The Paradoxical Design of *The Book of Sir Thomas More*

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Scholars, distracted by the problem of authorship and the state of the manuscript, once assumed that *The Book of Sir Thomas More* was "unfinished and chaotic."¹ This was an unexamined assumption that has not withstood the scrutiny of several recent studies which prove conclusively that the play, "despite its apparent disorder, is a coherent theatrical document."² Recent critics, however, understandably concerned with offering a corrective to the earlier view, have stopped short of saying the obvious: as coherent as *Sir Thomas More* may be, whether in terms of its stagecraft or its interior duplications, in meaning it is complex and problematical; it entertains certain possibilities at the same time as it frustrates them, so that a question arises as to whether this is the product of ineptitude or design. My contention is that the ambiguities are deliberate, functional, and the product of an identifiable view of the human situation.

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The complexity of the play can be seen in its basic structure. It is far too simple to consider *Sir Thomas More* either as merely a *de casibus* play or as merely episodic, even though critics who identify one or the other of these patterns are unquestionably justified.³

At first sight the play does appear to reproduce the pattern exemplified in *The Mirror for Magistrates*: a rise and fall determined largely by the capriciousness of Fortune. More rises from relative obscurity as a sheriff of London to become Lord Chancellor of England, then, equally precipitately, he falls to execution as a traitor. This pattern is reinforced by the division of the plot material into three blocks: a first section depicting More in his public role (scenes i-vii), a central section showing him at the peak of social and intellectual success as he entertains such guests as Erasmus and the Lord Mayor of London (scenes viii-ix), and a third section in which More becomes increasingly isolated and retreats into a private world (scenes x-xvii). Visually, this pattern is underlined

by an increasing frequency of interior locations and by a sequence of stage furnishings that progressively diminish in richness until the bareness of the prison scene is reached.⁴

The ostensible pyramidal shape of the play is nevertheless complicated by an inverted parallelism of the first half (scenes i-vii) within the second (scene viii-end) that cannot be accounted for merely in terms of *de casibus* philosophy. Both halves of the play climax with an execution, the first half with Lincoln's, the second half with More's own. A number of plays show this kind of plot duplication (for example *Henry IV, Part II*), but *Sir Thomas More* is unusually interesting because of the care with which the structural parallelism is underlined, especially by verbal cross-references. As Doll is about to climb the ladder to execution, Williamson says, "Give me thy hand, let's kiss, and so let's part."⁵ This anticipates More's words to Shrewsbury and Surrey as he is going up the steps to the block: "give me your hands yet before we [part]" (Scene xvii, l. 1920). More's death is also ironically anticipated in the words with which Shrewsbury announces his elevation to Knighthood:

Master More, to you
A rougher, yet as kind a salutation —
Your name is yet too short. Nay, you must kneel.
A knight's creation is this knightly steel.
Rise up, Sir Thomas More. (Scene vi, ll. 527-531)

The literal act here is transformed into a figurative sign by the echoes of it in the last scene. As More climbs the scaffold, he says, "Ye see, though it pleaseth the king to raise me thus high, yet I am not proud" (ll. 1922-1923). He then recalls the phrase "your name is yet too short" to deflate it through an ironic substitution: "But I can tell thee, my neck is so short . . ." (l. 1949). At one level, these echoes suggest that More's downfall was implicit in his rise from the outset; at another, they suggest that More's knightly elevation was a parody of a truer elevation at the play's end:

More: There is a thing within me that will raise
And elevate my better part 'bove sight
Of these same weaker eyes. And, Master Shrieves,
For all this troop of steel that tends my death,
I shall break from you, and fly up to heaven.
(ll. 1966-1970)

The parallelism is further reinforced by visual recollections created by the staging demanded in the text.⁶ More's speech to the rioting mob would have been delivered from the same raised area on which first Lincoln, then More would have been executed. This would have created a visibly ironic relation between the three events. The character grouping

is also calculated to this end, since Surrey and Shrewsbury attend More in both scenes. Ostensibly, such associations might tempt one to conclude that More fell because he was hoist on his own petard: that he fell because, like the complacent Justice Suresby in Scene ii, he was willing to commit the fault he condemned in others. Linguistically at least, his "error" and "folly" is associated with that of the Evil May Day rioters themselves.⁷

It is obvious that an explanation of More's fall simply in terms of Fortune will not do. The whole question of causality is made the subject of a dialectic in which conflicting notions oppose one another. This is seen in More's own thinking. Just after he has been chosen to serve in the King's Privy Council, he says to the Earl of Shrewsbury: "My Lord, farewell. New days beget new tides: / Life whirls 'bout fate, then to a grave it slides" (Scene vi, 11. 564-565). A few scenes later, however, he explicitly and emphatically rejects this idea, replacing it instead with an assertion of Providence:

It is in heaven than I am thus and thus,
And that which we prophanely term our fortunes
Is the provision of the power above,
Fitted and shaped just to that strength of nature
Which we are born [withal]. (Addition III, 11. 1-5)

At yet another point, just after he has persuaded the rioters to lay down their arms, More offers a subtle qualification of the providential view:

My Lord and brethren — what I here have spoke
My country's love and, next, the City's care
Enjoined me to; which since it thus prevails,
Think, God hath made weak More his instrument
To thwart sedition's violent intent.
(Scene vi, 11. 511-515)

This statement suggests that the providentiality of any event is not necessarily predetermined, but may depend upon the outcome of choices men freely make. More himself, at the end, has no doubts that Providence is working in the circumstances of his fall by enabling him to make a choice for which he will receive the reward of heaven.⁸ The notions of Providence he entertains work, not only to modify his own earlier fatalistic opinion, but also the *de casibus* suggestion implicit in aspects of the play's structure. The procedure reminds one of the dialectical questioning in *Richard III* as to whether events are predetermined or the consequence of grace avoided or accepted.⁹

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Why, we wonder, should the play apparently frustrate its own efforts to propound answers for the problems it contemplates? A clue is to be

found in the play's most immediate source, Hall's *Chronicle*. As we know from Shakespeare's case, it is a fairly common occurrence for key words in a source to provide thematic germs for the ensuing play: for example, the preamble of Barnabe Riche's *Of Apolonius and Silla* quite manifestly suggested the central concerns of *Twelfth Night*. The same thing happens in *Sir Thomas More*. In his final assessment of Sir Thomas, Hall concludes, "I cannot tell whether I shoulde call him a foolishe wyseman, or a wise foolishman."¹⁰ Hall's chiasmic paradox contains the germ of a dialectical counterpointing that the dramatists adopted and extended as the shaping principle of the whole play.

Hall, in turn, was taking his cue from Erasmus' *Moriae Encomium* (with its pertinently punning title). This, too, the dramatists picked up, for the influence of *The Praise of Folly* is pervasive in *Sir Thomas More*. It is manifest in the way the opening scenes initiate a dialectic on the nature of folly and wisdom. In Scene ii, for example, More instructs Lifter the pickpocket to pick the purse of the presiding Justice. Lifter perceives that the purpose of More, whom he knows "to be one of the wisest men that is in England" (l. 173), is "but to check the folly of the Justice" (l. 199). Suresby himself is able to observe, in words of unwitting dramatic irony, that "Knaves and fools meet when purses go,/Wise men look to their purses well enow" (ll. 258-259). The scope of the dialectic is progressively enlarged until it encompasses the central question of whether More's own wisdom is folly, or his folly wisdom – whether he may be right in being wrong, while at the same time wrong in being right.

The characterization of More at large reflects Erasmus' characterization of *Moria*. At the beginning of *The Praise of Folly* she is youthful and exuberant, but by the end of her oration she is made to appear old and much more sombre as her perceptions deepen. Precisely the same thing happens in More's case, as the song of Wit (with whom he is allegorically associated) suggests in the interpolated play, *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*:

Wit: I dreamed fast of mirth and play,
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.
Methought I walked still to and fro,
And from her company [i.e. Lady Wisdom's] I could not go;
But when I waked, it was not so.
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

(Scene ix, ll. 1044-1048)

More, too, like *Moria* and Wit, wakes to find it is not so, and decides at one point (in a heavily revised passage) that

Now will I speak like More in melancholy,
For if grief's power could with her sharpest darts

Pierce my firm bosom, here's sufficient cause
 To take my farewell of mirth's hurtless laws.
 (Addition I, 11. 1-4)

Further evidence of Erasmus' influence is More's echo on several occasions of Folly's Lucianic metaphor of life as a play. When the interlude is broken off, More, who has just stepped in to improvise the part of Good Counsel, declares that he has hindered the play instead of helping it, and concludes: "Thus fools oft-times do help to mar the play" (Scene ix, 1. 1146). This alludes to Folly's bitter assertion that

If one at a solemne stage plaie, woulde take vpon hum to plucke of the
 plaiers garmentes, whiles they were sayng theyr partes, and so disciphre
 vnto the lokers on, the true and natiue faces of eche of the plaiers,
 shoulde he not (trow ye) marre all the mattier? and well deserue for a
 madman to be peltid out of the place with stones?¹¹

(Chaloner, p. 37)

Apart from offering a metaphoric comment on the meaning of More's actions in the later parts of the play, the echo also equates him with the Lucianic wise man whom Folly imagines to have dropped down from the sky to comment on the folly of the human race. Layer upon layer of paradox is implicit in the latent equation, for, in *The Praise of Folly*, Folly concludes that men would rightly consider the wise sky-man a crazy madman:

For surely as nothing can be more foolissh than wisdom out of place,
 so is nothyng more fonde than prudence out of season. And dooeth
 he not out of season (trow ye) that plieth not him selfe as the world
 goeth? nor will not take the market as it ryseth?¹²

In a typically Erasmian paradoxical way, therefore, the echo suggests two conflicting interpretations of More's future actions that may be applied simultaneously: he may be the wise man who sees the real truth of things, or he may be the genuine fool who has no discreet sense of time or place. These are the two possibilities that *Sir Thomas More*, as I will show, persistently explores. More echoes *Moria* on one further occasion, in the final scene. When asked to confess his fault, he replies,

I confess his majesty hath been ever good to me, and my offence to his
 highness makes me of a state pleader a stage player — though I am old
 and have a bad voice — to act this last scene of my tragedy.

(Scene xvii, 11. 1931-1934)

Here More interprets his own situation in the same metaphoric terms Folly uses to characterize the human situation at large — as a kind of play:

wheras men come foorth disguised one in one arraie, an other in an other, eche playng his parte, till at last the maker of the plaie, or boke-bearer causeth them to auoyde the skaffolde, and yet sometyme maketh one man come in, two or three tymes, with sundrie partes and appaile.¹³

It is a nice touch that More casts Henry VIII in the role of the stage producer; whose play it is, however, is a matter that *Sir Thomas More* implicitly questions.

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The pervasive Erasmian influence, derived directly from Erasmus' *Moriae Encomium* and indirectly through Hall, shows that the ambiguities in the play are not capricious or confused, but deliberately constructed. A prevailing Erasmian paradoxicality is evident in the treatment of all the play's main thematic concerns.

The relation between the King's law and natural justice, for example, shows the typical counterpointing procedure at work. In Scene i the commoners acknowledge that they are 'curbed by duty and obedience' (1. 41) from breaking the peace; but they are equally aware that the law to which they are bound is perpetuating injustice:

Lincoln: It is hard when Englishmen's patience must be thus jettied on
by strangers and they not dare to revenge their own wrongs.
(11. 24-25)

Scene ii underlines the fallibility of positive law by revealing the lack of charity and the malicious hypocrisy of the presiding Justice. By having Lifter pick Suresby's purse, More is, in effect, stepping outside the law in order to achieve a natural justice superior to the justice that the law threatens to execute; the episode is a dramatization of the need for equity. When Lifter questions the wisdom of what More asks him to do, More declares: "Lifter, I am true subject to my king" (1. 176). He believes that to secure a greater degree of justice than the strict letter of the law allows (Lifter is, after all, technically guilty) is to fulfil his duty to the king more perfectly than through a mere servile observance: the truest form of loyalty is to see that the king's responsibilities are most fully realized. The conflict between the justice of the king's law and the justice of natural law is thus enlarged into a question about the nature of, and relation between, obedience and duty – with interesting implications for the interpretation of More's situation at the end of the play. To what extent is More fulfilling his duty by disobeying the same law that he urged others to obey? Here, as elsewhere, the play's fundamental paradoxicality comes to the fore.

The most complicated and perplexing manifestations of paradox

surface, however, in the central concern of the play, which is the question of whether (as Hall wondered) More was a fool or a wise man, or a foolish wiseman, or a wise foolishman.

The examination of More as the wise fool is deliberately focused in three carefully constructed episodes placed at the pivotal centre of the play. The first is when More dresses his fool Randall in his own robes of state, and instructs him to act his part before Erasmus to see whether that wise man can distinguish between "merit and outward ceremony" (Addition IV, 1. 20). Here is a piece of obvious visual symbolism in which, potentially at least, the literal object is capable of being viewed as a figurative emblem of the truth. Something comparable is found in *Henry IV, Part I*, in the way that Henry's kingly status is figuratively dramatized in the decoys, and in the way that the relation between Falstaff's and Hotspur's brands of honour is suggested by the sight of Falstaff carrying Hotspur's dead body on his back.¹⁴ The visual suggestion is even more complex in the Randall/More scene. At one level the fool's adoption of the Chancellor's robes may suggest More's own folly in entering the King's service. More himself is aware of the folly of public office at the moment he accepts it: "I now must sleep in court, sound sleeps forbear; / The chamberlain to state is public care." (Scene vi, 11. 550-551). And when Randall unwittingly parodies More's deeply serious meditation on the spiritual dangers attending success (Addition III), something further is suggested:

Randall: Before God, I have practised your lordship's shift so well that
I think I shall grow proud, my lord.

(Addition IV, 11. 4-5)

Has More successfully avoided the pride against which he warned himself? Randall overgoes himself in the trick played against Erasmus, and ruins the illusion (just as More declares he has after stepping into the players' interlude to take over the role of Good Counsel). Is More, we are forced to wonder, to be equated with Randall, or is the parallel strictly parodic, serving to underline the ultimate difference between them? The problem of discriminating between appearance and reality is made even more difficult by the fact that Erasmus, for whom More devised the test, *fails* it. A problem of perception is thus exposed at four levels: More's, Randall's, Erasmus', and that of the audience itself.

The second episode is when More encounters Faulkner, the long-haired ruffian. Faulkner has sworn "upon a foolish vow" not to have his hair cut for three years (Addition IV, 1. 76). More gives him the option of having his hair cut or lying in Newgate until his vow expires. The figurative association between More and Faulkner is obvious: the dilemma More presents to Faulkner is not unlike the one the King pre-

sents to him — both have to choose between integrity and common-sense. More's words when he orders Faulkner to Newgate prefigure what Shrewsbury later says about More himself:

More: Sirrah, great sins are bred
 In all that body where there's a foul head.
 (Addition IV, 11. 90-91)

Shrewsbury: No doubt
 His mind will alter, and the Bishop's too.
 Error in learned heads hath much to do.
 (Scene x, 11. 1279-1281)

More and Faulkner appear to be equated in the nature and obstinacy of their error, but when Faulkner enters for a second time, newly shorn, the ambiguity is restored. More discharges him, saying, "Thy head is for thy shoulders now more fit: / Thou hast less hair upon it, but more wit" (Addition IV, 11. 203-204). This looks forward to More shaving his beard before the execution (Scene xvii, 11. 1954 — 1955), and the implied parallel suggests wisdom, not folly. Yet, in the immediately following episode of the interpolated play, such lack of hair is equated with *lack* of wisdom. The paradoxical ambiguity of the episode is sustained as the associations between More and Faulkner first of all suggest shared folly, then shared wisdom, and, finally, that the similarity may be only apparent. When Morris, Faulkner's master, sees that he has been dissembling and is really unregenerate, he casts him off; Faulkner, however, manages to ingratiate himself into his master's favour once more, and says: "I care not to be turned off, and 'twere a ladder, so it be in my humour, or the fates beckon to me. Nay, pray sir, if the destinies spin me a fine thread, Faulkner flies another pitch" (11. 238-240). Clearly, Faulkner is unlike More in his willingness to be hypocritically obsequious to ensure self preservation, because, even though many, including the members of his own family, urge More to take a similar line, he refuses to do so. The presentation forces us to ponder whether More is wrong in being like Faulkner, or wrong in being unlike him — or vice versa.

The last of the three key episodes occurs when More participates in *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*, which turns out to be an allegorical dramatization of his own situation and its dangers. The idea underlying the treatment given to the interlude — really a part of *Lusty Juventus* — derives, I think, from Hall:

I cannot tell whether I shoulde call him a foolishe wyseman, or a wise foolishman, for undoubtedly he beside his learnynge, had a great witte, but it was so myngled with tauntyng and mockyng, that it semed to them that best knew him, that he thought nothing to be wel spoken except he had ministred some mocke in the communication.¹⁵

More, without specifically applying it to himself, says much the same thing at the outset of the interlude: "To marry wit to wisdom asks some cunning; / Many have wit, that may come short of Wisdom" (Scene ix, 11. 926-927). As the interlude gets underway, More is directly associated with young Wit, who has to distinguish between Lady Wisdom and Lady Vanity. Wit accidentally lacks a beard, a detail that anticipates the reiterated play upon More's clean-shavenness in the final scenes:

More [to his wife]:

Thow wast wont to blame my kissing when my beard was in the stubble, but I have been trimmed of late — I have had a smooth court shaving, in good faith, I have.

(Scene xi, 11. 1339-1342)

More [to the hangman]:

One thing more: take heed thou cut'st not off my beard. Oh, I forgot, execution passed upon that last night, and the body of it lies buried in the Tower.

(Scene xvii, 11. 1954-1955)

The second reference to More's beardlessness shows the dramatists deliberately altering a detail in their source to align it with their conception: in Hall, More does have a long beard, and the ironic quip in 1. 1954 is spoken by More when he places his head on the block.¹⁶ From one angle, the beardlessness that More and Wit share suggests lack of wisdom; for, as the interlude does indeed show, "Wit's inclination may gallop so fast that he will outstrip wisdom and fall to folly" (Scene ix, 11. 1016-1017). But this possibility is consistently counterbalanced by another. More instructs the players to proceed without Wit's beard, "for wit goes not all by the hair" (1. 1008), and because "we'll rather allow a beardless Wit than Wit all beard to have no brain" (11. 1021-1022). This allows for the possibility that More, in his apparent "beardless" folly at the end, may have been wise — a notion further strengthened by the way in which More is able to improvise the role of Good Counsel so precisely that, as one of the players observes with astonishment, "it is as right to Luggins' part as can be" (1. 1125). When More dismisses his achievement with the words "Thus fools, oft-times do help to mar the play" (1. 1146), he is, as I have said, equating himself with the foolish Lucianic man from the sky in Erasmus' *Moriae Encomium*.

Viewed together, these three episodes demonstrate how carefully the play was designed and executed. Their symmetrical arrangement at the central point of the play draws attention to the thematic duplication and variation of the wiseman-fool theme within them. Moreover, the presence of Hands C and E in revisions of two of the episodes proves that the basic paradoxical conception of *Sir Thomas More* must have

been premeditated and agreed upon for the revisions to have been orchestrated into such consistency.

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The question remains as to whether the play ever resolves the paradoxical problems it propounds. Beyond a certain point, the interpretation of More's character ceases to be dialectical; no one in the final scenes doubts his greatness or virtue:

1 Warder:

Well, be it spoken without offence to any,
A wiser, or more virtuous gentleman
Was never bred in England.

(Scene xiv, 11. 1612-1614)

Woman:

Ah, gentle heart, my soul for thee is sad.
Farewell, the best friend that the poor e'er had.

(Scene xiv, 11. 1647-1648)

Butler:

I cannot tell, I have nothing to do with matters above my capacity,
but, as God judge me, if I might speak my mind, I think there lives
not a more harmless gentleman in the universal world.

Brewer:

Nor a wiser, nor a merrier, nor an honester.

(Scene xv, 11. 1683-1686)

Equally, no one doubts More's heavenly destination:

Horsekeeper:

Well, he was too good a lord for us, and therefore, I fear, God himself will take him.

(Scene xv, 11. 1691-1692)

Catesby:

A dead man to the world, and given the axe his head,
But his sweet soul to live among the saints.

(Scene xv, 11. 1705-1707)

Is there any way that this universal admiration and esteem for More at the end of the play can be reconciled with the reiterated suggestion in the earlier parts that he may have been wrong?

The answer lies in the basic Erasmian conception of More's character. As I have suggested, More undergoes a change of character that is similar, to some extent, to the transformation of *Moria* from the youthful, life-loving wit to the older, more percipient Christian fool as depicted in the

closing pages of the *Moriae Encomium*. There Erasmus has *Moria* quote Saint Paul: "*who so semeth (saith he) to be wise amonges you, let him become a foole, to the ende he be wise in deede.*"¹⁷ Folly sees the wisdom in this Christian madness in terms of a necessary *contemptus mundi*: "generally throughout all their liuyng, holy men wil flie from those thynges, that sauour of the bodie, as beyng rapte and drawn vp to the other, that are ghostly and invisible."¹⁸ In *Sir Thomas More*, More sees his own situation as involving just such a spiritual withdrawal:

Perchance the king,
Seeing the court is full of vanity,
Has pity lest our souls should be misled,
And sends us to a life contemplative.
O happy banishment from worldly pride,
When souls by private life are sanctified.
(Addition I, 11. 26-31)

By the penultimate scene, More is presented clearly as the type of the true Christian stoic. This is seen in the words of the Lieutenant of the Tower when he comes to announce the arrival of the warrant for More's execution:

Your wisdom, sir, hath been so well approved,
And your fair patience in imprisonment
Hath shown such constancy of mind
And Christian resolution in all troubles,
As warrant us, you are not unprepared.
(Scene xvi, 11. 1735-1739)

It seems, then, as if the dramatists ultimately chose transcendence as a solution for the experiential difficulties of life that they recognized in More's tragic experience and explored so resonantly in the major part of the play.¹⁹ The design remains paradoxical, as it does in Erasmus' paradoxical encomium, but it involves substituting one set of paradoxes for another: the chiasmic possibilities in Hall's original paradox have been separated into what amounts to a simple either/or alternative. Just as More on the scaffold confidently bids farewell to "the fool of flesh" (Scene xvii, 1. 1980), so does the play appear to repudiate the folly of the earthly wise man in favour of the wisdom of the otherworldly Christian fool. As neat as this resolution may be, it seems slightly anticlimactic after the dynamic manner in which worldly problems were explored, and perhaps it is not entirely fanciful to detect a note in Surrey's final words suggesting that not all perturbations are entirely allayed:

Come, we'll to court.
 Let's sadly hence to perfect unknown fates,
 Whilst he tends progress to the state of states.
 (Scene xvii, 11. 1984-1986)

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Notes

- 1 Harold Jenkins, "Supplement to Greg's Edition of *Sir Thomas More*," in *Malone Society Collections* (Oxford, 1961), 6: 185. See also J. Dover Wilson, "The New Way with Shakespeare's Texts III," *Shakespeare Survey*, 9 (1956), 72, and T.W. Baldwin, *On the Literary Genetics of Shakespeare's Plays: 1592-1594* (Urbana, 1959), p. 270 n.
- 2 Scott McMillin, "The Book of *Sir Thomas More*: A Theatrical View," *MP*, 68 (1970-1971), 11. See also Judith Doolin Spikes, "The Book of *Sir Thomas More*: Structure and Meaning," *Moreana*, No. 43/44 (1974), 25-39.
- 3 For the former view see McMillin, p. 22; for the view that the play's structure is basically episodic, see Spikes, p. 36.
- 4 For a full discussion of this point see McMillin, pp. 20-22.
- 5 *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, ed. W.W. Greg, Malone Society Reprints (Oxford, 1911), Scene vii, 1. 680. I have modernized spelling and punctuation in my quotations, and have regularized lineation where necessary. Subsequent references are given in the text.
- 6 See McMillin, pp. 22-24.
- 7 Compare, for example, Addition II, 1. 249 with Scene xvii, 1. 1984.
- 8 See Scene xiii, 1. 1602, Scene xvi, 11. 1854-1855, and Scene xvii, 11. 1966-1970.
- 9 This idea is traced in my article, "Richard III's Pauline Oath: Shakespeare's Response to Thomas More," *Moreana*, No. 57 (1978), 13-23.
- 10 *The Lives of the Kings*, ed. Charles Whibley, Vols 1-2: *The Triumphant Reigne of Kyng Henry the VIII* (London, 1904), p. 265.
- 11 *The Praise of Folie*, trans. Sir Thomas Chaloner, ed. Clarence H. Miller (Oxford, 1965), p. 37. The original Latin reads: "Si quis histrionibus in scena fabulam agentibus personas detrahare conetur, ac spectatoribus veras nativasque facies ostendere, nonne is fabulam omnem perverterit, dignusque habeatur, quem omnes e theatro velut lymphatum saxis ejiciant?" (*Opera Omnia*, Tomus IV (Hildesheim, 1962), p. 428.
- 12 *The Praise of Folie*, p. 38. "Ut nihil est stultius praepostera sapientia, ita perversa prudentia nihil imprudentius. Siquidem perverse facit, qui sese non accommodet rebus praesentibus, foroque nolit uti. . ." (*Opera Omnia*, IV, p. 429).
- 13 *The Praise of Folie*, p. 38. "Porro mortalium vita omnis quid aliud est, quam fabula quae-piam, in qua alii alius obiecti personis procedunt, aguntque suas quisque partes, donec choragus educat e proscenio? Qui saepe tamen eundem diverso cultu prodire jubet. . ." (*Opera Omnia*, IV, p. 428).
- 14 *The First Part of King Henry IV*, ed. A.R. Humphreys (London, 1960), V. iii. 20-25, and V. iv. 128 s.d.
- 15 Hall, p. 265.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 266.
- 17 *The Praise of Folie*, p. 116. Folly quotes 1 Corinthians 3: 18: "Qui videtur esse sapiens inter vos, stultus fiat, ut sit sapiens." (*Opera Omnia*, IV, p. 496)
- 18 *The Praise of Folie*, p. 126. "... in omni vita refugit plus ab his quae corpori cognata sunt, ad aeterna, ad invisibilia, ad spiritalia rapitur" (*Opera Omnia*, IV, p. 502).
- 19 "Resonantly" does, of course, not imply successfully. The dramatists' reach was beyond their grasp: the promise remains greater than the performance. Indeed, as J.M. Nosworthy puts it, the play, in parts, is "desperately pedestrian" ("Shakespeare and *Sir Thomas More*," *RES*, 6 [1955], 25).