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Sister Mary Edith Willow, *An Analysis of the English Poems of St. Thomas More*.

Bibliotheca Humanistica et Reformatorica, volume VIII. Nieuwkoop, B. DE GRAAF, 1974. Pp. 285. Dutch guilders 80.

This book is a revision of the doctoral dissertation which Sister Mary Edith Willow completed at Loyola University in 1959.

Its stated purpose is "to probe into a new facet of Morean scholarship and to reveal the skill More manifested in the field of English prosody" (7); indeed, to reinstate More as a Tudor poet (8).

Sister Mary Edith's contribution is significant. In an extensive and carefully documented study she gives to More's "neglected" English verse the kind of in-depth analysis which it deserves. She discusses More's scope; his meanings; his distinctive use of tradition and convention; his handling of theme, voice and address, narrative technique, schemes, tropes, and metrics. She elucidates both the poetry and its literary significance by extensive exploration of its historic background, its literary milieu, its references and allusions, as well as its literary prototypes and influence. Finally, under one cover she brings together and summarizes four centuries of the comment, scholarship, and criticism of More's English verse.

In her eagerness to be thorough and to utilize all the available tools of literary research and analysis, however, Sister Mary Edith, at times, neglects the corresponding synthesis. For example, after praising "A ruful lamentation" as "a perfect work of art", she devotes considerable space to a discussion of its structural inconsistencies (143-148). She defines, explains, and illustrates More's use of hypotaxis and parataxis as tools of amplification in the "Nyne pageauntes" but does not comment on the effectiveness of that usage in itself or within the total structure and context of the poem (102-103). She quotes the 12-line segment of "A meri jest" beginning "Whan an hatter/Wyll go smatter/ In philosophy," four separate times to illustrate theme (24), rhythm, diction, and tone quality (24), use of feminine rhyme (52), and alternation of consonants and consonant blends (53), but she does not emphasize the relationship of theme, rhythm, diction, tone quality and rhyme within the passage or within the total structure of the poem. Often she includes bits

of information which, though interesting, are not focused to bear directly upon the point at issue.

At times Sister Mary Edith is unnecessarily repetitive. She outlines nine examples of men in More's "Meri jest" who court disaster by attempting to change their occupations and thus their positions in society (23); she cites in full the passages in which More describes these same men (27 and 28); she then again outlines the nine exempla by juxtaposing "present craft" and "coveted one" (62). Similarly, after quoting in full the English epitaph which More appended to his "Ruful lamentation" (160), she includes an "outline" (161) which is a verbatim transcription, in only slightly altered order, of the praises enumerated in the epitaph. (Nor does she give any reason, incidentally, for ascribing to More a piece which no serious editor, as far as I know, retains in the canon of his works). Although her approach to her subject assumes and demands a scholarly audience, she is apt to belabor the obvious, as when she cites OED to gloss 'nother' a variant of 'other' or 'an other' (168), or when she explains that 'brottel' means 'brittle' (195) and that 'brotle' is spelled 'brittle' in our day (190 and 262).

At times Sister Mary Edith assumes that which she proposes to prove. In reference to "A meri jest," for example, she uses circular logic: "The very fact that it was *probably* [italics mine, as in the next three quotes] narrated or sung at a merry feast points to its appropriateness for such an occasion" (35). In reference to "Thomas More to them that trust in fortune" she writes: "These verses figuratively expose the true nature of Fortune, and *their references to clouds, land, and fire make these lines highly artistic.*" References to natural phenomena in themselves do not necessarily contribute to artistry, and Sister Mary Edith does not elucidate the artistic quality or use of the references she cites (204).

The work is not free from startling inconsistencies. On page 167, for example, Queen Elizabeth's youngest child Kate "probably died while young." In the next paragraph, by Warton's authority, "the queen died within a few days after she was delivered of this infant, the princess *Catherine, who did not long survive her mother's death.*" And although she is careful to establish that in More's day punctuation practice was not consistent and that often punctuation was dictated by printer's

practice (152 and 238), the author stresses More's punctuation as a basis for conclusions about tone color, rhythm, and quality of cadence (150 and 151).

These obvious flaws, and the redundancy which results from an effort to be thorough and all-inclusive cannot, however, destroy Sister Mary Edith Willow's overall accomplishment. As a compendium of literary and historical information, her *Analysis* promises to be a useful tool for students of More's English verse, and indeed, for students of the English verse in of poetically "drab age".

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HUMANISTICA LOVANIENSIA, vol. XXII (1973) begins with two articles by our amicus Joseph R. Berrigan: "Latin Tragedy of the Quattrocento" (1-9) and "Gregorii Corrarii Veneti Liber Satyrarum" (10-38). The link between the two essays is Gregorio Correr. This Venetian aristocrat, the nephew of several popes and a student of Vittorino da Feltre, composed his *Progne* at the age of eighteen, but he never surpassed this adolescent feat. The six satires here edited were also finished before the author's 22nd birthday.

Titus Livius de' Frulovisi, subject of the next paper (by W. Ludwig) is known to the More world chiefly through his Latin life of Henry V, written in the early days of Henry VI (1437) and printed in London in 1513.

D. Donnet montre abondamment la dette de Varennius envers les *Commentarii* de Budé pour sa *Syntaxis graeca* de 1532.

Philip Dust offers a Latin answer to a crux in Milton's *Lycidas*.

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L'UTOPIE OU L'ESPÉRANCE.

Notre dernier bulletin, après avoir examiné conjointement deux utopies : celle de l'écologiste Dumont et celle du Président Mao Tse Tung, leur associait une brève recension du numéro "Utopie" de la revue *Esprit*. Dans *Le Monde* des 12-13 mai 1974, Elisabeth Bossé a copié pour nous les réactions d'Yves Florence à ce numéro spécial, dans un article intitulé "l'utopie ou l'espérance" :

"Ou l'espérance : la conjonction ne marque certes pas l'alternative, comme dans *l'Utopie ou la mort*, de René Dumont, défi révolutionnaire et cri d'angoisse, mais l'équivalence, l'identité. Le titre qu'*Esprit* donne à son numéro sur l'utopie est, à la lettre, plus raisonnable : "L'utopie ou la raison dans l'imaginaire." Mais l'idée reste la même : l'utopie, si elle est pas menace et péril, reste notre seul recours. Etant entendu qu'on écarte les mauvais usages du mot, ses connotations, comme on dit, péjoratives ou dédaigneuses, pour en revenir à l'usage qu'en fit Thomas More en l'inventant pour nommer "sa cité parfaite". Pour nous, moins présomptueux, et rendus plus prudents depuis que nous craignons d'être acculés au néant par le mauvais usage, justement, non du mot mais des utopies mêmes, c'est tout bonnement de la cité *vivable* qu'il s'agit. Une utopie pour aujourd'hui et pour demain qui "déconstruirait" l'utopie d'hier et la cité mortelle (ne serait-ce qu'au sens de mortel ennui) qu'elle a préfigurée. On voit donc déjà que l'utopie est ambiguë, qu'elle est Janus. On y introduit même le manichéisme : le "socialisme utopique", qui est le mal ; le "socialisme scientifique", qui est le bien. Simplification due aux marxistes, consciemment ou inconsciemment sacrilèges, en ce que Marx est "utopique" autant que "scientifique". Et c'est une vue moins fautive que d'opposer l'utopie à l'histoire.

J'indique, un peu librement, quelques-unes des perspectives tracées par J.M. Domenach en manière d'introduction et dont on retiendra deux propositions-clés. Un constat : *L'utopie est ce qui toujours échoue et toujours réussit*. Et un bon usage : *Ce qui, dans l'utopie, nous concerne directement peut à la fois nous révéler la réalité de notre évolution et nous proposer un projet différent*.

(...) Et c'est dans le premier article, celui de Luce Giard, que je trouverai la conclusion ; dans cette belle vérité aperçue de l'utopie, tendue vers la vie et le bonheur : *Elle a la force du désir.* "