

**Ulysses in Antwerp: The Lucianic Aesthetic of Thomas More's *Utopia***

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### Abstract

Both the historical person and the literary works of Thomas More are notoriously challenging to interpret, not the least because More himself so frequently hides his intentions and communicates in knowingly ironic and enigmatic ways. To suggest the peculiar complexities one encounters when reading More, I begin with an investigation of an anecdote which relates More's quasi-legendary mode of communicating and work through the various ways one might seek to understand the anecdote itself and the meaning of More's statement within it. Building on what is learned in this investigation, I turn to More's most enigmatic communication of all, *Utopia*. When one opens *Utopia* one finds, before anything else, the provocative, perplexing persona of Raphael Hythlodæus. I make the case that Hythlodæus, not his island, is the central conundrum of *Utopia* and that understanding why More characterizes him so ambiguously is the best way to understand what More seeks to accomplish in *Utopia*. If More's aim, as most assume, was to design an ideal commonwealth in the tradition of Plato, why did he complicate his work by telling most of it through the mouth of a man like Raphael Hythlodæus and as if it were a true account? Why not follow Plato's model, bringing into being an openly fictional commonwealth through a trustworthy narrator? If Hythlodæus' account of the island of Utopia is the main thing, then why does More keep calling the reader's attention to Hythlodæus himself?

My argument is that sorting out why More created such a demanding narrator ends in an understanding of what More sought to achieve through *Utopia*, not so much what he meant by it. Most interpreters of More have refused to countenance the full significance of More's characterization of his narrator and so have failed to recognize that More's aesthetic decision to complicate his work in this way signals the definite context to which *Utopia* belongs: the renewal or revival of the study of ancient Greek language and culture in the northern countries, a movement which Erasmus and More were orchestrating at the time of *Utopia*'s publication in large part through their efforts to popularize the work of Lucian of Samosata. In 1506, More and Erasmus had published a set of translations of some of Lucian's dialogues. In 1509, Erasmus published his *Encomium Moriae*, a work explicitly indebted to Lucian. In the 1510s, Erasmus nearly broke himself over his new edition of the Greek New Testament and his endless exertions to find audiences to appreciate this labor, a task which essentially involved finding readers of ancient Greek. Then, in 1516, More published his *Utopia*, which he meant not merely as another spur to the study of Greek, but as an attempt to mediate a poetic drawn from the works of Lucian and, through Lucian, since Lucian himself was a mediator of classical Greek culture to the Roman Empire, from the Greek tradition. In this tradition, in works like the *Odyssey* and Plato's *Protagoras* and especially in the works of Lucian, one meets with numerous unreliable or even trickster narrators. The central claim of this study is that More meant his readers to see Raphael Hythlodæus as in that tradition. The bulk of this study will focus on demonstrating what techniques and outlooks More took from Lucian and his tradition and how he adapted them to his own purposes in the *Utopia* and suggested ways for other humanists to do the same. I finally arrive at an understanding not so much of what More intended the *Utopia* to mean, for the final meaning of this work is intentionally inscrutable, but of what More must have wanted the *Utopia* to accomplish – to train his readers in a skeptical mode of intellectual inquiry that could counter many of the false and superstitious habits of thought that More thought were corrupting the church of his day.

### Acknowledgments

When Thomas More published *Utopia* in 1516, he relied heavily on the support of friends like Peter Giles and Erasmus to strengthen the work he had done in his dialogue. The humanists understood better than most that any work of criticism or art was something that depended ultimately on a community of scholars, writers, and researchers in a given field. This thesis is no different, and I am grateful to have been able to work with such a generous scholar as Roger Ladd in preparing it. As Graduate Director, as a professor, and above all as an unstinting and yet supportive critic of several of my papers and this thesis, Dr. Ladd has taught me more about the care with which one must approach older texts than any other teacher I have had. I am grateful to him for all the illuminating points and questions he has raised about my work while at the same time supporting what I wanted to do. I am also grateful to Dr. Vela and Dr. Berntsen for serving on my committee. I have learned a great deal from both of them about how to write well for the contemporary scholarly community.

When Thomas More was away in the Low Countries on the king's business in 1514-1515 and was working on the idea for *Utopia*, he missed his family inordinately, as he says both in *Utopia* through the persona of Morus and in his actual letters to friends and family. I too have grieved at the hours I have had to take away from my own family to write this thesis, whether that took the form of reading and taking notes during soccer practice, hurrying off to the library while everyone else stayed at home, or simply being lost in thought about Raphael Hythlodæus while someone was speaking to me about money for school pictures or what we might watch on television that evening. I want to offer my greatest thanks, then, to Cason and Hannah and little Soren, for so generously giving me the time and space to complete this thesis. To Soren, thanks for being my "table buddy" and always cheerfully accepting my excuses that I had to write and so could not play ping-pong. To Hannah, thanks for your constantly good sense of humor and for being such a grown-up. To Cason, thanks for

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***Introduction: Thomas More's Sense of Indirection***

Johannes Ludovicus Praschius (1637-1690) records the following anecdote about Thomas More in his *Facetiae*, “in Anglia quidam malae notae e carcere profugerat. Thomas itaque Morus, vocato custodiae praefecto, serio imperavit ut diligenter obseraret carcerem ne rediret illuc, qui evaserat” (“In England, an especially wicked criminal had escaped from prison, and so Thomas More summoned the [prison] warden and in all seriousness ordered [him] to lock down the prison so that the man who had escaped not get back in there” (Riley 3).<sup>1</sup> Consider this story closely for a moment, for, although Riley claims that no other extant sources corroborate it, this sketch does effectively illustrate how Thomas More communicated with others (Riley 3). One would assume as context, based on the mention of a prison (“carcere”) and its warden (“praefecto”), that this incident occurred during More’s time as undersheriff of London, sometime between 1510-1518, for this is the time when More would have been most involved in the day-to-day of the criminal system of London (Guy 45). How is one to take hold of this story so as to make some sense of it? If one first identifies with the poor warden, one might hope that More is actually serious here. Best not to have such a monster back in our midst, one might reason. This interpretation, after all, would best please the warden since it would mitigate his responsibility for losing a prisoner. But even the thickest warden must soon realize his duty and the simple fact that the prison in London is precisely where such a monster belongs. Perhaps, then, this is just a joke, and that More is said to have issued this command “serio” because he made all his jokes in this manner:

in the midst of his jokes he kept so grave a face, and even when all those around were laughing heartily, looked so solemn, that neither his wife nor any other member of the

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<sup>1</sup> All translations from Latin and Greek are my own.

family could tell from his countenance whether he was speaking seriously or in jest, but had to judge from the subject-matter or the circumstances. (Stapleton 139)

Judging from the “subject-matter or the circumstances,” though, More could not have meant his order to the warden merely as a joke for a joke’s sake, yet, if it was more than a joke, what did it mean? And why did More choose to complicate this matter with such a puzzling response? What did More seek to accomplish by communicating in this way? Thinking through More’s comment, though, and running up against questions like these will only make it more apparent that what is needed to understand More’s “order” to the warden is more context. Perhaps, then, since such an abundance of information about the times and the person of Thomas More is available, one might be able to recover a context in which More’s quip makes sense. One has already taken this step, after all, in assuming that this event took place during More’s time as undersheriff, and that supposition seems likely enough, after all. Surely additional historical and textual research would shine some light on this saying of More’s.

When one begins researching, one learns early on that Thomas More both appreciated and practiced communication that was indirect and even misdirecting (Cox 304-306). In 1516, for instance, More read the infamous *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum* (*Letters of Obscure Men*). This work of German humanism mercilessly satirizes the preferred target of Northern humanism, the scholastics, for their foolishness, their uncouthness, and, above all, their deplorable Latinity, memorably called their “Küchenlatein” or “kitchen Latin” (Pfeiffer 462). The meaning of the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, though, is not patent to all, for the humanists who penned this work actually wrote not *in propriis personis* but took on the personas of scholastics and wrote letters back and forth to one another in the worst Latin their humanist brains could muster. Hence, these fake letters, sometimes written in the name of actual, living persons, deceived many of their readers. Thomas More, of course, was not

deceived. He understood that the laughs were directed not only at the Latinity of the scholastics but at nearly all of their practices. Thus, he wrote to Erasmus the following:

*Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum* operae pretium est videre quantopere placent omnibus, et doctis ioco et indoctis serio, qui, dum ridemus, putant rideri stilum tantum; quem illi non defendunt, sed gravitate sententiarum dicunt compensatum et latere sub rudi vagina pulcherrimum gladium. Utinam fuisset inditus libello alius titulus! profecto intra centum annos homines studio stupidi non sensissent nasum quamquam rinocerotico longiorem.

It is a pleasure to see how delighted everyone is with the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, the learned by their humor, the unlearned by their ‘significance.’ When we laugh, the uneducated think we are merely laughing at their style, which they do not defend, ‘but,’ they say, ‘[the style] is compensated for by the importance of the thoughts, and a stunning blade is hidden within a crude scabbard.’ Oh, if only another title had been given to this little book! Surely within a hundred years these fools would not have noticed the scorn heaped on them! (51)

More delighted in this non-direct style of communication, then, but observe that in the last part of this quotation More expresses his opinion that the authors of the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum* had not gone far enough in concealing their joke on the scholastics because they had given the work a title that nearly gives the joke away. The adjective “Obscurorum” in the title is a pun that allows for several different meanings. Its primary sense may be that these men are “unknown” or “undistinguished,” but it also suggests that they are “obscure” in their writings or even “unintelligible.” Whatever meaning one assigns to this word, or even if one allows it a range of meanings, it certainly is pejorative. Hence



More's wish that the authors should have given it a less revealing, less direct, title so that scholastic fools might go on being deceived for decades to come.

More also has his persona "Morus" in the *Utopia* advocate directly for a form of communication that he terms "ductus obliquus," to be used when one is acting in an official capacity to convince princes and their ilk: "at neque insuetus et insolens sermo inculcandus, quem scias apud diversa persuasos pondus non habiturum, sed obliquo ductu conandum est, atque adnitendum tibi uti... omnia tractes commode" ("Nor should you use an unusual mode of speech that contradicts custom, for you know that it will have no weight with those persuaded of the opposite. Rather, you should try an indirect strategy, striving to manage all things agreeably.") (96). Admittedly, the context for this statement is markedly different from the putative context we have established for the anecdote from Praschius. In this passage from the *Utopia*, the character is explaining how to advise kings and cardinals – "princes," in the idiom of his time – whereas in the anecdote from Praschius More is certainly speaking to an inferior. This much can be determined by the fact that More summons the warden rather than the other way around. Nonetheless, Virginia Cox, in her learned discussion of "ductus obliquus" expands the range of this concept such that it readily applies to the present discussion. She reminds her readers, and this reminder is always needed, of "how self-conscious rhetorically trained early modern readers were about the different relationships that can obtain between utterance and belief or conviction" (306). Steeped as they were in rhetoric, More and men trained like him conceived of all public interactions as contexts of persuasion. They were at every moment keenly aware that one of their best tools for fixing a point more effectively and memorably in the minds of their hearers was, as Cox suggests, to play with the differences "between utterance and conviction," and so they often communicated with others, especially their social inferiors, in ways that ran counter to more

commonly coined speech. And what was true of other men was doubtless doubly true of Thomas More.

*Democritus' Son*

The persistent researcher will also learn that More closely connected his fondness for indirect communication with his self-adopted role as a new Democritus, and thus gave to the entirety of his public life a satiric and ultimately moral shape. Democritus, contemporary of Socrates, lived and studied philosophy in the Ionian settlement of Abdera, on the northern shore of the Aegean; he was renowned in antiquity for having systematized and developed the atomistic philosophy of his teacher Leucippus (Berryman; Cartledge 3). Thomas More neither likened himself nor allowed himself to be likened to this Democritus, however, because he helped to generate a formidable materialistic philosophy, but because Democritus was also known in antiquity as the “laughing philosopher,” especially as one who derided the irrational actions and habits of the people around him (Berryman). Thus Horace, while ridiculing the habits of Roman theatergoers for their vulgarity and longing for spectacle, says that, if Democritus were still around and in attendance at a Roman play, he would turn himself around and watch the folly of the crowd rather than the play itself since the crowd would present “nimio spectacula plura” (“far more sights worth seeing”) (ii.i.198). In *On Sacrifices*, Lucian recounts the Egyptian habits of beating their breasts after sacrificing a victim or shaving themselves bald out of respect for a dead god and exclaims that the ignorance betrayed by these sorts of actions wants a Democritus to laugh at it (170). And in *Philosophies for Sale*, Lucian has Democritus rebuke the high god Zeus himself for the laughable arrangements of human affairs. When Zeus asks the Abderan sage why he cannot seem to stop giggling, Democritus responds with his characteristic bluntness and insolence: “ἔρωτᾶς; ὅτι μοι γελοῖα πάντα δοκέει τὰ πρήγματα ὑμέων καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑμεῖς;” (“Do you really need to ask? Because all your affairs are laughable to me, as are you yourselves.”) (474).

Democritus, then, became the model of the wise man who not only notes the follies of humankind but who is willing to deride them openly.

Within More's humanist circle, this understanding and celebration of Democritus as the laughing philosopher was often applied to Thomas More. In his introduction to the *Encomium Moriae*, Erasmus addresses a letter of dedication to Thomas More and there first (1509) dubs More a contemporary Democritus: "soleas huius generis iocis, hoc est, nec indoctis, ni fallor, nec usquequaque insulsis, impendio delectari, et omnino in communi mortalium vita Democritum quendam agere" ("You [More] are accustomed greatly to delight in jokes of this kind, that is, neither unlearned nor, unless I'm mistaken, wholly without wit and in the common life of mortals entirely to act the part of a Democritus") (67). Around the time More was writing *Utopia*, his friend and fellow humanist Richard Pace published a curious book entitled *De Fructu Qui Ex Doctrina Percipitur*, which is translated by Frank Manley and Richard S. Sylvester as *The Benefit of a Liberal Education*. In this work, Pace offers a quirky sketch of More which is generally accepted to be accurate historically speaking, although the work in which it is contained is a decidedly "in" book that revels in the current gossip concerning the best known humanists (xvi). After stating that Thomas More most subscribes to "[philosophiae] Democriticae," Democritean philosophy," whatever that might mean, Pace goes on to elaborate on Democritus and his re-embodiment in Thomas More:

de illo Democrito loquor, qui omnes res humanas risit, quem non modo diligentissime est imitatus, verum etiam una syllaba superavit. nam ut ille humana omnia ridenda, ita hic deridenda. unde Richardus Paceus, Morum amicissimum suum, Democriti filium, vel successorem, per iocum appellare solet.

I am speaking about that Democritus who laughed at all human affairs. [More] has not only imitated him most industriously but has even surpassed him by one syllable. For, just as he [Democritus] considered all things human to be risible, so he [More] considered them to be derisible. For this reason, Richard Pace often as a joke calls More, who is his dear friend, the son or successor of Democritus. (104)

The play on words that Pace makes here, while clear enough in the Latin, “ridenda” and “deridenda,” is difficult to carry over into English. Manley and Sylvester render it as follows: “For just as Democritus thought that everything that pertains to man was ludicrous, More thought it was ridiculous” (105). How one should render this statement, though, is scarcely the point. The point is that, in the eyes of one of his contemporaries and friends, Thomas More was even fonder of laughing at human folly than was Democritus himself.

Pace then relates an anecdote to exemplify More’s Democritean persona and brings one closer to understanding why he might have chosen to toy with the prison warden as he did. In Pace’s story, More, still a boy (“adhuc puer”), listens to two Scottish theologians arguing that King Arthur once made a coat for himself out of the beards of giants he had killed (104). When More asks them how this was physically possible, the elder of the two responds that the skin of the dead is remarkably stretchy (104). The other Scot readily agrees. The boy More issues a cuttingly enigmatic response: “hoc... incognitum fuit, atque illud est notissimum, alterum ex vobis hircum mulgere, alterum cribrum subiicere” (“I didn’t know that, but this is well known – that one of you is milking a he-goat and the other is catching its milk with a sieve” (104-106).<sup>2</sup> Since the Scottish dunces are unfamiliar with Lucian, who

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this study, it is essential to note that this quip is taken directly from Lucian’s *Demonax*, 28. As Manley and Sylvester note, in that passage the philosopher Demonax, who shares much in common with Democritus, sees two ignorant philosophers ignorantly debating and asking silly questions of one another and says to those standing about and listening, “Doesn’t it seem to you, friends, that one of these fellows is milking a he-goat and the other is holding a sieve for him!” (173). It is possible, of course, that Pace simply adapts this story of Lucian for his own purposes, creating this convenient fiction in order to illustrate the character of Thomas More and perhaps pleasing More in that he is drawing on one of More’s most beloved writers. More

relates this anecdote in his *Demonax*, and not accustomed to opposition from mere boys, they do not understand what More has just said to them (106). The way Pace rounds off this story should resonate with anyone seeking to make sense of More's more enigmatic statements:

“quod dictum quum perciperet illos non intellexisse, ridens sibi et eos deridens, abiit”

(“After he said this and noted that they did not understand, he went away laughing to himself and mocking them.”) (106). There is every indication in the surviving sources that Thomas More enjoyed laughing at the folly of others and that his typical response to folly was folly, to suggest that the fool should be expected to understand only what is foolish.

### *The Porter and the Lord Chancellor*

Perhaps, then, this anecdote about the prison warden should be added to the biographical details of More's life. After all, this event can be fitted neatly into More's time as undersheriff (1510-1518) and certainly is in keeping with his character and his commonly assumed mode of communicating with others. But one would be wrong in this conclusion. It turns out that, if one had only begun by searching for a historical kernel for this anecdote rather than with the biographical reconstruction of More's adopted modes of thought and communication, one would have made better progress from the start. For, in spite of Riley's comment that historical sources for the anecdotes in Praschius' *Facetiae* “are so far undiscovered,” More describes an event in his *The Apology of Sir Thomas More, Knight* that seems to be the basis for the anecdote that eventually found its way into Praschius' book of jokes.

Historically speaking, More's own porter was the warden in the story, and the prison More's own house. In 1531, George Constantine, “carrier” or trafficker in books of heresy,

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likely, though, this story is at least roughly accurate. Perhaps More himself told this story to Pace. If that is the case, it would mean that More's familiarity with Lucian and thus Lucian's shaping of his persona and project as an author began when he was still a boy.

was apprehended and then imprisoned in More's home at Chelsea (Rex 106-107; Ackroyd 304-305). Constantine was put into the stocks in More's home, questioned by More himself and perhaps tortured or threatened with torture under the supervision of More, who was at this date the Lord Chancellor of England. Ackroyd relates the results More's handling of Constantine succinctly: "Constantine talked" (304). Constantine disclosed to more not only "divers of his companions," but he also revealed "the brethren's" methods for secretly marking and shipping heretical books into England (Ackroyd 304-305). And then Constantine escaped, or, for Ackroyd, "was allowed to escape after providing such good service to the old faith" (305). However Constantine found his way out of the stocks, More later wrote a defense of his treatment of Constantine, in response to the "many marvelous lies" of the brethren against More, denying that he had tortured anyone or that Constantine's escape had even made him angry:

And some have said that when Constantine was gotten away, I was fallen for anger in a wonderful rage. But surely... when he was neither so feeble for lack of meat but that he was strong enough to break the stocks, nor waxen so lame of his legs with lying but that he was light enough to leap the walls, nor by any mishandling of his head so dulled or dazed in his brain but that he had wit enough when he was once out, wisely to walk his way – neither was I then so heavy for the loss but that I had youth enough left me to wear it out, *nor so angry with any man of mine that I spoke them any evil word for the matter, more than to my porter that he should see the stocks mended and locked fast, that the prisoner steal not in again.* And as for Constantine himself... never will I for my part be so unreasonable as to be angry with any man that riseth if he can, when he findeth himself that he sitteth not at his ease. (9, 119, 16; emphasis my own).

I have given this passage in full to exhibit how determinative is the historical context in which More issued his enigmatic statement to the porter. In this passage, More is unmistakably attempting with all his rhetorical skill to show himself as the sort of person who would never torture or otherwise mistreat prisoners. Note first how More stresses that Constantine must have been in a sound enough physical state to “break the stocks,” his legs strong enough to “leap the walls,” and his head clear enough “wisely to walk his way.” But even these “facts” do not suggest how generous was More’s treatment of the heretic must have been. The Lord Chancellor was able to bear the prisoner’s escape lightly, he insists, and yet at the same time he absolves himself from responsibility for the heretic’s escape by placing it on his porter, to whom he did not even speak an angry word “more than” to suggest that he rebuild the stocks and lock them so that the prisoner “steal not in again.” More even goes so far as to say that he is understanding of Constantine’s act. After all, he suggests, he could never be so unreasonable as to expect that someone held against his will would not flee at the first opportunity.

That this passage is the historical basis for Praschius’ anecdote can scarcely be doubted, so parallel do the stories show themselves when one substitutes the porter in for the warden, yet the historical context provided in More’s *Apology* entirely alters the meaning of this anecdote. One can clearly see now that More’s purpose in making this enigmatic statement was at least twofold. Given that the overarching purpose of this entire passage is to absolve More of any wrongdoing, it is first and foremost a subtle way of suggesting that the prisoner did not slip out on More himself. The blame for Constantine’s escape is decisively placed on the porter. Second, this anecdote is intended to show the reader that, far from being angry, More was sufficiently pacific and even cheerful enough to make a joke out of the prisoner’s escape. The subtle suggestion here is that Constantine, who had informed on his friends and given up so much useful information to the Lord Chancellor, was distasteful

enough that More would not want him around for longer than he had to have him (Marius 213). Hence, the anecdote as it is told in More's own writings is not so much an example of More playing Democritus, although such a coloring may be hinted at when More connects this joke to an "evil word." Rather, it is a glimpse into the mutual revulsion both More and his porter must have shared for their heretic prisoner. When one combines these insights with the fact that this anecdote has to be moved, temporally speaking, from More's time as undersheriff to his time as Lord Chancellor, one can readily see that this anecdote has morphed into something entirely other than what it originally seemed.

### *On to Utopia*

I have thought through this anecdote and its possible contexts at such great length because all the deliberations and conclusions set forth above have peculiar bearing on how one should reach an understanding of Thomas More's *Utopia*, the main object of this study. Unless one's interpretation is to lack constraints, one should do with *Utopia* what I have done above with the anecdote about More and the prison warden as told in the *Facetiae*. One should begin by noting its salient characteristics and then locate reasonable historical contexts to account for those characteristics. One should then read back and forth between work and context until one has a sense of what More is trying to accomplish in his *Utopia*. This study seeks to be the most thorough examination of a historical context that is still largely neglected by interpreters of More: the writings of Lucian of Samosata and their role in More's and Erasmus' attempt to revive the learning of ancient Greek language and culture in northern Europe. This is a context that strikingly reorients one's thinking and allows one to see the meaning of More's literary techniques, particularly his way of creating his main character, Raphael Hythlodæus, and then to grasp not so much what *Utopia* means as what it is supposed to do. For, just as the meaning of More's statement to the warden is still ambiguous and open to further interpretation while the function of the anecdote as a whole is relatively



well-defined, so the final meaning of *Utopia* will always be open, although it will be possible to determine what More hoped to accomplish through the many ironies and obscurities and enigmas that make up *Utopia*. Before explicating the context in which More wrote, then, I should put a finger on what is most enigmatic in *Utopia*, what facet of More's writing most calls for explanation, what stops and unsettles the reader regularly throughout the story. Once one has a sufficient grasp on this central conundrum, one will inevitably ask about its function and the historical context in which such a function makes sense.

### ***Chapter 1: Raphael Hythlodæus, the Man and His Monkey***

As he was about to set sail on his “quarto” (“fourth”) voyage with Vespucci,<sup>3</sup> Raphael Hythlodæus, the main speaker and character in Thomas More’s *Utopia*, tells his audience, “librorum sarcinam mediocrem loco mercium quarto navigaturus in navem conieci” (“rather than goods I might sell, I tossed on board an average-sized bag of books”). Hythlodæus ended up giving all of these books away to the Utopians upon leaving their island, even though in the same sentence he tells us “mecum plane decreveram numquam... redire” (“I was completely decided never to return”) to Europe (180). One of the books he gave to the Utopians, however, “Theophrastum item de plantis” (“Theophrastus’s book *On Plants*”) was “pluribus... in locis mutilum” (“badly mutilated”) (180). Hythlodæus’s explanation of this mutilation is surprising, and revealing: “in librum enim dum navigabamus negligentius habitum cercopithecus inciderat, qui lasciviens ac ludibundus paginas aliquot hinc atque inde evulsas laceravit” (“While we were sailing, a long-tailed monkey, who was frisky and wanted to play, attacked the [Theophrastus’] book, which I had rather carelessly put away, and mangled several of the pages it had ripped out here and there.”) (180). That More created this character to narrate his *Utopia* should always come as a surprise to the contemporary reader. So much of Hythlodæus’s idiosyncrasy and eccentricity is related in this oddball anecdote involving a long-tailed monkey. First, there is his unreliability and his negligence: his statement that he was setting sail with Vespucci on his “fourth” voyage directly contradicts

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<sup>3</sup> I have used the Latin text of *Utopia* prepared in 1995 by George M. Logan, Robert M. Adams, and Clarence H. Miller for Cambridge University Press rather than the text prepared in 1965 by Edward Surtz and J.H. Hexter, although the latter, as a part of the *Yale Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, is generally taken to be the more authoritative volume. I have done so largely because, while the text prepared by Logan et alii is just as accurate as the Yale text, it is also much more readable and comprehensible; the editors themselves state that they have prepared their Latin text “aiming at ease of comprehension” (Logan xxxv). The older Yale text adheres more closely to the original printed manuscripts of 1516-1518, and thus it contains antiquated spellings of words, no paragraphing of the Latin text, and, most importantly, confusing punctuation. The early manuscripts of More’s *Utopia* are marred by an indefensible overuse of punctuation. The editors of the Cambridge text tell of one printer’s “unnecessary and frequently obstructive colons” and “needless” spates of commas, for instance (xxxvi). The Yale edition, of course, goes a long way towards correcting this problem, but not to the point of reforming it altogether. In many passages, the Yale edition retains commas and even the cryptic colon of the early printers that obfuscate the text and cannot but confuse contemporary readers.

his earlier statement that he had accompanied Vespucci only on the last three of his four voyages (45). Moreover, Hythlodæus's stowing of his book "neglegentius" recalls for the vigilant reader the first time Morus caught sight of him in Antwerp and looked him carefully over (42).<sup>4</sup> There, Morus notes that Hythlodæus wore his cloak "neglectim ab humero dependente" ("carelessly hanging from his shoulder") (42). Then comes Hythlodæus's oft marked scorn for all things commercial, "mercium," which he accents when he makes sure his audience knows that he carried books with him specifically in place of wares he might sell on his travels, and his very accenting of this point reveals his incessant concern with controlling how his audience perceives him. There is also, with the mention of Theophrastus and then, later in the passage, when the Greek texts in his sack are catalogued, Hythlodæus's close association with the learning and the culture of the ancient Greeks.

Most striking, though, is the "cercopithecus." Why should More include such an incongruous animal and his antics in a passage of the *Utopia* where the narrator is recounting how enthusiastically the blessed islanders took to Greek literature and the small canon of books Hythlodæus gave them? More than one biographer has noted that Thomas More loved animals and had his own menagerie – "two dogs, rabbits, a fox, a ferret, a weasel, and an exotic collection of songbirds" – which included a pet monkey (Guy 63; Ackroyd 261; Marius 401). The family's monkey may even be seen "scrambling up the skirt of More's second wife, Alice" in the family picture Holbein painted (Hawhee 153). And, lest one wrongly assume, as I did, that More's children must have talked him into the purchase of such an exotic animal, Erasmus himself explains that, whatever the rest of More's family thought about their menagerie, it was Thomas More's own fancy that motivated his collection (19). Erasmus even tells a story in one of his *Colloquies* about the Mores' monkey and what

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<sup>4</sup> Following a scholarly convention commonly used when writing about *Utopia*, I will refer to the historical person Thomas More, the author of *Utopia*, as More, and to the character of More within the *Utopia* as "Morus."

Ackroyd terms its “primatial compassion” (262). He recounts how the family’s monkey, while convalescing from an injury, closely observed a weasel trying to force his way into the rabbit hutch and then, when it seemed the weasel would be successful, intervened to rescue the unwitting rabbits from death (707). Perhaps, therefore, since More seems to have appreciated monkeys and even, perhaps, to have passed on stories about their good qualities, the cercopithecus and its relation to Hythlodæus is merely an amusing anecdote, maybe even one that subtly connects Hythlodæus to the author More, if one assumes that the monkey belonged to Hythlodæus.

Such a lighthearted reading of this passage, it should first be noted, does not mitigate its strangeness, nor does it evade the question of why More chose to complicate his story in this way. As Stephen Greenblatt has argued both in “Utopian Pleasure” and more extensively in *The Swerve*, More founded the island of Utopia at such a distance from contemporary Europe because he wanted its islanders to embody for the humanist reader a sense of ancient Greekness that was “at once compellingly vital and at the same time utterly weird” (37). Indeed, throughout the narrative of *Utopia*, both Hythlodæus and the Utopian islanders are strongly associated with the ancient Greeks. When Hythlodæus relates his brief anecdote about the cercopithecus, he does while telling of how readily the Utopians absorbed ancient Greek learning. Hythlodæus supposes that the Utopians enjoy such facility in Greek because they are, ultimately, a Greek-speaking people:

eas litteras ut equidem conicio ob id quoque facilius arripuerunt, quod non nihil illis essent cognatae. suspicor enim eam gentem a Graecis originem duxisse: propterea quod sermo illorum cetera fere Persicus, non nulla Graeci sermonis vestigia servet in urbium ac magistratuum vocabulis.

As I see it, they absorbed the [Greek] language so readily because it was somehow related to their own [language], for I suspect that they are a Greek people in origin, especially because their speech, which is Persian in most respects, preserves some traces of the Greek language in their terms for cities and magistrates. (180)

Greenblatt also demonstrates that the Utopians are not merely native Greeks but are a specifically Epicurean people (37-39). Hence, the context in which one meets the cercopithecus and learns of his destructive ways is obviously trying to get at something specific about the Utopians themselves. Even if this anecdote about the cercopithecus bears little in the way of significance, then, it remains a conspicuously unnecessary interruption to the account that Hythlodæus is setting out in this portion of Book II. It seems likely that More is up to something in this anecdote.

### *The Meaning of a Monkey*

Just what that is one may begin to see by taking seriously Guy's note that "animals were regularly used for didactic or symbolic purposes in the Renaissance. They were allocated attributes which had a moral significance" (65). Guy himself suggests that the More household's pet monkey was "symbolic of the need to avoid worldly temptations" (65). Here Guy is drawing on a story related in Roper about how More would exhort and instruct his family to resist temptation:

Whosoever will mark the devil and his temptations shall find him therein much like to an ape. For like as an ape, not well looked unto, will be busy and bold to do shrewd turns, and contrariwise, being spied, will suddenly leap back and adventure no farther, so the devil, finding a man idle, slothful, and without resistance ready to receive his temptations, waxeth so hardy that he

will not fail still to continue with him, until to his purpose he have thoroughly brought him. (16)

The resemblance between this passage and Hythlodæus's anecdote about the cercopithecus is striking. Note first how More's description of the devil as "an ape, not well looked into" calls to mind Hythlodæus's statement that he had stored away his books carelessly ("librum... neglegentius habitum") and the fact, implicit in the story of the long-tailed monkey, that Hythlodæus was not looking after him when he tore into a defenseless Theophrastus (180). The style of language More uses in this account to describe the "ape" also recalls Hythlodæus's story. More's description of the ape as "busy and bold to do shrewd turns" recalls Hythlodæus's description of his monkey "lasciviens ac ludibundus," and the ways More describes the aggressive and fearful movements of this devil-ape suggests Hythlodæus's monkey jumping "here and there" ("hinc atque inde") (180).

More than once in his writings More connects a "monkey" or an "ape" to the devil. When he is describing Tyndale's hypocrisy, More maintains that although Tyndale begins his works with words of the utmost Christian propriety, he "bloweth and blustereth out at last his abominable blasphemy against the blessed sacraments of Christ, and like the devil's ape maketh mocks and mows at the holy ceremonies that the Spirit of God hath so many hundred years taught his holy Catholic Church" (8.76.25). Note, of course, that here the ape is not representative of the devil himself but is a sort of henchman or foolish subordinate. More develops this connection significantly later in the same work when he criticizes Tyndale for prying overmuch into the sacramental mysteries of the church:

with his curious search [Tyndale] hath so narrowly so long pried upon them [the sacraments], with beetle brows and his brittle spectacles of pride and malice, that the devil hath stricken him stark blind and set him in a corner with a chain and a clog, and

made him his ape to sit there and serve him and to make him sport, with mocking and mowing and potting the sacraments, which yet the devil dreadeth himself and dare not come near them. (8.127.34)

This passage is an entertaining example of just how well More can write English prose in paratactic style, but it also develops another nuance to the link in More's mind between the devil and the ape, for here Tyndale, as the devil's ape, is also bound by the devil and made to serve him as a sort of fool. The devil himself is not adventurous enough to approach the sacraments on his own, and thus he keeps a fool in Tyndale, through whose mocking he feels somewhat emboldened and perhaps even ennobled.

In other of his polemical works, More explicates the source of this apish, foolish assistance to the devil, human pride. In *Apology of Sir Thomas More, Knight*, More criticizes those who pridefully seek out human praise, calling them "some of the most foolish apes that the devil hath to tumble before him and to make him laugh, when he seeth them take so much labor and pain for the reward of the blast of a few men's mouths" (9.69.3). More again draws on this idea in *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* when he is holding forth on the origin of heresy. Following Augustine, More contends that the "mother of all heresies" is "pride" since, he argues, heretics are so "frantic" for the "liking of the people" and "worship that people talketh of them" that they cannot resist opening their mouths and spreading their ideas (6.423.13). Hence, after they are burned by authorities they become "the devil's martyrs, taking much pain for his pleasure, and his very apes, whom he maketh to tumble through the hope of the holiness that putteth them to pain without fruit" (6.423.13). Thus, for More the concept of an ape or monkey when used to some literary end was a composite or aggregate that involved sin or Satan at its core with connections to idleness and sloth, foolishness, wrongheaded, heretical thinking, and pride. When the author More associates Hythlodæus with an unattended long-tailed monkey that has run loose and torn apart the very embodiment

of reason, Theophrastus's book, this association must at the least suggest that this longwinded narrator who believes he has the answers to most of humanity's ills is himself the sometime plaything of what is absurd and destructive in human experience.

But the most suggestive hint as to what More the author is suggesting through the tale of the cercopithecus may be revealed in the term "cercopithecus" itself. More uses the word "cercopithecus" only once in his writings, here in this passage from *Utopia*. Elsewhere, when More needs a word for "monkey" or "ape," and he does so more than a dozen times, he always uses the word "simius" or "simia," depending on the animal's gender. Moreover, it is this word, "simius," which Erasmus uses in his dialogue *Amicitia* to denominate the More's household pet, and this usage probably means that More himself would have called his own monkey a "simius." This is not surprising. William McDermott has explained that after the time of the church fathers "simia [or simius] becomes the regular word in late authors for this animal" (155 n.42). The word "cercopithecus," which means quite literally a "tailed monkey," was a rare Greek term transliterated into Latin and used as a noun of the second declension, as More uses it in *Utopia*. It is likewise a rare term in Latin literature. The very rarity of this word indicates both that More selected it purposively and that the context in which he encountered it may have some bearing on the discussion at hand. More also likely used this term, of course, to introduce into his narrative a long-tailed monkey for the sake of its exoticism. Perhaps he imagined that this is just the sort of pet a sailor would have. He might have read in Pliny the Elder that these animals came from central Africa (8.30.72) or, less likely, in Strabo that they came from India (15.1.29). In either case, he would have associated a long-tailed monkey with exotic lands. This word, however, is so rarely used by Roman writers that it might even have stumped some of More's learned humanist readers, and this fact suggests that the context in which More found this strange word might have bearing on its meaning in *Utopia*.



Where is it most likely that More met this strange word? Martial uses it three times, and Ackroyd notes that Martial was certainly on Erasmus's list of poetic authorities (142). In J.P. Sullivan's judgment, though, Martial seems not to have engaged More, especially in comparison with Greek epigrammatists (153). Moreover, even if More met the term "cercopithecus" in Martial's writings, he would have seen that Martial does not elaborate or develop the meanings of this term but draws on preexisting connotations of it. As McDermott explains, Lucilius and Varro seem to have established that the general referent of this term, when it was referred to a human, was that of a "tricky and evil man" (153). Suetonius even refers to a person whose name was "Cercopithecum Panerodem," or "Paneros the Ape Guy," a money lender whom Nero enriched with both urban and rustic villas (30.2). McDermott thinks he was assigned this epithet "because of his evil character or his apelike appearance," or maybe both (153). Perhaps, then, in associating Hythlodæus with this animal and this term, More meant to suggest his narrator's slipperiness and ambiguity by drawing on associations with monkeys in both the Christian and the classical tradition.

### *The Superior of Ulysses*

This supposition seems all the more likely when one considers another striking usage of the term "cercopithecus" in the Roman poet Juvenal. Juvenal's "Satire 15" is a meditation on the unfamiliar and the foreign, both in human behavior and in storytelling. Juvenal begins his satire in the far off, exotic land of Egypt by ridiculing the Egyptians for their alien religious ideas and practices, like the fact that "nefas illic fetum iugulare capellae;/ carnibus humanis vesci licet" ("it is forbidden to slay the offspring of a she-goat, [but] permissible to eat human flesh" (12-13). Among the several customs Juvenal derides is the Egyptian practice of worshipping animals as gods. The poet notes that, although no one worships Diana, "the mistress of animals," whole towns are devoted to the worship of cats, dogs, and river-fish (7-8; McKim 60). Before he laughs at these absurdities, though, Juvenal first laughs

at the “portenta” worshipped in Egypt (2). This important, multivalent term, “portenta,” may refer to “portents” and “omens,” “monsters” or “monstrous births,” or even to “extravagant fictions,” all of which are under consideration in the fifteenth satire.<sup>5</sup> Strictly in the context of the opening lines of this satire, though, “portenta” is the term Juvenal uses for the “monsters” which Egyptians adore as gods, namely, crocodiles, ibises whose stomachs are full of snakes, and an “effigies sacri... aurea cercopithecii” (“a golden statue of a sacred long-tailed ape”) (4).

This shared use of the word “cercopithecus,” in itself does not amount to much, but, when one rereads Juvenal’s fifteenth satire with *Utopia* in mind, one finds a remarkable consonance of themes between the two works that may be more than accidental. As hinted at above, both works rely heavily upon the interest, even a disgusted interest, aroused by the foreign and the exotic. Juvenal creates this sense of foreignness not merely by detailing the strange practices of the Egyptians, but by presenting himself as a second Odysseus who is reporting on these religious practices and, at the center of the satire, a recent act of cannibalism, as if he himself had witnessed these events, which he may indeed have done (Kelting 422 n.6). What is of interest, though, is how the poet depicts the figure of Odysseus, for he does not depict him as the great hero-traveler of the *Odyssey*, but as a garrulous liar easily seen through, who deserved to be devoured by one of the monsters he invented for his fabulous narrative:

tale super cenam facinus narraret Vlixes

Alcinoo, bilem aut risum fortasse quibusdam

mouerat ut mendax aretalogus. ‘in mare nemo

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<sup>5</sup> More uses the term “portenta” in precisely the same sense that Juvenal uses it here when he has Morus remark that he and Peter Giles avoided asking Hythlodæus whether he encountered any “monsters,” “portenta,” of the sort which Odysseus encountered on his travels, “Scyllas et Celaenos rapaces, et Laestrygonas populivoros,” (“Scyllas and voracious Harpies and people-eating Laestrygonians”) (48).

hunc abicit saeua dignum ueraque Charybdi,  
 fingentem inmanis Laestrygonas et Cyclopas?  
 nam citius Scyllam... crediderim...  
 tam uacui capitis populum Phaeaca putauit?  
 sic aliquis merito nondum ebrius...  
 solus enim haec Ithacus nullo sub teste canebat.

[When] Ulysses told of such a crime over dinner to Alcinous, he must have provoked frustration or perhaps laughter in certain listeners, as an obviously deceitful teller of tall tales. ‘No one threw this guy into the sea? He deserves a real Charybdis, in all her savagery, for making up the gruesome Laestrygonians and Cyclops. I’d sooner believe in Scylla herself [than to trust Odysseus]. Does he think the Phaeacean people so empty headed?’ In this way someone not yet drunk might have spoken, for the Ithacan was singing his deeds on his own authority, with no other witness. (14-26)

Within the context of Juvenal’s satire, this rendering of Odysseus, or Ulysses, as he is known in the Roman tradition, unmistakably reflects the poet’s own anxieties that his listeners will not believe his account, for he immediately follows his depiction of Ulysses before the Phaeaceans singing his tale on his own authority with a turn to the strange tale he himself wants to relate: “nos miranda quidem sed nuper consule Iunco gesta super calidae referemus moenia Copti,/ nos uolgi scelus et cunctis grauiora coturnis” (“But I will relate astonishing acts done recently during the consulship of Iuncus, beyond the walls of hot Coptus, I [will relate] a mob’s crime and deeds gloomier than any tragedy”) (27-29). The fact, though, that he would depict Ulysses in this manner is noteworthy. Not a single Phaeacean raises the slightest doubt about the veracity of Odysseus’s tales in the *Odyssey* itself; rather, Odysseus’s account is met only with a spell-bound silence (13.1-2). Juvenal’s Ulysses, then, is a figure

from the literary tradition, one meditated on for so many centuries, even by the time of Juvenal, that his deeds have come to seem fantastic, his story unbelievable.

This version of Ulysses begins to loom large in significance for *Utopia* when one thinks about the similarities between him and the figure of Raphael Hythlodæus. Just like Ulysses, Hythlodæus has travelled to a foreign land and has seen wondrous things. Like Ulysses, Hythlodæus has a marvelous story to tell. But, also like Ulysses, Hythlodæus was the sole witness to what he saw, not because he is the only one to have survived his journey, presumably, but because he and his companions have long since parted ways. Moreover, within *Utopia* and its parerga Hythlodæus is twice compared to Ulysses. Interestingly, both comparisons to Ulysses are made by Peter Giles, More's friend in life and fellow character in the dialogue. In Giles's letter to Jerome Busleyden, he says of the Portuguese traveler that he is "homo mea quidem sententia, regionum, hominum, et rerum experientia vel ipso Ulysse superior" ("a person, in my opinion, in his experience of places, peoples, and affairs of all sorts even the superior of Ulysses") (24).<sup>6</sup> In making this statement, he is likely following the lead of what his character says of Hythlodæus within *Utopia* when he is commending the sailor to his friend Morus. In this part of the narrative, Morus has been observing "Petrus," the fictional version of Giles, in conversation with Hythlodæus and, since Hythlodæus is as yet unknown to him, Morus has been studying the Lusitanian's bearing and clothing quite closely. Morus has reached the conclusion that Hythlodæus must be a "naucerus," a "ship's captain" (42). Morus informs Petrus of his deduction when Petrus approaches to introduce Hythlodæus, but Petrus quickly corrects him, "Atqui inquit aberrasti longissime: navigavit

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<sup>6</sup> It is now commonly accepted that in interpreting More's *Utopia* one must take into account the "parerga" or supplementary letters that participate in More's fiction and that were appended to the first editions of *Utopia*, especially the letters from More to Giles and those between Giles and his correspondents. Particularly in the case of Giles, it is apparent that he was knowingly participating in the construction of More's fiction. On this issue, see McCutcheon's "More's *Utopia* and Its Parerga (1516-1518)" and her more thorough "My Dear Peter." See also Sylvester's discussion of this matter in "Si Hythlodæo Credimus: Vision and Revision in More's *Utopia*," pages 277-278.

quidem non ut Palinurus, sed ut Ulysses: immo velut Plato” (“‘And yet,’ he said, ‘you were far wrong, for he sailed not as a Palinurus but as a Ulysses; or, rather, like a Plato.’”) (42).

Even without the additional context supplied by Juvenal’s satire, this description of Hythlodæus is complex and freighted in its deliberate allusiveness, especially since this is the first time that Morus and the reader meet Hythlodæus. What exactly is Petrus saying here, and what is More trying to relate through his remarkably oblique statement? Palinurus was Aeneas’s pilot, renowned for his skill in the craft of sailing, yet he was most renowned in the Roman tradition for falling asleep while at the helm of his ship and tumbling overboard into the sea to his death.<sup>7</sup> Presumably, then, in saying that he sailed “non ut Palinurus,” Petrus is asserting both that he sailed with more in mind than mere sailing and its craft and that he did so wisely. Then why include this reference to Palinurus at all?

### *Letting in the Ambiguity*

The best place to look for understanding a reference like this, that is, a denial, “non ut,” which affirms something positive about the person referred to, is to Elizabeth’s McCutcheon’s now canonical essay “Denying the Contrary: More’s Use of Litotes in the *Utopia*.” The assertion that Hythlodæus sailed “not as a Palinurus” possesses the same logical structure and complication of meaning that all litotes possess, especially if one takes the term “Palinurus” to stand in for a negative like “not wisely” or “not inquisitively.” McCutcheon argues that More uses this rhetorical device of litotes to various effects, but one of the most common is to generate ambiguity in the reader’s mind concerning some facet of the text (116). She explains this by using a simple example of litotes, “not uncommon” (118). When the reader meets this adjectival construction in a sentence, she will perform a rather complicated feat to grasp its meaning. First, she must understand the logic of the structure,

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<sup>7</sup> See Aeneid, V.833-861 and VI.337-383.

that a negative is being denied, which means that something is being affirmed. But then things get more complicated because to say “not uncommon” is not the same as saying “common.” The range of meaning here is broadened by the litotic structure, for, just as “not white” may logically refer to blue or brown or red as well as black, so “not uncommon” opens up a range of meanings broader than the simple adjective “common.” Thus, McCutcheon argues, with this figure More urges the reader to linger over the negative that is being denied and through that act to notice in a fully conscious way that, even when one grasps that a litotic structure is being employed, one is still somewhat in the dark precisely because that structure is intended to let in ambiguity (118).

The realization that More must intend his ambiguity and that his readers recognize these ambiguities as inescapable, McCutcheon maintains, leads one to a much better understanding of how Thomas More wrote *Utopia*:

In a larger sense we're never quite sure where we stand in the *Utopia*, either... On the smallest syntactical level ambiguity does exist of a sort which can never be altogether resolved, and probably was not meant to be. For this ambiguity vivifies the text, arouses its readers, and agitates its points, however casually they appear to be made, so that they neither evaporate nor solidify.

What, then, can be fairly said about this reference to Hythlodæus as “non ut Palinurus?” Although she does not discuss this passage at length, McCutcheon herself seems to take the reference to Palinurus in context, as one should, but to reduce it down to meaning that Hythlodæus “has sailed in search of truth” (111). This is certainly a plausible reading. Petrus likely fears that Morus’ terming Hythlodæus a “nauclerus” will reduce him in Morus’ mind to something like a Palinurus, and so he tries to counter this thought by stating that Hythlodæus was more than a mere helmsman. But matters are more complicated than

McCutcheon allows here, as the presentation of Ulysses in Juvenal's "Satire 15" suggests. Hythlodæus, says Petrus, sailed "non ut Palinurus sed ut Ulysses." After his mention of Ulysses, though, Petrus immediately pulls back, corrects himself, and changes course again: "immo velut Plato." The Latin conjunction that Petrus employs here, "immo," often translated as "rather," is commonly used to correct a previous assertion. To get at the conversational sense of what Petrus is saying here, one might render this entire passage, "He sailed not like Palinurus but Ulysses; well, no, not Ulysses, but like Plato!" This hesitation over Ulysses should be understandable to someone familiar with Juvenal's "Satire 15." Petrus hesitates and doubles back on his statement because he recalls the ambiguity that surrounds Ulysses as a traveler in the Latin tradition. As the editors of the Cambridge *Utopia* put it in their explanation of this comment, Ulysses could be seen as the man who travelled widely and knew the minds of many peoples, but "he could also be regarded... as a notable liar" (45). Petrus is aware in that moment, perhaps, that Hythlodæus is very much in the position of Ulysses in that he is the only witness to his own tale, and so he does not want to plant in Morus' mind the idea that Hythlodæus might be less than truthful.

But the comment is out there, not to be taken back, and as such this comment colors both what Petrus has already said about Hythlodæus and what he says to correct himself. Now that Petrus has likened Hythlodæus to a legendary liar, the reference to Palinurus seems less than stable. One is prompted to wonder why Palinurus had even come into Petrus's head in connection with Hythlodæus. Perhaps the pilot of Aeneas came to mind because Hythlodæus has something of his ill luck or even negligence about him, for the Roman literary tradition recognizes Palinurus as both deeply unfortunate, in that he was chosen as the sacrificial stand-in for his whole people, and as a negligent steersman who paid the ultimate price for his inattention (Brenk 776, 782). Petrus's slip of the tongue concerning Ulysses also colors his attempt to correct himself by dubbing Hythlodæus a contemporary Plato, for, as

with Palinurus and with Ulysses, the Plato to whom Petrus refers is inevitably the Plato of the literary tradition and not merely the author of *Republic*. Jane Raisch expounds the fuller meaning of this third choice of a figure to whom Petrus likens Hythlodæus,

But the Plato Giles calls to mind here is a reference not to the Plato of the Platonic dialogues... but to the Plato of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*. In Diogenes Laertius, Plato becomes a seasoned traveler, sailing all over the Mediterranean and continuously running into trouble... His various mishaps while traveling are almost without exception the result of the lackluster reception of his philosophy. In one particularly problematic encounter, Plato explains the philosophical and political limitations of tyranny to a tyrant in Sicily who doesn't take very kindly to Plato's volunteered wisdom and shortly after sells Plato off as a slave. (938)

So much, then, for McCutcheon's idea that Petrus merely means to suggest that Hythlodæus sailed in search of truth, although one must always remember that it is her way of envisioning the language of *Utopia* that opens up its full complexity, ambiguity, and irony. Each of the three figures to whom Petrus likens Hythlodæus has proved to be polyvalent and indistinct, so that the reader who closely considers just some of the possible implications of these allusions is left in a state of *aporia*, which is probably what More wants.

My analysis is not meant to suggest, of course, that any single reader, not even one from More's circle of humanists, would or even could have brought together, in the instant in which he encountered the brief interruption afforded by the long-tailed ape, all of these varied allusions and echoes in perceiving More's complex attempt to signal Hythlodæus' suspiciousness. Rather, as I have shown, More riddles his account with these sorts of hints, some remarkably subtle, like his use of the term "cercopithecus" rather than "simius," some



less than subtle, as when he has Petrus liken Hythlodæus to Ulysses or when he has Hythlodæus himself describe the island of Utopia in dimensions that are physically impossible. This is how More works, always and everywhere through insinuation and understatement intimating his meaning rather than spelling it out. As discussed above, this reaches all the way down to the level of the smallest rhetorical device, as Elizabeth McCutcheon has long since demonstrated. Her essay, far the most essential study of More's modus operandi in *Utopia*, convincingly argues that, whatever else can be said about what More was up to in *Utopia*, one is on firm ground, relatively speaking, in saying that he labored to keep his meaning as obscure as possible while still making it available to the learned reader.

This claim about More's approach to his work has the character of a truism and would probably pass without disputation in scholarship on *Utopia*. What other scholars have not seen, however, is that this literary modus operandi points to the poetic or aesthetical framework from which More was writing and thence to the context in which he wrote this work. To note and critically probe More's approach to depicting the persona of Hythlodæus ought to be the interpreter's first and most necessary concern. To understand *Utopia*, one must render Hythlodæus a question, for it is the question that surrounds his person that both ties together the problems of the work as a whole and that points most meaningfully to what More was attempting to accomplish in this work. Once one has come to understand why More created such a problematic and complex narrator, one will understand where the whole work is tending. This brief look at Hythlodæus wrestling with a long-tailed monkey over an ancient Greek work on botany has, perhaps, adequately evoked some of the complexities, problems, and questions that one regularly meets with when reading *Utopia* and its narrator closely. I will return to a close reading of Hythlodæus again soon, but first I should sketch out an explanation of what inspired More to create such a problematic narrator. It may well

have been, as I have suggested above, that something of More's conception of Hythlodæus as an unreliable narrator came from his reading of Juvenal's fifteenth satire, but this supposition, following the lead of a "cercopithecus," may be an error. What is indisputable, however, is that More encountered this version of Odysseus in an author who exercised a considerable influence over the poetic and the character of *Utopia*, an influence that is often ignored. Near the beginning of Lucian's *A True Story*, the narrator, who will prove himself to be unreliable, leaves no doubt about whom he takes to be the original unreliable narrator. He says pointedly that "ὁ τοῦ Ὀμήρου Οδυσσεύς" ("Homer's Odysseus") was the "ἀρχηγὸς δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ διδάσκαλος τῆς τοιαύτης βωμολοχίας" ("leader and teacher of this sort of silliness") (250). To understand why More might have decided to create a narrator so rife with ambiguities, so like the liar Ulysses as he had come down through the Greek and Roman traditions, one must get a sense of the influence Lucian of Samosata exercised on More around the time he was writing his *Utopia*. It is to this influence that I now turn.

## **Chapter 2: The Greek Revival and Lucian of Samosata**

Arthur F. Kinney, one of *Utopia*'s most insightful readers, argues persuasively in *Humanist Poetics* that "More's *Utopia* is frequently misgauged because the context in which it was written – and an understanding of the audience for whom it was intended – is ignored" (55). Kinney maintains that if one is to comprehend something of the meaning of More's *Utopia*, one must understand it as being closely, even categorically, connected to Erasmus's *Encomium Moriae*: "when the *Encomium Moriae* is placed directly alongside *Utopia*, certain puzzling elements in More's fiction become clear, both in how they work and in what they mean to do and say" (55). To begin making his case, Kinney notes both ideas and techniques that More must have borrowed from Erasmus in constructing his own literary masterpiece. "More's *Utopia*," he writes, "also begins with a joking prefatory matter to introduce what appears at first to be a lighthearted debate about the possibilities of Nowhere, yet this work too grows increasingly serious and even grim when it comes to portray the crime and poverty" that were so prevalent in the time of Henry VIII (54). Kinney also maintains that More uses Hythlodæus in much the way Erasmus had used his narrator in her rambling speech: "More causes the patterns of humanist rhetoric so to intersect that the signals to his humanist audience their fundamental understanding that all orations are potentially single sides of a controversia" (54). Perhaps Kinney's most important observation, however, concerns the way in which both the *Encomium Moriae* and the *Utopia* "rely on a divided perspective, neither of which alone would be sufficient as a blueprint for action" that forces the reader who seeks to assess and learn from these works to "develop a third viewpoint in an act of triangulation" (55). This third viewpoint, though, is a contextualized view like the one this chapter will develop, "not the viewpoint of the narrator, for another Erasman strategy is to place the narrator squarely within the narrative and to make him or her, Hythlodæus or

Folly, a subject of the argument the narrative is meant to provide” (55). According to Kinney, then, the narrator in *Utopia* is himself not the bearer of clarity, but of more ambiguity.

Although far less specific than Kinney about what constitutes the strong likenesses between *Encomium Moriae* and *Utopia*, H.A. Mason expresses a parallel conviction when he discusses how alike in spirit More and Erasmus are in their most celebrated works. Indeed, Mason contends that the two shared not a likeness of spirit, but an “identity of spirit:” “I come now to the contention that the More who counts as a literary force in England is virtually identical with Erasmus” (59). Mason, moreover, even has a sense that this identity of spirit comes from a shared source, for he writes, “And the point at which I should like to being the enquiry is the moment when More and Erasmus began to translate Lucian” (59). Both critics, it seems to me, are taking the most direct and probable course for understanding More’s literary work by noting its original literary techniques and by relating it to Erasmus and to the common humanist interests he and More shared.

Both critics, however, fail to understand where this pathway ends. Kinney, for all intents and purposes, traces the path only as far back as to Erasmus’s own thinking: “the ideas and techniques established by Erasmus were formative for English fiction” (54). And, to be clear, in the sentence following on this quotation Kinney includes *Utopia* in the category of “English fiction” (54). Mason, on the other hand, sees plainly that this critical direction ends in Lucian, and yet, because Mason himself so devalues the Greek sophist, he underestimates the extent of his influence on these two most influential humanists. Mason’s attitude toward Lucian comes across in vivid colors in the following critical question he poses for himself: “Why can such a small fry as I so easily shrug off Lucian to-day, while such great men as More and Erasmus confounded him with the best authors of antiquity?” (60). While I have grown fond of the snub suggested in Mason’s use of the verb “confounded” to designate their act of canon-formation, it becomes clear as one reads through his account of

the early works of More and Erasmus that Mason radically underappreciates their vital roots in Lucian. My aim in this chapter is to build on insights like those of Kinney and Mason into the commonness of style, design, and purpose of *Utopia* and *Encomium Moriae* and to begin to demonstrate the plausibility of imagining More's *Utopia* as an attempt to work out a poetic rooted in a Lucianic sensibility that justifies the study of Greek literature and injects into that study a renewed moral potency.

### *A Friendly Competition*

It all began with what Erika Rummel calls a “friendly competition” (49). Erasmus spent much of the first two decades of the sixteenth century in England. He made his second visit to this country in 1505-1506 and then, “aside from one short trip to Paris, Erasmus remained in England between 1509 and 1514” (Rummel 49; Christ-von Wedel 80). Erasmus lived in the house of Thomas More while in England from 1505-1506, and, sometime during this stay, the two agreed that they would together translate a handful of the dialogues of Lucian (Robinson 370). Rummel notes that one “cannot say with certainty which of the friends suggested the idea of collaborating on a translation and which of them proposed the subject matter,” but speculates that the two most likely “developed a taste for Lucian’s writings independently, and on discovering their preference made a joint decision to translate some of his essays and dialogues” (49-50). Lucian of Samosata, the Greek satirist, rhetorician, and philosopher lived (b. c. AD 120) during the Second Sophistic, which Ewen Bowie defines rather unspectacularly as “the period c.ad 60–230 when declamation became the most prestigious literary activity in the Greek world” (Bowie). Lucian himself wrote declamations, as Erasmus was to point out in excusing his *Encomium Moriae*, but he also wrote “essays and dialogues, the majority satirical and witty, in relaxed and undemanding, moderately Atticizing Greek prose” (Edwards). After the fall of the Roman Empire, Lucian’s works were scarcely to be found in the west, but “in the Eastern empire, they continued to be

read and appreciated, as the proliferation of Byzantine imitations demonstrates” (Robinson 363). Hence, Italians searching the libraries of Byzantium during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries found a ready supply of manuscripts containing Lucian’s works. By the time More was born, a canon of Lucian’s “complete works” had been formed and translated mostly by Italian scholars into Latin (Robinson 363).

When More and Erasmus released their own translations of Lucian in 1506, they were so successful that they “displaced the Italian canon both north and south of the Alps,” as Robinson explains: “This collection, principally in the form of the augmented second Badius edition (Paris 1514) had an unparalleled success. The translator himself [Erasmus], with customary modesty, notes: ‘rapiebantur hae nugae primum magna studiosorum applausu.’” (Robinson 365).<sup>8</sup> Although Erasmus is, of course, not being modest in this statement, neither is he exaggerating. These translations were wildly popular among the literati and promoters of the learning of Greek throughout Europe. Indeed, so well-liked were these translations that they proved “More’s most popular work during his lifetime. Reprinted nine times between 1506 and 1534, the translations exceed even *Utopia* on this count” (Collected works 17; Mason 60). This simple fact should cause anyone who is trying to think seriously about *Utopia* and the works that might have had significant influence on it to pause and think, even if no further evidence existed as to the overreaching significance of these translations on More’s oeuvre. Erasmus and More published their translations in 1506. Three years later in 1509 Erasmus’s most Lucianic work, *Encomium Moriae*, was published, a work in which the author directly states his reliance on Lucian as a model and justification (68). Five years later in 1514 the most successful print of their translations of Lucian is issued. And then two years later in 1516 Erasmus sees *Utopia* through the press for an eager Thomas More. The

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<sup>8</sup> Erasmus’s “modest” statement translates to “These literary trifles [their translations of Lucian] were from the first snatched up to the great adulation of the learned.”

closeness in time of these publications, not to mention their aesthetic similarities, makes at least a *prima facie* case that Lucian and his dialogues would be near to More's heart in the years when he was writing *Utopia*, 1514-1516.

*Another Lucian and the "Graecistes"*

What's more, when *Utopia* was published and for some time thereafter Thomas More was closely associated with Lucian and his texts. Everywhere in the historical record one encounters other authors likening More, usually negatively, to the notorious Greek sophist. John Frith, for instance, clearly not intending to compliment More, says of him in *A Mirror or Glass to Know Thyself* that he was "another Lucian, regarding neither God nor man," (267). This close connection to Lucian affected More's own reputation as an author appreciably. Drawing on an anecdote concerning a print of *Utopia* from 1519, Raisch helpfully reorients the contemporary reader to what was more likely to be More's status as an author in the early part of the sixteenth century, that is, in his lifetime. An unlicensed edition of *Utopia* was printed in 1519 in Florence. This printing was not of *Utopia* alone; rather, *Utopia* was appended in this print almost "as an afterthought" to a collection of More's and Erasmus's translations of Lucian (932). Raisch explains the significance of this print:

*Utopia*... had, in this one [print], become a kind of paratext itself, subordinated to, and included within, the greater project of translating Lucian. From a twenty-first-century perspective, this 1519 *Utopia* reveals a surprising fact about More's sixteenth-century authorial status. As B. R. Branham observes, 'in More's lifetime he was probably more widely read as the translator of Lucian than as the author of *Utopia*' and indeed, more than 30 editions of More and Erasmus's translations of Lucian were published during Erasmus's lifetime (in comparison with only five of *Utopia*). In this edition, *Utopia* becomes practically an extension of Lucian's corpus, the logical *telos*

of Erasmus and More's efforts to introduce Lucian, and Greek, to the sixteenth century. (932)

Raisch's claim at the end of this quotation is essential to the thesis of this study, although I do differ with Raisch on one fundamental point. More and Erasmus dearly loved their Lucian, without question, but introducing his works to the sixteenth century was by no means their central goal. Rather, as Raisch implies here but does not effectively emphasize, *Utopia*, *Encomium Moriae*, the translations of Lucian, amongst other publications, were all in the service of introducing ancient Greece, its language and its culture, to contemporary northern Europe for the moral and civic betterment of that culture. To understand the significance, then, of More's and Erasmus's enterprise to promulgate the works and aesthetic stance of Lucian, one must understand the larger purpose to which this enterprise was subordinated, and so I must again broaden the scope of this investigation in order to articulate fully the context in which More composed his Utopian fantasy.

At the same time that More and Erasmus were developing their Lucianic works, Erasmus was toiling over a publication even dearer to his heart, the *Novum Instrumentum* of 1516 (and then *Novum Testamentum* of 1519), his newly edited Greek version of the New Testament, along with his fresh translations and annotations in Latin on this text (Christ-von Wedel 82). Contemporary readers have a difficult time grasping the consequence of Erasmus's work in editing and retranslating the New Testament. Suffice it say here that Erasmus's new Greek New Testament implicitly claimed priority over the thousand-year-old-monolith that was the Latin Vulgate, for, whatever might be said in defense of the Vulgate, it was indisputably a translation of Greek originals. De Jonge succinctly explains the intellectual daring and significance of Erasmus's project: "He wanted to open a direct path to the important early sources of knowledge. He wanted to supersede the circuitous route, via the corrupted tradition of a translation into dubious and easily misinterpreted Latin" (394).



The problem, of course, was that most of his contemporaries considered the “circuitous route” that was the Latin Vulgate to be the sole source of authority for the Christian religion. Moreover, Erasmus was not at all shy about pointing out all the instances he could find of “misinterpreted Latin.” Comparisons between the Vulgate and Erasmus’s revised Greek text revealed many places where either the Vulgate had erred in its translation or the Latin of the translation had been taken to mean something other than what it originally meant owing to later readers’ ignorance of koine and classical Greek. These sorts of textual problems, so common and so trivial when the text was that of a pagan author, grew proportionally when the text under consideration was what most people took to be the unchanging Word of Truth: “Erasmus had applied philological principles to a sacred text, an approach conservative theologians considered inappropriate at best, sacrilegious at worst” (Rummel 41). Robert Coogan aptly intimates how many contemporaries would receive and understand Erasmus’s *Novum Instrumentum*, by linking it in spirit to *Encomium Moriae* and notes the “remarkable storms” provoked by both works:

The waspish sarcasm at the center of the *Encomium* stings and offends as had the daring of *in principio erat Sermo*, his correction of the Vulgate's, *in principio erat Verbum*, words sanctioned in private worship and in theological discourse for centuries. Turbulence radiates likewise from the proof text for the dogma of original sin, Romans 5:12, where... *quatenus (for, because, inasmuch as)* [replaces] *in quo (in whom)* of the Vulgate. (25)

One is scarcely surprised, then, when one learns that early reactions to Erasmus’s *Novum Instrumentum*, like those of Dorp at Louvain, stressed that in introducing changes to “the established text” of Catholic Christianity, Erasmus “would create confusion in the minds of believers and shake the very foundations of the church” (Rummel 42).

Even Erasmus's pen was not swift or pugnacious enough to respond to all the criticisms his work, particularly his Greek New Testament, incited. To mount a successful defense, Erasmus needed friends, and he had them in England. In the early part of the sixteenth century, Erasmus befriended several men in London, Oxford, and Cambridge who "became the first Englishmen to dedicate themselves to the study of Greek, and to make a polemical point of preferring Greece to Rome" (Nelson 897). These men, "whom More dubbed *Graecistes*," included the likes of Thomas Linacre, William Grocyn, John Colet, Richard Pace and, of course, Thomas More himself (Nelson 897). Although Erasmus was still searching for patronage during this period, his reputation and influence among the learned were great, and it was largely around his work and in accordance with his judgment that the other "Graecistes" seem to have pursued their own humanistic projects (Christ-von Wedel 80). I am not trying to suggest that Erasmus dictated to his fellows what they should and should not write about, although there is some evidence of this sort of imperiousness on the Dutchman's part,<sup>9</sup> but that More and friends rallied around Erasmus as their center, sharing with him the belief that the language and the thinking of the ancient Greeks, particularly as it was embodied in the Greek New Testament, was the prime means through which European society would be reformed. In De Jonge's words, Erasmus's justification of Greek and his campaign to spread the knowledge of it was ultimately about "the purification of language and knowledge, the cultivation of manners and spirit and the improvement of man and society" (394).

The belief of Erasmus and his friends, especially More, that ancient Greek and its propagation in Europe could lead to societal reform is sufficiently strange as to beg for

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<sup>9</sup> According to Manley and Sylvester, for instance, Pace's "*De Fructu* embarrassed Erasmus in every possible way" (xv). Erasmus was particularly bothered by its references to his poverty and its chatty, everyday treatment of important figures like Erasmus and More. In response, Erasmus wrote to More and asked him to advise Pace "that he devote himself to translating from the Greek" (xvi). Pace acquiesced, never making "any direct attempt to defend his little book" (xvi). In other words, Pace did what Erasmus told him to do.

exposition and sufficiently related to this study as to merit it. One may easily perceive why the “Graecistes” judged that a revised and corrected New Testament might lead to the reform of Europe theologically and morally. More himself, in his “Letter to Oxford University,” maintains that a knowledge of ancient Greek is necessary for understanding “the surer and more convincing presentation” of the New Testament in its original language (75). In his “Letter to Martin Dorp,” More contends even more staunchly the church has always privileged the Greek text of the New Testament over its Latin translation: “nam primum Ecclesia sic in Latinis codicibus contineri credit Evangelium, ut fateatur tamen e Graeco translatum. credit ergo translationi, sed magis tamen archetypo” (“For, first of all, the church trusts that the gospel is contained within the Latin texts in such a way that it nonetheless admits that it was translated from Greek. Hence, it trusts the translation, but it trusts the original more so”) (30). For humanists, a firmer Greek text of the New Testament and a more accurate Latin translation of it were certain boons to European Christendom. Likewise, the science of philology, which Erasmus was inventing in passing when he collated, compared, and corrected Greek manuscripts, presented an obvious example of how robust humanistic learning could purify the language and the knowledge which had been handed down from antiquity (Bentley 15-17). But the most substantial impetus behind the “Graecistes” fervent support of the Greek language seems to have been that the Greek tradition proffered so many and such various “moralizing works of history and biography... interested in civic behavior and statecraft” (McCallum-Barry 52). Guy helpfully spells out why, in historical terms, the humanism of More’s day was so concerned with morality and politics, “The philosophy to which More was exposed by his humanist education is the crux of his early life and career. In the age of Lorenzo Valla... the focus had been on law and philology, but by 1500 it had shifted towards the moral and political philosophy of the canonical authors” (24). Particularly “In the Greek texts,” Guy continues, “the emphasis was on virtue, social justice, and the

perfection of a *respublica*" (24). Like the Italian humanists who preceded them, More and his friends genuinely believed that the Greek tradition contained a wisdom within itself that was keen enough to reshape Europe in its moral behavior, which is precisely where the "Graecistes" thought reform needed to occur (Ackroyd 157).

The vision of reform, that is, which the "Graecistes" shared was not Luther's, who sought first to undo even the established theological order of the church and then to reform it. Their sense of what needed to be reformed in the church was far less radical, and it was nearly always presented in moral terms. Their ideal of reform is best captured in John Colet's statement of purpose for his "Convocation Sermon" of 1510: "To exhort you, Reverend Fathers, to the endeavor of reformation of the Church's estate, (because that nothing hath so disfigured the face of the Church as hath the fashion of secular and worldly living in clerks and priests)" (1). Colet goes on to elaborate the secular and worldly failings of priests and leaders in the church under four well worn, morally charged categories: "devilish pride... carnal concupiscence... worldly covetousness... secular business" (2). The "Graecistes" thought that the trespasses arising from these moral traps were precisely the sorts of trespasses that the Greek moralistic tradition, especially writers like Lucian, would aid in combatting and reducing. Again, it is More himself in his letter to Oxford who says that the secular learning of the Greek tradition "*animam ad virtutem praeparat*" ("prepares the soul for virtue") (6). To see what he meant, one need look no further than the Utopians themselves. I have explained above how closely More connected the Utopians to ancient Greece and its culture, and it is this people, in all its integrity and wisdom, that stands as a foil to Christian European culture, in all its arrogance and folly.

Most broadly conceived, the goal of Thomas More, Erasmus, and their circle was to celebrate and promulgate among the learned the knowledge of ancient Greek attained in the Renaissance, for they believed that this learning could reform the mores, particularly those of

the well-educated, in Europe. To that ultimate and common end, the “Graecistes,” especially More and Erasmus, published works in the early part of the sixteenth century that promoted Greek thought, Greek genres, and the central importance of the Greek language. The translations of Lucian were meant to contribute to this end, without doubt: “More’s translation activities in the first decade of the sixteenth century appear as a response to concerns for sound scholarship and Christian renewal” (Chuilleanáin 49). Erasmus’s *Encomium Moriae*, which openly acknowledges its debt to Lucian and other ancient Greek models, was in the service of this end (68). That More’s *Utopia* had a similar purpose one can surmise not merely from arguments like those of Kinney and Mason, who point up the apparently endless resemblances between these works, but also from an understanding of the context afforded by Erasmus’s controversial work on the Greek New Testament. Nelson points out that from “1514 to 1520, the general period of *Utopia*’s preparation and publication, this circle’s [the “Graecistes”] advocacy of Greek culture took on a new intensity, as several of its members were called upon to defend Erasmus’s controversial project of using the Greek New Testament to correct the Vulgate” (897). Far the most prominent of these defenses of Erasmus’s works, particularly the *Encomium Moriae* and *Novum Instrumentum*, is Thomas More’s “Letter to Martin Dorp,” which he wrote in the same year, 1515, that he was writing *Utopia* (Paul 6). In this letter, More goes to great lengths to champion the program of learning and method embodied in the controversial works of Erasmus over against that of scholastic learning, and it was this letter, in all its complexity of argument, that More was thinking through as he worked out his dialogue about a Portuguese traveler who happens upon a just commonwealth (Kinney 201). All of More’s works, then, from the period of 1506 to the first years of the Reformation share a common set of concerns and aims that have largely to do with promoting Greek learning for the moral and civic betterment of Europe.

*More's Letter to Ruthall*

The works of Lucian were at the heart of this set of concerns. To understand how central those works were to the thinking of More (as well as Erasmus), one needs to grasp with greater precision what Lucian meant to Thomas More. This is a difficult question to handle, though, and one to which different scholars have given different answers. The difficulty arises mainly from the subject-matter, Lucian, and the disrepute in which many of More's contemporaries held this controversial author (Chuilleanáin 62; Rummel 50). This same Lucian, after all, in *The Passing of Peregrinus*, depicts Christians as childish dupes, as they unquestionably must be to credit the fantasies of the Christian faith, easily taken advantage of by any passing huckster:

πεπέικασι γὰρ αὐτοὺς οἱ κακοδαίμονες τὸ μὲν ὄλον ἀθάνατοι ἔσεσθαι καὶ βιώσεσθαι τὸν αἰὲ χρόνον... ἔπειτα δὲ ὁ νομοθέτης ὁ πρῶτος ἔπεισεν αὐτοὺς ὡς ἀδελφοὶ πάντες εἶεν ἀλλήλων, ἐπειδὴν... τὸν δὲ ἀνεσκολοπισμένον ἐκεῖνον σοφιστὴν αὐτὸν προσκυνῶσιν καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ἐκείνου νόμους βιώσιν. καταφρονοῦσιν οὖν ἀπάντων ἐξ ἴσης καὶ κοινὰ ἡγοῦνται, ἄνευ τινὸς ἀκριβοῦς πίστεως τὰ τοιαῦτα παραδεξάμενοι.

For the miserable wretches have convinced themselves above all that they will be deathless and will live on forever... And then their first lawgiver [Christ] convinced them that they would all be brothers to one another if they worshipped him, that sophist who was fixed up on a cross, and lived in accordance with his laws. And they despise all things equally and consider that all should be held in common; they accept these sorts of ideas without any strict proof. (11, 13)

People foolish enough to hold to views like the ones Christians routinely hold to, Lucian says in the next sentence, are easy prey for conmen. One is scarcely surprised, then, to come across judgments from More's contemporaries about the dangers of dipping into Lucian. Sir

Thomas Elyot, who does recommend the reading of prudently selected dialogues, adds the cautious advice that those dialogues should be “without ribawdry, or [given] to moche skornyng... [for] thus moche dare I say, that it were better that a childe shuld never rede any parte of Luciane than all Luciane” (quoted in Surtz 469). And this was a generous judgment that More himself might have echoed. More typical are the sentiments expressed in Luther’s use of Lucian against Erasmus: “By such tactics, you only succeed in showing that you foster in your heart a Lucian... who, having no belief in God himself, secretly ridicules all who have a belief and confess it... You reek of nothing but Lucian, and you breathe out on me the vast drunken folly of Epicurus” (quoted in Chuilleanáin 54). Anna Peterson deftly summarizes the way many regarded Lucian in the early part of the sixteenth century, “Lucian’s name became a slur used to denote someone not only as an atheist but also as a ridiculer of the faithful – a label that would be applied to both Erasmus and More” (173). One must conclude from Lucian’s reputation in the early sixteenth century that More must have thought his work particularly significant to have associated himself so closely with it.

Lucian’s questionable reputation in More’s time meant that More had to speak about Lucian guardedly, and this guardedness renders much of what More says he thinks about Lucian ambiguous and evidently incomplete. Nonetheless, it is fortunate that More recorded at least some of his thoughts on Lucian in a letter from 1506 to Thomas Ruthall, a noted supporter of the new learning who was at that time the King’s Secretary and who later served as the Bishop of Durham (Baker-Smith 159). Scholars have here and there noted similarities between the aesthetic ideals set forth in this letter to what seem to be More’s own guiding principles as an author, but my contention is much stronger (Raisch 931-932; Walker 331). To my mind, this letter is the best glimpse More offers, however indirectly, into his own aesthetic values and into the poetic that he embodies in *Utopia*. I will dwell, then, for the remainder of this chapter on More’s letter to Ruthall, reading it as closely as possible in order

to draw out his aesthetic ideals and will then round out these findings with some thoughts from modern scholars about More's literary debt to Lucian.

The opening of More's letter proffers his most crucial statements about his judgments of Lucian and what counts as good writing, and, since More jumps straight into his analysis without any sort of preface, so will I: "Si quisquam fuit umquam, vir doctissime, qui Horatianum praeceptum impleverit, voluptatemque cum utilitate coniunxerit, hoc ego certe Lucianum in primis puto praestitisse" ("If ever there was anyone, most learned sir, who fully heeded Horace's teaching that one should join pleasure to useful instruction, I think that Lucian certainly was among the best in this") (2). It is far too easy to pass over More's opening statement, sounding as it does like an ornate if succinct and typically humanistic introduction to what will follow, and yet the adoption of this maxim from Horace and the claim that Lucian best exemplifies the application of this maxim is momentous. Erasmus offers the same assessment of Lucian in one of his letters: "omne tulit punctum (ut scripsit Flaccus) qui miscuit utile dulci. quod quidem aut nemo, mea sententia, aut noster hic Lucianus est assecutus" ("He carries every point, as Flaccus [Horace] wrote, who mixes usefulness with sweetness. In my opinion, [it was] either no one or our beloved Lucian who pursued this aim" (425). H.A. Mason struggles in his valuable study of humanism in the Early Tudor period to suggest the historical significance of what More and Erasmus mean in adopting this Horatian stance on literature and then taking Lucian as their exemplar:

through Lucian they [More and Erasmus] came to understand the basic principle of Roman literary theory... that literature is justified because it combines pleasure and instruction... The particular application of Horace's maxim they had learned to make was to the combination of levity with seriousness[, which] they found in Lucian (70).



While Mason is guilty of oversimplification when he speaks of a the “principle of Roman literary theory,” his point about More and Erasmus is worth considering, especially his claim that their particular understanding of what it means to combine pleasure with useful learning derives not from their reading of Horace but from Lucian. They might have found this approach exemplified in numerous other Latin and Greek authors, but it was Lucian and his peculiar blend of intellectual satire, skeptical humor, and absurdist tendencies that mainly attracted More and Erasmus. The two seemed genuinely to have enjoyed Lucian, so much so that they would hazard their literary, if not their social, reputations by putting out new translations of his works and commending him to posterity.

Yet more striking in this opening statement is how More uniquely emphasizes the pleasure he enjoys when reading Lucian. Whereas Erasmus simply quotes Horace’s maxim verbatim, “qui miscuit utile dulci,” More summarizes it in a Latin clause that highlights the pleasure derived from the act of reading: “voluptatemque cum utilitate coniunxerit.” More might have used the noun “dulcedinem,” “sweetness,” in place of “voluptatem,” “pleasure,” here, if he wanted to echo Horace more resoundingly. That he chose the noun “voluptatem” and fronted it in the clause, setting “utilitate,” “utility,” in a mere prepositional phrase, suggests that he wants to stress the importance of pleasure in the activity of reading. This supposition is further strengthened by the fact that More has obviously reversed Horace’s ordering of the concepts. Horace had written, “who mixes usefulness with sweetness,” but More rephrases it as, “who joins pleasure with usefulness.” In Horace, the direct object of the verb is “utile,” which suggests a slight privileging of that concept over “dulci;” in More, not only is the noun in the prepositional phrase (or oblique case) bolstered – “dulci” to “voluptatem” – but it is made the direct object of the verb. This careful reworking of Horace suggests that More means plainly to set forth his conviction that the aesthetic value of a literary work, not to mention the value of the act of reading, may come as much from the

pleasure it instills as from the practical instruction it affords, or that instruction is most effectively delivered when accompanied by pleasure.

To gain a sense of how daring this aesthetic revaluation was, one should consider the extensive argument that Erasmus prefaces to his *Encomium Moriae* in the form of a letter to Thomas More, for in this preface Erasmus spells out several ideas commonly brought to bear in this period on the acceptable uses of literature and the propriety of satire and literary play. Erasmus was well aware that his declamation in praise of folly, his most Lucianic work, would meet with stern resistance. He tells More in his letter that he expects criticism to come from two different quarters. First, he predicts, some will criticize him for writing trifles not worthy of a theologian. These men will calumniate him by claiming that he is “*veterem comoediam aut Lucianum quempiam referre, atque omnia mordicus arripere*” (“restoring the old comedy or pretending to be Lucian and tearing everything apart with [his] teeth”) (68). Others, Erasmus knows, will criticize him for the very mordancy of his wit. Because he anticipates these sorts of criticisms, Erasmus structures his entire letter to More as an apology-in-advance for the *Encomium Moriae*. He starts off the letter emphasizing that he only engaged in the composition of his declamation in the first place because he was riding on horseback from Italy to England and did not want to waste that time on non-literary activities (67). He maintains that although composing on horseback was not well suited to serious work, it did afford him space for literary play and the production of a humorous, ironical declamation (67).

Erasmus also excuses his work by associating it as closely as possible with Thomas More. He says first that the Latin genitive of More’s name, “*Mori,*” brought to mind the Greek word for folly, “*moriae,*” although Erasmus is careful to point out that, in fact, Thomas More himself is as far from folly himself as the Latinized form of the word is close to More’s Latinized name (67). But Erasmus gives a much more significant second reason for

dedicating this work to More: “deinde suspicabar hunc ingenii nostri lusum tibi praecipue probatum iri, propterea quod soleas huius generis iocis, hoc est, nec indoctis, ni fallor, nec usquequaque insulsis, impendio delectari” (“And then I suspected that this amusement would be especially approved by you because you tend to be uncommonly delighted by jokes of this kind, that is, learned [jokes] and, if I am not mistaken, [jokes] not wholly without wit”) (67). To complete his identification of *Encomium Moriae* with Thomas More, Erasmus closes this section of his letter with a fully verbalized dedication to More in which he asks his friend to take up the job of defending his little work, “hanc igitur declamatiunculam non solum lubens accipies, ceu mnemosunon tui sodalis, verum etiam tuendam suscipies, utpote tibi dicatam, iamque tuam non meam” (“And so [I trust that] you will not only gladly accept this little declamation as a memento of your friend, but also will undertake its defense, inasmuch as it is yours, not mine, now that it has been dedicated to you”) (68). Erasmus’s argument here is that his *Encomium Moriae* is uniquely designed to appeal to the literary taste of Thomas More, and More, Erasmus stresses, has a taste for the sort of learned humor exemplified in the writings of Lucian. Hence, to attack Erasmus’s work is to attack More himself. Anyone who does so should expect a retaliation like the one Martin Dorp received from the pen of Thomas More.

The other pieces of evidence to be teased out of Erasmus’s letter to More concerning the adventurousness and uniqueness of their literary tastes come when Erasmus directly addresses the claim that the sort of writing he does in *Encomium Moriae* is beneath him. Although Erasmus designs the entire letter, through its very structure and the account he tells about why he wrote this declamation in the first place, to excuse his literary play, this topic is essential enough to him and, as I will show, to More that he sees fit to address the charges that will be brought against him openly. First, he points out that he is not setting a precedent in writing with such levity but following a very old one set by numerous ancient authors,

among whom Lucian is the only author named twice (68). Then Erasmus adds a rhetorical question that has significant bearing on the aesthetic from which he and More were working,

nam quae tandem est iniquitas, cum omni vitae instituto suos lusus concedamus, studiis nullum omnino lusum permittere, maxime si nugae seria ducant, atque ita tractentur ludicra, ut ex his aliquanto plus frugis referat lector non omnino naris obesae, quam ex quorundam tetricis ac splendidis argumentis?”

Finally, why are things so unfairly arranged that, although we grant to every other association of persons its own peculiar amusements, we permit to scholars no play whatsoever, even when their trifles lead into serious matters and they handle ridiculous matters in such a way that any reader who is not wholly obtuse may draw from these trivialities a great deal more fruit than might be drawn from the gloomy and showy subjects of certain writers? (68)

In this passage, one sees most clearly the grave context against which More and Erasmus professed their affection for Lucian and for pleasure in reading. What is most pregnant in this passage, however, is Erasmus’s claim that a good reader is able to get more out of reading works like those of Lucian and *Encomium Moriae* than he is out of more traditional courtly and scholastic works. This suggestion, which Erasmus does not spell out in greater detail, has the potential to give birth to an entire poetic whose source is the amusing or pleasant treatment of serious matters and the enjoyment of intellectual play. And this is a fundamental element of the aesthetic that is embodied in Thomas More’s *Utopia*, as I will demonstrate after elaborating more fully on More’s appreciation of Lucian as he expressed it in his letter to Ruthall.

When More stresses the importance of pleasure first and then utility in literature and in the works of Lucian, he tries to spell out what he means in the particular case of the author whom he has just translated:

qui et superciliosis abstinens philosophorum praeceptis, et solutioribus poetarum lusibus, honestissimis simul et facetissimis salibus, vitia ubique notat atque insectatur mortalium. Idque facit tam scite, tantaque cum fruge, ut quum nemo altius pungat, nemo tamen sit, qui non aequo animo illius aculeos admittat.

He [Lucian], while abstaining from the arrogant teachings of the philosophers and the unrestrained play of the poets, everywhere observes and attacks the vices of mortals with a most principled and a very clever wit. And this he does so skillfully and with such great fruit that, although no one stings more vigorously, nevertheless there is no one who does not accept his stings calmly. (2)

This passage lays bare what commended Lucian the satirist and tireless critic of human foibles to Thomas More, whose vision of reform was so markedly moralistic: Lucian's keeping his sights always set on the "vitia," the "faults" or even the "sins" of humankind. As Peterson puts it, More focuses in on Lucian as a singularly "moralizing writer" (184). More thought that Europeans needed new ways to observe their moral failings and then to set about rectifying them. They needed the jarring experience of having their characteristic vices criticized by an alien culture that could perceive them only too distinctly. Erasmus took exactly the same approach to commending Lucian to his contemporaries, as Robinson explains,

[According to Erasmus, precisely] the vices satirized by Lucian were those rife in Erasmus' day, and he saw in the dialogues an immediate contemporary application. The *Toxaris* is a lesson in what Christian love should be and clearly is not... The

*Alexander* is a comment on hypocrisy and the exploitation of superstition by the Church... The *De Mercede Conductis* is a picture of contemporary court life... And, particularly, in the *Gallus* and *Conuiuuium* the contentious and pretentious philosophers are the scholastics and theologians.<sup>10</sup> (366)

More himself offers similar tags for each of the dialogues he translates, as I will soon show, but what is essential here is that it was not only the target of Lucian's wit that appealed to More, as he makes plain in this statement to Ruthall. Most of what More says to Ruthall has to do with how – the manner in which – Lucian noticed and attacked the endless frailties of human beings. This is essential to grasp because it connects back to More's opening statement that Lucian joins pleasure to instruction more effectively than any other author. He does it so effectively, More claims, that he can show his readers their own vices, always a painful experience, without offending them and in such a way that they are able to improve themselves. For More, then, it is all about how Lucian works on his readers that makes him such a successful practitioner of Horace's maxim. Unfortunately, More says less than one would hope when he explains how Lucian works on his readers, but what he says is instructive and repays close reading.

More fronts the fact that Lucian went about his satirical way “abstaining from” or “keeping himself from” the “arrogant teachings of the philosophers and the unrestrained play of the poets.” Since these ideas are fronted, they must be significant, but what precisely do they mean? To my knowledge, no one has accurately elucidated the significance of where

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<sup>10</sup> Since in this chapter I rely so heavily on the likenesses between More and Erasmus and often elaborate on More's meaning by consulting the works of Erasmus, I should note here that I am familiar and in general agreement with Anna Peterson's persuasive argument that, although they agreed so extensively when it came to Lucian, More and Erasmus had subtly different interpretations of his ultimate meaning: “While Erasmus in particular plays up Lucian's satiric credentials and Syrian identity, More places greater stress on the moral utility of Lucian's writings, at the same time as he looks to Lucian as a model for fictional tales. Because his translations follow those of Erasmus in the volume, one effect of this is that More's moralizing Lucian revises and focuses the varied image of Lucian that Erasmus's translations convey” (175). Her central point, that Lucian was a figure of debate even for More and Erasmus, is well put and well taken.

More begins this sentence even though he all but points his reader in the direction of what he means later in the letter when he elaborates on these ideas while tagging the dialogue he translated second in the collection, *Necromantia* (4). There he insists that this dialogue wittily reproaches the “inania poetarum figmenta, vel incertas quavis de re philosophorum inter se digladiationes” (“useless creations of the poets or the doubtful disputes of philosophers among themselves about any matter whatsoever”) (4). This is a rather obvious reference to several of the early sections of Lucian’s *Menippus sive Necromantia*, as More terms it in his actual translation, that explain what More is commending in Lucian (3-5).<sup>11</sup> In these sections of the dialogue, the protagonist of the story, Menippus, recounts to a friend a predicament he fell into when he was a young man. Menippus says that as a young man he listened to Homer and Hesiod singing about wars and adultery and rape and incest, amongst other themes, and was taken in: “haec me hercle omnia bona pulchraque putabam, et studiose erga ea afficiebar” (“By god, I thought that all these things were perfectly lovely, and I was compelled in all eagerness towards them”) (3). When he came of age, however, much to his befuddlement he made the discovery that the laws he was subject to did not permit adultery, rape, and theft, and so he was unsure as to how he should conduct himself (“me gererem”) (3).

In this state of fledgling aporia, Menippus decided to go to the philosophers and to entrust himself to them in the expectation that they would show him “vitaeque viam aliquam simplicem ac certam” (“some uncomplicated and sure way of life”) (4). Here again, though, Menippus found more trouble than help: “haec igitur mecum reputans ad eos venio, imprudens profecto, quod me ex fumo (ut aiunt) in flammam conicerem. apud enim hos

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<sup>11</sup> When citing from More’s translations of Lucian, I will cite the section numbers of More’s Latin text rather than the page numbers because the section numbers also correspond to modern editions of Lucian. This practice will not only allow for more precise referencing, but, if the reader wants to look up what More is translating from Lucian, she will be readily able to do so.

maxime diligenter observans summam repperi ignorantiam, omniaque magis incerta” (“And so, reasoning thus with myself, I go to them [the philosophers], absolutely ignorant that I was sending myself out of the smoke, as they say, into the fire, for, as I was carefully investigating [things] among these men, I found the utmost ignorance and even greater uncertainty”) (4). Menippus gives two main reasons as to why the philosophers were so harmful to his cause. First, all of the philosophers disagreed with one another, even though they were each able to produce sound arguments, or so they seemed to Menippus, for each of their contentious opinions. One philosopher, Menippus relates, encouraged him to pursue pleasure without vacillation or apprehension, but another one dissuaded him from pleasure, commending the toilsome path of virtue. One philosopher called money a great evil, he saw, while another pronounced it a good that all good men ought to pursue. And the main trouble about all this was that Menippus agreed with the arguments on all sides for all their varying and even mutually exclusive positions, while at the same time he recognized that he could not hold to two or more positions that stood in direct contradiction one to the other.

Second, Menippus found that the philosophers did not live up to their teachings. Here it is important to consider More’s actual translation of Lucian, for he emphasizes this particular point in his translation and, in so doing, sheds light on his own statement about the “arrogant precepts” (“superciliosis... praeceptis”) of the philosophers. In Lucian’s original, Menippus merely says he found that the philosophers “ἐναντιώτατα τοῖς αὐτῶν λόγοις ἐπιτηδεύοντας” (“practiced things entirely opposite to their words”) (5). As skilled a translator as More shows himself to be throughout his work on Lucian, he might have rendered this Greek participial phrase into Latin easily, word for word. Instead, he departs from Lucian’s more abstractly commonplace wording, rendering the phrase as, “comperi eam [vitam eorum] cum ipsorum verbis praeceptisque summopere pugnare” (“I found that it [their life] fought very greatly with their words and teachings”) (5). I have translated this clause



very literally, rendering “pugnare” with its most basic meaning of “fight,” to bring out something of the distinctiveness of More’s translation here. A better translation, of course, would be to allow that here “pugnare” merely means “to oppose” or “to contradict,” as it does oftentimes in Latin literature and that More has added the somewhat awkward “summopere” to account for the superlative character of “ἐναντιώτατα.”<sup>12</sup> The more literal translation, though, demonstrates how More belabors this phrase, for “cum... summopere pugnare” is certainly more vivid and slightly wordier than Lucian’s workaday abstractions. But this is not the only part of the phrase More belabors. Where Lucian writes that the philosophers’ lives were “opposed to their words,” More translates that their lives were “opposed to their words and precepts,” making use of the very same word, “praeceptis,” that More terms “arrogant” when he is speaking about philosophers to Ruthall (5). What More seems to be suggesting here is not merely that the philosophers were hypocritical, but that their hypocrisy is most related to their own teachings. The general sense that More communicates of philosophers is that they are mere windbags who lack the personal capacity to practice themselves what they pressure others to practice. He treats them at many points in his writings, and especially when he is drawing on Lucian, in much the same way the canonical gospels typically treat the Pharisees, as duplicitous guides motivated by judiciously hidden faults.

When More says that Lucian holds himself back from the “arrogant precepts of philosophers and the dissolute games of the poets,” he means that Lucian intentionally avoids errors that his characters encounter time and again in the words of the poets and philosophers. This is a statement, on both ends, about the moral decency of Lucian’s writings. First, More suggests, Lucian is not licentious like many of the most renowned Greek poets. Not only does he avoid their reprehensibly immoral tales, but he even scoffs at them and points up the harm

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<sup>12</sup> For this Ciceronian expression, “pugnare cum” as used in intellectual contexts, see, for instance, *Fin.* 2, 21, 68, where he writes, “pugnant Stoici cum Peripateticis.” See also *Fin.* 3, 12, 41; *N. D.* 3, 1, 3; *Phil.* 2, 8, 18.

they can do to a young person seeking after the good.<sup>13</sup> And, lest someone object that in his *Necromantia* Lucian portrays Menippus as a remarkably stupid young man because he does not recognize the fictional nature of the poetry he is reading and the implications of that fictionality, suffice it to say that the way Lucian depicts the experience of Menippus is a hasty, shorthand way of suggesting a debate that reaches back at least as far as Plato's *Republic*. More to the point, whatever Lucian was making of Menippus, More seems to take this criticism about the moral dangers of ancient poetry seriously, or he at least uses it rhetorically to evoke Lucian's moral decency. But it is More's exposition of Lucian's treatment of the philosophers that will have the most bearing on this study. Philosophers too, for More, are dangerous for the person seeking after both wisdom and goodness, all the more so because they are deceitful, arrogantly proposing standards and practices that they themselves do not live up to. They too are creators of fictions, but their fictions are the more lethal to the soul because they seem real and within reach.

According to More, then, Lucian, while avoiding the poets' Scylla and the Charybdis of the philosopher, makes his way through humor: Lucian "everywhere observes and attacks the vices of mortals with a most principled and very clever wit." Two features mark the writings of Lucian, then, his focus on human vice and his humorous treatment of it. So crucial is this approach to More that he expands on it in his next sentence. Lucian, he says, keeps sight of these foci and writes in light of them so skillfully that no conscientious reader could avoid enduring the sting he takes from Lucian's reprimands calmly and in good humor.

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<sup>13</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, I will skirt most questions about the accuracy and even the honesty of More's portrait of Lucian in his letter to Ruthall. Lucian certainly does tell risqué tales here and there, not least in *Lucius or the Ass*, which Erasmus himself mentions in the letter to More that forms the preface to his *Moriae Encomium* (68). It is possible, even likely, that More was familiar with *Lucius or the Ass* and other of Lucian's less than decent writings and is merely presenting a polished version of Lucian for the churchman to whom he is writing. But, then, it is also likely that Ruthall himself was familiar with these same sorts of stories. For my purposes it makes no difference even if More and Ruthall are here involved in a mutual lie. What matters here is what More sees in Lucian as worthy of emulation. That is the real heart of the letter. More will go to great lengths in this letter and even be more open and aboveboard than Erasmus to show that what he sees in Lucian and what he takes from him are perfectly acceptable for a Christian in his time.

This sort of writing, More presses, produces “fruit” (“*tantaque cum fruge*”) in the reader, by which he means, of course, moral fruit. One should stop for a moment to consider the theory of reading More is setting forth here, for those scholars who think that More is merely playing the rhetor here in defense of Lucian often miss the internal coherence of what he is arguing and its implications for his own writing. Recall that More began his letter holding together the significance of pleasure and instruction, but slightly privileging the pleasure over the instruction. Now it is clear why. First, from the outset More assumes that the purpose of reading is moral improvement. This moral improvement, he suggests, does not come through the mere imposition of instruction. Instruction in and of itself is unpleasant to the human heart, just as being stung by an insect is unpleasant to the body. If instruction is not softened by or even diluted in pleasure, the reader will feel it only as a sting, and, if he feels it only as a sting, he will only be annoyed and slap away the bug that got him, just as the Athenians did with Socrates. Lucian is no Socrates. Rather than simply pointing up the failings of his audience, Lucian, like the good rhetor Socrates was not, uses humor to divert and ease his audience while he hurts it. Satiric humor, then, along with the pleasure it induces, does not take away the sting of moral instruction; it merely provides one with something else to focus on while the instructive sting is taking place.

As Travis Curtright has recently explained, the view that More expresses here about the rhetorical usefulness of humor accords well with his general thinking. Not long ago, scholars like G.R. Elton and Richard Marius became fond of ferreting out dark psychological explanations for Thomas More’s famous humor, the sort of humor expounded in the first chapter of this study. Curtright counters this view with the more sensible and ground contention that humor or “mockery... need not be considered a vice, a mood, or a consequence of how More’s father raised him; it could be a sign of excellent rhetoric” (5). He goes on to explain that “the once widely held revisionist opinion of More obscures how

deeply classical rhetoric influences More's own sense not just of humor but also of humanism" (5). More understands humor, says Curtright, as a form of eloquence that can be used on the side of reason:

More follows rather than contradicts conventional humanist teaching, which echoes precisely what Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, among others, claim, namely, that the use of humor remains an essential means of persuasion. For the relationship between *ridere* (to laugh) and *deridere* (to deride), it was believed, presents orators with the means of victory. (5)

Although Curtright's study focuses mainly on More's later, polemical writings and the ways in which he employed humor against his opponents, the consonance between Curtright's exposition of More's view of eloquent humor and what More writes of Lucian's use of humor is well worth noting. For More, it would seem, humor was an essential tool, but as a tool its use was always subordinated to a higher moral purpose. This is the interpretive lens through which More understood Lucian, and the governing aesthetic he would himself put into practice.

Given the aesthetic More extracts from Lucian's writings, it should come as no surprise that More goes on to emphasize the moral lessons to be learned from each of the dialogues he has translated and how those lessons line up with Christian teachings. Of *Cynicus* (*The Cynic*), he asks what could be more pleasing to a Christian man than

is dialogus, in quo dum aspera, parvoque contenta Cynicorum vita defenditur, mollis, atque enervata delicatarum hominum luxuria reprehenditur? Nec non eadem opera, Christianae vitae simplicitas, temperantia, frugalitas, denique arcta illa atque angusta via, quae ducit ad vitam, laudatur.

this dialogue, in which while the hard life of the Cynic, contented with little, is defended, the soft and effeminate luxury of the pampered is criticized? And indeed at the same time the simplicity of the Christian life, its self-denial, its virtue, and that close and narrow way that leads to life, are praised. (4)

For More, it matters little that the cynic who is featured in this dialogue would have scoffed at the teachings of Christianity, at best. Moral teachings are what count, particularly those teachings that would bring about the reform of the church and its leaders. Recall that, like Colet, More did not think the church's core teachings or doctrinal authority needed substantive revision. What needed revising for More and the other "Graecistes" were the moral habits of the clergy and the church as a whole. Although it is debated whether More himself genuinely considered entering the monastery and why he might have done so, one is safe in asserting that More always had a deep respect for the intensity and integrity of this way of life (Ackroyd 96; Guy 28-32). No scholar doubts that More wore a hairshirt and whipped himself to tame his desires (Guy 22, 29). The least one can say on this matter about Thomas More says much about how potentially serious he was when he praised Lucian's *Cynicus* as moral guidance for the clergy, for the educated theologians, and for the church in general that had lost its way morally. The cynic of ancient Greece comes closest to the severity and the ardor of the cloistered monk and thus is well-suited in that regard to challenge the complacency of More's contemporaries.

Of the *Necromantia*, as I have already discussed, More maintains that it finds fault with the empty fictions of the poets, the philosophers' kerfuffles, and, he adds revealingly, "magorum praestigias" ("the deceptions [or illusions] of the magicians") (4). In fact, contrary to the way I have written it out in the previous sentence, More fronts "the deceptions of the magicians" at the beginning of the tricolon and ends it with his reference to philosophical disputes. This move unquestionably emphasizes philosophers' quarrels most, but it also

places a significant measure of emphasis on the “praestigias” of the “magorum.” But what, precisely, is More referring to here? To understand More’s use of these terms, it is well again to recall that he lived in a world very far from that of modernity or postmodernity. Ackroyd notes in his description of the Carthusian monks and their spiritual susceptibilities, for instance,

In the records of the sixteenth-century Charterhouse there are accounts of visitations and apparitions. The crucified figure of Jesus turned its back upon on recalcitrant monk, in sight of the community, while another was always struck with blindness on entering the church... The brothers [once] saw in the air ‘a globe as of blood, of great size,’ and in the same period swarms of flies covered the entire surface of the monastery, ‘all which things we feared were the signs and forecasts of other events...’ Such accounts come from intelligent and well-educated contemporaries of More himself; his was still a world of marvels and apparitions. (100)

These sorts of records should remind one that, when More refers to the “magorum praestigias,” he is probably not waxing rhetorical about matters that have no relation to his actual existence, especially since he uses the term “magicis... praestigiis” again later in the same letter when he is describing the moral usefulness of the third dialogue he has included for Ruthall. To perceive the relationship between these “praestigiae,” however, and More’s own lived experience is no simple matter. Gerald Malsbary’s translation of More’s letter and Lucianic dialogues in *The Essential Works of Thomas More* seems unsure of what to do with this term, first translating it, somewhat meaninglessly, as “the jugglery of magicians” and later simply as “magic” (20).

That More uses this same term twice in the same letter when he is explicating what he takes to be of the utmost importance in the dialogues he has translated implies the central

significance of this term to More's overall argument. My contention, indeed, is that "praestigiae" is a signal or shorthand for the heretically tinged, immoral falsehoods that More thought had invaded the church of his day and that were most in need of being eradicated for the better reformation of that church. Lucian's skepticism, More seems to think, would be the perfect moral antidote for the poison of superstition that so marks the church in the early sixteenth century. Evidence for this reading comes most to light when More is discussing his translation of *Philopseudes* and once again relating the moral fruits it will produce in his readers: "hunc certe fructum nobis adferet iste dialogus: ut neque magicis habeamus praestigiis fidem, et superstitione careamus, quae passim sub specie religionis obrepit" ("Certainly the dialogue [under discussion] produces this fruit: that we should not put our faith in magical deceptions and that we should free ourselves from superstition, which sneaks around everywhere under the guise of religion") (4). Here the conjoining of "magicis... praestigiis" to "superstitione" strengthens the attentive reader's sense of what More might mean by the first term. In his discussion of *Necromantia*, More juxtaposes a variation this term to the fantastical creations of poets, "inania poetarum figmenta" (4). Here in his discussion of *Philopseudes*, More juxtaposes the term even more significantly to unbounded and excessively fearful religious belief, "superstitione" (4). Based on these juxtapositions, one begins to suspect that the "deceptions" or "illusions" which More is terming "magicis" are fantasies and chimeras of an unmistakably religious nature.

This suspicion is decisively confirmed by the remainder of the letter. More's very next statement is that *Philopseudes* should help his contemporaries "tum vitam ut agamus minus anxiam, minus videlicet expavescentes tristia quaequam ac superstitiosa mendacia" ("in leading our lives less anxiously, less apprehensive, that is, of certain melancholy and superstitious untruths") (4). Then, at long last, More offers some adeptly chosen examples of what he means. He writes that superstitious falsehoods are "generally" "plerumque" told with

such conviction and authority that they can mislead even the most learned, as when someone long skilled in lying “nescio quisnam veterator” once convinced Saint Augustine that “ut fabulam illam de duobus Spurinis, altero in vitam redeunte, altero decedente, tamquam rem suo ipsius tempore gestam pro vera narraret” (“that he could relate as an event that truly happened in his own day that story about the two Spurrinae, the one returning to life, the other departing from it”) (4).<sup>14</sup> The problem with this story was that “Lucianus in hoc dialogo, mutatis tantum nominibus, tot annis antequam Augustinus nasceretur, irrisit” (“Lucian in this very dialogue [*Philopseudes*] ridiculed [this story], with only the names changed, so many years before Augustine was born”) (4). If Augustine had only known his Lucian, or perhaps had possessed a greater measure of Lucian’s skepticism, he would not have been taken in by such a fib. More goes on to work out a lesson from this story about Augustine that applies much more generally to the problems of his day:

quo minus mireris, si pinguioris vulgi mentes suis figmentis adficiant ei, qui se tum demum rem magnam confecisse putant, Christumque sibi devinxisse perpetuo, si commenti fuerint, aut de sancto aliquo viro fabulam, aut de inferis tragoediam, ad quam vetula quaequam aut delira lacrimetur, aut pavida inhorrescat.

You should be the less surprised if the minds of the dull herd are influenced by the inventions of those who think they have done a great work and have put Christ in their debt permanently when they have fabricated either a tale about some saintly man or a gloomy fib about hell to render some old lady senseless with tears or shuddering in fear. (4)

Although More ends on this note about frightening some poor old woman, his concern is not for his gullible and emotive contemporaries. His concern is that these falsehoods inevitably

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<sup>14</sup> For this story, see Augustine’s *De mendacio* 10.17.



lead to the falsification of the Christian faith. When those who insert these sorts of lies, letting no tale of a martyr or virgin pass without rendering it more incredible than it already is, they fail to consider, writes More, the harm that they are doing (6).

More at first allows that those who create untruths of this sort do so with pious intent, “*pie scilicet,*” but the end result of their fabrications, he argues, is to weaken the authority of the church’s teachings: “*Nempe (ut memoratus pater Augustinus testatur) ubi admixtum subolet mendacium, veritatis ilico minuitur ac labefactatur auctoritas*” (“Of course, as the aforementioned father Augustine bears witness, when the lie that had been mixed in is smelled out, the authority of the truth is instantly reduced and undermined”) (6). More then shifts ground and gives a much darker reading of some of the fabricators’ motives, saying that he has always harbored the suspicion that a great many of these fables were written by “*avafris ac pessimis quibusdam nebulonibus, haereticisque*” (“by certain guileful and immoral rascals and heretics”) both to amuse themselves at the gullibility of the common herd and to “*fidem veris Christianorum historiis adimere*” (“to deprive the true stories of Christians of their trustworthiness”) (6). For, More argues, they often write stories that are so like in character to Christian stories that they show they are merely playing around (6). The ultimate conclusion More draws from this argument is that Christian readers should fully trust in the stories of scripture, but should test and weigh all other stories handed on in the Christian tradition, keeping some, rejecting others, if they “*carere volumus et inani fiducia et supersticiosa formidine*” (“wish to be free from both naïveté and superstitious fear”) (6). The implication of this rather long argument is as well-defined as it is historically ironic: Lucian, the notorious “atheist” and satirist of Christians and their beliefs, is the finest author available to More’s contemporaries for inculcating in them the skepticism necessary to reform the church by purging it of the countless fables and falsehoods that it has accumulated over the

centuries (Wegemer 62). Lucian is now no longer an enemy of the church; he is to be an indispensable partner in its reformation.

For those capable of following More's reasoning but still reluctant about Lucian's credentials, More takes up the problem of Lucian's ill repute far more directly than Erasmus does in any of his writings. More's first move, early in the letter, is to maintain that John Chrysostom, "vir acerrimi iudicii, doctorum ferme omnium Christianissimus, et Christianorum (ut ego certe puto) doctissimus" ("a man of the sharpest judgment, of nearly all the learned the most Christian and of the Christians, as I see it, the most learned"), included a large portion of Lucian's *Cynicus* in a homily he wrote on the Gospel of Saint John. Although Peterson notes that this is an "association for which there is no evidence," what More probably means here is that he detects the usage of some of Lucian's ideas in Chrysostom's sermon, no doubt a debatable contention, not that he directly quotes from Lucian's dialogue (187). Whatever is the case in this matter, More's rhetorical intentions here are evident: if so Christian and so learned a person as Chrysostom used Lucian's dialogue in a homily, then the Syrian sophist must surely have some valuable teachings for Christians to consider.

More also deals with an inescapable fact about Lucian, however useful he might prove to be, that he was certainly not a Christian. This fact More dismisses in an interesting manner: "in quo non valde me movet... ut non satis immortalitati suae confideret, atque in eo fuisse errore, quo Democritus, Lucretius, Plinius, plurimique itidem alii. quid enim mea refert quid sentiat his de rebus ethnicus, quae in praecipuis habentur fidei Christianae mysteriis" ("It does not much concern me that [Lucian] did not believe in his own immortality and was in that same error in which Democritus, Lucretius, Pliny, and many others likewise were. Why should I care what a pagan thinks about these sorts of issues, especially as they are considered to be mysteries of the Christian faith?") (4). The position that More is arguing for

here is that it simply does not matter how Lucian's views line up with those of the church on matters of faith. More, as Travis Curtright has explained, wants his fellow learned Christians to assess pagan writings with discrimination, adhering to what is uncontroversial and useful and simply disregarding what runs counter to Christian teachings (19). As I will show in the next chapter, this position does not merely proffer advice on how to read pagan authors with profit; it also opens up limitless possibilities for writing in a style and about topics that are not traditionally Christian. This position allows for a different aesthetic that takes different, that is, non-Christian authors as starting and as endings points.

### *Socratica Ironia*

Before setting out that aesthetic in something like its fulness, however, I should discuss another significant assertion in More's letter to Ruthall and how it has given contemporary scholars warrant to discuss many of the things they suppose More is not saying about Lucian in his letter. While I allow that these discussions should inform one's understanding of More on Lucian and the influence Lucian had on More, I want to emphasize from the outset that, in this debate, I generally side with Joshua Avery's pithy observation that "understated precision is also consistent with More's general *modus operandi*; he need not say everything on his mind" (227). More's letter to Ruthall is undoubtedly and by design a rhetorically accomplished, self-contained apology for Lucian that cunningly turns the sophist scoffer into a advocate of the church. And of course More thought more about Lucian than what he says in this letter; surely he and Erasmus had absorbing conversations in Latin about their beloved Syrian. But, as Avery says, More tends toward "understated precision" in most of his early writings, and, more importantly, what one finds in More's letter to Ruthall is what one can most safely conclude More thought about Lucian. Much else of what is said about More and his relation to Lucian is speculation built on speculation. More does open the door to this speculation, however, in his slightly more expansive discussion of *Philopseudes*,

the final dialogue he commends to Ruthall. Here for once he extends his discussion beyond the moral qualities of the dialogue, writing that “superest Philopseudes, qui non sine Socratica ironia, totus versatur (id quod titulus ipse declarat) in ridenda, coarguendaque mentiendi libidine, dialogus nescio certe lepidior ne, an utilior” (“There remains Philopseudes, which, as the title itself makes clear, is wholly concerned with ridiculing, not without Socratic irony, and exposing the inordinate passion for lying, a dialogue of which I cannot say whether it is more amusing or more useful”) (4). Since More so rarely specifies what he admires about the singularly literary quality of Lucian’s work, this reference to his appreciation of the “Socratica ironia” of *Philopseudes* is taken to be of great significance by more than one scholar, for this indication that More enjoys the ironic quality of Lucian’s work opens up possibilities for various other literary values More might have held or qualities he might have noted in Lucian’s work but not commented on in his closely argued letter to Ruthall.

The most fair-minded of these sorts of analyses comes in one of the first works of literary criticism to give proper weight to Lucian’s influence on Thomas More, Alistair Fox’s *Thomas More: History and Providence* (Branham 23). Even Fox’s accomplished reading, however, must be handled with care because it is predicated strongly on a biographical “fact” of More’s life that is nowadays not considered so factual. Fox was of the opinion that More, after passing the bar in 1501, had lived in the Charterhouse Monastery in order to contemplate taking holy orders and becoming a monk (38, Paul 17), and he builds significantly his interpretation of More’s thinking on this “fact.” He argues, for instance, that when More “was in the Charterhouse, [he] would have read the *Cynicus* as a praise of temperance and the avoidance of worldly pleasures. Such is the entirely harmless interpretation he invites the reader to accept in the Letter to Ruthall” (38). Fox then surmises that, when More departed from the Charterhouse, he was making a conscious decision not to

become a Christian cynic but to lead a public life. Thus, Fox maintains, when More actually read the *Cynicus* he “had just come out of the Charterhouse, having decided to reject the life of a cynic, and to wed instead” (38). Thus, More took up a Lucian precisely at the time when he was attempting to fashion a new “*modus vivendi* less exclusive than the one he had been contemplating” (35-36). The problem with Fox’s reading is that no solid evidence exists to support it. Not only is he reading facts into the life of More that were not facts, but he is seeing in those supposed facts much more than he could possibly demonstrate. The truth is, as Paul explains it, that “although most of More’s sixteenth- and seventeenth-century biographers speak of him as living in the Charterhouse, Cresacre More’s 1630 biography states that More lived ‘near the Charterhouse’” (17). Hence, the question as to whether More even lived for a time in a monastery rather than spatially near it is an open one, not to mention that no evidence exists explaining why More chose to live there. Fox creates a whole existential crisis in the life of More and grounds it on weak to insubstantial evidence. Without this crisis, one need not surmise, as Fox does, that More was being “provocatively disingenuous” in his letter to Ruthall, writing a “piece of propaganda pleading... aimed at securing Lucian admission to pious society, if only through the didactic back door” (36). Without this biographical crisis, one can see More’s letter, as contemporary critics do, as an expression of what he actually thought, even if he does not say all (Avery 227).

Nonetheless, Fox is a luminous literary critic, and his literary observations are well worth taking into consideration. Fox, in particular, is the first to observe what might be the most significant technique More learned from Lucian, to write “a form of dialogue that dramatized ambiguity as a function of meaning,” within an ironic worldview that was uniquely capable of comprehending “all aspects of human experience” (36). To grasp what Fox means, it suffices to consider his examination of what he thinks More learned from Lucian’s *Cynicus*. According to Fox, More had a “deep sympathy for the defeated Lycinus”

in this dialogue, and so he saw in the lead character, the Cynic, a “self-characterizing dramatic character whose mode of justification emanates from his willful determination to be justified. Ironically, the Cynic grows increasingly intemperate as he argues for temperance... until he has silenced Lycinus altogether... and monopolizes the stage” (40). How does Fox know that More took this lesson in irony from Lucian? He knows this because the Cynic’s “later Portuguese descendant” behaves in precisely the same way (40). To put this plainly, Fox’s first point is that More learned from Lucian (not, as Kinney thought, from Erasmus) to obfuscate and even to undermine his narrator by embedding him or her solidly in the narrative and imbuing him or her with characteristics that either do not comport with the character’s own words, one with another, or with what seems to be the message of the work as a whole.

Even more important than what More learned from Lucian about problematizing his narrator, however, is the end to which he learned to put this problematization: to dramatize and depict ambiguity as central to the meaning of a work. Fox maintains that More sympathized with the defeated Lycinus and went so far as to change this character’s name to Lucian in order to win the sympathy of his audience: “The effect [of this change] is to reinforce our inclination to sympathize with the defeated questioner, because we associate his perplexity with that of the author himself – a strategy More would later adopt himself in his own *Utopia*” (41). Because one identifies with the defeated “Lucian,” the questioner in the dialogue, and not with the victorious Cynic, on finishing the dialogue one mainly feels “the rational and emotional tension involved in trying to ascertain the truth,” or, as Fox puts it later, one experiences “feelingly the problematic nature of the question” (41). When reading a work like *Cynicus*, one will feel on some level the frustration of meeting with ambiguity and aporia, even if one intends to read it for moral instruction. To put Fox’s position in my own terms, the chief form of moral instruction on offer in *Cynicus* and in the works that More

wrote under Lucian's influence is precisely the expanded consciousness that comes from recognizing this ambiguity and subsuming it within one's view of the world. Fox maintains that this was "a breakthrough for More, because it reflected a recognition that contradictory impulses can be experienced simultaneously, and that such ambivalent experience is not necessarily a cause for dismay or despair" (41). Through his experience of reading *Cynicus*, More came to see that "to experience the reality of both possibilities is better than to be bound narrowly... within the confines of any single definitive alternative: that produces a cynicus on the one hand, a voluptuary on the other" (41).

Fox plainly does not realize that he has actually ended his analysis of More's relation to *Cynicus* on a point which more or less contradicts where he began. Recall that, according to Fox, More merely dressed Lucian up in a moral garb to appeal to his sternly Christian audience when what truly moved him about the Syrian was his dramatization of ambiguity and his ironic outlook. At this point in his analysis, though, Fox himself shows that these two positions need not be at odds. The whole point, Fox argues, of writing works like *Cynicus* and *Utopia* is to instruct, albeit pleasurably, one's readers in how to become more expansive in their thinking and more skeptical of even those fables and positions that most appeal to one's sensibilities. This is a moral end. It may be a higher or more subtle moral end that one expects to find in More, but, contra Fox, it is cogently argued for in More's letter to Ruthall and is itself further subordinated to the highest moral end of reforming the church. Moreover, because Fox ignores what More says in his letter to Ruthall and puts forth his own understanding of what was going on in More's mind, the scope of his interpretation of Lucian's influence on More extends no farther than *Cynicus*. Fox's discussion of this first work is incisive, but his insistence that More was not interested in the moral use to which he and his contemporaries could put Lucian prevents him from saying much that is meaningful about More's other translations. In his discussion of *Necromantia*, Fox focuses on the vision

of life as a play that Menippus sees in the underworld, arguing that Lucian's peculiar version of this trope, which More knew from Augustine, Cicero, Erasmus and other humanists, taught him "how much more comfortable it was to laugh at absurdity rather than feel laughed at by it" (Fox 43, Paul 15). Again, Fox offers no direct evidence as to how he knows what occurred in More's mind upon reading this trope in Lucian. Of the third and longest dialogue More translated, *Philopseudes*, and of More's declamation in response to Lucian's *Tyrannicida*, Fox can only say that they "are not immediately relevant to an understanding of More's intellectual development" (44). That Fox's interpretation of the evidence comes up so short is itself evidence that More was not writing tongue in cheek in his letter to Ruthall. Rather, More had located in the writings of Lucian a congenial aesthetic that was in the service of moral instruction and reform.

In my next chapter, I will show in detail how More applied this aesthetic in his writing of *Utopia*, but for now it might be helpful to summarize what More found in Lucian that he would later put to use. First, More noted and approved of how Lucian used humor to make the experience of reading for moral instruction more pleasurable. Second, as Fox explains, More learned from Lucian how to complicate his narrator by embedding him in the action of the dialogue and by imbuing him with qualities designed to make the reader think twice, and then a third time, about his authority and trustworthiness. More figured out with the help of Lucian how to write works that did not resolve moral problems but that goaded the reader into developing a broader, more independent moral stance of his or her own. Third, More believed that Lucian himself had a strong moral purpose in writing and that the skepticism he was so infamously associated with had a positive purpose that could be put to use in More's day. From the evidence that rises up when one reads More's translations of Lucian next to his *Utopia*, More seems to have thought that Lucian's humor, his treatment of his narrator, and his use of irony and ambiguity could all be put into the moral service of



training a more piously educated and skeptical clergy, which would eventually work towards the reform of the whole church. Along with this greatest of benefits, securing for Lucian a place in the work of the church would bolster the study of Greek authors and support his friend Erasmus's agenda of reform.

### ***Chapter 3: The Reality of Nowhere***

This final chapter aims to develop and detail the numerous ways in which More's interpretation of Lucian functioned as an aesthetic from which he composed his own *Utopia* and then to explain how applying this understanding of a Lucianic aesthetic resolves the main interpretive problems of More's work. Although the influence of Lucian on More is, as a rule, played down in the literature, other scholars since Fox have worked in this soil. In 1985, following on the heels of Fox's book, R.B. Branham wrote an article in which he examined the influence of Lucian on More's thinking about the aesthetics of writing dialogues, finding that More was very selective in his use of Lucian and markedly keen to "purge" his own work of "qualities unsuited to his own very different purposes" (23). Joshua Avery has recently taken issue with one sub-argument of Branham's analysis; he argues, as will I, that More learned from Lucian's character the Cynic how to create a character who seems right about so many things but whose behavior belies or otherwise undermines much of what he says (225). Anna Peterson has written a very recent article in which she argues for a morally stern, almost puritanical Thomas More whose main concern in writing to Ruthall and in the dialogues he chose for translation was to "construct a very specific image of the Syrian satirist," one less Bohemian than Erasmus's construction that might therefore prove palatable to Christian readers (191).

Perhaps the scholar who argues most vehemently in support of the claim that Lucian, not Plato, was More's preeminent guide as he was writing *Utopia* is Jane Raisch. Her essay focuses on the reception of Lucian in More's day and how More learns from Lucian's *Necromantia* to represent the Greek tradition in *Utopia*. Raisch concludes that

*Utopia* confidently displays its Lucianic Hellenism: intertextual compilation and collaboration remain firmly within the Greek tradition; Greek commentators and

authors, not Christian texts or figures, provide *Utopia*'s hermeneutic mediators...

*Utopia* mediates its Greek preoccupations exclusively through a lens of Greek reception. Indeed, despite the popularity amongst Renaissance Hellenists of projects that sought to Christianize Plato... More remained committed to the more literary and more skeptical mode of Lucian. (931-932)

All of these studies, as well as Fox's, have proven helpful in thinking about how More adapted Lucian's aesthetic, but none of them have attempted anything like a systematic treatment of Lucian's influence on More. Each of these studies, whatever its conclusion, usually focuses in on how More takes up a single dialogue or theme in Lucian and puts it to his own purposes. To my mind, Lucian's influence on More is far broader and farther reaching than any of these studies allow, and my aim here is to sketch out the character of that influence in as much detail as possible, rather than to home in on some single characteristic or scene in *Utopia*. This discussion will be broad ranging because the hand of Lucian is ubiquitous throughout the *Utopia*.

I should say a word also about method. First, for the purposes of this study, I will, with one exception, compare More's *Utopia* only to the works of Lucian that More himself translated, for the simple reason that there is no evidence of what else More read in Lucian. So far as my own research has found, one cannot even say for certain that More read Erasmus's translations, although it seems likely that he would have read at least some of them. In the works of Lucian which More translated one has a unique security to assert where More might have found a certain theme or technique. Second, and more importantly, I labored in the last chapter to detail the context of sponsoring Greek learning and church reform that informed More's translations of Lucian and the writing of his *Utopia*. I recognize, however, that this context is by no means conclusive in and of itself. Just as in the initial chapter of this study the hypothetical researcher created a false but plausible context within

which to understand More's quip to the prison warden about not allowing the prisoner back in, so it may be that I have created above a false if plausible context for understanding the central influence on More's *Utopia*. But just as with that dilemma the only way to perceive something of the actual context in which that anecdote was first told is to find a matching or corresponding passage, so here the measure of the truthfulness of the context I have elaborated will depend on how closely the themes and techniques and methods of *Utopia* match those found in Lucian's writings. As Mitchell Miller in his reading of Plato's *Parmenides* maintains, "For any interpretive stance, what counts is the actual richness of sense and range of coherence that it allows to come to light on the text" (12). The historical context in which I have situated More's writing of *Utopia* affords certain limits for what one should take into consideration when interpreting this work,<sup>15</sup> but it will only be vindicated by the various ways in which it explicates the fulness of *Utopia*, particularly in its more troublesome passages.

As was suggested earlier in this study, many of the themes and techniques More picked up from Lucian find their most significant applications in the figure of Hythlodæus. Perhaps the best place to begin a discussion of this predominant figure, whose significance is so fundamental to the overall work *Utopia* seeks to do on its reader, is to recall where I last left him, somewhere in the lower decks of his ship fighting with a long-tailed monkey over a

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<sup>15</sup> For instance, some of the techniques I suppose More to have found in Lucian he might well have found in some of the writings of Chaucer, not to mention Horace. See Elizabeth's McCutcheon's discussion of this issue on page 18 of "My Dear Peter." *Ars Poetica and Hermeneutics for More's Utopia*. *Angers: Moreana* (1983) and, more generally, the following studies: Ryan, Francis X. "Sir Thomas More's Use of Chaucer." *Studies in English literature, 1500-1900* 35.1 (1995): 1-17 and Marc'hadour, Germain. "Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1340-1400) and Thomas More (1477-1535)." *Moreana* 41.3 (2004): 37-63. The problem with looking at More's work through the lens of Chaucer's writings is that, as Alistair Fox explains, it is difficult to prove that More read much of Chaucer, even if it seems highly likely that he did (66). With Lucian, on the other hand, one has evidence not merely that More read him sensitively, as one must when translating, but of what he thought about Lucian's significance as an author. At the end of the day, of course, one must admit that even strong correspondences between ideas and techniques found in Lucian and those found in More's *Utopia* only imply the probability that More was borrowing from Lucian. Given the historical situation in which More was writing and the strong correspondences between his work and Lucian's, however, Lucian seems the final and most likely source for More's borrowing.

work of Theophrastus. I argued above that this episode, in a minimum of space and largely through symbol and allusion, intimates the unreliability and even the deviousness of Hythlodæus, who at this point in the work is acting as the sole narrator of the story. Now it is time to consider how this anecdote opens out and may be taken as a textual or anecdotal synecdoche for the ways *Utopia* dramatically undermines and ambiguates its own central character. For ease of reference, I will retranslate that passage here:

librorum sarcinam mediocrem loco mercium quarto navigaturus in navem conieci  
 quod mecum plane decreveram numquam potius redire quam cito... [inter quos]  
 Theophrastum item de plantis, sed pluribus, quod doleo, in locis mutilum. In librum  
 enim dum navigabamus negligentius habitum, cercopithecus inciderat: qui lasciviens  
 ac ludibundus, paginas aliquot hinc atque inde evulsas laceravit.

I tossed a medium-sized bag of books, in place of goods I might sell, onto the ship as I was about to set sail on the fourth voyage, since I had firmly decided that I would never return rather than return quickly... [Among these books was] likewise Theophrastus's *De Plantis*, torn apart in many places, much to my displeasure. For, while we were sailing, a long-tailed monkey had attacked this book, which I had put away thoughtlessly, and had, as he was running wild, eager for play, ripped apart several pages he had torn out here and there. (180)

### *Philosophus Gloriosissimus*

The first point to note about this passage is how Hythlodæus himself associates himself with Greek and, first and foremost, with Greek philosophers. In this passage, Hythlodæus is explaining how it happened that the Utopians were able to learn ancient Greek. This came about because Hythlodæus himself carried with him, on this journey from which he might never return, "Platonis opera pleraque, Aristotelis plura, Theophrastum item

de plantis” (“most of Plato’s works and more of Aristotle’s, [and] likewise Theophrastus’s *De Plantis*” (180). In this work, so evidently patterned after Plato’s *Republic*, as the introductory parerga twice note, the mention of Plato’s name first is undoubtedly intentional (18, 24).

Since Plato’s works (as well as those of other Greek philosophers) are the first Hythlodæus names, and since they come in the largest quantities mentioned, it is reasonable to assume that they are important to Hythlodæus and that he wants his hearers, Morus and Petrus Aegidius, to make this association.

That Hythlodæus is successful in communicating this version of himself to his hearers is obvious from early on in *Utopia*. Petrus Aegidius, at the least, wholly buys into Hythlodæus’s presentation of himself. Recall that it is Petrus, as he is about to introduce Hythlodæus to Morus, who says that “Raphael iste” has sailed not as a Palinurus, “sed ut Ulysses, immo velut Plato” (“but as a Ulysses, or, rather, as a Plato”) (42). In partial explanation of his meaning, Petrus goes on to say, “Raphael iste... et Latinae linguae non indoctus, et Graecae doctissimus cuius ideo studiosior quam Romanae fuit, quoniam totum se addixerat philosophiae, qua in re nihil quod alicuius momenti sit, praeter Senecae quaedam, ac Ciceronis exstare Latine cognovit” (“This Raphael [is] not unlearned in the Latin tongue and is very learned in Greek. He was more eager to learn [Greek] than Latin because he had given himself entirely over to philosophy; on this subject, he knew that there was nothing in Latin of much significance besides certain works of Seneca and Cicero”) (44). Later in the dialogue after he has gotten to know Hythlodæus, Morus seems to accept the same identification. At one point in their conversation, Morus refers to Hythlodæus’s “animo tuo tam generoso, tam vere philosopho” (“your noble and truly philosophical nature”) (52). Then, after he has been talking and arguing with Hythlodæus for some time, Morus tries a different tack to convince Hythlodæus that he should go into the service of some great prince to offer his philosophically informed wisdom to an actual ruler for the betterment of an actual people.

To sway Hythlodæus, Morus says, “tuus censeat Plato,” (“your friend Plato thinks”) that states will never become just until either philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers (80-82). Here Morus emphasizes the somewhat flattering “tuus” by separating it from the noun it properly modifies, calling attention to the identification he is making. Hythlodæus promptly counters that Plato himself learned better when he tried to make a philosopher of Dionysius, but he nowhere rejects More’s close association of himself with the greatest philosopher of the ancient world and the first inventor of a fictional, perfectly functioning commonwealth.

But the writer of *Utopia* is even smarter than Raphael, and using various techniques borrowed from the writings of Lucian he suggests to the audience that Raphael may be less, or perhaps much more, than he seems. First is the mere fact that More exhibits to his reading audience the extent to which and the ways in which Hythlodæus attempts to control and even bully his audience into perceiving him appropriately. In the passage above, which recounts how he carried along his books, this attempt to control his audience’s perceptions of him is evident. He says that he took this bag of books with him “loco mercium,” in place of goods he might sell” when he might simply have said that he carried some books along with him (180). The point of including “loco mercium,” of course, is to suggest that, while other sailors were merely interested in making a little extra cash to spend on their journey, he was intent on improving mind and soul. Throughout *Utopia* one encounters these sorts of efforts on the part of Hythlodæus to shape his own ethos. So, for instance, Raphael does not simply say that he spoke out in the presence of Cardinal Morton. Rather, as he puts it, “ego ausus enim sum libere apud Cardinalem loqui” (“for I dared to speak out freely before the Cardinal”) (56). Likewise, when Petrus is first telling Morus about Hythlodæus, he describes him by quoting two aphorisms the sailor frequently recycles: “cui haec assidue sunt in ore, “caelo tegitur qui non habet urnam” et “undique ad superos tantundem esse viae” (“These words are

regularly on his lips, “He who has no urn is covered by the sky” and “The path to heaven is the same length, wherever [one starts from]” (44). Petrus makes it clear when he relates these aphorisms that Hythlodæus means them to suggest his attitude that he is more concerned about his travels than where he might be buried, and, even though Petrus does not approve of this mindset, he gets the message and sends it on to Morus (44).

Hythlodæus is particularly good at implicitly characterizing himself through his criticisms of others. When Morus is just beginning the argument that Hythlodæus should serve some prince with his philosophical wisdom, he tells Hythlodæus that the combination of learning and experience he embodies could not but incite a prince to noble actions and sound rule (52). Hythlodæus quickly counters, “bis erras... mi More, primum in me, deinde in re ipsa. nam neque mihi ea est facultas, quam tu tribuis, et si maxime esset, tamen quum otio meo negotium facerem, publicam rem nihil promoveam” (“You are twice in error, my dear More, first in me and then in the matter itself, for I do not possess the ability you attribute to me, and [even] if I did possess it in the highest degree, nevertheless when I had given up my leisure to do my duty, I would still not progress the state one bit”) (52). At first sight, this passage may seem to argue against the idea that Raphael is keen to have others think well of him, especially since he maintains against Morus praise that he does not possess the competence Morus attributes to him, but, when one reads this denial in the context of the two paragraphs that follow, one readily sees that this is nothing more than false modesty on Hythlodæus’s part. He tells Morus that he errs on two points, his understanding of Hythlodæus and of the situation, and yet he devotes a total of nine words, generously counted, to denying Morus misunderstanding of his abilities and then follows up with two extensive paragraphs explaining how the shortcomings of prince’s and their advisors would always prevent them from taking Hythlodæus’s superior advice (52-54).



At one point, for instance, he argues that if someone, some wise someone, should proffer advice based on his reading or his travels (and of course it is clear by this point who that wise someone is), the prince's other counselors would feel that their own wisdom was being challenged and so would labor to find some fault with what he is saying, not because what he says has faults in it but to protect their own reputations for wisdom. All of his objections to Morus praise of his potential usefulness in court are of this kind. It becomes clear at once that Hythlodæus in no way blames himself for his uselessness before a prince. The fault is always with the arrogance of others and their unwillingness to take advice from a man so knowledgeable and well-travelled. More to the point, the way Hythlodæus repeatedly denigrates others who have a reputation for wisdom, or who should have, characterizes himself as the foil to their folly, and thus as the wise man. So effective is he in this self-characterization that, by the end of the dialogue, Hythlodæus has bullied Morus into not challenging his account even though More lets his reading audience know that Hythlodæus has failed to persuade Morus on many points. The reason Morus will not challenge Hythlodæus is carefully spelled out for the reader. Morus says that he was unsure as to whether Hythlodæus "would be able to bear" "possetne ferre" any sort of contradiction, especially because "recordabar, eo nomine quosdam ab illo reprehensos, quasi vererentur, ne non satis putarentur sapere, nisi aliquid invenirent, in quo vellicare aliorum inventa possent" ("I recalled how he had condemned certain men who were afraid that they would not be thought sufficiently wise unless they found some way to carp and nip at the original ideas of others") (248). This consideration on Morus part shows most effectively how Hythlodæus wins control over his interlocutors' perception of him through his characterization of those he presents as his foils.

But that More expected his readers to see through Hythlodæus's bullying attempts to earn their sympathies is apparent from the fact that, although Hythlodæus works hard to

associate himself with the best of Greek philosophy – Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, and so on – the writer of *Utopia* allows those associations to stand but himself labors to suggest that Hythlodæus should be sorted in the reader’s mind among lesser figures (Sylvester 273). One figure he is particularly likened to is the Cynic from Lucian’s *Cynicus*. Indeed, the very first impression More gives his readers of Hythlodæus calls up for those familiar with his translations of Lucian the image of the Cynic philosopher. Here is how More translates the opening lines of *Cynicus*, where Lucianus first encounters the Cynic and describes him, both, within the dialogue, to call the Cynic to account and for the benefit of the reading audience: “

Quid tu, tandem? Barbam quidem habes, et comam, tunicam non habes, nudusque conspiceris, ac sine calceis... nunc huc, nunc illuc circuis, in arido praeterea solo cubans, adeo ut plurimum etiam sordium, tritum istoc pallium referat, alioqui nec ipsum, vel tenui filo, vel molle vel florulentum.

What’s with you? You have a beard and hair, but you don’t have a shirt on and appear [almost] nude, and without shoes... you wander about, now here, now there, sleeping, I should add, on the bare ground, and so that worn out cloak of yours, which is not fine in its threading nor soft nor florid, is covered in a great quantity of filth.

More precisely parallels this dramatic situation when he has Morus first meet Hythlodæus. Rather than simply presenting Hythlodæus and having him begin speaking, More makes sure to have the audience first see the wandering philosopher through the eyes of Morus, just as readers first encounter the Cynic through the eyes of Lucianus, before Morus is even aware that the man he is considering will soon step into his life as a new and significant acquaintance.

Morus tells his readers that, as he was leaving from mass in Antwerp one Sunday, he saw his friend Petrus Aegidius talking “with some stranger” (“cum hospite quodam”) and

then offers a description of him that echoes in significant ways Lucianus's more contemptuous description of the Cynic philosopher (42). Morus says that the stranger was "vergentis ad senium aetatis, vultu adusto, promissa barba, paenula neglectim ab humero dependente, qui mihi ex vultu atque habitu nauclerus esse videbatur" ("inclining to old age, his face burnt by the sun, his beard flowing out long, his hooded cloak hanging sloppily from his shoulder; from his face and appearance I took him to be a ship's captain" (42). This description, of course, is not as pejorative or intentionally provocative as Lucianus's, but it still suggests a rootless, wandering figure who is careless about his appearance and who is not exactly the picture of respectability. It is difficult to know what to make of the fact that Morus thinks him a "nauclerus." Is this a slight referring to his probable social standing or merely a deduction without much value attached to it? Petrus's reaction when Morus tells him he took Hythlodæus by his appearance to be a ship's captain would suggest that it is something of a slight: "atqui... aberrasti longissime" ("But you were far off the mark") (42). Petrus is quick, that is, to correct Morus mis-impression with the line that Hythlodæus has sailed as an Odysseus or Plato, suggesting that to term Hythlodæus a ship's captain is, somehow, to misprize or underappreciate him. This is the place in text when the negotiations over Raphael's image and ethos begin, but significantly before Hythlodæus himself starts to weigh in with his own heavy-handed methods. Morus pictures for the reader a man who is perhaps a skilled sailor, but who is also questionable in terms of his appearance, maybe even somewhat antisocial, much like Lucian's Cynic. Petrus insists that he is Plato reborn. The reader is left to take up a position of her own with both of these conflicting portraits in mind, just as Lucian's readers must make up their own minds about whether the Cynic is simply noble or base, or something in between.

Avery has noted several other ways that More's Hythlodæus recalls Lucian's Cynic, although, as I mentioned above, he does not ground his observations solidly or systematically

in the text, as I will try to do here. His most essential observation is that the Cynic and Hythlodæus “are both rootless wanderers by choice... For both characters, individual self-determination is very highly valued, clearly represented by wandering and deliberate homelessness” (228). More seems particularly keen to emphasize Hythlodæus’s rootlessness both in itself and in contrast to the figure of Morus. Throughout the early paragraphs of *Utopia*, More stresses Morus many and complex ties to his community, first to his king and his associates, like Tunstall, in pursuing the king’s business in Bruges, and then to his family and friends (40-42). Moreover, although having Morus meet Hythlodæus as he is coming out of mass is a rather obvious and cheeky reference to the opening of Plato’s *Republic*, it also suggests Morus comfort, even though he is away from home, with an even larger social order that grounds and sustains him. Hythlodæus, by contrast, is noticeable even from his external appearance as a person who does not sit so comfortably within the social order. As it continues, the narrative places a measure of emphasis on this fact. As he is about to introduce the two, Petrus tells Morus that Hythlodæus was so eager to see the world as a young man that he left his patrimonial inheritance to his brothers, mentioning by the way that Raphael is Portuguese, so that he would have no ties binding him to his family (44). More than one commentator has noted that this detail is probably patterned on the life of Pico della Mirandola, “whose biography,” the Cambridge editors inform the reader, “More had translated and whom he greatly admired” (45 n.8). At first sight, then, this detail would seem to count in Hythlodæus’s favor, except that when Hythlodæus himself speaks of giving up his patrimony his antisocial attitude flashes unmistakably.

This occurs when Petrus kicks off what will become an argument about whether or not Raphael should put himself in the service of some king or prince. After listening to Hythlodæus discourse on his travels for some time, Petrus, in some excitement over Raphael’s qualifications, asserts that he really should enter into some king’s service in order

to further his own interests as well as those of his family and friends (50). Petrus, in other words, attempts to bind Hythlodæus within that social order with which he and Morus are so at ease. Hythlodæus's rejoinder typifies his responses, not simply in countering the common wisdom of his interlocutor but also in seizing the opportunity to control how his interlocutors think of him:

quod ad meos attinet... non valde commoveor, nempe in quos mediocriter opinor me officii mei partes implevisse. nam quibus rebus alii non nisi senes et aegri cedunt, immo tum quoque aegre cedunt, quum amplius retinere non possunt, eas res ego non sanus modo ac vegetus, sed iuvenis quoque cognatis amicisque dispartivi, quos debere puto hac mea esse benignitate contentos, neque id exigere atque exspectare praeterea, ut memet eorum causa regibus in servitium dedam.

As far as what pertains to my family, I am not much concerned. I think I have fulfilled my duty towards them moderately well, for, those goods which others do not give up unless they are old and sick, and even then they give them up grudgingly and only when they can no longer keep them, those things I divided among my relatives and friends when I was not only healthy and vigorous, but still a young man. [So,] I think they ought to be satisfied with my generosity rather than demand and expect that for their sake I would put myself in servitude to some king. (50)

In one sentence, in the Latin, Hythlodæus denies those ties that seem such a happy part of the lives of men like Petrus and Morus, the harmless humanists, but it is the way he does so that is most striking. First and foremost, Hythlodæus reduces one's obligation to one's family to purely financial transactions that can be dated and totaled up. He says that he has done his duty well – or “moderately” well, and note the carelessness of that adverb, “mediocriter” – simply because he divided up his inheritance among his relatives and friends, as if this were

all one might owe to one's family. Contrast Hythlodæus's sentiment with the emotion that grips Morus concerning his relations earlier in *Utopia*. Morus is praising young Petrus Aegidius, and he notes that Petrus's conversation was so pleasant that for a time it lightened "patriæ desiderium, ac laris domestici, uxoris, et liberorum quorum studio revisendorum nimis quam anxie tenebar (iam tum enim plus quattuor mensibus afueram domo)" ("the strong desire [I felt] for my own country, my home, my wife and my children, whom I very much wished to see again, (for by that time I had already been away from home for more than four months") (42). One wonders if this sort of emoting would even make sense to Hythlodæus, who finds no other obligation to those nearest him than to ensure that each has his appropriate share of the family's wealth.

This passage says still more about Hythlodæus. First, of course, Hythlodæus makes his typical move of characterizing himself positively by negatively characterizing the common run of human beings who surround him. Rather than simply saying that he divided up his goods among his relatives, Hythlodæus emphasizes almost pleonastically throughout the passage that he was so free from greed that he was able to do when a young man what most cannot do even when they are old and done for. He then returns to his theme that his family should be content with what he has already done for them, the one-time transaction he made in their part, rather than seek to bind him to their own wishes. At this point in his account Hythlodæus is starting to sound like he divided up his inheritance precisely so that he would have no further obligations to his family. He made his great gesture, and that should suffice. But what is undoubtedly most noteworthy in Hythlodæus's account, as Petrus's response to him will indicate, is how Hythlodæus describes putting himself in a king's service: "ut memet eorum causa regibus in servitium dedam." Note first the form of the pronoun Hythlodæus uses here; rather than simply using "me," he uses the emphatic form, "memet." This is a difficult distinction to bring across in translation, and I have yet to find

one that does so. Perhaps it would not be too strong a translation to put it thus, “that for their sake I should put myself – me, of all people! – into servitude to kings.” The use of “memet” here, in other words, speaks to an ego that accords itself unquestionable worth. Above all, though, there is the way Raphael describes service to a king. When Petrus raises this issue, he speaks of it in entirely positive terms, “miror profecto mi Raphael... cur te regi cuiquam non adiungas” (“I wonder, my friend Raphael, why you don’t attach yourself to some king or other”) (50). Like a moody teenager, Hythlodæus takes this mild suggestion and turns it into nothing less than sheer servitude, as Petrus himself notices, “mihi visum est non ut servias regibus, sed ut inservias” (“I meant not that you should be a slave to king, but that you should put yourself in their service”) (50). Raphael’s response to Petrus’s correction is to be clever: “hoc est... una syllaba plus quam servias,” which should simply be paraphrased as “the difference is only one syllable” (50). With this response, Hythlodæus reasserts his position that service to kings is servitude, but without elaborating on why he might hold a position like this.

Petrus does not give up, however, and his continued pressing of Hythlodæus shows just how much difficulty he is having in comprehending the Portuguese sailor’s way of life. Petrus next puts a challenge to Hythlodæus that reveals the gulf that exists between the two, and between Hythlodæus and Morus as well, and that forces Hythlodæus to show his hand: “At ego sic censeo... quoquo tu nomine rem appelles, eam tamen ipsam esse viam, qua non aliis modo et privatim, et publice possis conducere, sed tuam quoque ipsius condicionem reddere feliciorum” (“Well, whatever name you want to call it, I think that [service to kings] is the very way you would be able not only to benefit your loved ones and the general public, but also to render your own place in life more successful”) (50). Now Petrus has thrown down a gauntlet of sorts. The form into which he molds this response assumes a couple central values that the interlocutors have been dancing around, that the purpose of one’s life

is to be of service to those nearest one and to one's commonwealth and that a flourishing life results from this service. This is Ciceronian humanism 101, and Petrus, the good humanist, seems genuinely befuddled at his inability to fit what Hythlodæus is saying with those humanistic assumptions that seem so self-evident to him (Wegemer 5-6). Hythlodæus's response to Petrus's challenge is among the most telling passages in all of *Utopia* about the nature of his outlook on life: "felicior me... ea via facerem, a qua abhorret animus? atqui nunc sic vivo ut volo, quod ego certe suspicor paucissimis purpuratorum contingere." ("Would I make myself happier by [following] a way that is repugnant to me? As it is now, I live just as I please, something I firmly doubt is true for even a few courtiers" (50). Raphael, then, denies that happiness comes through service to others and the commonwealth and implicitly suggests that it comes through "sic vivo ut volo," living as one pleases.

This statement, "sic vivo ut volo," ("I live just as I wish"), is adapted from a statement that Cicero makes in his *De Officiis*, and, although in context Cicero writes positively of this sentiment, it still tells in significant ways about what is motivating Hythlodæus to guard himself with such care against any sort of service to a prince. Cicero is writing in this portion of the *De Officiis* about the importance of being free from the passions that control the lives of most people (i.xx.69-70). Some, writes Cicero, pursue the tranquility he is speaking of by withdrawing from public life and living away in retirement. Many philosophers fall into this category, he continues, as well as "quidam homines severi et graves nec populi nec principum mores ferre potuerunt" ("certain stern and serious people [who] were not able to endure the behavior of the people or their leaders") (i.xx.69). Then Cicero explains what these sorts of people are ultimately aiming at, "his idem propositum fuit quod regibus: ut ne qua re egerent, ne cui parerent, libertate uterentur, cuius proprium est sic vivere ut velis" ("These [men] have the same objective as kings: to lack nothing, to obey no one, to enjoy liberty, in essence, to live as you please" (i.xx.70). This passage suggests rather clearly what motivates



Hythlodæus to take up the socially disagreeable lifestyle he adopts: his aim is to be a king to himself. As both the passage from Cicero and the subsequent developing of his character suggest, Raphael cannot but see himself as better than everyone else around him because of his education and experience, and yet he is not in a position of power. Moreover, as various events in *Utopia* (like the debate at Cardinal Morton's) which I will discuss later show, when Hythlodæus has been in a position to influence a powerful person, he has always been challenged, and so sensitive is he to challenge that he ends up writing off the whole experience as a waste of his time. His pride is such, that is, that he can only be content with absolute agreement. He would be king or nothing.

Furthermore, More is evoking more than one intertext when he characterizes Hythlodæus by having him say, "sic vivo ut volo." Of course, the editors of the Cambridge *Utopia* note that Hythlodæus's statement of his basic outlook echoes passages in More's *The Life of John Picus*, but the passages they recommend bring out the wisdom of Raphael's wisdom, not its folly (51, n.6). As it is one of the basic premises of this study that, in his depiction of Hythlodæus, More wants a complicated figure and aims to exhibit both the good and the bad in his way of life and since most scholars read the passage from Cicero as imbuing Raphael with some measure of nobility, it is essential to point out an additional intertext from Lucian that again likens Raphael to Lucian's Cynic. Although, so far as I can tell, no one else has noticed this intertext, it is of particular importance both because it strengthens the association between Raphael and the Cynic and because it hints at the darker motives driving Hythlodæus. Late in *Cynicus*, the Cynic, like Cicero in the passage above, is inveighing against being controlled by one's desires. Like Hythlodæus, the Cynic often characterizes himself positively by pointing up the faults of everyone else, so at this point in the dialogue he sets about comparing men like the supposedly soft Lucianus to riders who are driven about contrary to their wishes by their horses, that is, their desires, which are always

running about willy-nilly (18). What keeps him off such rollicking horses, the Cynic says, are precisely the poverty of his cloak and hair, which so many soft young men like Lucianus are fond of poking fun at (19). He says, “at hoc detritum pallium quod vos ridetis comaque habitusque meus tantam habet vim, ut vitam mihi quietam praebeat, utque agam quicquid volo, verserque cum quibus volo” (“But this worn down cloak which you all [i.e., indulgent people like you] ridicule and my hair and my outfit are able to secure for me a quiet life, so that I do whatever I please and associate with whomever I please” (19). This statement, especially “utque agam quicquid volo,” not only recalls the sentiment of Raphael’s statement but also the very syntactical form in which he couched it. The two statements are precisely parallel, with an adverb or conjunction coming in the first position (“sic” and “ut”), then the word for conducting one’s life (“vivo” and “agam”), followed by an adverb or object functioning adverbially (“ut” and “quicquid”), and finished in both cases with the verb “volo.” So that the plainness of this parallelism is truly plain, I should emphasize that in the context of this passage “agam quicquid” has exactly the same meaning as “vivo:” “I conduct myself,” or “I live my life.” The only relevant difference between the two passages is that, while the Cynic is talking about being controlled by one’s desires, Raphael is referring to being controlled by the desires of others. It is not difficult to imagine, however, how these two types of control are closely related to and involve one another.

Nothing likens Hythlodæus to Lucian’s Cynic, however, so much as the central message Raphael seeks to impart in the second book of *Utopia*. This message the Portuguese philosopher expresses most clearly in his peroration when he is claiming that the Utopians are happier even than the superrich in Europe because they have cut out of their society the source of all evils, money. With this one move, Raphael exclaims,

quanta moles molestiarum recisa, quanta scelerum seges radicitus evulsa est! quis enim nescit fraudes, furta, rapinas, rixas, tumultus, iurgia, seditiones, caedes,

proditiones, veneficia, cottidianis vindicata potius quam refrenata suppliciis, interempta pecunia commori? ad haec metum sollicitudinem, curas, labores, vigiliis, eodem momento quo pecunia perituras. Quin paupertas ipsa, quae sola pecuniis visa est indigere, pecunia prorsus undique sublata, protinus etiam ipsa decresceret.

How great a mass of troubles was cut away, how great a crop of wickedness was completely uprooted! For who cannot see that swindling and theft, looting, violent brawls and quarrels, civil riots, murders, treasonous acts, poisonings, and the crimes that are avenged rather than held back by the usual punishments would die together with the slaying of money? And in the same moment in which money succumbed, so too would dread, nervousness, worries, distress, and sleepless nights. Even poverty itself, for which money seems the only cure, would at once lessen if money were everywhere and entirely done away with. (244)

This same thought, expressed in a comparable manner, is first found on the tongue of Lucian's Cynic. In More's words, the Cynic makes the following wish: "aurum vero, argentumque ne desiderem umquam, neque ego, neque meorum amicorum quisquam. Omnia namque mala inter homines ex horum cupiditate nascuntur, et seditiones, et bella, et insidiae, et caedes. Haec omnia fontem habent plus habendi cupidinem" ("May I never desire gold, sincerely, and silver, neither I nor anyone of my friends, for all the evils that beset humankind arise from a desire for these very things [i.e., gold and silver] – civil riots and wars and treachery and murder. All these things have as their source the desire to have more" (15). Clearly then, even if he does not expect his readers to understand exactly what he is doing in this identification and how he is bringing it about, More is endeavoring to create a character much like Lucian's Cynic for his *Utopia*.

More is styling his lead character as a Cynic for the same reason that, in the opinion of Thomas More, Lucian renders his own Cynic such an ambiguous personage: to body forth and communicate the figure of a philosopher whose behaviors belie his beliefs. Recall from the last chapter that Lucian, especially in his *Necromantia*, goes to some lengths to point up the central failings of philosophers. Those two failings are that they cannot agree with one another and that their actual choices in life contradict the teachings they push onto their students or interlocutors. Here I shall focus on the latter fault. As Warren Wooden explains, the characterization of the philosopher as a walking contradiction is a common feature of Menippean satire, the satiric tradition in which Lucian himself wrote and of which More obviously approved, as his letter to Ruthall demonstrates in more than one passage (51-52). Following Lucian, More is depicting Hythlodæus as a “philosophus gloriosus” in the role of the “alazon:” “In this role More employs him to expose the folly of the argumentative technique and philosophic position he embodies” (Wooden 52, O’Brien 17). Just as, on Fox’s reading, Lucian’s Cynic talks so much and argues so vehemently – at one point likening himself to a god – that he ends up undermining his own position and creating sympathy for his interlocutor, so too More’s Hythlodæus, who also dominates the conversation throughout *Utopia*, makes countless statements and argumentative moves that undermine, in his own person, the positions of which he is trying to convince his interlocutors (Avery 225, 231). This principle can be demonstrated even with regard to Raphael’s most basic convictions.

Consider, for instance, Raphael’s conviction that money should be eradicated and that this eradication would immeasurably better society. One would assume that someone who holds to such a belief would conduct his life in such a way that money would not even enter into his thinking about his relations to others since money is what causes those relations so to deteriorate that people find themselves fighting and disputing one another, defrauding and cheating on one another, betraying, deceiving, murdering, and warring against one another.

Hythlodæus's list is much longer than this, of course, just as it is much longer than the list of evils brought about by money which the Cynic enumerates. If Raphael truly believes that money is the root of so many evils, then assuredly he would attempt as far as possible to limit its influence on his life and thinking. And certainly, when he is on his guard, Hythlodæus is careful to present himself as superior to money, as when he points out to his interlocutors that he took books on his last voyage rather than goods to sell for cash. He also is obviously pointing out his superiority to wealth when he notes, as discussed above, that he was able to let go of his wealth as a young man. This very same passage, however, points up Raphael's duplicity, for it is in this passage that Raphael bluntly informs his interlocutors that he has surely done his duty by his family simply because he has divided up his inheritance among them.

Moreover, it seems evident that, in the vocabulary More chooses to relate Raphael's acts of financial beneficence, More is seeking to hint at the extent to which monetary thinking dominates Hythlodæus's conscience. The main terms Hythlodæus uses to convey his act are brusquely financial: "eas res... cognatis amicisque dispartivi" ("I distributed these possessions among relatives and friends") (50). Here the language is almost formal, like a contract. The verb Hythlodæus uses in particular is most often connected to financial dealings, as in Cicero's *Pro Cluentio*, when one of the participants in this case is reasoning about its outcome: "illo absoluto pecuniam illam aut iudicibus dispertiendam aut ipsi esse reddendam; damnato repetiturum esse neminem" ("If he is acquitted, that money will either have to be divided among the judges or returned; if he is condemned, no one will ask after it") (xxv.69). Here the verb is spelled in an alternate form, "dispertiendam" versus "dispartivi," but it is the same verb with the same essential meaning of dividing up or distributing financial resources among several persons. Likewise, when Hythlodæus refers to his "benignitate" and demands that his family be contented with it, he is using that term to

refer to his financial generosity. Cicero uses the same term in the same way when he is discussing munificence in his *De Officiis* (ii.xv.52).

The key term that suggests Raphael's mindset, though, shows up when he says that he thinks ("puto") his relatives "debere... hac mea esse benignitate contentos" ("ought to be content with this munificence of mine" (50). The word "contentus" often carries with it financial associations as well, but the term to note in this clause is "debere," which More calls attention to by fronting it in a clause where a more naturally Latinate word order would have it coming at the end of the clause. The verbal play here is very clever. The verb "debere" of course may mean "ought" or "ought to" in a purely moral sense, but this is an abstracted sense of the word. Its most literal and primary meaning connects it unequivocally to money. This more basic meaning is so well attested in the ancient literature as to require little exposition, so I will here let one example stand for many. In *Philippic 2*, Cicero inveighs against Marcus Antonius for murdering people on the battlefield whom Caesar would have allowed to live. Antonius committed one of those murders, says Cicero, because "appellatus es de pecunia quam pro domo, pro hortis, pro sectione debebas" ("You were called upon about the money you owed for the villa, the gardens, and the portion of the property put up for auction") (ii.xxix.71-72). Here the word "debebas" has its most rudimentary meaning of "to owe someone money." From this fundamental sense of the word was abstracted the notion that a moral obligation was something one owed to another, much like a debt. More is playing on the two senses of this word to demonstrate how Hythlodæus confounds and intermixes the two. As Neumann puts it, for Hythlodæus "the claims of blood and friendship apparently cease when one makes a free distribution of one's goods. The feeling for family ties and friendships implicit in this attitude is lukewarm to say the least" (499). Hythlodæus believes that, because he has given to his family what he "owed" them in the financial sense, he has given them what he owes them in the moral sense, and so now, because the financial

sense of the term dominates Raphael's thinking, his family and friends owe to him a satisfaction with what he has already done for them and the great courtesy of leaving him alone.

*Qualis Artifex!*

The concreteness of this insight, that Raphael's own life does not always or simply line up with what he goes about preaching, takes one into the very heart of More's "designedly enigmatic" *Utopia* (Logan 3). Indeed, when one recognizes that More designed these sorts of enigmas while listening intently to the spirit of Lucian whispering in his ear, this insight opens up the mysteries of *Utopia* for a renewed consideration. This is so because, and here I come to the heart of this study, the enigma that is the narrator of *Utopia* accounts for the other enigmas that arise in the course of the narrative. Take the issue of money and the Utopians. Recall what Raphael says above about money being the root of all societal evils and, more to the point, his claim that the Utopians had eradicated money from their social existence. Raphael delights to dwell on this theme throughout his narrative about the island of Utopia, and yet it is not at all true. In fact, the Utopians are rich in gold, silver, pearls, diamonds, and all manner of currency and backing for currency. When speaking of the travels and international relations of the Utopians, Raphael says that the Utopians export their surplus to other countries. Raphael notes that the Utopians give a seventh portion of their goods to the poor in these countries, but the rest "pretio mediocri venditant, quo ex commercio, non eas modo merces, quibus domi egent, (nam id fere nihil est praeter ferrum) sed argenti atque auri praeterea, magnam vim in patriam reportant" ("They sell for a moderate price. From this commerce, they bring back to their country not only those goods which they lack at home (which is nearly nothing besides iron) but an immense quantity of silver and gold besides") (146). This statement and the passage that follows it are so crucial to understanding what More is doing in *Utopia* that I want to unpack it circumspectly and at

some length before showing how it connects back to the mind of Hythlodæus as More reveals it using Lucianic brush strokes.

First and foremost, of course, one should note that the Utopians use money currency and that their economy could not function without it. Of course, what Raphael wants his interlocutors to buy into is the notion that the Utopians, within their own society in their inter-familial relations, do not use or have a need for money, that it is only the state that actually handles money and treats it with value, but this passage begins to suggest the sheer implausibility of that claim. The most important statement in the sentence above may not be that the Utopians have masses of silver and gold, but that they use this money to supply what they do not have on their own island. Here I cannot resist the admittedly unfounded supposition that More was smiling to himself when he wrote this line about what is lacking on the island of Utopia: “nearly nothing besides iron.” Nothing besides iron. This is humor and the cleverness of More that I labored to spell out in the first chapter of this study and that is so much in harmony with Lucian’s humor. The man who would say that a prison, of whatever sort, should be fortified so that an escaped prisoner not steal back in is the same man who could write that the Utopians lacked nothing on their island except the relatively inessential metal called iron. Hythlodæus obviously wants to deemphasize this deficiency, for he tosses the comment away parenthetically and then names only one item. But the item he names, as Cicely Howell has shown in her study of the Kibworth region of Leicester, was an “essential commodity” in pre-industrial England that was avidly “used and reused” (95, 167). In the Yale commentary, Surtz supposes that this reference to the importing of iron has some natural relation to England, adding that “By 1450 at latest, the iron industry appears to have recovered completely from the effects of the Black Death... the demand for iron increased; so much so that in spite of improved techniques production remained unable to meet the demand on the home market” (427). Whatever is true of England, the need for iron



would prove particularly keen for an entirely agrarian society like that of the Utopians, who would have to make most of their farming implements out of iron. Furthermore, a page later Raphael himself says “aurum argentumque... quis non videt quam longe infra ferrum sunt” (“Gold and silver, who does not see how far beneath iron they are”), meaning that gold and silver are of much less utility, and therefore value, than iron. To say, then, that the Utopians lacked nothing besides iron is a deliberately ironic understatement that, I believe, More expects his readers to pick up on, for this means that, whether the Utopian citizenry or only the state handles money, the daily lives and activities of all the islanders are dependent on a money economy.

Raphael next explains that, through their commercial activities, the Utopians have accumulated a large supply of precious metals than “credi possit” (“could be believed”) and offers what he takes to be the main reason why:

in rem unam totum illum thesaurum quem habent domi servant, uti aut extremis in periculis, aut in subitis praesidio sit, potissimum quo milites externos (quos libentius quam suos cives obiciunt discrimini) immodico stipendio conducant, gnari multitudine pecuniae hostes ipsos plerumque... inter se committi.

They keep the entire treasure they have for one reason, as a protection in extreme or unexpected dangers, especially so that they can purchase, at outrageous prices, mercenaries (whom they gladly expose to danger [rather] than their own citizens), knowing that a great deal of money will generally set their own enemies against one another. (146)

Here again the key statement that works to undermine the case Hythlodæus making about the virtues of his communist state is merely parenthetical, that the Utopians use their heaps of wealth to buy mercenaries so that their own citizens do not have to go to war. This statement

is suspicious on two counts. First, it again emphasizes how, even if individual Utopian citizens do not handle money, their wellbeing and the high quality of their lives is dependent on a money economy. Second, especially when read in the overall context of Book 2, it sounds quite fanciful. After all, what Raphael is suggesting here is that this fabulously wealthy state cares more about the good of its own citizens than about its own wealth or its claims abroad. This is, of course, a central claim for Hythlodæus, but surely any reader who is paying close attention to Raphael's conversation and narrative account has had serious suspicions by this point. It is all so neat, so tidy, so comfortably planned out to fashion a place and a people sealed off hermetically from the evils of Europe. This account of how the treasure the Utopians keep isolates them from war recalls all the other claims Raphael makes about the island that seem too perfect, too unqualified, as when he asserts that the Utopians alone know the channels that allow ships to reach their island or when he notes that all animals are slaughtered by slaves outside the city because "neque suos cives patiuntur assuescere laniatu animalium, cuius usu, clementiam humanissimum naturae nostrae affectum paulatim deperire putant" ("They do not allow their own citizens to become accustomed to the slaughter of animals, [as] they think that on account of this act our most truly human feeling, compassion, gradually wastes away") (108, 138). A pre-industrial society that was able to dig channels fifteen miles in width to isolate its people and that could so arrange its quotidian workings such that citizens did not have to witness the slaughter of animals, not to mention that this society arranged itself thus in order to protect its citizens' delicate sense of compassion, would be a wonder indeed (110).

In the passage where Raphael discusses how the Utopians use their money, the apparatus of the text itself rather oddly nudges the reader to doubt what the narrator is saying and to observe how the author is trying to communicate. The text of *Utopia*, that is, was from its first printing accompanied by numerous marginal glosses that denote a change or subject

or that simply comment on what is being discussed. Although Peter Giles, in his letter to Busleyden, takes the credit for adding these glosses, the Cambridge *Utopia* notes that “On the title page of the 1517 edition... they are attributed to Erasmus” (27 n.23, Ackroyd 175, Romm 177). Whether it was Giles or Erasmus or both, whoever added these glosses was close to More and must have had a strong sense of what he was trying to communicate in *Utopia*. This unknown glosser adds his most surprising and enlightening gloss at the passage in *Utopia* currently under consideration, where Hythlodæus is describing the Utopians use of money and their attitudes toward it. Typically, the glosses note what is being discussed or praise the society of the Utopians almost in echo of Hythlodæus. Hence, when Hythlodæus relates that the Utopians have no taverns or brothels, the glosser exclaims, “O sanctam rempublicam, et vel Christianis imitandam!” (“O saintly commonwealth, worthy to be imitated even by Christians!”) (144). Here, however, the glosser makes a rare move and comments directly Raphael Hythlodæus and what he is saying. Perhaps realizing that he has underlined the Utopians need for money too definitely, Raphael changes tack abruptly and tries to argue that, although the Utopians have this massive wealth, they hold it lightly, even scornfully. This fact, he says, he witnessed with his own eyes:

hanc ob causam inaestimabilem thesaurum servant, at non ut thesaurum tamen, sed ita habent, quomodo me narrare profecto deterret pudor, metuentem ne fidem oratio non sit habitura, quod eo iustius vereor, quo magis mihi sum conscius, nisi vidissem praesens, quam aegre potuissem ipse perduci ut alteri idem recensenti crederem.

For this reason they maintain their infinite treasure, but they do not hold it as a treasure, but in such a way that – my sense of shame deters me from telling you how [they do hold it] – as I am afraid that my account may seem false; I am all the more afraid of this as I am the more aware that I myself would scarcely have been able to

be convinced to believe someone relating it to me, if I had not myself been there and seen it. (149).

I have tried in this translation to bring out something of the torturous syntax that Raphael employs here, but this is an approximation.<sup>16</sup> This sentence is pleonastic in the extreme and is an awkward accumulation of subordinate clauses that seem to lead only to more subordinate clauses. The syntax itself, then, suggests that Raphael might be up to something here. One begins to understand these syntactic hesitations better when Raphael goes on to explain that, by prior planning, the Utopians use some of the gold and silver they do not spend to make chamber pots, chains for slaves, and toys for children (148). This is done deliberately to devalue the worth of gold and silver in the minds of Utopia's citizens (148-150).

What is most telling, however, is the marginal note provided as a gloss for this demanding sentence. Whoever made this gloss, when he encountered the above sentence responded with the exclamation, "O artificem!" which the Yale *Utopia* translates as "O artful rogue!" and the Cambridge *Utopia* as "O crafty fellow!" (151, 149). In context, this comment can only refer to Raphael Hythlodæus and what he has just said about how he saw with his own eyes, in his own person, the Utopians using their gold and silver for the meanest purposes. And yet the commentaries are mute on this point. In fact, the only scholar who even takes this gloss into consideration as to the meaning of *Utopia* is Peter Ackroyd (175). I will reserve discussing his take on this insertion, however, until a little later in this study. Here I will simply set forth what I think this gloss means and why. First, it is clear that

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<sup>16</sup> For a much more basic sense of what Raphael is saying here, but one that does not well communicate how he is saying it, consider the translation of the Cambridge *Utopia*: "For this reason, therefore, they have a vast treasure in reserve, but they do not keep it like a treasure. I'm really quite ashamed to tell you how they do keep it, because you probably won't believe me; I would not have believed it myself if someone else had simply told me about it, but I was there and saw it with my own eyes" (149). This is a very elegant translation of a sentence that is not at all elegant. For one thing, it is essential to note that Hythlodæus strings his sentence along by adverbial, relative, and participial clauses, which are difficult to reproduce in English but which suggest that Hythlodæus is deliberately obfuscating what he is saying in this sentence.

“artificem” here does bear a meaning that creates suspicion about what Raphael is saying. Literally, of course, an “artifex” is a “skilled worker” or “craftsperson,” someone who is a capable “maker” or “contriver” of anything. The word “artifex” can be used straightforwardly to describe someone like a carpenter, an “artifex lignorum,” or its meaning may be extended to refer to such “craftspersons” as orators and actors and singers, as in Suetonius’s well-known account of the words Nero muttered to himself as he prepared to die, “qualis artifex pereo!” (“What an artist dies in me!”) (49). The word sometimes carries with a sense that accentuates the cunning or craftiness of the “artifex” and thus her or his falseness. More himself uses the word dexterously in this sense in his translation of Lucian’s *Philopseudes* in his own cunning description of an exorcist: “Syrus ille ex Palestina, qui harum rerum artifex est, quam multos mortales suscipiat, qui ad lunam concidunt, oculosque distorqueant, spumaque os oppleant: quos tamen erigit ac sanos remittit, magna accepta mercede, diris eos malis liberans” (“That Syrian from Palestine, who is cunning in these sorts of things, receives so many people who fall down before the moon and roll their eyes around and fill up their mouths with froth, and yet he straightens them out and sends them back healthy, after accepting a large fee, freeing them from fearful evils”) (16). In context, More is mirroring Lucian’s own verbal subtleties and is trying to have the speaker slightly undermine himself through his inadvertent word choice about the Syrian quack, just as More has Raphael do when he relates what he owed to his family. More is even more subtle than Lucian, though. Whereas Lucian has the detail about the Syrian accepting a large fee at the end of his sentence so that the reader will not miss it, and it is this detail that activates the more pejorative connotations of “artifex,” More tucks that detail quietly into an absolute phrase and ends the sentence with an apparently positive description of the “artifex.” More likewise calls up the more pejorative senses of “artifex” when in one of his letters he refers to Martin

Luther as “malorum machinator et artifex,” (“the engineer and contriver of evils”) (L143.205).

At its core, though, the word “artifex” refers to someone with the capacity to “make” or to “invent” something that was not there before. Suetonius’s Nero mourns on the world’s behalf because he knows that, when he dies, along with him will die all his as yet unseen artistic inventions. This would seem to be the primary sense in which the glosser means the term here. The main evidence for that claim derives from the fact that the glosser, just a couple of pages later, uses the Greek synonym for this term, “ὁ τεχνίτην,” in precisely the same sense, case, and grammatical function that he had before used “O artificem!” (152). Here Hythlodæus is wrapping up his story of the Anemolian ambassadors, who try to impress the Utopians by wearing expensive jewelry and clothing (150-152). This attempt, however, ends with the Utopians, far from being impressed, assuming the Anemolian ambassadors to be slaves and bowing to the humblest members of their party as the ambassadors they were anticipating (152). Hythlodæus rounds off his artful account with a child mocking an Anemolian ambassador and his mother telling the child to be quiet because “est opinor quispiam e morionibus legatorum” (“he is, I think, one of the ambassadors’ fools”) (152). It is at this point that the glosser inserts the marginal comment, “ὁ τεχνίτην!,” which is the precise Greek synonym of the Latin “artificem.” In both of these cases, it would seem that the glosser is calling attention to the inventiveness of Hythlodæus’s account, but in such a way that shows Hythlodæus to be not a reporter of events but a contriver or maker of them. One might understand the second gloss merely to refer to how skillfully and creatively Hythlodæus has related the story of the Anemolians, which is one of the most memorable illustrative anecdotes of the entire account, but the first gloss, “O artificem,” places direct emphasis on and must be read in relation to the fact that Hythlodæus claims to have seen all

of this with his own eyes. What can this mean other than that Hythlodæus is in some sense fabricating his account according to his own whims and needs?

Here at last I come to be the heart of *Utopia*'s mystery – that, although Raphael Hythlodæus's account of the Utopians is productive of the most trenchant criticisms of contemporary Europe, it is also in some robust sense a fabrication. I will explore the extent and nature of this fabrication as this chapter proceeds, but here I should pause and try to elucidate this fundamentally Lucianic attribute of *Utopia*. Lucian, particularly in his *Philopseudes*, the dialogue for which More in his letter to Ruthall professes the greatest admiration, implicates his several narrators of tales and even the main narrator of the dialogue in lies and fabrications that suit their own worldviews. More evidently discerned this technique and approved of it, as the evidence that he is creating a narrator whose account is manifestly improbable and problematic is overwhelming. Here and there, scholars have obviously noted the unreliability of Raphael's account, and I will discuss their work in suitable places. Inexplicably, however, no scholar has worked with the patent unreliability of Hythlodæus's account critically enough to follow it through to its logical consequences and to allow its insincerity and speciousness to have their full explanatory power on the text as a whole. Hence, no scholar, to my knowledge, has fully elucidated how the problems that arise in Raphael's account of the island of Utopia may be contextualized and, in most instances, explained when they are referred back to the narrator himself.

Take, for instance, the case I have been developing for some pages now. When More has Hythlodæus discuss his obligations to his family and put them in unambiguously monetary terms, he is suggesting both that Hythlodæus does not truly conceive of his life without currency and that he does not even want to do so, in spite of his indications to the contrary. Perhaps More even means to suggest that Hythlodæus is not capable of conceiving of human life without money. This insight becomes significant when one realizes that,

although Hythlodæus inveighs against money throughout *Utopia* and claims that the Utopians live without it, he also reveals in no uncertain terms that the Utopian way of life is utterly dependent upon and intermingled with money. One learns, then, the same thing both from what Raphael says about himself and what he says about the island of Utopia, that he cannot truly imagine human society functioning without money. This is not a criticism of communism. Some form of collectivist, moneyless society may or may not work for human beings. The point is that Hythlodæus has not found or imagined one that works even though he claims to have done so. The point is also that in Hythlodæus the reader encounters exactly the sort of philosopher Lucian pokes fun at in *Necromantia* and that More warns against in his letter to Ruthall: the philosopher who arrogantly teaches one thing but seems to believe its opposite, if one judges by what else he says and by his behavior.

Moreover, the way More undermines Hythlodæus closely parallels and arguably derives from the way Lucian undermines his own narrator in *Philopseudes*, a dialogue that is rarely discussed in connection with *Utopia* but one for which More expressed both moral and aesthetic approbation in his letter to Ruthall. Here is Karen Ní Mheallaigh's succinct and effective summary of this dialogue, which is rich in story and characterization, but simply in its plot:

the principal speaker, Tychiades, discusses with Philocles the nature of those who love to tell lies. As proof that such perversity exists, Tychiades repeats for Philocles the wild fabrications he has just heard from a group of philosophers and other intellectuals, who were gathered around the sick-bed of the eminent philosopher Eucrates. (95)

This narrator, Tychiades, who claims to be so appalled by the lies and gullibility of learned men, in more ways than one shows himself by the dialogue's end to be as enamored of tall



tales and stories of miraculous healings as are any of his uncritical interlocutors (Ní Mheallaigh 99-100, Ogden 484, Perry 234). Thus, in the words of Ní Mheallaigh, Lucian betrays his potential “authorial presence” in *Tychiades* so that he can show himself to be “winking slyly through the mask at the reader, exposing *Tychiades* as a persona he uses, so that he may have his cake and eat it - indulge in writing fiction, whilst maintaining a sophisticated, skeptical distance from it” (101). When he was writing *Utopia*, just as when Erasmus was writing his *Encomium Moriae*, More attempted to create the same sort of ironic distance from his characters using many of the same techniques Lucian commonly uses. Evidence for this claim comes not merely from the many passages I will examine in this study that point to More’s own wink, but, again, from More’s own words in his letter to Ruthall.

Recall that, in his letter, More praises the “Socratica ironia” of *Philopseudes* (4). After all, properly speaking Socratic irony is the pose of ignorance the Athenian philosopher displayed in order to elicit responses from his interlocutors. That sense of the term “Socratica ironia” does not apply well to *Philopseudes*, however, where the speakers are all forthcoming with their stories and the narrator is straightforwardly and bluntly skeptical of what they say. In all likelihood, More means something different by “Socratic irony” than a stance of pretended ignorance intended to get others talking in his letter to Ruthall. What More probably means is brought to light in Gregory Vlastos’s influential essay on the development of the term “ironia” from its earliest pejorative uses in Attic Greek down through the way it is “laundered” and adapted by Roman orators and theorists and then passed on through the literary tradition (84). As Vlastos puts it,

When Cicero, who loves to make transliterated Greek enrich his mother tongue, produces in this fashion the new Latin word, *ironia*, the import has an altogether different tone. Laundered and deodorized, it now betokens the height of urbanity,

elegance, and good taste... : ‘urbana etiam dissimulatio est, cum alia dicuntur ac sentias... Socratem opinor in hac ironia dissimulantiaque longe lepore et humanitate omnibus praestitisse.’ (84)

The Latin Vlastos quotes here is from Cicero’s *De Oratore* (2.67), and may be rendered as follows: “Insincerity is also refined, when other things are said than what you intend... I think that Socrates far surpassed everyone else with wit and culture in this sort of irony or dissembling.” This simpler sense of the term “Socratica ironia,” Vlastos says, “speech used to express something contrary to what is said,” is the sense that shaped “the sensibility of modern Europe” and is probably close to what More means when he is writing to Ruthall (84). The significant takeaway here is that the sort of irony that Lucian employs in his *Philopseudes* is much closer to the ironic distancing of the author from his characters, the sort which Ní Mheallaigh notes and spells out in her interpretation of Lucian. If this is the “Socratic irony” that More himself perceived in Lucian, as it seems to be, then one should scarcely be surprised to find that More is winking at his own readers through his depiction of Hythlodæus, establishing his own ironic distance from his character and hardly using him, as more than one interpreter has imagined, as a “mouthpiece” for his own views (Wegemer 288). Furthermore, More’s use of this sort of irony would fit well with his reforming and educative intentions for *Utopia*, for only those who read most closely and critically will discern More’s wink and thereby develop the sort of critical faculties he thinks are so needed in the church of his day. On this reading of More’s intentions, the glosser becomes More’s ideal reader, one who notices what More is up to in his depiction of Hythlodæus and so sees through the beautiful fabrications of the socially disagreeable, haughty philosopher.

*The Serpent and the Suckfish*

More asks his readers to see through his narrator time and time again. Closely connected to his indications that Hythlodæus is misleading or confounded in his views on money are his many suggestions that, while Hythlodæus condemns human pride in no uncertain terms, he is also himself eaten up with pride and its attendant vices. For, as Thomas I. White has argued convincingly, Hythlodæus does not truly see money as the ultimate source of human evil and conflict, but something darker and deeper and much more in keeping with More's Christian worldview: "It is on the heels of this and similar remarks against money that he then labels pride as the main problem, defines it in economic terms, points out the impossibility of its extirpation, and stresses the importance of institutions for its control" (343). That is, a more nuanced understanding of Raphael's position is that it is pride working through money that is the final source of human grief. Hythlodæus emphasizes this point early in his account of Utopia, "*nempe avidum ac rapacem, aut timor carendi facit, in omni animantium genere, aut in homine sola reddit superbia, quae gloriae sibi ducit superflua rerum ostentatione ceteros antecellere, quod vitii genus in Utopiensium institutis nullum omnino locum habet*" ("A fear of shortage produces greed and rapacity in every other kind of animal, [but] in humans pride alone brings it about, [pride] which prompts [people] for their own glory to outdo others in gratuitous displays of their possessions; this sort of vice has no place whatsoever in the institutions of the Utopians") (136-138). Money, possessions, gems, pearls, diamonds, all the usual currencies and goods that denote wealth to the onlooker, these have become vehicles in European society, Hythlodæus maintains, for the manifestation of human pride.

White goes on to lay out very efficiently how central pride is to Raphael's arguments over the course of both books,

We might say, then, that if the first part of the framing discussion... argues that the most effective guarantor of the common good is not good counselors but the

fundamental institutions in society, especially common property, then the second part... provides the rationale for this notion: since it is folly to trust the good will of monarchs, counselors, or citizens because all men are subject to pride and it is impossible to eradicate it, the best anyone can hope for, then, is to limit the material harm pride can do by the shape of society's institutions. (343)

What Hythlodæus presents in the island of Utopia, then, and here again things seem far too neat, is an entire society that has learned to cope with the conflagration of human pride by depriving it of its fuel. Without differences in income and without currency and other means of flaunting wealth, human pride, though always present, subsides and becomes more of a dormant rather than an active force in human affairs. So essential to Raphael's thinking is the success of the Utopians in combatting and suppressing pride that he ends his entire account of the island with a vehement denunciation of this sin and the toll it has taken on Europe, remarking how it measures its own prosperity by the poverty of others and finally deeming it a "Averni serpens, mortalium pererrans pectora ne meliorem vitae capessant viam, velut remora retrahit ac remoratur" ("a serpent of hell, slithering through human breasts so that they do not undertake a better way of life; like a suckfish [pride] drags them back and delays them") (246). The very vehemence of Raphael's language here suggests his loathing of human pride in the abstract and the effects it has on human relations. That the Utopians, he concludes, have found a way to manage this serpent and suckfish is the greater part of their blessedness.

Hythlodæus himself, however, seems to have found no comparable way to manage his own individual pride. However artfully he inveighs against it in others, a genuine "overreaching and intellectual pride" is present in nearly everything he says (Wooden 54). This fact about the Portuguese Socrates is first suggested through his association with the

Cynic philosopher of Lucian's *Cynicus*. Avery has found a fascinating connection here between the two characters:

Wegemer points out that the Cynic's pride in not wearing shoes, symbolic of his supposed autonomy from civilized society, ironically contrasts with his need for civilization's maintenance of conditions for good roads (63). A similar characteristic in Raphael appears when we learn that in his insistence upon operating independently, he narrowly escapes with his life, thanks to an unexpected encounter with Portuguese ships (11). (228)

The passage that Avery is referring to is the closest any character comes in all of *Utopia* to criticizing Hythlodæus for his overreaching pride. It occurs when Petrus Aegidius is telling Morus about Hythlodæus before introducing the two. Petrus says that Hythlodæus, on his last voyage with Vespucci, had with some difficulty persuaded Vespucci to allow him to be left behind with a garrison of twenty-four men at the farthest point to which their travels took them (44). Petrus then relates that Hythlodæus begged for this "privilege" because of his attitude as expressed in those aphorisms, discussed above, which one always heard him saying, that the road to heaven is the same length wherever one begins from and that the sky covers the dead person who has no grave (44). Petrus says of the attitude revealed in these sayings, "quæ mens eius, nisi deus ei propitius adfuisset, nimio fuerat illi constatura... mirabili tandem fortuna... pervenit in Calicut, ubi repertis commode Lusitanorum navibus, in patriam denique præter spem revehitur" ("If God had not been favorable to him, this frame of mind of his would have cost him dearly... At last by a remarkable good fortune... he came to Calicut, where he conveniently found Portuguese ships and at finally was brought back into his own country beyond all hope") (44-46). One wonders, of course, why it was such an unusually good fortune to escape the island of Utopia for European Portugal, what with its infixed pride and money economy, but I will return to that point presently. Here, what is of

note is, as Avery writes, that Hythlodæus is so singularly and even arrogantly independent in how he conducts his life that he very nearly loses that life and the last rites that any Christian ought to undergo before he meets his maker. This attitude is so objectionable that even Petrus, who is everywhere else a devotee of Hythlodæus, mentions and criticizes it. As with Lucian's Cynic, Hythlodæus clings to his autonomy too intensely and treats his own person with greater fondness than he ought.

This fact comes out most clearly, again, when More puts Hythlodæus in conversation with Morus and brings out their different ways of thinking about advising kings in court. After Hythlodæus has given a long speech to demonstrate that the sort of advice he will offer to kings is bound to be rejected, Morus tries to take Raphael in hand and show him that his problem is that he does not recognize and yield to the context in which he is speaking. His tone is all wrong, his style of disputing is wrong, his directness and lack of tact are wrong. Morus says, “*apud amicos in familiari colloquio non insuavis est haec philosophia scholastica. ceterum in consiliis principum, ubi res magnae magna auctoritate aguntur, non est his rebus locus*” (“When you are involved in an intimate conversation with your friends, this scholastic, philosophical [style of yours] is fine, but in the councils of princes, where great matters are conducted authoritatively, there is no place for these kinds of ideas”) (94). Morus then goes on to offer his most dazzling speech on the nature of political life as a dramatic play being performed before the people, and in so doing he characterizes Raphael as follows:

*alioquin dum agitur quaedam Plauti comoedia, nugantibus inter se vernulis, si tu in proscaenium prodeas habitu philosophico et recenseas ex Octavia locum in quo Seneca disputant cum Nerone, nonne praestiterit egisse mutam personam quam aliena recitando talem fecisse tragicomodiam?*

Otherwise, while some comedy of Plautus is being played and the household slaves are goofing off [on stage], if you advance yourself onto the stage in a philosopher's costume and rehearse the passage from *Octavia* in which Seneca is arguing with Nero – would it not be better to play a silent role rather than to turn the play into a sort of tragicomedy by reciting things unrelated [to the original play]? (96)

This passage says a great deal about how Morus, who has been conversing with Hythlodæus for some time now, has come to think of the man he formerly thought a mere “naucerus.” He is politely funny in his rebuke, just as he was with the porter who allowed Constantine to escape his prison, but his rebuke also has teeth. In truth, this characterization of Hythlodæus borders on the absurd and thus on presenting the Portuguese traveler as ridiculous, for who would be so brazen as to interrupt a play that is already being conducted and to “correct” the performers and the audience by performing – on his own – a play that in his judgment is superior to the comedy already being performed? Only maniacally proud and self-absorbed person could perform such an act.

But Morus has more to add, and his next point comes even closer to suggesting the pride he perceives in Hythlodæus. First, Morus says something that is easily overlooked but that gets at his understanding of Hythlodæus rather pointedly: “sic est in republica, sic in consultationibus principum” (“So it is in the commonwealth, so it is in the councils of princes”) (96). Morus is here urging Hythlodæus to think on what he already knows. Yes, he is saying, princes and their advisors are corrupted by pride. Yes, they are often acting from wrongful motives for wrongful ends when they discourse one with another. But that is, Morus, says, the way it is, and the essential thing for a would-be advisor to recognize is his own place in public affairs and what he can realistically accomplish. Morus then offers an image of Raphael's outlook that carries greater and greater meaning as this conversation proceeds. He tells Hythlodæus that he should not abandon the commonwealth just because

he cannot remake it entirely and then reinforces this idea with an image that must have stung: “non... in tempestate navis destituenda est quoniam ventos inhibere non possis” (“In a storm, a ship should not be abandoned just because you cannot control the winds” (96). Here Morus is pointing clearly at the most significant flaw in Raphael’s thinking, that he refuses to recognize his own limitations. Since Raphael is indisputably a sailor, moreover, and has presumably weathered more storms than Morus, the king’s “oratore,” it borders on being an insult, as if Morus were rebuking Hythlodæus for not having learned more about life from the trade he has practiced for so long (40). What makes this comment so pointed, though, is that it contains an obvious allusion to the story of Jesus calming the winds and the sea, as told in Matthew 8 and Mark 4. Morus is asserting to the dreamer-philosopher that he cannot effect such great change as he seems to think he can. He is not Jesus. And because he is not Jesus, he needs to realize what he can genuinely accomplish and commit himself to those accomplishments for the good of the commonwealth (96). The outlook expressed in Morus here and passim is always an unpretentious looking out for the good of others and the state as a whole.

Morus has one further point. He advises Hythlodæus that he should not take on princes and their advisors so directly and with such little tact, “sed obliquo ductu conandum est atque adnitendum tibi uti pro tua virili omnia tractes commode, et quod in bonum nequis vertere efficias saltem ut sit quam minime malum” (“But by an indirect course you must try and even strive with all your strength to manage everything tactfully, and what you are not able to turn to good you should at least make as little bad as possible”) (96). This indirect course of action Morus not only exemplifies in his periphrastic verbs, which, characteristically, elide the person who is doing the action, but also justifies by an oblique appeal to Jesus, this time to his second coming, “nam ut omnia bene sint fieri non potest, nisi omnes boni sint, quod ad aliquot abhinc annos adhuc non exspecto” (“For that all things



should be good cannot happen unless all people become good, and this I do not expect [to happen] for some years from now”) (96). Owing, perhaps, to what Raisch explains as More’s desire to have Greek themes dominate his work, he holds off naming the time when all people will become good, but the allusion is still there (931-932). No pagan would have gone on to add the clause “quod ad aliquot abhinc annos adhuc non exspecto,” and yet it makes sense within the Christian worldview that is clearly shared by these three interlocutors. Hence, Morus is once again advising Hythlodæus to accept his limitations and to recognize that the only person who might bring about the sort of change he is constantly advocating for is a divine person.

In his response to Morus, Hythlodæus betrays the extent of his egoism and the pride that is so characteristic of philosophers, in the thinking of Thomas More. Rather than focusing on Morus central appeal to him to try to do as much good as possible for others through his experience and intelligence, Raphael, again characteristically, focuses on how such a tack would affect him individually and how it simply cannot agree with his own conception of himself “vera loqui,” “speaking the truth,” “hac... arte nihil fieret aliud quam ne dum aliorum furori mederi studeo ipse cum illis insaniam. nam si vera loqui volo talia loquar necesse est. ceterum falsa loqui sitne philosophi nescio; certe non est meum” (“By this art of yours nothing else would come about other than that while I am trying to heal the madness of others I myself will go mad with them. If I indeed wish to speak the truth, I must say things of this sort. Moreover, whether it is the part of the philosopher to speak false things I don’t know, [but I know] it’s certainly not my part”) (96-98). In just 35 Latin words, Hythlodæus manages to refer directly to himself no less than seven times, and his deafness to or ignorance of the points Morus has just made shows that he cannot look outside himself for a justification to give himself over to political work. When he does look at others, furthermore, all he can see are the folly and the pride that his magical island of Utopia not so

unpredictably is able to quash, and then he sees himself again in outstanding contrast to everyone else. Here in this passage, for instance, he presents himself not as a mere advisor, but as a eager healer, “*mederi studeo,*” who is needed because the others “*aliorum*” he encounters have all gone mad. This reference may reveal that Hythlodæus was listening very closely to Morus. In particular, he heard Morus say that he was not Jesus, and so in his response Hythlodæus sets out to correct that obvious misperception. He is very much like Jesus, Raphael suggests, in that he heals those who are raving mad and restores them to sanity, or he would, at least, if they would listen to him.

Hythlodæus is most like Jesus in his teachings, or so he suggests as his speech proceeds. First, Hythlodæus discusses how he points out the straight and narrow way to those who are on the broad road to destruction, just as Jesus does in Matthew 7. Hythlodæus puts this idea in a way, contrary to Jesus’s, that highlights both the folly of those on the path to destruction and his own prudence in trying to correct them: “*quod ad eos qui statuissent secum ruere diversa via praecipites, iucundus esse non potest qui revocet ac praemonstret pericula*” (“The one who recalls those who have resolved to rush recklessly down a dangerous path and points out the dangers [of their course] cannot be likeable to them” (98). That I am not merely stretching this allusion to fit it to my own reading is evinced by what Hythlodæus says next. After implying that what makes his own doctrines seem so strange is mere custom, he asserts, “*si omittenda sunt omnia tamquam insolentia atque absurda quaecumque perversi mores hominum fecerunt ut videri possint aliena, dissimulemus oportet apud Christianos pleraque omnia quae Christus docuit*” (“If we were to exclude all the arrogant and nonsensical things the twisted customs of human beings have made seem alien to us, we would have to ignore almost all the things Christ taught”) (98). So, princes and their advisors ignore Hythlodæus, just as the Jewish leaders ignored Jesus, not because he is wrong and they can prove him so, but because custom blinds them to the truth of what he is

saying. Hythlodæus presses this identification of himself with Christ more than once. In the same vein as his argument above, Hythlodæus says that the greater part of Christ's teachings "ab istis moribus longe est alienior quam mea fuit oratio" ("is far more distant from those [common] customs than was my speech" (98). Then, in yet another instance of Raphael characterizing himself positively by negatively characterizing others, he explains that no one recognizes the strangeness of Christ's teaching because preachers in general, "contionatores," have accommodated it to the culture in which they preach, adjusting the demands of Christ conveniently to make them fit how people actually live (98). This accommodation, says Hythlodæus, is the only reason the shocking teachings of Jesus have made their way as far as they have into the European bloodstream. His teachings too, and in particular his vision of a people living at peace in a kingdom established for the good of all, also be realizable in the world if only those in power would throw off the yoke of custom and listen to him.

What is to be made of a character who holds in contempt all princes, all their advisors, even all the poor preachers of Europe, as madmen and liars? And what if this same character should liken his teachings, his potential activity in the world, and his rejection by others to no less a figure than Jesus Christ? And what if, as a justification for making all these proclamations, he should ground his authority for his teachings on his claim that he lived for more than five years on a faraway island named "Nowhere," where all the ideas he had been advocating for were entirely realized by a morally superior people (104)? This is, in fact, the Hythlodæus given to the readers, and it is essential to note that, although he presents many of his radical ideas from the very beginning of the dialogue, his ultimate grounding for the truth of those ideas rests in his experience of the island of Utopia, as he tells Morus near the end of the first book (104). At this point in the work, Hythlodæus has several times mentioned the necessity of a community sharing all things in common in order to function well and morally

(102). Morus finally responds to this assertion by saying, in essence, that he simply cannot imagine a state of affairs working out in practice. Raphael's response is crucial:

Non miror... sic videri tibi, quippe cui eius imago rei, aut nulla succurrit, aut falsa. verum si in Utopia fuisses mecum, moresque eorum atque instituta vidisses praesens, ut ego feci, qui plus annis quinque ibi vixi, neque umquam voluissem inde discedere, nisi ut novum illum orbem proderem, tum plane faterere, populum recte institutum nusquam alibi te vidisse quam illic.

I'm not surprised it seems thus to you, especially because you have either no image or else a false one of [such a] state. But if you had been with me in Utopia and had seen in person their customs and institutions – as I myself did, living there for more than five years, nor would I ever have wanted to leave that place except that I [wished] to reveal that new world – then you would have confessed openly that you had nowhere else seen a people rightly governed besides there. (104)

This passage is another one of those places that takes the reader right into the beating heart of More's *Utopia*, at least insofar as its narrator is concerned. Here Hythlodæus makes an argumentative move that, as Sylvester has shown and I will discuss shortly, he makes time and again when he wishes to authorize his teachings: he appeals to an experience he had while travelling, of which experience he is the only witness and which is, of course, not reproducible. Surtz has pointed out the peculiarity of this move,

Hythlodæus' answer [to Morus] is practical, not theoretical. He points to the res, the reality: Utopia, a supremely successful communistic state. As a philosopher, he should have met More's objections on the theoretical level. A philosopher does not solve the problem of Achilles and the tortoise by walking" (382).

This appeal, therefore, in which Hythlodæus emphasizes the character of his experience in contrast to Morus lack of experience, points up his weakness as a philosopher. This weakness is pointed indeed, as More has the would-be philosopher strongly accentuating the first-person nature of his evidence when he says “ut ego feci,” “as I myself did,” for the use of “ego” here is entirely unnecessary except to accent the person who had the experience. Morus may be a learned and capable administrator, he suggests, but he lacks the experience and therefore the imagination to see what is truly best in governing. Ultimately, this is the sole source of Raphael’s authority to be a critic and guide to Europe.

*A Judas and a New Ulysses*

Even as he has Hythlodæus making his most blatant appeal for authority, the author More further undermines him or at least calls him into question through his language. The most interesting term Hythlodæus uses in this attempt to authorize himself comes when he tells why he left the island of Utopia: “ut novum illum orbem proderem” (“to make that new world known”) (104). The Latin verb “prodere” has as its basic meaning, “to put something forth,” “to exhibit,” or even “to produce” something. Hence, it may simply mean, as I have translated it above, “to reveal” something or “to make something known.” This is probably the sense in which Hythlodæus means the term, as he here likens himself unambiguously to the noble philosopher from Plato’s *Republic* who, having escaped the cave of shadows and seen by the light of the sun, nevertheless returns to the world of darkness to liberate those who sit chained in the gloom (514-517). But the verb “prodere” has other strong senses. It is often related to “offspring,” something that one has “produced” or given birth to. Hence, in the *Aeneid*, Jove says that Aeneas is supposed to “genus alto a sanguine Teucris/ proderet” (“produce a race from Teucer’s high blood”) (230-231). The verb “prodere,” then, contrary to Raphael’s claims, may suggest that the island of Utopia has sprung from the mind of Hythlodæus in the heat of argument like Athena from the mind of Zeus. An even more

common meaning of the verb “prodere,” though, is “to betray” someone or something. This meaning of the word is attested throughout the Latin literature, but nowhere perhaps so memorably, especially for someone like Thomas More, as in the Vulgate, where this word is often applied to Judas Iscariot as the “proditor” or “betrayor” of Jesus. Consider, for instance, Mark 14:10, which reads, “et Judas Iscariotes, unus de duodecim, abiit ad summos sacerdotes ut proderet eum illis” (“And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went away to the high priests in order to betray him [Jesus] to them.” Perhaps, then, as I argue below, the author More is suggesting that Hythlodæus has in some way betrayed the island of Utopia. Whether the author is suggesting that Hythlodæus invented the island or in some sense betrayed it, however, the nuances to this verb again raise the question of Raphael’s honesty. More might have easily chosen a different, less ambiguous verb to intimate Raphael’s relation to the island of Utopia. His choice of “prodere” hints that, in this most essential expression of Raphael’s mission statement, more is going on than the narrator intends.

In the second chapter of this study, I considered some of the different ways More likens or associates his narrator Hythlodæus to the figure of Ulysses. Like Ulysses, Hythlodæus has travelled the known and the unknown world and has seen many wondrous things in those travels. Like Ulysses, Hythlodæus returns telling a marvelous story. But, also like Ulysses, Hythlodæus is the sole witness to what he saw, not because he alone survived his journey, presumably, but because he and his companions have long since parted ways. More importantly, More links Hythlodæus, albeit tangentially, to Ulysses through the “cercopithecus,” and he has Petrus Aegidius explicitly liken Raphael to Ulysses, only to quickly correct himself and change the comparison to Plato (42-44). The Ulysses to which More likens Raphael in various ways throughout *Utopia* is not so much the heroic figure of the *Odyssey*, but the liar and conman of Juvenal’s satires. Juvenal, though, is not the only Greco-Roman writer to present Ulysses as a phony. Lucian also presents an Odysseus of this

sort in *A True Story*. Now, *A True Story* is not a work of Lucian that either More or Erasmus translated for their collection, but a good case can be made that More would have been familiar with it. First, it is likely that More and Erasmus chose not to translate this work of Lucian's because it was already so popular. C.R. Thompson has argued that, if one determines the popularity of a dialogue by the number of times it was printed, Lucian's *A True Story* was at the top of the list, noting that *A True Story* had been published in Latin four times before 1499 (858, 868). Thompson also demonstrates, citing evidence from Erasmus's letters, that at least Erasmus had read *A True Story* by 1499 (868). It is difficult to imagine the Dutchman not enthusing over this book to his English friend at some point in their work together on Lucian. Brian O'Brien, whose methods are more in keeping with my own, has shown some of the various ways in which More's *Utopia* seems to be drawing on Lucian's *A True Story* (17, 196, 207, 230, 241). With what I add to this evidence below, it seems quite safe to assume that More had read and understood *A True Story*.

Lucian's *A True Story* is, first and foremost, a travel narrative about an unnamed narrator who, intellectually curious and eager for adventure, sets off westward with a ship and crew. On their journey, the narrator and his fellow sailors have some of the strangest experiences recorded in literature, including sex with women made of vines, a trip to the moon, two years inside the belly of a whale, a visit to the Island of the Blessed, and many adventures besides. What is perhaps most striking about the entire work, however, is what the narrator says in the proem to his work before he gets into the adventure proper. Before he tells his story, the narrator frankly confesses that his story is an outright lie: “γράφω τοίνυν περὶ ὧν μήτε εἶδον μήτε ἔπαθον μήτε παρ’ ἄλλων ἐπιθόμην, ἔτι δὲ μήτε ὄλως ὄντων μήτε τὴν ἀρχὴν γενέσθαι δυναμένων. διὸ δεῖ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας μηδαμῶς πιστεύειν αὐτοῖς” (“And so I am writing about things I have not seen or experienced or learned from others, things which, indeed, that do not and even cannot exist. Therefore, whoever reads this should

in no way believe it”) (4). The narrator relates that he learned this style of storytelling from writers like Ctesias, who wrote much nonsense about India, a place he had never visited himself nor even heard reliable reports about, and Iambulus, who wrote many unbelievable things about places in the far sea (3). Many other writers, the narrator goes on, have written fanciful stories about travels to far off places, telling about imaginary beasts, wicked people, and, significantly, “βίων καινότητας,” “strange ways of life” (3).

The narrator then gives what he takes to be the ultimate source of these sorts of travel narratives in a passage which I mentioned earlier but which is so essential that I will now give it in full:

ἀρχηγὸς δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ διδάσκαλος τῆς τοιαύτης βωμολοχίας ὁ τοῦ Ὀμήρου Ὀδυσσεύς, τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἀλκίνοον διηγούμενος ἀνέμων τε δουλείαν καὶ μονοφθάλμους καὶ ὠμοφάγους καὶ ἀγρίους τινὰς ἀνθρώπους, ἔτι δὲ πολυκέφαλα ζῷα καὶ τὰς ὑπὸ φαρμάκων τῶν ἐταίρων μεταβολάς, οἷα πολλὰ ἐκεῖνος πρὸς ιδιώτας ἀνθρώπους τοὺς Φαίιακας ἑτερατεύσατο.

Their leader and a teacher of this sort of silliness is Homer’s Odysseus, when he tells to the members of Alkinous’s court stories about the servitude of winds and one-eyed creatures and cannibals and certain savage people, and about many-headed animals and how his companions were transformed [into different creatures] through magic drugs. That man [Odysseus] wowed the Phaiakans with many things of this kind. (3)

After reading accounts like those of Odysseus, Ctesias, and Iambulus, the narrator says he was not angry because they told lies, for, and signaling clearly that Lucian is the author of this text, even philosophers are fond of lying (4). It was not the others’ fondness for lying that provoked the narrator to pen his own fantastical travel narrative, but to see if he could be as successful a liar as they were and even surpass their performances by stating that he would at



least be honest about the fact that he was lying (4). These passages and the general logic of Lucian's proem, much like Juvenal's satirical depiction of Ulysses, provide a good explanation for why Petrus Aegidius is so reluctant to identify Raphael with Ulysses when he is introducing the Portuguese seafarer to Morus: Ulysses is the first in a long line of mariners from the literary tradition to return home with stories of his travels that are scarcely believable.

When he made his own contribution to what would nowadays be called the fictional universe of *Utopia*, the historical Peter Giles played with this association and even furthered it to imply that Raphael Hythlodæus belongs in the tradition of Ulysses, Ctesius, and Iambulus. In his brilliant letter to Busleyden, Giles takes on the persona of Petrus Aegidius, pretending that he was actually there when Hythlodæus was holding forth and that he greatly honors this adventurer, but, just like More and Lucian, Giles keeps his tongue firmly in his cheek as he is writing and undermines Raphael when he most seems to be supporting him. After telling to Busleyden that he was present at the meeting between Morus and Hythlodæus, Giles, or Petrus, says that it was

facile appareret eum non ea referre, quae narrantibus aliis didicisset, sed quae  
 comminus hausisset oculis, et in quibus non exiguum tempus esset versatus, homo  
 mea quidem sententia, regionum, hominum, et rerum experientia vel ipso Ulysse  
 superior, et qualem octingentis hisce annis nusquam arbitrer natum, ad quem collatus  
 Vespucius nihil vidisse putetur.

readily apparent that he [Hythlodæus] was not reporting things he had heard from others, but things he had in person taken in with his very own eyes and spent no little time [observing]. [He is] a man, at least in my opinion, [who] is superior to Ulysses in his knowledge of places, people, and human affairs, such a man, I judge, as has not

been born in the last eight hundred years, in comparison with whom Vespucci may be thought to have seen nothing. (24)

If one takes this statement as coming from the mouth of Petrus Aegidius, it is merely praise of the sort he lavishes on Hythlodæus in his description to Morus. Recognizing, however, that Giles was very much in on More's game and was, arguably, its next most significant player, one can see that in this passage he is indulging in hyperbole and embellishment of the most palpable sort. But Peter Giles apparently lacked Thomas More's sophistication as a writer. His hints to the reader are much more transparent, as when he writes, later in the same letter, "*et hercule crediderim Raphaelem ipsum minus in ea insula vidisse per omne quinquennium quod illic egit, quam in Mori descriptione videre liceat*" ("And, by heaven, I believe that Raphael himself saw less on that island in the five years he spent there than one is able to see in More's description") (24-26). One is able to discern something of More's own intentions from this sort of heavy-handed attempt on the part of Giles to imitate him and play along.

The first thing to note is how Giles overdoes the hyperbole where More would be much subtler. Hence, when Giles goes to emphasize what Hythlodæus will emphasize about himself later in the narrative, that he himself saw the island and its workings with his own eyes, Giles does so clumsily, piling on unrelated terms that evidently laugh and point at the notion that Hythlodæus saw anything himself, "*comminus hausisset oculis*," "he had drunk it all down with his eyes in close contact" with the Utopians. This awkward translation gets at the awkwardness of Giles's Latin, as he mixes at least three metaphors to call attention to and poke fun at the idea that Hythlodæus saw anything himself. And then there is the strange description of Raphael as the greatest man born in the last eight hundred years. Surtz addresses the befuddlement this seemingly precise number has caused and can only hypothesize that Giles means it to stand in for "a large quantity" (280). Because, though,

Giles's wink is so affected, one ought to be suspicious of his comparison of Hythlodæus to Ulysses and then to Vespucci. I have said enough in this study to explain why the comparison to Ulysses is not at all favorable, especially in this obviously tongue-in-cheek account. The association with Vespucci is equally unfavorable, and it is brought up more often (24, 44, 46). As Baker-Smith explains, More knew that, of the four voyages Amerigo Vespucci claimed to have made to the New World, "the first was a hoax," and so for Giles "to include in the comparison [with Ulysses] Amerigo Vespucci, with whom Raphael sails to the New World, suggests that Giles, like More, knew that at least some of his claimed travels were a hoax" (2500, 2532). Ackroyd is even more critical about the implications of associating Hythlodæus with Vespucci:

By the time *Utopia* was being composed... the voyages of Vespucci to the New World were dismissed as fabrication or as mendacious attempts to acquire glory... in the first and second decades of the sixteenth century... the manifold inconsistencies and incoherencies in Vespucci's supposed account led most people to suppose that he was a boastful liar... So for Hythlodæus to be described as the constant companion on his travels was in no sense a compliment. It might even imply that the island of *Utopia* was his own invention. (174-175)

Giles's hyperbole and comparison of Raphael Hythlodæus, therefore, to two infamous seafarers with dubious reputations make the question of Raphael's honesty of the utmost importance to this study, especially since a dishonest Hythlodæus, who is both a philosopher and a mariner and thus, conceivably, a liar twice over, would fit so well within a Lucianic aesthetic. What evidence is there, then, that Hythlodæus is less than trustworthy?

Considerable evidence, to be sure. First and foremost, of course, are the metatextual signals More sends his readers through his naming of people and places. McCutcheon

provides a helpful reminder of how More has crafted the names of things in this most crafty of works: “We know how cunningly More named the persons and places in Utopia, creating a paradoxical best- place, no-place where the chief city is a phantom, the river waterless, and the ruler without a people” (21). Perhaps the simplest example mentioned by McCutcheon that gets across what More was about with his name-game is the name of the main river on the island of Utopia. The word “Anydros,” is a coinage from ancient Greek that means “without water” or “waterless.” U-topia, then, is a “no-place” with a river that has no water, pointing for the learned to the obvious fact that Utopia nowhere exists. Likewise, the name of the principal speaker in *Utopia*, Hythlodæus, is variously translated to mean something like “well-learned in nonsense” or “nonsense-peddler” or, my favorite, “narrator of nonsense” (Kinney 430, McCutcheon 21, Rudat 41, Sylvester 283). Wolfgang E.H. Rudat contends that, if More had not named his principal speaker “expert in nonsense,” it would be unfair to associate Raphael<sup>17</sup> with the liar Ulysses from the Greco-Roman tradition (41). If Hythlodæus had a more neutral name, one would probably want to follow Adams, says Rudat, in seeing this as a positive association with a “man who learns from travelling” (41). Since Hythlodæus has this name, however, Rudat maintains that the reader is fully justified in seeing the nastier Ulysses superimposed onto the Portuguese sailor, the Ulysses who is false, an unsuccessful traveler and unnecessary risk-taker, and “socially irresponsible both to his men and to his family at home” (42). All of these descriptions apply equally well to Hythlodæus, Rudat maintains, and they are authorized mainly through the ironic name More assigns to his lead character. This technique of naming is yet another technique More picked up from Lucian, as James Romm explains, “More's model for this catch-me-if-you-can

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<sup>17</sup> I should also note that just as the name “Hythlodæus” clearly undermines the authority of the narrator, so too does his first name, even if he is meant to be named after the angel. Elizabeth McCutcheon has made this case in her convincing “Thomas More, Raphael Hythlodæus, and the Angel Raphael,” which concludes that More is presenting Hythlodæus as the angelic guide ironically and that his “vision” is “a tall tale” (21, 38). It is not the case, then, that the name “Raphael” somehow balances out or redeems the surname.

etymological game was undoubtedly Lucian, and in particular the one Lucianic work which peers out from behind Utopia's ironic veils at every turn, the *Vera Historia* [i.e. *A True Story*]” (180). Through the technique of signaling meaning to his more learned readers through etymological play, More first suggests that Hythlodæus may need to be handled with care.

Another textual detail that suggests Raphael’s tendency towards falsehood occurs when he is relating the incident with the “cercopithecus,” Hythlodæus himself says that he was setting out on his “fourth” (“quarto”) journey with Vespucci (180). This small detail should induce significant suspicions in any reader who knows, as Baker-Smith points out, that the first of Vespucci’s journeys was known by More to be a fabrication. When he is talking to Morus about Hythlodæus before introducing them, Petrus Aegidius more plausibly reports of Raphael that “in tribus posterioribus illarum quattuor navigationum quae passim iam leguntur perpetuus eius comes fuit” (“he was his [Vespucci’s] constant companion on the last three of his four journeys, which are now read everywhere”) (44). Petrus is the only character who can be right on this point, so that means that Hythlodæus is either misspeaking or lying when he says that he travelled with Vespucci on four separate journeys. In either case, he is unreliable. Another of his statements that seems highly questionable, even assuming that he is telling the truth about the island of Utopia, is when he explains why he ever left the island. Kinney goes so far as to put this question together with Raphael’s current location, Antwerp: “Beneath and beyond this, however, we must ask why Hythlodæus is in Antwerp, then headquarters of international commerce and banking, the center of the world’s capitalism; we are tempted also to ask why he left Utopia” (430). Of course, Hythlodæus does give an explicit answer to this question; as discussed above, he says that he would never have wished to leave except to “reveal” (or “create” or “betray”) the new world in Europe.

This statement, though, defies belief once one has finished reading Raphael's account of the island of Utopia and tries to imagine him living on that island for five years or more.

Recall again that pivotal passage in which Hythlodæus explains to Morus and Petrus how he distributed his familial inheritance so that he would be free from his friends and family and could simply live as he pleased (50). Recall his vehement resistance throughout the first book to ever putting himself in "servitude," as he terms it, to some king or prince (50). Recall that Hythlodæus is so fiercely independent that he is willing to flout religious convention and risk dying without last rites in order to go where he wants to go (44-46). Now consider this account of Utopian society from Hanan Yoran, who leans hard on Stephen Greenblatt's darker depiction of this society in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*:

Utopia regulates the most minute details of its citizens' lives: their free time... the garments they wear... the games they play... their sitting place in the common dining halls... Even in the few cases in which deviation from routine is formally permitted, it is either informally prevented—as when citizens are deterred from eating at home, "because it is not thought proper"... - or accompanied with numerous prerequisites and restrictions, such as the restraints on traveling. (8)

Perhaps the greatest irony in all of *Utopia* is that Hythlodæus in speech after speech praises a place one could never imagine him wanting to live. If he were to become a Utopian citizen, that would be the end of his exploring: he would never leave the island. He would be a farmer and a craftsman, and, if he wanted to travel to another Utopian city, he would have to get a letter from his governor to do so (144). If he ignored this mandate, he could be corporally punished and even enslaved (144). If he merely wanted to stroll about his own region he could, with his father's and his wife's permission, but he would not receive food from anyone until he had put in a full day's work (144). It is difficult to imagine how the free-ranging

mariner would handle these conditions, but one can safely assume that they would chafe against his nature. Perhaps, then, this is merely an irony of the work, or, more likely, it is that classic, Lucianic case of the philosopher who presses onto others norms and standards that he himself does not and could not live up to. My own inclination is towards the latter supposition, but that can only come fully clear once I have shown all the evidence against Raphael's trustworthiness.

Many of the supposed "facts" of his narrative also tell against Raphael's credibility. Kinney is fond of pointing out how the shape of Utopia is an impossible, if suggestive, shape:

The island also images Luna which for More's day shone with borrowed, not original light and signified inconstancy and minor misfortune. Beyond that, Hythlodæus' account is in factual error: if there is indeed a crescent shape and an inner bay, then the greatest breadth of land must be substantially less than the diameter of the circumference, or approximately 160 miles... Thomas More, close friend of the mathematician Cuthbert Tunstal, would surely know that.

Alan F. Nagel has come to the same conclusion about the shape of the island, but he shows his work and makes a good case that More simply could not have made this mistake himself (176). This must either mean, as with the detail about his fourth journey, that Hythlodæus is simply wrong in the information he is dispensing, gullible in accepting what others have told him, or simply making up his narrative – not to mention bad at basic geometry, which one would not expect of a sailor. In support of the ideas that he is gullible or simply false is much of his account of the island's site and founding. This account seems legendary at more than one point. First, there is Utopus himself, the founder of Utopia, who, the listener is asked to believe, conquered the land of Utopia, which was not at that time an island, and then labored to make its citizens the most humane and sophisticated people the world has yet to see (110).

That no conqueror in human history has ever acted so benevolently towards a conquered people does not slow Hythlodæus down. He goes on to tell how, in order to accomplish his benevolent wishes towards the Utopians, Utopus separated them from other lands by having a channel cut “passuum milia quindecim qua parte tellus continenti adhaesit” (“15 miles in width where the land joined the continent”) (110). As the Cambridge editors note, this is a clear allusion to Roman attempts to construct a comparable, though much smaller, channel in the Isthmus of Corinth, a task that even the Roman empire under Nero could not complete (111 n.4). The notion that Utopus could have completed this task with the help of the Utopian natives and his soldiers is unthinkable.

Then again, Hythlodæus also believes that the Utopians are an unusually strong people. He tells at one point in his narrative how the Utopian “populi manibus alibi radicibus evulsam silvam alibi consitam” (“people, with their hands, tore up a forest by the roots and placed it elsewhere”) (178). O’Brien says of this incident,

As if to remind us of the Lucianic provenance of Hythlodæus, More... inserts a detail worthy of *A True History*: in order to have wood close to seas, rivers and cities, the Utopians have uprooted whole forests and transplanted them. Hythlodæus utters this without a hint of irony on his part, and we are reminded that the reality of this ideal state is purely fictional, that not everything in it is to be taken seriously. (230)

While he is making them laugh, therefore, More is asking his readers to note the folly of much of what Hythlodæus has to say. Even if many of his ideas are appealing to readers, as they are bound to be, More seems to want those same readers to recognize not merely the fictional quality of the work as a whole, but that Hythlodæus himself, who otherwise can seem such a fair critic of Christian Europe, is the fabricator of these fictions. More even goes so far in this regard as to make it clear in one of his letters, where he is posing as Morus, that



he is smart enough (“non sum tam stupidus”) to understand that the names Hythlodæus assigns to things, like Utopia, Anyder, Amaurot, and Ademus, are “barbaris illis... nominibus et nihil significantibus” (“are barbarous names signifying nothing”) (268). The only reason he kept these names, he insists, is that he was acting as a historian and so trying to keep faith with his source, Raphael Hythlodæus. That this claim itself is a fiction which the author More is overseeing does not change the fact that, within the fictional world of *Utopia*, More and Giles are always insistent that the account they are transmitting derives in full from the narrator of nonsense.

What most betrays Hythlodæus as a liar, though, is how he argues with others. In what I consider to be a decisive essay on the interpretation of *Utopia*, Richard Sylvester has shown that the argumentative moves Hythlodæus makes are profoundly questionable. He takes his lead and the title of his essay from the parerga, mainly the letter from Bude to Lupset, as he considers Bude to be one of the keener interpreters of More’s work:

Twice Bude hedges his praise for Utopian institutions with the words ‘if we may believe Hythlodæus’ (si Hythlodæo credimus) or ‘if we may believe the story’... and he distinguishes carefully between Hythlodæus, whom he calls ‘the real builder of the Utopian city,’ and Thomas More, who, as author, has adorned Hythlodæus’ account with style and eloquence. (279-280)

Everything depends, says Sylvester, on whether or not the reader may trust Raphael: “Not only is almost all of Book II presented, without direct comment, as Hythlodæus’ speech, but he is also the driving force behind and the monopolizer of the conversation in Book I” (280). Since it is Book I that most patently reveals the character of Hythlodæus to his interlocutors and readers, Sylvester focuses on this book and notes some interesting things about how Hythlodæus argues with others. First, he points out that there are three “main moments” in

the first book, each of which is punctuated by Hythlodæus telling a story to clinch his point. The first story he tells is historical, the second is hypothetical “yet tied to history by being set in France,” and the third is “totally imaginary, offered without reference to locality or to time” (284-285). Sylvester summarizes the progression thus: “Hythlodæus’ argument, in other words, moves from a firm grasp on a past historical situation, to a hypothetical revision of contemporary history, to a totally aloof fabrication” (285). Moreover, as Sylvester is keen to point out, the point that Raphael is attempting to prove through all of these stories is that princes and their advisors would never listen to his advice, and so he is justified in declining such service. His first story, though, in which he relates his visit to England and his stay with Cardinal Morton in the summer of 1497, actually proves the opposite of his point, for Cardinal Morton listens intently to Hythlodæus and even goes so far as to say that “it would be a good thing to try this system!” (285). Hence, Raphael’s one concrete, historical instance actually argues against the views he typically expresses about princes and their ineptness and deaf ears.

Sylvester then comes to what I take to be his most important insight: “in each of his three anecdotes he offers, to clinch his argument, not so much a rational analysis as an alien example” (285). By “alien example,” Sylvester means that Hythlodæus cites places and peoples he which he alone has met on his travels, each of which is “farther and farther away from the known world,” as justifications that his seemingly impractical ideas can be put into practice (285). Thus, to argue that societies can thrive without a death penalty, Hythlodæus cites the Polyerites, whose name means “a people of much nonsense” (70-72). Then, to argue against war-mongering, Hythlodæus tells an anecdote from the history of the Achorians, whose name means “a people without a country” (86-88). Finally, to argue that no king should ever have too much wealth, Raphael cites a law of the Macarians, “the blessed or happy ones,” who tellingly “*ipsi non longe admodum absunt ab Utopia*” (“are not at all far

from the Utopians”) (94). The very progression of these lands takes the reader closer and closer to the island of Utopia while at the same time preparing the reader for the argumentative strategy that Hythlodæus everywhere uses, that of justifying his seemingly unrealistic ideas as grounded in genuine experience and as based on real-life exemplars. Recall that this is precisely the tack he takes when he is arguing with Morus about the feasibility of a communalist society. Hythlodæus first states his idea, “quamquam profecto, mi More (ut ea vere dicam quae meus animus fert), mihi videtur ubique privatae sunt possessiones, ubi omnes omnia pecuniis metiuntur, ibi vix umquam posse fieri ut cum republica aut iuste agatur aut prospere” (“And yet, my friend More, to tell you what I truly think, it seems to me that, everywhere possessions are held in private and everyone measures everything by money, it cannot come about that a state is governed either justly or prosperously” (100). Then his idea meets with Morus objection, “at mihi... contra videtur,” (“but it seems otherwise to me”) (104). And then Raphael plays the experience card, asserting to Morus that he cannot conceive of such a system working because he has never seen one in action (104). And so Book II begins, in which Hythlodæus tells a massively larger anecdote about a country no one else has seen to justify his claim that a communist society can work in practice.

The sheer cunning of all this on Thomas More’s part, and this is not something that Sylvester discusses, is that the reader, especially the humanist reader, is so inclined to accept Raphael’s ideas because they accord so well with his own worldview that he can easily fail to notice how slippery Hythlodæus really is. This, I think, is precisely what Thomas More wanted, for recall that he says in his letter to Ruthall that Lucian can train him and his contemporaries to reject stories or ideas piously inserted into Christian narratives that appeal to Christian sensibilities but that, ultimately, undermine the truth of Christianity. More has prepared his text to provoke readers to be critical – to probe even those ideas that are most

appealing – in order to see that those ideas come from a speaker and a psyche that is rather problematic. Hence, the suggestion must be, if those ideas and ideals appeal the reader, she should look closely into why. This is same lesson one finds in Lucian’s *Philopseudes*: numerous educated men and even the supposedly skeptical narrator himself are drawn to stories of miracle cures and marvelous sights so strongly that they lie to one another without seeming to be aware of it or to care to question themselves about the truth of what they are saying. More has set the same sort of trap that Lucian shows his own interlocutors caught up in, but he has also, like Lucian, built into his text another level of meaning that allows the reader to escape this trap.

In the words of Sylvester, this is the trap More has set: “Book II [is] an extended image of Hythlodæus’ own personality: Utopia enshrines his ideals and virtues” (286). And this is the recognition that frees one from the trap: “but it [Book II] also –and [Hythlodæus] himself is completely unaware of this – hints at the defects in his thinking and at the moral flaws in his character” (286). What Sylvester does not do in his essay and what I have tried to do in this study are two things. First, he does not flesh out in any detail how Book II is “an extended image of Hythlodæus’ own personality.” This task is one central thrust of this final chapter. Second, he does not get very far into the question of where Thomas More might have learned to write a dialogue like *Utopia*. Sylvester speculates that More might have learned his techniques from Chaucer, but quickly drops that suggestion and in a footnote focuses on how More might have learned from “the classics, especially Lucian and Horace” (281 n.15). It is here that Sylvester says, “Although Lucian's influence on More is highly probable, it too must be demonstrated through detailed criticism and not merely claimed as a most likely possibility (282 n.15). This has been the second central thrust of this chapter and the one that preceded it. One might well say, then, that this study is an attempt to flesh out the bones of

Sylvester's perspective more fully and thereby to demonstrate how much light it sheds on the *Utopia* as a whole.

That a need exists to defend Sylvester's interpretation is evidenced in George M. Logan's classic work, *The Meaning of More's Utopia*. Logan's work is useful to consider because he so clearly evinces the bias against interpreting *Utopia* as firmly in the tradition of Menippean satire and Lucian, especially when he expresses his austere scholarly disapproval of Sylvester's reading and of the school of interpretation that sees *Utopia* as a "conscious and consistent work of satire" (6-7; see especially note 6). For Logan, More's *Utopia* should be situated squarely within the tradition of European political writings and read as a work of political theory in conversation with other great works of political theory, not as a character study of a political theorist. Of course, Logan fails to mention that no one writing in the interpretive tradition which sees *Utopia* as primarily satire denies that it is a great work of political theory as well, not to mention a great work of societal critique, nor do Logan's criticisms of this interpretive trend amount to more than acts of begging the question. He says, for instance, that one simply needs to read some of the soberer passages of *Utopia* alongside the writings of Lucian to see the clear difference between the two, betraying the apparent belief that satire must be everywhere riotous, absurdly funny, with sailors spending time in the bellies of whales and the like. The difference, Logan seems to think, between works of satire and works of political theory is always readily apparent. The problem with this idea, it seems to me, is that, although More clearly learned from Lucian, he was writing in a very different time for very different literary sensibilities, and so he does cut down on the absurdities in his narrative. Instead, then, of having trips to the moon, he has a people uproot a forest using only their hands. This is a difference of degree, not of kind. Moreover, Logan fails to bring up any of the passages in More's *Utopia* that are frankly comical or absurd, like the story Hythlodæus tells about the argument between the friar and the fool at Cardinal

Morton's (78-80), Raphael's ceaseless sarcasm against "lesser" men, the incident with the "cercopithecus," and the several absurdities that I have considered above. More is doubtless subtler than Lucian, but that does not make his work the less satirical. It makes it, as Avery says, "the higher art" (233).

So, Hythlodæus is false. But how? What does that mean? Did he simply make up the island of Utopia? To further exhibit my understanding of Hythlodæus, I would like to make a case that the text of *Utopia* provides some evidence that Hythlodæus fabricated the people of Utopia from some genuine experience he had on his travels. Here and there in *Utopia* are hints of an experience quite different from the one Raphael relates to his interlocutors. It will be of use to consider one of those hints. When Hythlodæus discusses the religions, and it is in the plural at first ("religionibus" and "religiones"), of the Utopians, his overall aim is to depict them as a people who, because they are so submissive to nature and reason, have developed a religion that is the perfect preparation for them to accept Christian revelation as truth, which they rapidly do (218 ff.). His account of how their own native religion naturally prepares them for Christianity is a part, it seems to me, of his overall argument that a people largely free from the grip of pride is able to conceive of the cosmos more correctly than those who, because of their money economy, live under the daily burdens that pride sets upon the shoulders of human beings to keep them from seeing the truth about invisible things. Hence, it is essential to Raphael's whole purpose that in every aspect of life the Utopians seem not perfect but superior to Christian Europe. Hence, when one recalls the "religion" of the Utopians, and one does tend to think of it in the singular because of Raphael's account, one thinks of a monotheistic people who believe firmly in the providence of God and in an eternal life of bliss or punishment after death, despite the fact that they are sort of Epicureans (Greenblatt 313).

But this final picture of the Utopian people is not what the beginning of Raphael's account suggests will follow. It may be, furthermore, that the contrast between what Hythlodæus says at the beginning of his account and what his account turns out to be opens up a space for the reader to see into something of the actual experience that lies behind the fabrication he foists upon Morus and Petrus. Here is how Hythlodæus begins his account of the "religionibus Utopiensium:" "religiones sunt non per insulam modo verum singulas etiam urbes variae, aliis solem, lunam aliis, aliis aliud errantem siderum dei vice venerantibus. sunt quibus homo quispiam cuius olim aut virtus aut gloria enituit non pro deo tantum sed pro summo etiam deo suspicatur" ("There are diverse religions not only on the island [as a whole] but even in individual cities. Some worship the sun, others the moon, still others one of the wandering stars as God. Some take some man [or other] who once was renowned for his courage or glory not only as a god but even as the highest God") (218). The gist of this beginning is that on the island of Utopia diversity is the rule in religion, just as one would expect of a pagan people who had never heard of Jesus Christ. This beginning reads very much like an ancient ethnographic account, such as the one Caesar gives of religion on the island of Britain in the sixth book of his *Commentary on the Gallic Wars*. The reader sits back and prepares to read of surprising religious traditions and customs set forth in a reasonably systematic fashion, but Hythlodæus quickly turns the discussion with an abrupt "at," ("But") and there begins setting forth his account of a people whose religion makes them the perfect subjects for conversion to Christianity. That is, he completely drops this picture of religious pluralism and depicts a society that is suspiciously monotheistic and Christian in character, and he never looks back. My suggestion is that this may be a glimpse of the real natives he encountered that is essentially slipping out into his account, perhaps without his fully realizing it. It might even be that the real island to which he is referring had some monotheists on it. If that were the case, then what he does in his fabrication of Utopia is

less an invention of the island he visited than a betrayal of it, as I suggested when discussing the fact that Hythlodæus uses the verb “proderem” to describe his act of communicating the ways and workings of this island to others.

Dominic Baker-Smith provides evidence that might support this supposition both in an essay he wrote for the *Cambridge Companion to Thomas More* and in his translation and supplementary notes of *Utopia*. In his essay, Baker-Smith points out that Vespucci himself reported on natives from the New World who “preferred feathers to gold or pearls” (146). In the appendices of his translation of *Utopia*, Baker-Smith also includes an account of the New World, written by the Italian Peter Martyr d’Anghiera in 1511, five years before *Utopia*, that relates the voyages of Columbus and tells stories of natives who both believed in an afterlife and with whom

the earth, like the sun and water, is common, nor do ‘mine and yours,’ the seeds of all evils, fall among them. For they are content with so little that in that vast earth there is an excess of land to farm rather than a lack of anything. Theirs is a golden age: they do not hedge their estates with ditches, walls, or hedges; they live with open gardens, without laws, without books, without judges; of their own nature they cultivate what is right (2418).

One almost feels that Hythlodæus himself is speaking here. At the least, d’Anghiera sounds like a Hythlodæus in the making, “one of the first hippies,” as Sylvester says his students were fond of calling the Portuguese traveler when he speaks whimsically of the wondrous mellowness of the New World (283). Perhaps, then, More the author, who may have read d’Anghiera’s account or others like it, is expecting that Hythlodæus would have encountered on his many travels native peoples of the sorts he read about in accounts of Columbus’s and Vespucci’s travels, and he is suggesting that Hythlodæus took those seeds and grew them,



again the verb “proderem” comes to mind, into a much more developed and well cultivated garden that would serve to decorate and finally substantiate the ideas he had about a moneyless, communal society. This is, of course, a largely speculative conclusion that I recognize as such, but it seems helpful to flesh out this idea in order to get a better sense of how Raphael’s thinking might work.

### *A State of Mind*

It is with the mind of Hythlodæus that I would like to conclude this study. If, in fact, one of More’s central aims in *Utopia* was to create a Lucianic-style parody of a “philosophus gloriosus,” then what, exactly, has he given to his readers in Raphael Hythlodæus, and why? Wooden and O’Brien maintain that Hythlodæus is “a philosophus gloriosus, one in whom *saeva indignatio* has become a ruling passion, to the exclusion of other necessary qualities” (O’Brien 210). That is to say, in Hythlodæus his indignation and his resentment towards the society he finds around him have come so to dominate him that he can only spill out his malice each time he speaks and will go to any lengths, including inventing peoples and places, to support his contentions, to make this malice seem as rational a response to the world as possible. I agree generally with this idea, but I hope to have shown in this chapter that More’s creation is even more complex than what Wooden and O’Brien suggest. To my mind, what mainly drives Hythlodæus is not indignation, although he has a lot of that to share with others, but an almost maniacal autonomy and will to self-government most like the Cynic in Lucian’s own dialogue. In both dialogues, it is essential to note, both of the main speakers liken themselves to gods, the Cynic to the Greek gods whose statues he finds around him and Hythlodæus to the radical Jesus whose teachings so conform to his own. This passionate insistence on his own autonomy drives Hythlodæus to try to control the thinking of those around him *every single time* one finds him speaking (with the exception, perhaps, of the story he tells about the friar and the fool), just as he controlled his family’s claim on him

by distributing his patrimony among its members. His tendency to try to control the thinking of others is so deep-seated that he will go to any lengths to accomplish that goal. Ultimately, that is why the island of Utopia is what it is: it is a group of human beings behaving in precisely the measured ways that Hythlodæus thinks they should. This move gives him psychological satisfaction, no doubt, but also a constant and unshakeable high ground from which to judge the lives of others and to win arguments. This is the same tendency one observes in Lucian's Cynic, who is not so much concerned in the dialogue to live as he pleases as he is to harangue others about how they are living. It is, in fact, almost a constant in Lucian's writings that whatever a character says, no matter how eloquently or appealingly put, it is motivated by some need or weakness in that character, which she or he is trying to manage through the use of language, either by trying to re-present the world in a more pleasing fashion, as is the case for Lucian's learned men in *Philopseudes*, or by trying to control how others think about themselves, as is the case in Lucian's *Cynicus*.

The point of fashioning this sort of character is most openly expressed in Lucian's *Necromantia*: the inventions of a learned person, especially a philosopher, intended to tell others how to live or think should always be subjected to criticism and questioning in proportion as those inventions are the more appealing. This is because all humans, no matter how learned, are fundamentally flawed and therefore comical creatures. That they are comical does not mean that they are always amusing. It means that they are always preposterous in the etymological sense of that term, "prae-posterus," "what is before coming after what is behind." They are reversed. They are absurd. They are contrary to reason and sense, and so they cannot be corrected through sober directness. It is for this reason that the person who wishes to improve someone, and that is already a very questionable motive, must do so indirectly and with a sense of humor. This is the vision of Thomas More. It is for this reason that More corrected his porter by saying "that he should see the stocks mended and

locked fast, that the prisoner steal not in again” (9.119.16). And this is the reason he rendered Hythlodæus such a complex figure: it is difficult to criticize someone whose opinions greatly appeal to one even when one senses that what motivates and buttresses those opinions is one’s own folly and the folly of the person issuing those opinions. Human folly, for More as for Erasmus, is both funny and susceptible to humorous correction, but this correction only comes about when people learn to think prudently about their lives and societies. Dominic Baker-Smith has argued that “one indubitable quality of *Utopia* is that it unsettles familiar attitudes and prompts acts of political imagination... Its goal is a state of mind rather than a specified state of society” (162). The familiar attitudes, the inheritance of custom, that More was trying to work against in *Utopia* were those habits of mind that, as he explains them to Ruthall, had led to the corruption of the Catholic Church in Europe. It was the thoughtless piety of a monk who wished to improve upon a story about a saint he loved by adding in a miracle or two. It was the carelessness of a person even so brilliant and learned as Augustine, who accepted an apocryphal tale without looking into the sources of that tale. It was the preacher who, to win some attention, told marvelous stories to the lay folk that only rendered them more gullible and superstitious. Ultimately, it was the unfounded belief that the Latin Vulgate was somehow magically the one text through which God might choose to speak. What was needed to resist those habits of mind, More thought, was the sort of skepticism that one could sharpen through reading Lucian’s dialogues and works like them. *Utopia* is a work like that.

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