

### Robert Parkyn's Transcript of More's "Prayer of Picus Mirandula vnto God"

Although the body of Thomas More's English verse is quite small (fewer than fifteen hundred lines), it seems to have had quite an extensive manuscript circulation. Manuscripts containing More's English verses range from the copies of the *Rufull Lamentation* and the *Fortune Verses* in Ms. Balliol 354, probably copied there fairly soon after composition, to the later version of the former poem added to a medieval manuscript, British Library Sloane 1825, to the fragmentary, apparently memorial transcription of a passage from More's *Mery Jest* which appears in the late sixteenth century Churwarden's Accounts of Ashburton.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, of More's major English poems only the *Pageant Verses* survive uniquely in printed form.

Apart from the works already noted, More's English verse corpus consists of the translations and additions appended to his *Life of Pico Earl of Mirandula*, first printed by Rastell in [1510?] (STC 19897.7) and subsequently reprinted by de Worde c. 1525 (STC 19898) before appearing in the *English Works* of 1557 (STC 18076). These constitute More's single most extensive group of English verse writings.

It seems worthwhile to draw attention to the only manuscript text of any part of More's *Pico* verses. This occurs in Bodleian Library MS Lat. th. d. 15, the well known commonplace book of Robert Parkyn.<sup>2</sup> It contains a range of devotional and didactic material including a brief cluster of More texts copied before 1551.<sup>3</sup> Among these is a copy of More's "Prayer of Picus Mirandula vnto god", one of his few direct verse translations in this work, in this instance based on Pico's "Deprecatoria ad Deum".

The interest of the text is not simply that it provides a manuscript witness for More's poem. This witness also represents a textual tradition

that is significantly different from that represented by the printed editions which follow each other seriatim, with only very minor variations. As the variant readings make clear, the Parkyn transcript contains a number of unique substitutions (e.g. variants at lines 22, 23, 31, 37, 50) as well as larger patterns of variation (e.g. lines 38, 71). It should be noted that the Latin <sup>4</sup> provides no support for these Parkyn readings and in one instance (line 71) specifically supports the reading of the printed editions against Parkyn. There is, however, one point where Parkyn adds a word which does have the support of the Latin. In line 66, Parkyn reads: "O. love. O. pittie, our welth ay well providinge". All the printed editions omit *well*; but the Latin reads: *O amor o pietas nostris bene prouida rebus*.

However, none of the readings noted above is manifestly inferior to those of the printed editions. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Parkyn's text represents not simply a different textual tradition for More's poem, but one that has claim to serious consideration by More's editors.

Parkyn's transcript is here reproduced verbatim. Transcription poses few problems: a few otiose nasal contractions appear as in *thowghe* (50), *mighti* (57, 69), *Graunt* (71, 73, 75) and *highe* (81). All other contractions have been silently expanded, apart from the ampersand. Parkyn uses the Middle English forms thorn frequently and yogh occasionally (cf. lines 54, 70) and the latter has been retained throughout but thorn has been regularized to *th*. The manuscript capitalization has been preserved and there has been no attempt to add punctuation to that which appears in the manuscript. I have appended collations from the three substantive printed editions.

f. 119]

O Holly gode of dreydfull maieste  
 Uerely one in thre and thre in one  
 Whom angells serue, whos workes all creatures be  
 With hevin & Erth directist all aloyne  
 5 We the besuch good lorde with wofull moyne  
 Spayre hus wrettcheis, and washe away our gyllt  
 Thatt we be nott, by thy iust Angre spyllt

In straitt balaunce of Rigorows iudgmentt  
 Yf thu showldest owr synes ponder and way  
 10 Who able werre to beare thy punyshmentt  
 The holle engynne of all this worlde I say

The engynne thatt endure schall for Ay  
 With such examination myghtt nott stande  
 Space of one momentt in thy angre hand

15 Who is nott borne in syne Originall ?  
 Who doth nott actual syne in sondrie wysse  
 but thu artt the good lorde thatt sparist all  
 With pittuousse mercy temperinge iustice  
 for as thu doest to hus Rewards device  
 20 Above our meritte so doest thu dispence  
 Thy punyschmentt farre vnder our offence

More is thy mercy lorde, than all owr syne  
 to gyve vnto tham thatt vnworthy be  
 More godly is, and more mercy therin  
 25 how be itt worthy ynowghe ar thay parde  
 be thay neuer so vnworthy whom thatt he  
 lyst to acceptt, wher so euer he takyth  
 Whom he vnwordye fyndith, worthy makyth

f. 119v]

Wherfor good lorde thatt ay mercifull artt  
 30 Vnto thy grace and soverayne dignitie  
 We sely wretches, crie with wofull hartt  
 Owr synes forgitte and owr malignitie  
 With pittuows Ees of thy benignitie  
 frendly luke on hus, ons thy owne we be  
 35 Seruaunttes or synneres, wither itt lykith the

Synneres yf thu our cryme beholde certayne  
 The cryme, the worke of owr vncurties mynde  
 butt yf thu than thi gyfftes beholde agayne  
 thy gyfftes noble wonderfull and kynde  
 40 Thow shall hus than the selfe sayme persons fynde  
 Wich ar to the & haith beyne by long space  
 Seruaunttes by nature, childrene by thy grace

Butt this thi goodnes, wringith hus alas  
 for we whome grace haith mayde thy children dere  
 45 Arre mayde thy gillyt folke by owr trespass

Synne haith hus gilty mayde this many yeare  
 Butt lett thy grace, thy grace thatt haith no peyre  
 Of owr offence surmowntten all the prece  
 thatt in owr syne, thy honowr may encrece

- 50 Ffor thowghe thy wisdome, thowghe thi mightti powr  
 May other wysse appeare sufficiently  
 As thinge wich thy creatures euery owre  
 With one voce declare and testifye  
 thy goodnes 3itt, thy singuler mercye  
 55 Thy pitteous hartt, thy gratius Indulgence  
 Nothinge so clerely schewith as owr offence

Whatt butt owr syne haith shewyde that mightti love  
 Wiche able was thy dreadful maiestie

- f.120]To draw downe in to erthe from hevin above  
 60 and crucifye god, thatt we poore wrettches wee  
 Schulde from owr fylthy synes clensside bee  
 With bloode and watter of thy owne syde  
 thatt stremyde from thi blisside wondes wyde

- Thy love and pittie thus O. hevinly kyng  
 65 Owr evill makith matter of thy goodnes  
 O. love. O. pittie, our welth ay well providinge  
 O. goodnes seruinge thy seruantes in destres  
 O. love. O. pittie, well neyghe now thankles  
 O. goodnes, mightti, gratius and wysse  
 70 And 3itt almost vanqwesshide with owr visse

Grauntt thu, good lorde such heatte in to my hartt  
 thatt vnto thi love of thyne may be egall  
 grauntt me from Sathanas service to astartt  
 With whom me Rewith so longe to have ben thrall  
 75 Grauntt me good lorde, and creator of all  
 The flame to qwenche of all synfull desire  
 And in thy love, sett all my hertt a fyere

- Thatt when the Iowrnay of this deadly lyffe  
 My sely gost haith fyneschide and thence  
 80 departen must, with owtt his flescly wyffe  
 aloyne into his lorde highe presence

he may the fynde / O. well of Indulgence  
 In thy lordshippe, nott as a lorde, butt Rather  
 as a veray lovinge, tender father. Amen

### Variant Readings

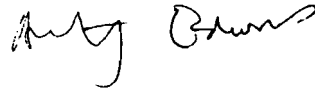
#### Abbreviations :

- Ra* : *the lyfe of Johan Picus, erle of Mirandula* (J. Rastell, [1510?]),  
 g3-g4<sup>v</sup>  
*Wo* : *the lyfe of Johan Picus Erle of Myrandula* (de Worde [c. 1525]),  
 g3-g4<sup>v</sup>  
 1557 : *The workes of Sir T. More*, b8<sup>v</sup>-c1<sup>v</sup>

3. workes] wark *Ra Wo 1557*
4. With] Which *Ra Wo 1557*
8. straitt] straye *Wo*
9. synes] synne *Ra Wo 1557*
12. engynne] engyue [sic] *Ra* ; endure] enduren *Ra Wo 1557*
14. one] a *Ra Wo 1557* ; thy] thyne *Ra Wo 1557*
16. nott] *Wo. om.*
17. artt the good lorde thatt] good lorde art he that *Ra Wo 1557*
19. to hus Rewards] rewardes vs *Ra Wo 1557*
20. merittes] merite *Ra Wo 1557*
22. lorde] ferr *Ra Wo 1557*
23. vnto tham] them also *Ra Wo 1557*
27. acceptt] accept which *Ra 1557*
31. wofull] humble *Ra Wo 1557*
32. synes] synne *Ra 1557*
34. thy] thyne *Ra Wo 1557* ; we be] *Wo om.*
37. The] Oure *Ra Wo 1557*
38. thu than thi gyfftes] thi giftis thou *Ra Wo 1557*
40. shall] shalt *Ra Wo 1557* ; selfe] *Ra Wo 1557 om.*
41. haith beyne] haue *Ra Wo 1557*
44. haith] had *Ra Wo 1557*
46. yeare] a yere *Ra Wo 1557*
49. thy] thyn *Ra Wo 1557*
50. mightti] souereyne *Ra Wo 1557*
52. thinge] thingis *Ra Wo 1557*
53. With] All with *Ra Wo 1557*

54. thy] they *Ra*  
 55. gratius] garcious [sic] *Wo*  
 61. synes] synne *Ra Wo 1557* ; clensside] Iclensed *Ra Wo 1557*  
 62. thy] thyne *Ra Wo 1557*  
 66. well] *Ra Wo 1557 om.*  
 70. almost] almost now *Ra Wo*  
 71. thu good lorde] I the praie *Ra Wo 1557* ; my] myne *Ra Wo 1557*  
 72. vnto thi] to this *Ra Wo 1557*  
 74. have] *Wo om.* ; ben] be *Ra Wo 1557*  
 77. my] myne *Ra Wo 1557*  
 81. lorde] lordis *Ra Wo 1557*  
 84. lovinge tender] tendre louing *Ra Wo 1557*

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1. Full details and discussions of all these manuscript versions will be found in my forthcoming edition of More's English poems for the Yale edition.
2. The most recent description (with references to earlier ones) appears in Gary E. Haupt's edition of volume 13 of *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More* (New Haven, 1976), cxli-cxliii.
3. See Haupt's edition, cxli.
4. I have used the 1496 Bologna edition of Pico's *Opera* ; the prayer occurs on sigs. VV 6<sup>r-v</sup>.

#### Précis

A.S.G. Edwards, the editor of More's English Poems for the Yale *Complete Works*, here presents the only manuscript text of any part of More's *Pico* verses, collated with the editions of John Rastell [1510?], Wynkyn de Worde [c.1525], and William Rastell [1557].

#### Résumé

A.S.G. Edwards, qui prépare l'édition critique des poèmes anglais de More pour les *Complete Works* de Yale, présente ici le seul texte manuscrit d'une partie des vers de Pic de la Mirandole traduits par More ; il l'a collationné avec les éditions de John Rastell [1510?], Wynkyn de Worde [c.1525], et William Rastell [1557].