the use of such a **persona**, he could fully explore the paradoxes inherent in human nature; he could even raise the possibility, arrived at not by any definite statement, but by a process of cumulative suggestion, that human nature is in essence problematical and paradoxical, and that no system of philosophy or psychology could fully account for it.

What, then, does Moria have to say of herself and of human nature? In the manner of the classical eulogy, she tells us of her parentage and birthplace. We are again reminded that we are not to take seriously everything that Moria says when she lists her attendants as Philautia, Kolakia, Lethe, Misaponia, Hedone, Anoia, Tryphe, Comus and Negretos Hypnos. Since the benefits of having such attendants are not immediately obvious, we are immediately led into an ambiguous attitude towards the speaker: her energy of speech, her good humour, and candour are all attractive qualities, but she is also linked with the common associations both of her own name and those of her attendants. It will be interesting indeed to see how such a goddess can benefit mankind. It is her claim that she does benefit mankind: 'why shouldn’t I rightly be recognized and named the Alpha of all the gods, when I dispense every benefit to all alike?' (74). As she begins to enumerate these benefits, she is, as Sr. Thompson notes, presented as a natural concomitant of life, as a part of man’s estate not crying out for rebuke or remedy, and with no element of human choice in it. She is the begetter of life, since ‘the propagator of the human race is that part which is so foolish and absurd that it can’t be named without raising a

34. ‘cur non ego iure deorum omnium Alpha dicar habearque, quae vna omnibus largior omnia?’ (80/141-142).

35. Thompson, p.57.

36. Ibid., pp.57-58.
laugh' (76).\footnote{37} Similarly, matrimony owes its existence to Anoia, and all advantages throughout life are provided by Folly. What would life be without pleasure? That is, without some seasoning of folly? She then goes on to demonstrate the existence of folly in all ages of life, and concludes:

> But if mortals would henceforth have no truck with wisdom and spend all their time with me, there would be no more old age and they could be happy enjoying eternal youth.\footnote{38}

She contrasts this state with that of the philosophers:

> You must have seen those soured individuals who are so wrapped up in their philosophic studies or other serious, exacting affairs that they are old before they were ever young;\footnote{39}

It is at this point that we begin to see something of Folly's strategy, and to obtain some hint of what Erasmus is working towards: Moria constantly refers to the philosophers -- by whom she means the Stoics -- as upholders of a creed based on sterile reason. The life of reason can be made to sound superficially attractive, but it is, in their case, based on the suppression of all normal human instincts. Yet, as Moria wittily points out: 'In fact, if the philosopher ever wants to be a father it's me he has

\footnote{37} 'imo ea pars adeo stulta adeoque ridicula, vt nec nominari citra risum possit, humani generis est propagatrix' (80/158-159).

\footnote{38} 'Quod si mortales prorsus ab omni sapientiae commercio temperarent ac perpetuo mecum aetatem agerent, ne esset quidem vllum senium, verum perpetua iuuenta fruerentur felices' (84/236-239).

\footnote{39} 'An non videtis tetricos istos et vel philosophiae studiis vel seriis et arduis addictos negociis, plerunque priusquam plane iuuenes sint, iam consensuisset' (84/240-241).
to call on—yes, me’ (76). In other words, the Stoic’s life of reason is an unattainable, not to say undesirable, ideal, a species of inhumanity in the guise of wisdom.

So far we may follow her without difficulty. But what is it which she opposes to such a conception? It is, in fact, the so-called natural life, life lived without any semblance of reason at all. Moria carefully selects examples to illustrate her argument, but each is of a situation in which reason would be either unnatural—the baby, the senile old man—or superfluous—the lover, the mother in childbirth. They are by no means representative of the whole range of human activity. In arguing for an extreme point of view, she sets up an opposite and equally unreal extreme as justification for her position. That, of course, is a standard debating trick, but it ignores the possibility of a middle course, an estate of man in which reason is fully operative but kept in its proper place.

She expands upon this when she comes to set out explicitly the terms of her argument:

By Stoic definition wisdom means nothing else but being ruled by reason; and folly, by contrast, is being swayed by the dictates of the passions (87). Stoicism is invoked as the standard against which the benefits of folly must be measured. There are, in Moria’s logic, only these two alternatives: the desiccated life of reason or the pleasures of folly, a point upon which she now expands: Jupiter has given man more passion than reason, and has set up anger and lust as tyrants in opposition to reason:

40. ‘In summa me, me inquam, sapiens ille accersat oportet, si modo pater esse velit’ (80/154/155).

41. ‘Etenim cum Stoicis definit oribus nihil aliud sit sapientia quam duci ratione, contra stulticia affectuum arbitrio moueri’ (88/316–90/318).
How far reason can prevail against the combined forces of these two the common life of man makes quite clear. She does the only thing she can, and shouts herself hoarse repeating formulas of virtue, while the other two have only to bid her go hang herself and intensify their hatefule opposition until at last their ruler is exhausted, gives up and surrenders (87).

Moria is here appealing to that Menippean norm of 'the mean and sure estate', the life of the common man, and we can accept that, for the moment, Erasmus is content to use this as a standard by which he can attack arid philosophers. In the Enchiridion, however, Erasmus had utilised this opposition of reason and passion and come down in favour of reason. The norms of Menippean satire and of Erasmian piety are divergent, in this sense; yet, in another sense, they do converge in their joint opposition to abstract speculation. The attempt to fuse the two, then, ought to result in a creative tension between them.

For the moment, though, we pass over the fact that Moria, in preferring folly to reason, is opposing herself to a doctrine which we know Erasmus to have held, and note that the way in which her argument makes use of generalisations which are manifestly highly questionable is illustrated by her further comment that, on her advice, Nature had sweetened man's harsh nature by giving him woman:

For Plato's apparent doubt whether to place woman in the category of rational animal or brute beast is intended to point out the remarkable folly of her sex (88).

42. 'Aduersus has geminas copias quantum valeat ratio, communis hominum vita satis declarat, cum illa, quod vnum licet, vel uaque ad rauim reclamat et honesti dictat formulas, verum hi laqueum regi suo remittunt multoque odiosius obstrepunt, donec iam ipse quoque fessus utro cedit ac manus dat' (90/324-328).

43. 'Nam quod Plato dubitare videtur, virt in genere ponat mulierem, rationalium animantium an brutorum, nihil aliud voluit quam insignem eius sexus stulticiam indicare' (90/334-336).
Moria's view of the nature of woman is yet another example of her use of only that evidence which supports her case, since, as Miller points out, she has quoted from the *Timaeus* while ignoring a passage in the *Republic* where Plato insists on the essential equality of men and women (*Tim.* 76E; *Rep.* 452E-456A).

Having elaborated her basic position in this way, Moria now returns to her account of her operation among mankind. She allows women to tyrannise over men to give pleasure to the latter (90/346-359); she adds spice to drinking parties (91/360-92/376); she is the support of friendship, as evidenced by the way in which we ignore our friends' faults and build up illusions (92/377-391). Again, at this point, she contrasts her benefits with those of the Stoics: 'But among these Stoic philosopher-gods either no friendship forms at all, or else it is a sour and ungracious sort of relationship...' (91). She now turns to an account of the role of folly in war which has more of a satirical tone than anything she has yet said. Wise men are useless in war: 'The need is for stout and sturdy fellows with all the daring possible and the minimum of brain' (96). And again:

> Besides, it's the spongers, pimps, robbers, murderers, peasants, morons, debtors and that sort of scum of the earth who provide the glories of war, not the philosophers and their midnight oil (96).

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44. *Opera omnia* IV.3, p.91, n.11

45. 'cum interim inter sapientes istos deos aut omnino non coalescit amicitia aut tetrica quaedam et insuauis intercedit ...

46. 'crassis ac pinguibus opus est, quam quibus plurimum adsit audaciae, mentis quam minimum' (96/470-471).

47. 'alioque parasitias, lenonibus, latronibus, sicariis, agricolis, stupidia, obaeratis et huiusmodi mortalium fece res tam praeclaera geritur, non philosophis lucernariis' (96/475-477).
Why has the tone suddenly become more serious? Has Erasmus let Moria drop her mask? Since this account of war can be paralleled in other places in Erasmus, what is the implication of putting it into the mouth of a persona whom we have already come to distrust? Moria, of course, is exemplifying her opinion that great deeds cannot be performed without the aid of folly, but there has been a perceptible shift in tone from the comic to the satiric. However, with the next section, which modulates into another attack on the philosophers, we are back with Moria’s jesting banter. Perhaps Erasmus felt himself unable to write lightly of war under any circumstances, even to maintain the decorum of a fictional character, and this explanation, taken in conjunction with the second part of The Praise of Folly surely indicates that when his deepest feelings were engaged, the tone and idiom of Moria was not his natural mode of expression.

The new attack on the philosophers is aimed, not at the Stoics, but at representative classical philosophers such as Theophrastus, Cicero, Quintilian, Plato, Cato and Marcus Aurelius. The style and mode of argument are familiar: random examples are adduced to show that philosophers are useless for any practice in life. Drawing from Aristophanes’ Clouds, Moria says of Socrates:

For while he was philosophising about clouds and ideas, measuring a flea’s foot and marvelling at a midge’s humming, he learned nothing about the affairs of ordinary life (97).

Other philosophers have been equally impotent in practical affairs, and we note that Moria is utilising now familiar technique of selective use of examples — no mention is made of Solon, for example, and no mention is made of the more positive side of all those philosophers criticised. The result, too, is familiar: Moria defends her own claims against those of the

48. ‘Nam dum nubes et ideas philosophatur, dum pulicis pedes metititur, dum culicum vocem miratur, quae ad vitam communem attinent non didicit’ (98/485-486).
philosophers in a way which increases our scepticism about her credibility. And this is so in the generalised denunciation of wise men who are gloomy at dinner and morose at the theater; unskilled in everyday affairs, they are of no use to anybody.

Moria, of course, has a vested interest in attacking the philosophers, since she has to show that it is she, not they, who rules life. She continues this task by showing that she is responsible for the foundation of civilised society. Flattery was what brought men together, through the lyres of Amphion and Orpheus, while fables and childish stories have often been more effective than the speeches of philosophers (100/531ff.;100). No state has ever modelled itself on the precepts of Plato, Aristotle or Socrates. And we note that Moria is making full use of an empirical approach to these problems, an attitude that, ironically of course, amounts to claiming that whatever is, is right. Yet a more serious note creeps in when she says:

Then there are changes of first and second names, divine honours awarded to a nobody, official ceremonies designed to raise even the most criminal of tyrants to the level of the gods. All this is utterly foolish ... Yet from this source spring the deeds of valiant heroes to be lauded to the skies in the writings of eloquent men (102).

We can see, in fact, that as the speech develops, it becomes, through imperceptible shifts in tone, increasingly more serious, until it finally approaches the satirical list of followers. This becomes fully apparent when Moria begins to talk about prudence. From this point, the debate between Moria and the Stoics, always present, becomes fully explicit, and its presence once again raises the primary question of the relative validity of the claims of folly and reason to rule man’s life.

49. ‘Adde his nominum et cognominum adoptiones, adde divine honores homuncioni exhibitos, adde publicis ceremoniis in deos relates etiam sceleratissimos tyrannos. Stultissima sunt haec ... Atqui hoc fonte nata sunt fortium heroum facinora, quae tot eloquentium virorum litteris in coelum tolluntur (102/548-553).
Naturally, Moria assumes that her audience will find incredible her claim to the possession of prudence; nevertheless, she launches into a lengthy defence of it. Since prudence develops through experience, she asks:

\[
\text{does the honour of possessing a claim to it rightly belong to the wise man who attempts nothing, partly through his sense of propriety, partly through his natural timidity, or to the fool who isn't deterred from anything either by the propriety which he hasn't got or the dangers which he doesn't think about? (102).}
\]

Again she makes use of her factitious absolute division between the wise man and the fool, so that this central section of her argument --and she clearly considers it to be central -- is subject to the same strictures as have been applied to previous sections. She goes on to say that shame and fear are the two chief obstacles to obtaining knowledge of things, and that folly liberates us from these. She ignores, of course, the evident fact that one needs a certain amount of reason to make sense of experience.

Now she begins to talk of another sort of reason which comes from forming opinions on life, a type which is not really possessed by those who claim to possess it. In order to explain this, Moria introduces the figure of the Silenus -- which Erasmus had also used in *Enchiridion* (LB.V.29B) -- with its two opposite faces. The point of the comparison is this: that life, like a play, is an illusion, and to destroy the illusion is to destroy the whole play. The use of such illusions is a sort of pretence, 'but it is the only way to act out this farce'. Moria now introduces the figure of the wise man from the sky, who deliberately shatters a variety of human illusions; such a one

50. 'in vtrum magis competet eius cognominis honos, in sapientem, qui partim ob pudorem partim ob animi timiditatem nihil agreditur, an in stultum, quem neque pudor, quo vacat, neque periculum, quod non perpendit, ab vlla re deterret? (102/566-569).
would rightly be considered mad: 'Nothing is so foolish as mistimed wisdom, and nothing less sensible than misplaced sense' (105). 51 Man should adapt himself to things as they are, since it is a true sign of prudence not to want wisdom beyond one's mortal lot, to be willing to overlook things with the rest of the world, and to wear one's illusions with a good grace.

People say that this is really a sign of folly, and I'm not setting out to deny it -- so long as they'll admit on their side that this is the only way to play the comedy of life (105). 52

Much needs to be said about such an important section. It is clear that it looks both backwards and forwards, and thus stands at a pivotal point in the text. Up to this point, Moria's discourse has consisted largely of her defence of the role of illusion in the life of mankind. Opposed to this have been the views of the philosophers as recounted by Moria, and it is these views that culminate in the figure of the sky-man, who uses illusion to destroy illusion, stripping the masks off the actors to reveal what lies within.

The image of life-as-a-play comes, of course, from Lucian, and is the most important borrowing from that author in The Praise of Folly. Lucian's use of the metaphor was discussed in Chapter One, where it was argued that it has rather more complexity than is at first apparent. Certainly, it is more complex than allowed for by Leonard F. Dean in his discussion of the passage in The Praise of Folly. He argues that Lucian's use of irony 'rarely exceeds the limits set for that device by the classical rhetoricians', 53 -- it is primarily a forensic weapon.

51. 'Vt nihil est stultius praepostera sapientia, ita peruersa prudentia nihil imprudentius' (104/612-106/613).

52. 'At istud ipsum, inquiunt, stulticiae est. Haud equidem inficias iuerim, modo fateantur illi vicissim hoc esse vitae fabulam agere' (106/617-619).

53. Dean, p.53.
In contrast, the irony of Erasmus in the passage under discussion is like the irony derived from dramatic literature; it is the complex irony of expressing simultaneously several points of view, and 'the meaning of the irony ... is not that of any one point of view ... but of all of them interacting upon each other'.

Certainly, this stands as a fine description of the working of complex irony, but that it is really an account of the particular functioning of The Praise of Folly is open to doubt. In particular, the potential complexity of the Lucianic metaphor is not allowed full development, since Erasmus will cut through it with his idealism in the final section. And this idealism is itself only an extension of the insistent intrusion upon Moria's voice of the voice of reason, as represented, first by various anonymous philosophers, and now, by these two crucial metaphors. The full elaboration of the metaphor of life-as-a-play in a complex irony would have to wait for More's Utopia.

What Erasmus does with the image is characteristic of his use of Lucian in general. That is, he strips away the ironic complexity, and reads a Lucianic text as simple moralising. We must thus qualify the view expounded by Walter Kaiser, who describes Moria's technique up to this point as a transvaluation of values. To each Stoic virtue, he says, such as restraint and reason, she counterposes an Epicurean opposite. 'Erasmus pretends to espouse the outrageous Epicurean licenses in order to show the fallacy of their Stoic restraints. He does so, not to advocate without qualification the former, but rather to redefine the latter'.

In this way, the emblem of the Silenus is emblematic of the whole speech -- while seemingly trifling, it conceals divine wisdom. Further, true prudence consists in not noticing the contradictions in human affairs.

54. Ibid., p.54.
56. Ibid., p.60.
And Moria herself is a sort of Silenus. 'In a certain sense, it is perverse not to accommodate oneself to things as they are; in another sense, it is folly to accept the world as it is'.

Values are transmuted by praising their opposites. Similarly, the value of wine and self-love are both based on an understanding and acceptance of the frailties and cares of human existence. Finally, Moria's praise of passion, far from being merely the counsel of a fool, seems too deeply-felt to be rejected in those terms. The value of passion and reason both represent facets of Erasmus' thought, with that in The Praise of Folly qualifying that in Enchiridion.

Whether The Praise of Folly does qualify Enchiridion in this way is open to doubt. In fact, at this point Moria is making a plea for the value of illusion in man's life, a plea which needs to be compared with what Erasmus had to say about illusion in the Enchiridion. Moria begins by praising her benevolent art of deception, and we find this illuminated by the statement in Enchiridion that 'Yet in this matter the great majority of mankind is often deceived, for the world, like some deceitful magician, captivates their minds with seductive blandishments'.

We are told also that people live in false security, closing their minds to reality (29/1A). Here we find an unequivocal statement that helps us place in perspective the opening section of The Praise of Folly. Clearly, it could not have been Erasmus' intention to accept Moria's valuation of these 'harmless follies'. We now have an indication as to why Erasmus so consistently undermined Moria's voice in this section: her voice is that of the 'deceitful magician' of Enchiridion, praising the blandishments of the world. It is true enough that if The Praise of Folly were a consistent, thoroughgoing piece of complex irony,

57. Ibid., p.60.

then it would function in the way Kaiser suggests. But it is not consistent precisely because Erasmus was unable to accept the logic of complex irony, abandoning it first for satire, then for moral exhortation identical with *Enchiridion* in both tone and content.

The digression on the sky-man completed, Moria moves on to her next point, introduced with some solemnity:

> Come, then, for a while, daughters of Jove, while I show that no one can approach that perfect wisdom which the wise call the citadel of bliss unless Folly shows the way (105).

The emotions belong to folly, reason to the wise man:

> But in fact these emotions not only act as guides to those hastening towards the haven of wisdom, but also wherever virtue is put into practice they are always present to act like spurs and goads as incentives towards success (106).

And to strip the wise man of all emotions leaves only a marble statue of a man, dull and devoid of all human feeling. But the implied alternative is a man devoid of reason, and again we feel the partial truth of what she says as well as the inadequacy of her own position.

This attack on the Stoic wise man is elaborated in the following passage with Moria asking rhetorically:

> Who wouldn’t flee in terror from a man like that as a monstrous apparition, deaf as he is to all

59. 'Adeste igitur paulisper, Iouis filiae, dum ostendo nec ad egregiam illam sapientiam ac felicitatis, vt ipsi vocant, arcem, aditum esse cuquam nisi stulticia duce' (106/622-624).

60. 'Verum affectus isti non solum paedagogorum vice funguntur ad sapientiae portum properantibus, verumetiam in omni virtutis functione ceu calcaria stimulique quidam adesse solent, velut ad bene agendum exhortatores' (106/628-630).
natural feelings and no more moved by love or pity or any emotions ... (106).

This, she says, is the type of the wise man; most people would prefer someone from the ordinary run of fools, who is congenial and who thinks nothing human to be alien to himself. Having ended this attack on a rhetorical high note, she professes to be bored with the wise man and moves on to 'more profitable themes' (107).

She moves, in fact, to the characteristically Lucianic 'episcopic' point of view, considering the life of man from 'a great height', and seeing all its disasters. The passage serves two functions. It helps to generalise the entire argument up to this point, allowing Moria to claim that those whom weariness of life drove to suicide were all connected with wisdom, while she brings help to men in their miseries. In spite of having no evident reason for living, they are still pleased with life, and eager to use any number of illusory practices to render it more pleasant.

All this raises a general laugh for what it is -- absolute foolishness; but meanwhile they're pleased with themselves, lead a life of supreme delight suffused with sweet fantasy, and owe all their happiness to me (109-110).

She characteristically sets up the false, but rhetorically effective, opposites of illusion or suicide in this summation of the first section of her argument. But while she dwells on harmless illusions, Erasmus has also had her prepare us for the bitingly satirical account of harmful illusions by introducing

61. 'Quis enim non istiusmodi hominem ceu portentum ac spectrum fugitet horreatque, qui ad omnes naturae sensus obsurduerit, qui nullis sit affectibus, nec amore nec misericordia magis commoueatur ...' (106/637-640).

62. 'Ridentur haec ab omnibus, tanquam (vti sunt) stultissima, at ipsae sibi placent, et in summis interim versantur deliciis, totasque sese melle perungunt, meo videlicet beneficio felices' (108/694-110/697).
such items as poverty, imprisonment, slander, dishonour, torture, treachery, betrayal, insult, litigation and fraud (108). We are being made aware that Moria is really putting the best possible gloss on a case that is far more serious than she is prepared to admit -- just how serious becomes apparent when she eventually drops her mask completely.

Again she attacks the philosophers, who protest that it is wretched to cling to folly. Nor is understanding of the sciences any compensation for what nature has denied to men. They are an obstacle to happiness, and are the product of evil spirits. They were not needed in the Golden Age, when people were guided solely by natural instinct, with no need of grammar, or dialectic, or rhetoric, or astronomy. Her account of the origin of the sciences is, of course, greatly oversimplified, and as Levi notes, her use of the myth of the Golden Age glosses over the problem of original sin. In this she is very close to Erasmian humanism, although in the context of her speech it appears as just one more of her logical inadequacies. She now asserts that the happiest of living creatures are those who are taught by no master save nature, and quotes Lucian's The Dream or The Cock to prove her point.

As the argument develops, we can see Erasmus is steering it towards a point where he can have Moria drop her mask and adopt a directly satirical tone. After another summation of her case, she enters onto her final, culminating illustration: that the happiest people are those popularly called fools. They have no fear of death; they do not suffer pangs of conscience; they are not terrified by tales of the dead, and are not tortured by dread of impending disaster or the hope of future bliss. They are untroubled by the thousand cares to which our life is subject (117). Many more details are adduced to make the same point -- a characteristic rhetorical overkill -- and, inevitably, the fool

63. p.113, n.61.

64. 'In summa non dilacerantur milibus curarum quibus haec vita obnoxia est' (114/803-804).
is contrasted with the wise man. The latter has wasted boyhood and youth in acquiring learning, and tastes no pleasure in life; he is, in fact, a thoroughly unpleasant and objectionable character.

The Stoics, of course, object to Moria’s praise of insanity, and must once more be demolished in argument. There are, it appears, and as Plato confirms, two forms of insanity. One is sent from hell by vengeful furies,

whenever they let lose their snakes and assail the hearts of men with lust for war, insatiable thirst for gold, the disgrace of forbidden love, parricide, incest, sacrilege, or some other sort of evil, or when they pursue the guilty, conscience-stricken soul with their avenging spirits and flaming brands of terror (121).

The other type is highly desirable and comes from Moria:

It occurs whenever some happy mental aberration frees the soul from its anxious cares and at the same time restores it by the addition of manifold delights (121).

This distinction marks the shift in the argument from the complexities of the first section to the satirical catalogue of Moria’s followers. The folly of illusion is the pleasant sort of madness. The folly that she will now castigate strenuously is the hell-sent form of madness. The voice now adopted by folly is that of the sky-man whom she had earlier condemned. Instead of defending the role of illusion in human life, she proceeds

65. ‘... quoties immissis anguibus vel ardorem belli vel inexplebilem auri sitim vel dedecorum ac nefarium amorem vel parricidium, incestum, sacrilegium aut aliam id genus pestem aliquam in pectora mortaliim inuehunt, siue cum nocentem et conscium animum furiis ac terriculorum facibus agunt’ (116/874-118/877).

66. ‘Id accidit quoties iucundus quidam mentis error simul et anxiis illis curis animum liberat et multiluga voluptate delibutum reddit’ (118/879-880).
ruthlessly to strip away all illusions and to reveal the cancer at the heart of society.

How has this transformation been produced? It has been variously described by critics. Walter Kaiser demonstrates that, as we go on in The Praise of Folly, the 'lambent ironies and laughing praise' modulate into tones of high seriousness and moral purpose. For Wayne Rebhorn, folly has a new meaning in each section, and the meaning of the work does not reside in any one section but in 'a dialectical and dramatic unity generated by shifts in attitude and meaning'. In a similar vein, Sr. Geraldine Thompson shows how the negative values of one section become the positive values of the next, so that the structure of the work is a type of ascending dialectic.

Moria's transformation, however, can also be explained in terms of Erasmus' ambivalent attitude to his Lucianic prototype. That complex irony which leaves one in a state of uncertainty did not finally satisfy Erasmus; he felt the need to make a more definite statement, whether by the negative method of satire or the positive method used in the final section. Nor is Moria's transformation entirely unexpected. As a woman, her essential character is mutability, which might help explain her change of stance. But the real explanation lies deeper than this. The structure of the argument in the first section was based upon her setting up of false, rhetorically-inspired antinomies between nature and reason, the wise man and the fool. This helped to sustain a case that was logically weak, based as it was upon a denial of the importance of reason.

But it did more than this. It set up an implied alternative to Moria's point of view. The essence of Moria's case was that she fostered harmless illusions that made life more bearable. Yet at several points in her argument, Erasmus made us aware that

68. Rebhorn, p.472.
69. Thompson, p.72.
there were in human life not merely these harmless, even necessary, illusions, but real vices and evils of whose existence Moria can give no adequate account. Paradoxically, as she becomes bolder in her assertions, linking folly to both wisdom and madness, so the alternative voice also becomes louder, protesting the inadequacy of her views, until, finally, the definition of the two types of madness shows how superficial her argument really is. At this point, Erasmus is able to pass quite naturally from folly as illusion and a pleasant form of madness to folly as vice and evil and a harmful madness. Thus begins the catalogue of followers. The volte-face is achieved only at the expense of a break in dramatic consistency. Nevertheless, Erasmus is able partially to conceal the extent of his violation of decorum and move away from the norms of complex irony by pointing out that mutability is a part of Moria’s character. Formal consistency is maintained but the point-of-view of the work has altered substantially.

The list of those who are subject to harmful illusions rises in crescendo, beginning with what may be termed personal vices, and culminating in the attack on the vices of the church. As Miller points out, this section of the book relies heavily on such medieval literary conventions as the literature of complaint and the satire of estates. This technique relies heavily on a sense of hierarchical cohesiveness, the obverse of which is a society in a state of collapse, because warring classes have failed to do their duty. In this section, says Miller, Erasmus’ voice ‘does not entirely replace Folly’s, but blends with it, so that Erasmus’ own intellectual and social aims can be apprehended more directly’. Many of the satirical thrusts in this section have obvious parallels in such works as Adagia and The Colloquies.


71. Ibid., p.507.
The collective force of this sustained attack has a definite literary function, noted by Sylvester: "by descending into the depths of moral corruption she has, as it were, created a demand for some positive vision which, while restoring the happiness of her opening movement, will nevertheless transpose her elation to a new and transcendent level". It has, too, another function, also preparatory for the final section: "This long catalogue of Folly's followers compels her auditors to realise that the world cannot be redeemed by the folly that destroys it, and that a goddess who uncovers the very tragedies she had promised to hide hardly merits their trust or their faith". This change in Moria's stance has been thus described by Sr. Thompson: she 'undergoes a kind of conversion as the oration proceeds, first moral and then spiritual, and, as she does so, her hold on the original line of inverted praise becomes tenuous'.

The first of the followers are those 'who care for nothing but hunting wild game' (118/915; 122). The ritual of the hunt is described in detail and with mock solemnity, until Moria concludes that the hunters, while thinking they live the life of a king, actually degenerate into beasts. This strikes a note common to all pursuits and practices described in this satirical section, that the following of corrupt and degraded practices necessarily entails a measure of personal corruption for those involved, and that such practices can be carried on only if sustained by illusion, that is, folly. Hence the connection with the first section is clear: the activities of human life would be insupportable if Moria did not cover them with a veil of illusion. The difference is equally clear: the activities described in the second section are clearly harmful, both to the individual and to society, in a way that those described in the first section are not.

73. Rebhorn, p. 470
74. Thompson, p. 68.
An insatiable passion for building is the next species of folly, followed by the search for the elusive fifth essence. In the pursuit of self-delusion, men spend every penny they possess, and finally blame the shortness of life for their failure to achieve their objective. The thrust of the satire is the same as in the two Colloquies Alchemy and Pychologica, showing at the outset of this section the continuity of Erasmus’ concerns. The gamblers, similarly, waste all their resources in the hope of quick gain, and end by turning to cheating.

Erasmus turns next to the subject of superstition, one which was a recurrent concern for him, not only because it was a species of folly, but because it detracted from true religion. He attacks here specifically those who delight in hearing or telling fabulous lies (120/953-954;125). They listen the more willingly to tales that are furthest from the truth — and, by the way, such things are profitable to preachers and demagogues. The note by Listrius draws attention to More’s translation of Lucian’s The Lover of Lies, and his introductory comments on it. Striking a defensive note, he points out that Moria does not condemn miracles, ‘but the vanity of those who pursue their own gain with feigned wonders, and the folly of those who are more moved by such inventions than by sacred stories’.75 The parallel with what More had written is obvious, as is the connection both with such colloquies as Exorcism. The characteristic obliquity of the Lucianic dialogue is lacking, and, as was the case with Adagia and The Colloquies, Erasmus’ satire is more contemporary, more direct, more biting.

The religious theme is continued in the next attack on those who place too much belief in images of saints, and those who ‘enjoy deluding themselves with imaginary pardons for their sins’ (122/970-124/971;127) and those who rely on prayers invented by some impostor for his own gain. Listrius is at pains to point out

75. ‘... sed illorum vanitatem, qui fictis miraculis quaestui suo consulunt, et eorum stulticiam, qui talibus figmentis magis captuntur quam sacris historiis’ (120/954, note). (My translation).
that Erasmus is mocking, not real indulgences, but, again, those invented for gain by impostors (123/970, note). He goes on to point out that the efficacy of indulgences is guaranteed because it was promised by Christ, not by men, and the practice was, in any case, of comparatively recent date (123/970, note). The elaborateness of Listrius' notes at this point is surely an indication not only that Erasmus was seeking to defend himself against the possible charge of heresy, but that he considered the content of this part of The Praise of Folly important enough to warrant full explication, such as had not been provided in the first section.

To drive the point home, he uses the example of those who, by giving coins, hope to expiate a life of sin (124/979-981;128). Similar superstitions are the belief that the repetition of seven short verse of the Psalms ensures heavenly bliss; the cultivation of district saints, each with peculiar powers; the cult of the Virgin Mary — a comment made, as Listrius notes, because 'It is wonderful how the mob of men seeks everything from her, as if Christ were less approachable by prayer than Mary, or less powerful'. 76

The origins of The Praise of Folly in irony are remembered when Moria asks:

But what do men seek from these saints except what belongs to folly? Amongst all the votive offerings you see covering the walls of certain churches right up to the very roof, have you ever seen one put up for an escape from folly 97 for the slightest gain in wisdom? (129).

76. 'Mirum est autem quam vulgus hominum ab hac omnia petat, perinde quasi Christus aut minus sit exorabilis quam Maria, sit minus possit' (124/996, note). (My translation).

77. 'Verum ab his diuis quid tandem petunt homines nisi quod ad stulticiam attinet? Agedum inter tot anathemata, quibus templorum quorundam parioes omnes ac testudinem ipsam refertam conspicitis, vidistisne quum qui stulticiam effugerit, qui vel pilo sit factus sapientior?' (124/997-126-1000).
Such offerings record thanks given for escape from various physical calamities; none give thanks for being rid of folly. In summing up her attack on religious follies, Moria says:

The ordinary life of Christians everywhere abounds in these varieties of silliness, and they are readily permitted and encouraged by priests who are not unaware of the profit to be made thereby. She then repeats, in a religious context, the image of the wise man: if, he says, change of mind accompanies outward signs of penitence, sins will be redeemed. But 'if ... your wise man starts blurting out these uncomfortable truths, you can see how he'll soon destroy the world's peace of mind and plunge it into confusion. The image this time occurs in a context of activity of which we are clearly meant to disapprove, so that its use here raises interesting questions. Is this wise man identical with the one met earlier -- at least in spirit if not in person? If so, are we meant to approve the attitude of this one and disapprove of the other? Or does the fact that, on his second appearance, he is obviously voicing sentiments with which we are supposed to agree mean that he was also doing this on his first appearance? This latter reading is consistent with our reading of Moria's volte-face in attitude as a consequence of Erasmus' fictional strategy.

She now passes to the question of knowledge. It is sad not to be deceived, since man's happiness depends not on facts, but on opinions.

For human affairs are so complex and obscure that nothing can be known of them for certain ...

78. 'Vsquead omnis omnium Christianorum vita istiusmodi delirationibus vndique scatet, quas ipsas tamen sacrifici; non grauatim et admittunt et alunt, non ignari quantum hinc lucelli soleat accrescere' (126/14-16).

79. '... id genus alia si sapiens ille obganniat, vide a quanta felicitate repente mortalium animos in quem tumultum retraxerit' (126/20-22).
Alternatively, if anything can be known, more often than not it is something which interferes with the pleasure of life (135).

It is quite in character for Moria to adopt a sceptical approach to the problem of knowledge; indeed, her whole case depends upon it. She defends life as it is, asserting that attempts by philosophers and wise men to understand and interpret it lead only to unhappiness and confusion. She is not now speaking in the voice of Erasmus, since the drive underlying the final section is based on the possibility of definite knowledge being attainable about human affairs. Indeed, the assumption underlying the philosophia Christi is that it is possible to obtain certain knowledge about how one should order one's life and conduct one's affairs. It is a point of view quite in accord with the opinions of the author of Enchiridion.

Moria goes on to say that 'man's mind is so formed that it is far more susceptible to falsehood than to truth' (130/100-101;135). For example -- and we note that the examples given have quite a different effect from those given in similar arguments in the first section -- church-goers yawn during a serious sermon, but take notice of preachers ranting about old wives' tales; legendary saints receive far more attention than Peter and Paul and even Christ himself (130/106-109;135-136). These satirical asides serve to remind us that the argument is taking quite a different turn from that of the first section, where folly was largely harmless. Here, it is harmful, vicious and sinful. So we suspect that Erasmus is not in agreement with Moria's argument that even unimportant facts take trouble to acquire, whereas opinions are easily formed and even more conducive to happiness (130/110-113;136).

The examples adduced in support of this argument are wholly trivial, and she clinches this section of the argument by

80. ‘Nam rerum humanarum tanta est obscuritas variestasque, vt nihil dilucide sciri possit, ... Aut si quid sciri potest, id non raro efficit etiam vitae iucunditati’ (130/98-101).
claiming that between those who stay in Plato's cave and marvel at the shadows, and the philosophers who see the real thing, there is no difference: both are happy in their way, and the fools are actually better off, since their happiness costs them so little (132/127-132;137). This image is used again in the closing pages of the work with quite different intent. In the later context (190/176-181;202-203), it is the man who leaves the cave who is closer to the truth. As Clarence H. Miller observes, the change in attitude pinpoints 'how the irony of the first part is both like and unlike the irony of the third part'. The introduction of this Platonic myth again helps prepare us for the Platonism of the final section, where the context of the reference to the myth of the cave makes it clear that Erasmus was not in agreement with the interpretation given here by Moria. Indeed, it seems that the reversion to the mode of ironic praise is intended to show its inadequacy for a full conception of human life. This would account for the discrepancy in the qualities of the activities so praised. It also serves as a preparation for the final sustained outpouring of Erasmian eloquence, which includes both the catalogue of followers, and the praise of Christian foolishness. After being lulled so deceptively by a voice which had earlier had at least a superficial attractiveness, we are devastated to see the consequences of Moria's point of view.

Moria now comes to the real turning-point of the argument:

In case anyone thinks I'm presuming too far and not speaking the truth, let's take a brief look at the way men live, and it will then become clear how much they owe me and how much they appreciate me, whether great men or humble (140-141).


82. Below, p.147.

83. 'Atqui si cui videor haec audacius quam verius dicere,
She promises to pick out outstanding examples of her admirers from which to judge the rest, and claims:

It's hardly believable how much laughter, sport and fun you poor mortals can provide the gods every day. ... Heavens, what a farce it is, and what a motley crowd of fools! (141).

The section that follows is avowedly Lucianic in its satirically episcopic overview of the foolish activities of mankind, and in keeping with the movement of the work as a whole, moves from mere foolishness to actual viciousness, from hopeless love, theatrical mourning and vain search for profits, to the corrupt meanness of merchants, the sycophancy of friars, to useless pilgrimages, a topic familiar from the Colloquies. The whole is summed by an explicit reference to Lucian's Icaromenippus.

To sum up, if you could look down from the moon, as Menippus once did, on the countless hordes of mortals, you'd think you saw a swarm of flies or gnats quarrelling amongst themselves, fighting, plotting, stealing, playing, making love, being born, growing old and dying. It's hard to believe how much trouble and tragedy this tiny little creature can stir up, shortlived as he is, for sometimes a brief war or an outbreak of plague can carry off and destroy many thousands at once (143).

agedum paulisper ipsas hominum vitas inspiciamus, quo palam fiat, et quantum mihi debeant et quanti me faciant maximi pariter ac minimi' (134/185–187).

84. 'Quin etiam incredibile sit dictu, quos risus, quos ludos, quas delitias homunculi quotidie praebent superis ... Deum immortalem, quod theatrum est illud, quam varius stultorum tumultus!' (134/193–136/200).

85. 'In summa si mortalium innumerabiles tumultus e luna, quemadmodum Menippus olim, despicias, putes te muscarum aut culicum videre turbam inter se rixantium, bellantium, insidiantium, rapientium, ludentium, nascentium, cadentium, mortientium. Neque satis credi potest, quos motus, quas tragoedias ciat
The first of the classes surveyed is the schoolmasters, who would be the most wretched of mankind if Moria did not mitigate the hardships of their profession by a pleasant kind of madness (138/242-244; 144). Their schools are akin to torture chambers, full of stench and filth, yet they gain a compensatory satisfaction by thrashing their pupils; in short, their pitiful servitude seems like sovereignty (138/253-254; 144). Their belief in their own learning makes them even happier, so that they think themselves greater than the Roman grammarians Palaemon and Donatus. They are given to pedantic searches for archaic words, and turn out feeble verses. They mutually complement one another. The tedious production of pedantic grammars is either madness or folly. This attack on the grammarians was one of the most frequent themes of the humanists, and was taken up in detail in More’s Letter to Dorp, written in defense of The Praise of Folly.

Poets are dealt with briefly as people ‘whose sole interest lies in delighting the ears of the foolish with pure nonsense and silly tales’ (147). Orators come next, as they belong not, as they imagine, to philosophy, but to folly; they have written treatises on joking. Those who court immortal fame by writing books are also in folly’s camp; even the most learned, painstaking writers -- and here Erasmus is surely making a personal reference -- wreck their health and suffer all manner of ills, all for the sake of the approval of other scholars. Those writers who explicitly belong to Moria are far happier. They lose no sleep and write whatever takes their fancy -- the more trivial the piece, the wider the audience. The plagiarists are equally fortunate in gaining satisfaction while doing little to deserve it.

The classes so far mentioned -- with the exception of the schoolmasters -- have been relatively harmless, but with the introduction of the lawyers, the satire begins to darken tantulum animalculum tamque mox periturum. Nam aliquoties vel levis belli seu pestilentiae procella multa simul milia rapit ac dissipat’ (138/231-237).

86 ‘... quorum omne studium non alio pertinet quam ad demulcendas stultorum aures, idque meris nugamentis ac ridiculis fabulis’ (140/289-291).
appreciably. They are 'the most self-satisfied class of people' (150), piling up opinions and glosses to make their profession seem difficult. Like the sophists, they are garrulous and quarrelsome. Next come the philosophers, 'who insist that they alone have wisdom and that all other mortals are but fleeting shadows' (151). In their madness, they turn to astrology and meteorology, 'as if they'd access to the secrets of Nature, architect of the universe, or had come straight to us from the council of the gods' (151). However, their mutual quarrels show their total lack of certainty.

Ignorant of themselves and the things nearest to them, they still boast that they can see ideas, universals, separate forms, prime matters, quiddities, ecceities (152). This attack is similar to that found in such Lucianic works as Menippus and Icaromenippus, and such a sceptical attitude to claims about the possibility of attaining certain knowledge is part of the ideological underpinning of Menippean satire. Yet it is an attitude that Erasmus found uncongenial, possibly even dangerous, and which he dropped when he came to the final section. We can see here quite clearly that, while he was attracted to the Menippean satirist's view of the world, and found in that genre a useful weapon for lashing vice, he yet shied away from its ultimate implication. The pietist of the Enchiridion could not be happy with an acceptance of the impossibility of certain knowledge.

The philosophers are followed by the theologians, and the attack now moves to the plane of religious perversions, a topic familiar from the Colloquies, and which takes us, step by step,

87. '... qui se soles sapere praedicant, reliquos omnes mortales vmbras volitare' (144/361-362).

88. '... quasi naturae rerum architectrici fuerint a secretis quasiue e deorum consilio nobis aduenerint!' (144/366-367).

89. '... tamen ideas, universalia, formas separatas, primas materias, quidditates, ecceitates, formalitates, instantia videre se praedicant' (144/372-373).
closer to the Erasmian doctrine of the *philosophia Christi* in the final section. Moria, of course, is aware that they respond by attacking her as a heretic (146/384;153), although they are heavily in her debt for their self-love, which enables them to look on the rest of mankind with pity (146/388-390;153). They are fortified by the weapons of scholasticism, and interpret hidden mysteries to suit themselves (146/395;154). They discuss absurd questions such as the exact moment of divine generation. Erasmus probably has his tongue in his cheek at this point, since some of the questions are of genuine religious importance. The general point, however, is that the theologians are more interested in abstruse speculation than in cultivating religious piety, a message that is at the very heart of evangelical humanism. Gospel sanction for Erasmus’ view is quoted by Listrius, who refers to several places in *St.Paul* (147/400, note).

We next come to one of the extensive passages added in the edition of 1514, extending from 148/407 to 154/484 (156-161). Its length indicates that it was no mere afterthought, and the occurrences of other extensive additions in this part of the work surely shows that Erasmus considered that what he was saying here was of more than usual importance. In the present section, Moria says that the theologians are over-fond of subtle paradoxes; and what is worse, ‘These subtle refinements of subtleties are made still more subtle by all the different lines of scholastic argument ...’ (156). Erasmus now explicitly contrasts these endeavours with those of the Apostles, who would need the help of another holy spirit in order to dispute with them. Paul’s famous definition of faith is unscholastic (150/425;157); the Apostles consecrated the eucharist without being aware of subtle disputes as to its true nature; they baptised without teaching the four causes of baptism; they taught grace without distinguishing between actual and sanctifying grace; and so on. The learned Paul

90. *Opera omnia* IV.3, p.31.

91. ‘Iam hab subtilissimas subtilitates subtilliores etiam reddunt tot scholasticorum viae ...’ (148/416-417).
would not have so often condemned 'logomachiae' had he been versed in these subtleties.

Nor are theologians averse to 'interpreting' the Scriptures if they are not written correctly. The Apostles refuted pagan philosophers and the Jews by their way of life and their miracles rather than by syllogisms (154/464;160) -- and dialectic is proof against heathens, who would either fail to understand it, understand and scorn it, or refute it. Erasmus now draws back a little to emphasise that some theologians regard these minutiae as frivolous or even sacrilegious; those whom he criticises are too busy even to look at the Gospel, and fondly believe that 'they support the entire Church on the props of their syllogisms and without them it would collapse' (161/162). 92 They fashion and re-fashion the scriptures at will, demand recantation of anything which disagrees with their propositions, and think themselves nearest to the gods when they are addressed as 'our masters'.

With this lengthy and biting attack on the theologians, the mask has been completely dropped. Moria makes no pretence to speak ironically, and her voice merges completely with that of Erasmus. The sweeping condemnation of the theologians and other social orders serves to show both the limitations of Moria's earlier point of view, and to prepare us for Erasmus' alternative view. She now goes on to attack those

who are popularly called "Religious" or "Monks". Both names are false, since most of them are a long way removed from religion, and wherever you go these so-called solitaries are the people you're likely to meet (164). 93

92. 'sese universam ecclesiam, alioqui ruituram, non aliter syllogismorum fulcire tibicinibus' (154/488-489).

93. '... qui se vulgo religiosos ac monachos appellant, vtroque falsissimo cognomine, cum et bona pars istorum longissime absit a religione, et nulli magis omnibus locis sint obuii' (158/524-526).
In spite of being loathed, they are self-satisfied. They are illiterate, repeat psalms by rote, make a living out of squalour and beggary, and do everything according to rule so as to feel superior to one another. They are interested, not in being like Christ, but in being unlike one another (160/550-552; 165). A great deal of their happiness depends on their name. They rely too much on ceremonies and man-made traditions, unaware that Christ enforces only the rule of charity.

Their sermons also come in for sustained attack. They observe the traditional rules of rhetoric, using invocations borrowed from the poets, absurd exordia -- the better for being wholly unconnected with the subject -- and an exposition that is merely a hasty interpretation of a Gospel passage, an aside, so to speak. They then propound some absurd theological question, supported by scholastic rubbish, and end by interpreting some anecdote allegorically, tropologically, and anagogically. Moria concludes:

Now I think you must see how deeply this section of mankind is in my debt, when their petty ceremonies and silly absurdities and the noise they make in the world enables them to tyrannise over their fellow men, each one a Paul or an Antony in his own eyes (173). 94

Moria's next target is kings and their courtiers. If one considered the burdens of sovereignty, no-one would want to exercise it. One must think only of public, not personal affairs, and one must not deviate from the laws one has promulgated. All look to the ruler, whose fall from honesty corrupts his entire people; he has many seductions to lead him from the path of virtue, and must continually fear plots against him. All this should rob the prince of all his pleasure, but with Moria's help,

94. 'Videtis, opinor, quantopere mihi debet hoc hominum genus, qui cum ceremoniolis et nugis deridiculis clamoribusque tyrannidem quandam inter mortales exerceant, Paulos atque Antonios sese credunt' (168/670-672).
they leave these concerns to the gods (168/697;168). They are concerned only with the soft life, listen only to flatterers, devote themselves to hunting, sell magistracies at a profit, devise new methods of taxation -- all under suitable pretexts so as to preserve a facade of justice. They are ignorant of the law, an enemy to their people's advantage while intent on their own convenience, haters of learning, freedom and truth -- yet their insignia of office symbolise all the virtues.

As for the courtiers, they are mostly obsequious, servile, stupid and worthless, but wish to appear foremost in everything. They know how to flatter the kings; they sleep till midday, hear a quick mass from a hired priest, spend the day eating, gaming, gambling and drinking. The practices of princes have been adopted by popes, cardinals and bishops -- they know nothing of the meaning of their vestments or insignia of office; they look after themselves, delegating the care of their flock to others:

They don't even remember that the name Bishop, which means "overseer", indicates work, care and concern. Yet when it comes to netting their revenues into the bag they can play the overseer well enough -- no 'careless look-out' there (177). 95

The cardinals are supposed to follow the apostles, and if they asked themselves about the discrepancy between the symbols of their office and their worldly wealth and power, they would either renounce their worldly ambitions, or lead a life akin to the original apostles (172/765-767;178).

Similarly, the popes would be utterly cast down if they attempted to imitate the life of Christ. One grain of the salt Christ spoke would rid them of all their pomp and pleasures, replacing them with vigils, fasting, prayers, studies, and other hardships. As it is now, they leave all their work to Peter and

95. 'Neque vel nominis sui recordantur, quid sonet episcopi vocabulum, nempe laborem, curam, solicitudinem, verum in irretiendis pecuniis plane episcopos agunt, οὐδ' ἡλαοσκοινή' (170/750-172/752).
Paul, so as to save their time for pleasure. No class of men has fewer cares, since they believe they do enough for Christ by overseeing rituals and ceremonies; miracles and hard work are out of date, as is teaching and interpreting scripture and praying. They are fond of issuing anathemas and excommunications -- especially against those who seek to nibble away at Peter's patrimony! They will fight to preserve their wealth and power, while believing they are defending the Church -- in fact, they are enemies of Christ, fettering him with noxious ways of life. They manage Church affairs by the sword. In spite of the deadly madness of war, they devote themselves to this alone, having their sycophants call it zeal, piety and valour (172/768ff.; 178-181).

Their example, of course, is followed by martial priests and bishops, who are concerned about their worldly rights and privileges, while paying only perfunctory attention to their religious duties. The different Church orders, from the pontiff downwards, pass their burden down to the next rank, making a mockery of their vows. And at this point, Moria stops herself:

But it's not my purpose here to go into details of the lives of pontiff or priest. I don't want to look as though I'm writing satire when I should be delivering a eulogy, nor anyone to think that in praising bad princes I mean to censurate good ones. I touched briefly on these matters only to make it clear that no mortal can live happily unless he is initiated in my rites and is sure of my favours (183).

In a formal sense, she realises that this indictment of the various social orders has been a breach of decorum, and she must now revert to the ironical praise of folly. But it had never been

96. 'Verum non est huius instituti pontificum ac sacerdotum vitam excutere, ne cui videar satyram texere, non encomium recitare neu quis existimet bonos principes a me taxari, dum malos laudo. Sed haec ideo paucis attigi, quo palam fieret nullum esse mortalem qui suauiter viuere possit, nisi meis initiius sit sacrirs meque propiciam habeat' (176/856-860).
Erasmus' purpose to maintain the consistency of his persona. Indeed, the chief advantage in utilising Folly as a persona was her mutability -- it was relatively easy for Erasmus, under this mask, to move from one section of his work to another. And now, having shown why Moria's original position was so inadequate, and having destroyed false religious ideas and practices, Erasmus can lift his argument to a new plane and move to the praise of Christian folly.

Moria begins by making familiar points. Fortune favours the injudicious and venturesome, while wisdom makes men apprehensive; the wise are poor, the foolish wealthy and in charge of affairs of state. This brief section forms a bridge to the main argument, in which Moria promises to show that many great authors have mentioned her in their works (178/888-889;185). She begins in a light-hearted tone, citing popular proverbs, Horace, Homer and Cicero to show the existence and blessings of folly, and then proceeds to invoke Christian authorities (178/904-906;186-187). After calling for aid on the Muses and the spirit of Scotus, she begins her demonstration. Ecclesiastes wrote 'the number of fools is infinite', thus embracing all mankind. She goes on to cite, in her support, Jeremiah, Ecclesiasticus, Augustine, Matthew, Solomon -- all to establish the pervasive existence of folly among mankind. She then turns to a sophistic proof of her thesis: it is better to hide away things that are rare and valuable than those which are common and cheap (178/952-953), so

isn't it obvious that the wisdom which Ecclesiasticus forbids to be hidden is worth less than the folly he orders to be kept concealed? Hear the evidence of his own words: "Better is a man who hides his folly than a man who hides his wisdom" (190).

97. '... nonne palam est sapientiam, quam vetat abscondi, viliorem esse stulticia, quam recondi iubet? Iam ipsius testimonii verba accipite. Melior est homo qui abscondit stulticiam suam quam homo qui abscondit sapientiam suam' (182/959-962).
This 'proof' depends upon the false syllogism that all things which are hidden are more valuable than those which are not: the conclusion follows logically from the false premise. At this point, Erasmus is using such reasoning, not to raise doubts about the validity of Moria's arguments, but to prepare us for the spiritual paradoxes which will follow.

Similarly, she indulges in a tendentious interpretation of Ecclesiastes 10:3, and points out that neither Solomon nor Paul was afraid of calling himself a fool: since she is now citing Scriptural references rather than the classical ones of the preceding sections, we are obviously being prepared for the redefinition of folly which Erasmus is about to undertake.

After attacking the way in which certain theologians misinterpret Scripture to suit their own purposes, she returns to citing Paul's praise of folly, saying that he openly advocated it as a necessity and a benefit (186/70-71;196). And Christ himself acknowledged his own foolishness in Psalm 78.6. Then, too, fools have always given pleasure to God, and Christ always condemns those who trust in their own intelligence (186/84-84;197) -- a clearly transcendentally read interpretation of Moria's own contempt for sophists and philosophers. Various texts are cited to establish God's honouring of folly and fools. Just as Moria had delighted in women, children and naturals, so she now tells us of Christ:

But Christ seems to have taken special delight in little children, women and fishermen, while the dumb animals who gave him the greatest pleasure were those furthest removed from cleverness and cunning (197-198).

Christ himself was something of a fool in assuming man's nature and being seen in man's form, and wishing to be redeemed only through the folly of the Cross. He taught his apostles to

98. '... at paruulis, mulieribus ac piscatoribus potissimum delectatus esse videtur. Quin et ex animantium brutorum generis ea potissimum placet Christo, quae a vulpina prudentia quam longissime absunt...' (186/93-187/96).
shun wisdom, pointing to the example of those things which live by instinct alone (188/112-113;199). Eating of the tree of knowledge was forbidden, and St. Paul openly condemns knowledge as harmful (188/119-120;199). Folly is used by men as an excuse for sinfulness, and Christ’s plea for forgiveness of his crucifiers was based on their ignorance.

With folly now taking its place as something akin to a Christian virtue, Erasmus is ready to embark on the final and most exalted section of his argument. Moria undertakes to prove that ‘it is quite clear that the Christian religion has a kind of kinship with folly in some form, although it has none at all with wisdom’ (201). The very old and the very young, women and simpletons, take delight in religion, led by their natural instincts. The founders of the faith were lovers of simplicity, enemies of learning. Those possessed by zeal for Christian piety are the biggest fools of all:

They squander their possessions, ignore insults, submit to being cheated, make no distinction between friends and enemies, shun pleasure, sustain themselves on fasting, vigils, tears, toil and humiliations, scorn life and desire only death — in short, they seem to be dead to any normal feelings, as if their spirit dwelt elsewhere than in their bodies. What else can that be but madness? (201).

Further, Moria argues, the happiness of Christians is nothing other than a sort of folly (190/156-158;202) — and it is at this point, when folly has finally been redefined to mean not the

99. ‘... videtur omnino Christiana religio quandam habere cum aliqua stulticia cognationem minimeque cum sapientia conuenire’ (189/141-143).

100. ‘... adeo sua profundunt, iniurias negligunt, falli sese patiuntur, inter amicos et inimcos nullum discrimen, voluptatem horrent, inedia, vigilia, lachrymis, laboribus, contumeliis saginantur, vitam fastidiunt, mortem vnice optant, breuiter ad omnem sensum communem prorsus obstupuisse videntur, perinde quasi alibi vivat animus, non in suo corpore. Quid quidem quid aliud est quam insanire?’ (189/149-190-153).
natural, unimproved instincts of man, but something close to the
spirit of religion in its contempt for the ordinary estimation of
man's behaviour, it is at this point that we begin to understand
why Erasmus should have written that The Praise of Folly taught
the same lesson as Enchiridion. In the earlier work, the vices
and sins of the world are delineated, and opposed by a kind of
Platonised piety. Those two tendencies in Enchiridion are
represented here as opposing definitions of folly.

In the first place, Christians come close to agreeing with
Platonists that the soul is bound down by the body and that
philosophy is a preparation for death (190/159-162;202). This
conception of the soul agrees precisely with that found in
Enchiridion, although in The Praise of Folly the argument is
given an apparently ironic twist:

And so long as the mind makes proper use of the
organs of the body it is called sane and healthy,
but if it begins to break its bonds and tries to
win freedom, as if it were planning an escape from
prison, men call it insane (202). 101

This leads to a discussion of Plato's myth of the cave: the man
who returns to the cave deplores the insanity of his companions;
they, in their turn, consider him crazy: the common herd of men
feels admiration only for the things of the body, whereas the
pious scorn whatever concerns the body and are wholly uplifted
towards the contemplation of invisible things (203). 102 As noted
earlier, 103 this second use of the myth gives it an
interpretation exactly the obverse of the original, so that we

101. 'Itaque quamdiu animus corporis organis probe vtitur,
tam diu sanus appellatur. Verum;vbi ruptis iam vinculis
conatur in libertatem asserezere sese quasique fugam ex eo
carcere meditatur, tum insaniam vocant' (190/163-166).

102. 'Itidem vulgus hominum ea quae maxime corporea sunt maxime
miratur eaque prope sola putat esse. Contra pii, quo quique
propius accedit ad corpus, hoc magis negligunt totique ad
inuisibilium rerum contemplationem rapiuntur' (190/181-184).

103. Above, p.135.
can see quite clearly how far folly has been transformed and how the character of the work has changed.

This thought is elaborated by considering those things to which the ordinary man and the pious direct their attention, and by consideration of the nature of the soul, whose power depends on its inclinations. According to the nature of that to which it is attracted, so shall its own nature be better or worse. As Moria goes on, the full extent of the transformation in the work becomes apparent. In the opening section, Moria had consistently opposed the inclinations and activities of the ordinary man to those of the philosophers and wise men who would destroy our illusions; in the middle section, she herself destroyed those illusions; in the final section, she is metamorphosed into a Christian/Platonic wise man of the type she had earlier scorned. She now opposes herself irrevocably to the actions and beliefs of the ordinary man. The ironic complexity which took a benignly tolerant view of the infirmities in human nature is now replaced by an insistence that those infirmities should be overcome by a single-minded devotion to the things of the spirit rather than those of the body: 'in fact the pious man throughout his whole life withdraws from the things of the body and is drawn toward what is eternal, invisible and spiritual' (205-206).

The epithet 'mad', though, is best applied to the pious man, since man's supreme reward is a kind of madness (192/232;206). Using the Platonic analogy of the madness of lovers being the highest form of happiness, since the lover moves out of himself, Moria says that the soul that is leaving the body is regarded as mad. So in heavenly life the spirit will conquer the body, and will itself be absorbed by the Suprême Mind. Thus perfect happiness can be experienced only when the soul is outside the body, and has been granted immortality; those who are granted a foretaste of this, experience something akin to madness (194/259ff.;206-207).

104. '... in omni vita refugit pius ab his quae corpori cognata sunt, ad aeterna, ad inuisibilia, ad spiritalia rapitur' (192/227-228;205-206).
Suddenly, as she had done at the end of the second section, Moria breaks off, apologising for her garrulosity: 'you must remember it's Folly and a woman who's been speaking' (208). This final re-adoption of the ironic mask serves to remind us of why it was dropped in the first place -- that is, because its inadequacy had been comprehensively demonstrated. Its brief reappearance after such a spell of religious eloquence demonstrates again its inadequacy, and suggests that Erasmus had never had any intention of sustaining the ironic mode in which he began. His real interest was not in the complex irony of the opening section, but in the later sections of satire and religious exaltation.

A genuinely complex irony would not, as Erasmus did, have finally rejected the attempt to understand the world as it is in favour of the exalted idealism of the peroration. Both the folly of the world and the folly of the Cross would need to be included in an all-embracing irony in which neither was regarded as uniquely capable of explaining the whole life of man. Perhaps, given the nature of his subject, such an implied limitation on Erasmus' brand of Christianity would have been too much to ask; but then, would a genuine Menippean satirist, who felt the full force of complex irony, not simply as a literary tool, but as an objective correlative for the problematic nature of man and his society, would such a satirist have chosen such a subject? Probably not. Certainly, as will be shown in the following chapters, Thomas More consciously chose subjects inherently more suited to the genius of complex irony.

105. '... cogitate et Stulticiam et mulierem dixisse' (194/269-270).
CHAPTER FIVE

'RICHARD III': AN EXPERIMENT IN LUCIANIC METHOD

If Encomium moriae was only partially Lucianic, finally rejecting complexity for a platonised Christianity that admits no doubts, the same can be said of More's The History of King Richard III but in a radically different sense. The sense of ironic ambiguity so subtly expressed in the preface to his translations of Lucian is carried over into the composition of both The History of King Richard III and Utopia. The Lucianic nature of the latter has been increasingly recognised in recent scholarship; what has not often been realised is the extent to which the History is a Lucianic treatment of the subject of Richard's usurpation.

More has provided us with his reflections on the meaning of history, raising such questions as the role of providence in history; the nature of tyranny; and how the ordinary citizen can recognise tyranny for what it is. More's use of a complex irony derived, in part, from Lucian, is designed to allow the writer the flexibility to pose such questions without committing himself to a definitive answer. He does so by strategically undermining the expectations aroused by his chosen fictional mode. Rather than making direct statements, he works by suggestion and implication, often utilising a persona through which he can make suggestions and statements that can then be attributed to the persona rather than to the author himself, and whose reaction to the events being described is itself one element of the work's meaning.

This is not to say that in the History More had attained that mastery of ironic complexity that characterises Utopia. Indeed, the style of the History is clearly experimental, and it is More's inexperience in handling the new fictional mode that accounts for much of the uneven tone and apparent uncertainty of purpose that can be seen in this work.

Considerations of dating bear out the contention that the experience of working with complex irony which More gained in the composition of the History allowed him to perfect the same mode in Utopia. Although we can accept Rastell's statement that it was begun in 1513, and was continued over a period of some years, it is not possible to state with any real certainty when the bulk of the material was written and when More finished working on the manuscript. It must have been completed after 1514, the year in which Thomas Howard was made Earl of Surrey (3/13), and a number of textual references point to the years 1517/1518 as possible dates for part of the composition.2

It is possible that the English continuation, ending with the origins of the Morton/Buckingham conspiracy, may have been worked on as late as 1521, the date of the judicial murder by Henry VIII of the Third Duke of Buckingham, son of the character in More's history and possessor of a claim to the throne. It has been suggested that More, when he came to this section, broke off the writing, disturbed at its contemporary implications.3 It is at least as likely that it was just those events and their implications that prompted him to add this section. The year 1521, then, seems to be a likely date for More's final work on the text, although it should be noted that since More refers to Shore's wife as still living, and since she died only in 1527, writing could, in theory, have continued until that date. The likely period of composition, then, was 1513 to 1521, but a reasonable conjecture can be made as to the date of the composition of the bulk of the text.

2. CW 2, p.lxiv.

It is known that More composed *Utopia* in 1515/1516, and that work is generally now regarded as a polished piece of complex irony. If the *History* is regarded as an attempt at complex irony which does not fully succeed, then it is reasonable to suggest that at least the main outline of this was probably composed before More began work on *Utopia*. The continuity between the two works is a matter of artistic as well as philosophical development.

These ironic intentions bring into question the extent to which More was writing a humanist history exemplifying the evils of tyranny, and both Sallust and Tacitus have been pointed to as models. This point has been most recently made by Richard Marius, who writes:

> This is history in the classical mode of Thucydides or Tacitus; it is the first true work of Renaissance historiography done by an Englishman, a lean, fast-moving narrative intended not only to teach the major lessons More has in mind about tyranny and public office, but also to instruct his readers in the vagaries of fortune and the evils of presumption.

Such influence is certainly there, but no classical model and no contemporary historical writing can fully account for More's procedure.

More's seeming affinity with other humanist historians has been noted by Patrick J. Sullivan who cites, among others, Caxton and Berner to show that the humanists regarded history as didactic, a source of knowledge about the past, and a means of moral persuasion to good action in the present. 5 History was regarded as a species of rhetoric, and, following Quintilian, it


was also regarded as a literary artefact, designed to instruct by moving and pleasing the reader. More, says Sullivan, moves and delights by his dramatic power. Such a reading of More, by attempting to fit him into a known category, is unnecessarily Procrustean, and overlooks the work's elements of structural irony. It is quite true that there is much dramatic power in the History and Sullivan excellently analyses this, but this dramatic power does not tell us everything about the work as More conceived and wrote it.

Leonard F. Dean also draws attention to the classical models for the History and discusses its relation to rhetoric. He makes extensive reference to Lucian's How to write history, saying that More must have had this in mind while writing the History. Of the precepts which Dean cites from Lucian, all could have been found in other classical writings on rhetoric; nor does Lucian's treatise contain anything that is not innate in the man of good literary taste.

The Lucianic element in the History is more fundamental than the possible influence of a hackneyed treatise on the principles of historical writing -- a fact acknowledged by Dean himself when he talks of More's natural bent for irony being strengthened 'by his study of the practice of Tacitus and Thucydides, and particularly by his intimate knowledge of Lucian and the Encomium moriae'. He then goes on to draw a distinction between Lucianic irony and the Erasmian irony of complexity. It has, however, been the argument of this study that Lucian's irony is more complex than allowed for by Dean, and that Erasmus' ironic complexity was not applied consistently in The Praise of Folly. Nor, as this chapter will demonstrate, is the complex irony of the History

6. Ibid., p.74.
8. Ibid., p.27.
limited to 'an attitude towards life which is comprehensive and flexible without being irresponsible'.

The critic who has come closest to recognising More's true purpose in the History is Alison Hanham, who notes that as straightforward historical writing, it is uneven and its purpose seemingly unsure. It is, she writes, a Lucianic, irreverent commentary on the whole craft of history. More parodies the kind of argument advanced by contemporary 'Richard' experts, and mocks credulity in Lucianic fashion, using signals to alert the reader. This is undoubtedly an important part of the History, but it does not account for all of it. It has a more serious purpose than mere mockery and, moreover, the Lucianic elements are not limited to the mocking of credulous historians; nor can it be said that all of the work is Lucianic. The precise extent of the Lucianic influence on the work is the subject of this chapter.

Heath correctly notes that the work has a literary structure but fails to comment on either the local ironies or the structural irony. Arthur Kincaid writes of it:

The structure of the work is essentially founded upon a dramatic conceit, and it is subtly through this dramatic structure that More makes clear the moral intention of the History.

The primary movement, he writes, is from the order and harmony of the reign of Edward IV to rebellion and death, and the final re-establishment of the state of natural order postulated at the

9. Ibid., p.32.
11. Ibid., p.155.
12. Ibid., pp.157-159.
beginning of the work. 15 Within this, the metaphor of the stage defines Richard's relationship to both the reader and the population of London. The reader beholds the progress of ambition and its results; Richard is watched by other characters and by the general public.

The subtle shifts of the audience's attitude towards Richard define his gradual downfall. The extent to which the responses of the internal audience (the populace) and the external audience (the reader) combine and verge adds a further dimension to the work and can be manipulated for mood and emphasis. 16

Irony is used to undercut Richard's talk and actions, becoming more frequent as the work progresses. It is, however, questionable whether the History does end with the re-establishment of the natural order, and whether the irony is directed solely against Richard, as Kincaid seems to assume.

This disagreement about the primary movement in the work bears upon one of the major difficulties concerning the transmission of the text, that of the rearrangement of the order of the opening paragraphs in the various English versions. The earliest printed English versions of the work are those found in the chronicles of John Harding and Edward Hall, both published by Richard Grafton. Harding's chronicle appeared in 1543, Hall's in 1548 with a reprint in 1550. There are textual differences between these versions, but what is of more interest is the common readings which both share against the version printed in the collected works of More, published by William Rastell in 1557. In particular, the Harding/Hall texts open with an account of the character of Richard of Gloucester; Rastell's text opens

15. Ibid., p.231.
with an account of the children of Edward IV, recounts the events of the king's last illness, and fully portrays Gloucester only on page six.

This is of some consequence for the way the story is developed, for, as Sylvester puts it: 'By the time we meet the bad king-to-be we have seen enough of the good king-that-was to make the contrast singularly striking'. In view of this and other transpositions, Sylvester is led to suggest that it is 'a reasonable probability that the arrangement of the sequence of events in the H group goes back to an original draft of the History which More composed before making the fair copy eventually printed by Rastell'.

Against this, Hanham suggests that the bulk of the changes in the H texts were made by More himself. She suggests that the changes were made in order to put the events in chronological order, and concludes that 'If More did not furnish these alterations to his own text, someone else was taking remarkable liberties'. It seems that this was exactly what did happen. Sylvester tells us that the H versions are 'edited' texts, 'that is, they consciously attempt to adjust More's narrative to the historical details related elsewhere in their volumes, and they endeavour to supply the names and dates which Rastell, presumably following More's autograph, so conspicuously left blank in his text'. In other words, it can reasonably be conjectured that chroniclers who were prepared to make some alterations in the name of historical accuracy were equally prepared to make others for the same reason. There seems no reason to look further for an

17. CW 2, p.xxv.
18. Ibid., pp.xxvii-xxviii.
20. Ibid., p.211.
21. Ibid., p.212.
22. CW 2, pp.xxiii-xxiv.
explanation of the most significant variations between the H
texts and that of Rastell.

The account of the opening sections given by Fox seems close
to More's intentions. He writes that the function of the work's
irony is 'to intimate an underlying reality in events that belies
their superficial appearance'. The example given is that of
Polydore Virgil's account of Richard's destruction of Edward's
ideal order; in More, a second perspective undermines the first. There are discordant notes in the portrait of Edward, and it is
implied that Richard does nothing that Edward did not do; Edward,
however, got away with it, while Richard did not.

In exposing the 'ideal' conditions of Edward's reign as a contrived illusion, More was seeking to prepare his readers for the real import of the History: a realization that Richard's reign merely manifests in extreme form circumstances that pertain in all political situations.

While this view accounts for the ambiguity of much of the History, it does not account for the wide range of ironic devices used by More; nor does it fully explain their effect. In order to understand what More was doing, and the place of the History in his works, we must turn to an examination of the text.

The work opens with an idealised description of the reign of Edward IV,

A Kinge of suche gouernaunce and behauioure in time of peace ... that there was never anye Prince of th is lande attaynynge the Crowne by battayle, so heartely beloued with the substaunce of the people: nor he hymselfe so speciallye in anye parte of his life, as at the time of his death (3/20-26).

23. Fox, p.78.
24. Ibid., p.78-79.
25. Ibid., p.80-81.
26. Fox, p.81.
Yet even here, irony intrudes. What weight are we to put on the phrase 'attaynynge the Crowne by battayle'? Is the method of his attaining the crown mentioned so as to qualify the praise given to him? What of the parenthetical phrase 'for in war eche parte muste needes bee others enemye'? Even on the first page of the text, the apparently idyllic nature of Edward's reign is being set against a harsher reality. Not only that which is of importance for the ostensible subject of the History, but the tradition of classical and humanist panegyric is being undercut by insistent reference to that same reality. This ironic purpose is surely what is behind the decision to dislocate the chronological order of the narrative; we expect a contrast of the ideal reign of Edward with the villainy of Richard, but get something more complex.

More goes on to make it clear that a considerable part of the reputation of Edward's reign as 'golden' was occasioned by nostalgia as a result of what followed.

Which fauour and affeccion yet after his decease, by the crueltie, mischiefe, and trouble of the tempestious worlde that folowe highelye towarde hym more increased (3/26-4/3).

There follows an idealised portrait of Edward's virtues and of his physical appearance which, however, ends by saying:

howe bee it in his latter dayes wyth ouer liberall dyet, sommewhat corpulente and boorelye ... hee was of youthe greatelye geuen to fleshlye wantonnesse (4/18-20).

27. More may, of course, be referring to the idea that victory in battle is a sign of divine favour, an idea used, for example, to legitimise Henry Tudor's otherwise dubious claim to the throne; but this does not seem to be the primary reference here.

28. The Latin stesses the contrast between Edward and Richard: inuisus parricidae sequentis principatus auctiorem fecit (4/1).
Again we observe the tendency to undercut the idealised portrait of Edward. England was not, under his reign, as idyllic as the panegyricist would have us believe, nor was Edward of quite such spotless character.

The idealisation of Edward's reign continues, but again in a way which is curiously qualified:

And all bee it that all the tyme of his raygne, hee was wyth hys people, soo benygne, courteyse and so familyer, that no parte of hys vertues was more esteemed (5/7-9).

More then tells the story of his hunting at Windsor with the Mayor and Aldermen of London, and his sending venison into the City so freely that no one thing in manye dayes before, gate hym eyther moe heartes or more heartie fauoure amonge the common people, whiche oftentymes more esteme and take for greater kindenesse, a lyttle courteyse, than a great benefyte (5/18-21).

The Latin adds the phrase 'ac pro maioris in se amoris argumento ducitur' (5/17-18), making more explicit the implication that his gift to the City of London was given not from benevolence, but from more politic considerations.

More now makes the transition from Edward IV to Richard of Gloucester, introducing him in colours as black as those in which Edward were portrayed were bright. Edward's children had been committed to the care of their uncle, and More now gives an initial brief character of his chief protagonist.

For Richarde the Duke of Gloucester, by nature thayr Uncle, by office theire protectoure, to theire father beholden, to themselfe by othe and allegyaunce bownden, al the bandes broken that binden manne and manne together, withoute anye respecte of Godde or the worlde, vnnaturallye contriued to bereue them, not onelye their dignitie, but also their liues (6/2-8).
He passes to a brief account of Richard's background. His father, Richard, Duke of York, raised rebellion against King Henry VI, and his three sons -- and we observe that this description again qualifies the earlier portrait of Edward -- were 'greate and statelye of stomacke, gredye and ambicious of authoritie, and impatient of parteners' (6/26-28). Edward attained the Crown by usurpation; George, Duke of Clarence, led by ambition to oppose his brothers, was attainted of treason and drowned in a butt of Malmsey: 'whose death kynge Edwarde, (albeit he commaunded it) when he wist it was done, pitiously bewailed and sorowfully repented' (7/13-15).

Such being the family of Richard of Gloucester, we expect him to be portrayed as a consummate villain -- however, given the ambiguities which More has built into his portrait of Edward, we might also expect that his treatment of Richard will be similarly qualified. He is described as little of stature, ill fetured of limmes, croke backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard fauoured of visage, and suche as is in states called warlye, in other menne otherwise. He was malicious, wrathful, envious, and from afore his birth, ever frowarde (7/19-23).

These details, although based on other accounts, are not necessarily historically accurate, and More goes on to give absurd details about Richard's birth:

It is for trouthe reported, that the Duches his mother had so muche a doe in her travaile, that shee could not bee deliuered of hym vnclt: and that hee came into the worlde with the feete forwarde ... and (as the fame runneth) also not vntothed (7/23-27).

The ambiguity of 'for trouthe' and 'as the fame runneth' is amplified when More goes on to say of this strange birth:

whither menne of hatred reporte aboue the trouthe, or elles that nature chaunged her course in hys
beginninge, which in the course of hys lyfe many things unnaturallye committed (7/27-30).

Already, More is drawing back, distancing himself from his sources of information, questioning their veracity, and stressing the large amount of sheer rumour surrounding the figure of Richard. Clearly, at this point his narrating persona is being portrayed as someone of considerable literary and intellectual sophistication, capable of seeing that the legend of Richard has been greatly oversimplified, and capable also of using a sophisticated irony to correct those distortions.

More now moves to a character of Richard as politician:

Free was hee called of dyspence, and sommewhat aboue hys power liberall, with large giftes hee get him vnstedfaste frendeshippe, for whiche hee was fain to pil and spoyle in other places, and get him stedfast hated. Hee was close and secrete, a deepe dissimuler, lowlye of counteynaunce, arrogant of heart, outwardly comptainable where he inwardely hated, not letting to kisse whome hee thoughte to kyll: dispitious and cruell, not for euill will alway, but ofter for ambicion, and either for the suretie or encrease of his estate (8/3-11).

The stress on Richard’s consummate hypocrisy is of the essence of the work. Not only is it the major element in his character, but his dissimulation about his intentions creates the atmosphere of uncertainty that abounds among the citizens, and makes it so difficult for them to distinguish appearance from reality in political events.

To complete the picture, Richard is charged with slaying King Henry in the Tower. This statement, however, is first qualified by the narrator’s adding ‘as menne constantly saye’ (8/15-16), and then undermined by the savagely ironical statement ‘and that without commaundemente or knowledge of the king, whiche woulde vndoubtedly yf he had entended that thinge, haue appointed that boocherly office, to some other then his owne borne brother’ (8/18-21). We are told also that ‘Somme wise men
also weene' (8/22) that he killed his brother Clarence, so that he should stand closer in the line of succession. More now adds the statement that throws all his sources of information and all his vilification of Richard into doubt:

But of al this pointe, is there no certaintie, & whoso diuineth vppon coniectures, maye as wel shote to farre as to short (9/5-7).

In spite of this warning, he goes on to say 'haue I by credible informacion learned' (9/7) that on the night of King Edward's death, a servant of Richard's, being told the news, said 'then wyll my mayster the Duke of Gloucester bee kynge' (9/13). Again the insinuation is heavily qualified by ambiguity:

What cause hee hadde soo to thynke harde it is to saye, whyther hee being toward him, anye thynge knewe that hee suche thynge purposed, or otherwise had anye inkelynge thereof: for hee was not likelye to speake it of noughte (9/13-17).

The Latin gives an explanation of More's source:

quem ego sermonem ab eo memini, qui colloquentes audiuerat, iam tum patri meo renuntiatum, cum adhuc nulla proditionis eius suspicio haberetur (9/18-20).

Thus the evidence for any such conversation having taken place, much less its having any significance, is heavily qualified by More himself -- and this as he sets out to establish that Richard plotted his usurpation quite deliberately from the moment of Edward's death. He now states explicitly that whatever the reason may have been, Richard decided upon the destruction of his nephews and the usurpation of the Crown -- and this is given on no better authority than the phrase 'certayn is it' (9/25).

With this intention in mind, Richard set out to exploit the division between 'the Quenes kindred and the kinges blood' (9/28). We are now taken back to the reign of Edward, who, we are
told, was irked by this dissension between the two parties. He attempted to reconcile them on his deathbed, and his lengthy speech sets out the conditions of peace and concord in the kingdom after his death. It is underpinned by a tragic awareness of what is likely to happen. He gives a disquisition on the evil of ambition, that ‘pestilente serpente’ (12/21-22), and reminds his hearers of what it has lately done in England. He then goes on to say, in yet another statement that qualifies the initial picture of him:

Whiche thinges yf I could as well haue forsene, as I haue with my more Payne than pleasure proued ... I woulde neuer haue won the courtesye of mennes knees, with the losse of soo many heades (13/3).

Because of the danger of civil discord, he begs those around his bed to henceforth love each other, ‘Whiche I verelye truste you will, if ye any thing earthly regard, either godde or your king, affinitie or kinred, this realme, your owne countrey, or your owne surety’ (13/21-24). The lords present join hands together, and the king dies.

This speech has a double purpose. First, it deals in a straightforward way with More’s views on the running of a kingdom, ‘and, as such, ought to be considered in relation to that perennial topic of the humanists, the education of the prince. It touches, of course, on matters more practical than education, but the central idea that, as the ruler of the kingdom is responsible for maintaining justice, truth, peace and religion, he ought to be well-educated and well-advised in his role, is obviously related to this complex of concerns. The proper government of the kingdom was the theme that was to serve as occasion for Utopia, and More is here explicitly setting out the standards and ideals by which all following events in his treatise are to be judged. It is, however, a mistake to think that More is making a simple contrast of this standard to the behaviour of Richard. That is part of his purpose, but it must be
noted that the speech is put in the mouth of a king who tells his hearers that he himself gained the throne by methods which he exhorts them to abjure. We have an implied contrast not simply between Richard and the ideal of government, but a standard by which all historical actors are judged and found wanting. With Edward deceased and the story of Richard's usurpation about to open, we shall find that there is no one character of sufficient moral stature to serve as a foil to Richard.

Following Edward's death, More moves on to show us Prince Edward's progress to London from Wales, accompanied by the Queen's kinsmen. More notes explicitly that the Queen's attempts to plant her brother and uncle in the Prince's affections earned them the enmity of Gloucester, 'vpon that grounde set the foundacion of all his vnhappy building' (14/18-19). Richard was able to exploit the old nobility's latent jealousy of the upstart Woodvilles who in Edward's reign had been concerned only with 'the immoderate aduauncement of them selve' (15/7-8). He is also sceptical about the death-bed reconciliation between the factions, 'in whyche the kinges pleasure hadde more place than the parties willes' (15/20-21). Richard concludes with a sentiment that is, in the circumstances, less Machiavellian than realistic:

Nor none of vs I beleue is so vnwyse, ouersone to truste a newe frende made of an olde foe, or to think that an hourely kindnes, sodainely contract in one houre, continued yet scant a fortnight, shold be deper settled in their stomackes: then a long accustomed malice many yeres rooted (15/21-25).

However cynical this may sound when compared with Edward's hopes in the death-bed scene, it is no more than would have been passing in the minds of the Woodvilles themselves, and given what we have already noted of More's treatment of Richard, it is probably not intended to indicate that he was any more of a scheming politician than were his opponents.
In the following paragraph, More stresses the expedient nature of political alliances by saying that both Buckingham and Hastings supported Richard, and commenting: 'These two not bearing eche to other so muche loue, as hatred bothe vnto the Quenes parte' (15/31-32). Again we see that the background colouring of the History qualifies the foregrounding of Richard's villanies. Similarly, More notes that the Woodvilles had so arranged matters that Richard, although he had been appointed Protector in Edward's will, could not gain control of the young Prince without seeming to raise rebellion. It is this that drives him to the stratagem now described. The Queen is persuaded that the force the Woodvilles have gathered might be easily misinterpreted; she writes to the Welsh party so that they, 'nothynge Earthelye mystrustynge' (17/5-6), brought the Prince on unguarded.

With Edward and his kinsmen thus separated, Gloucester and Buckingham set about entrapping Rivers and Woodville at Stony Stratford. A coup is carried out against the Queen's party, resulting in their arrest and eventual execution at Pomfrait. The news of the arrests provokes the Queen and her children to seek sanctuary in Westminster Abbey, where the Chancellor delivers to her the Great Seal. The portrait of the break-up of the Queen's household and the desolation of the Queen is full of pathos, evoking sympathy for her situation. The sanctuary is immediately surrounded, and the Chancellor sees 'all the Temmes full of bootes of the Duke of Gloucesters seruantes, watchinge that no manne should go to Sainctuary, nor none coulde passe unserched' (22/14-16). More now first introduces the theme of the attitude of the people to these events:

Then was there greate commocion and murmure as well in other places about, as specially in the city, the people diuersely diuininge vpon this dealinge (22/16-18).
The Latin is more detailed, dwelling, as Sylvester notes, more on the common people than on the nobles.29

Iam continuo res dispargi, toti populo in ore esse, stupere omnes, ira, metu, ac merore compleri, conglobari alij alibi in armis, turmatim volitare diversi, atque inuicem mimitantes, prout quosque partium studium aut periculi formido copulauerat (22/16-19).

This emphasis on the reactions of the people will assume more importance as the work progresses; as the narrator comes to identify himself ever more closely with them, his attitudes become coloured by theirs until he eventually forgets his original sophisticated and balanced treatment of the subject and ends in simple condemnation of Richard.

It was seen in Chapter Two that More found in Lucian the elements of a narrator whose statements may point to an underlying meaning at variance with the ostensible significance of his words. This was particularly the case in The Tyrannicide and in More's reply to it. He also found in Lucian the elements of a complex dramatic irony in which meaning is contained not solely in the statements made, but in the combination of these with the chosen literary form. Lucian's rather stereotyped scepticism was enlivened by the use he made of the dialogue form; in the History, More's full meaning resides, not in the statements made about Richard, but in the form in which those statements are cast. More's use of the device is more complex than that of Lucian: where the latter's dramatic irony was static, serving principally to raise questions about a specific philosophy and the language in which it is presented, More's is dynamic, dramatising the process of questioning, as well as presenting the conclusion reached.

The uncertainty exhibited in this section permeates much of the remaining account of Gloucester's actions. On one level, it is what gives him his opportunity; on another level, it is what makes it difficult to state his motives with certainty.

At a meeting of the Council in London, Hastings assures the Lords of Gloucester's good intentions, and of the incipient treason of the Woodville faction. He further advises them to beware 'they judged not the matter to farrefoorth, ere they knewe the trueth' (23/16-17), and warns them not to disturb matters before the Coronation. As the Dukes approach London, 'colourable provee' (24/3) is given of the plans of the Woodville faction, in the shape of a wagon full of arms taken from the 'conspirators'. The narrator comments:

This devise all be it that it made the matter to wise men more vnlykely, well perceuyuyng that the intendours of suche a purpose, wolde rather haue hadde theyr harneys on theyr backes, then tawe bounde them vppe in barrelles, yet muche part of the common people were therewith verye well satisfied, and said it wer almoiste to hange them (24/10-15).

Sylvester quotes Mancini as noting the actuality of this, and as noting also that the arms had been in place in the city since before the death of Edward IV, in preparation for the war against the Scots. 30

This is the first of a number of farcical episodes in which Richard and his associates support their actions with such brazen-faced trickery that one is driven to ask why others allowed him to succeed as he did. Such episodes are reminiscent of the exposure of charlatans in such Lucianic works as Alexander and The Death of Peregrinus. They introduce into the History the theme of why men fail to act against apparent and obvious evil. Already we can see that More has had recourse to a range of ironic devices in order to convey his meaning. He has used verbal irony against Edward IV; he has used the device of an apparent praise that is undercut by facts; he has set Edward's pious death-bed speech against the facts of his character and actions; he has used the classical device of the contrasting portraits of

30. CW 2, p.188/189.
the hero and the villain in a way quite different to what the reader expects. Here, he uses farce to suggest the absurdity inherent in Richard's conspiracy. Other devices will be used later, and the impression given is partly that of a writer experimenting with the full range of ironic devices available to him.

The next section of the work raises the issue of whether More, true to his claim that he feels free to exaggerate the facts, was deliberately suppressing some facts in order to blacken the character of Richard. The arrival of the young King in London provides the occasion for some further reflections on Richard:

> But the Duke of Gloucester bare him in open sighte so reuerentlye to the Prince, with all semblaunce of lowlinessse, that from the great obloquy in which hee was soo late before, hee was sodainelye fallen in soo great truste, that at the cousayle next assembled, hee was made the only manne chose and thoughte most mete, to bee protectoure of the king and hys realme, so (that were it desteny or were it foly) the lamb was betaken to the wolfe to kepe (24/23-25/1).

As Sylvester's note here makes clear, More chooses to omit the fact that Richard had been named as Protector in Edward's will. It seems that More is using artistic licence to suppress a fact of which he can hardly have been unaware in order to blacken Richard's name. He has already warned the reader that not everything he says is to be taken as truth, and this same warning should be applied to the following section in which he explicitly accuses Richard of a conscious plot to usurp the crown:

> Nowe all were it soo that the protectoure so soore thyristed for the finyshynge of that hee hadde begonne, that thoughte euerye daye a yeare tyll it were atchyeued ... (25/10-12).

This assigning to Richard of a conscious intention of usurpation is, of course, only an interpretation of events and, as Pollard makes clear, probably an incorrect one.  

Richard's next move is to gain control of the younger prince, who was with his mother in sanctuary. He decides on this course, says More,

well wittinge that yf hee deposed the one brother,  
all the Realme woulde fall to the tother, yf hee  
either remayned in Sainctuarye, or should happelye  
bee shortelye conuayde too hys farther libertye (25/14-17).

He claims to the assembled Lords that the Queen's keeping the Duke of York in Sanctuary makes it appear that the Lords were not to be trusted with him, although they have charge of the King, who, says Richard, needs the familiar conversation of those of his own age and status. Further, if the Duke remained in Sanctuary, it would be to the dishonour of the King and those around him,

For everye manne wyll weene, that no manne wyll so dooe for noughte. And suche euyll oppinyon once  
fastened in mennes heartes, harde it is to wraste  
oute, and maye growe to more grief than anye manne  
here canne diuine (26/20-24).

Since More has explicitly stated that Richard intended to usurp the crown, this speech appears as sophistical reasoning; but if we keep in mind that More has given himself licence to exaggerate, then it can be argued that it is the attribution of evil motives to Richard that we are to treat with suspicion. In this speech, then we have a local irony — the seemingly specious speech by Richard — cancelled out, or at least qualified, by an over-riding structural irony.


33. The Latin has him being conveyed out of Britain.
It is now decided to send the Archbishop of Canterbury to parley with the Queen; if she proves obstinate, Richard says they may bring him out by the King's authority. The Archbishop demurs at the use of violence to break Sanctuary: 'And therefore ... Godde forbydde that anye manne shoulede for anye thynge earthlye enterpryse to breake the immunitie, and libertye of that sacred Saintuary, that hath bene the safegarde of so many a good mannes life' (28/9-12).

His speech provokes a lengthy reply from the Duke of Buckingham, the length of which may indicate that, in part, More was giving expression to a vexing contemporary problem, but it also serves to characterise Buckingham as possessed of a violent disposition, unscrupulous, and, most notably, having considerable ability at sophistical reasoning. The Queen, he says, well knows that no harm is meant to the Duke of York, 'Whose honoure if shee as muche desyred as oure dishonoure, and as muche regarde tooke to his wealthe, as to her owne will, she woulde bee as lothe to suffer him from the kinge, as anye of vs bee' (28/29-32). He claims that the reason for her refusal to release the Prince is not fear, but obstinacy. But suppose her motive is fear, then 'the more she feareth to delyuer hym, the more oughte wee feare to leaue him in her handes' (29/13-14). If she fears his being taken by force -- which, of course, we are told that Richard has planned -- she might then send him out of England. To prevent this, force should be used at once.

Buckingham's reasoning now becomes yet more specious. Such an action, he argues, would not be a breach of Sanctuary, which is a privilege reserved for genuine cases, not for thieves and murderers, and he speaks at length about abuses of Sanctuary. This eloquent speech is irrelevant to the issue of the Duke of York's situation. Whatever can be said about murderers and thieves, the Duke of York is in neither of these categories. Buckingham's purpose in mentioning them is the hope that, by
impugning the inviolability of Sanctuary, he will nerve his followers up to breach it if necessary.

He concludes with a series of specious analogies: If a wife takes Sanctuary so as to run from her husband, surely her husband can take her out? If a child takes Sanctuary because he does not wish to go to school, can his master not take him out? There is even less reason in this case. In the case of the schoolchild, there is an element of fear; in this case, none at all. Finally, he jokes:

And verelye I haue often heard of saintuarie menne.
But I neuer heard erste of saintuarie chyldren
(33/8-9).

Such is Buckingham's speech on Sanctuary. Eloquent and forceful though it is, its purpose is given away by its slippery logic, its false analogies, and its final reductio ad absurdum in the case of the truant schoolboy. We are forced to ask ourselves: if he relies on such devices, while bearing such an obvious animus against the Queen, what are his real motives? Why does he feel himself constrained to conceal them behind this parade of specious arguments? More obviously intends to imply that Buckingham's plans for the Duke of York were at variance with what he here expresses. A speech that conceals the speaker's real motivation while revealing him as untrustworthy is thus one more of More's ironic devices. A similar device was used by several of Lucian's personae -- for example, in such works as The Cynic, The Tyrannicide, and Phalaris -- and we will later find it used in Utopia by Raphael Hythlodaeus, although not all these examples include the conscious attempt at deception.

More now states:

When the Duke hadde done, the temporall menne whole, and good part of the spirituall also, thinking none hurt erthly ment towarde the younge babe, condescended in effecte, that if he were not deliuered, he should be fetched (33/20-23).
This is the first example of that weakness of will that allows tyranny to prosper and progress. As the Cardinal departs for Westminster, More gives another example of that multiplying of possible motives that, on one level, indicates that men do indeed act out of mixed motives, and, on another level, reinforces the ambiguity that surrounds the events described. The Cardinal, More says,

departed into the saintuary to the Quene, with diuers other lorde with him, were it for the respecte of hys honoure, or that she shoulde by presence of so manye perceyue that this erande was not one mannes minde, or were it for that the protectour entended not in this matter to trust anye one manne alone, or els that if she finally wer determined to kepe him, somne of that company had happily secret instruccion incontinent magry her minde to take him and to leaue her no respite to conuaye hym, whiche she was likely to mind after this matter broken to her, yf her time would in any wyse serue her (33/28-34/5).

Only one of these motives reflects at all badly on the Protector, while the Queen’s supposed motives make the manoeuverings of the Dukes seem like necessity rather than malignity. After verbal fencing between the Queen and the Cardinal, the Queen makes a veiled insinuation against the Protector:

I merueile greatly that my lord protectour is so disirous to haue him in his keping where if the child in his sicknes miscaried by nature, yet might he runne into slaunder and suspicion of fraude (35/34-36/2).

The English text here omits a section of some thirteen lines in which the Queen attacks the Protector in words which, as Sylvester notes, increase the pathos of her situation, and so add yet another dramatic element to More’s text.34

Following her speech, an anonymous Lord asks if she knows any reason why the princes should be in jeopardy. ‘No’, she

replies, 'But it is I trow no great maruaile though I fere, lest those that haue not letted to put them in duresse with out colour, wil let as lytle to procure their distrucion without cause (36/28-31). She clearly has no illusions as to what she thinks the Protector's motives might be, and so the Cardinal silences the other Lord, giving assurances which the Queen refuses to accept.

The Cardinal mentions Buckingham's doubts as to the validity of Sanctuary in this case, and the consequent legitimacy of the use of force. The Queen denies any intention of removing the young Duke, pointing out that no place is as safe for him as the Sanctuary, 'whereof, was there neuer tiraunt yet so deuelish, that durste presume to breake' (37/31-38/1). She refutes Buckingham's false analogies by saying of Richard 'Forsoth he hath founden a goodly glose, by whiche that place that may defend a thefe, may not saue an innocent' (38/3-5). She then sums up her attack on the Protector: 'Troweth the protector ... that I parceiue not whereunto his painted processe draweth?' (38/8-10).

The phrase 'painted processe' may be seen as, in part, a summation of the entire work. The Queen is in no doubt of its literal truth as applied to Richard, while the work as a whole treats it ambiguously, simultaneously bringing forward supporting evidence and questioning its reliability.

In reply to further arguments by the Queen, the Cardinal gives his personal pledge for the safety of the Duke and his estate, and refuses to use force if she will not give him up:

for he neuer entended more to moue her in that matter, in which she thought that he and all other also saue herselfee, lacked either wit or trouth. Wit if they were so dul, that they coulde nothing perceive what the protectour entended: trouthe if they should procure her sonne to be deluyered into his handes, in whom thei shold perceyue toward the childe any euil intended (40/18-23).

She is the only character who so explicitly condemns the Protector, and so uncompromisingly accuses him of evil
intentions. Such recognition must be the first condition of resistance to tyranny, for unless one recognises evil for what it is, one cannot act against it. But the Queen is not the person to resist Richard: she fears that her son will be taken from her by force; she has made no preparations to convey him out of the kingdom; she trusts the Cardinal and others of the land with him, since they may be more inclined to look after her son if she gives him up freely. Her resistance collapses. In spite of all her fears and suspicions, she delivers her son into the hands of the Protector -- and even as she does so, she rehearses arguments as to the danger to both her sons, handing over the Duke of York with the warning: 'that as farre as ye thinke that I fere to muche, be you wel ware that you fere not as farre to little' (42/6-8). The whole episode, more than any other in the work, humanises the arguments on tyranny. The Queen's dilemma is acute, with no satisfactory answer available to her. Fully cognisant of what she regards as Richard's intentions, she must yet yield to them, since she is unable to resist effectively for fear of bringing about the very consequences she most fears.

The Queen's fears are now reinforced by More's description of Richard's reception of his nephew. He welcomes him gladly -- while a marginal note says '0 dissimulacion' (42) -- but 'Thereupon forthwith they brought hym to the kynge his brother into the bishoppes palice at powles, & from thence through the citie honourably into the tower, out of which after that day they neuer came abrode' (42/19-23).

The point of the episode is clear; what is not so obvious is why it should be dwelt on at such length. More may have been indulging his talent for dramatic representation of a scene without fully considering how it would fit into his plan for the whole work, or he may have been exercising the humanist love of rhetorical elaboration. More importantly, the apparent lack of structural balance may be due to the composition of the History in blocks, and the lack of final revision. Such a view has important consequences for a consideration of the role of the narrator, since it is possible that the sudden alternations in
tone which mark the work may be the result, not of authorial intention, but of the circumstances of composition. It is notable that, in the episodes which immediately surround the debate on Sanctuary and the story of the Queen, the stance adopted by the narrator has a consistency of tone which suggests the possibility of the intervening episodes being an interpolation. Both the debate on Sanctuary and the story of the Queen’s dilemma are fully worked up pieces, one of rhetoric and the other of drama, which are inserted into the chronologically appropriate place in the text without much thought for artistic decorum.

More is now fully launched on an account of Richard’s single-minded usurpation, and the rest of the History is given over to an account of how he brought this about. We first have an account of the motives of the Duke of Buckingham, which has been translated by Rastell from the Latin, although it occurs again later in the English, at 87/24f. Sylvester says of this apparent clumsiness:

> It seems likely that Rastell included both accounts because, although they do overlap, they nevertheless reinforce each other. Only the Lt. (43/8f.) gives the subtle arguments used to persuade Buckingham that he was already so far in he could not withdraw even if he wished to, and it alone preserves the account of the agreement (44/1f.) reached between the two conspirators. The En., on the other hand, concentrates primarily on the causes of their disagreement.

We are told that after Richard had imprisoned the Queen’s kinsfolk and had her sons in his hands, he then took Buckingham into his counsels through the agency of

>suttell folkes, and such as were their crafte maisters in the handling of such wicked deuises: who declared vnto him, that the yong king was offended with him for his kinsfolkes sakes, and that if he were euer able, he would reuenge them (43/9-13).

Nor is it any use to repent, since the Protector has had spies set on Buckingham to ensure his loyalty, and More adds, 'For the state of thinges & the dispositions of men wer than such, that a man could not wel tell whom he might truste, or whom he might feare' (43/26-28). Thus the Duke, like Macbeth after him, was brought to that pointe, 'that where he had repented the way that he had entered, yet wolde he go forth in the same: & since he had ones begun, he would stoutly go through' (43/29-31). So an alliance was formed between the two Dukes, after which 'they went about to prepare for the coronacyon of the yong king as they wold haue it seme' (44/9-11). More now stresses that Richard had decided upon usurping the Crown, for while he and Buckingham have sundry bishops and nobles plan the Coronation, 'as fast were they in an other place contruying the contrary, & to make the protectour kyng' (44/19-21).

At length, even some of the lords begin to have suspicions as to Richard's intentions, particularly in the matter of the two councils. The passage on Catesby, the double-dealing servant of Lord Hastings, reveals the extent to which men as trusting as Hastings aided Richard's designs. Catesby, present in the council of Richard and Buckingham, was bringing false information to his master:

For his dissimulacion onelye, kepeth all that mischief vppe. In whope if the lord Hastings had not put so special trust, the lord Stanley and he had departed with diverse other lordes, and broken all the daunce, for many il signes that hee sawe, which he nowe construed all to the beste (45/29-46/3).

Episodes such as this tend towards tragedy, while some of those that come later savour more of farce. This mixture of tones is one indication of the changes in the attitude of the narrator; as
Richard appears as both stage-manager and chief actor in his own play, his performance is so outrageously overplayed that it becomes a source of wonder why no move was made against him. It becomes clear that it is not merely the history and actions of Richard that we are witnessing but, albeit in an extreme form, a fable of the condition of all political action.

Farce soon follows when More moves on to write of the Council in the Tower, where the lords assemble to discuss the Coronation. This episode displays Richard's marvellous stage-managing of the scene. Arriving late, he dispatches Morton, Bishop of Ely, to Holborn for strawberries—was this to be rid of one whom he knew would oppose his plot against Hastings?—departs for an hour and returns 'al changed with a wonderful soure angrye countenaunce, knitting the browes, frowning and froting and knawing on hys lippes' (47/15-17). His changed mood prepares the lords for his accusations of treason. He accuses first the Queen and Shore's wife of sorcery, showing his withered arm as proof; More notes 'as it was neuer other' (48/11). More's presentation of this historically accurate scene is dramatic, and he characteristically uses it to show how the lords failed to oppose Richard: 'And thereupon every mannes mind sore misgaue them, well perceiuing that this matter was but a quarel' (48/11-13). Richard immediately accuses Hastings of treason, and has him arrested and executed without benefit of trial—and this without any mention of resistance, although More makes it clear that those present know the charge to be false. Indeed, it is hard to say at this point whether More is more critical of Richard's charlatanry or the lords' acceptance of it.

The Council scene is rounded off by a series of anecdotes concerning Hastings' having ignored omens about his death. Lord Stanley had dreamt of himself and Hastings being 'rased by a bore', the symbol of the Protector (50). Hastings refuses to flee London with him, regarding such belief in dreams as 'trifles' and 'witchcraft' (50/10;50/12). The events surrounding the death of Hastings are used as an opportunity for moralising. Hastings and
a man sent by Richard to ensure his appearance at the Council encounter a priest. Hastings' companion tells him 'you haue no neade of a prist yet' (51/8-9); Hastings suspects nothing sinister in the remark:

& so little mistrusted, that he was neuer merier nor neuer so full of good hope in his life: ... But I shall rather let anye things passe me, then the vain sureti of mans mind so nere his deth (51/11-14).

A conversation of Hastings with an old comrade on the fate of the Queen's kinsmen is reported, in which Hastings says: 'And lo how the world is turned, now stand mine enemies in the daunger ... & I neuer in my life so mery, nor neuer in so great suerty' (52/10-13). This elicits the comment:

O good god, the blindnes of our mortall nature, when he most feared, he was in good suerty: when he rekened him self surest, he lost his life, & that within two howres after (52/13-16).

The simple moralising of the narrator at this point makes it seem as though he has abandoned the attempt to make sense of the remorseless logic of events, and is taking refuge in convenient and conventional explanations. From now on, he will stress the outright cynicism with which the population of London receive Richard's justifications of his usurpation -- cynicism, but resignation too, as though these are matters in which ordinary people have no right to interfere, a point implied in the later use of the metaphor of life-as-a-play.

More again stresses the naked charlatanry by which Richard conducted events when he has the Protector and Buckingham don old mail-coats, such as they would have worn only in a case of sudden necessity, and expound the conspiracy to diverse assembled lords. He further comments, again underlining the lack of resistance to Richard, 'Eueri man answered him fair, as though no man mistrusted the mater which of trough no man beleued' (53/8-10).
Richard then sends out a herald to read a proclamation concerning Hastings' treason and his execution, a proclamation containing a multitude of charges against Hastings, including the accusation of adultery with Shore's wife. On this the narrator comments that it was so well-written, and so lengthy and detailed, "that every child might well perceive, that it was prepared before. For all the time between his death & the proclaiming could scant have sufficed unto the bare writing alone, all had it been but in paper & scribbled forth in haste at adventure" (54/6-9). And so it appears to the schoolmaster and the merchant who comment upon it.

Richard now puts Mistress Shore to public penance for her supposed part in the 'conspiracy', and for her adultery with Hastings -- and the narrator ironically adds of Richard that he was 'a goodly continent prince clean & faultless of himself, sent out of heaven into this vicious world for the amendment of men's manners' (54/24-26). A lengthy description of Mistress Shore leads to mention of her affair with Edward IV, and thus to mention of Edward's concubines, a further incidental reminder that the early description of the golden reign of Edward was a piece of literary fiction.

The narrator's final comments on Mistress Shore show awareness of the human individual behind the manoeuvres of high politics:

I doubt not some shall think this woman to sleight a thing, to be written of & set amonge the remembrances of great matters: ... But me semeth the chance so much the more worthy to be remembered, in how much she is now in the more beggerly condition, vnfrended & wore out of acquaintance, after good substance, after as great favor with the prince, ... Her doinges were not much lesse, albeit thei be muche lesse remembred, because thei were not so euil (56/26-57/4).

In political terms, Mistress Shore can be placed alongside the Protector's nephews as one of the few characters who is entirely
innocent. Her fate thus calls for our unqualified sympathy, something that is so rarely called for in this work that we are reminded by the contrast of the extent to which most of the other characters have compromised themselves. Doubtless this is part of the reason why so much attention is paid to such an insignificant character. In its evocation of sympathy it is similar to the portrait of the Queen, while its awkward place in the narrative possibly results from the method of composition in blocks with the attendant lack of proportion between episodes. The narrative disjunctions that result from this lack of final revision tend again to obscure the extent to which More is struggling to create a persona to control the tone of his work.

This touching portrayal of Shore’s wife completed, More returns to his tale of political machinations. He deals first with the execution of the Woodvilles, stressing the lawlessness of the proceeding. This is undercut by the phrase ‘to nigh to the quene’ (58/2-3), since whatever one may think of Richard’s actions, the Woodvilles can hardly be regarded as innocent, guileless victims — and this specifically because of their relationship to the Queen. In his stress on the depravity of Richard, the narrator is occasionally, as here, naive and credulous.

It is now stated that ‘while no man wist what to thinke nor whome to trust, ere euer they should haue space to dispute & digest the mater & make parties’ (58/6-8), Richard seized the opportunity to promote his plot of usurpation. The next sections tell of his attempts to explain it to the people, ‘in such wise that it might be wel taken’ (58/12). Certain divines were suborned to make specious pleas on Richard’s behalf. As a pretext for the deposition, bastardry was to be alleged against Edward, his children, or both. Because of the imputation against Richard’s mother, the matter was to be broached ‘not euen fully plain & directly, but that the matter should be touched a slope craftely, as though men spared in yt point to speke al the trouth for fere of his displeasure’ (59/29-31). The bastardry of Edward’s children was to be declared openly.
The history of Edward's marriage negotiations contains the final ironic undercutting of his original portrait. More gives us, for instance, his coarse reply to his mother's objection to the proposed marriage with Elizabeth Grey:

That she is a widow & hath already children, by gods blessed Ladye I am a batchelor & have some to: & so eche of vs hath a profe that neither of vs is lyke to be barren (64/10-12).

The complicated history of the marriage leads to war with the Earl of Warwick, and More tells us that at the Battle of Barnet, Edward

slew the Erle of warwik with many other great estates of that partie, & so stably attained the crowne againe, that he peassibly enjoyed it vntil his dieng day: and in such plight left it, that it could not be lost, but by the disorde of his verye frendes, or falsched of his fained frendes (66/3-8).

The placement of this comment is of strategic importance, coming as it does as Richard begins to make his own definite moves towards the crown. The narrator tells us that the purpose of this lengthy digression has been to show 'vpon how slipper a grounde the protectour builded his colour, by which he pretended king Edwardes children to be bastardes' (66/10-12). This seems to be a reversion to the tone of the work's opening, with the narrator indulging in an urbane and sophisticated irony; it thus lends further support to the thesis of composition in blocks written at different periods and to a lack of that final revision that might have given the work more artistic coherence than it now posseses.

The attempts by Richard's allies to gain support for his usurpation constitute another series of episodes of broad farce. First, Dr. Shaa preaches a sermon on bastardry at St. Paul's. He imputes illegitimacy to the Duke of Clarence, Edward IV, and Edward's children, claiming that only Richard is a legitimate child of the Duke of York. As he entered on his peroration, the
Protector was to have entered the church so that the people might acclaim him, 'that it might have been after said, that he was he was specially chosen by god & in manner by miracle' (68/5-6). The timing was wrong, however, and Richard entered after the words had been spoken, whereupon Shaa broke off what he was saying and repeated his declaration of Richard's legitimacy: 'But the people wer so farre fro crying king Richard, that thei stode as thei had bene turned into stones, for wonder of this shamefull sermon' (68/24-26). Shaa later hid himself, and, according to the narrator, died of shame within a few days (68/26-34).

Shortly thereafter, Buckingham attempted to extort a declaration of loyalty to Richard from the aldermen and commons of London, assembled in the Guildhall. In another magnificently specious oration, Buckingham promises the citizens surety of their own bodies, the peace of their wives and daughters and the safety of their goods, which, he claims, they had not previously had for certain, because of Edward's extortionate taxes. Resistance to those taxes had caused the downfall of such London citizens and officials as Burdet, Markham, Coke and others. He cites other crimes committed by Edward IV, whose civil wars had ruined the land and its citizens. (The speech is replete with ironic echoes of Edward's death-bed speech on the same subject). He was insatiable in his appetite for concubines, and in all this, the city of London was particularly vexed, 'as for that you were nereste at hande, sith that nere here about was comonly his most abyding' (72/20-21).

Finally, Buckingham says he need not rehearse the tale of Edward's illegitimacy, since the citizens heard it in Shaa's sermon the previous Sunday -- and here, in spite of previously saying that he will not mention the matter, he does so in some detail. Consequently, the title of King must devolve on the only legitimate heir, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. So, he says, the nobles and commons of the realm, mindful of Richard's virtues, have decided to ask him to accept the crown. He, loth to accept, may be persuaded if the citizens of London join the petition. In
spite of this lengthy and eloquent speech, the citizens, supposed to have been primed by the Mayor, refuse to acclaim Richard. Buckingham repeats his speech,

so wel and ornately, & natheles so evidently and plaine, with voice gesture and countenaunce so cumly and so conuenient, that euery man much meruailed that herd him, and thought they neuer had in their liues heard so euill a tale so well tolde (75/10-12).

Still the citizens say nothing, whereupon the Mayor suggests that the Recorder may be able to persuade them; he does so unwillingly, and to no effect. On being ordered by Buckingham to give their answer, the citizens begin to murmur among themselves, and some of the Duke’s servants, together with a few press-ganged apprentices, raise the cry of ‘King Richard’, which the Duke takes for assent.

At this point, the rapidly changing point of view of the narrator collapses into complete cynicism. He has, in the course of the work, begun with an extremely sophisticated point of view, informed as much by literary models as by the actual events he is narrating. As the work progresses, he himself becomes affected by the content of his narration, expressing great sympathy for the fate of people caught up in events beyond their control. As he does so, he loses his sophistication and drops his reliance on literary models; he relates the bare facts of events, and takes up the point of view that Richard was an exceptional villain whose single-minded ambition is the sole cause of the tragedy he is narrating. This, of course, belies his earlier effort to stress not the uniqueness but the continuity in Richard’s behaviour. The sheer pressure of events proves too much for him, and he progressively sheds the point of view of the sophisticated literary historian in favour of that of the ordinary citizen. His perplexity re-enacts that of More: what is the truth about Richard? And what is the larger relevance of that truth to the meaning of history?
This process climaxes in his presentation of the scene of Richard's acceptance of the crown. Richard, of course, feigns ignorance of the purpose of the crowd's coming to Baynard Castle; civilities are exchanged between Buckingham and Richard, and Buckingham asks him to accept the crown; Richard claims to have too much honour for King Edward and his family to accept the offer -- he does not wish to be accused to be accused of ambition; Buckingham repeats the request, and then, More adds ironically,

These wordes muche moued the protectoure, whiche els as every man may witte, would neuer of likelyhoode have inclyned thereunto (79/25-27).

Richard then accepts the crown.

Richard having accepted the offer, the people talk of it among themselves. Richard's reluctance is compared to that of a Bishop at his enthronement, and More now introduces the central metaphor of the work, that of life as a play. It is drawn from Lucian's *Menippus*, and had previously been elaborated by Erasmus in *The Praise of Folly*; here, however, it is given a quite different interpretation.

And in a stage play all the people know right wel, that he that playeth the sowdayne is percase a sowter. Yet if one should can so lyttle good, to shewe out of seasonne what acquaintance he hath with him, and calle him by his owne name whyle he standeth in his magestie, one of his tormentors might hap to breake his head, and worthy for marring of the play. And so they said that these matters bee Kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaied vpon scafoldes. In which pore men be but the lokers on. And thei that wise be, wil medle no farther. For they that sometyme step vp and play with them, when they cannot play their partes, they disorder the play & do themself no good (80/31-81/10).

The narrator here seems to have all but abandoned any attempt to find a coherent meaning in events, settling for this attitude of
quietist resignation. As he has progressively abandoned his initial role of the sophisticated, literate historian and adopted the point of view of the common man, this attitude of resignation and despair has become more pronounced. More, it seems, has adopted the use of such a persona partly in order to emphasise the difficulty of finding any sense of order behind the workings of history.

On the following day, Richard, accepting the crown, 'declared the dyscomoditie of discorde, and the commodityes of concorde and vnitie' (81/27-29), pardoned all his enemies and all offences committed against him. The tragic train of events, however, has not yet ended: the Coronation over, 'Now fell ther mischieues thick' (82/13). At this point the Latin text ends; it may be that the post-coronation section of the work was a late addition, which More never managed to translate into Latin. Death and slaughter marked Richard's reign, particularly the murder of his nephews -- although More reminds us 'that some remain yet in doubt, whither they wer in his dayes destroyede or no' (82/20-21). He goes on to stress the uncertainty surrounding events in those days, then proceeds with a highly circumstantial account of the deaths of the Princes, an account which agrees in many details with those given in Polydore Virgil and the Great Chronicle.36

After this deed, we are told, Richard never had peace of mind, and More here enters on a graphic description, based partly on Tacitus' description of Tiberius, of the troubles of tyrants (87). Since the narrator has returned to his early technique of using literary analogues to give added point to his comments, this may be an indication that this section was added some time after the writing of the main narrative. Such a break in the writing would account for the break in the continuity of the portrayal of the narrator. Such a speculation is supported, perhaps, by the remainder of the History dealing with the genesis of the conspiracy between Buckingham and Morton. If, as suggested

36. CW 2, pp.261-262.
earlier, this section was added as a response to Henry VIII’s judicial murder of the Third Duke of Buckingham, then it is probably to be dated circa 1521.

The reasons which Morton urges on Buckingham are as insinuating as any of those used earlier by Buckingham himself, and although the probable late date for this additon makes it difficult to use the passage in considering More’s artistic purpose in the History, the character given of Morton and the subtlety of his reasoning form obvious parallels with the already published Utopia. Morton, says More,

> by the long & often alternate proofe, aswel of prosperitie as aduers fortune, hadde gotten by great experience the verye mother & maistres of wisdom, a depe insighte in politike worldli driftes (91/18-21).

Perceiving Buckingham’s pride injured by Richard’s glory, he decides to prick him on to rebellion. He tells Buckingham that, although he had been a supporter of Henry VI, he did not oppose Edward IV, and would have been glad to see him succeeded by his son:

> Howbeit if the secrete judgement of god haue otherwise prouided: I purpose not to spurne against a prick, nor labor to set vp that god pulleth down (92/12-14).

Morton, in effect, is enunciating the idea of Providence which eluded the narrator earlier. There is a divine purpose behind all these events, even if we cannot comprehend it, and the best policy in the circumstances is accommodation to the state of things. This is a doctrine similar to that which had already been elaborated in Utopia. Here, though, Morton seems to announce the idea only to ignore it, for he goes on to add:

> And as for the late protector & now kyng. And euen there he left, saying that he had alredy medled to muche with the world, and would fro that day medle
with his boke and his beedes and no farther (92/14-17).

Naturally Buckingham encourages him to continue. Morton then repeats Aesop’s fable of the lion who said no beast with horns should dwell in the wood; an animal ‘that had in his forehed a bonch of flesh’ (93/3-4) asked: ‘But what & he cal it an horn, wher am I then?’ (93/9-10) -- this being a warning against careless political speech. The text ends with Morton saying he does not dispute Richard’s title, as he is ‘king in possession’:

But for the weale of this realme, ... I was about to wish, that ... it might yet haue please Godde for the better store, to haue geuen him some of suche other excellente vertues mete for the rule of a realm, as our lorde hath planted in the parsone of youre grace (93/19-25).

This subtle encouragement to rebellion is far from the cynical resignation expressed by the narrator as Richard accepts the crown, yet it is equally distant from the type of constructive engagement in politics that More urges on the wise man in Utopia, and which is at least implied in Morton’s earlier comments. It is likely that in having Morton express these contradictory views, More was giving voice to the felt paradox that tyranny may, on the one hand, be the expression of Providence and yet must be resisted. This suggests that he may have been struggling to show that a benign Providence was at work when all the evidence suggested otherwise.

The History can be said to be relatively successful in achieving its purpose. Ostensibly an account of the history of the usurpation of Richard III, More’s chosen literary mode, arrived at, in part, from a study of Lucian, allows him to admit a complexity of viewpoint that would have been difficult to achieve with a straightforward chronological narrative method. Assumptions about the unique evil of Richard are consistently undermined; the emphasis throughout is on the continuity, both political and moral, between Richard’s actions and those of
Edward IV. What is stressed is the universality of the events of which the reign of Richard as Protector and King is a heightened and concentrated example, and that universality raises the question which, in this work is left unresolved, of the role of Providence.

The chief method by which More achieves his aim is the use of a narrating persona, through whose changing reactions to the events he describes we can sense his creator’s own radical uncertainty. Faced at every turn with ambiguity of both events and motivations, how is the historian to find sense and meaning in what he is describing? Intellectually, More understood that ambiguity itself may constitute meaning. Artistically, his task was to find a literary form that would enable him to dramatise this ambiguity. Accordingly, his persona is initially introduced as one who is certain of what he wants to say. His intention is to record the events of Richard’s usurpation so as to show that the Protector was in essence neither better or worse than his predecessor. As his narration proceeds, however, the sheer malignancy of what he is describing defies his attempt to provide a reasoned and balanced explanation for it. He comes more and more to accept the premise that Richard was uniquely evil, even when this interpretation is at odds with his own account of what actually happened.

The ironic poise of the opening sections disintegrates as the narrator comes to feel sympathy for Richard’s victims, and amazement at the ease with which the Protector was able to pursue his ambitions with little resistance. More is thus able to attribute to his persona his own uncertainty as to how best to understand these events. If Richard’s villainy is so manifestly obvious, why does he meet so little opposition? Even more disturbing is the sense that evil is so heavily predominant, and so little counterbalanced by an opposing good. Where is the presence of a Providence that would bring good out of evil? More believed strongly in the reality of Providence, but the events of Richard’s reign seem to deny its existence. By adopting the use
of a persona who finds it difficult to see the workings of Providence in what he is describing, More can dramatically project the sceptical, doubting side of his personality. The notion of a persona is one of the things which More adopted from Lucian, although it exists there only in embryonic form, without any of the complexity which More gives to it. Lucian used his personae not to objectify an inner conflict, but to dramatise an argument; unlike the personae of More, those of Lucian are static, so that there is no need to interpret them as characters. More saw that the idea was capable of dramatic development, and the History is his first attempt to utilise such a device for his own complex purposes.

The element of experimentation in the History is one of the reasons for the work's unevenness of tone and for the apparently disproportionate attention paid to some episodes. As well as this, the length of time which More spent on the composition of the work makes it likely that he did not work on the narrative consecutively. He is more likely to have composed it in blocks, and then to have inserted each section into its appropriate place in the whole. Although the work retains a coherent design as a whole, it cannot be said to be perfect in its parts. A combination of the circumstances of composition and a sometimes tentative search for a dramatic correlative for his intellectual uncertainty led More to produce a work which, while its intentions are clear, shows him groping towards that intellectual and artistic poise which he attained in the chronologically contemporary Utopia.
CHAPTER SIX

THE FINAL ACHIEVEMENT: 'UTOPIA'

In *The History of King Richard III*, More was seen to be searching for a use of the role of *persona* that would be fully adequate to conveying the complexity of his vision. "Official" versions of history could be called into question; the problematic role of providence could be examined; a variety of problems inherent in the notion of history could be explored -- all this without More's needing to commit himself to any one point of view. If all these ideas could be reflected in the complex consciousness of a *persona*, the work could be given at least a provisional unity. However, the extended period of composition and the lack of final revision meant that the presence of such a *persona* was only fitfully evident.

The attempt to create such a unifying *persona* was inspired, at least in part, by More's reading of Lucian, a reading which stressed the presence in the Greek writer of a complex structural irony rather than merely incidental satire. More had realised that not only the content but the form of Lucian's most characteristic works was ironical -- and ironical in a way that modified one's attitude towards the content.

The composition of *Utopia* was contemporary with that of the *History*, and the former work displays the same interest in finding a literary form that will itself enact the process of disinterested inquiry. What differentiates *Utopia* from the *History* is the presence in the former of two characters who are both recognisable aspects of the historical More: they engage in debate, but neither emerges as fully vindicated. There is something to be said for each position, although that taken by Raphael is more fully explored. And it is just here that questions of the genesis of the work become relevant.
Since the publication in 1952 of J. H. Hexter's work *Utopia: The Biography of an Idea*¹ it has been recognised that the book owes its shape to the revision of an original conception. Its origins lie in More's membership of an English embassy to the Netherlands in 1515 to discuss trade problems with the Emperor Charles V.² When the negotiations reached an impasse, More found himself at leisure. He also found himself in the company of friends of Erasmus, most notably a citizen of Antwerp, Peter Giles. They discussed many things together, including, under the stimulus of Amerigo Vespucci's account of his voyage to the New World, the topic of the ideal state. Various aspects of such a state, its customs and institutions were touched upon, and when More committed this to paper, it took the form of a traveller's account of such a society, chanced upon in the course of a voyage. The whole was then supplied with a fictional narrator, Raphael Hythloday.³

On his return to England, More was offered employment in the royal service by Wolsey and Henry VIII.⁴ Meditating on the implications of this offer for his career as humanist man of letters, More remembered what he had written in Antwerp, and, recalling the figure of Hythloday, constructed an imaginary debate between him and a new character called Morus, on the merits and demerits of a humanist entering the service of a prince.⁵ This was inserted into the previously written work, and the whole became the work in two books which we now have. This accounts for the evident opening of a seam in the original work


4. Ibid., p.xxxiii.

5. Ibid., pp.xxxvi-xxxvii.
in order to insert the Dialogue of Counsel, and also for the impression of some artistic incoherence in Book II. Topics such as Utopian ethics and religion which were appropriate to the type of discussion held between More and Giles in Antwerp ceased to interest More as his mind, under the pressure of new, more urgent circumstances, began to engage those topics more appropriate to a humanist about to enter the royal service -- that is, Utopian social practices and property arrangements, and their ideas on crime and punishment, war and peace, luxury and idleness. 6

Much of this account can be accepted as it stands, although the argument seems to rest on two mistaken assumptions. The first of these is that the genesis of the work was conversations held with Giles in Antwerp; but the verbal and rhetorical complexity suggest a much longer period of gestation, perhaps as long as that suggested by Prévost. He spoke of 'a process of some six years, following a seminal period in the summer of 1509, when Erasmus, in More's own house, wrote the Praise of Folly.' 7 The putative conversations were probably only a point in a much more extended process. Hexter's second assumption is that Hythloday, as fictional narrator, formed part of the original conception. 8

Book II is a discourse, a first-person narration to an audience, although we are not told who the audience is, and find out only after the discourse is completed that the speaker's name is Raphael (244/15). Further, there are scattered bits of autobiography in Book II, telling us that the narrator lived five years at Amaurotum, capital of the Utopians (116/28); of his literary tastes (180); that he was a member of the fourth voyage made by someone unspecified (180); and that only four of his party visited Utopia (218/10-11). Many of these difficulties are cleared up at the beginning of Book I, so that much of that book

6. Ibid., p.xi.


8. CW 4, pp.xvii-xviii.
must have been written in the Netherlands. 9 But does this mean that Hythloday the narrator was part of what More originally wrote?

The matter can best be decided if we begin reading at the opening of Book II. We begin with a purely factual description of the island of Utopia. It is clearly intended as a description of an ideal state, since we are told that Utopus, 'who as conqueror gave the island its name ... brought the rude and rustic people to such a perfection of culture and humanity as makes them now superior to almost all mortals' (113/3-7). 10 The factual description of this state then continues, and it is made clear that its excellence derives from its rational planning. As the description continues, however, some of the details raise disturbing questions. It is true that some of these, for example the public meals to which Fr. Surtz objected, 11 may well have appealed to the abstemious More; but in other sections, such as those on war and slavery, the distortions generated by the tension between rational idealism and actuality are far from pleasant. It begins to look as though Utopia is not wholly as ideal as one had originally supposed.

Why should this be so? Why should More have wished to depict an apparently ideal state that is, in reality, far from ideal? It reflects, firstly, the tension in More between the sceptic and the idealist, one part of him believing that social reform was greatly to be desired, the other half that the imperfections of human nature made it impossible. Both sides of More's nature find expression in the original discourse. More began to describe an ideal state, but as he wrote, the sceptical side of his temper

9. Ibid., p.xviii.

10. Vtopus cuius utpote victoris nomen refert insula ... quique rudem atque agrestem turbam ad id quo nunc caeteros prope mortales antecellit cultus, humanitatisque perduxit (112/1-5).

11. Ibid., p.ciii.
asserted itself, so that his depiction of this ideal state became qualified. When he came to add Book I, new circumstances meant that his interest shifted to the means by which his idealism could be translated into practice.

In the book of epigrams which More published in 1518, there is one which throws particular light on his attitude towards building ideal states. This is the one entitled QUIS OPTIMUS REIPVB. STATVS. In this poem, More is responding to someone who has asked whether a king or a senate governs best. After providing arguments that weigh heavily in favour of a senate, he breaks off, saying:

Is there anywhere a people upon whom you yourself, by your own decision, can impose either a king or a senate? If this does lie within your power, you are king. Stop considering to whom you may give power. The more basic question is whether it would do any good if you could (No.198/28-31).

Bradner and Lynch make valuable comments on this poem in relation to Utopia. More could, of course, give any government he liked to Utopia, but that was "no-place". They link the poem to the letter to Erasmus, in which More recounted his dream of himself as king of the Utopians. As the editors note: 'his reverie came to an end and left him in the complex realities of a waking world. In this poem, too, after speculating about the theoretical


advantages of a monarch or a parliament, he calls himself back down to the real world of expedient rather than ideal choices'.

Finally, the question in the last line of the poem 'is not which form is best but which form works in particular circumstances; or the question is whether it is expedient that you do the choosing. In the dramatic context of the poem (including its publication in the same volume with Utopia), the two words 'an expediat' are like a struck gong reverberating in the mind'. Although the composition of this poem cannot be dated more certainly than 1500-1518, its relevance to Utopia is obvious: More here expresses scepticism about the theoretical construction of ideal states, and allows this to be published in the same volume as his own account of such a state.

This poem, then, helps us to understand why More has so heavily qualified his description of Utopia. This qualification is, as Elizabeth McCutcheon has shown, all-pervasive at the level of style. In, fact, so pervasive is the use of litotes to express More's evasiveness, that it again leads one to doubt Hexter's assumption that the discourse on Utopia substantially represents the conversations held between More and Giles. It is improbable that such conversation would have included such profuse use of the resources of litotes; the discourse on Utopia is not simply a transcription of the conversations between More and Giles, but is a reconstruction of them, artistically and stylistically shaped so as to give expression to the full complexity of More's response to the theoretical exercise of describing an ideal state.

16. CW 3.2, p.50.
17. Ibid., p.50.
18. Ibid., pp.10-11, 391.
It seems that we must posit a stage of the text intermediary between More's committing his conversations with Giles to writing, and the later composition of the Dialogue of Counsel. It was probably at this stage of revision that More introduced the figure of the narrator, originally as a means of establishing the fictional verisimilitude of his work. The discourse of Utopia was thus firmly established as a traveller's tale and, in this form, began to acquire associations with such genres as traveller's tales of the New World and the fantastic journey. The latter class reminds us particularly of Lucian's True History, in which great trouble is taken to give verisimilitude to what is evidently nothing but lies and fantastic invention; the narrator tells us as much at the beginning of his tale. More does something more complicated with his narrator, naming him Raphael Hythloday, 'angelic talker of nonsense'. If, as Raphael, he has the role of 'salvation-bringer to Christian Europe' as an expert in trifles and a babbler of nonsense he is clearly not always to be taken seriously. Deciding which is the 'real' Hythloday is beside the point, since the name suggests the complexity of More's response to his own work, and the simultaneous raising and undercutting of expectations which he wished to induce in his audience.

A further indication of the kind of complexity which More was now introducing into his work lies in the geographical names and descriptions. 'Utopia' itself looks like a Greek coinage for either 'no place' or 'happy place'. The first of these would be Ou-topia, the second Eu-topia; by combining the two in this way, More builds the ambiguity of his conception into the very name of his imaginary island. Its capital city, Amaurotum means 'Ghost City' or 'Shadowy City'; that it was named Mentirano until the edition of 1517 indicates More's continues effort to enhance

the ambiguity of his text. The city is built on the river Anydrus, 'waterless'. Although the reasons for this undoubtedly lie in More's character, it may be that something concrete also had a part to play. As More's mission in Antwerp was coming to an end, he became involved in the controversy between Erasmus and Martin Dorp over *The Praise of Folly*. Martin Dorp was a young theologian from the University of Louvain who had attacked, in both public and private letters, Erasmus' book, because of its satire on scholasticism and on the religious orders. More's letter to him in defence of Erasmus contains, besides a defence of his friend, a defence of humanistic learning, and of satire as an instrument of education and reform. So much is commonly agreed by commentators, but there may be a deeper significance, connected to the shape *Utopia* was taking in More's mind. His letter to Dorp is dated Bruges, October 1515 although he was presumably aware of Erasmus' correspondence with Dorp some time before this. It is surely not impossible that as he came to the defence of his friend and of the humanist enterprise, More was made aware of the possibility of similar attacks upon himself should *Utopia* be thought too bold. His revision of the text to increase its ambiguity may well have found justification in this episode.

The work which More took back with him to England was, then, quite different in its history from what Hexter has called More's 'first intention'. It had already been revised, and already

22. It is not certain that the punning names existed at this stage of the text's development; later correspondence between More and Erasmus refers to the island by the Latin name of 'Nusquama'. But if the Greek names had not been present in the Antwerp version, how are we to explain their use in the Prefatory Letter to Giles, and the assumption that Giles had known of them previously? It may be that the Latin was used in the letter to Erasmus for the sake of the pun.

23. SL 8; Corr. 27.

represented More's second thoughts on the subject. Accordingly, any view of the nature of those sections which More added to the work in London must take into account the ambivalence already built into his account of Utopia. In particular, since the Dialogue of Counsel amplifies the character of Hythloday, we have to see how this was made to fit with what More had already written. More solved this problem by making his narrator an uncompromising idealist who demands radical institutional reform, and who refuses to have any dealings with the corrupt courts of Europe; he is opposed by the somewhat naive Giles and the sceptical Morus. The impulse that led More to devise his original ideal state and the second thoughts that led him to make his creation so ambivalent are thus both embodied in the Dialogue of Counsel, which now serves not only as an introduction to the account of Utopia but as the intellectual centre-piece of the work.

Our sense of the relationship between More and his text is confirmed by much of the detail of its publishing history and by the parerga to the work. Between Erasmus' leaving England and the eventual publication of Utopia, correspondence between himself and More shows something of the latter's attitude towards his book. On 3 September, More wrote to Erasmus asking him to take care of the publishing details:

I am sending you my "Nowhere", which is nowhere well written. I have added a prefatory epistle to my friend, Peter. I know from experience that I do not have to tell you to give your proper attention to everything else (SL 73).25

'Everything else' probably refers to an offer of Erasmus to obtain suitable prefatory material from well-known humanists; it is certainly this to which More refers in his letter of 20 September:

25. Nvsquamam nostram nusquam bene scriptam ad te mitto; praexcripsi epistolam ad Petrum meum. Cetera tu vt recte cures, expertus sum non esse opus vt te adhorter (Allen II, 461/1-3).
Some time ago I sent you my Nowhere; I am most anxious to have it published soon and also that it be handsomely set off with the highest of recommendations, if possible, from several people, both intellectuals and distinguished statesmen (SL 76).

He wrote again on 31 October, expressing happiness that the book had been approved by Peter Giles, and adding:

I am anxious to find out if it meets with the approval of Tunstal, and Busleiden, and your Chancellor; but their approval is more than I could wish for, since they are so fortunate as to be top-ranking officials in their own governments, although they might be won over by the fact that in this commonwealth of mine the ruling class would be completely made up of such men as are distinguished for learning and virtue (SL 80).

More was clearly anxious that his book should be praised by the right sort of people -- people, that is of reputation and influence. On December 4, he expressed his delight that the book had been praised by Tunstal.

With much of the prefatory material collected, the book finally appeared in that same month. The letters from famous humanists, so assiduously collected by Erasmus, form the bulk of the *parerga*, although other items, such as the specimen of the Utopian alphabet and the map of the island, also appear, and are

26. Misi ad te iam pridem Nusquamam, quam ego gestio et breui prodire et bene ornatam etiam egregia et magnifica laude, eaque si fieri posset a pluribus non litteratis modo, sed etiam his qui sint ab administranda republica celabratii (Allen II, 467/13-17).

27. Cupio scire an Tonstallus probet, an Buslydius, an Cancellarius vester; quibus vt probetur supra votum est, hominibus tam felicibus vt in his rebus publicis suis primos ducant ordines, nisi eo propicietur quod in illa republica nostra illi tales viri, litteris ac virtute tanti, principes plane essent futuri; (Allen II, 481/63-68).

clearly designed to introduce the reader to the pretence of reality with which More chose to endow his non-existent island; their purpose is to enhance the fictional status of the work.

The letters are a different matter. The letter of John Desmarais is, as Surtz says, 'uninspired, as though written from a sense of duty'. In spite of its praise of More’s book, it was omitted from later editions. That of Jerome Busleyden is also full of fulsome praise for the book and its author, talking of his holding up 'that ideal of a commonwealth, that pattern and perfect model of morality, whose equal has never been seen anywhere in the world for the soundness of its constitution, for its perfection, and for its desirability' (35/1-4). All the praise is directed towards the content of the book; no mention is made of its status as a work of fiction.

The letter of Guillaume Budé, too, consists mainly of praise for the institutions of Utopia, particularly for its reformed legal system. There are, however, indications that Budé felt uneasy about the fictional status of the work, and particularly about its narrator. He says that Justice was not stationed in the Zodiac after her flight from earth:

> If we are to believe Hythlodaeus, she must have remained behind on the island of Utopia and not yet have made her way to the sky (11/39-13/2).

> 'If we are to believe Hythlodaeus': Budé, apparently, in spite of his enthusiastic praise of Utopian customs and institutions, felt that the element of fiction in the work was in tension with

29. CW 4, p.282.

30. 'eam Reipublicae ideam, eam morum formulam, absolutissimumque simulacrum praescribere, quo nullo unquam in orbe usum sit, uel salubrius institutum, uel magis absolutum, uel quod magis expetendum uideatur' (33/29-34/1-3).

31. '... restitisse enim eam in Vtopia insula necesse est, si Hythladaeo credimus, necdum in caelum peruenisse' (10/30-12/1).
the suggestions for social and political reform. Of his attitude to Hythloday, Coogan writes that it is twofold: a playfulness in sharing and shaping the fictional character, and serious concern with his word. In fact, Budé seems ambivalent about the status of Hythloday. He has, however, as Sylvester points out, raised the question of the relationship between Hythloday and his creator. More leads us to feel sympathy for Hythloday’s views while making it impossible to agree with him completely. This creates an interpretative problem that can be solved only by responding fully to Hythloday as social reformer and Hythloday as Menippean alazon, and seeing the relationship between them. Whether Budé felt the full implications of his phrase is perhaps open to doubt, and it is Giles and More who elaborate -- or, rather, imply -- the stance which the reader needs to adopt.

Giles takes up the pretence of the reality of Hythloday, comparing him favourably to Ulysses and Amerigo Vespucci. Even so, the eloquence of his speech is nothing compared to that of More’s writing. And Giles here, perhaps, alerts us to be wary of Hythloday: ‘By heaven, I am even disposed to believe that in all the five years Raphael spent on the island, he did not see as much as one may perceive in More’s description’ (23/5-7). Although the reader’s attention is at once diverted to More’s powers of memory and the fluency of his Latin style, we are surely being asked to look for those things which More saw but Raphael did not. The latter’s credibility is in question even before we meet him.

The most important of the introductory materials is More’s letter to Peter Giles, in which he apologise for and offers an

33. R. S. Sylvester, "Si Hythlodaeo credimus": Vision and Revision in More’s Utopia, in Essential Articles, p.295.
34. ‘Et hercule crediderim Raphaelem ipsum minus in ea insula uidisse per omne quinquennium quod illic egit, quam in MORI descriptione uidere liceat’ (22/4-7).
explanation of his delay in publishing the book (38/1-40/2); introduces the process of fictionalisation by asking Peter to recall several details which Hythloday had mentioned about Utopia (40/10-42/4); and takes the opportunity to satirise those who will misjudge the work (42/24-44/21). As Elizabeth McCutcheon has shown in impressive detail, the letter also constitutes a hermeneutics for Utopia, a guide to its interpretation. 35

The letter is silent on the subject-matter of the work, and is ambiguous and paradoxical, in spite of its concern for truthfulness to what follows. There is a flexibility to More's sense of the interconnection between his repertorial, authorial and historical selves that goes beyond a fixed sense of persona-More.36 The writer of the letter talks of the simplicity and artlessness of the work, while the text insists on its own subtlety and sophistication.37 As More distances himself further and further through the figure of Morus, he becomes increasingly present through the subtlety and sophistication of the language.38

Precisely how subtle and sophisticated this is becomes apparent when he raises the issues of doubt, truthfulness and lying. The section on lying 'depends ... upon a sly treatment of truth and falsehood as if they were exclusive or immediate contraries -- that is, contraries with no middle ground, so that if one is denied the other must be asserted'.39 For this reason, he insists upon knowing the exact measurement of the bridge in Utopia, and goes on to say:

Just as I shall take great pains to have nothing incorrect in the book, so, if there is doubt about

36. Ibid., p.18.
37. Ibid., p.19.
38. Ibid., p.20.
39. Ibid., p.44.
anything, I shall rather tell an objective falsehood than an intentional lie ... (41/31-35).

A marginal gloss refers to 'the Theological Distinction between an Intentional Lie and an Objective Falsehood', a distinction which is probably non-existent. More is either poking fun at scholastic theologians, or asking us to inquire into the meaning behind the words. If, as reporter, he is merely repeating from memory what he has been told, he cannot intentionally be lying; but Morus the reporter is a fictional creation of Thomas More the author, as is Morus' informant, Hythloday. The account of Utopia is an account of a fiction, something that is an objective falsehood: since it was created by More, is it also, in some sense, an intentional lie? Because of this complication of fictional selves, everything in the book is 'in ambiguo'.

Nor is this all, for in regard to the fact in question, the 'reporter' is correct. The paradoxes thus created are infinitely recessive, and are at the heart of More's hermeneutics both in the letter and in the work itself. The doubts that have already been raised as to the status of Hythloday and his account of Utopia are here confirmed.

The final part of the letter offers a guide to the correct response by the reader, by way of warning against possible

40. '... nam ut maxime curabo, ne quid sit in libro falsi, ita si quid sit in ambiguo, potius mendacium dicam, quam mentiar ...' (40/27-29).

41. These marginal glosses were probably composed by Giles and Erasmus. Giles, in a letter to Busleyden, writes: 'I have appended also some brief annotations in the margins' (23/25-26). Fr. Surtz points out that in the edition of 1517, Lupset attributes them to Erasmus, and comments: 'Many of the observations are typically Erasmian in spirit and observation. Consequently, Erasmus, as well as Giles, may have a hand in their composition' (CW 4, p.281).

42. The Yale translation may be misleading at this point. As both McCutcheon (1983, p.47) and Fr. Surtz (CW 4, p.292) point out, the distinction derives from Aulus Gellius and turns on the moral question of intentionality.

misreadings, which 'are interpreted psychologically as reflections of the reader's own self-interest and as a projection, conscious or unconscious, of his own self-image onto another's work'. Against this, More counterbalances the enjoyment and thoughtful response for which he hopes. What we can see in the letter is

the subtlety and sophistication of his composite forms, his fascination with the roles of writer and reader, his powerfully realized fictions, the unique blend of the lucid and ambiguous in his language, his sense of the hypothetical or conditional, his aesthetic of complementary opposition and honest deception, and a method of paradox and puzzle which constantly challenges us and reflects the subtlety, suppleness, and vigor of his mind and imagination.

In conjunction with the other prefatory material, this letter bears out Robbin S. Johnson's contention that the three stages of composition -- Book I, Book II, and the parerga -- make the work progressively less direct and more complex rhetorically. The challenge to the reader begins early in the text. More begins with a strictly factual account of his activity as a member of the English embassy in the Netherlands. The language has a tone of ceremonious formality, as More impresses upon the reader his identity as a responsible public official:

The most invincible King of England, Henry, the eighth of that name, who is distinguished by all the accomplishments of a model monarch, had certain weighty matters recently in dispute with His Serene Highness, Charles, Prince of Castile. With a view to their discussion and settlement, he sent me as a

44. Ibid., p.59.
45. Ibid., p.68.
commissioner to Flanders -- as a companion and associate of the peerless Cuthbert Tunstal, ... (47/8-14).

He is, of course, supplying necessary background information by way of introduction to his book, but he is doing more than this. He stresses his association with top public officials, and his being commissioned by his king. He is a man of public affairs, and the opening pages of his book have the air of grave and judicious realism appropriate to the memoirs of a diplomat. Yet even here More has introduced the characteristic playfulness of the work by use of the figure of litotes. In the opening sentence, the phrase 'Qvvm non exigui momenti negocia quaedam' is 'played against regal superlatives: "inuictissimus" (46/8-9), "ornatissimus" and "serenissimo" (46/10). He knows, too, the stock phrases of humanist flattery: the chief diplomat on the Spanish side, Georges de Themsecke, is 'a man not only trained in eloquence but a natural orator -- most learned, too, in the law and consummately skilled in diplomacy by native ability as well as by long experience' (47/27-30). By speaking thus of his opponent, More conveys a sense of himself as fair-minded and judicious, and one who has sufficient experience to recognise the qualities of which he speaks.

Similarly, he extols his friend Peter Giles in a delightful eulogy which serves to characterise both Giles and More. Having established the tone of realism, and having thus created the impression that what we are about to read is a true and factual

47. 'Qvvm non exigui momenti negocia quaedam inuictissimus Angliae Rex Henricvs eius nominis octauus, omnibus egregij principus artibus ornatissimus, cum serenissimo Castellae principec Carolo controuersa nuper habuisset, ad ea tractanda, componendaque, oratorem me legauit in Flandriam, comitem & collegam uiri incomparabilis Cuthberti Tunstalli ...' (46/8-14).


49. '... non arte solum, uerumetiam natura facundus, ad haec iureconsultissimus, tractandi uero negotij cum ingenio, tum assiduo rerum usu eximius artifex' (46/24-26).
account by one who is eminently qualified to give it and whose
judgement we can trust, More at once introduces fictional
elements into his work. The tone of verisimilitude is maintained
while we read of his encounter with a stranger:

a man of advanced years, with sunburnt countenance
and long beard and cloak hanging carelessly from
his shoulder, while his appearance and dress seemed
to me to be those of a ship's captain (49/20-23).

It would be difficult to imagine one less like the people whom
More had described in his opening paragraphs; he at once catches
the imagination and excites curiosity. This is even more the case
when Peter, whose companion he is, says of him:

There is no mortal alive today who can give you
such an account of unknown peoples and lands ...
(49/30-32).

He goes on to compare his sailing to that of Ulysses or Plato,
and it is now that we find out his name -- Raphael Hythlodaeus.
The aura of realism is ruptured to accommodate a palpably
fictional name; what seemed to be a purely factual account has
been skilfully modulated into fiction. The reader becomes even
more unsettled if the etymology of that strange name is
investigated. 'Raphael' evokes associations with the archangel,
while the coinage 'Hythlodaeus' means 'expert in nonsense'. We
are presented, then, with an angelic expert in trifles, and this
in a work which we had been initially led to believe was wholly
serious.

50. ‘... uergentis ad senium aetatis, uultu adusto,
promissa barba, penula neglectim ab humero dependente,
qui mihi ex uultu atque habitu nauclerus esse uibebatur’
(48/18-21).

51. ‘Nam nemo uiuit hodie mortalium omnium, qui tantam tibi
hominum, terrarumque incognitarum narrare possit
historiam’ (48/25-27).
If the name of the stranger provokes the reader to look again at his physical description, then it can be seen that this may be designed to evoke not only the experienced traveller, but also the charlatan philosophers of Lucian, who are distinguished by their long hair and beards, and who lay claim to a wisdom which they do not possess. In particular, it may evoke the Cynic from the dialogue of that name. He is distinguished by his long hair and beard, and his mode of argument is markedly similar to that which Raphael will later employ.

The stranger to whom More is introduced is obviously not a figure to which we can make a simple response. He may be angelic; he may be a mere trifler; he may be an experienced traveller with something worthwhile to relate; he may be a charlatan who will unwittingly expose his own weaknesses in the course of his argument. He may even be a combination of all these attributes. Equally disorienting is the way in which a character of this type is introduced into what one may have expected, on the evidence of the title, to be a political treatise. Is the work to be a serious one? Or is it an elaborate form of fiction? The care which More has taken to establish an atmosphere of verisimilitude seems to be undercut by the elements of fiction which he has introduced. Lucian had followed the same method in A True History. More generally, part of the method of Lucian's satirical dialogues consisted in utilising a comic framework which brought into question the seriousness of the ostensible subject matter. The inter-relationship of fictional and serious elements in Utopia is more complex, but More may well have taken the Lucianic method as one of his starting points.

As we find out more about this stranger, we learn that he is more learned in Greek than in Latin, and had been a companion of Amerigo Vespucci on his last three voyages. More greets him civilly, and they sit in the garden of his house to hear Hythloday's conversation. More's report of Hythloday's conversation reveals him as an adventurous traveller and an apparently objective reporter on what he has seen. The brief
account of the physical climate of the countries he has visited predisposes the reader to accept as equally truthful what he has to say about the social customs of these nations. More, at this point, undercuts the surface objectivity of his text by saying that he will relate 'what he told us of the manners and customs of the Utopians' (55/5-6). 52 We are confronted with the multifaceted ambiguity of that name just at the point where Hythloday's narration of their customs is to begin.

It is at this point that More has chosen to insert the section known as the Dialogue of Counsel. It is primarily an 'occasional' piece, having its origin in More's change of circumstances following his return to England. Yet it is not simply an awkward insertion into an existing text. Its themes are related to the account of an ideal political system; it is carefully shaped so as to lead naturally into Book II; and it deepens our sense of More's literary strategy, both in his portrayal of Hythloday and in his deliberately making it impossible for the reader to form any fixed opinion on the matters in debate.

The debate begins with Hythloday being allowed to appear high-minded against the prudential arguments of a somewhat naive Peter Giles; he is not interested in entering royal service as a means of advancing the personal interests of himself and his friends and relatives. But there is a further reason for his refusal: 'As it is, now I live as I please, which I surely fancy is very seldom the case with your grand courtiers' (57/2-3). 53

With these mixed motives given, Morus enters the debate, praising Hythloday's lack of desire for riches and power, but suggesting that he will best use his 'generous and truly philosophic spirit' (57/11) 'if you so order your life as to apply your talent and industry to the public interest, even if it

52. '... quae de moribus atque institutis narrabat Utopiensium' (54/5-6).

53. 'Atqui nunc sic uiuo et uolo, quod ego certe suspicor paucissimis purpuratorum contingere' (56/1-2).
involves some personal disadvantages to yourself' (57/12-14). 54

This can best be done by helping a monarch follow honourable courses. Morus and Hythloday share substantial areas of agreement: neither would enter the royal service for personal gain, and they agree that monarchs are in need of good advice. Where they disagree is on the practical value of a humanist involving himself in the corrupting miasma of intrigues, selfishness and foolishness that seem to them to constitute a court. It must be noted, however, that Hythloday's position is not dismissed lightly: his idealism clearly held a dangerous fascination for More, and he is more than once allowed to score points at the expense of Morus. The method here is not dissimilar to that used in Lucian's dialogue The Cynic which More had translated.

He begins his discussion with Morus by drawing a wholly bleak portrait of kings and courts. Kings prefer war to peace, and have more care for gaining new territory than for administrating that which they have (56/20-26; 57/22-30). Among courtiers, flattery and self-serving prevents them profiting by good counsel (56/26-33; 57/31-38). He himself has observed their behaviour, even in England. In the lengthy account that follows of Hythloday's account of his visit to Cardinal Morton, More proceeds to complicate his text in a variety of ways.

Hythloday describes Morton in glowing terms as an ideal statesman in whom the king places the greatest confidence; whatever Morton says will command our respect. The discussion at Morton's table turns on the number of thieves in England and the proper punishment for them. Hythloday speaks against capital punishment as being 'too harsh a penalty for theft' and yet not 'a sufficient deterrent' (61/18-19). 55 It would be better to

54. '... si te ita compares, ut uel cum aliquo priuatim incommode ingenium tuum atque industriam, publicis rebus accommodes' (56/10-11).

55. 'Est enim ad uindicanda furta nimis atroc, nec tamen ad refrenanda sufficiens' (60/15-16).
provide them with some means of livelihood so that they would not need to steal. In describing how it is that people are driven to theft, he veers into radical social criticism: returned soldiers are prevented from earning a livelihood by their disabilities; the idle attendants of nobleman have no source of livelihood when their masters die or fall ill; the enclosure movement, while enriching the landowners, has produced a new class of landless beggars. Such are the causes of poverty and theft, although Hythloday's eloquence leads him far from his ostensible topic. He denounces the use of mercenaries in the French army, and inveighs against the uses of luxury in England before coming to his conclusion: 'Assuredly, unless you remedy these evils, it is useless for you to boast of the justice you execute in the punishment of theft' (71/8-10). His criticism, then, is that evil effects are produced by evil institutions and customs, and that unless these are remedied, nothing permanent will be achieved. In putting forward the theory that social evils are man-made, Hythloday has given us 'a historic landmark of humanist social criticism'. It is not sufficient, however, simply to praise the far-sighted radicalism of Hythloday's thought and to identify his views with those of More. It may well be the case that More saw merit in such an analysis of social evils; it by no means follows that he would adopt Hythloday's solution.

It is at this point that the literary provenance of Hythloday begins to assume importance. He is, in part, a philosophus gloriosus, one in whom saeva indignatio has become a ruling passion, to the exclusion of other necessary qualities. This

56. 'Certe nisi his malis medemini, frustra iactetis exercitiam in uindicanda furta iustitiam ...' (70/6-7).


is evident when we see his torrent of passionate indignation
taking him far beyond the point he wishes to establish. It is
evident, also, in the reply he makes when asked for his solution
to the problem. The real complexity of his character now begins
to emerge. He also takes on qualities of the personae of
Menippean satire. In that genre can be found the alazon, a
boastful charlatan, and the eiron who subjects him to shrewd
criticism, often assuming a mask of false naivety. In Hythloday,
these functions are combined. As eiron he criticises the naive
assumptions on which the punishment of thieves is based; as
alazon, he proposes remedies which do not fully address the
problem. Morus, as becomes apparent later, also acts as eiron,
criticising Hythloday's assumptions and conclusions.59 This
complexity in the figure of Hythloday is one measure of the
complexity of More's response to Lucian.

Following Hythloday's speech, Morton asks him to state how
theft should be punished. In reply, Hythloday again eloquently
attacks capital punishment as contrary to justice and to Biblical
injunction. As for a more appropriate punishment 'I can find no
better system in any country than that which, in the course of my
travels, I observed in Persia among the people called the
Polylerites ...' (75/24-27).60 Hythloday, then, has recourse to
the fictional example of a people whose name means 'much
nonsense'. Is this meant to imply that 'their reasonableness is
nonsensical, or non-existent, in the European world?61 Or is it
meant to imply that Hythloday is talking nonsense? In view of the
complexity which More has introduced into the character of
Hythloday, neither meaning ought to be excluded.


60. '"... nullius institutum gentis magis probo, quam id quod
interea dum peregrinabar, in Perside obseruatum apud uulgo
dictos Polyleritas adnotau ...' (74/18-21)).

61. A. R. Heiserman, Satire in the 'Utopia', PMLA, 67 (1962),
163-174, (p.168)
As Hythloday explains the Polylerite system of punishment we can again observe his tendency to stray from his ostensible subject: rhetorical exempla are amplified for their persuasive power. The Polylerites are physically isolated, a condition that seems to be essential to Hythloday's ideal states. Having little contact with other peoples, they are free to experiment with their social systems and penal codes. However, as Robbin S. Johnson notes, their isolation symbolises the distance between the paradigm and social reality, and as Hythloday expounds these paradigms, he becomes progressively further abstracted from reality. 62

The community of the Polylerites also exhibits the peculiar mixture of idealism and practicality that characterises the Utopians. Criminals are treated humanely not only because it is right to do so, but because it benefits the community. It is not clear whether Hythloday is really describing what he has seen, or whether his stress on the idealism of the Polylerites is merely his own rationalisation of their utilitarianism. The prisoners are generally well-treated, and are employed on public works; all are dressed in clothes of the same colour; the tip of one of their ears is cut off. In contrast to the English penal system, this is indeed lenient. More is here playing his complex game of positing a corrective to bad institutions in England, while having Hythloday ignore the problem of how the ideal may be converted into reality; it is just this problem that will be debated in the Dialogue of Counsel.

The Polylerite system is, not however, as ideal as Hythloday supposes. He had begun by being appalled by England's use of the death penalty for theft, and the fervent idealism with which he denounced this, and the social conditions which gave rise to it, carried complete conviction. But what does he say of the Polylerites?

The state which Hythloday praises as practising a humane alternative to the death penalty for theft actually practises it for far less serious offences, even if it is utilised far less frequently than in England. Hythloday's idealism is such that he cannot see that the example he invokes in support of his case in fact ironically interrogates it. The irony is pointed nicely by his final comment: 'I added that I saw no reason why this method might not be adopted even in England and be far more beneficial in its working than the justice which my legal opponent had praised so highly' (79/38-81/2). This myopia will prove to be characteristic of him, and although the moral earnestness which lies at the root of his idealism is never questioned, More succeeds in raising doubts about its practical consequences.

In reply to Hythloday, Cardinal Morton suggests that no harm can come from experimenting with this system, and making it law if it proves successful. At this point, however, attention is diverted by an incident which shocks and disgusts Hythloday. One of the Cardinal's hangers-on makes a jest at the expense of friars; Morton takes it in good part, and the hanger-on is emboldened to continue. The friar, feeling himself insulted, denounces the joker, threatening him with excommunication, in

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63. 'Suos quaeque regio propria distinguit nota, quam abiecisse capitale est, ut uel extra suas conspici fines, uel cum alterius regionis seruo quicquam esse collocutum. At neque tutior fugae meditatio quam ipsa est fuga. Quin conscium talis fuisse consilij in seruo nex est: in libero seruitus' (78/1-6).

64. '... adiecissem nihil mihi uideri causae, quare non hic modus haberi uel in Anglia possit, multo maiore cum fructu, quam illa iustitia, quam iuris ille peritus tantopere laudauerat' (78/32-80/3).
spite of Morton’s exhortation to him to control himself. Apart from the opportunity taken for satire at the expense of the friars, what purpose does this incident serve? Its importance comes from Hythloday’s reaction to it:

This conversation I had to relate ... to exhibit the attitude of those who rejected what I had said first yet who, immediately afterward, when the Cardinal did not disapprove of it, also gave their approval, flattering him so much that they even smiled on and almost allowed in earnest the fancies of the hanger-on, which his master in jest did not reject. From this reaction you may judge what little regard courtiers would pay to me and my advice (85/30-37).

Hythloday pays more attention to the flatterers than to Morton; but the Cardinal himself is a courtier of Henry VII, and, as Hythloday acknowledges, he expresses interest in Hythloday’s description of the Polylerite penal code, and himself suggests that England should experiment with it. Once again, Hythloday’s exemplum proves the precise opposite of what he claims is the case. If, in the description of the Polylerites, he had been simply unable to see that he was casting doubt on his own case, in this instance his ignorance seems almost wilful. He knows that Morton had reacted favourably, but overlooks this in his eagerness to find evidence to support his case. His refusal to serve his Prince is not rational, but emotional and temperamental.

The impression that we have so far formed of Hythloday inevitably conditions our response to his further arguments against becoming a royal councillor. It is Morus who specifically

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65. ‘... narranda tamen mihi fuit omnino propter eorum iudicium, qui quae me dicente spreuerant, eadem rursus euestigio non improbante Cardinale, etiam ipsi comprobarunt, usque adeo assentantes ei, ut parasiti quoque eius inuentis, quae dominus per iocum non aspernabatur, ad blandirentur & serio propemodum admitterent. Vt hinc possis aestimare quanti me ac mea consilia aulici forent aestimaturi’ (84/24-30).
raises this issue by praising what Hythloday has already said while concluding that he ought not to shun the courts of kings, and should instead follow the advice of his 'favorite author', Plato, that 'commonwealths will finally be happy only if either philosophers become kings or kings turn to philosophy. What a distant prospect of happiness there will be if philosophers will not condescend even to impart their counsel to kings!' (87/12-15). This turning of Hythloday's favourite author against him is a palpable hit, and Hythloday can answer it only by resorting to hypothetical examples.

If, says, Hythloday, I were present at a meeting of the French King's council where the councillors were advising on the best way to make war, what would happen if I undercut their cynical realism by suggesting that Italy should be left alone? He might even mention the example of the Achorians. We are at once back in the realm of irony, since the name 'Achoria' means No-place. Is this meant to imply that Hythloday is dwelling in Cloud-cuckoo-land with his impractical idealism and fictional exempla? The behaviour of the Achorians is, of course the opposite of that of European kings, but Hythloday, caught up in the sweep of his own rhetoric, avoids making any suggestion as to how the Achorian ideal may be translated into the European reality. He ends by asking what sort of reception he would receive if he advised the French King to 'look after his ancestral kingdom and make it as flourishing as possible, love his subjects and be loved by them, live with them and rule them gently, and have no designs upon other kingdoms since what he already possessed was more than enough for him' (91/25-29).

66. '... respublicas ita demum futuras esse felices, si aut regnent philosophi, aut reges philosophentur, quam procul aberit felicitas, si philosophi regibus nec dignentur saltem suum impartiri consilium?' (86/11-13).

67. '... proinde auitum regnum coleret, ornaret quantum posset, & faceret quam florentissimum. Amet suos & ametur a suis, cum his una uiuat, imperetque suauiter, atque alia regna ualere sinat, quando id quod nunc ei contigisset, satis amplum superque esset' (90/17-19).
More's reply is a masterpiece of quiet irony: "To be sure, not a very favourable one," I granted' (91/31). The irony seems to be directed at both the cynicism of the councillors and the naivete of Hythloday, so that More maintains the delicate balance between making us feel the moral force of Hythloday's point of view, while simultaneously letting us see the practical weakness of his position.

Hythloday now turns to an example from domestic politics. The councillors of a king are debating with him the best ways of extorting money from the populace: debasing the coinage, using the pretext of war to raise taxes, enforcing long-forgotten laws by means of fines, corrupting judges -- all are mentioned seriously as possible methods of raising revenue, and Hythloday quite properly objects. Everything he says, however, is couched in sweeping generalisations which give moral force to his arguments but indicate also how hopelessly impractical he would be as an advisor. For Hythloday, all councillors give this type of advice, all judges are corrupt, all kings dishonourable. Everything must be either black or white; he can acknowledge no shade in between. The exhortatory imperatives at 97/5ff. reveal the cast of his mind exactly. 'Let the King do this'; 'Let the King do that'. And he again resorts to a fictional example to prove his point. This time, it is that of the Macarians, who have an ideal financial system. Like the Achorians, they are 'a people not very far distant from Utopia' (97/17). Hythloday, of course, thinks of them as being not geographically distant, but it is probable that More meant the statement to be taken metaphorically as well. If Hythloday's account of the Achorians and Macarians has told us as much about him as about them, then we can confidently expect his account of the Utopians to do likewise.

68. 'Profecto non ualde pronis inquam' (90/22).
69. '... qui & ipsi non longe admodum absunt ab Utopia' (96/12-13).
As with the account of the Achorians, Hythloday ends by saying: 'If I tried to obtrude these and like ideas on men strongly inclined to the opposite way of thinking, to what deaf ears should I tell the tale!' (97/35-38). This time, Morus' irony is more pointed: they would be right to be deaf, since to give such advice in such circumstances would be foolishness. At this point, More introduces the phrases that express the central oppositions of the dialogue:

In the private conversation of close friends this academic philosophy is not without its charm, but in the councils of kings, where great matters are debated with great authority, there is no room for these notions ... But there is another philosophy, more practical for statesmen, which knows its stage, adapts itself to the play in hand, and performs its role neatly and appropriately. This is the philosophy which you must employ (99/5-16).

This is the central argument in the debate, and it is expressed, significantly, in a metaphor drawn from Lucian. The philosophus gloriosus who would make no concession to the awkward facts of human nature, is opposed by the eiron, who is prepared to adapt himself to the world as he finds it. More’s use of the metaphor of life-as-a-play is, however, more subtle than that of Lucian, for whom it expressed a sense of good-humoured

70. 'Haec ergo atque huiusmodi si ingererem apud homines in contrariam partem usehementer inclinatos, quam surdis essem narraturus fabulam?' (96/29-31).

71. 'Apud amiculos in familiari colloquio non insuaus est haec philosophia scholastica. Caeterum in consiliis principum, ubi res magnae magna autoritate aguntur, non est his rebus locus ... sed est philosophia ciuillior, quae suam nouit scenam, eique sese accommodans, in ea fabula quae in manibus est, suas partes concinne & cum decoro tutatur. Hac utendum est tibi' (98/6-14).

72. The metaphor was by no means unique to Lucian, and had a wide currency in antiquity and the Middle Ages. See, for example, Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, translated by Willard R. Trask (London, 1953), pp.138-144. However, the terms in which More elaborates it seem to be drawn from Lucian's Menippus, or The
resignation and quietism. This is far from More's purpose. While recognising the validity of much that Hythloday has said, Morus also sees the weaknesses in his position:

If you cannot pluck up wrongheaded opinions by the root, if you cannot cure according to your heart's desire vices of long standing, yet you must not on that account desert the commonwealth. You must not abandon the ship in a storm because you cannot control the winds (99/31-35).73

Hythloday's principled refusal to serve, no matter how nobly motivated, is ultimately a refusal to engage with the facts of human experience. If, as seems probable, both Morus and Hythloday represent opposing tendencies in the character of the historical More, then it can be seen that while he possessed an intense awareness of the radical corruption of human nature, and while he may well have indulged in compensatory daydreams of human perfectibility, his hold on reality was ultimately too strong to allow him to follow the course recommended by Hythloday. One can occasionally dwell imaginatively in an ideal world, but one must live and act in the real one. For Morus, the issue finally turns on his scepticism about the perfectibility of human nature:

What you cannot turn to good you must make as little bad as you can. For it is impossible that all should be well unless all men were good, a situation which I do not expect for a great many years to come! (101/1-4).74

Descent into Hades which, of course, More had earlier translated.

73. 'Si radicitus euelli non possint opiniones prauae, nec receptis usu uitijs mederi queas, ex animi tui sententia, non ideo tamen deserenda Respublica est, & in tempestate nauis destituenda est, quoniam uentos inhibere non possis' (98/25-28).

74. '... quod in bonum nequis uertere, efficias saltem, ut sit quam minime malum. Nam ut omnis bene sint, fieri non possit, nisi omnes boni sint, quod ad aliquot abhinc annos adhuc non expecto' (100/1-3).
Typically, Hythloday responds to this by invoking a state where human nature is perfect. His account of Utopia is the last of his series of fictional exempla, and our reception of it will be conditioned by our view of his character, as well as by our memory of the dubious status of his earlier examples of the Polylertes, the Achorians and the Macarians. Although Book I of Utopia has its genesis in a personal crisis in More's career, it is also an indispensable guide to the proper interpretation of the ideal state of Book II.

Hythloday's final reply to Morus' objections is couched in the language of Christian Humanism, and the force of his argument is such that Morus can make only a feeble reply. Christ, says Hythloday, forbade dissembling in the teaching of truth, but his teachings have been perverted by preachers who accommodate them to the morals of men: 'By this method I cannot see what they have gained, except that men may be bad in greater comfort' (101/25-26). The moral force of his argument is impressive, but his particular application of it raises doubts: the indirect approach favoured by Morus would be no use at court, where there is no room for dissembling.

One must openly approve the worst counsels and subscribe to the most ruinous decrees. He would be counted a spy and almost a traitor, who gives only faint praise to evil counsels (103/6-8).

75. This, of course, is one of the reasons for Hexter's argument that Hythloday is the spokesman for the Christian Humanist views of More and Erasmus, and that Utopia is a document in their programme of reform (CW 4, lxiv ff.; Hexter, 1952, pp.118 ff.).

76. '... qua re nihil uideo quid profecerint, nisi ut securius liceat esse malos' (100/27-28).

77. '... approbanda sunt aperte pessima consilia, & decretis pestilentissimis subscribendum est. Speculatoris uice fuerit, ac pene proditoris, etiam qui improbe consulta maligne laudauerit (102/5-8).
Hythloday has never been to court, has never taken part in a Royal council; he cannot possibly know these things with certainty. He is about to appeal to his experience among the Utopians as evidence of an ideal commonwealth, yet he is here speaking with assurance of things quite beyond his experience. Again, the limits of his moral idealism are made clear.

Hythloday now introduces the topic which has been regarded as the main feature of Utopian life, and which links the satire on Europe with the ideal imaginary state: common ownership of property. It is impossible to have justice or prosperity where all things are owned privately, and one ought to adopt the institutions of the Utopians. Even as Hythloday produces another torrent of eloquence in defence of his claims, More is silently undermining him by having him misquote Plato. Hythloday claims that Plato saw that the general welfare could be guaranteed only by the maintenance of equality in all respects. Plato, however, had extended the provision of equality only to his ruling class; the Utopian ideal of absolute equality is less Platonic in origin than Hythloday claims.

Morus' reply to these final arguments of Hythloday states the orthodox conservative position on property: without the motive of personal gain, people would become slothful. In the context of Hythloday's eloquence, that argument does not have a convincing ring to it. This is somewhat surprising, since we have just been convinced that Morus has the better of the argument about service at court; now we find Hythloday, in spite of the ironies that seem to undercut what he says, having the better of the argument on property. Did More wish to acknowledge that, in spite of Hythloday's intellectual rigidity, in spite of the frequent misjudgements occasioned by his moral fervour, there is, after all, much to be said for his position? The ironies tug in so many possible directions that one is not quite sure what one is meant to believe at this point.

78. It is this eloquence that led Hexter to identify Hythloday's views with those of More (CW 4, lxxxviii), just as he had earlier argued that More's comments here are refuted in Book II. Hexter, 1952, pp.40-42.
The spiralling ironies which allow neither Hythloday nor Morus to 'win' the argument seem designed to place the reader in a state of alertness and responsiveness. Hythloday’s previous exempla may have failed to carry conviction, but his sincerity and idealism are such that one wants to believe that his ideal state will be what he says it is. At the same time, what we have so far seen of his methods of argument and standards of proof has been enough to suggest that we should scrutinise very carefully what he does say: his own interpretation is not to be trusted. As W. J. Barnes has put it:

By observing Hythloday ... and noting his idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies, we may just be alerted to watch for the inconsistencies and contradictions that greet us at almost every turn in Utopian society. If we see the ironic in the characterisation of Hythloday; if, also, we see the complex irony working in the confrontation of Hythloday and the More-figure in Book I, then we may be prepared for the irony which qualifies and conditions our response to the experience of Hythloday and the Utopians in Book II.

In Book I of Utopia, More has taken advantage of a particular occasion to extend the scope of his original work, and to provide a method for its interpretation. He has done this chiefly through the use of the complex Menippean figure of Raphael Hythloday, utilising a number of lessons drawn from his reading of Lucian. Our response to this figure will condition our response to his account of Utopia.

Any reading of Book II is complicated, however, by the circumstances of composition. More did not at first have Raphael in mind, and some of the ironies in Book II were conceived independently of the presence of this persona. Moreover, the shape of what is now Book II seems not to have been present in More’s mind as he wrote, but rather to have evolved as part of the process of composition; as a result, there are sections in

this part of the work which are strictly redundant -- they have their origin in More's original conception but are out of place in his final meditation on the shape of a society built by reason alone. The most notable of such sections is that on the Utopian theory of pleasure; as will be seen, rather than merely excise it, More has utilised it for the purpose of extending our conception of the character of the narrator.

Book II opens in the mode of a traveller's tale, with More being careful to establish the verisimilitude of his account in the Lucianic manner. It is not until we are well into the account of Utopia that we begin to see exactly how he is subverting the mode he has so carefully built up. We are told details about the situation of the island, its geography, its defences; and we are given an early hint that this is to be an account of an ideal society: 'But Utopus ... brought the rude and rustic people to such a perfection of culture and humanity as makes them now superior to almost all other mortals' (113/3-7). This idealism is connected with the apparent perfection of their planning. The island contains fifty-four cities of identical layout, and similar in appearance; lands are apportioned so that no city has any desire to extend its territory; the system of farming is highly organised. The only apparent breaks in the tone of objectivity come from the use of comic names such as Amaurotum, and from the humorous detail of the chicks who acknowledge humans as their mothers.

When we come to the description of the capital city, Amaurotum, part of More's purpose begins to become clear. In certain respects, this city closely resembles London: a tidal river flows through it; the river is spanned by a stone bridge. However, the orderliness of the town planning in Amaurotum, with houses divided by avenues twenty feet broad, and every house's having a garden at the back, are far removed from More's London.

80. 'Sed Vtopus ... rudem atque agrestem turbam ad id quo nunc caeteros prope mortales antecellit cultus, humanitatisque perduxit' (112/1-5).
In its physical characteristics, then, Amaurotum both is and is not London. The effect of having an imaginary image thus imposed upon a real one is unsettling; it is intended to provoke thought about whether the real society could profitably adopt any of the institutions of the imaginary one.

The description of the government of the island is puzzling for its neglect of certain vital details. We are told, for instance, how the government of this one city is constituted, and we can reasonably assume that the others are governed in the same way. Nothing, however, is said about the relation of one city to others. Is the island governed by a federal system? Or is it constituted of independent city-states? This is something we never know. Nor are the details of the government of Amaurotum complete: we are not told how the senate is chosen, or precisely what division of powers applies to what is obviously a mixed constitution. Hythloday is more interested in the proceedings of this body, whereby nothing is debated on the day on which it is first proposed so that it may be eventually debated more judiciously.

The account continues with a section on the occupations of the Utopians: each is taught one particular craft of a utilitarian nature; clothing is uniform throughout the island, except for a distinction between the sexes; there are a number of regulations as to the circumstances in which one can change one's occupation; the Utopian day is divided into regular numbers of hours for work, meals, sleeping and leisure; leisure hours are commonly devoted to intellectual pursuits, or games of a moralistic or allegorical character. The result of the rational planning of the Utopians is a uniformity enforced by both law and custom; the details of how Utopia is organised provoke us to question Hythloday's repeated claim that it has very few laws.

At this point, the narrator intervenes to forestall an objection: if they work for only six hours, will there not be a shortage of commodities? In reply to this hypothetical objection, he begins a tirade, in the Hythlodaean manner, against the
prevalence of idleness in Europe. No work is done by women, priests, or the religious; masters of estates and their retainers are equally idle, as are beggars. Of those who work, few are engaged in essential trades: 'For, in a society where we make money the standard of everything, it is necessary to practise many crafts which are quite vain and superfluous, ministering only to luxury and licentiousness' (131/13-15). If all these idlers were set to useful work, they could easily produce all that is required by necessity or comfort. And, he goes on, this is proved by the experience of Utopia. This passage is so characteristic of the method employed by Hythloday in Book I -- answering an objection by recourse to an example of which only he can have personal experience -- that one wonders whether the attack on Europe idleness might not have been added when More was trying to make the two parts of his work consistent with one another.

Hythloday now goes on to describe Utopian social relations and once again a seemingly factual description is gradually undermined; the remorseless rationalism of Utopian life produces not only ideal social relations, but a number of unpleasant distortions. If, for example, the population of the island becomes too numerous, they found a colony in a neighbouring land. If the natives are willing, both peoples merge, to the advantage of both. Those who refuse to live according to Utopian laws are expelled from the territory; if they resist, war is waged against them: 'They consider it a most just cause for war when a people which does not use its soil but keeps it idle and waste nevertheless forbids the use and possession of it to others who by the rule of nature ought to be maintained by it' (137/19-22).

81. '... siquidem ubi omnia pecunijs metimur, multas artes necesse est exerceri inane prorsus ac superfluas, luxus tantum ac libidinis ministras' (130/12-14).

82. '... nam eam iustissimam bellii causam ducunt, quum populus quispiam eius soli quo ipse non utitur, sed uelut inane ac uacuum possidet, alijs tamen qui ex naturae praescripto inde nutriri debeant, usum ac possessionem interdicat (136/14-17).
This is the logic of Utopian utilitarianism. Such a rule of nature was a recognised legal principle and although it is not certain that More is inviting us to condemn it as a justification of self-interest, we must surely keep in mind the Utopian condemnation of all war. Hythloday maintains his tone of uncritical admiration of all things Utopian, while the deadpan irony of More lets us see the logical consequences of this attitude.

Irony may again be present in the description of the Utopian meals. These are taken in common, although one may dine at home if one wishes: ‘yet no one does it willingly since the practice is considered not decent’ (141/28-29). There may be no law against it, but public opinion is a powerful agent in inducing conformity. The marginal note here is surely tongue-in cheek: ‘How Respect for Freedom is Preserved Everywhere so that People Do Nothing under Compulsion!’ The atmosphere of these public meals seems one of stultifying conformity: the young and the old mingle together so that ‘the grave and reverend behaviour of the old may restrain the younger people from mischievous freedom in word and gesture’ (143/33-35). As well as this, they begin the meal with a reading conducive to morality, and introduce approved topics of conversation. We are assured that these are neither sombre nor dull; but we may perhaps be permitted our doubts. Yet however oppressive these practices may seem, it is well to remember the abstemiousness of More’s own household. Once again, More’s concern is less with the desirability or otherwise

83. CW 4, p.416.
84. ‘... nemo tamen hoc libenter facit, cum neque honestum habeatur’ (140/23-24).
85. ‘Vt ubique libertatis habetur ratio, ne quid fiat a coactis’ (140).
86. ‘... ut senum grauitas ac reuerentia ... iuniores ab improba uerborum, gestuumque licentia cohibeat’ (142/29-33).
of particular Utopian institutions than with the means of translating his ideal into practice.

The lack of freedom in Utopia is again emphasised when Hythloday talks of their travel arrangements. They can visit other cities if they receive permission, but to leave one's territory without permission is to invite severe punishment or, for a repeated offense, slavery. We may be appalled by the coercion of the Utopian state, but Hythloday finds occasion at this point to eulogise it:

Now you can see how nowhere is there any license to waste time, nowhere any pretext to evade work -- no wine shop, no alehouse, no brothel anywhere, no opportunity for corruption, no lurking hole, no secret meeting place. On the contrary, being under the eyes of all, people are bound either to be performing the usual labour or to be enjoying their leisure in a fashion not without decency (147/21-28).

Hythloday now moves on to the topic of trade and money, and again More has introduced elements of irony into the discourse. The Utopians have no use for money, but keep it in their treasury for use in emergencies, especially for paying foreign mercenaries 'whom they would rather jeopardize than their own citizens' (149/39-39). As he had done with the question of colonisation, Hythloday simply does not see the moral problem involved with this, nor does it occur to him that this use of mercenaries was something he had denounced in relation to European kings. In his eagerness to praise Utopia, he is involving himself in a mass of contradictions.

88. 'Iam uidetis quam nulla sit usquam ociandi licentia, nullus inertiae praetextus, nulla taberna uinaria, nulla ceruisiaria, nusquam lupanar, nulla corruptelae occasio, nullae latebrae, conciliabulum nullum, sed omnium praesentes oculi necessitatem aut consueti laboris, aut ocij non inhonesti faciunt' (146/15-21).

89. '... quos libentius quam suos cluis objiciunt discrimini' (148/33-34).
The Utopians do not value gold and silver more highly than their nature deserves: they use them for chamberpots and other humble vessels, and for the chains they put on their slaves. The marginal note at this point makes it seem that More must have enjoyed throwing in this suggestion: 'O Magnificent Affront to Gold!' (153). This, and the following anecdote of the Anemolian ambassadors, constitute one of the points in the text at which More is most freely commenting adversely on conditions in Europe. In spite of the irony which is increasingly being obtruded into the account of Utopia, More does not simply reject the idealism of Hythloday and the Utopians. The Anemolian ambassadors are said to have visited Utopia, determined to impress the Utopians with the magnificence of their clothing and jewelry. The golden chains had, of course, the opposite of the desired effect, so that the ambassadors were shamed into putting away their finery.

This anecdote, and the following attack on the use of gold in Europe, together with the marginal gloss that extols the Utopians as being wiser than the majority of Christians, might seem to lend support to the interpretation of Utopia advanced by R. W. Chambers:

The underlying thought of Utopia always is, With nothing save Reason to guide them, the Utopians do this; and yet we Christian Englishmen, we Christian Europeans ... 

Yet the explicit contrasts between Utopia and Europe occur just as the ironies of the text begin to question the validity of Hythloday's assumptions. Pointing the contrasts between the

90. 'O magnificam auri contumeliam' (152).

imaginary ideal and the corrupt reality is not an adequate hermeneutic approach to a text as ironical and ambiguous as *Utopia*.

Hythloday now recounts their attitude to philosophy, at length arriving at that discussion of Utopian ethical theory that has seemed to many to be the intellectual core of the work. In the debate over virtue and pleasure, he says, 'they seem to lean more than they should to the school that espouses pleasure as the object by which to define the whole or the chief part of human happiness' (161/25-29). This, however, seems to be a misinterpretation of what the Utopians actually believe. The whole section, as Surtz notes, must be regarded as a declamation, a literary exercise to be judged, not by the truth of its assertions, but by the success of its style and form; and in which More has cunningly prejudiced the argument. The initial use of the word 'uoluptas' leads one to assume that it is bodily pleasures that are being talked about, but the use of a variety of weaker synonyms eventually leads More to reveal that 'they cling above all to mental pleasures, which they value as the first and foremost of all pleasures' (175/34-35). Everything that Hythloday has told us about Utopia has reinforced the idea that their pleasures are indeed abstemious: how, then, to account for his obvious uneasiness with this topic?

If, as seems likely, the declamation on pleasure formed part of what More had originally written, then it is possible that he was indulging in a degree of wish-fulfilment in exploring the proposition that virtue and pleasure are compatible. Having

92. 'At hac in re propensiores aequo uidentur in factionem uoluptatis assertricem, ut qua uel totam, uel potissimam felicitatis humanae partem definant' (160/20-23).


94. 'Amplectuntur ergo in primis animi uoluptates, (eas enim primas omnium principesque ducunt' (174/29-30).

later conceived the character of Hythloday, and having recast the purpose of the original work, he may well have felt that the lengthy declamation on pleasure was no longer appropriate to his new conception of the work; yet rather than completely abandon what is, after all, a minor tour-de-force in the genre of paradoxical declamation, he decided to utilise it to further undercut the character of Hythloday. Accordingly, he has Hythloday utter a disclaimer that is wholly unnecessary. Hythloday, after all, has been presented in both books as being profoundly disgusted by the pursuit of false pleasures in Europe, and in the section on Utopian ethics he takes the opportunity to denounce this at length and eloquently. In doing so, he occasionally sounds like Lucian's Cynic. For one so profoundly and sincerely opposed to the pursuit of false pleasures, the notion that his admired Utopians actively pursue pleasure causes him uneasiness; he is accordingly concerned to disassociate himself from any imputation of approving of hedonism.

We are reminded that Hythloday’s judgement on what he has seen and heard is not always impeccable, and this reminder comes at a strategic point in the text. As Wooden notes, after this obvious failure of interpretation on the part of Hythloday, we can no longer allow him to evaluate Utopian customs for us. It is following this section that the ironic distance between Hythloday's admiration for Utopian rationalism and the facts of Utopian life begins to increase markedly. The irony is pointed again when Hythloday ends his discussion of Utopian ethics with a palpable sense of relief:

Whether in this stand they are right or wrong, time does not permit us to examine – nor is it necessary. We have taken upon ourselves only to describe their principles, and not also to defend them. But of this I am sure, that whatever you think of their ideas, there is nowhere in the world

96. Wooden, p.212.
He may not wish to defend this part of their philosophy, but he is more than willing to defend their communism. The surface tone of objectivity is dissipated when the narrator is caught in such a blatant falsification of his own procedure, and attention is directed not just to what is being described, but to the character and preoccupations of the narrator.

As if to remind us of the Lucianic provenance of Hythloday, More at this point inserts a detail worthy of A True History: in order to have wood close to seas, rivers and cities, the Utopians have uprooted whole forests and transplanted them. Hythloday utters this without a hint of irony on his part, and we are reminded that the reality of this ideal state is purely fictional, that not everything in it is to be taken seriously.

These passages of irony at the expense of Hythloday are followed by a short section of idealisation of the Utopians: Hythloday praises their aptness at learning, stressing their fondness for Greek authors. This, of course, was likely to recommend them highly to an audience of humanists. It is all the more ironical, then, that this is followed by sections likely to have the opposite effect. The account of slavery in Utopia is part of Hythloday's description of a rational and virtuous people, but that they enslave and treat harshly some of their own countrymen is an indication that human nature in Utopia is no less intractable than in Europe. As Hythloday tells us: 'Their own countrymen are dealt with more harshly, since their conduct is regarded as all the more regrettable and deserving a more severe punishment as an object lesson because, having had an

97. '... qua in re rectene an secus sentiant, excutere nos, neque tempus patitur, neque necesse est. quippe qui narranda eorum instituta, non etiam tuenda suscepimus. Caeterum hoc mihi certe persuadeo, ut ut sese habeant haec decreta: nusquam neque praestantiori populum, neque feliciorem esse rempublicam' (178/12-15).
excellent rearing to a virtuous life, they still could not be restrained from crime’ (185/26-30). Utopia, then is not as ideal as Hythloday would have us believe; there may be an intended irony in the marginal comment: ‘The Extraordinary Fairness of this people’, pointing towards the unconscious irony of what Hythloday is saying.

Euthanasia is practised among the Utopians, and this may be one of those sections where T. S. Dorsch has argued that the real meaning is to obtained only by reading the words in the opposite of their literal sense. The Utopian custom of prenuptial inspection of partners had been laughed at by Hythloday and his companions, but defended by the Utopians on logical grounds; it is another example of the rationality of the Utopians leading to a reductio ad absurdum. Hythloday also talks in some detail about the Utopian customs in divorce and adultery, and provides an example of the punishments meted out for serious crimes: slavery, or if the slave prove recalcitrant, death.

After describing these laws and punishments, Hythloday goes on to say: ‘They have very few laws because very few are needed for persons so educated’ (195/8-9). It is true that the Utopians have fewer laws than do European states, but Hythloday, in his praise of Utopia, loses sight of the question of how the ideal can be imposed upon actual states. Hythloday’s assertion is followed by another of his sweeping attacks upon the customs of Europe. There are no lawyers in Utopia because their laws are less complicated than those of other

98. ‘sed suos durius quos eo deploratores, ac deteriora meritos exempla censent, quod tam praeclera educatione ad uirtutem egregie instructi: contineri tamen ab scelere non potuerint. (184/22-25).

99. ‘Mira huius gentis aequitas’ (184).


101. ‘Leges habent perquam paucas. sufficiunt enim sic institutis paucissimae’ (194/6-7).
countries. The reason for this policy is that 'since all laws are promulgated to remind every man of his duty, the more recondite interpretation reminds only very few' (195/28-30). This was the feature of Utopia that so appealed to Budé, and it may be presumed to have held equal attraction for More. Nevertheless, the difficulty of translating such a legal code into practice can hardly be supposed to have escaped the attention of one trained and experienced in the law.

There follows a passage of satire on the treaty arrangements of Europe, although this is less simple than it seems. With deadpan irony, Hythloday says: 'In Europe, however, and especially in those parts where the faith and religion of Christ prevails, the majesty of treaties is everywhere holy and inviolable ...' (197/26-28). He fails to notice, however, that he is admitting that which destroys the premises of his argument: his perfect Utopian society is to be transplanted to a Europe where human nature is, by his own admission, far from perfect. This difficulty is never noticed by Hythloday, although it is precisely what Morus had alluded to in the Debate on Counsel: 'it is impossible that all should be well unless all men were good' (101/2-3); The attitude which Morus had enunciated in Book I has crept into Hythloday’s account of Utopia in Book II without his being aware of it.

The irony is doubled, moreover, when we realise that human nature is not perfect in Utopia any more than in Europe. This has already been noticed in regard to slavery and punishment, but

102. '... quum omnes leges ... ea tantum causa promulgentur: ut ab hijs quisque sui commonefiat officij: subtilior interpretatio paucissimos admonet ...' (194/23-25).

103. 'Etenim in Europa idque his potissimum partibus quas CHRISTI fides & religio possidet, sancta est & inviolabilis ubique maiestas foederum’ (196/21-23).

104. Fox, p.57.

105. 'Nam ut omnia bene sint, fieri non potest, nisi omnes boni sint' (100/2-3).
becomes even more telling in connection with the Utopian practice of war. In this section, the irony at the expense of Hythloday is at its most consistent and most devastating. As T. S. Dorsch has noted: ‘everything relating to the Utopians’ attitude to war and methods of conducting a war is described with an irony that could scarcely be missed’. 106 Hythloday begins by telling us that ‘War, as an activity fit only for beasts and yet practiced by no kind of beast so constantly as by man, they regard with utter loathing’ (199/36-37). 107 They do, however, go to war, though not lightly: ‘They do so only to protect their own territory or to drive an invading enemy out of their friends’ lands or, in pity for a people oppressed by tyranny, to deliver them by force of arms from the yoke and slavery of the tyrant, a course prompted by human sympathy’ (201/5-9). 108 As Dorsch puts it: ‘Considering their detestation of war, we may well be surprised to see how often the Utopians find occasion to fight’. 109

The Utopians are diligent in undertaking war when their merchant friends are being unjustly persecuted under pretext of law. The example brought forward by Hythloday, of a war fought on behalf of the Nephelogetes against the Alaopolitans shows that much greater evil follows from the defence of their principles than from the actual cause of the war.

Into this war the neighbouring nations brought their energies and resources to assist the power and to intensify the rancor of both sides. Most flourishing nations were either shaken to their


107. ‘Bellum utpote rem plane beluinam, nec ulli tamen beluarum formae in tam assiduo, atque homini est usu, summopere abominantur’ (198/30-31).

108. ‘... non temere capessunt tamen, nisi quo aut suos fines tueantur, aut amicorum terris, infusos hostes propulsent, aut populum quempiam tyrannide pressum, miserati, (quod humanitatis gratia faciunt) suis uiribus Tyranni iugo, & seruitute liberent’ (200/4-8).

foundations or grievously afflicted. The troubles
upon troubles that arose were ended only by the
enslavement and surrender of the Alaopolitans.
Since the Utopians were not fighting in their own
interest, they yielded them into the power of the
Nephelogetes, a people who, when the Alaopolitans
were prosperous were not in the least comparable to
them (201/25-33).

To point the irony further, More has Hythloday the bland
comment: 'So severely do the Utopians punish wrongs done to their
friends, even in money matters -- but not wrongs done to
themselves' (201/34-35). To cause so much havoc over
something which they consider to be of no importance is, and to
justify it in the name of an abstract principle, is rationalism
run riot.

The actual conduct of Utopian wars is matter for irony as
well. They offer rewards for anyone killing the enemy king; they
reward treachery on the part of their enemies; they stir up
strife among the enemy by supporting pretenders. All this is
justified in idealistic terms as concluding wars with the minimum
possible amount of casualties; but war itself is supposed to be
abhorrent to them. The practice of supporting pretenders with
arms and money is, of course, an accurate reflection of the
actual practice of European states, but it is not what we would
expect from a people living in an ideal state, and officially
committed to the doctrine of the common humanity of all peoples.
In Utopia as in Europe practice does not invariably follow
principle.

110. '... quum ad proprias utriusque partis uires, odiaque
circumiectarum etiam gentium studia atque opes
adiungentur, ut florentissimis populorum alijs
concussis, alijs uehementer afflictis, orientia ex malis
mala, Alaopolitarum seruitus demum, ac deditio finierit,
qua in Nephelegotarum (neque enim sibi certabant
Vtopienses) potestatem concessere, gentis, florentibus
Alaopolitarum rebus, hauad quaquam cum illis conferendae'
(200/21-28).

111. 'Tam acriter Vtopienses amicorum, etiam in pecunij,
iniuriam persequuntur, suas ipsorum, non item' (200/28-29).
Even more ironically, considering what Hythloday had said in Book I, the Utopians make liberal use of the Zapoletan mercenaries. Again, their reasons are utilitarian: 'The Utopians do not care in the least how many Zapoletans they lose, thinking they would be the greatest benefactors to the human race if they could relieve the world of all the dregs of this abominable and impious people' (209/11-15). The account of Utopian military practices contains the apotheosis of their institutions. 'Each man is surrounded by his own children and relations by marriage and blood so that those may be closest and lend one another mutual assistance whom nature most impels to love one another ... The absence of anxiety about livelihood at home ... makes their spirit exalted and disdainful of defeat ... Finally, their good and sound opinions, in which they have been trained from childhood both by teaching and by the good institutions of their country, give them additional courage' (211/3-25). As Robbin S. Johnson states: 'Utopian education achieves its institutional apotheosis not in what may do to fertilize each man’s nature and reason but in what it may do to compartmentalize personalities into an efficient war machine'. The discrepancy between Hythloday’s idealism and the actual details of the Utopian state seems to be as wide as it could possibly be.

More, however, goes on to make this discrepancy wider still in his account of the religion of Utopia. If Hythloday has failed to observe the obnoxious and oppressive features of life in

112. ‘Neque enim pensi quicquam habent, quam multos ex eis perdant. rati de genere humano maximam merituros gratiam se, si tota illa colluuie populi tam tetri, ac nepharij orbem terrarum purgare possent’ (208/10-13).

113. ‘... tum sui quemque liberi affines cognati circumsistunt, ut hi de proximo sint mutuo sibi subsidio, quos maxime ad ferendas inuicem suppetias natura stimulat ... Quippe uictus illa securitas quae cuique domi est, ... sublimem illis animum & uinci designantem facit ... postremo rectae opiniones (quibus & doctrina & bonis reipublicae institutis imbuti a pueris sunt) uirtutem addunt’ (210/2-19).

114. Johnson, 1969, p.120.
Utopia, here he fails to understand the one feature for which More seems to have felt genuine sympathy. It is not the fact that the Utopians practice religious toleration which interests More, nor even the pious earnestness of their religion. Their toleration is impressive, particularly their quiet assurance ‘that, provided the matter was handled reasonably and moderately, truth by its own natural force would finally emerge sooner or later and stand forth conspicuously’ (221/20-22). 115

More important than this and the other details of the Utopian religious system is what we are told of their public prayer. Each man thanks God

... for all the benefits received, particularly that by the divine favor he has chanced on that commonwealth which is the happiest and has received that religion which he hopes to be the truest. If he erra in these matters or if there is anything better and more approved by God than that commonwealth or that religion, he prays that He will, of His goodness, bring him to the knowledge of it, for he is ready to follow in whatever path He may lead him. But if this form of a commonwealth be the best and his religion the truest, he prays that then He may give him steadfastness and bring all other mortals to the same way of living and the same opinion of God — unless there be something in this variety of religions which delights His inscrutable will (237/14-26). 116

115. ‘... facile tamen praeuidit (modo cum ratione ac modestia res agatur) futurum denique: ut ipsa per se ueri uis emergat aliquando atque emineat’ (220/15-17).

116. ‘... tot ob recepta beneficia gratias agit. nominatim uero quod deo propitio in eam rempublicam inciderit quae sit felicissima, eam religionem sortitus sit, quam speret esse uerissimam. Qua in re, si quid erret, aut si quid sit alterutra melius, & quod deus magis approbet, orare se eius bonitas efficiat, hoc ut ipse cognoscat. paratum enim sequi se quaqua uersus ab eo ducatur, sin & haec Reipublicae forma sit optima, & sua religio rectissima, tum uti & ipsi constantiam tribuat, & caeteros mortales omnes ad eadem instituta uiuendi, in eandem de deo opinionem perducat, nisi inscrutabilem eius voluntatem etiam sit, quod in hac religionum uarietate delectet’ (236/14-24).
This willingness to submit themselves to Providence, the readiness to entertain the notion that they may be wrong, is at the core of the religious experience of the Utopians, just as it is at the core of More's acceptance of the norms of Menippean satire. As Wooden states:

It is one of the fundamental lessons of Menippean satire that the philosophus glori奥斯us' schemes never do or can bring perfection, perfect order, from the changeable world of man, ruled by Fortune. 117

He further states, with clear relevance to Utopia, that the satiric touchstone is

the virtuous and practical philosophy of doing one's best to improve the lot of mankind insofar as one's efforts are consonant with virtue and are of a practical and directly beneficial nature. 118

It is, in fact, a variant on the Menippean doctrine of the mean and sure estate. Where Teiresias in Menippus had advised Menippus to adopt an attitude of good-humoured scepticism, and where the standard Menippean and Lucianic attitude is to pour scorn on those who reduce life to a set of rigid rules and principles, More saw that those attitudes, while healthy, were finally insufficient. Always tempted to see the world in the black-and-white terms of a Hythloday, More yet struggled to express a more complex personal response which involved the willingness to entertain the notion of the open-ended nature of experience. This is what he has embodied in his account of Utopian religion, and it is only at this stage that we can realise just how drastically Hythloday has erred in his account of Utopia.

As Hythloday's account of this society is progressively unfolded, one becomes ever more cautious about accepting his evaluation of it. Many details are absurd, many are obnoxious,

118. Ibid., pp.158-159.
and some which stand in flat contradiction to Hythloday's own stated principles yet receive his approval. We feel the force of his insistence on the perfection of Utopia even while realising that he is wrong. When we finally come to the section on religion, we realise that the Utopians themselves do not attribute to their society the same degree of ultimate perfection that Hythloday does. Driven by his emotional and intellectual absolutism, Hythloday has simply misinterpreted what he has seen. Utopian institutions and customs do not actually conform to any ideal; only one as wilfully blind as Hythloday would maintain that they do. Since even Utopian customs and institutions do not correspond to an ideal pattern in the way that Hythloday suggests, the way is open for Morus, the practical reformer, to enter the service of his prince with the intention of 'making things less bad'. Radical idealism can accommodate itself to the facts of human nature.

This final revelation of the extent of Hythloday's misinterpretation comes immediately before his eulogy of Utopia, and must therefore condition our response to his panegyric. He begins by saying that he has described as exactly as he could 'the structure of that commonwealth which I judge not merely the best but the only one which can rightly claim the name of a commonwealth' (237/38-39). 119 This sweeping claim is in direct contradiction to what the Utopians themselves claim, so that what Hythloday says in praise of Utopia from here on must be regarded with some scepticism. He draws the distinction which he has repeatedly used between affairs in Utopia and those in Europe, and praises Utopian communism and justice. Typically, most of what he has to say is an attack on Europe rather than an account of Utopia, and it is again the moral force of his argument that is impressive.

119. '... formam Reipublcae quam ego certe non optimam tantum, sed solam etiam censeo, quae sibi suo iure possit Reipublicae uendicare uocabulum' (236/31-33).
Paradoxically, it is just this moral earnestness that has blinded him to the real state of affairs in Utopia. There are many virtues in their communism, but it is inseparable from a utilitarian ethic which subordinates the individual to the state to a dangerous degree. Eventually, his very vocabulary gives him away. After attacking the state of affairs in Europe, he talks again of how the Utopians had abolished all greed for money: 'What a mass of troubles was then cut away! What a crop of crimes was then pulled up by the roots!' (243/1-2). The violence of the metaphor suggests that Hythloday has an emotional need to feel the perfection of Utopia. He finishes his peroration with a sermon on pride which he admits 'is too deeply fixed in men to be easily plucked out' (245/3). Nevertheless, the Utopians have succeeded in this. They have 'extirpated the roots of ambition and factionalism along with all other vices' (245/9-10). It is doubtful that most readers feel that the Utopians have eliminated all vices from their commonwealth, but Raphael cannot bear the thought that his imaginary commonwealth is less than perfect. Unwilling to compromise with reality, he simply shuts his eyes to those features of Utopian life that might undermine his vision, and finishes his account with a grand rhetorical sweep that is intended to produce conviction in his hearers.

This monologue ended, we are reminded that other people are present besides Raphael, and that what they say may well have a bearing on how we are meant to take his final peroration. Morus' immediate comment is notoriously ambiguous:

many things came to my mind which seemed very absurdly established in the customs and laws of the

120. '... quanta moles molestiarum recisa, quanta scelerum seges radicitus euulsa est?' (242/1-2).

121. '... pressius hominibus infixa est, quam ut facile possit euelli' (244/2-3).

122. 'Extirpatis enim domi cum caeteris uitijs ambitionis, & factionum radicibus' (244/7-8). This is just what Morus had earlier maintained to be impossible (99/31-101/4). The contrast between the two could hardly be more graphically expressed.
people described - not only in their method of waging war, their ceremonies and religion, as well as their other institutions, but most of all in that feature which is the principal foundation of their structure. I mean their common life and subsistence - without any exchange of money. This latter alone utterly overthrows all the nobility, magnificence, splendor, and majesty which are, in the estimation of the common people, the true glories and ornaments of the commonwealth (245/18-26).

Hexter has shown that all these terms are used in pejorative senses in *Utopia*, and has argued that this is proof positive that More was here being ironical at the expense of his alter ego Morus, and that we are meant to disagree with his assessment and agree with that of Hythloday. We have seen, however, that we are not intended to agree with Hythloday’s account of Utopia, so that these words cannot be taken in the sense for which Hexter so ably argues. Furthermore, as Ward Allen has shown, the actual pattern of the disputed words in *Utopia* is ‘incomplete, scattered, and ambiguous’: it is by no means as coherent as Hexter assumes. How, then, are they to be read? We have just spent a considerable time listening to Hythloday’s monologue, and, as we are returned from his fantasy island to the ‘real’ world of Antwerp, More wishes to indicate his own attitude to what Hythloday has said. His initial comment, then suggests that

123. ‘... haud pauca mihi succurrebant, quae in eius populi moribus, legibusque perquam absurdeuidebantur instituta, non solum de belli gerendi ratione, & rebus diuinis, ac religione, alijsque insuper eorum institutis, sed in eo quoque ipso maxime, quod maximum totius institutionis fundamentum est uita scilicet, uictuque communi, sine ullo pecuniae commercio, qua una re funditus evertitur omnis nobilitas, magnificentia, splendor, maiestas, uera ut publica est opinio decora atque ornamenta Reipublicae’ (244/14-21).


126. Ibid., p. 112.
there is much truth in what Hythloday has said, but that it is
one thing to sketch such a society imaginatively, and quite
another to bring it into existence in the real world. The two
strands of More's nature that have gone into Utopia, his idealism
and his realism, are thus neatly brought together at the
conclusion of his work.

We are reminded as well of Hythloday's personal limitations:
'I was not quite certain that he could brook any opposition to
his views' (245/27-28). Morus would love the opportunity to
continue the discussion and to put his point of view, but
Hythloday is not a man with whom one argues lightly. Morus has to
be content with telling us that he cannot fully agree with
Hythloday: 'But I readily admit that there are very many features
in the Utopian commonwealth which it is easier for me to wish for
in our countries than to have any hope of seeing realised'
(245/39-247/3).

Utopia, then ends with More on the side of the reformers in
principle, but sceptical about the chances of putting large-scale
reforms into action. He is, nevertheless, committed to rational
consideration of the topic. Both his hopes for reform and his
scepticism as to its possibility are conveyed in his book, the
one in Hythloday, the other in Morus. To give expression to both
these sides of his character, and to unite them into an aesthetic
whole, More drew upon his fondness for and knowledge of the forms
of Menippean satire. He utilises the figure of the philosophus
gloriosus in his characterisation of Hythloday, and casts his
tale of an ideal society into the form of Lucian's True History.
What he has finally achieved, however, is beyond the aesthetic
and intellectual scope of Lucian, for More does not allow us to
take up a definite attitude to the issues he raises. He is

127. '... neque mihi satis exploratum erat, possetne ferre, ut
contra suam sententiam sentiretur' (244/22-23).

128. '... ita facile confiteor permulta esse in Vtopiensium
republica, quae in nostris ciuitatibus optarim uerius, quam
sperarim' (246/1-2).
looking, not for assent to a set of propositions, but for active and honest engagement with the issues they raise. If he utilises Lucian to help mould this purpose, he nevertheless has created something that is finally Morean rather than Lucianic.
CONCLUSION

Lucian was one of a number of classical authors to influence significantly the writings of Sir Thomas More and Erasmus. Their response to him is important as a touchstone for assessing the response to classical literature by the Christian humanists of the Northern European Renaissance. Both More and Erasmus seem to follow in the tradition established by Petrarch of assimilating classical authors to Christian teaching; in this task, it was inevitable that most attention would be paid to the ethical philosophers, particularly Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca and Plutarch. They could be regarded as teaching the highest type of moral wisdom available without the benefit of the teachings of Christ and the Church. The Ciceronian claim that philosophy taught *ars bene atque beate vivendi* could be accepted and its significance deepened to assimilate it to the claims of Christianity. The result was what Erasmus and others called the *philosophia Christi*.

This project might be easily enough applied to philosophy, but the status of other classical literature -- drama, poetry and satire -- was more problematic. Should this literature be read for profit or pleasure? Was there anything in it which might tend to corrupt the reader, particularly the young reader? How could pagan literature be pressed into service in the humanists' various campaigns for educational, social and political reform? All these questions greatly exercised the minds of the humanists, and various answers were supplied.

In the first place, much Latin literature could be defended on the grounds of the need to acquire a correct Latin style. More importantly, however, both Latin and Greek literature could be defended on the grounds of its usefulness. In applying the Horatian maxim that poetry was both *utile et dulce*, the humanists made much of the useful ethical and practical lessons that could be drawn from the poets and dramatists of antiquity. If some poetry seemed to teach no immediately useful lesson, or if it contained passages difficult to explain away on those grounds, some humanists, such as Erasmus, availed themselves of the...
medieval theories of exegesis: if the literal sense seems offensive, then the passage in question might be susceptible to an allegorical explanation.

Clearly the humanists felt that the extensive use they were making of pagan classical literature might easily become a double-edged sword. The elements of pleasure in a given text might well constitute enticing allurements which might lead one to its more profitable elements; but there was, of course, no guarantee of this. The result of this somewhat ambivalent approach to the literature of antiquity is the creation of a certain tension in the humanists' approach to the art of fiction, a tension that is evident in their own fictional writings, particularly The Praise of Folly and Utopia.

More and Erasmus, faced with a felt difficulty in using fictional literature for instructive purposes, attempt different solutions to the problem, and these differences are exemplified in their differing approaches to Lucian. He, in many ways, perfectly exemplifies the difficulties with which the humanists felt themselves to be faced. A clear and attractive style makes him suitable for teaching Greek to beginners; his humour, fantasy and comedy are sufficiently enticing; and he can, in many instances, serve as a source of ethical precepts: both More and Erasmus note his attacks on superstition, on charlatans, philosophers, on hypocrisy, on luxury. In many dialogues, he provides a satirical overview of the life of man showing the myriad ills to which it is subject. On the other hand, he is quite clearly atheistic in religious matters and profoundly sceptical in philosophy. His prescription that the best course for the seeker for truth is to stop worrying and put one's trust in the life of 'the common sort' may be an antidote of sorts to the hair-splitting of oversubtle metaphysicians and theologians but is hardly likely to recommend itself to a humanist as the pinnacle of human wisdom.

Both More and Erasmus see this problem clearly, and both attempt to solve it in their own ways. Erasmus relies on an interpretation of Lucian which stresses the ethical lessons contained within the framework of humour. On occasions, we find him stretching a point too far, as when he finds useful lessons in such a squib as Astrology; more characteristically, he regards
the form of the Lucianic dialogue as the coating on a didactic pill. More is superficially similar, but his interpretation of those dialogues which he translated often deliberately begs the question or misleads. He seems to have seen, perhaps more clearly than Erasmus, the sceptical tendencies of Lucian and to have found them, to some extent, attractive. More importantly, he senses that the form of Lucian's most characteristic work is problematic, that it resists any easy reduction to a set of detachable ethical formulae. The dialogue form can be used not simply to teach a lesson but to enact the process of inquiry.

These differing approaches to Lucian find their parallels in other works by More and Erasmus. The latter's educational treatises set out explicitly his conception of literature, and one can sense a certain nervousness in the repeated recourse to the formula of dulce et utile: he recognises the capacity of the work of literature to resist this kind of neat ethical explanation. In his Colloquies, one finds that the most frequent mode is the use of the dialogue form as a vehicle for satire on the corruptions of the age, or for conveying a range of ethical and moral precepts: Erasmus is not interested in the epistemological implications of the dialogue as a genre.

The Praise of Folly seems initially to recognise and respond to the potential complexities of the genre of the paradoxical encomium. Erasmus begins his work in a mode which acknowledges the complexity of human experience and the real difficulty of finding meaning in it. He seems, however, to have felt uneasy about the implied scepticism of this part of his work in spite of its being attributed to a foolish persona. A radical change in tone accompanies a less complex section of scathing satire and a concluding section which can solve the problem only by radically changing the terms in which it is posed. For Erasmus, the nature of man and the purpose of his life cannot be allowed to remain in doubt; his fictional exploration of this problem cannot, finally, be allowed to leave the reader in a state of numbed perplexity; some more positive statement is required.

In contrast to this, More, in The History of King Richard III and Utopia, has given us works of genuine ironic complexity. Both draw partly on hints found in embryo in Lucian. The former work uses a variety of ironic techniques to complicate the reader's
response and to frustrate the wish to see a straightforward moral lesson in the history of Richard's usurpation: the result is a profound and disturbing meditation on the nature and meaning of human history and its relation to divine providence. In *Utopia*, More utilises the figure of the Lucianic *philosophus gloriosus* to give fictional form to the related problems of the nature of the ideal state and the desirability or otherwise of a humanist's entering the service of his prince. No easy solution is provided; neither Morus nor Hythloday represents the whole truth; the function of the work is not to provide such a solution but to dramatise the difficulty of finding it.

The response to Lucian which can be traced in the works of More and Erasmus can be seen as providing contrasting paradigms of the Renaissance approach to literature. It must delight and instruct. The way in which it does this, however, is very much open to debate. Does it work by providing a series of moral truths under the pretext of giving pleasure? Does it work by providing embodied examples of, in Sidney's phrase, 'notable virtues and vices'? Or is its function more disinterested, lying, perhaps in its training of the mind to recognise the complexities of human problems? If the two former approaches seem to predominate in formal discussions of literary theory, the latter approach finds its vindication in the actual literary productions of poets and dramatists. Just as they had in the work of More and Erasmus, the two contrasting approaches to literature continue to exist in an uneasy but fruitful tension.
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