

MORE'S *UTOPIA* : PERSUASION OR POLYPHONY ?

The question introduced in the title touches upon what I believe is the fundamental problem facing any critic approaching *Utopia* : is More's work a straightforward treatise advocating communism or demonstrating arguments against it -- persuasion -- or a literary work which affirms no single ideology and is open to many contradictory interpretations -- polyphony ?¹

Those who claim that *Utopia* depicts the perfect commonwealth accept Hythlodæus' point of view as the dominant one, identifying his attitude with that of the implied author. The grounds for this interpretation are the following : Hythlodæus, the main character and the principal narrator, regards his description of the island as a demonstration of the perfect commonwealth in motion.² He makes this clear when he openly expresses his evaluation of Utopia in a passage which also serves as a means of establishing his credibility as the narrator :

But you should have been with me in Utopia and personally seen their manners and customs as I did, for I lived there for more than five years and would never have wished to leave except to make known that new world. In that case you unabashedly would admit that you had never seen a well-ordered people anywhere but there.³

The hyperbolic expressions he uses whenever he passes a general judgment on the island testify to his full identification with the point of view of the Utopians. For example, he refers to Utopia as « that commonwealth which I judge not merely the best but the only one which can rightly claim the name of a commonwealth » (p. 237). In fact, his strategy aims at persuading the addressee that Utopia is indeed the ideal commonwealth. Accordingly, Hythlodæus begins to describe it only when the conversation has led to the ultimate question of how best to solve the problems besetting Europe. Although he protests that « We have taken upon ourselves only to describe their principles, and not also to defend them... » (p. 179), he makes this claim at the end of an extended defence of the Utopian philosophy of pleasure in which his point of view merges with that of the Utopians to the extent that they become indistinguishable. This holds true also of the cases when Hythlodæus pretends to be criticizing the Utopians, and when he distances himself from their ideas by using reported speech introduced with « they think », « they say », « they hold », which signals the nonconcurrence of their points of view on the psychological level. However, as the style

of these « reported » utterances is identical with his own, their points of view on the phraseological level appear to be the same. Very often the concurrence of their points of view on the phraseological level is an indirect signal of a corresponding agreement on the level of evaluation, for example, when Hythlodæus attacks the Utopian marriage customs : « In choosing mates they seriously and strictly espouse a custom which seemed to us very foolish and extremely ridiculous ... » (pp. 187-189). The nonconcurrence of the two points of view (« them » and « us ») is strongly articulated through the polarity of two different semantic contexts -- « seriously and strictly » and « foolish and ridiculous ». Further on Raphael reiterates his 'negative' evaluation : « We laughed at this custom and condemned it as foolish » (p. 189). This is followed by an extensive defence of the custom conducted from the Utopian standpoint :

They, on the other hand, marvelled at the remarkable folly of all other nations. In buying a colt where there is question of only a little money, persons are so cautious that though it is almost bare they will not buy until they have taken off the saddle and removed all the trappings for fear some sore lies concealed under these coverings. Yet in the choice of a wife, an action which will cause either pleasure or disgust to follow them the rest of their lives, they [the Europeans] are so careless that, while the rest of her body is covered with clothes, they estimate the value of the whole woman from hardly a single handbreadth of her, only the face being visible, and clasp her to themselves not without great danger of their agreeing ill together if something afterwards gives them offense (p. 189).

However, Hythlodæus' evaluation does not go unchallenged because the force of his invectives is echoed in the « reply » of the Utopians thus matching the effect of his polemical rhetoric. Moreover, whereas he simply condemns their custom without giving any rational justification of his attitude, the arguments advanced by the Utopians in defence of their premarital inspection are presented in full. In addition Raphael's description of the custom makes use of words implying approval : the young people are introduced to each other by a « worthy and respectable matron » and « a discreet man » (p. 189). He thus adopts the point of view of the Utopians on the phraseological and evaluative levels. The ways in which his point of view merges completely with theirs on both the phraseological and evaluative levels can best be observed in those sections where he pretends to be merely reporting their ideas without making any direct judgments of his own. Here is a passage in which he presents their opinions on dicing and hunting :

Although the mob of mortals regards these and all similar pursuits -- and they are countless -- as pleasures, yet the Utopians positively hold them to have nothing to do with true pleasure since there is nothing sweet in them by nature. The fact that for the mob they inspire in the senses a feeling of enjoyment -- which seems to be the function of pleasure -- does not make them alter their opinion. The enjoyment does not arise from the nature of the thing itself but from their own perverse habit. The latter failing makes them take what is bitter for sweet, just as pregnant women by their vitiated taste suppose pitch and tallow sweeter than honey (pp. 171-173).

He begins by introducing the point of view of the Europeans referred to derisively as « the mob of mortals » -- his own point of view on the evaluative plane -- and within the same sentence he juxtaposes their viewpoint to that of the Utopians by means of the adversative *yet*. In the next sentence the suggestion of his own critical attitude towards the Europeans reappears, this time as a part of the Utopian position which he is now reporting. His negative evaluation of European mores is then implied in phrases like « seems to be the function of pleasure », « perverse habit », « bitter for sweet », « vitiated taste ». In this and similar examples Hythlodæus' view coalesces completely with the position of the Utopians and so both are contrasted with the viewpoint of the Europeans.

Moreover, Hythlodæus' description of Utopian institutions emphasizes those aspects which represent alternative and superior solutions to the problems facing Europe. The particular passage on Utopian officials, organization of labour, or treatment of criminals can be referred back to the discussion of these issues in European context (Book I). Apart from the implied criticism of Europe contained in the praise of Utopia, Hythlodæus frequently indulges in open attacks on Europe, e.g.,

... it appears to me that wherever you have private property and all men measure all things by cash values, there it is scarcely possible for a commonwealth to have justice or prosperity -- unless you think justice exists where all the best things flow into the hands of the worst citizens or prosperity prevails where all is divided among very few -- and even they are not altogether well off, while the rest are downright wretched (p. 103).

Raphael also presents the reactions of the Utopians towards certain aspects of European life, and their view free from the conditioning of European culture enables the narrator to see things in a new light -- the device of estrangement⁴ -- in order to expose their absurdity : « The Utopians wonder that any mortal takes pleasure in the uncertain sparkle

of a tiny jewel or precious stone when he can look at a star or even the sun itself » (p. 157). Hythlodæus' ironic *declamatio* in praise of the sanctity of treaties in Europe serves a similar function :

... in those parts of the world treaties and alliances between kings are not observed with much good faith. 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, partly through the justice and goodness of kings, partly through the reverence and fear of the Sovereign Pontiffs. Just as the latter themselves undertake nothing which they do not most conscientiously perform, so they command all other rulers to abide by their promises in every way and compel the recalcitrant by pastoral censure and severe reproof (p. 197).

The irony here springs from the nonconcurrence of the narrator's point of view on the levels of ideology and phraseology.³ In phraseology he sides with the Europeans -- solemn vocabulary reminiscent of official speeches or documents (« the majesty of treaties », « holy and inviolable », « Sovereign Pontiffs », « recalcitrant », « pastoral censure »), whereas on the evaluative plane there is a clash between the position he sustains throughout the text (sharp criticism of the Europeans, their diplomacy and treaties) and his unqualified praise in the above passage. The results are a dissociation of the point of view of the narrator and that of the addressee due to a sudden shift in the position of the former, and, within the point of view of the narrator, a discrepancy between the professed and real evaluations.

Hythlodæus not only equates his position with that of the Utopians but also attempts to persuade the addressee to follow suit. As the effectiveness of this persuasion rests primarily on the veracity of his relation and the soundness of his judgment he is introduced by « Peter Giles » as both a traveller and scholar :

Now this Raphael ... is no bad Latin scholar, and most learned in Greek. He had studied that language more than Latin because he had devoted himself unreservedly to philosophy, and in that subject he found that there is nothing valuable in Latin except certain treatises of Seneca and Cicero. He left his patrimony at home -- he is a Portugese -- to his brothers, and, being eager to see the world, joined Amerigo Vespucci and was his constant companion in the last three of those four voyages which are now universally read of, but on the final voyage he did not return with him (pp. 49-51).

Raphael also takes pains to establish a common evaluative code with his audience by means of references to recent events and topical problems : « the insurrection of Western Englishmen against their

king », enclosures, thieving, war in France ; references to the system of common knowledge expressed in idioms, proverbs, adages and sententiae : « almost all monarchs prefer to occupy themselves in the pursuits of war ... rather than in the honourable activities of peace » (p. 57) ; « You never have war unless you choose it ... » (p. 65) ; references to Christianity as the ultimate standard of judgment : « the authority of Christ our Saviour » (p. 243) ; references to acknowledged authorities : Sallust, Plato, Terence, Seneca. The latter three groups of references function as arguments in support of Raphael's thesis, e.g.,

Nor does it occur to me to doubt that a man's regard for his own interests or the authority of Christ our Saviour -- who in His wisdom could not fail to know what was best and who in His goodness would not fail to counsel what He knew to be best would long ago have brought the whole world to adopt the laws of the Utopian commonwealth, had not one single monster, the chief and progenitor of all plagues, striven against it -- I mean, Pride (p. 243).

Having established the addressee's complicity, Hythlodæus tries to convince his audience of the validity of the solutions he proposes and the perfection of the Utopian commonwealth. In this he relies on devices aimed at making the addressee's responses emotional rather than rational. The most important of these devices are : the presentation of extreme situations, e.g. « By hook or by crook the poor wretches are compelled to leave their homes -- men and women, husbands and wives, orphans and widows, parents with little children ... » (p. 67) ; imperatives and appellations : « Cast out these ruinous plagues. Make laws that the destroyers of farmsteads and country villages should either restore them or hand them over to people who will restore them and who are ready to build » (p. 69-71) ; rhetorical questions : « Who does not know that fraud, theft, rapine, quarrels, disorders, brawls, seditions, murders, treasons, poisonings, which are avenged rather than restrained by daily executions, die out with the destruction of money ? » (p. 243) ; exclamations : « Yet when these evil men with insatiable greed have divided up among themselves all the goods which would have been enough for all the people, how far they are from the happiness of the Utopian commonwealth ! » (p. 241) ; invectives (« greedy, unscrupulous and useless », « so called gentlefolk ») ; beast imagery (« this serpent from hell », « like a beast of burden ») ; moral vocabulary (« unjust and ungrateful commonwealth », « empty pleasure », « Justice », « the perverse morals of men »).

The most characteristic feature of Hythlodæus' evaluation of the world is the simplification of the distribution of values : positive values are all associated with Utopia, negative ones with Europe. He describes Utopia as « that new world, which is almost so far removed from ours by the equator as their life and character are different from ours » (p. 197). The distance between the two worlds is seen by him not only in terms of space but also in terms of value. The spatial distance acquires an axiological character in Book I where Hythlodæus compares various aspects of European life with their superior counterparts in far away lands, e.g., the treatment of thieves among the Polylerites or the Macarian laws. Characteristically, with each of these comparisons Raphael moves away from Europe towards Utopia both in space and in the hierarchy of values. Thus the location in space corresponds to the appropriate degree of felicity and position in the hierarchy of values. ⁶ The two extreme positions in this hierarchy are occupied by Europe and Utopia and so from Hythlodæus' utterances emerges a model of the world consisting of two juxtaposed parts which can be presented as two mutually exclusive, though interrelated, semantic fields :

<i>UTOPIA</i>	<i>EUROPE</i>
virtue	vice
true commonwealth	false commonwealth
community of property	private property
equality	inequality
justice	injustice
order	disorder
freedom	slavery
peace	war
happiness	misery
true pleasure	false pleasure
wisdom	folly
leisure	toil
mercy	cruelty
modesty	pride

But this axiological division of the fictional world does not reach the status of the constructive principle of the work as a whole because the division holds true only if Hythlodæus' point of view is seen as representing the position of the author and accepted by the reader as such : in other words, all other characters and their ideologies would have to be viewed not independently but as objects of Hythlodæus' consciousness and evaluated accordingly. In fact Hythlodæus represents precisely such a tendency towards the total subjugation of all other views to his own, i.e., the tendency towards monologization :

I knew, however, that he was wearied with his tale, and I was not quite certain that he could brook any opposition to his views, particularly when I recalled his censure of others on account of their fear that they might not appear to be wise enough, unless they found some fault to criticize in other men's discoveries (p.245).

However, it is Hythlodæus who becomes the object of Morus' consciousness, when Morus makes use of his superior position as the principal narrator who has the final word, despite the opinion of R.C. Elliott who holds that Hythlodæus is given « all the good lines »⁷, and although his utterances occupy two thirds of the text.

The superior function of the main narrator, and the identity of his name with the actual author's, give greater poignancy to the objections that Morus raises against Hythlodæus' arguments and proposals. In fact, a group of critics believe that the proper interpretation of the text is to be sought in the utterances of Morus, assuming that whenever the author uses his own name he speaks his own mind.⁸ Whilst the above claim seems excessive and not necessarily true, the fact remains that the importance of Morus in the structure of the text has to be carefully considered.

First of all, while Morus is never subjected to direct evaluation by Hythlodæus, he evaluates Raphael both at the beginning and at the end of the story. Furthermore, Morus twice voices his opposition to Hythlodæus' proposals : against community of property (in Book I) on theoretical grounds, and against its practical application in the Utopian system (in Book II)⁹. His objections against community of property are never really challenged by Hythlodæus, except indirectly by means of the description of a society based on the principles of common ownership. His reply is thus something like « Community of property works in Utopia ». Considered from the point of view of the addressee who is learned in Greek the sentence reads : « Community of property works in No Place », especially as the name of the author of this description means « Nonsense-Distributor ».¹⁰ In addition, Hythlodæus' account of Utopia, for all its apparently logical order with each section devoted to one aspect of the Utopian life, contains a number of internal contradictions.¹¹

All this undermines Hythlodæus' credibility and reliability as the narrator and, consequently, the validity of the solutions he proposes. Thus, it is Morus, his opponent in the discussion, who has the final word on the subject, and his final assessment of Utopia turns out to be largely critical :

When Raphael had finished his story many things came to my mind which seemed very absurdly established in the customs and laws of the 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 whole 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. ... 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 realized (p. 245-7).

The first part of his utterance constitutes in fact a *reductio ad absurdum* as Morus rejects, one by one, all the fundamental institutions of Utopia together with their underlying principles.¹² In this he upholds the position he introduced in Book I. However, the nature of his argument against community of property and the exchange of money introduces a sudden change in his approach. Here Morus adopts the attitude of the common people, and in doing so renders his position unacceptable to the humanist addressee of the text who does not share this opinion of common people, as is evident from the prefatory letters and marginal notes. Thus, Morus' final evaluation of Utopia becomes as ambiguous as Hythlodæus' enthusiastic praise of it.

What is more, the viewpoints of Morus and Hythlodæus are not the only ones that appear in the work. In fact, their positions and the text as a whole are seen and evaluated by the author of the marginal notes and the writers of the prefatory letters,¹³ whose points of view do not always coalesce with those of the two main characters. For example, Budé calls Utopia « this model of the happy life and this rule of living » (p. 13), but at the same time he weakens his praise and commends only some aspects of this model : « our age and succeeding ages will hold its account as a nursery of correct and useful institutions from which every man may introduce and adapt transplanted customs to his own city » (p. 15). Thus he participates in the literary game of affirmation and negation, truth and fiction, especially when he discusses the location of the island :

I personally, however, have made investigation and discerned for certain that Utopia lies outside the limits of the known world. Undoubtedly it is one of the Fortunate Isles, perhaps close to the Elysian fields, for More himself testifies that Hythlodæus has not yet stated its position by giving its definite bearings (p. 13).

2.

The above considerations suggest that neither More's nor Hythlodæus' consciousness makes it possible to construe the meaning of the entire work in its terms without involving a series of contradictions. In other words, it is not possible for the reader to identify fully with any single point of view or ideological position and to objectify the text as a whole in accordance with the monological pattern. Thus, it may prove useful to study *Utopia* as a polyphonic structure, defining polyphony in accordance with the suggestions of B. Uspensky :

- (a) Polyphony occurs when several independent points of view are present within the work. ...
- (b) The points of view in a polyphonic work must belong directly to characters who participate in the narrated events (in the action). In other words, there must be no abstract ideological position outside of the personalities of the characters.
- (c) When studying polyphony, we take into consideration points of view manifested on the plane of ideology only. They become manifest primarily in the manner in which characters (vehicles for the ideological positions) evaluate the world around them.¹⁴

In *Utopia* neither Morus nor Hythlodæus' ideology is consistent enough but at the same time both find some justification in the text and neither can be regarded as wholly untenable or absurd. The lack of any single superior consciousness which would incorporate the elements of both into one synthetic position is responsible for the independence of the points of view of the protagonists. The ideological positions determine the shaping of the characters who represent them and the contrast of their personalities echoes the ideological conflict between Morus and Raphael : Morus -- home-loving, longing for his family, disliking travel, a state official in the service of the king, tolerant with regard to other people and their views, skeptical and moderate in his ideas ; Hythlodæus -- the wanderer who severed all ties with his home and family by giving away all his possessions, strongly opposed to any kind of official service, highly critical of others, enthusiastic about new ideas and radical in his opinions. Thus practically every attribute of Hythlodæus is matched by its opposite in the character Morus. Nevertheless, the contrast between them does not entail the evaluation of their respective positions. In other words, the values assigned to the characters, though radically different, occupy comparable positions in the hierarchy of values implicit in the work. Hythlodæus' function as the main character

and the one whose utterances occupy most of the text is counterbalanced by Morus' function as the principal narrator in whose narration Hythlodæus' utterances appear. On a different level Hythlodæus (Nonsense-Distributor) has as his interlocutor Morus (Fool).

The utterances of both characters reflect yet another important feature of the polyphonic structure : a constant awareness of the opposing view which exerts a considerable influence on their form. Hythlodæus in his monologue in Book II is all the time conscious of the addressee, his possible objections and criticism as well as of the views advanced in Book I by other speakers in the dialogue. This is how he introduces the Utopian treatment of gold :

They keep it in a way which I am really quite ashamed to reveal for fear that my words will not be believed. My fears are all the more justified because I am conscious that had I not been there and witnessed the phenomenon, I myself should have been with difficulty induced to believe it from another's account (p. 151).

When he talks about the number of hours devoted to work in Utopia he makes a direct appeal to the addressee : « But here, lest you be mistaken, there is one point you must examine more closely. Since they devote but six hours to work, you might possibly think the consequence to be some scarcity of necessities » (p. 129). Of course, not all the cases of the internal dialogization of his monologue are so conspicuous.¹⁵ The saturation of his speech with stylistic devices involving the nonconcurrency of two points of view (litotes, rhetorical questions, imperatives, antithesis) serves the same purpose.¹⁶

The dialogization occurs also on the level of a single word, in the names of geographical places, nations and officials, which, being derived from Greek, refer the reader to another linguistic code. When considered in terms of the primary linguistic code (Latin) they are merely « barbaric and strange » names. However, when heard by a humanist addressee who knows Greek as well as Latin, they acquire new meanings which considerably modify his understanding of the text as a whole. Whereas on the level of the primary code they affirm the existence of the objects they denote (in a literary text names « bring into existence » the fictional universe), when understood in accordance with their etymology they inform the reader that those objects do not really exist, e.g., Utopia - No Place ; Achorians - Placeless People ; Amaurotum - Shadow City ; Anydrus - Waterless (river) ; king Ademus - Peopleless, Without Body, Form or Idea.¹⁷ Some other names contradict the quality assigned to their denotata by the narrator - Polylerites (people who

devised an effective method of punishing thieves) - People of Much Nonsense ; Syphogrants (Utopian officials) - Silly Old Men, Old Men of the Sty ; Tranibors - Plain Gluttons. Furthermore, the dialogization of a single word is not restricted to the opposition of two linguistic codes : in many cases then uncertain derivation (within a single code) becomes an additional source of ambiguity : Utopia is not only No Place (*ou-topos*) but also a Happy Place (*eu-topos*). The latter derivation is suggested in a laudatory poem appended to the text : « Deservedly ought I to be called by the name of Eutopia or Happy Land » (p. 21). Similarly, another derivation of the names of the Utopian officials is possible : Syphogrant - Wise Old Man ; Tranobor - Bencher.

More's ironic comment on the use of the tell-tale names in his letter appended to the text suggests the importance of this device in defining the meanings of the text and in directing the reader's response, apart from being an attempt at establishing « ironic verisimilitude » :

... if I wanted to abuse the ignorance of common folk, I should have prefixed some indications at least for the more learned to see through our purpose.

Thus if I had done nothing else than impose names on ruler, river, city and island such as might suggest to the more learned that the island was nowhere, the city a phantom, the river without water, and the ruler without a people, it would not have been hard to do and would have been much wittier than what I actually did. Unless the faithfulness of an historian had been binding on me I am not so stupid as to have preferred to use those barbarous and meaningless names, Utopia, Anydrus, Amaurotum and Ademus (p. 251).

In the same way Hythlodæus who is well learned in Greek turns out to be unaware of the meaning of these names although he says that the Utopian « language, which in almost all other respects resembles the Persian, retains some traces of Greek in the names of their cities and officials » (p. 181). Thus, Morus' and Hythlodæus' apparent lack of awareness of the meaning of these names leads to the internal dialogization of their points of view and, in consequence, undermines their credibility as narrators.

This undermining of the credibility of both narrators goes hand in hand with attempts to establish verisimilitude, thus making their utterances both reliable and unreliable at the same time. The situation is complicated even further by the fact that many of these attempts have

obvious ironic undertones and so involve nonconcurrent points of view. For example Morus, bound by « the faithfulness of an historian », asks « Peter Giles » about the length of the Amaurotum bridge, and in his letter concluding the text he again invites those who might not believe the story to consult Hythlodæus or people to whom he has told his tale : « Let them inquire the truth from him or, if they like, dig it out of him with questions. I would only have them understand that I am responsible for my own work alone and not also for the credit of another » (p. 253). Thus the reader is required to adopt two points of view simultaneously, or, in other words, to use two contradictory codes in his decoding of the text – he has to accept the story as factual and at the same time to see it as a literary game in which the ideologies of both narrators are equally valid and equally absurd.

3.

The dialogic character of the work manifests itself in the most obvious manner on the level of composition : as a dialogue the text is divided into several parts assigned to different speakers, the roles of the speaker and the listener are constantly alternating (the opposition between « I » and « you »). In accordance with Mukařovský's typology the dialogue may be classified as « conversation » – the characters gather in a quiet place (a garden) solely in order to speak.¹⁸ Neither the situation nor the personalities of the speakers have any direct influence upon the theme of their conversation. Thus the emphasis is on the dialogue itself as a chain of semantic reversals, alternations of different, often contradictory semantic contextures. There is never any consensus among the speakers apart from the agreement as to the ultimate objectives : the best state of commonwealth which realizes such general values as justice and happiness. The conflict appears already in the beginning of the conversation when « Giles » declares to Hythlodæus, a man of great experience : « I wonder that you do not attach yourself to some king ... thus you would not only serve your own interests excellently, but be of great assistance in the advancement of all your relatives and friends » (p. 55). Hythlodæus' reply leads in fact to stichomythia :

« I think that they [friends and relatives] ought to be satisfied with this generosity from me and not to require or expect additionally that I should, for their sakes, enter into *servitude* to kings. »

« Fine words ! » declared Peter. « I meant not that you should be in *servitude* but in *service* to kings. »

« The one is only one syllable less than the other, » he observed (p. 55).

Many other replies of the interlocutors also stress the lack of agreement between them, e.g., « You are twice mistaken, my dear More, » said he, « first in me and then in the matter in question » (p. 57). « No, » I countered, « you shall not escape so easily » (p. 61) ; « But, » I ventured, « I am of the contrary opinion » (p. 107). It is so even when the speakers seem to be in agreement as in the discussion of the role of philosophy in politics :

« 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. »

« That is just what I meant, » he rejoined, « by saying there is no room for philosophy with rulers. »

« Right, » I declared, « that is true – not for this academic philosophy which thinks that everything is suitable to every place. 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 » (p. 99).

Both interlocutors, not only Hythlodæus, frequently refer to the system of supra-individual knowledge expressed in proverbs, adages or sayings, which, besides securing contact with the addressee (reference to the code shared by all) is supposed to constitute the ultimate authority for validating or invalidating their respective positions. However, when seen from the point of view of the text as a whole, the use of proverbs and adages to support contradictory, mutually exclusive, ideological positions impairs the validity of their ultimate authority by demonstrating its self-contradictory nature : Morus – « You must not abandon the ship in a storm because you cannot control the winds » (p. 99), « What you cannot turn to good you must make as little bad as you can » (p. 101) ; Hythlodæus – « To persons who had made up their minds to go headlong by the opposite road, the man who beckons them back and points out dangers ahead can hardly be welcome » (p. 101).

The alternation of several points of view can be observed within the limits of a single scene described in terms of a single consciousness where there is no real ideological conflict. Morus, seeing Hythlodæus for the first time, describes him from the external point of view (on all levels), marked on the phraseological level by the use of indefinite articles and appropriate vocabulary (« a stranger », « a man of advanced years ») as well as by the use of the words of estrangement : « his appearance and dress *seemed* to me to be those of a ship's captain » (p. 49). The external point of view is sustained by « Giles » : « Do you

see this fellow? » (p. 49) who adopts Morus' point of view before describing Hythlodæus from an internal point of view on the psychological and ideological levels (in terms of his own consciousness): « ... he had devoted himself unreservedly to philosophy, and in that subject he found that there is nothing valuable in Latin except certain treatises of Seneca and Cicero » (p. 51). Later on, Hythlodæus' point of view is introduced also on the phraseological level, at first by means of indirect speech: « And so he was left behind that he might have his way, being more anxious for travel than about the grave » (p. 51) and then by a direct quotation of Raphael's words: « These two sayings are constantly on his lips: 'He who has no grave is covered by the sky' and 'From all places it is the same distance to heaven' » (p. 51).

Finally, the polyphonic character of the work can also be seen in the « genre instrumentation » of *Utopia*¹⁹. Considered in the light of its genological structure a number of different genre conventions can be discovered in the work. Whilst a detailed discussion of the problem would take us beyond the limits of the present study we shall simply list some of the more important genre conventions appearing in *Utopia*. These include travel narrative, Platonic dialogue, satire, diplomatic report, sermon, symposium. Obviously, the use of each of these conventions is not just a simple formal or ornamental device as each of them involves a different way of looking at the world: the world seen through the convention of travel narrative is different from the world as it is seen by the participants in a Platonic dialogue. This is well illustrated by the contrast between the two books of *Utopia*. Unfortunately, too many critics have restricted themselves to a simplistic approach to *Utopia* viewing it as a generically homogeneous text.

It seems that the characterization of *Utopia* as a polyphonic structure may point to the way of putting an end to the controversy concerning the meaning and significance of the text, at least in its traditional form which concentrates on the issue of communism. When *Utopia* is viewed as a polyphonic work the problem of whether it presents a model of perfection which should be closely followed shifts into the background because the question turns out to be largely irrelevant implying, as it does, that *Utopia* is a homophonic structure like any non-artistic text whose main function consists in providing straightforward and unambiguously articulated ideas. *Utopia*'s failure to satisfy this expectation may suggest that it is a flawed work. But ambiguity, which is a fault in a treatise, constitutes the very essence of an artistic text. And this seems to explain the continuing validity and relevance of

Utopia as well as the controversy surrounding it. Like any truly great work it never allows a single voice or idea to dominate the scene, and so gives every new generation of its readers a chance to discover something useful or pleasant among its pages.

Marie Curie University, Lublin.

Artur BLAIM

NOTES

1. The present study has been inspired by theoretical ideas of M. Bakhtin, and Elizabeth McCutcheon's « Denying the Contrary: More's Use of Litotes in the *Utopia* », *Moreana*, 31-32 (1971).

2. The interpretations of the *Utopia* in which Hythlodæus' point of view is identified with that of the author usually follow Kautsky's ideas, e.g., M. Frackowiak, *Poglądy ekonomiczne Tomasza More* (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 1967), Raymond Southall, *Literature and the Rise of Capitalism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973).

3. P. 3 in *Utopia*, Yale Edition (CW 4), ed. by Edward Surtz and J.H. Hexter. Subsequent references to this edition are included in the text. Emphasis will be marked by spacing the letters out (instead of italics).

4. Cf. Victor Shklovsky, « Art as Technique, » in Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, *Russian Formalist Criticism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 3-24.

5. I have used Boris Uspensky's conception of point of view in literature introduced in *A Poetics of Composition*, trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). Uspensky distinguishes four levels on which point of view may manifest itself: evaluative or ideological, psychological, spatial and temporal, and phraseological.

6. The semiotic analysis of the categories of space as an expression of evaluation in artistic and cultural texts was first introduced by Ju.M. Lotman, « O ponyatii geograficheskogo prostranstva v russkikh srednevekovykh tekstakh, » *Trudy po znakovim sistemam*, 2 (1965), pp. 210-216.

7. R.C. Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 48.

8. Cf. R.W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), p. 155.

9. Paul Turner states that More's real attitude towards the community of property was different from the position adopted by the character bearing his name in the *Utopia*. His argument is based on a number of his utterances in other writings : Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. with an introduction by Paul Turner (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 149-152.

10. Cf. « Commentary » in *CW* 4, p. 301. In H. Brockhaus, *Die Utopia-Schrift* (Leipzig, 1929), p. 14, the name of Hythlodaus is interpreted as « ardent visionary ».

11. Cf. Ward Allen, « Speculations on Thomas More's Use of Hesychius, » *Philological Quarterly*, 46 (1967), pp. 156-166.

12. Cf. J.H. Hexter, « *More's Utopia : the Biography of an Idea.* » (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1952) ; for an opposite view see Ward Allen, « Hythloday and the Root of All Evil, » *Moreana*, no. 31-32 (1971), pp. 51-59, challenged by Hexter in « Intention, Words, and Meaning : the Case of More's Utopia, » *New Literary History*, 6 (1975), pp. 529-542 ; Allen's reply, « The Tone of More's Farewell to Utopia : a Reply to J.H. Hexter, » *Moreana*, no. 51 (1976), pp. 108-118.

13. A comprehensive discussion of the function of the prefatory letters and poems is offered by P.R. Allen, « Utopia and European Humanism : the Function of the Prefatory Letters and Verses, » *Studies in the Renaissance*, 10 (1963), pp. 91-107 ; D.G. McKinnon, « The Marginal Glosses in More's Utopia : the Character of the Commentator, » *Renaissance Papers* (1970), pp. 11-21.

14. B. Uspensky, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

15. The problems connected with the internal dialogization of monologue are fully discussed by M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. R.W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor : Ardis, 1973), p. 88.

16. Cf. Elizabeth McCutcheon, *op.cit.*, pp. 109-110.

17. Cf. *Utopia*, pp. 267-570 ; J.D. Simmonds, « More's Use of Names in Book II of Utopia, » *Die neuen Sprachen. N.F.* 10 (1961), pp. 282-284 ; Ward Allen, « Speculations », *op.cit.*

18. Cf. Jan Mukařovsky, « Two Studies of Dialogue, » in *The Word and Verbal Art* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 81-115.

19. The term « genre instrumentation » was first introduced by Stefania Skwarczynska, *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze*, vol. III (Warszawa : Pax, 1965), p. 198.