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Thomas More and Lucian:  
A Study in Satiric Influence and Technique\*

by Warren W. Wooden

After Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, Thomas More's *Utopia* is perhaps the most controversial product of sixteenth century English literature. Near the center of the controversy over More's methods, aims, and means in the *Utopia* lie the twin problems of the genre and literary heritage of his strange work. I suggest that the *Utopia* is modelled upon and may be most profitably studied in conjunction with the literature of classical satire. Specifically, I will first assemble the evidence of More's acquaintanceship with and admiration for the 2nd century A.D. Greek satirist, Lucian of Samosata. The central character in the *Utopia*, Raphael Hythloday, will then be considered as a satiric persona and other evidence of Lucianic techniques will be studied. Finally, the *Utopia* will be canvassed from the standpoint of classical Lucianic or Menippean satire—to adopt the modern term for satire of the Lucianic variety employed by Northrop Frye, Alvin Kernan and others—as evidence for a generic classification.<sup>1</sup>

More's study of the works of Lucian of Samosata, the classical master of prose satire, forms one of the most curiously neglected chapters of *Utopia* criticism. Despite More's translations from the Greek satirist, his demonstrably close familiarity with the corpus of his work, and the high praise for Lucian with which his correspondence is sprinkled, the great majority of More scholars studiously ignore the possibility of affinities between the satire of Lucian and that of the

\* This essay is based upon a paper delivered at the West Virginia Association of College English Teachers in October, 1971. Much of the research upon which this study is based was supported by a Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation Research Grant during the summer of 1970.

<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of the term "Menippean Satire" and the conventions of this genre, see Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957, rpt.; New York: Atheneum, 1966), Alvin B. Kernan, *The Cankered Muse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), John M. Aden, "Toward a Uniform Satiric Terminology," *Satire Newsletter*, 1 (1964), 30-32, and Juanita S. Williams, "Toward a Definition of Menippean Satire," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1966).

*Utopia*, a work admitted by all to be satirical in some degree.<sup>2</sup> This neglect is made more curious by the findings of the handful of scholars who have investigated the techniques and targets of the *Utopia* in the light of a Lucianic model.<sup>3</sup> Without exception these scholars conclude that there are striking parallels and similarities between the characteristic methods of Lucian and those of More in the *Utopia*.

Traditionally these critics willing to acknowledge the possibility of a positive, creative literary influence of Lucian upon More have focussed their studies either upon such minutia as that of borrowed nomenclature or, at the other extreme, broad theoretical similarities. As a result, an attempt to assess the extent and importance of Lucianic satiric strategy in the *Utopia* itself has yet to be undertaken even in the best of these studies. It is my intention in this paper to suggest several of the larger satiric techniques employed by More which seem most plausibly to derive from his study of Lucian. My purpose, then, is not to belabor real or imagined parallels between specific incidents in the Lucianic corpus and More's *Utopia*, but rather to illustrate a similar philosophic outlook and satiric stance in the Greek and the Englishman including comment upon the creative and original uses to which More put those satiric tactics which so delighted him in his study of Lucian.

<sup>2</sup> For example, note the dismissal of Lucian in the preface to the Yale *Utopia*: "Lucian's extravagant fantasy and robust humor find a possible echo only in a touch here or there. . . ." (*Utopia*, ed. Edward Surtz and J. H. Hexter [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963] p. clxiii). This is the modern standard edition of the *Utopia*, and all subsequent citations of More's text will refer to this edition.

<sup>3</sup> H. W. Donner, *An Introduction to Utopia*, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., 1945), and C. S. Lewis, *History of English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), suggest a Lucianic model for the *Utopia*. C. R. Thompson, in *The Translations of Lucian by Erasmus and St. Thomas More* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., 1940) and also in "Lucian and Lucianism in the English Renaissance: An Introductory Study" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1937), has investigated the possibility in some detail and has concluded that the similarities between Lucian and the *Utopia* are too striking to be coincidental. In his illuminating article, "Satire in the *Utopia*," *PMLA*, 78 (1963), 163-174, A. R. Heiserman detailed many generic similarities between Lucian's satire and the *Utopia*. Most recently, T. S. Dorsch, in "Sir Thomas More and Lucian: An Interpretation Of *Utopia*," *Archiv fur das Studium der Neuren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 203 (1967), 345-363; an article which curiously does not mention the valuable work of either Thompson or Heiserman, concludes that More was heavily in Lucian's debt in the composition of one of "the two most beautifully developed and most consistently sustained works of Lucianic irony in English literature" (p. 362). To this writer's knowledge, no attempt has ever been made to rebut these critics' contentions.

Since the possibility of a positive Lucianic influence upon the *Utopia* has been suggested, it seems apposite here to examine first that portion of the evidence for such a thesis which concerns More's early study of Lucian. During 1505–1506, More and Erasmus initiated an extended study of Lucian, each of them translating into Latin a number of the satiric dialogues of the Samosatans. In 1506, a volume containing the translations of Lucian by More and Erasmus was printed by Badius in Paris, containing eighteen short dialogues and ten longer ones by Erasmus and three dialogues and a declamation, *Tyrannicida*, translated by More.

The three Lucianic dialogues which, in addition to the *Tyrannicida*, More chose to translate are the *Cynicus*, *Menippus* (Necromantia), and *Philopseudes*. The choice is an interesting one, and according to More's dedicatory epistle, its basis was purely personal: they struck his fancy.<sup>4</sup> A brief examination of the individual dialogues may aid in discovering what particular appeal these three satires held for More.

The *Cynicus* is a dialogue between a worldly young man and a Cynic philosopher, revolving about the reasons for the philosopher's choice of a hard and austere life. The dialogue, essentially a satire upon luxurious living, concludes with the Cynic's assertion that the simple life is the best, a conclusion which More, who wore a hair-shirt all of his adult life, would have heartily endorsed. Lucian's conclusion in this dialogue, a faithful reproduction of the philosophical position taken by the original Cynics, is also essentially the classical philosophic basis of Menippean satire: the mean and sure estate. More's endorsement of this philosophic position and his insistence upon its compatibility with the *contemptu mundi* tradition of Christianity are evinced in his dedicatory comments upon this dialogue. There More is explicit in stressing the common philosophic ground which he shared with the pagan satirist. More wrote that in this dialogue, "the severe life of the Cynics and their contented existence with few possessions is defended, the soft and enervating luxury of

<sup>4</sup> "For just as all men do not love the same maiden, but one prefers and loves a certain one, nor can he easily tell precisely why, but she simply suits his taste, so of the most agreeable dialogue of Lucian one man likes a certain one best, another prefers another; these ones have particularly struck my fancy, nor that merely by accident, I trust, nor they alone." (From the dedicatory epistle to the translations of Lucian, trans. by C. R. Thompson in *The Translations of Lucian by Erasmus and St. Thomas More*, p. 25).

voluptaries is denounced. In the same work the simplicity, temperance, and frugality of the Christian life, and finally that strait and narrow way that leads to life are commended."<sup>5</sup>

In the *Menippus*, Lucian's target is the crowd of foolish philosophers, the *philosophi gloriosi* who bear the traditional brunt of the Menippean satirist's scorn. Menippus goes about to the philosophers of the different sects hoping to learn from them the correct manner in which to order his life. Each advises him to follow a different plan of life, all the while assuring Menippus that the philosopher's own sect possesses exclusive knowledge of the truth. Disgusted by the contradictions of the philosophers, Menippus journeys to the underworld to consult the seer Tiresias. The seer's advice to Menippus is simple and to the point:

The life of the common sort is best, and you will act more wisely if you stop speculating about heavenly bodies and discussing final causes and first causes, spit your scorn at those clever syllogisms, and counting all that sort of thing nonsense, make it always your sole object to put the present to good use and to hasten on your way, laughing a great deal and taking nothing seriously.<sup>6</sup>

The *Menippus* is notable as an exceptionally fine example of the genre named for the Cynic philosopher-satirist. It contains most of the standard devices associated with the genre—the *philosophus gloriosus*, the voyage, both dialogue and narrative elements, a simple philosophic norm—all of which may be paralleled in the *Utopia*.

The third of the dialogues translated by More is the *Philopseudes*, which, while ostensibly a general satire on liars and the gullibility of their adherents, is primarily another indictment of foolish philosophers. The principal speaker, Tychiades, marvels at the credulity of men in putting their complete trust in all manner of outrageous prevarications. However his chief scorn is reserved for the philosophers, the lovers of wisdom, who should attempt to correct the errors of the common people. Instead, Tychiades finds that the philosophers are

<sup>5</sup> C. R. Thompson, *The Translations of Lucian*, p. 25. Compare the *Life of Pico*, where More wrote that "the golden mediocrity, the mean estate, is to be desired which shall bear us as it were in hands more easily, which shall obey us and not master us." (*The English Works of Sir Thomas More*, ed. W. E. Campbell [New York: Dial Press, 1931], I, 370).

<sup>6</sup> *Lucian*, trans. and ed. by A. M. Harmon (Leob Classical Library). 8 vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1921), IV, 107–109.

the worst offenders, not only telling wilder tales than the rest, but even vouching for the authenticity of the monstrous lies promulgated by their fellow scholars.

Certainly it is difficult to overvalue More's admiration for the chief classical practitioner of Menippean satire. For despite Lucian's inevitable pagan lapses, there are no apologies for the Greek satirist in the dedicatory epistle which More affixed to his translations and no equivocations in his praise:

If, most learned sir, there was ever anyone who fulfilled the Horatian precept and combined delight with instruction I think Lucian certainly stood *primus inter pares* in this respect. Refraining both from the arrogant teachings of the philosophers and the more dissolute dallings of the poets, he everywhere remarks and censures, with very honest and at the same time very amusing wit, the shortcomings of mortals. And this he does so cleverly and so effectively that although no one pricks more deeply, yet there is no one of impartial mind who would not allow his stings of sarcasm.<sup>7</sup>

This is indeed heady praise, for in the sixteenth century the Horatian dictum was nearly the sole criteria for judging the worth of imaginative literature. On the basis of such testimony, taken in conjunction with More's peculiar native talents, his admiration for Lucian's philosophic position and his choice of satiric targets, it would be remarkable indeed if More composed a humorous prose work which did not bear the imprint of his close study and admiration of the Greek satirist.

In turning from a discussion of Lucian's attacks on narrow-minded philosophers to More's *Utopia*, our initial subject for examination will be its curious mariner-philosopher, Raphael Hythloday. In the Dialogue of Counsel in Book I, Hythloday and the fictional More figure find themselves dialectical opponents, and their conversation lays the foundation for Hythloday's development as a classical satiric persona. The fictional More argues that Hythloday, a public-spirited man of such great parts, should "do what is worthy of you and of this generous and truly philosophic spirit of yours if you so order your life as to apply your talent and industry to the public interest, even if it involves some personal disadvantages to yourself."<sup>8</sup> Hythloday's reply reveals the oversimplification of men and institutions that marks his whole philosophy and outlook. Hythloday will not go to

<sup>7</sup> C. R. Thompson, *The Translations of Lucian*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>8</sup> *Utopia*, p. 57.

court, first, because "almost all monarchs" occupy themselves in ignoble pursuits, self-aggrandizement, and insidious plotting.<sup>9</sup> In the second place, no one would heed him because at court "everyone is actually so wise as to have no need of profiting by another's counsel, or everyone seems so wise in his own eyes as not to condescend to profit by it."<sup>10</sup>

On the face of it, these pronouncements possess a measure of truth, and More doubtless would agree with them. But ultimately, one suspects, they reflect the simple-mindedness and kindred *alazoneia* of their spokesman. To Hythloday's mind, there are no complexities in the world; things are right or wrong, good or bad, black or white. He recognizes no shadings, no authentic humanity. It is on the basis of this world view, prompting him to systematize and categorize everything, that Hythloday condemns all things European and commends all things Utopian.

Also like the foolish philosophers of Lucian's dialogue, Hythloday's method of argument reveals his penchant for abstract theory and generalization. Hythloday never argues a point on the practical level. For example, as the chief point of his argument for the abolition of capital punishment in Europe, he points not to an example of a real state which functions successfully without capital punishment but to the example of the Polyerites, a people whom he had encountered on his travels and whose name, as the humanist fraternity would have recognized, means the "People of Much Nonsense." When pressed for logical proofs and concrete examples, Hythloday points consistently to the unreal, to the People of Much Nonsense to prove that capital punishment may be successfully abolished in the state; to the Achorians, the People without Place, to prove that bellicose imperialism is a self-defeating policy for a monarch; and, most pertinently, to the Utopians, the inhabitants of Nowhere, to prove that communism is the only economic basis for a good commonwealth and Epicurean hedonism its wisest official philosophy.

The identification of Hythloday with the *philosophus gloriosus* is reinforced throughout Book I. Having delivered himself on the corruption of those in high place and the uselessness of attempting to advise monarchs, Hythloday moves into a reminiscence of his trip

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

to England which completely contradicts the condemnation he has just uttered. While on his visit, Hythloday stayed at the home of Cardinal Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England, whom Hythloday praises for his sagacity, virtue, and similar fine qualities. Oblivious to the fact that he is contradicting his earlier speech, Hythloday recalls that "the king placed the greatest confidence in his advice, and the commonwealth seemed much to depend upon him when I was there."<sup>11</sup> At the same time he condemns, in a manner analogous to that of his earlier speech, the bad counsel of the Cardinal's retainers, lawyers, clerics, and the like. Still, Cardinal Morton displays no inclination to take any of this bad advice, nor does Hythloday intimate that he ever did. He does, on the other hand, question Hythloday intelligently and courteously and he shows every sign of having benefited from Hythloday's views. In fact, the Cardinal endorses Hythloday's opposition to capital punishment and says that its temporary abolition would be a worthwhile experiment in the state.

This encounter with Cardinal Morton affords a typical example of More's satiric method in conditioning his reader's reactions to the satiric persona Hythloday and consequently, by extension, to the Utopian world which Hythloday describes and endorses in Book II. The method seems not to have been noticed by critics of the *Utopia* and therefore warrants a brief analysis. It is, in its simplest form, a device of juxtapositions, between the theoretical, unreal, abstract, and erroneous on the one hand, and the practical, real, concrete, and reliable on the other. In the incident just referred to, Hythloday's earlier generalizations about the character of rulers and the ineffectuality of good advisors are directly contradicted through the concrete example, delivered by Hythloday himself, of a good and noble advisor who, again by Hythloday's own admission, is highly efficacious in directing his monarch to rule the state in the most virtuous manner. This advisor, though of high rank and himself the head of a household of retainers, is willing to listen to and learn from a stranger who would advise him.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 61.

<sup>12</sup> And immediately preceding his demonstration of the specious quality of his satiric persona's logic, More has added a fine ironic twist, after the manner of Lucian, by making Hythloday denounce in others the "proud, ridiculous and obstinate prejudices" of which he himself is so often a prime example. (*Ibid.*, p. 59)



This juxtaposition of theory and practice, general and particular, unreal and real, abstract and concrete, is operative throughout Book I, and constitutes the major satiric technique by which More undercuts the credibility of his satiric persona and dissociates himself from Hythloday's judgments on Utopian institutions and practices.

This self-contradiction also takes the form of the denial or ignoring of a fact which is obvious to all but the speaker, as in Hythloday's assertion at the conclusion of Book I that he admires Utopian justice because "with very few laws, affairs are ordered so aptly that virtue has its reward. . . ."<sup>13</sup> This in face of the fact that if there ever were a law-ridden state, it is Utopia, and that it is precisely this plethora of laws which fascinates Hythloday in his account of the island.<sup>14</sup>

This method of discrediting the judgment of the satiric persona by setting real and practical against unreal and theoretical and allowing the persona to incriminate himself is a distinctly Menippean technique, for a prime example of which one need look no further than the Lucianic dialogue "The Lover of Lies," which More had translated earlier in his career.

The similarities between Hythloday and the Menippean *philosophus gloriosus* are apparent not only in Hythloday's abstract method of argumentation, but also in his world view touched upon earlier. Hythloday's rigorous intellectualism blinds him to the idiosyncracies, to the essential humanness, of humanity. His real interest is in systems not people. And he has the universal panacea, the simple solution to all of the troubles of mankind: communism.

According to Hythloday, the abolishment of private property will rapidly and inevitably bring about the eradication of injustice, inequality, poverty, and all the other ills of European society.<sup>15</sup> A

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>14</sup> W. J. Barnes, who has also noted this particular contradiction, writes of Hythloday that "what he admires in Utopia is the fact that whenever and wherever Utopian human nature has shown any tendency toward irrational or subrational conduct, the Utopians have passed a law against it. This multiplicity of *rational* laws—some silly souls, less enlightened than Hythloday of course, have thought many of them absurd—these many laws are mentioned in almost every paragraph of Raphael's narration, though he tells us at one point that one of the great virtues of Utopia is there are but a few laws!" ("Irony and the English Apprehension of Renewal," *Queen's Quarterly*, 73 [1966], p. 368)

<sup>15</sup> It is interesting to note that this is a decidedly non-Christian position, denying original sin and implying the perfectability of man. This is a consideration which would hardly have escaped those humanists who, with tongue in cheek,

relatively simple change in the social system will cure all of man's problems. Hythloday's equation remains simple: communism works in the land of Nowhere, therefore it will work in Europe or anywhere. The fallacy of the equation is pointed out by the fictional More. In rebuttal to Hythloday's arguments, More attacks "this academic philosophy which thinks that everything is suitable to every place,"<sup>16</sup> and offers a pragmatic philosophy which embodies the attainable and the workable. More's argument for the practical rather than the theoretical takes the following form.

But there is another philosophy, more practical for statesmen, which knows its stage, adapts itself to the play in hand, and performs its role neatly and appropriately. This is the philosophy which you must employ. Otherwise we have the situation in which a comedy of Plautus is being performed and the household slaves are making trivial jokes at one another and then you come on the stage in a philosopher's attire and recite the passage from *Octavia* where Seneca is disputing with Nero. Would it not have been preferable to take a part without words than by reciting something inappropriate to make a hodgepodge of comedy and tragedy? You would have spoiled and upset the actual play by bringing in the irrelevant matter—even if your contribution would have been superior in itself. Whatever play is being performed, perform it as best you can, and do not upset it all simply because you think of another which has more interest.

So it is in the commonwealth. So it is in the deliberations of the monarchs. If you cannot pluck up the wrongheaded opinions by the root, if you cannot cure according to your heart's desire vices long standing, yet you must not on that account desert the commonwealth. You must not abandon the ship in a storm because you cannot control the winds.<sup>17</sup>

The basis for this condemnation is a clear and steady view of the world as it is, not simply as one would like it to be. It is a plea for the acceptance of reality and the adoption of a practical workable philosophy, and as such it shares common ground with the Menippean satirist. It is a straightforward condemnation of a closed philosophy which pretends to reduce the mutable world to a well-oiled, predictable and regulated, machine. More's reply may lack the vitriol of Lucian but the message is the same, and it is a distinctly Menippean

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echo Hythloday's blanket endorsement of Utopian institutions in the prefatory letters.

<sup>16</sup> *Utopia*, p. 99.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

message.<sup>18</sup> And the motive is also that of the Menippean satirist: one does not abandon the ship because he cannot control the winds. Instead of turning his back on the real and searching for perfection, one writes, as Lucian had and as More on the title page of the *Utopia* proclaimed that he had, a work "No less Beneficial than Entertaining," to correct what faults one may, in the realization that some faults are too deeply embedded in the fabric of humanity ever to be totally eradicated. One writes in order that, as the fictional More puts it, "What you cannot turn to good you must make as little bad as you can."<sup>19</sup> Hythloday is so deeply imbued with the "academic philosophy" that he can tolerate, even if he is aware of, no other, and he rejects the fictional More's suggestion out of hand.<sup>20</sup>

More also manipulates his satiric persona in a manner characteristic of Menippean satire. Hythloday is used as both a target and a tool of More's satiric attack. As *philosophus gloriosus*, Hythloday's function is that of an *alazon*.<sup>21</sup> In this role More employs him to expose the folly of the argumentative technique and philosophic position he embodies. His view of the evil in the world as springing from a social root rather than a fundamentally humane one is discredited both by his own words and by the speeches of the fictional More. In typically Menippean fashion, however, More builds upon the good intention and moral character of his satiric persona so as to secure the advantages of *eirōn* as well as *alazon*. However much Hythloday's philosophical position is undercut, his personal good intentions and high moral purpose are never impugned. It is as a good, public-spirited, if misguided, man that Hythloday is employed by the author as an *eirōn* to attack existing vice and corruption in sixteenth-century Europe. Thus, in the dual use of his satiric persona, More is able to have it both ways, to both agree and disagree, to laugh at and commend his persona's various attacks on European society and praise of Utopian institutions. The technique is a favorite among Menippean satirists, perhaps the most famous non-classical example being Swift's

<sup>18</sup> See Juanita S. Williams, "Towards a Definition of Menippean Satire," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1966), p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Utopia*, p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> The terms *alazon* and *eirōn*, respectively the foolish intellectual imposter and the shrewd under-player, are borrowed from classical comedy. See David Worcester's *The Art of Satire* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969) and Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* for discussions of the two as natural adversaries in classical satire.

Gulliver.<sup>22</sup> This dual function of Hythloday is the most thoroughly Menippean characteristic of More's use of the satiric persona.

This combination of *alazoneia* and *eironeia* in a single figure has perplexed critics. As *eiron* in Book I, the facet of his character traditionally emphasized by critics, Hythloday continually pierces through the sham, hypocrisy, and cant of sixteenth-century Europe. It is Hythloday who makes the famous accusation that enclosure has become so wide-spread in England that men no longer live off the sheep; rather the sheep now devour Englishmen. It is he who inveighs against the idle and wasteful nobility and their retainers, against a standing professional army in peace-time and against the unscrupulous policies of European monarchs. And there is much truth in the *eiron's* charges. The evils and abuses did indeed exist; but the remedies proposed are often more radical and destructive than the evils intended to cure. Here the *eiron* becomes *alazon*.

The *alazon* is not interested in reforming the abuses in a human, and hence imperfect, system. His solution is to abolish it and erect in its place a perfect system, Utopianism. This is the perfect pattern which the *philosophus gloriosus* will impose upon a mutable world of fallible human beings; and of course it will not work. One of the fundamental lessons of Menippean satire is that the *philosophus gloriosus's* schemes never do or can bring perfection, perfect order, from the changeable world of man, ruled by fortune.<sup>23</sup> The reality which is overlooked in Hythloday's systematizing will not be denied. The fictional More points directly to the chief obstacle to all of Hythloday's proposals: humanity itself. The problem is, as More says, that "it is impossible that all should be well unless all men were good, a situation which I do not expect for a great many years to come!"<sup>24</sup>

As *alazon*, Hythloday is sure that he has discovered the cure-all in

<sup>22</sup> Some, but by no means all, of the similarities between More's technique and that of Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* have been explored by John Traugott in "A Voyage to Nowhere with Thomas More and Jonathan Swift," *Sewanee Review*, 69 (1961), 534-65. Apparently the similarities between More and Rabelais have not been explored, an odd circumstance since More is obviously one of Rabelais' masters. It is worth remembering that Pantagruel is one-half Utopian, his mother being queen of Amaurotum, the capital city of Utopia. And he is hailed as the savior of Utopia when he, along with Panurge and their companions, repel the invasion of the Dipsodes and rescue that nation.

<sup>23</sup> Juanita S. Williams, "Towards a Definition of Menippean Satire," p. 48.

<sup>24</sup> *Utopia*, p. 101.

Utopianism. He is so sure that he will have no part of what he regards as the half-measures of the fictional More's practical philosophy, to make as little bad as possible what you cannot turn to good. For the *philosophus gloriosus*, everything can be turned to good if only his system is adopted. Here two prominent attributes of Hythloday's *alazoneia* are apparent: his overreaching and his intellectual pride. His reply to the fictional More's advice of a practical philosophy is a curt one:

By this approach, . . . I should accomplish nothing else than to share the madness of others as I tried to cure their lunacy. If I would stick to the truth, I must needs speak in the manner I have described. To speak falsehoods, for all I know, may be the part of a philosopher, but it is certainly not for me.<sup>25</sup>

Thus the final irony of the *philosophus gloriosus*. He will not accommodate himself to things as they are, even far enough to attempt to persuade a monarch to institute some or all of the Utopian practices. He will not go to court. He will not act. He only talks, preaches. Hythloday's world is words, not things, or human beings: he can only juggle abstractions and he respects only statistics.

Opposed to the needless complexities and impossible system-mongering of the *philosophus gloriosus* there exists in the text itself only the philosophical position which holds that the simple, practical, and common-sensical are man's best and truest guides to a mutable world he never made and never could hope to completely and effectively control.

This normative attitude is most explicit in Book I. It is there expressed directly as an ideal by the fictional More and illustrated in practice by the example of Cardinal Morton.<sup>26</sup> The norm is much

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* The Lucianic irony of Hythloday's last sentence is obvious. The use of the madness in this passage is also Menippean. It is the madman, the *philosophus gloriosus*, who believes that only he is sane and that it is the rest of the world which has gone mad.

<sup>26</sup> Harry Berger, Jr. has noted Cardinal Morton's normative function but he tends to view Morton as *the* norm in the *Utopia* rather than as only one source of it. According to Berger, "More has placed the contrast to all these Utopian methods, and the criteria by which they are to be judged, in the figure of Cardinal Morton." ("The Renaissance Imagination: Second World and Green World," *Centennial Review*, 9 [1956], 70) His position is adopted and further argued by Robbin S. Johnson, *More's Utopia: Ideal and Illusion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 59-60. The difficulty here is that Morton is simply not prominent enough in the narrative to function as a norm for the work as a whole. In

stronger or more insistent and obvious in Book I than in Book II, where it is largely implicit and residual. As a sane and steady counterpoise both in theory and practice to the sophisticated fantasies of Hythloday, it functions as the reader's guide to the torrent of ideas, propositions, and arguments which flow from Hythloday.

This consideration leads to another of some importance, the manner in which characterization is handled in the *Utopia*. The work opens with realistic descriptions of the characters; and, although all the characters exist in a work of fiction and are themselves fictional, several of them, Thomas More, Peter Giles, and later in the narrative, Cardinal Morton, bear the names, traits, and known characteristics of real people. These characters are nevertheless, in this context, fictional, and as in such satiric dialogues as Lucian's *Philosophies for Sale*, their resemblance to their living prototypes is distorted by the author to serve satiric purposes. In the early portion of Book I, the fictional More appears to have a touch of the ingenué about him; Giles, who appears only sporadically in Book I and not at all in Book II, is more credulous than More; and Cardinal Morton is aggrandized into a personification of virtue, wisdom, and piety. The realistic aspect of the characterization is clearly subordinate to the author's interest in the mental and philosophical attitudes of his fictional characters which controls the characterization. To achieve the desired satiric ends, More is quite willing to abandon the pretense of verisimilitude which the names of More, Giles, and Morton help to maintain, even to the point of making his good friend and fellow humanist Peter Giles into a rather foolish fellow who is completely taken in by Hythloday's marvelous tale. This credulity of the character Giles enables More to manipulate him as a "straight man" for Hythloday. It is Giles who keeps the discourse moving and who introduces new topics at opportune moments when Hythloday has exhausted a subject or when the reasoning of the fictional More comes too close to exposing Hythloday's fallacious reasoning before he has

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fact, the character of Cardinal Morton is almost exactly analogous to Swift's Don Pedro de Mendoza in Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels*. Mendoza is a striking example of the satirist's intellectual norm in action, and he enters at a crucial moment to contradict by his presence the fulminations of the *philosophus gloriosus*; but he is not in and of himself the whole show, nor need he be. The norm in the *Utopia* is explicitly stated once, implied everywhere, and incarnated, at different times, in both Cardinal Morton and the fictional More, most noticeably in the latter at the conclusion of Book II.

told his tale. Although the fictional More is more than a bit gullible, never questioning the reality of Hythloday's voyage, this facet of his characterization does not interfere with the tentative identification of the philosophical position and mental attitude of the fictional More with that of the author More. The same satiric expediency that calls for a characterization of the fictional More as naive in regard to Hythloday's voyage demands at the same time that there be nothing naive about the fictional More's attitude toward Hythloday's ideas and his method of defending them. Indeed, the naive aspect of the fictional More's characterization may be an extension of the character's *eironeia*. For it is by holding back behind the naive facade that the More character disingenuously encourages the *alazon* Hythloday to overextend himself. At any rate, this is certainly the practical result of the fictional More's credulity.

The basic conflict in the *Utopia*, then, is between different sets of mental attitudes. The characters function as mouthpieces for these attitudes, and the characterization is styled to fulfill satiric purposes.

Just as the characterization and the central narrative emphasis are thoroughly Menippean, so too is the structure of the *Utopia*. Structurally, the work falls into two distinct parts. The basic structural principle of Book I is the dialogue, revolving about the introduction of the fictional More to the traveler-philosopher Hythloday and their debate over whether Hythloday could best serve the state by going to court as an advisor. This dialectical structure, according to Northrup Frye, is the most common form of the short Menippean satire.<sup>27</sup> Within the narrative framework of the book the characters, who function as mouthpieces for different sets of mental attitudes, are brought together for an exchange of views through the use of a related Menippean device which Frye calls *cena*.<sup>28</sup> The characters first come together by accident in a street and determine to adjourn to the fictional More's garden, to hear Hythloday's description of his travels. The fictional setting for the entire narrative of Books I and II is the fictional More's garden, which functions as a symposium setting for the ideological conflict between the fictional More and Hythloday. Hythloday's long digressive reminiscence of his trip to England also employs

<sup>27</sup> Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 310. Most critics do not consider this possibility, preferring with the editors of the Yale *Utopia* to reflexively derive the dialogue form of Book I from Plato.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

the *cena* convention. The setting for Hythloday's digression is Cardinal Morton's dinner table, a setting which draws a number of new characters into the narrative and provides Hythloday with a philosophical *adversarius* in Cardinal Morton, an object of attack in the stock character of the pedantic lawyer, and opportunity for incidental satire on corrupt and lazy members of the religious order.

Finally, the interest in ideas rather than realistic characters produces something like the logical dislocation remarked of Menippean strategy by Frye. In Book I, Hythloday's sophisticated habit of switching back and forth between the real and the imaginary in the course of his discussion is more than sufficient to throw the careless reader into a complete state of confusion as to what is real and what is not. A typical example of this dislocation occurs when Hythloday moves heedlessly from a discussion of conditions in the French court to conditions among an imaginary people called Achorians and then back to the French court again. This same effect of logical dislocation is also achieved in the digressions of Book I, as when, for example, the central focus of the reader's interest, the dialogue between Cardinal Morton and Hythloday, is interrupted for several pages in order to interject a humorous and satirical conversation between a jester and a friar, two peripheral and inconsequential characters.

Finally, such a reading as that proposed here possesses the advantage of recognizing the true literary merit of More's little "golden book." For when considered as Menippean satire, the *Utopia* justifiably may be regarded as a great artistic success similar to the *Encomium Moriae*. Any interpretation of the *Utopia* which views the work as a predominately serious treatise may call it many things but not an artistic success. As a philosophical treatise it must be accounted a failure, for the unified program and the consistent philosophical position which the myriad ideas in the *Utopia* supposedly mirror have yet to be elucidated and systematized after over four hundred and fifty years of intensive study. Only under the rubric of Menippean satire can the *Utopia* legitimately assume the lofty position in the canon of English literature to which its author's artistry and centuries of universal acclaim entitle it.