

***Sir Thomas More :***  
**Sources, Characters, Ideas ★**

THE printed sources of *STM* can be conveniently classed in three or four groups : historical, biographical, dramatic and literary. Those available at the presumable date of composition of *STM* and used by the dramatist in the first seven scenes of the play, may include Sir Thomas's own *Apology* (1533), reprinted in the 1557 edition of his *English Works* by his nephew William Rastell. There is little doubt in my mind that the authors of *STM* drew on materials provided by More's *English Works*. His 'merry jest', collected in the *E. W.*, and combined with a passage in the *De Quatuor Novissimis*<sup>1</sup> enlarged by Stapleton's *Vita Mori*, was probably the source of the trick played by the 'sheriff' More upon Judge Suresby in scene ii.

Hall's *Union* or *Chronicle* (1548, 1550) was the ultimate authority on the May Day events in London. Munday, however, appears to have used it in the less grandiloquent version it assumed in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, probably in its edition of 1586-7. Hall's *Chronicle* had become quite rare and had never been reprinted after being included among the prohibited books under Queen Mary. The 1586-7 reprint of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, 'now newlie recognised, augmented and continued', was brought out by Richard Grafton and included the enlargements and additions interpolated by him from the collections of the Lancaster herald Francis Thynne, the antiquarian Abraham Fleming, and the *Summary* of Stowe.

The augmented edition of Holinshed presents several differences from Hall, either condensing ('mangling', according to Stow's charge ; see *DNB*, sub Fleming) or amplifying and otherwise altering and adapting the original text by Hall, although quite often bodily incorporating it. *STM* sticks to Holinshed in verbal texture and general contents, but rehandles and skilfully manipulates the materials of the *Chronicles*, occasionally 'interlacing' it with the biographical sources and other borrowings. It looks, on the whole, as though the large folio of Holinshed

had constantly lain open on the desk of the author of *STM* as he drafted the original text of the play.

A resourceful 'plotter' and playwright like Munday, who had a considerable familiarity with Latin, was probably acquainted with the anonymous *Expositio fidelis de morte Thomas Mori* (Basel, 1535) which included the Paris newsletter on More's execution and was possibly edited by Erasmus himself.<sup>2</sup> One of its quotations from Seneca's *Hippolitus* (II, iii, 607) in an admittedly new context (xiii, + 1600) is echoed in *STM*: « Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent ».

Munday laid obviously under contribution also the *Vita* of More by the Recusant controversialist Thomas Stapleton. The longest of the *Tres Thomae*<sup>3</sup> had appeared first in print at Douai in 1588 and had subsequently been 'translated and ordered' extensively in Ro.Ba.'s *Life* of Thomas More,<sup>4</sup> which Ms. Schütt considers an additional source of some episodes in *STM*, a point to be discussed later.

The comparative frequency of Latin quotations and expressions in the play conforms of course to the dramatic custom of the age, particularly of the University Wits, like, for instance, Thomas Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy* (ed. P. Edwards, Revel plays, London: 1959; II.v.67-80) or Marlowe in *Edward II* (IV.vi.53-4, and V.iv.8, 11, 61, 70). The 'scholar' Munday may have also dipped in the pages of Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* (bk. XXVII, Basel, 1555) where the Italian humanist and British resident reported the III May Day episode at some length. Holinshed quotes Vergil on many occasions, both in the margin and in the text of the *Chronicles*, e.g. at III.637 (ed. H. Ellis): 'Hereof a threefold evil chanced to the commonwealth as Polydore noteth'; at the beginning of the chapter on Henry VIII, he follows closely Vergil's *Historia*. Although no verbal borrowings are traceable in *STM* from it, it is possible, that Munday too was acquainted with Vergil's account, 'whose words', as Holinshed writes in another context, a-propos the indictment and condemnation of the duke of Buckingham, 'I have thought to impart to the reader' (III.821, 864).

Among the further sources of *STM*, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563, 1583),<sup>5</sup> curiously enough given its perfervid Protestant inspiration, lent one of its pages the comic episode of the long-haired ruffian which stimulates More's sense of humour in scene viii. This was shrewdly transferred by the dramatists from the *Life* of Thomas Cromwell in the 'Book of Martyrs' to that of More, as a foil to his wit and sense of propriety. It is of course possible, as has been suggested, that the episode was ascribed to More by oral tradition, although none of his biographers seems aware of it. In Foxe, however, the 'ruffian' is a nameless slovenly 'servingman', not involved in the street row. It is characteristic of Munday's admiration for More that in his portraiture of

his hero he never draws elsewhere upon Foxe, or upon Foxe's source as regards More's life, which is Hall's hostile treatment filtered through Holinshed. He assigns to More and compresses into one scene two successive incidents recalled by Foxe as creditable examples of the forceful authority of More's chief political enemy, Cromwell.

In this connection, it is illuminating to compare Munday's exaltation of More's moral stature with his devastating indictment of the Catholic martyr Edmund Champion in one of his many fiercely anti-catholic pamphlets.<sup>6</sup>

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When we consider the main biographical sources of *STM*, especially in scene x-xvii, we are faced with the indisputable fact that, contrary to Ms. Schütt's assertion in her article of 1933<sup>7</sup>, the authors of the play resorted directly to Harpsfield's *Life*, and not to Roper's memoir, just as they had laid under contribution Holinshed's *Chronicles* and not Hall's for the prentices' rising. From More's son-in-law, the Archdeacon of Canterbury Harpsfield received the charge of writing a full life of More, and he composed it, using Roper's materials as his chief authority, before the 1557 folio edition of Sir Thomas's *English Works* appeared in print. Harpsfield became Cardinal Pole's right hand in the short-lived restoration of the Catholic confession in the English Church, and died in 1575 after spending twelve years in prison for his faith under Queen Elizabeth.

His *Life*<sup>8</sup> -- its 'finger-prints' can be easily detected in most of the second half of *STM*, from More's imprisonment to his execution -- remained in manuscript until less intolerant times, but circulated widely among admirers of the Lord Chancellor<sup>9</sup>. The dramatists of *STM* are familiar with its contents and drew upon it at length without of course borrowing its artificial, redundant style or its hagiographical approach. A general tendency is always to double every Anglo-Saxon word with a Romance or Latinate synonym, and occasionally to indulge in far-sought and far-fetched alliterative sequences, like 'writhe and wrest their woords to the woorst and make their reasons more weake and feeble than than they are' (p. 108).

In the second half of the play the authors depart from their practice in using Holinshed's *Chronicles*; they adopt most of his spelling and stick fairly close to his wording in the account of the May Day disturbances.

While borrowing from Harpsfield and other biographical sources, the dramatists in the last part of the play did not, however, completely forget the historical sources. That they followed Holinshed rather than Hall is demonstrable: (a) They adopt most of the names of the characters mentioned in Holinshed (derived from Hall) but none of those mentioned in Hall and omitted by Holinshed.

(b) Where Hall and Holinshed differ, the wording in *STM* is always closer to the latter. This is true of the crucial incident that suggested the involvement of More in appeasing the rebels, which is reported by Holinshed as follows:

and at saint Martins gate there met with them sir Thomas More, and others, desiring them to go to their lodgings. And as they were thus intreating, and had almost persuaded the people to depart, they within saint Martins threw out stones, bats and hot water; so that they hurt diverse honest persons that were there with sir Thomas More, persuading the rebellious persons to cease, in somuch as at length one Nicholas Downes a sergeante of armes being there with the said sir Thomas More, and sore hurt amongst others, in a furie cried: Downe with them.

In Hall, the name of More is found only twice, the name of the sergeant of arms is spelt Nycholas dounes, the expression 'almost persuaded the people to depart' is missing, while there is no doubt that the attack on Downes was effectively represented in the Original as the occasion for More's firm intervention, and the name used was Downes, as is apparent from its survival in a much later scene, where the author made him act as the officer in charge of arresting More:

Moore. I Downes, ist thou? I ones did saue thy life,  
when else by cruel riottous assaulte  
thou hadst bin torne to pieces: (lines 1560-62)

(c) Where Hall has the crowd rush to 'the house of one Mutuas, a Frenchman or Pycarde borne', Holinshed speaks of assaults against Frenchmen 'that dwelt within the gate of maister Mewtas house called Greene gate. This maister Mewtas was a Picard borne'. This is much closer to the *STM* text:

and yonder dwells Mewtas a wealthie Picarde, at the green gate. (line 419).

(d) Holinshed has two full paragraphs on John Lincoln's meeting with Dr. Standish, while Hall has only one short sentence (and the name is spelt Standyche); the additional matter contains the sentence 'he offer-

ed unto the same doctor Standish a bill, conteining this matter more at large', which is echoed by Doll's words at the beginning of scene iv of *STM*: 'heare Captaine Lincoln speake ... till we know his minde at large (lines 412-52).

(e) Speaking of some incidents previous to the Ill-May Day, Hall says that

divers yong men of the citie piked quarels to certeine strangers as they passed by the streets, some they did strike, some they buffeted, and some they threw into the Kennell:

Holinshed's peculiar spelling *kennell* must have suggested Lincoln's closing couplet at the end of scene iv:

Burne down their kennelles let us strait away,  
least that this proue to vs an ill May daye. (lines 451-2)

(f) The wording of Holinshed's comment on the King's mercy toward the rebels, of which there is no trace in Hall, is echoed in Surrey's speech to the reprieved prisoners at the end of scene vii, lines 716-32.

(g) The bill of complaint read by John Lincoln in scene i (lines 79-91) reproduces essentially in punctuation and spelling the Holinshed version, which alters Hall's in several places. Thus where Hall has 'the poore fatherless chylde', Holinshed prints 'the fatherlesse children', and the same omission and the same spelling is found in *STM*.

Though the historians following the Protestant Tudor tradition underplay More's role as Lord Chancellor, they all report with identical words (first found in Hall) five anecdotes connected with More's death, and it is significant that these are repeated in identical form also by Foxe in his *Acts and Monuments* (1583 ed., p. 1069). The passage common to Hall, Grafton, Foxe and Holinshed is worth reporting as it appears in the 1586-7 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*; absent from earlier editions, it was added to this one by Abraham Fleming, who borrowed directly from Hall:

I cannot tell (saith master Hall) whether I should call him a foolish wise man, or a wise foolish man, for vndoubtedly he beside his learning had a great wit, but it was so mingled with taunting and mocking,

(1) that it seemed to them that best knew him, that hee thought nothing to be well spoken except he had ministred some mocke in the communication. Insomuch as at his comming to the Tower, one of the officers demanded his vpper garment for his fee, meaning his gowne: and he answered, he should have it, and took him his cap, saieing it was the vppermost garment that

- (2) he had. Likewise euen going to his death at the Tower gate, a poore woman called vnto him, and besought him to declare what he had doone with evidences of hirs in the time that he was in office (which after he was apprehended shee could not come by) and that he would entreat shee might haue them againe, or else she was vndoone. He answered, good woman, haue patience a little while, for the king is so good vnto me the euen within this halfe houre he will discharge me of all business, and helpe thee himselfe.
- (3) Also when he was vp the staiers on the scaffold, he desired one of the shirifes officers to give him his hand to help him vp, and said ; When I come downe againe, let me shift for my selfe as well as I can. Also the
- (4) hangman kneeled downe to him, asking him forgiuenesse of his death (as the maner is) to whome he said, I forgive thee, but I promise thee thou shalt neuer have honestie by striking off my head, my necke is so shor. Also
- (5) euen when he should laie downe his head on the blocke, he hauing a great graie beard, stroked out his beard, and said to the hangman, I praie you let me laie my heard ouer the blocke, least you should cut it. Thus with a mocke he ended his life.

All five anecdotes are found in *STM*, albeit not in the same order. The last one, with substantial modifications, is the only hne omitted by Harpsfield ; at least one of the other four he has taken not from Roper's *Life* but directly from Hall with slight variants. A close comparison between the wording of the episodes in the original ms. of *STM* and the version appearing in Holinshed and Harpsfield respectively shows that in one case the play relied mainly on Harpsfield (*STM*, xv, + 1649-55, cf. Harps. 170) ; in two cases, connected with More's execution, he followed more closely Holinshed (*STM* + 1916-19 and 1942-50, cf. Harps. 204) though aware of the other version, while in the episode of the old woman asking More for her papers in Chancery (*STM* + 1626-48) he amplified the interview to such an extent that it is hard to say on which of the two accounts it is based. This is further proof of the skill and conscientiousness with which the original author of the play consulted and elaborated his historical and biographical sources for dramatic effect.

The catalogue of the printed sources and of the analogues in conception, imagery and rhetorical devices of the play would not finally be complete without a reference to several of Shakespeare's 'Histories' and Roman plays, where the swaying emotions of the crowd are vividly dramatised, (*2 Henry VI*, the Jack Cade scenes in IV, ii, iii, vi-viii ; *Richard III*, I, iv, 9-21 ; *Troilus and Cressida*, I, iii, 111-13 ; *Julius Caesar*, III, ii, 64 ; *Lear*, IV, ii, 41-50 ; *Coriolanus*, III, i, 245-8) and to the interludes, both printed and manuscript, listed in the play-within-the-play of *STM* named *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* in scene ix. Giorgio

Melchiori recalls elsewhere<sup>10</sup> how Munday must have read an interlude of that title in manuscript while serving his apprenticeship with the printer John Allde and how, having lost sight of it at the time of writing *STM*, he preferred, rather than 'inventing' a substitute playlet, to borrow from similar interludes available in print.

If from the printed or manuscript, biographical and dramatic sources we pass to the oral popular tradition, the legend or myth of the hero as a definable element in *STM*, it clearly appears that, even apart from a few anecdotes not to be found in the sources surveyed, the legend affects and colours the all-round presentation of More as an example of citizen virtue and of devotion to the cause of justice and truth.

The historical circumstances would not, though, allow a formal rehabilitation of the Roman Catholic martyr, especially after the attempted invasion by the Spanish Armada, when anti-catholic feeling, which had somehow abated since the failure of the 1569 conspiracy of the Northern Earls against Elizabeth, was once again running high in the country. However, some scholars are inclined to believe that a change in religious atmosphere, not entirely unfavourable to the Recusants, was expected at the turn of the last decade of the century. In one of his 1586-7 Additions to Holinshed, Abraham Fleming significantly praises More, 'to the rebuke of protestants', by quoting a sermon of John Elmer (or Aylmer), bishop of London, at Paul's Cross in 1584, in which More was appealed to as an example of a man 'for his zeal to be honoured but for his religion abhorred' (*Chronicles*, 1586-7 ; III.939). This change of climate in public opinion might have encouraged enterprising playwrights to tackle the burning issue of a great Londoner executed for his religious faith and for his allegiance to Rome. The fact remains, however, and it is the single most striking *lacuna* in his portrait in *STM*, that Sir Thomas's specific religious personality, his 'confessional' voice and principles are quite muted in the play. This stands out particularly in comparison with his concern for the poor and the weak, already exhibited in *Utopia*, for the unfortunate 'halting soldiers and poor needy scholars' (xvi, f. 1785) mentioned in the play as objects of More's generous provisions. To put it another way, those principles are merged with his unflinching moral conscience, his wisdom and wit, with the Renaissance Christian humanist's love of poetry and his patronage of the theatre.

This should not surprise us, given the astute mind of Anthony Munday, More's Roman allegiance and his political disgrace. The care-

ful avoidance of the controversial matter combined with the favourable presentation as a saintly hero of the character of the other religiously motivated martyr, John Fisher, agree very well with what we know of Munday's versatile dramatic approach to historical subjects. It is notable, in this respect, inclined as I am to accept an early date in the 1590s for the drafting of the original text of *STM*, that Munday's creative attention was turned, not long after, to John Oldcastle another martyr of conscience, although a Wycliffite witness for the truth of the Gospel under King Henry V and a Lollard (*The Life of Sir John Oldcastle*, c. 1599-1600 ; Malone Society Reprint, IV.iii.102-3).

It looks as though Munday, realizing the insuperable obstacles to the staging of *STM*, in order to redress the balance and to dispel any dangerous suspicion about his Protestant orthodoxy which might have been created by his near-apotheosis of More, decided to testify his own faith by highlighting, in another collaborative 'biographical chronicle', the figure of a protomartyr of the Reformation. In a central statement of his position, Sir John Oldcastle seems to echo More : 'Only my conscience for the Gospels sake is cause of all the troubles I sustaine' (IV.iii.102-3).

After serving part of his apprenticeship to the printer Alde, and obviously dissatisfied with the unrewarding practice as a translator of continental (Italian included) romances, Munday became an assistant of Sir Richard Topclyff, the notorious inquisitor and prosecutor of Roman Catholics in the 1580s and 1590s, and through his collaboration with Topclyff, he may have gained access to a manuscript of Harpsfield's *Life of More*. His qualifications as an informer were grounded in the first-hand knowledge of Rome and of the English Roman Catholics he had acquired when residing in 1579, as a concealed spy probably, in the Venerable English College of Rome, of which he boasts in the title pages of some of his pamphlets and translations (Cf. *The Defence of Contraries ... trans. out of the French by A.M. one of the Messengers of her Majesties Chamber*, London 1593).

In his Ashland Seminar paper of April 1983, Melchiori suggested that Munday's first conception of *STM* may have been inspired by the impression he received from Pomarancio's fresco in the English College showing the execution of More, Fisher and Lady Margaret Pole. Traces of his Roman experience can perhaps be pointed out in the names of Sherwin and Morris in *STM*. Ralph Sherwin was a pupil of the College in Rome, under the supervision of the Welsh principal Morris. His name is mentioned as a cardinal's secretary by Foxe only one or two pages

before the episode of Faulkner the 'ruffian' who claims to be a servant of master Morris, secretary to the bishop of Winchester. Sherwin was arrested and executed for high treason with Edmund Campion and other Roman Catholics in 1581, and Munday was a witness for the prosecution in the state trial. Among the play's historical sources, only Holinshed mentions Sherwin's name.

On his return to England Munday recorded his experience of the College in *The English Roman Life*<sup>11</sup>. Later on, he started his career as an actor and playwright, 'ruffling' upon the London stage and trying to 'play ex-tempore', apparently with little success, as a hostile witness recorded.<sup>12</sup> It seems natural that, when choosing More as the theme of his historical play, Munday should decide to leave out entirely, 'for dramatic effect as well as for ideological reasons' (Melchiori), Sir Thomas's part in the jurisdictional controversies of State and Church, and his anti-Lutheran obsession as displayed in his long-winded polemical treatises.

Munday had likewise to steer clear of Wolsey's role and, possibly, Queen Catharine's allegedly decisive intervention<sup>13</sup> in the May Day events, to eschew getting mixed up with ecclesiastical and ticklish royal matters. Wolsey's part in the riots had been equally ignored by George Cavendish in his *Life of the Cardinal*, while the author of *Thomas Lord Cromwell* omits<sup>14</sup> all reference both to the London riots of 1517 and to Wolsey's measures to quell them and his success in securing the royal pardon. It would be an interesting speculation to know whether in the two lost plays on Wolsey, by Munday, Chettle and other playwrights, any significant echo or loan from *STM* was to be found.

The cautiousness of Munday's approach to dangerous areas of public affairs, while celebrating in More a great popular London figure, transpires from several details. He is silent about the presence of the 'young priests' among the rebellious crowds that according to his sources 'fell to rifling' the aliens' houses in London during the riots. True, these 'preests' in Hall as well as in Holinshed (1586-7 ; III.842), had become 'persones' in Grafton's compilation, *Chronicle at Large*, of 1568 (p. 1023). Yet more striking is Munday's unusual presentation of the bishop of Rochester as a mild saint. Hall, Holinshed and Foxe unanimously report Fisher as a 'great enemy and persecutor' of Lutherans, although 'for his learning and other virtues of life ... well reputed and reported of by many'.<sup>15</sup>

Munday's sybilline allusion, in scene X of the play, to the 'Articles' submitted to More, Fisher and the noblemen Shrewsbury and Sur-

rey confirms my point. The reader of *STM* is left to surmise that these articles refer to the Acts of Succession and Supremacy of 1534, which Sir Thomas refused to swear to. They were, in his words, like a two-edged sword, in that if one swore and obeyed them, he was bound to 'lose his soul' (by denying the Papal supremacy) and if one refused to swear and obey them, he would 'lose his body and life'.<sup>16</sup>

Munday never specifies the nature of the 'Articles'. He may well have recalled and be echoing here simply a passage in Harpsfield's *Life* which possibly offers a clue to the incident of the 'articles' in *STM*. Harpsfield writes: 'there ran a brut ... that he was about the making... and meant to divulge and publish in print, an answer to certain Articles put forth by the King and his Council';<sup>17</sup> further on he refers again to 'the articles', which in this passage are simply the breakdown of More's indictment for treason. It is on record that a copy of Harpsfield's manuscript *Life* was seized by Topclyff's men among the papers of a grandchild of the martyr, also named Thomas More, arrested for recusancy in 1592. It is obvious that Munday read it quite carefully, as his extensive use of it, pruned of its repetitive peculiarities and flourishes, abundantly shows throughout *STM*.

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The presence in the play of some anecdotes which are not to be found either in the main historical sources or in Roper's and Harpsfield's biographies has suggested that the dramatists may have had access to other printed or manuscript materials, first and foremost among them John Harington's satirical treatise on sanitation punningly named *Metamorphosis of Ajax* (published in 1596) and the *Lyfe* of More by Ro:Ba: written before or in 1599, the date of the 'Epistle Dedicatorie'. Recent scholarship tends to identify the author with Robert Bassett, great-grandson on his mother's side of Sir Thomas More.<sup>18</sup> This biography, considered by Ms. Schütt as one of the 'Hauptquellen' of the original version of *STM*, is heavily indebted to Harpsfield and to Stapleton, whose Latin *Vita* of More the author candidly avows to have 'translated' in part and 'ordered' in his own *Lyfe*: 'the most part of this book', he writes in the dedication to Roper, 'is none of my owne' (p. 14). Ro:Ba: seems also to be acquainted with More's 1557 *English Workes* ... and he quotes probably from Erasmus's famous pen-portrait of More in his 1519 letter to Von Hutten and from More's farewell letter to Antonio Bonvisi. Essentially derivative and hagiographical, the *Lyfe*

presents More as an 'epitome of celestiall vertues' and a spring of memorable apophthegms, whose description 'hath wearied painfull Stapleton, gravelled learned Harpsfield, made silent eloquent Pole'. (This is not quite true of Reginald Pole, as he dwelt at some length on More's martyrdom in his *Pro Ecclesiasticae unitatis defensione*<sup>19</sup>, a work quoted by Stapleton in ch. 21 of his *Vita*).

Like Harpsfield, Ro:Ba: indulges in the medieval practice of 'enterlacing' details and incidents in his narrative, and like Stapleton he inveighs against More's critics, although they had, after all, kept alive his memory and made allowance for his learning, integrity and zeal, whilst abhorring his religious faith: 'Foxe, Hall, Holinshed and such Rabines most obscure and base fellows, most unworthie to have the name of Historiographers, yea, so empious and shamelesse they are in their assertions that they beare no great credit among their own fellows' (p. 266).

The claim that Ro:Ba: was a major source for the original author(s) of *STM* can be assessed only by a thorough re-examination of the four episodes in the play which are independent of Holinshed or Harpsfield. The first occupies practically the whole of scene ii -- the trick played by More with the help of the pickpocket Lifter at the expense of judge Suresby. The other three are all found in scene xvi, lines +1730-59, +1779-86 and +1821-31. The second of these is a mere hint and should be treated separately, while the other two are reported (albeit in reverse order) also in Harington's *Metamorphosis of Ajax*. A marginal note points them out as 'Two Apothegms of Sir Thomas More'<sup>20</sup>, and I quote them in full:

The first was, when the king sent him to know if he had chaunge his mind; he answered, yea: the King sent straight a counsellor to him, to take his subscription to the sixe Articles. Oh, sayd he, I have not chaunged my mind in that matter, but only in this; I thought to have sent for a Barber, to have bene shaven ere I had died, but now if it please the king, he shal cut off head, and beard, and all together. But the other was milder and pretier; for after this, one coming to him as of good will, to tell him he must prepare to die, for he could not live; he called for his urinall, and having made water in it, he cast it, and viewed it (as Physicians do) a pretie while; at last he sware soberly, that he saw nothing in that same water, but that he might live, if it pleased the King; a pretie saying both to note his own innocencie, and to move the Prince to mercie.

It should also be taken into account that the story of the pickpocket and the judge and the equivocation on More's change of mind in prison are related at some length in Stapleton's *Vita* of More as well.

The relevant passages in the play should now be considered one by one.

(1) scene ii (11. 104-313) : all the essential details of the story -- probably developed from a hint in More's own *Four Last Things* -- are already found in Stapleton, pp. 263-5 of the 1588 Douay edition, in chapter 13 'Acute & facete dicta vel responsa', which is in fact a collection of examples of More's wit in all circumstances, including many anecdotes reported also by Harpsfield and/or Hall-Holinshed and echoed in the play. Ro:Ba's version (pp. 1078-9) is no more than a translation with some amplifications of Stapleton's text. Ro:Ba: for instance attributes the episode to a time when More served in the City court : he was perhaps influenced by the Latin expression describing the judge as *ex assessoribus unus gravis & senex*, where the Latin word *assessor* means judge and City alderman. There is no doubt that Stapleton is the common source both of Ro:Ba: and of the dramatist, who developed the story independently of each other. The matter is clinched by the fact that at one point Ro:Ba: misunderstands Stapleton's Latin while the dramatist (Munday was a good Latin scholar) translates him faithfully. Stapleton (p. 264) relates the way in which More induced the judge to look for his missing purse in the following words :

captata occasione alterius cuiusdam miseri in discrimine capitis constituti aliqua praesenti eleemosyna iuuandi, collectam publicam fieri permittit ; capto a se et a suis initio

that is to say : « taking occasion from the urgent need of giving alms to another poor man sentenced to beheading, authorized a public collection, beginning from himself and his party ». This becomes in Ro:Ba: (p. 109) :

taking occasion by giuing an almes to a prisoner whose discharge was staid for lacke of money to defray the keepers fees, requested the gentlemen on the bench to help the poor man. He himself gaue first'.

In the play (lines 269-70), the money is requested (by the Lord Mayor upon More's instigation) 'toward buriall of the prisoners now condemned'.

(2) The anecdote of More asking for a urinal (lines +1730-59 of the play) is not found in Stapleton. We have seen before Harington's version, which does not specify to whom More's witty remarks were addressed, while Ro:Ba: develops the story to a greater length (pp. 119-20), identifying More's interlocutor as Sir Thomas Pope. At all events

the wording of the play is much closer to Harington than to Ro:Ba:, but neither of these mentions the 'gravell in the water', whereas it is underlined in the play by More's saying : 'I haue had a sore fitt of the stone to night'. The dramatist was obviously taking a hint from Harpsfield who reports that More during the last part of his imprisonment (p. 175) 'was now greeued in the reynes by reason of gravell and stone'.

The episode of More and the judge had reached Stapleton's ears through oral tradition developed from a hint in More's *Four Last Things* :

I remember me of a thefe once cast at Newgate that cut purse at the barre when he should be hanged on the morrow. And when he was asked why he dyd so, knowing that he should dye so shortelie, the desperate wretche sayd, that it didde his heart good, to be lord of that purse one nyght yet. And in good faythe me thynketh as much we wonder at hym, yet se we many that do much like, of whom we nothyng wonder at all.

The urinal anecdote may likewise have originated from this biographical fact and reached both the dramatist and Harington through oral tradition, while Ro:Ba: developed the apophthegms printed in Harington's *Metamorphosis of Ajax*. The extraordinary verbal similarities between Harington and the play text may be due, in Giorgio Melchiori's opinion, to the fact that Sir John Harington, at the time of writing his book, was a brilliant young courtier and wit and a frequenter of the theaters ; Queen Elizabeth's godson was also a great admirer of More, whom he described in his book (p. 108) as 'that worthy and uncorrupt Magistrate', so that it is not inconceivable that the players may have shown him, hoping to get his support, the manuscript 'book' of *STM* which had fallen foul of the censor.

(3) Stapleton is once again the original in print of More's equivocation about changing his mind, though in the play the episode is reduced to a few lines (+1821-31) exchanged between More and his wife and family, while the Latin biography makes a long story of it (pp. 305-7) with the comings and goings of a courtier from the prison to the king. In chapter 16, devoted to the worldly 'temptations' which More underwent while in prison, it is the last of the nine temptations, and the meddling courtier is described in the margin as '*Tentator Ridiculus*'. Significantly, it is immediately preceded by the '*Octaua tentatio per uxorem*', when More's wife 'orat obnixè ne illam, ne liberos, ne patriam & vitam qua multis adhuc annis frui poterat, pro derelicto haberet' -- a passage echoed at least twice in the play, scene xiii, lines +1572 and scene xvi, lines +1813.

The authors of *STM* had certainly read Stapleton, and need not have had any other source. Ro:Ba:'s version (pp. 120-3), which relates the story immediately after that of the urinal, is merely a translation of Stapleton, with some amplifications. Thus More's last sentence 'nunc autem mutauit plane consilium, voloque ut barba idem discrimen subeat quo caput' becomes: 'But now I have changed my opinion, for my beard shall fare as my head, though the one be dearer to me than the other' -- an addition that has no counterpart in the play. Also in this case Harington's wording is the closest to the play and we could account for it in the same way as we did for the episode of the urinal.

(4) Though Harpsfield insists on More's generosity to the poor and needy, there is no specific mention of provisions made for them during his period in office. In the play instead More explains at some length to the lieutenant of the Tower (scene xvi, lines +1779-88) that 'with most parte of my coyne' he has purchased 'crouches ... and bare cloakes' and adds that 'halting souldiours, and poore needie schollers haue had my gettingsd in the Chauncerie'. This has induced commentators to identify the origin of the statement in a passing remark in Ro:Ba: (p. 54): « In Chelsey he hyred a house for lame, poore and old men, and kept them at bed and borde, at his owne cost and charges. » But this merely transliterates Stapleton's chapter 6, p. 92: 'Porro in parochia sua Chelsey conduxit domum in qua collegit multos debiles & pauperes & senes quos suis sumptibus aluit.'

The only variant is Ro:Ba:'s translation with the more specific 'lame' for Latin 'debiles'; at all events the play does not mention the hospitality that both Stapleton and Ro:Ba: say was given by More to the old and needy in Chelsea. There is no need to suppose that the dramatist had direct knowledge of Ro:Ba:'s *Lyfe*; wishing to represent more concretely More's help given to the poor, both the dramatists and Ro:Ba: may have hit independently on the idea of mentioning the lame as examples of unfortunate people who deserved his generosity.

From an examination of the problems and the evidence involved in this discussion it seems safe to conclude that the original authors of the play had access and utilized as biographical sources the *Lives of More* by Harpsfield in Ms and Stapleton printed at Douai in 1588, while there is no evidence at all that they knew the biography compiled by Ro:Ba: in or about 1599. As for Harington's book (1596), the two apophthegms incorporated in the play were obviously part of current oral tradition, so that there is no proof of the dependence of either text on the other. Ro:Ba:'s description of More's martyrdom as 'a Tragedy'

(p. 152) finally is too slight a foundation for supporting a hunch that he had perused the manuscript of *STM*, even if admittedly this may have circulated in the 'nineties among worshippers of the martyr and lovers of the theatre.

Quite few and mostly insignificant in *STM* are the departures from and alterations of the record provided by the chief sources bearing upon the xenophobic rising of 1517 and upon More's family, friends and career. In the process of telescoping the chronology and foreshortening the events, the dramatists compressed eighteen years of history into a stage action which seems to cover only a few months or weeks. They also changed the sequence of the London insurrection of April-May 1517 as well as the successive stages of More's public career.

The actual rioting and violence, according to Hall-Holinshed, was crushed and over by the night *before* May Day, the day of the 'renewal of spring' or 'calendimaggio' in the words of Dino Compagni's *Cronaca* (I.22) recalling an episode of violence in the history of Florence in May 1300. Thirteen rebels were executed in London on May 4, 1517. The three weeks between the 'mutiny' and the general pardon were rolled by Munday into two days. Lincoln, who in the play is the first to be hung up as a ringleader of the 'privy confederacy' recollected in More's *Apology* as origin of the uprising, does not appear in the *Chronicles* among the first thirteen executed. One may wonder if the dramatists noticed More's statement that the instigators of the 'conspiracy' leading up to the riots 'two lewd lads in the business fled away themselves and never came again after'.

It is generally agreed that the contributors to the alterations and the Additions, in the different hands identified by Greg in the original manuscript, did not tap the play's sources. They simply developed and modified independently suggestions contained in it, or echoed other works, especially dramatic, and topical allusions. They hardly ever fractured, any way, the basic unity of *STM*, albeit different claims can be advanced about the unevenness of its writing, its artistic level and dramatic power. Amazing, in fact, appears to me the skill of the authors of the play in pulling and fitting together the disparate materials they found in their sources, in weaving the uneven strands of the various prosaic narratives into a fine dramatic fabric. Except for the discrepancy of scene vii (Addition II in Hand D), of which more later, *STM* strikes at least this reader, if not as a seamless garment, certainly as unified structure, a nearly organic growth.

★ ★ ★

As several scholars point out,<sup>21</sup> the structure of the play is marked by carefully worked design, rich in paradox and ambiguity. Judith D. Spikes has showed how the two halves of *STM* are finely balanced on the central section stating the problems of responsibility, which she regards as the unifying theme of the play, both in the meditative soliloquy and in the moral allegory of the interlude. S. McMillin had already convincingly argued that many revisions must have been dictated not by political expediency, to meet Tilney's injunctions, but by dramatic considerations: particularly for casting and staging effects. He provided a valuable analysis of the structure and the Additions of *STM* as primarily justified by pragmatic concerns. To use the expression of A. Fox, the revisions were finely 'orchestrated into consistency'. Fox also underscores the 'symmetrical arrangement' of the episodes, the 'thematic duplication and variation', the 'inverted parallelism' of the first part of the play (scenes i-viii) within the second (scenes viii-xvii). Forker and Candido brought out the centrality and all-pervasive meaning of the play-within-the-play for the whole play, and A.F. Kinney in his paper 'Text, Context and Authorship in the Book of *STM*' submitted to the Ashland Seminar of 1983, further elaborated these insights by stressing the symmetrical, almost specular position of the two parts of the play: the parallelism between the first seven scenes concerned with London apprentices 'subscribing' their secret pact to enforce their 'bill of wrongs' and with their attempted disobedience of the royal will on the one side, and scenes x-xvii on the other, which articulate the theme of More's refusal to subscribe as Lord Chancellor the Act of Supremacy, thus turning from an opposer of the mutiny and mouthpiece and enforcer of the law into an opposer of the king's authority and defier of the law. More ends up by infringing the duty of obedience he had passionately advocated with the rioters as 'God's instrument' for peace.

More's large family, of three daughters and one son, plus the three sons-in-law and their children, is cut down in the play, for obvious theatrical requirements, to 'two daughters'. One of them is his eldest, the favourite 'Meg', wife to Roper, and the other is probably Alice Alington, More's step-daughter by his second wife Alice Middleton. Lady More is idealised, in comparison with the sources, and is given one

of the prophetic dreams in scene xi, lyrically sounding the approaching catastrophe. Though 'Meg' is also projected in a sympathetic light, her image is rather pale and out of focus if set against the vivid picture provided by the biographical and epistolary evidence.

William Roper himself appears as a pious, would-be worldly-wise, slightly pompous if devoted son-in-law, with possibly a vestigial touch of the failed public preacher trained in pulpit oratory 'to edify and profit the people'. His figure conjures up a less fortunate contemporary reformer, Sir Francis Bigod who, after advancing Cromwell's laicizing reforms, preposterously ended his life in 1537 as a victim of the 'rebellious' Pilgrimage of Grace in Beverley, Yorkshire. The Roper of *STM* has nothing to do with the 'marvellous zealous Protestant' described by Harsfield 'at what time he married with Mistress Margaret'. His voice is that of the moralist, sermonizing on the fickleness of fortune and the vanity of earthly joys, in his father-in-law's literary manner as mirrored for instance in More's Epigram 101, 'In huius vitae vanitatem'. His 'reclaiming and recovering' from his religious aberrations, in Ro:Ba's words, must have taken place long since. Not a trace is left, of course, of his 'intense abhorring' of Sir Thomas, which was undoubtedly due, in real life, to the Lord Chancellor's unmitigated hatred of the Lutherans and of all kinds of heresy ('haereticis molestus', as his own epitaph defiantly proclaimed him).

The other deviations from historical truth in the dramatists' treatment of their sources are mostly anachronisms, like adopting the Elizabethan wigmaker Ogle as a contemporary of More in the interlude of scene ix; confusion and conflation of persons, like the Lieutenant of the Tower Sir Edward Walsingham with whom More jokes, in the sources, on the weakness of the scaffold, and Sir William Kingston, Constable or Deputy of the Tower who departs in tears from More, who has to comfort him. A more telling, deliberate departure is represented by the casting and projecting of Surrey in the May Day events and in the subsequent career of More.

Surrey is consistently treated as an adult and the poet Henry Howard, not as his grandfather Thomas first Earl and future second duke of Norfolk who actually took part, with his son Thomas, in the cruel repression of the 1517 London riots. As the *Chronicles* clearly intimate, he had already distinguished himself in the 1513 battle of Flodden, against the Scots. The poet, eldest son of Lord Thomas, third duke of Norfolk, had hardly been born in that year; he was presumably picked on by Munday as a foil to More's 'poetical', literate character, and

to diversify and shade the noblemen's attitudes towards the insurgents and, later on, towards the tragic dilemma facing More.<sup>22</sup> Surrey in fact differs perceptibly from the soldierly Shrewsbury in *STM*. This is the rather obtuse and relentless spokesman of the Court and executor of the king's pleasure with regard to the 'rebels', whether the rioting apprentices or the former Lord Chancellor turned himself rebellious. Surrey has a pleasant witty temper and a sense of humor even about himself as a poet and he shows some sympathy with the 'rage of the commons' risen to 'revenge their wrongs' against the proud, mocking, privileged, prevaricating strangers, as they are presented in the first seven scenes. He is the first to suggest More's peacemaking intervention and tries to address the rioters himself as 'friends'. It is Surrey who conveys the news of a general pardon, rebukes the sheriff for his forwardness in carrying out the capital sentence against Lincoln, and praises More as a 'statist' and a 'linguist'. He shares More's love of poetry as the 'finest heraldry of art', and finally mourns, in a sententious choric manner, More's death winding up the play.

The dramatists' attitude to and portraiture of the common people is not entirely consistent throughout the play. In what is the chief inconsistency of *STM*, as previously stated, the author of Addition II in Hand D -- presumably Shakespeare -- to the original text, obviously did not care to shape the first part of scene vi -- his description of the rioting apprentices -- in such a way that it would fit in and cohere with the context of the preceding and of the following parts, of which he seems to be hardly aware. This is particularly true, as Melchiori shows more analytically in another paper of his<sup>23</sup> of the double countenance which the London rebels assume in scenes v and vi. They are introduced in scenes i-iii as decent citizens resorting to violence only after their petition has failed and are rather carefully individuated in character and occupation. This same « duplicity » applies to the foreign merchants.

In the former scenes the sympathy of the audience would have been enlisted with the long-suffering artificers and apprentices claiming their birthrights, whilst the strangers, abusing their privileges just like the 'enclosers' in respect to the ejected farmers or labourers in *Utopia*<sup>24</sup> arouse a hostile reaction. In scene vi on the contrary, the rioters' foolish credulity and vandalism, as though they were 'possessed' with devilish spirits', in Shakespeare's words (*2 Henry VI*, IV.vii.72), is indiscriminately emphasized and satirized, with close verbal parallels to the riot scenes in *2 Henry VI*, IV.ii, iii. Moreover, in 'sheriff' More's great oration to appease the rebels, the hounded and banished strangers become

objects of pity and sympathy in their turn, without any distinction of status or trade between Flemish, Frenchmen and 'Lombards' (Italians).

The volubility of the anonymous populace who, like Jack Cade's Kentish handicraftsmen vowing 'reformation', mean to 'dress the commonwealth and turn it and set a new nap upon it' (*2 Henry VI*, IV.ii.4-5), is of course a commonplace of European Renaissance literature. In his *Ricordi*, Guicciardini called it 'un monstro pieno di confusione e di errori ; e le sue vane opinione sono tanto lontane dalla verità quant'è, secondo Tolommeo, la Spagna dalla India'.<sup>25</sup> Jack Cade and his followers in Shakespeare's 'history play' are among the most remarkable dramatic embodiment of class prejudice and of inconsequence among the rabble, 'like a feather / blown to and fro ... always commanded by the great gust' (IV.viii.55). The dramatists' view of the mob in *STM* is too sharply divided to be accounted for with Tucker Brooke's description of their attitude as one of 'half good natured laughter, half scorn and distrust'.<sup>26</sup>

The 'lower orders', however, present a better face again in the second half of the play. For one dishonest servingman (appearing only in Addition VI in hand B, not in the original) in More's household and staff and trying to cheat the players of their fees, we are shown in Harpsfield's footsteps the unanimous consent of all More's servants and dependents, honest and devoted, in appreciating and praising their master's liberality and goodness, once they are told of his testamentary provisions. Lincoln and Doll Williamson redeem their 'sin' of insurrection first by their open leadership of the rebels and afterwards by their fearless acceptance of death. In Lincoln's case, one may be surprised by his somewhat sudden conversion to the Elizabethan gospel of obedience and subordination in each degree. His paramount concern for the common weal, however, matches his brave assumption of full responsibility for the rising. Doll's pluck and nearly female chauvinism, a character invented by the original author, reflect his sympathy for it.

The fierce enthusiastic nationalism of the Elizabethans which shines in most contemporary chronicles and stands out in Shakespeare's 'histories' -- as well as in his so-called 'Apocrypha' like *Lochrine* (in Estrild's description of England, 'the happie Isles / most fortunate' of Albion, in I.iii.33-50) or *Edward the Third's* ardent patriotism anticipating *Henry V* -- finds a naive expression in *STM* too. One is impressed by the low-born rioters' narrow-minded pride of Britain as 'a great eating country' and by their proud memories of their past victories over

the French, no less than by the noblemen's circumspection, shared by More with his hatred of war and state, not to jeopardise their country's independence in their alliance against the French with the Emperor's overwhelming power (scene x).

★ ★ ★

The less amiable, and intolerant aspects of More's personality, as we have previously emphasized, and his activities, both literary and practical, aimed at uprooting heresy, as he hoped, are totally absent from the play. His encounter with Faulkner, the 'votary' ruled by 'humours and fates' but ultimately converted to 'civil living', and his stern treatment of the ruffian's rowdiness and unkempt appearance are particularly credible in view of what is borne out by the *State Papers*, i.e. that More was 'personally involved' in several of the Council's projects to contain vice and vagabondage in London and its suburbs by bringing to task and disciplining unruly bullies and loafers.<sup>27</sup> It makes no dramatic difference that the specific incident is borrowed by the dramatists from an episode unrelated to him and illustrating, in Foxe's words, Cromwell's vigorous enforcement of the law.

Of Harpsfield's account of More's literary writings, 'his books, whereby he hath consecrate his worthy name to immortality in this transitory world',<sup>28</sup> it is not surprising that the play does not make any use beyond showing Sir Thomas' appreciation of poetry, learning and the arts. His 'Roman' integrity extolled by Harpsfield is given full play and relief, even though Munday wisely refrained from applying to his hero's virtue that dangerously ambiguous adjective which might have conjured up the religious allegiance of the 'malleus hereticorum' and pillar of popish orthodoxy.

The figure of More in *STM*, apart from his 'error' in refusing to subscribe the 'Articles' of the Royal Supremacy, is endowed with all the engaging qualities of his character. They are mirrored both in the high opinion of the common people and in that of his colleagues in the royal service. Surrey underlines More's distinction as a humanist and his statesmanship, his sly sleepless physician-like watch over the peace, security and welfare of the commonwealth.

The virtues of hospitality in the 'sheriff' of London, and of generosity, wisdom and constant cheerfulness in the Lord Chancellor of England, are highlighted and cherished by the voice of the artificers and of his own servants. It would be impossible to suspect, behind his

comely mask and the Aristotelian *aimulia* or graceful conversation praised in him by Harpsfield,<sup>28</sup> the man that Lutheran reformers disparaged as an enemy of the 'new learning', that Calvin branded as a 'horrible enemy of the gospel' and of 'God's people'<sup>29</sup> and that Charles Lamb, followed by Froude in his demonisation of More as a 'merciless bigot', was to note wryly for his 'supersatanic malice'<sup>30</sup>.

Some comment is in order on Sir Thomas's role as a 'stage player' in *STM*. The record transmitted by the biographical and chronicle sources about his youthful improvising capacity on the stage, his propensity to jokes and his mocking disposition, is unanimous, even if the emphases are not uniformly positive. One is reminded of Roper's earliest testimony of More as a young page in the household of Cardinal Morton mixing with players on the Christmas stage, and improvising 'a part of his own'. And one recalls also Hall's damning statement echoed by Holinshed (*Chronicles*, 1586-7 ; III.938) that he was uncertain whether to call More a foolish wiseman or a wise foolishman. To More's character as shown in the play can be applied Jaques' words in his speech on the seven ages of man : 'one man in his time plays many parts' (*AYL* II.vii.142). As such he is stage-managed by the dramatists taking their clue from their sources and is introduced in the 'play-within-the-play' of scene ix in the appropriate role of Good Counsel. Like Kyd's Hieronimo, they obviously thought that interludes admitted the acting of 'gentlemen and scholars' alongside the professional players.<sup>31</sup>

There is little doubt that More appreciated the theatre in its mimetic, playful aspects. In his *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532), he affirms that in the *Moria* his 'darling' Erasmus had only joked about abuses 'after the manner of a dysours part in a playe'.<sup>32</sup> His multiple roles, as the play unfolds, develop from the humane and witty 'sheriff' at the Lord Mayor's session (scene ii), through the wise counsellor to the City threatened by the apprentices' rising, and the successful appeaser of the rioters (scene v and vi), to the stage director of Randall's little play-acting out of his own person in front of Erasmus and Surrey, the chastiser of the shrewd shaggy ruffian Faulkner, the improvised player in the Interlude at his house in Chelsea, the statesman prudently canvassing international policy in the Royal Council,<sup>33</sup> the family man surveying his personal predicament and clearing the decks for his departure to the Tower, his own physician and diagnostician in jail. Finally he turns from the « state pleader » into the « stage player » of scene xvii, while escorted to the block : all the time, apart from the melancholy monologue in scene xiii, indulging in language games and scattering puns, wisecracks and jokes around and about himself.

The strife between the binding covenant of 'conscience', statute law and 'frailer life' (xiii, 162) is, to my mind, the ideological core and essence of *STM*. Other scholars have read the play's meaning as a lesson in the fatal results of tyrannical rule or, alternatively, of disobedience to the legitimate authority. To me it seems as if Keats, in his sonnet « Re-reading Lear », had unwittingly re-phrased More's own dilemma between 'impassioned clay' and 'the fear of damnation'. Like our contemporary victims of despotic rule all over the world, More is in the play a 'prisoner of conscience'. Conscience is to him a synonym of moral integrity in a sense which was no longer universally current among late Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, to whom the abuse of the term by Puritans had made it a synonym of hypocrisy, 'cozenage'. Scenes viii-xvii dramatise first More's sudden elevation to 'greatness', the conflict in his mind like a medieval psychomachia, and finally his decline to the condition of a state prisoner, his indictment and condemnation for high treason. The loss of his life More evangelically accepts for the salvation of his soul.

More's letter to 'Meg' Roper, of April 17, 1534, provides the *leitmotiv* to the unfolding tragedy, in spite of what Tucker Brooke rightly stressed as the 'light-heartedness inspiring the tragic scenes': <sup>34</sup> 'unto the oath that there at Lambeth Palace was offered me, I could not swear, without the jeoparding of my soul to perpetual damnation'. <sup>35</sup> Conscience, a key word reverberating through most of More's letters from the Tower, triumphs in *STM* over the frailty of the flesh and the warmth of family affections. After his Protean performance of many parts, the lay martyr leaves the stage to proceed to the 'celestial court' in front of which he is confident to acquit himself. He had 'never intended to pin his sould to another man's sleave'. (Ro:Ba: here substitutes 'sleeve' for the 'back' in Margaret Roper's letter. <sup>36</sup> Like Shakespeare's Henry V, More was convinced that 'every subject's duty is the king's, but every subject's soul is his own' (*H5* IV.i.188-90).

More's criticism of absolute power (the prince's 'excesses' in the flesh in xiii.75) is moderately voiced in *STM* in comparison with what we know of his radical hatred of tyranny and love of equality from his Epigrams, his *Richard the Third*, and from Erasmus's testimony <sup>37</sup>. It first comes through in his own playful comment on Randall's pride (scene viii) and in his analysis of how precarious 'greatness' is when abused and thus divorced from 'remorse', in Brutus' words (*JC* II.i.18-19). It is no express denial of the 'divinity' of kings but an apprehension of the vanity, nay, the dire consequences of violence.

The conception of responsible power as a selfless service of public interest goes hand in hand in More with his Tudor horror of anarchy and with his near Wolseyan appreciation of 'littleness' after his fall: 'his overthrow heap'd happiness upon him; / for then, and not till then, he felt himself, / and found the blessedness of his being little' (*H8* IV.ii.64-6). Schücking reckons, echoing F.W. Moorman, <sup>38</sup> in his essay on 'Shakespeare and *STM*', that Shakespeare cannot be the author of More's oration in *STM* on the divine authority of kings and on rebellion, since in *Henry V*, he expressed an opposed view of royalty, namely that 'a king...is but a man as I am...all his senses have but human conditions' (*H5* IV.i.105-10). His argument, however, seems to me based upon the undemonstrated assumption that the views of dramatic characters necessarily reflect the author's own and, consequently, that *STM* was written around 1600, the date of *Henry V*, it takes for granted that Shakespeare could not entertain or present two such sharply conflicting views of kingship at the same time.

More and Rochester, Lincoln and Doll Williamson, on different levels of dignity, are obviously the 'heroes' of *STM*. The first two were beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1886 and canonised in 1935 by Pius XI. Lincoln and Doll stand out clearly, for their courage and devotion to the cause of the wronged people. They stand out from the 'gazing' and roaring multitude, the brawling, anti-alien, church-going, sermon-hungry artisans of Elizabethan London. This is a microcosm of Tudor England, with its stinks and its sights, St. Paul's and Newgate, Paris Garden and Moorfields, pastoral Chelsea and the grim Tower, its theatres, taverns, prisons, lawcourts and May Day bonfires, its wharves teeming with merchandize, its carpenters and jewellers and brokers: all creatures of 'flesh and blood' like Doll, if not gifted with her stamina and *panache*.

The 'error' of the rioting apprentices in disobeying the law, by attacking the foreigners protected by the royal authority, is only outwardly comparable to More's 'error', of which he showed himself fully aware in his letters from the Tower. <sup>39</sup> In *STM*, prentices and Lord Chancellor share the belief that one day, all injuries, errors and disagreements forgotten, they will be friends and live merrily together in heaven. Neither could share the tolerant view of religion, typical of moderate Protestantism a century later, that 'two probable contrary opinions could be embraced by two learned and discreet and pious and zealous men', in John Donne's words. <sup>40</sup> In *STM*, both 'cockney' Doll, saintly Fisher and the 'foolish wiseman' More expect to 'meet again ... one day', after death, even though neither Lincoln nor Doll can articu-

late their hope in a heavenly rebirth with the eloquence of the 'religious statesman'.

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NOTES

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1. *The Workes of Sir Thomas More ... 1557* (London : Scholar Press, 1978) ; vol. I, p. 93, the section 'Of Covetise' in *De Quatuor Novissimis*.
2. *Des. Erasmi ... Opus Epistolarum*, vol. XI (Oxford : 1947), pp. 369-78.
3. Thomas Stapleton, *Tres Thomae* (Douai : 1588).
4. Ro:Ba., *The Lyfe of Syr Thomas More, Sometymes Lord Chancellor of England*, ed. Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock and Mgr. P.E. Hallett (E.E.T.S.). (Oxford : 1950), p. 14.
5. John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 1563, ed. J. Pratt. (London : 1874), vol. V, pp. 395-96.
6. Anthony Munday, *A Discoverie of Edmund Campion and his Confederates* (London : 1582).
7. Marie Schütt, « Die Quellen des 'Book of Sir Thomas More', *Englische Studien*, 68 (1933).
8. Nicholas Harpsfield, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More, Knight, Sometimes Lord High Chancellor of England*, ed. E.V. Hitchcock (E.E.T.S.). (Oxford : 1932).
9. Eight manuscripts of Harpsfield's *Life* (none of them in his hand) are still extant. The critical edition provided by E.V. Hitchcock is based on the Emmanuel College, Cambridge, copy which was found by the « priest-catcher » Richard Topclyff when he arrested More's grandson in April 1582.
10. Giorgio Melchiori, 'The Contextualization of Source Materials : The Play Within the Play in « Sir Thomas More », *Le forme del Teatro*, III (Roma 1984), pp. 59-94.

11. A. Munday, *The English Roman Life*, London 1582, ed. by Phillip J. Ayres (Oxford : 1980).
12. I.A. Shapiro, 'Shakespeare and Munday,' *Shakespeare Survey*, 14 (1981).
13. The papal nuncio Francesco Chiericato reported to Vigo da Campo S. Pietro, in a letter from London of May 19, 1517, that 'our most serene and compassionate queen, with tears in her eyes and on her bended knees, obtained their pardon' (*Calendar of State Papers Venice*, II, pp. 385-6). This intervention is not recorded in any authoritative historical compilation. It appears for the first time in the 1605 revised edition of Stow's *Annales of England*, but it was not in the 1592 edition. It is difficult to establish the date of the ballad reproduced by Dyce from *A Crowne Garland of Golden-Roses...* compiled by Richard Johnson. (London : 1662), Second Part, New Additions.
14. *Thomas Lord Cromwell*, IV, Chorus : 'Pardon if we omit all Wolsey's life / because our play depends upon Cromwell's death.'
15. Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, pp. 68-9, deriving from Hall's *Chronicle*, 1550, f. 226.
16. Harpsfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 176, 187.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
18. I feel inclined to accept Ms. Muriel St. C. Byrne's judicious summing up about Ro:Ba:'s identity in her admirable edition of *The Lisle Letters* (Chicago : 1981), vol. 6, p. 286. She writes : 'the fact that Sir Robert Basset of Devon (1574-1641) has now been put forward by modern scholars of repute (e.g. A.W. Reed, in App. I to the EETS edition of the *Lyfe*) as the most likely identification for the Ro.Ba. who compiled *The Lyfe of Syr Thomas More*, his uncle's grandfather, certainly ties with the various contemporary references to his Catholic leanings.' Sir Robert Bassett was the son of James B. and Mary Roper, the daughter of William Roper and Margaret More.
19. R. Pole, *Pro ecclesiasticae unitatis defensione* (Ridgewood, N.J. : Gregg Press Reprint, 1965), liber tertius, pp. 89-95.
20. John Harington, *A New Discoverie of a Stale Subject, called metamorphosis of Ajax...* a critical annotated edition by Elizabeth Story Donno. (London : 1962), pp. 101.
21. Among others, by S. Mcmillin in '« The Book of Sir Thomas More » A Theatrical View', *Modern Philology*, 68, (1971) ; J.D. Spikes in '« The Book of Sir Thomas More » Structure and Meaning', *Moreana*, 43-4 (1974) ; C.R. Forker and J. Candido, 'Wit, Wisdom and Theatricality in « The Book of Sir Thomas More », *Shakespeare Studies*, XIII (1980) ; A. Fox, 'The Paradoxical Design of « The Book of Sir Thomas More »' *Renaissance and Reformation*, N.S., 8 (1981) ; M.C. Rousseau, « *Sir Thomas More* : du texte à la scène », *Moreana*, 83-84 (1984), pp. 127-142.

22. Curiously, Munday's deliberate distortion of genealogical accuracy in *STM* was a precedent for the re-appearance of the same confusion in the neo-classical *Sir Thomas More, A Tragedy* (1793) by James Hurdis who does not appear to be aware of the confusion. In Act IV of this play, on taking leave from the third Duke of Norfolk, More enquires about his son the poet, once again identified with his grandfather: 'I do not think more accomplished man / lives in the world. He manages the pen / as bravely as the truncheon. With the one, he overthrew the Scot at Flodden Field / [1513 !] and with the other triumphs ev'ry where. / He wins the laurel twice, and should be crown'd victor in army and song. Where is he now ? / *Norfolk* : 'At Florence, Sir, maintaining Geraldine'.

23. G. Melchiori, 'Hand D in *Sir Thomas More* ; An Essay in Misinterpretation', in *Shakespeare Survey*, 38 (1985).

24. A passage in the English translation of More's *Utopia* depicting the miserable conditions of evicted tenants in England seems to have been in the mind of the author of More's oration to the rebels. Cf. Ralph Robinson's 1551 translation in English Reprints, *Utopia*, ed. E. Arber (London : 1869), p. 41 : 'the husbandmen be thrust owte of their owne... By one meanes thefore or by other... they must needs departe awaye, poore, selye, wretched soules, men, women, husbands, wives, fatherlesse children, widowes, wofull mothers, with their yonge babes, and their whole houshold smal in substaunce and much in nombre ... Awaye thei trudge, I say, out of their knowen and accustomed houses, fyndynge no place to reste in'.

25. F. Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, ed. R. Spongano. (Firenze : 1951), no. B 123.

26. *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, ed. Tucker Brooke. (Oxford : 1908), p. ii.

27. Cf. John Guy, *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More* (Brighton : 1980), p. 13

28. N. Harpsfield, *Life*, p. 100.

29. J. Calvin, *Commentaires sur le Prophete Isaïe* (Geneva : 1552). In commenting chapter xxii of Isaïa, Calvin deprecates the arrogance of people aspiring to fame through funeral monuments and refers to More's 'fort beau sepulchre' as a case in point. See the Latin text in *Moreana* no. 45, p. 37-38, the French in *Moreana* no. 65-66, p. 25.

30. C. Lamb, *The Indicator*, 20 December 1820 ; J.A. Froude, *History of England* (London : 1877), vol. I, pp. 562, 599.

31. T. Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. P. Edwards, (Revels Plays). (London : 1959), IV.i.101-2.

32. T. More, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, ed. L.A. Schuster *et al.* (New Haven : 1973), pp. 176-9.

33. One of More's merry tales about a cardinal (Wolsey ?) and a flattering courtier competing in a show of vanity offers us a hint of the humour and playful mood of which More was capable during the meetings of the Council. Cf. More, *Dialogue of Comfort*

*against Tribulation* (1534), ch. X, 'of flattery'.

34. *Shakespeare Apocrypha*, ed. Tucker Brooke (Oxford : 1908), p. liv.

35. *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. E.F. Rogers, p. 505.

36. Compare the phrasing of the original : « I neuer entend ... to pyne my soule at a nother mans back (*The Correspondence*, p. 521) with « I never intended to pinne my soule to another mans sleeve » (*Ro:Ba.*, p. 205).

37. Cf. Erasmus's pen-portrait of More's character in his famous letter of 1519 to Von Hutten in *Opus Epistolarum*, IV, *Ep.* 999, p. 15 : 'Ab aula principumque familiaritate olim fuit alienior, quod illi semper peculiariter inuisa fuerit tyrannis quemadmodum aequalitas gratissima'.

38. L.L. Schücking, in *Review of English Studies*, I (1925), 40-59 ; F.W. Moorman 'Doubtful Plays', in *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge : 1910), vol. V, pp. 249-59.

39. Harpsfield, *Life*, ed. Hitchcock, pp. 184-5, 'And for this mine error (if I may call it error, or if I have been deceived therein) I have not gone scot free and untouched, my goods and chattels being confiscate, and myself to perpetual prison adjudge where I have been nowe shutt up about fifteen months'. These words are quoted by Harpsfield as uttered by More to rebut the charge, during his trial in Westminster Hall, of showing malice against the King and his late marriage. More denied this article of the indictment, stating that he had always spoken 'according to my very mind, opinion and conscience'.

40. J. Donne, *Sermons*, ed. G.R. Potter, E.M. Simpson (Univ. of California Press) vol. VII, p. 97.

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### Vittorio GABRIELI, « *Sir Thomas More* : Sources, Characters, Ideas » - Résumé.

**H**ISTORIQUES, biographiques, dramatiques ou littéraires, les sources de *STM* en ont marqué la composition à des degrés divers. S'il faut sans doute compter parmi elles l'édition de 1557 des *English Works* de More, les chroniques de Hall et Holinshed, l'*Expositio Fidelis* (1535), la *Thomae Mori Vita* de Stapleton (Douai, 1588), l'*Anglica Historia* de Polydore Vergil (1555), les *Acts and Monuments* de Foxe (1563, 1583), et si l'on peut trouver tel ou tel écho de Kyd, Marlowe ou Shakespeare, il semble que l'auteur de la pièce ait surtout été un familier des écrits biographiques, qui font ici l'objet d'une analyse textuelle détaillée.