

his brother for harboring a Jesuit priest" (1977), while "Holy Sonnet IV" may reflect "the situation of Donne as the heir of a long-suffering Catholic family" (1993).¹⁵

Donne's copy of More's English Works (the Rastell folio of 1557), now in the library of the Catholic University of America (Washington, D.C.), lacks any marginalia that might provide more clues to Donne's understanding of his Catholic legacy. But it is clear that his recusant and Catholic heritage played an important part in his life, as it did in the lives of many Elizabethans and Jacobean. He was born two years after Pope Pius V had excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I, "a time when the course of a man's life," Mueller observes, "could be crucially shaped by his religious convictions, particularly if he was willing to speak them forth."¹⁶ Donne was clearly rooted in the Catholic legacy of his great-grand-uncle, whose good name he invokes in *Pseudo-Martyr*, that "Sir Thomas More, of whose firmness to the integrity of the Roman faith, that Church need not be ashamed" (Donne 94).

Cithara, 8 (1968): 39–46, explains further that for Donne to belong to the "visible" church would have cut him off from his Catholic heritage, and to maintain his Catholicism would have prevented him from embracing the "visible" church.

¹⁵ M. Thomas Hester has written extensively and well about Donne's religion and lyrics. See his important study, *Kindle Pity and Brave Scorn: John Donne's Satyres* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982) as well as "The 'Bona Carmina' of Donne and Horace," *Renaissance Papers (for 1976)* (1977): 21–30; "Henry Donne, John Donne and the Date of 'Satyre II,'" *N&Q*, n. s. 24 (1977): 524–27, and "'Let them sleepe': Donne's Personal Allusion in 'Holy Sonnet IV,'" *Papers on Language & Literature*, 29 (no. 3, 1993): 346–51.

¹⁶ William R. Mueller, *John Donne: Preacher* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 8. Sir Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia* (1641) observes: "The name of Recusant began then [1570] . . . and till then the Catholics were no more than Church Papists; but were commanded by the Pope's [Bull to] forbear church-going" (Caraman, n. 9, 34). Even Philip II of Spain was surprised by the Queen's excommunication, and commented that Pope Pius V had "allowed himself to be carried away by his zeal," and that "this sudden and unexpected step will exacerbate things there and drive the Queen and her friends the more to persecute the few good Catholics remaining in England" (33–34). "Church papists" were Catholics who maintained minimum attendance at parish churches to avoid penalties.

THOMAS MORE IN THE SUBTEXT OF SHAKESPEARE AND FLETCHER'S *HENRY VIII*

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Since the dominant theme of the play is that of "The King's Great Matter" (his divorce of Katherine and marriage to Anne) it would be difficult for a viewer or reader not to think of Thomas More as the play unfolds, so much was he involved in this event. But *Sir Thomas More*—which also had Shakespeare among its authors—was not approved by the Master of the Revels, and the playwrights no doubt wished to avoid a similar rejection. A solution for them was to suggest More in the subtext, particularly since his cult was by then well established. This article studies the relationship of the absent More to several of the characters present on stage.

Key words: The Field of Cloth of Gold, underground cult, Buckingham, Wolsey, Katherine of Aragon.

Puisque Henry VIII a pour thème dominant «la grande affaire du roi», à savoir son divorce et son remariage, on ne peut pas voir ou lire cette pièce sans penser à Thomas More, qui en fut un témoin engagé. Mais Sir Thomas More—qui a aussi Shakespeare parmi ses auteurs—n'avait pas reçu l'autorisation du censeur officiel, et sans doute les dramaturges ne voulurent pas courir le risque d'un semblable refus. Une solution pour eux aurait été de mettre More dans le sous-texte, où il serait reconnu au moins par les Londoniens, nombreux à l'époque, attachés à sa mémoire. L'article étudie les rapports entre More le grand absent et plusieurs personnages présents.

Mots clés: Le Camp du Drapeau d'Or, culte souterrain, Buckingham, Wolsey, Catherine d'Aragon.

Dado que el tema dominante de la obra de teatro es «El Gran Asunto del Rey» (su divorcio de Catalina y su matrimonio con Ana) sería difícil—tanto para el espectador como para el lector—no pensar en Tomás Moro a medida que la obra va desarrollándose, habida cuenta de la implicación de éste en los acontecimientos. Pero *Sir Thomas More*—que cuenta con Shakespeare entre sus autores—no recibió la aprobación del censor oficial, y sin duda los autores deseaban evitar un rechazo similar. La solución a la que llegaron consistió en dejar a Moro en el subtexto, dado que para entonces su culto se encontraba bien arraigado. Este artículo estudia la relación entre el ausente Moro y los distintos personajes presentes en el escenario.

Palabras clave: El campo del paño de oro, culto clandestino, Buckingham, Wolsey, Catalina de Aragón.

The Elizabethan church, Dominic Baker-Smith tells us, dropped the elaborate use of vestments practiced before the Reformation: "It was the court which inherited the sign consciousness that was integral to Catholic practice, and it had even extended it through the royal government of the church. For Shakespeare, therefore, the court was the most intensely semiotic milieu within his experience."¹ Of all his plays *Henry VIII* is probably that of greatest courtly spectacle, perhaps too much so, for at its performance of June 29, 1613, the Globe theatre burned to the ground when the firing of cannon for the play ignited the thatched roof, but with only one injury. The mishap, however, does serve to date the play, for a letter written July 4 of the same year notes that this play had been acted only two or three times before.² Printed in the First Folio of 1623 as the last of the English history plays, *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth* was also known by its subtitle, *All Is True*. Since Balzac quotes this subtitle to affirm that *Père Goriot* is true, there may have been a Parisian performance of the play in 1830.

The Cult of Thomas More

It would have been very difficult for Shakespeare and Fletcher to write a play about Henry VIII—at least on the subject of "the King's great matter"—that did not feature Thomas More. To this may be added the fact that by the latter part of the sixteenth-century, More had become a cult figure. As Clark Hulse explains, following Thomas Cromwell's destruction of visible memories of saints, most notably of Thomas Becket, "with no tomb or shrine, there could be no pilgrimages, no public ceremonies. The cult of Thomas More developed instead in the interior and exile spaces of Tudor culture." In the midst

¹ Dominic Baker-Smith, "Courts and Creativity: Shakespeare and the Court," *The Court Historian* 6:2 (2001), 93–122, p. 113.

² William Montgomery, Introduction to *All Is True (Henry VIII)* in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, Second Edition, General Editors Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006) p. 1247.

of recusant family privacy, there flourished a secret underground of illegal Catholicism. "Deprived of a body, a public site, a shrine, and driven into hiding, the cult of Thomas More centered instead around substitute bodies, namely the portraits and written accounts of More that already existed or were soon produced. Hence it was a cult centered not on the metaphorized body but on metaphors for the body, or even on metaphor itself."³ While Hulse writes only of portraits and biographies of More, we may add drama.

As two articles and two reviews in this issue attest, *Sir Thomas More* had been written perhaps twenty years before *Henry VIII*. The play was refused official approval by Edmund Tilney, the Master of the Revels, and remained for many years a written document only, and therefore *The Book of Sir Thomas More*.⁴ The same playwright Shakespeare was involved with part of the authorship of both plays. How could playwrights deal with More and still have their play accepted by the Master of the Revels? One possibility would be that of placing him in a literary subtext that would function as part of a secret cult.

History plays were not in vogue in 1613 writes Baker-Smith. Why this exception? The play may indeed have been a gesture toward the wedding of Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I, and the Elector Palatine in February of that year. The letter referred to earlier, however, says that *Henry VIII* had had only two or three performances before the fire of June 29. There is no evidence that this play was part of the wedding celebration, but in any case Shakespeare would have been engaged in writing it at the time of the festivities. *Henry VIII*, Baker-Smith claims, is Shakespeare's "most specific portrait of a court, representing, under the still contentious events of the Tudor past, the factional tension of Stuart politics."⁵

³ Clark Hulse, "Dead Man's Treasure: The Cult of Thomas More" in *The Production of English Renaissance Culture*, eds., David Lee Miller, Sharon O'Dair, Harold Weber (Cornell U P, 1994), 190–225, p. 208.

⁴ See Martin White, "Authorship and Censorship of *Sir Thomas More*" in Anthony Munday and Others, *Sir Thomas More* (London: Nick Hearn Books for the Royal Shakespeare Company, 2005), xv–xvi.

⁵ Baker-Smith, p. 119.

Thomas More's role in these contentious events of Tudor history was certainly known, and in 1613 there were still living descendants of persons who had known More. There were portraits, there were his own writings, and many biographies of him, secretly known perhaps only in the underground of those who formed his cult and who would recognize subtextual references or images of him. Three characters in particular are linked with More: Buckingham, Wolsey, and Katherine.

Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham

As a relative of Edward IV, Buckingham was a potential claimant to the throne after Henry—should the latter die without a male heir—and thus had to be gotten rid of. Through the false testimony of his Surveyor, he was sentenced to death for high treason, but he still dies praying for the king (2.1.88–94). In the section on the sin of envy in *The Last Things*, More himself wrote of “a great Duke” (referred to in the play as “the great Duke of Buckingham” [2.1.3] and “The great Duke” [2.1.11]), who was suddenly overthrown and executed (CW1, 160–61). W. E. Campbell and A. W. Reed identify this figure as Buckingham in their edition of this treatise in *The English Works of Sir Thomas More*, Vol. 1, pp. 21–22 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1931). In the Yale edition (CW1, 1997) Katherine Gardiner Rodgers (pp. lx–lxi and 268) is not so thoroughly convinced as Campbell and Reed, pointing out that the identification is speculative.

The evidence for the speculation, however, is very strong. Buckingham certainly qualified as a “great Duke keeping so great estate and princely port in his house,” whom others could indeed envy, “specially at some special day in which he keepeth for the marriage of his child a great honorable court above other times. . .” (CW1, 160/34–161/2 [spelling modernized]).⁶ A person who saw the royalty and

⁶ Buckingham's youngest daughter, Mary, married George Neville, third Baron Bergavenny (Abergavenny) in June 1519. The duke was executed in May 1521.

honor shown to this duke, writes More, all his neighbors kneeling bareheaded to him, could be envious of him. If the jealous one were informed

that, for secret treason lately detected to the king, he should undoubtedly be taken the morrow, his court all broken up, his goods seized, his wife put out, his children disinherited, himself cast into prison, brought forth and arraigned, the matter out of question, & he should be condemned, his coat armor reversed, his gilt spurs hewn off his heels, himself hanged drawn, and quartered,

(CW1, 161/6–12 [spelling modernized])

would not his envy turn to pity?

More writes that Buckingham was arrested for “secret treason” detected to the king. More is doing as tactful a job as possible in stating there was no case against Buckingham—only something secret related to the king, by whom being another secret. The duke was indeed condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, the sentence later reduced to beheading. *The Last Things* is unfinished and unrevised by the author. Its only printing was in the 1557 Folio edition of More's English works by William Rastell, who apparently received the manuscript from Margaret Roper. Stapleton tells us that Margaret had herself written a lost treatise on the same subject in a sort of father-daughter game, in which according to her father, she produced the better composition.⁷ Campbell and Reed point out that More himself would not have published this un-revised text in his own lifetime “nor would it have been safe in his own lifetime to have referred as he does to the sentence passed” on Buckingham (p. 21).

It is worth noting that More uses the duke, who was so blessed with earthly goods and lost them all so suddenly, as an example of why one should not be envious, so quickly can envy turn to pity. In the play,

⁷ Thomas Stapleton, *The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More* (1588), trans. Philip E. Hallett (New York: Fordham UP, 1966, rpt. 1984), p. 103.

Buckingham himself eschews envy. When Lovell asks the convicted Buckingham to forgive him, Buckingham replies:⁸

I forgive all.

There cannot be those numberless offenses
'Gainst me that I cannot take peace with. No black envy
Shall make my grave. (2.1.83–86)

Katherine Rodgers points out that in his *Anglica Historia*, Polydore Vergil “stresses Wolsey’s connivance in the indictment and portrays” his “duplicity as motivated by his envy of the duke’s power” (CW1, lxi, n. 4).

As Buckingham had been condemned by the Surveyor’s perjury, and More will be by that of Richard Rich, so Buckingham—as More and Katherine will do—goes to his death praying for the king:

My vows and prayers

Yet are the King’s and, till my soul forsake,
Shall cry for blessings on him. (2.1.88–90)

Thomas Cardinal Wolsey

The subtextual relationship between More and Wolsey is a complex one. Many commentators on the play dismiss the archbishop of York simply as a thoroughly villainous figure. Shakespeare, however, gives him the dignity of a tragic hero and the honor, one might say, of speaking the lines concerning More. If it is a genuine honor for Wolsey to speak of More, it is a dubious honor for him to be spoken of by Lord Abergavenny as fiendishly proud:

I cannot tell

What heaven hath given him—let some graver eye
Pierce into that—but I can see his pride
Peep through each part of him. Whence has he that?

⁸ All quotations are from The Arden Shakespeare *King Henry VIII (All Is True)*, ed. Gordon McMullan (London: Thomson Learning, 2000).

If not from hell, the devil is a niggard
Or has given all before, and he begins
A new hell in himself. (1.1.66–72)

Abergavenny’s search for a description of Wolsey’s attachment to the deadliest of the seven deadly sins overshadows his opening acknowledgement that heaven as well as hell contributed to Wolsey’s character, but that it will take a graver eye than his to discern heaven’s role. On the surface, the play gives that role to Griffith. But there is also Wolsey’s most famous biographer, George Cavendish.⁹

In a recent article Richard Britnell explores a graver eye—perhaps even that of which the playwright was thinking—in the person of George Cavendish, who produced his biography—as William Rastell did his 1557 Folio—during the reign of queen Mary Tudor. For Cavendish, Wolsey’s important quality was that of service, certainly a Tudor value, exemplified in the S’s of the chain we are so accustomed to seeing in the Holbein portrait of Thomas More. “Cavendish represents loyal service as an absolute ideal, virtually an extension of religious obligation.”¹⁰ And loyal to Henry VIII Wolsey was, to the extent of making serious enemies, like Anne Bullen, for, while Wolsey dutifully fought the king’s case in Rome for nullifying his marriage to Katherine, he favored a French second marriage as a diplomatic gesture. Wolsey says of Anne: “All my glories/ In that one woman I have lost forever” (3.2.408–409).

This is only a few lines after Cromwell has given him the news that Henry is displeased with his service and has replaced him as Lord Chancellor with Thomas More. Wolsey here shows some surprise: “That’s somewhat sudden” (3.2.394), but no resentment at all, as he speaks about More:

But he’s a learned man. May he continue
Long in his highness’ favour, and do justice

⁹ For the use of Cavendish in the play see McMullan, pp. 162 and 169–71.

¹⁰ Richard Britnell, “Service, Loyalty, and Betrayal in Cavendish’s *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*,” *Moreana* N° 161 (March 2005), 3–30, p. 6.

For truth's sake and his conscience, that his bones,
 When he has run his course and sleeps in blessings,
 May have a tomb of orphans' tears wept on him.
 (3.2.395–399)

These lines are a sophisticated combination of reality for Wolsey and of both reality and irony for the audience, which knows the future that Wolsey cannot see. More was a learned man, but he did not remain long in the favor of the king. He did indeed practice justice for truth's sake and his conscience (a key word in this play), but his conscience and truth as he saw it kept his life from running its course. His bones slept in blessings in the eyes of those who kept his Cult, but without their head, and in the crypt of St. Peter ad Vincula, parish church of the Tower where he had been imprisoned. Thus, although the Lord Chancellor was the official responsible for minors, More had no tomb for orphans to weep on. According to Erasmus, Wolsey, while having little liking for More, did admire his capabilities,¹¹ and Shakespeare so indicates.

As though edified by thoughts of More, Wolsey—at the end of his response to Cromwell—rises to the stature of a tragic hero, recognizing his *hamartia*:

O Cromwell, Cromwell,
 Had I but served my God with half the zeal
 I served my King, he would not in mine age
 Have left me naked to mine enemies. (3.2.454–7)

The principle of service that Cavendish tells us Wolsey never lost (as neither did Cavendish) is that seized upon by Shakespeare. Wolsey recognizes his *hamartia* as that of having served the wrong master, king rather than God. Was it known that More died protesting

¹¹ Letter to Johann Faber, Bishop of Vienna, late 1532 (Allen 2750). There are two *pro forma* appearances of an un-named "Lord Chancellor" in the play, but these occur historically after More had resigned that office.

that he was the king's good servant and God's first?¹² Surely his words, recorded on the spot and sent off to the Continent immediately, were known to his Cult in England. In any case, does not Wolsey's self assessment, delivered so shortly after his praise of More, juxtapose the service of the two?

Katherine of Aragon

In *Sir Thomas More* a woman watching More on his way back to the Tower after his trial in Westminster Hall, calls out "Farewell the best friend that the poor e'er had" (5.1.43). In an early scene in the Council Chamber (1.2) in *Henry VIII*, Queen Katherine pleads for the common people, in this case, the clothiers. As More once was, she is a delight to Henry. But matters take a quick turn when Wolsey hosts a masque at which Henry meets Anne Bullen and is immediately smitten; thus ends Act I.

Act II opens on a somber note as one Gentleman relates to another the trial of Buckingham, who then enters on his way to execution. No sooner has he exited when we learn that the meeting with Anne has taken effect: two Gentlemen echo the rumors of the separation of Henry and Katherine, the king being "possessed . . . with a scruple / That will undo her" (2.1.157–58). The reference is to the pretense Henry found for divorcing Katherine, his wife of twenty years: that

¹² See "The Paris News Letter", Appendix I, pp.253–266 of Nicholas Harpsfield, *The life and death of S' Thomas Moore, knight, sometymes Lord high Chancellor of England* (Oxford UP for The Early English Text Society, 1932, rpt. 1963). At his execution More exhorts the onlookers to pray to God for the king, that He will give him good counsel: *Après les exhorta, et supplia tres instamment qu'ils priassent Dieu pour le Roy, affin qu'il luy voulsist donner bon conseil...* Then "The Letter" concludes: *protestant qu'il mouroit son bon serviteur et de Dieu premierement / protesting that he died his [the king's] good servant and God's first*" (266).

she had previously been married to his brother Arthur, who had died very young.¹³

In the following scene the Chamberlain confides to Norfolk and Suffolk that the king is "Full of sad thoughts and troubles" and explains:

It seems the marriage with his brother's wife
Has crept too near his conscience.

Suffolk's reply might be said to sum up the whole of the king's great matter:

No, his conscience
Has crept too near another lady. (2.2.15–17)

Norfolk regrets

a loss of her
That like a jewel has hung twenty years
About his neck yet never lost her lustre;
Of her that loves him with that excellence
That angels love good men with; even of her
That, when the greatest stroke of Fortune falls,
Will bless the King—and is not this course pious?
(2.2.29–35)

A scene with Anne and the Old Lady follows, the latter calling the former a hypocrite when she insists that she would not want to be Queen (2.3.23–24). The next scene—Katherine's trial—prepares the way for just that, however: she is demoted to Princess Dowager. But even so, Henry calls her "the queen of earthly queens" (2.4.138).

¹³ Henry's older brother Arthur, Prince of Wales, married Katherine on November 14, 1501. Both were 15 years old. Arthur was sickly and died the following April 2, the marriage apparently unconsummated. On December 26, 1503, Julius II granted permission to Henry to marry his sister-in-law. They were married June 11, 1509, according to the ceremony of virgin fiancées. See Germain Marc'hadour, *L'Univers de Thomas More* (Paris: Vrin, 1963), pp. 115, 118, 124, 162.

Norfolk's words come true. Although Katherine calls herself "the most unhappy woman living" (3.1.147), she still asks Wolsey and Campeius:

Pray do my service to his majesty:
He has my heart yet, and shall have my prayers
While I shall have my life. (3.1.179–181)

All this leads up to Wolsey's dismissal and his praise of More. (In the meantime, Henry and Anne are secretly married.) The importance of the office of Lord Chancellor—about to be taken from Wolsey and given to More—is highlighted by the king's asking Wolsey, "Have I not made you / Prime man of the state?" (3.2.161–62).

Anne is crowned queen amid great splendor, while Katherine is exiled to the damp and unhealthy castle of Kimbolton attended by Griffith "her gentleman usher" and Patience "her woman." Griffith recounts to her the death of Wolsey, given sanctuary in Leicester Abbey, where he died "full of repentance, / Continual meditations, tears and sorrows" (4.2.27–28). The play then assesses Wolsey's life. After Katherine's account of his many faults, Griffith asks leave to "speak his good" (4.2.47). He so convinces Katherine that she replies:

Whom I most hated living, thou hast made me,
With thy religious truth and modesty,
Now in his ashes honour. Peace be with him. (4.2.73–75)

We are back to Abergavenny's assertion that someone else is needed to describe the good in Wolsey. The play made a promise, fulfilled by Griffith. It was not so difficult for Katherine to forgive Henry: after all, she loved him. Wolsey, on the other hand, she had hated. But he also is forgiven.

Katherine now lies dying; as she sleeps she has a vision in which six "Personages" in white robes—wearing garlands of bay leaves on their heads, golden vizards on their faces, and carrying branches of bay leaves or palms in their hands—alternate curtsies to Katherine with holding the garlands over her head. They mount and descend a ladder,

coming from and going up to heaven, as More had mounted the scaffold not too long before. Baker-Smith's comment about the semiotics of the court to Shakespeare is well illustrated in the Vision scene. The term "Personages" denotes spiritual creatures (not seen by either Griffith or Patience), wearing white for Katherine's purity and golden vizards for her incorrupt fidelity to the king ("gold tried in fire": Rev. 7.9), and by extension, of More and Fisher to her cause. The triumphal bay leaves announce her entry into heaven, from which the Personages come and return. Palms are leaves of praise or symbols carried by pilgrims to the holy land, but also the symbols of their fate depicted in representations of martyrs—thus bringing us back to More and Fisher. The spectacles for which *Henry VIII* is famous are all of the court, except for Katherine's vision, which is from heaven, so much so that Samuel Johnson called Katherine's death superior to all the other tragic scenes in Shakespeare.

The stage directions tell us that "she makes in her sleep signs of rejoicing and holdeth up her hands to heaven" (4.2.82.14–15). She wakes to receive the Spanish ambassador, Eustace Chapuys. As Buckingham and More had done, she dies praying for the king, for she says to Chapuys: "Tell him in death I blessed him, / For so I will" (4.2.163–164). As More died protesting that he was the king's good servant and God's first, Katherine reiterates that she is a queen—as More and Fisher proclaimed, she is the king's legitimate spouse:

Embalm me,
Then lay me forth. Although unqueened, yet like
A queen and daughter to a king inter me.
I can no more. (4.2.170–173)

Act Five deals with the new queen and the birth and baptism of her child, Elizabeth, whose name is that of the bride whose wedding the Court celebrated earlier in the spring of the play's presentation. According to Geoffrey Bullough, there was also a Cult of Queen

Elizabeth¹⁴—now ten years dead—a Cult with no need to hide underground, and whose importance explains the time given in the last act to her baptism and to Cranmer's prediction of the glories of the future reign of "this royal infant" (5.4.17ff).

The baptismal celebration is, however, not the end. An Epilogue speaks fourteen lines beginning:

'Tis ten to one this play can never please
All that are here.

And six lines later:

All the expected good we're like to hear
For this play at this time is only in
The merciful construction of good women,
For such a one we showed 'em. (8–11)

The candidates for the one woman, say the commentators, are Katherine, Anne, and Elizabeth, and according to McMullan, this "deliberately ambiguous reference" is "generally taken to refer only to Katherine" (p. 434n). As has been mentioned, Anne has lines that suggest hypocrisy. As for Elizabeth, one would hope that the playwrights would not be so cynical about women as to find the only good one to be a newly baptized infant. The Epilogue, therefore, seems to bring us back to an un-named Katherine, and thus to an un-named More, whose story was inseparable from hers.

Conclusion: Political Incorrectness

Marie-Claire Phélippeau and Arthur Kincaid have reviewed the 2005 Stratford-upon-Avon production of *Sir Thomas More* (see below, pp. 119–21 and 123–30). The Royal Shakespeare Company honored

¹⁴ Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Volume IV, *Later English History Plays* (London: Routledge and New York: Columbia UP, 1962), p. 448.

the event by publishing the text of the play with pertinent introductory material (see Note 4). It is striking how these essays reflect what Hulse has written about the Cult of More.

In her "Introduction," Ann Pasternak Slater cites "More's great twentieth-century biographer, R. W. Chambers" as the source of her observation that "the portrayal of More in this play is strikingly politically incorrect," and "is based on a resilient popular tradition that defied the authority of the crown's version for the sixty years between More's death and the play's composition." She continues: "Where a play gives us a view of its hero which contradicts the contemporary propaganda, it must be founded on a very strongly based and obstinate tradition."¹⁵ As Chambers himself concludes, "the old play is one of the most important documents concerning Thomas More. It shows what his own city thought of him, more than half a century after his death."¹⁶

If *Sir Thomas More* portrays what the city thought of More sixty years after his death, *Henry VIII* gives a subtextual court version another twenty years after that. And in the semiotic milieu that the court was to Shakespeare, the signs and symbols of More's relationships with court figures and events function beneath the surface to keep his memory alive. Geoffrey Bullough writes of Katherine: "The garland-dance which she sees in her Vision indicates her saintliness—a remarkable thing for a Jacobean dramatist to admit in a Spanish Catholic."¹⁷ What is perhaps more remarkable is that the presentation of Katherine throughout the play is supportive of her, even apparently to its Epilogue, probably written by Fletcher. In other words, the playwrights were being political incorrect, particularly we might note by the praise of Katherine in a play culminating in the baptism of Anne's child, the future queen. The underground Cult of Thomas More exists side by side with the visible Cult of Queen Elizabeth.

¹⁵ RSC edition, Ann Pasternak Slater, "Introduction," p. xviii.

¹⁶ R. W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935; rpt. Ann Arbor Paperbacks, U of Michigan P, 1958), p. 47.

¹⁷ Bullough, p. 447.

THOMAS MORE* À STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, 2005

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À la sortie de la représentation du *Sir Thomas More* d'Anthony Munday, William Shakespeare et d'autres, mis en scène à Stratford par Robert Delamere, l'impression première est celle d'un drôle de More. Un More bien sympathique, un More pathétique certes, mais surtout un personnage qui éclabousse la scène de sa surhumaine vitalité. Thomas More est drôle, gai, vif à l'extrême, voire bouffon. Ses réparties fusent, brillantes. Il semble régler les problèmes d'un coup de baguette; il renvoie les femmes – sa femme, ses filles – à leur ouvrage, raillant leurs états d'âme et méprisant leur légitime chagrin. Tout cela est plaisant à voir: More surprend, amuse, fait le pitre sur scène, comme s'il ne croyait pas au sérieux de son personnage, et affiche devant la mort la même fanfaronnade que devant le tribunal ou devant la cour. Conclusion: More en fait trop!

Oui, le personnage en fait trop. Enfin, c'est l'impression ressentie par nous, qui, alors spectateurs, avons jusque là brossé dans notre œil intérieur un portrait de More épaissi au fil de nos lectures, nourri de ses écrits. Et voilà que le portrait que nous contemplons a bien du mal à se superposer à celui que nous portons en nous.

Et pourtant, des amis venus nous attendre à la fin du spectacle, regardant se vider le théâtre, sont impressionnés par la gravité des

* The Royal Shakespeare Company a décidé d'omettre le mot *Sir* dans le titre.