

UTOPIA ON PROSPERO'S ISLAND.

In early issues of *Moreana*, Abbé Marc'hadour demonstrated that More's name provided the substance of rather extensive and clever word-play during his lifetime and after. ¹ These essays bring the game not only to our attention but very nearly to an end, so little, it seems, is there to add. There is, however, one additional possibility that should have its innings.

In Act II, scene 1 of *The Tempest*, the good servant Gonzalo talks for a brief minute or two about his version of the ideal commonwealth (lines 142-151 ; 153-159 ; 162-163). His audience responds with characteristic cynicism and so betray their own exhausted personalities. Finally Alonso demands « Prithee no more. Thou dost talk nothing to me » (II, i, 165). Realizing that the word *Utopia* means « nowhere » (literally, « not a place »), quick and well-educated playgoers in Shakespeare's audience might well have detected a play on words and reconstructed the lines something like this : « Prithee no Thomas MORE. Thou dost talk UTOPIA to me. » The words « merry fooling » in line 172 may be an extension of the worldplay -- *fooling* as a play on More's name and *merry* as an appropriately descriptive word for More's wit, in *Utopia* and in general. (Thomas Stapleton devoted an entire chapter of his *Vita Mori* (1588) to Sir Thomas's quick wit, which was strikingly unpredictable as well as pleasant : « though his wisdom was profound, his life strict, and his reserve impenetrable, yet [he] was in the ordinary intercourse of life extraordinarily pleasant, witty, and amusing ... He often introduced humor even into most serious business, without the slightest change in his features or the gravity of his demeanour. » Even in the Tower as death approached, « he was in no way cast down or anxious in mind : he was not only quite resigned ... but even cheerful and merry, according to his wont. »²)

One cannot be sure that Shakespeare was intentionally playing on More's good name and good humor in *The Tempest*. Gonzalo's ideal commonwealth owes more to Montaigne's essay on cannibals than to *Utopia*, after all. However, the existence of several other texts in which Shakespeare seems to pun on the word *more* increases the probability that he was up to old tricks in *The Tempest*. In the fourth act of *King Lear*, the viperous Goneril puts an end to her husband's reproaches by informing him that the discussion has ended : « No more ! The text is foolish » (IV, ii, 37). Inasmuch as Albany's moral « folly » is the object of Goneril's disdain for nearly twenty-five lines, there is every reason to think that Shakespeare was punning on the Greek word for fool (*moros*), just as Erasmus did a century earlier in his *Moriae Encomium*.

In *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron the Moor puns mordantly on his own name and appearance (IV, ii, 52-54) :

Nurse. Good morrow, lords.

O, tell me, did you see Aaron the Moor ?

Aaron. Well, more or less, or ne'er a whit at all.

The Merchant of Venice furnishes a similar example (III, v, 35-38) :

Lorenzo. The Moor is with child by you, Launcelot.

Launce. It is much that the Moor should be more than reason ; but if she be less than an honest woman she is indeed more than I took her to be.

It is germane to point out that the play on More-Moor is among the most conspicuous examples of More's own wit, extending all the way to his coat of arms. Erasmus kept the word in play by using the pseudonym *Niger* when referring to More in a letter to Vives (2 September 1528).³

Finally, there is the indisputable pun on More's name in the Ill May-Day scene ascribed to Shakespeare in *The Book of Sir Thomas More*⁴ :

But, More, the more thou hast

Either of honor, office, wealth and calling,

Which might accite thee to embrace and hug them,

Fear their gay skins with thought of their sharp state.

There are other reasons to believe that Shakespeare might have been thinking about *Utopia* when writing the first part of Act II. First, the book was well-known during Shakespeare's lifetime. Sir Philip Sidney singled it out for lavish praise in his *Defence of Poetry* : « In the most excellent determination of goodness what philosopher's counsel can so readily direct ... a whole commonwealth, as the way of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* ? »⁵ Bacon's *New Atlantis*, which might be considered a second-generation *Utopia*, and Robert Burton's poetical commonwealth (« an Utopia of mine own, a New Atlantic » created to supersede the « mere chimeras » produced by More and Bacon)⁶ are sufficient to prove how green *Utopia* was in the memory of Shakespeare's England.

It is therefore quite possible that Shakespeare intended to emphasize the connection between *Utopia* and Gonzalo's ideal commonwealth by means of paronomasia. Perhaps he also wished to offer guarded tribute to More. Perhaps, as More, he could not resist a merry jest. Certainly, More would have sympathized with this kind of vulnerability and, no doubt, would have realized that he had been « hoist with his own

petar, » for, as Abbé Marc'hadour tells us at the beginning of his first essay, « More ne peut s'empêcher de jouer sur les noms qu'il rencontre. »⁷

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NOTES

1. Germain Marc'hadour, « Thomas More, les arcanes d'un nom, » *Moreana*, 2 (1964), 55-70 and 5 (1965), 73-88. The substance of these notes will be found in R.S. Sylvester and G.P. Marc'hadour ed., *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More* (Hamden 1977), p. 539 f.

2. Thomas Stapleton, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, tr. Philip E. Hallett, ed. E.E. Reynolds (London : Burns & Oates, 1966), 121, 187.

3. G. Marc'hadour, *Moreana*, 2, 56-57. *Essential Articles*, 542-44.

4. S. Schoenbaum's *Internal Evidence and Elizabethan Dramatic Authorship* (Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 1966), 104-107, summarizes the main arguments that W. W. Greg, A. W. Pollard, Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, and R.W. Chambers accumulated to prove that Shakespeare wrote the Ill May-Day scene. See also Schoenbaum's *William Shakespeare, A Compact Documentary Life* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1977), 217.

5. Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1966), 33.

6. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London : J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1932), I, 99-101.

7. *Moreana*, 2, p. 55.

• More et son *Utopie* traversent une plaquette de Roberto Fernández Retamar : *Caliban Cannibal* (1971), qui est parue en édition française (Paris 1973) et italienne (Milan 1974). Le sous-titre donne le thème : « Existe-t-il une culture latino-américaine ? » L'auteur, Cubain, qui a enseigné à Yale et à La Havane, voit en Cuba l'île réelle la plus proche de l'Utopie, comme aussi de l'île où nous conduit *La Tempête* de Shakespeare. Il cite l'article de Ezequiel Martínez Estrada : « El Nuevo Mundo, la Isla de Utopia y la Isla de Cuba », in *Casa de las Américas* (n. 33, nov.-déc. 1965), que nous n'avons pas lu.

KEPLER ET L'UTOPIE.

Dans *BHR* XLII, 2 (1980), un article de Fernand Hallyn, intitulé « Le Songe de Kepler » comporte une section sur « Le Songe et l'Utopie » (p. 343), et cite une lettre du 4 décembre 1623, où l'astronome raconte à Matthias Bernegger *une vision merveilleuse, tout à fait remarquable : des villes et des murs, circulaires à cause de la forme de l'ombre portée. Que faut-il dire de plus ? Campanella a écrit sa Cité du soleil. Et si nous écrivions une Cité de la lune ? Ne serait-ce pas une excellente action que de dépeindre les mœurs cyclopéennes de notre temps en de vives couleurs, mais de quitter la terre avec un pareil écrit et de s'en aller à la lune, pour être prudent ? Mais à quoi bon cette esquivé, puisque ni More dans son Utopie ni Erasme dans son Eloge de la Folie ne furent si bien à l'abri qu'ils ne durent se défendre tous deux ? Abandonnons donc entièrement cette poix politique et demeurons confiné dans les plaines vertes et plaisantes de la philosophie.*

La n. 45 donne l'original latin : « cum nec Morus in Utopia nec Erasmus in encomio Moriae tuti fuerint, qui utrisque (lire : utrique ?) fuit apologia opus ? » Où Képler a-t-il pris l'idée que More eut besoin de défendre et de justifier son *Utopie* ? Serait-ce dans le souvenir vague, et déformé, des lettres (à Dorp, notamment) où More défend la *Moria* ?

L'intérêt de cette brouille morienne sous la plume du grand Kepler (1571-1630), se référant à son *Somnium sive Astronomia lunaris* de 1609 (*The Tempest* est de 1610), c'est qu'elle ne se trouve pas dans le *Gibson-&-Patrick* de 1961.

• *IRIS* est le bulletin d'un « Institute for Renaissance Interdisciplinary Studies » formé à l'Université de l'Etat de New York (SUNY) à Albany. Le n° 2 (fév. 1980), le seul qui nous soit parvenu, commence par ces mots de Raymond Ortali, directeur :

Utopia in the Renaissance : An exciting subject for a graduate seminar. But suppose that you are a Rabelais specialist, with a limited knowledge of the work of Thomas More, and there is no Thomas More specialist on your campus. Does this mean there will be no seminar on Utopia ? Probably so.

• Dans *SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE* (mars-avril 1980), Donald J. Millus refuse qu'on invoque l'*Utopie* pour « The Elimination of Hunting » (Viewpoint, p. 9), car une meute déchiquetant un lièvre n'a pas grand chose à voir avec le rifle qui abat un lapin. (Il évoque le rituel de la curée selon *L'Eloge de la Folie*). Pour combattre la cruauté envers les animaux, il n'y a pas lieu d'ostraciser le chasseur du dimanche. (Notre ami est, pour sa part, un pêcheur fervent).