

## UTOPIA AND CIVIC POLITICS IN MID-SIXTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON\*

JENNIFER BISHOP

*Newnham College, Cambridge*

**ABSTRACT.** *During the seven years of Edward VI's reign, a variety of ideas about how best to reform the religious, economic, political, and social structures of the English commonwealth were devised, debated, and enacted. London's citizens and governors were increasingly occupied with developing legislative and institutional solutions for pressing social ills such as poverty and vagrancy: the question of how best to govern the commonwealth was not just a philosophical dilemma, but a practical concern. It was within this context that the first English translation of Thomas More's Utopia appeared in London. Published in 1551 by a group of citizens with a keen interest in social reform, the English Utopia may best be described as constituting an engagement with ideas of 'good government'. This article draws on surviving evidence for the activities and concerns of Utopia's producers, and in particular the sponsor and instigator of the translation, George Tadlowe, in order to demonstrate that this publication represented a timely combination of humanist theory and political practice typical of the civic culture of the Edwardian reformation.*

---

On 8 October 1549, the members of London's common council were summoned to an emergency meeting at the Guildhall. The occasion of the meeting was a political crisis; the disastrous events of the summer, during which widespread uprisings and rebellions had taken place across the country, had led England's governors to fear the existence of a powerful undercurrent of social unrest and popular disaffection that threatened the stability of the commonwealth.<sup>1</sup> Concerned that Protector Somerset's handling of the situation had been ineffective, a group of lords had formed a conspiracy to forcibly remove him from power. Having informed the king, Cranmer, and the mayor of

*Newnham College, Cambridge CB3 9DF jjb74@cam.ac.uk*

\* I am grateful to Dr Phil Withington for his advice during the preparation of earlier drafts of this article, and for his supervisory guidance during the writing of my M.Phil. dissertation on which this is based. Thanks are also due to the editors of the *Historical Journal* and to the anonymous referees for their helpful comments on the text.

<sup>1</sup> Andy Wood, *The 1549 rebellions and the making of early modern England* (Cambridge, 2007); David Rollison, 'The specter of the commonality: class struggle and the commonweal in England before the Atlantic world', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63 (2006), pp. 221–52.

London of their intentions,<sup>2</sup> the lords assembled in the city with the aim of gathering together an armed force of citizens. (By this time Somerset, hearing that the lords sought his 'blood and death', had removed with Edward to Windsor.)<sup>3</sup> At the Guildhall meeting, the common council was presented with two petitions – one from Somerset, and the other from the lords who denounced the 'pryde, couetousness and extreme ambicion' of the Protector.<sup>4</sup> Both parties asked for London's support, with the lords calling on the citizens to act for 'the preservacion of his maiesties life and the . . . continuance of the noble state and comen wealth'.<sup>5</sup> The council was asked to give a response; would it support the lords, and provide them with armed men for the 'preservacion' of king and commonwealth?

At this point George Tadlowe, a London haberdasher, made a speech on behalf of the council.<sup>6</sup> Tadlowe began by reminding his audience of the lessons to be learned from 'things past'; he recounted an episode from Fabian's *Chronicle*, in which a war between Henry III and his barons provided a parallel situation to the one now facing the council.<sup>7</sup> Then, as now, the barons had asked for the city's support in the name of the common good. On that occasion the citizens had joined the barons, only to suffer miserable consequences once the king returned to power. Tadlowe asked:

What followed of it? Was it forgotten? No surely, nor forgiven neither, during the king's life. The liberties of the city were taken away, strangers appointed to our heads and governors, the citizens given away body and goods, and from one persecution to another were most miserably afflicted. Such a thing it is, to enter into the wrath of a prince; as Solomon saith, 'The wrath and indignation of a prince is death.'<sup>8</sup>

Rebellion against a king, Tadlowe warned, had resulted in the loss of civic freedoms; the citizens in his example had forfeited the right to appoint their own governors, they had lost the freedom of the city and, as a result, their lives

<sup>2</sup> Reginald Sharpe, *London and the kingdom: a history derived mainly from the archives at Guildhall in the custody of the corporation of the city of London* (3 vols., London, 1984), I, p. 433.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Brigden, *New worlds, lost worlds: the rule of the Tudors, 1485–1603* (London, 2000), p. 192.

<sup>4</sup> London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), CLRO, *Journals of the Court of common council 1543–1556*, Jnl 16 (x109/058), fo. 34.

<sup>5</sup> LMA, CLRO, Jnl 16 (x109/058), fo. 35.

<sup>6</sup> The speech is recorded in three chronicles: John Foxe, *The acts and monuments of John Foxe*, ed. Rev. George Townsend and Rev. Stephen Reed Cattley (8 vols., London, 1837–41), VI, pp. 289–90; Richard Grafton, *Chronicle, or history of England*, ed. H. Ellis (2 vols., London, 1809), II, p. 523; *Holinshed's chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, ed. H. Ellis (6 vols., London, 1807–8), III, p. 1018.

<sup>7</sup> For Tadlowe's use of historical example see Ian Archer, 'Discourses of history in Elizabethan and early Stuart London', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68 (2005), pp. 205–26, at p. 212; Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago, IL, and London, 1994), pp. 18–19.

<sup>8</sup> Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, VI, pp. 289–90.

were filled with miserable affliction and persecution. Tadlowe therefore recommended that the council proceed cautiously:

Wherefore, forasmuch as this aid is required of the king's majesty, whose voice we ought to hearken unto (for he is our high shepherd), rather than unto the lords, and yet I would not wish the lords to be clearly shaken off; my counsel is, that they with us, and we with them, may join in suit, and make our most humble petition to the king's majesty.<sup>9</sup>

By petitioning the king directly with such complaints as could be 'justly alleged and proved', Tadlowe assured the council that 'I doubt not but this matter will be . . . pacified', concluding that 'neither shall the king, nor yet the lords, have cause to seek for further aid, neither we to offend any of them both'.<sup>10</sup>

Although Tadlowe's advised course was ultimately not taken, his speech is useful in that it provides a valuable insight into the civic politics of the Edwardian reformation. Of particular significance is Tadlowe's emphasis on the right of citizens to appoint their own governors, a concern that is reflective of the social structure of the early modern English town or city in which citizens and freemen formed the broadest political community and occupied 'a crucial place within the wider panoply of English politics'.<sup>11</sup> Equally as striking is his emphasis on the importance of maintaining the stability of the commonwealth and its 'diverse good laws', a stability which, he suggests, is primarily dependent on the goodwill of the monarch. Tadlowe's view of this relationship between monarch and citizens represents an approximation towards 'monarchical republicanism', conforming to Patrick Collinson's definition of 'Quasi-republican modes of political reflection and action within the intellectual and active reach of existing modes of consciousness and established intellectual perimeters'.<sup>12</sup> Tadlowe's speech outlines a 'quasi-republican' view of civic privilege, albeit one that is framed primarily in terms of loyalty to the monarch. His speech is therefore of interest as an expression of the political outlook of London citizens during the turbulent years of Somerset's protectorate; it gains an even greater significance, however, when the identity of its orator is taken into consideration – just two years after making this speech, George Tadlowe would again emerge on the public stage, this time as the sponsor of Ralph Robynson's celebrated translation of *Utopia* into English.

## I

Although the English *Utopia* has attracted a considerable amount of historiographical attention in recent years, the significance of the framework

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 289–90.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 289–90.

<sup>11</sup> Jonathon Barry, 'Civility and civic culture', in Peter Burke, Brian Harrison, and Paul Slack, eds., *Civil histories: essays presented to Sir Keith Thomas* (Oxford, 2000), p. 187; Phil Withington, *The politics of commonwealth: citizens and freemen in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethan essays* (London, 1994), p. 18.

of civic politics within which the publication appeared, and within which Tadlowe and his circle of friends operated, has not been fully explored. This is surprising given the fact that, as the above example suggests, Tadlowe's political activities can provide a direct link between the text and its wider milieu, an exploration of which could further our understanding not only of the publication itself, but also the civic political culture that surrounded it. This article will argue that it was primarily the participation of London citizens within the institutions of local and national government, and their efforts to enact social reform, that provide the immediate contextual framework for the publication. A study of Tadlowe's activities, his friends, and his political views will therefore provide a crucial bridge for understanding the relationships between humanist ideas, textual production, and civic action in mid-sixteenth-century London.

The most detailed account of Tadlowe's activities can be found in S. T. Bindoff's *House of Commons*, which provides a comprehensive survey of most of his political and business activities.<sup>13</sup> No other biographical accounts of Tadlowe exist, although he does feature occasionally in broader social and political histories of London. Ian Archer and Susan Brigden, for example, have both mentioned Tadlowe's speech in the course of their discussions of the reformation in London,<sup>14</sup> with Archer describing Tadlowe as a 'civic Maecenas' whose speech to the council illustrated his knowledge of history and his interest in learning.<sup>15</sup>

A further assessment of Tadlowe's significance has been signalled by David Harris Sacks, who notes that Tadlowe was one of a group of citizens in mid-sixteenth-century London who 'possessed power in their own spheres to promote social good'.<sup>16</sup> Sacks suggests that the English *Utopia* was essentially concerned with questions of 'good government and the practical requirements of reform',<sup>17</sup> and he notes that Tadlowe may have been in a position to promote some of these ideas in practice. This positive account of Tadlowe provides a notable contrast to several recent studies of the English *Utopia* which have labelled him as both socially obscure and politically impotent. This marginalization of Tadlowe has been accompanied by a rejection of *Utopia's* connection to its civic context, with recent historiography focusing instead on the text's relationship to the rhetoric of 'popular politics' associated with the 1549 rebellions and the fall of Protector Somerset. Such analysis has generally centred on *Utopia's* engagement with controversial contemporary issues such as

<sup>13</sup> S. T. Bindoff, *The House of Commons, 1509–1558* (3 vols., London, 1982) (hereafter HoC), III, pp. 417–18.

<sup>14</sup> Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (New York, NY, 1994), p. 497.

<sup>15</sup> Ian Archer, 'The city of London and the theatre', in Richard Dutton, ed., *The Oxford handbook of early modern theatre* (New York, NY, 2009), p. 399.

<sup>16</sup> David Harris Sacks, 'Introduction: Thomas More's *Utopia* in historical perspective', in Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. David Harris Sacks (Boston, MA, 1999), p. 68. <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

land enclosures, and its use of 'radical' political keywords such as 'commonwealth'.

David Weil Baker, for example, has argued that the English *Utopia* carried echoes of 'popular' political language, and that its thinly cloaked allusions to contemporary social, economic, and political problems rendered the text not only topical, but also potentially dangerous. Baker claims that Robynson's translation is an example of a radical social critique, written in a language that would have recalled to its sixteenth-century audience recent threats to the social order – albeit that these references were presented obliquely, 'under the guise of translation rather than originality'.<sup>18</sup> Other historians have taken a similar approach to the English *Utopia*: Andy Wood has argued that the text appropriated and reflected the rhetoric of the 1549 rebellions, and claims that Robynson's translation 'echoes popular political speech';<sup>19</sup> and Joshua Phillips has suggested that Robynson's *Utopia* 'may have been dangerous because it sounded too much like the utterances of rebels and malcontents'.<sup>20</sup>

This equation of the language of the English *Utopia* with discourses of rebellion has been coupled with the assumption that the text's producers were as politically impotent as the disgruntled rebels whose voices they purportedly echoed. As a result, Tadlowe and *Utopia's* other producers have been largely sidelined in historiographical analysis. A recent essay on the English *Utopia* by Terence Cave exemplifies this: despite devoting a sub-section of his discussion to 'the translator and his friends', Cave focuses for the most part on Robynson, disregards Tadlowe, and dismisses their other 'unnamed friends' as 'far from... an illustrious group of scholars or noble figures'.<sup>21</sup> Cave concludes that although 'no issue was more important during the minority of Edward VI than bringing into being the best possible commonwealth', the publication of *Utopia* in 1551 was merely illustrative of the fact that 'Robinson, Tadlowe and their friends were obviously not in a position to do anything concrete about this; all they could do was roll the fictional barrel they had inherited from More.'<sup>22</sup>

This assumption stands in direct opposition to evidence of Tadlowe's political agency and social activities. Rather than being a literary 'barrel-roller', Tadlowe was in fact prominently involved in the institutions of civic government, both as a member of London's common council and as an MP; he was also closely involved with social reform in London, working as an administrator and governor of the Royal Hospitals during their re-foundation under Edward VI. Further, his social network includes a number of influential figures in the city,

<sup>18</sup> David Weil Baker, *Divulging Utopia: radical humanism in sixteenth-century England* (Amherst, MA, 1999), p. 226.

<sup>19</sup> Wood, *The 1549 rebellions*, p. 148.

<sup>20</sup> Joshua Phillips, 'Staking claims to *Utopia*: Thomas More, fiction and intellectual property', in Curtis Perry, ed., *Material culture and cultural materialisms in the middle ages and Renaissance* (Turnhout, 2001), p. 131.

<sup>21</sup> Terence Cave, 'The English translation: thinking about the commonwealth', in Terence Cave, ed., *Thomas More's Utopia in early modern Europe: paratexts and contexts* (Manchester, 2008), p. 89.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

some of whom can be related directly to *Utopia's* publication. This article will argue that a concern with creating 'the best possible commonwealth' is indeed the most important context for understanding the English *Utopia's* publication, and should be treated as such; and, further, that it was precisely Tadlowe's activities for civic reform and social change, and his efforts to 'bring about the best possible commonwealth', that provide the most meaningful framework for understanding the English *Utopia's* publication.

Beginning with a rehabilitation of Tadlowe and an exposition of his economic, social, and political status, this article will situate his activities in relation to their civic context, exploring the relationship between the English *Utopia* and some specific contemporary social and political concerns. Following this, Tadlowe's social network will be analysed in order to suggest some other contemporary figures who may have been involved in *Utopia's* publication. This will demonstrate that the publication of *Utopia* in 1551 represents a combination of humanist theory and political practice typical of the civic culture of the Edwardian reformation.

## II

In his preface to the 1551 edition of the English *Utopia*, the translator Ralph Robynson describes George Tadlowe, the sponsor of the text, as 'an honest citizein of London, and in the same citie well accepted and of good reputation'.<sup>23</sup> Although Tadlowe attended school (possibly at St Paul's), he did not go on to attend either a university or inn of court;<sup>24</sup> as a consequence, Robynson observed, 'in the knowledge of the Latin tonge, he was not so well sene'.<sup>25</sup> As a young man, Tadlowe set himself up in London as a haberdasher; although the dates of his apprenticeship and admission to the company are not recorded,<sup>26</sup> by 1526 he was able to value his stock of feathers and caps at £100.<sup>27</sup> Although this may have been an over-estimation, his business was presumably

<sup>23</sup> *A fruitful, and pleasaunt worke of the beste state of a publyque weale, and of the newe yle called Vtopia: written in Latine by Syr Thomas More knyght, and translated into Englyshe by Raphe Robynson citizein and goldsmythe of London, at the procurement, and earnest request of George Tadlowe citizein [and] haberdasher of the same citie.* As the original 1551 text is not paginated, all quotations will refer to *The Utopia of Sir Thomas More: in Latin from the edition of March 1518, and in English from the 1st ed. of Ralph Robynson's translation in 1551*, ed. J. H. Lupton (Oxford, 1895), referred to hereafter as *Utopia* (1551). All page references correspond to this edition. In this case: pp. 18–19.

<sup>24</sup> HoC, III, p. 417.

<sup>25</sup> *A frutefull pleasaunt, [and] wittie worke, of the beste state of a publyque weale, and of the newe yle, called Vtopis: written in Latine, by the right worthie and famous Syr Thomas More knight, and translated into Englyshe by Raphe Robynson, sometime fellowe of Corpus Christi College in Oxford, and nowe by him at this seconde edition newlie perused and corrected, and also with diuers notes in the margent augmented* (1556), (hereafter *Utopia* (1556)), A ii recto.

<sup>26</sup> Freedom admissions to the Haberdashers' Company do not exist before 1526, by which time Tadlowe was already trading independently. The dates of his apprenticeship are also unknown, as records of apprenticeship bindings do not exist before 1583.

<sup>27</sup> HoC, III, p. 417.

doing well as he was granted licence in the same year to import 'fifty great gross of caps and 600 lb. of ribands' in partnership with a vintner, Edmund Bonethon, and he went on to become a searcher of woollen cloths in 1552.<sup>28</sup>

Tadlowe had various trade interests, importing haberdashery from Spain and the Netherlands and wine from Bordeaux;<sup>29</sup> he might have been aided in these ventures by his uncle, William Tadlowe, who was a member of the Brotherhood of the Cinque Ports from 1531 until his death in 1556.<sup>30</sup> Chancery records indicate that Tadlowe held shares in the cargo of at least two ships, *The Christopher*<sup>31</sup> and *The Prymrose*, although these both proved to be problematic: in the case of *The Prymrose*, Tadlowe became involved in a dispute between the brothers Richard and William Gybson after being promised 'the interest and titill' of William's 'six parte of the shipe' on a fraudulent claim of debt by his brother, Richard.<sup>32</sup> This argument ended up in court, by no means an unusual occurrence for Tadlowe. Chancery records show that he was a frequent creditor and debtor, regularly taking recourse to the courts to settle accounts, or being summoned for the same; he also appeared in Chancery for various other contractual disputes throughout the 1530s and 1540s. It is worth noting, incidentally, that four of these court cases were brought to the personal attention of Thomas More during his chancellorship; these cases included a dispute over the sale of a 'Lycence of Beanys', a disagreement over the lease of a property, and a contract of joint ownership of a ship's cargo.<sup>33</sup> Although it is tempting to imagine that Tadlowe may have taken advantage of More's practice of allowing petitioners to approach him personally at his Chelsea house,<sup>34</sup> there is no evidence that the two had any contact beyond the bounds of the court.

Tadlowe held several properties in London. He paid taxes at London Bridge,<sup>35</sup> he held a piece of former church ground by lease in the parish of Christ Church,<sup>36</sup> and he was also involved in disputes with Roger Browne, a mercer, over the lease of certain houses in London, although the exact locations of these houses are unspecified.<sup>37</sup> Most of Tadlowe's property was located in Langbourne ward, and he retained close connections with that area for some twenty-five years; he is first recorded as leasing property there in 1533, and on his death in 1557 he requested that 30s be distributed there in his

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 417; *Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII*, ed. J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner, and R. H. Brodie (21 vols. and addenda, 1862–1932) (hereafter L&P), IV, part 3, g.5510 (21). <sup>29</sup> HoC, III, p. 417. <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 418.

<sup>31</sup> London, The National Archives (TNA), records of the Court of Chancery, Six Clerks Office, C 1/606/1. <sup>32</sup> TNA, C 1/894/77.

<sup>33</sup> TNA, C 1/606/1, C 1/612/50–1, C 1/619/35, C 1/658/15.

<sup>34</sup> P. Tucker, 'The early history of the Court of Chancery: a comparative study', *English Historical Review*, 115, (2000), pp. 791–811, at p. 796.

<sup>35</sup> Vanessa Harding and Laura Wright, eds., *London Bridge: selected accounts and rentals, 1381–1538* (London, 1995), p. 166.

<sup>36</sup> Janet Senderowitz Loengard, ed., *London viewers and their certificates, 1508–1558: certificates of the sworn viewers of the City of London* (London, 1989), no. 234.

<sup>37</sup> TNA, C 1/612/50–1.



name.<sup>38</sup> The best documented of Tadlowe's properties is the White Horse tavern on Lombard Street, where he was tavern keeper from 1533.<sup>39</sup> Tadlowe may have rented rooms here to European immigrants; the *Returns of aliens* for 1549 records one 'Garick the painter, dwelling at Mr. Tadlowe's rentes' and other entries refer to immigrants staying at the *tuitpeert* (white horse).<sup>40</sup> The tavern would have been in a prime location to benefit from foreign trade; in 1550, more than half the adult male population in Langbourne ward were 'strangers',<sup>41</sup> and Lombard Street in particular was well known for its European merchant population.<sup>42</sup>

As a tavern keeper, Tadlowe would have been a familiar figure to the inhabitants of Lombard Street. In addition to selling wine and renting rooms, Tadlowe also used the White Horse as a venue in which to host performances of plays and interludes.<sup>43</sup> This landed him in trouble in April 1543, when he and two other local tavern keepers were brought before the Court of Aldermen on the charge of hosting public gatherings without a licence; Tadlowe was bound by recognizance to no longer 'suffre eny enterlude or coen pleyes or eny vnlauffull game or games to be vsed or played within hys dwelling house or houses'.<sup>44</sup>

Tadlowe's promotion of these events demonstrates that he was acting as a cultural patron in London some eight years before his sponsorship of *Utopia*. His hosting of interludes also illustrates the social nature of his patronage: this was likely to have been central to the translation and publication of *Utopia*, which Robynson describes as being the result of the concerted collaboration and persuasion of his friends. In the preface to the 1551 edition, he claims that he 'was fully determined neuer to haue put it forth in printe, had it not bene for certein frendes of myne, and especially one';<sup>45</sup> that 'one' friend in particular was Tadlowe who, Robynson complained, 'ceased not by al meanes possible continually to assault me until he had at the laste, what by the force of his pitthie argumentes and strong reasons, what by his authoritie, so persuaded me that he caused me to... consente to the impryntyng herof'.<sup>46</sup> Although

<sup>38</sup> TNA, RPCC, PROB 11/39.

<sup>39</sup> L&P, Add., 1, part 1, p. 896.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Kirk and Ernest Kirk, eds., *Returns of aliens dwelling in the city and the suburbs of London from the reign of Henry VIII to that of James I* (Aberdeen, 1900), pp. 164, 202.

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant communities in sixteenth-century London* (Oxford, 1986), p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> John Stow, *A survey of the cities of London and Westminster*, ed. John Strype (2 vols., London, 1702), 1, book 2, p. 151.

<sup>43</sup> Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 345; David Kathman, 'Inn-yard playhouses', and Archer, 'The city of London and the theatre', in Dutton, ed., *The Oxford handbook of early modern theatre*, pp. 154, 399–400; Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and the Reformation: Protestantism, patronage, and playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 206 n. 72.

<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, no details as to the theme or authorship of the plays are divulged in the records. LMA, CLRO, *Repertories of the Court of Aldermen 1548–1552*, rep. 10 (x109/135), fos. 322b, 323a; E. K. Chambers, 'Dramatic records of the city of London: the repertories, journals and letter books', in *The Malone Society Collections*, 11/3 (Oxford, 1931), pp. 289–90.

<sup>45</sup> *Utopia* (1551), p. 19.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



authorial modesty was a common feature of prefatory addresses, Robynson's claim that Tadlowe 'continually assaulted' him with all the 'force' of his authority is unusual, and may not be entirely rhetorical; in fact, the colourful description that Robynson supplies is compatible with other contemporary accounts of Tadlowe's character.

Another example of Tadlowe's intractability is provided by Stephen Stryche, one of the employees at the White Horse tavern. In 1553, Stryche wrote a letter to Tadlowe in which he recounts a disagreement between the two over wages. Stryche complains: 'heard in London that if I was found there you would cause me to be put in prison, and therefore you caused me to forsake living and friends and go alone through all the countries till I could suffer no more'.<sup>47</sup> Stryche's relations with Tadlowe evidently did not improve: in 1534, Stryche was sent to Bordeaux to purchase ninety-eight tuns of wine for the White Horse. Unable to make good his credit, he was imprisoned in France whilst Tadlowe, it was claimed, had 'sold the wine, and will not pay'.<sup>48</sup> Stryche was in prison for nine months, and eventually Thomas Cromwell was asked to intervene on his behalf. If Stryche's experience of being in Tadlowe's employment is at all representative, then it is understandable that Robynson might have felt under considerable pressure to comply with Tadlowe's 'earnest request' that he publish *Utopia*.

In addition to Tadlowe's business dealings and his cultural interests, from the mid-1540s onwards a significant shift in his activities – or at least a shift in his recorded activities – can be perceived. Beginning in 1547 and continuing up to his death in 1557, Tadlowe took an increasingly active role in the institutions of governance, appearing as an MP in the House of Commons and as a member of London's common council, and acting as warden, surveyor, and governor of London's Royal Hospitals. This decade therefore saw a marked increase in Tadlowe's activities for civic reform, and in his participation in local politics; it was also this decade that provided the immediate context for his sponsorship of *Utopia* in 1551.

In 1547, Tadlowe sat in the House of Commons for the first time as a representative of the newly re-enfranchised borough of Petersfield; this was followed by Guildford in April 1554, Grampond in November 1554, and Camelford in 1555.<sup>49</sup> In 1554, a bill in the Commons for the 'true making of Welsh linens and cottons' was entrusted to Tadlowe's consideration, although this does not seem to have progressed beyond the initial stages of examination.<sup>50</sup> He appears in parliamentary records again during the 1555 session, on a list of 'government opponents';<sup>51</sup> two bills proposed by the queen

<sup>47</sup> L&P, Add., i, part 1, p. 896.

<sup>48</sup> L&P, vii, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> These appointments were probably due to the patronage of William Paulet; HoC, iii, pp. 74, 417–18.

<sup>50</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons, 1547–1628*, i (1852), no. 38.

<sup>51</sup> HoC, i, pp. 20–3.

were challenged by parliament in that year, but it is not clear which he opposed.<sup>52</sup> He was also an active member of London's common council, and in 1547, during his first parliamentary session, the council named him as one of a small group of men deputed to examine a bill introduced to the House of Lords 'Agaynste the cyte of London for and [concerning] the Ryver of Theamyces' – the committee were instructed to devise a 'mete and reasonable' answer to the bill, and to present it to the 'hole comen Counseyll'.<sup>53</sup> In April 1551, Tadlowe was again commissioned, along with five other councillors, to consider another parliamentary bill affecting the city's interests.<sup>54</sup>

Tadlowe's participation in local and national politics from 1547 onwards was concurrent with a wider contemporary trend that saw citizens taking an increasingly active role in the creation and enactment of legislation. The open discussion of social, economic, religious, and political topics that this participatory culture engendered, set against a background of widespread reform, has been described by Jennifer Loach as 'a peculiarly English and concrete form of "civic humanism"'.<sup>55</sup> Tadlowe's involvement in governance thus occurred at a time when economic and social issues were at the forefront of parliamentary discussion, with legislative solutions to pervasive social problems such as vagrancy being championed by an emerging circle of humanist statesmen including William Cecil. Tadlowe would have witnessed one such attempt at reform during his first parliament of 1547, when the so-called 'Vagrancy Act' was introduced by Somerset's administration. This act, which may have been written by Thomas Smith,<sup>56</sup> effectively legalized the enslavement of idle vagabonds by individuals, a parish, or a corporation, who were then licensed to set their 'slave' to work for a period of up to two years. Presented to the Commons as 'The Bill for Vagabonds and Slaves' on 10 December, the act was passed nine days later.<sup>57</sup>

Tadlowe's presence in the House of Commons at the introduction and passing of the Vagrancy Act would have heightened his awareness of the government's ongoing attempts to cure the social ills of poverty and vagrancy through the creation of new legislation – a task made even more urgent by the removal of those religious houses and institutions that had previously provided relief for the city's poor. Tadlowe would also have been aware of the humanist discourses that informed and influenced the act, particularly the idea – outlined in *Utopia* – that setting people to work for the common good was of great benefit

<sup>52</sup> Jennifer Loach, *Parliament under the Tudors* (New York, NY, 1991), p. 83.

<sup>53</sup> LMA, CLRO, Jnl 15 (x109/057), fo. 339.

<sup>54</sup> LMA, CLRO, Jnl 16 (x109/058), fo. 112.

<sup>55</sup> Jennifer Loach, 'Parliament: a "new air"?' in Christopher Coleman and David Starkey, eds., *Revolution reassessed* (Oxford, 1986), p. 85.

<sup>56</sup> C. S. L. Davies, 'Slavery and Protector Somerset: the Vagrancy Act of 1547.', *Economic History Review*, n.s., 19 (1966), pp. 533–49, at p. 545.

<sup>57</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, 1, p. 2.

both to the individual and to the state, providing both a punishment for criminals and also a valuable source of labour for the commonwealth:<sup>58</sup>

Moste commenlye the moste heinous faultes be punished with the incommoditie of bondage. For that they suppose to be to the offenders no lesse grieve, and to the common wealth more profitable, then if they should hastily put them to death, and make them out of the way. For there cummeth more profite of their labour, then of their deathe.<sup>59</sup>

Although this justification is almost identical to that of the Vagrancy Act, one significant difference between the two is that whilst bondage in Utopia is reserved as a punishment for only the most 'heinous' crimes, the Vagrancy Act was designed to treat vagrancy, or idleness, which was not a felony. However, the wording of the Act collapses this distinction by conflating vagrancy directly with criminality: it states that idle vagabonds are not only 'unprofitable members' of the commonwealth but, as such, are its 'enemies'. Thus, it continues, 'if they could be brought to be made profitable and dooe service, it were muche to bee wished and desired'.<sup>60</sup>

Although the Vagrancy Act was repealed in 1549 due to its being too extreme a measure, the issues that it addressed and the values that it endorsed were not without precedent in English law. A Beggars Act of 1536 had likewise advocated the enforcement of labour on the idle poor, placing responsibility on the city authorities to 'cause and compel all and every the said sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars to be set and kept to continual labour'.<sup>61</sup> The Vagrancy Act went further, specifying that the 'labour' to be undertaken by slaves could be of the most base sort, constituting 'suche woorke and labour (how vile so euer it be)';<sup>62</sup> this almost directly echoes the system described in *Utopia* in which all the tasks deemed unfit for citizens are carried out by slaves who are obliged to carry out 'all vyle service, all slavery and drudgerye, with all laboursome toyle and business'.<sup>63</sup>

The problem of poverty, and its possible solutions, was certainly a subject that would have interested Tadlowe. In fact, he would have had good reason to pay attention to the Vagrancy Act, as its introduction in 1547 coincided with his own work towards another scheme designed specifically to alleviate the problems of poverty: the development of London's Royal Hospitals. The Hospitals, run by committees of citizens acting under the authority of the crown, represented a systematic programme for the relief, containment, and ultimately the moral reform, of the poor and idle in London.

<sup>58</sup> Phil Withington, *Society in early modern England: the vernacular origins of some powerful ideas* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 150–1.

<sup>59</sup> *Utopia* (1551), p. 230.

<sup>60</sup> 'An Acte for the punishing of vagaboundes, and for the relief of the poore and impotent persones', England and Wales, *Anno Primo Edwardi Sexti* (1548), ch. 3, fo. v (recto).

<sup>61</sup> 'The Beggars Act of 1536', in F. R. Salter, ed., *Some early tracts on poor relief* (London, 1962), p. 125.

<sup>62</sup> 'An Acte for the punishing of vagaboundes'.

<sup>63</sup> *Utopia* (1551), p. 161.

Tadlowe was extensively involved with the Hospitals' development, acting in the capacities of overseer, surveyor, administrator, governor, and warden for three of the five institutions. In 1547, he was one of six citizens assigned to 'receive all the money coming towards the poor of the devotion of the people through the City monthly, and to survey the works of Christ Church and of the Hospital for the poor',<sup>64</sup> and in 1552, he was appointed as one of twelve 'surveyors' commissioned to oversee the repair of Christ's and St Thomas's Hospitals. He was also one of a coalition of thirty citizens charged with devising a scheme for the Hospitals' overall management, acting as a governor for Christ's and a warden for St Bartholomew's.<sup>65</sup> Tadlowe's activities for the Hospitals were high profile enough that Henry Machyn, on observing his funeral, was able to note that on 'the xij day was bered master Tadeley haburdassher . . . one of the masturs of the hospettall'.<sup>66</sup>

Tadlowe's involvement in the administration of the Hospitals was extensive, and his work therein would have afforded him a first-hand insight into some of the practical demands of ordering and structuring a civic institution. This would have been a demanding job; the citizens who oversaw the re-foundation of the Hospitals were charged with devising ordinances, offices, and regulations for the new institutions; they were also expected to ensure the moral well-being of the inmates, providing religious services and instruction in prayer, and preventing immoral behaviour (card playing, gambling, and drinking were strictly prohibited).<sup>67</sup> Tadlowe's various responsibilities for the Hospitals entailed finding a balance between moral ideals, economic demands, and social realities; it is likely that *Utopia's* discussion of these issues would therefore have had particular resonance for him at the time.

Tadlowe's work for the Royal Hospitals occurred during a period of increase in the number of charitable and civic institutions in England, with forty-one grammar schools and seventy-five new or restored almshouses established and incorporated between 1540 and 1570.<sup>68</sup> This context lends weight to a reading of the English *Utopia* as primarily influenced by, and intended as a contribution to, efforts by London citizens to enact reform through the development of new or re-founded institutions. In addition, Tadlowe's interest in these developments may go some way towards explaining the choice of William Cecil as *Utopia's* dedicatee in 1551.

<sup>64</sup> Ernest Harold Pearce, *Annals of Christ's Hospital* (London, 1908), p. 14.

<sup>65</sup> John Howes, *Being a brief note of the order and manner of the proceedings in the erection of the three Royal Hospitals of Christ, Bridewell and St. Thomas the Apostle* (1582), reproduced and printed by Septimus Vaughan Esq., with introduction and notes by William Lempriere (London, 1904), pp. 31–4.

<sup>66</sup> John Gough Nichols, ed., *The diary of Henry Machyn: citizen and merchant-taylor of London, 1550–1563* (London, 1848), p. 136.

<sup>67</sup> For example *The ordre of the hospital of S. Bartholomewes in Westsmythfelde in London* (1552).

<sup>68</sup> Paul Slack, *Reformation to improvement: public welfare in early modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 26.

The dedication of the text to Cecil has generally been viewed as an attempt by its translator, Ralph Robynson, to enhance his social standing and to ensure that *Utopia*'s publication would be afforded some level of legitimacy and protection. Whilst these motives were surely instrumental in the choice of a patron for the book, it is nonetheless plausible to suggest, in light of Tadlowe's interest in civic reform, that the dedication to Cecil might also have reflected Tadlowe's interests and ambitions, in addition to Robynson's hopes for preferment. Tadlowe would have known, for instance, that Cecil had been nominally involved in the acquisition of land for the Hospitals, intervening in the transfer of the lands of Bridewell at the personal request of Bishop Ridley, who beseeched him to 'be good unto [the poor] . . . long abroad (as you do know) without Lodging in the Streets of London'.<sup>69</sup>

Cecil was also involved with other civic projects during this period, and his support of educational and charitable institutions reflects his interest in the practical application of humanist ideals in a social context. He aided the establishment of Stamford School, for example, by guiding an act through parliament in 1549 stating that the school would 'educate and bringge uppe children and youthe as well in learnynge as also in Cyville maners'; this may be compared to the educational philosophy of the Utopians who 'be not more diligent to instruct them [children] in learning then in vertue and good manners'.<sup>70</sup> In 1551, Cecil again aided the establishment of a grammar school in Louth, Lincolnshire.<sup>71</sup> Cecil's support of these institutions at the time of *Utopia*'s publication in 1551 suggests that the dedication to him may have been intended to align the text—and its producers—with the reforming activities carried out by Cecil and his circle.

If the 1551 *Utopia* is viewed in relation to a context of active citizenship and reform, then the dedication to Cecil makes sense—his nominal association with the text has, however, posed an interpretative problem for those historians who have argued that *Utopia* was a consciously 'dangerous' political publication. David Weil Baker, for example, has argued that 'in 1551 *Utopia* was perhaps the last text that Cecil would have wanted publicly dedicated to himself'.<sup>72</sup> This is highly unlikely, as Cecil was closely involved in monitoring publications during the Edwardian period; he acted as censor from 1549, and continued to hold a position of influence after the transfer of licensing to the privy council in April 1551.<sup>73</sup> He would have therefore been in a good position to disallow the publication—or to request that his name be removed—if he had so wished.

<sup>69</sup> Stow, *Survey*, ed. Strype, 1, book 1, p. 176.

<sup>70</sup> Basil L. Deed, *A history of Stamford School* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Alford, *Kingship and politics in the reign of Edward VI* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 145–6.

<sup>72</sup> Baker, *Divulging Utopia*, p. 107.

<sup>73</sup> Phillips, 'Staking claims to *Utopia*', pp. 129–30.

Further, to claim that Cecil would have balked at this dedication is to assume that *Utopia* would have been associated by its contemporary audience directly with a 'popular' political discourse. It is more convincing, however, to align *Utopia* instead with an established tradition of political and economic writing concerned with the practical governance and administration of the 'commonwealth'. This discourse was by no means restricted to a dangerous or marginal rhetoric espoused by a small group of incendiary preachers and social critics, but was rather an established and legitimate textual tradition with which Cecil was familiar; in 1549, for example, just two years before *Utopia's* publication, Thomas Smith had written his 'Discourse of the commonweal' for Cecil to read. It is this tradition of practical, humanist, 'commonwealth' discourse that provides the most coherent point of reference for the 1551 *Utopia*.

### III

Tadlowe's work for the Hospitals and his political activities provide evidence of his reforming outlook and of his participation in civic affairs during Edward VI's reign. These activities provide a link between his political ideology and his sponsorship of *Utopia*, thereby placing the publication in relation to a context of reform and active citizenship. Tadlowe's civic activities are also useful in that they provide evidence of his social relationships, an exploration of which may be used to consolidate his position within a network of prominent citizens and city figures.

What is striking from an initial examination of Tadlowe's network is an absence – *Utopia's* translator, Ralph Robynson, does not appear in connection with Tadlowe in any of the institutions thus far discussed: he does not seem to have been involved with the Hospitals, he was not an MP, and he does not appear as a party in any of Tadlowe's numerous business transactions or court cases. Further, Tadlowe left nothing to Robynson in his will – a telling omission in a document that includes a wide range of friends and acquaintances from various different companies, parishes, and backgrounds (*Utopia's* publisher, Abraham Veale, appears twice in the will, both as a beneficiary and a witness).<sup>74</sup> Just as significant is Robynson's omission of Tadlowe's name from the title page of the second edition of *Utopia* in 1556. In the preface to that edition, Robynson refers to Tadlowe only as 'a frende', whose 'meanesse of learninge' is cited as the reason for the 'base' translation of the 1551 edition.<sup>75</sup> This change has been understood by some historians to mean that Tadlowe had died by 1556 and that Robynson, freed from obligation to his unlearned friend, was now able to seek 'a different level of readership' for his second edition,<sup>76</sup> aiming at 'a higher social stratum' than that represented by Tadlowe.<sup>77</sup> However, as

<sup>74</sup> TNA, RPCC, PROB 11/39.

<sup>75</sup> *Utopia* (1556), A.ii r–v.

<sup>76</sup> John Bennell, 'Robinson, Ralph (1520–1577)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (ODNB).

<sup>77</sup> Cave, 'The English translation', p. 94.

Tadlowe made his will in 1557, this could not have been the case; although Robynson may well have targeted a 'higher' readership for his corrected translation, this attempt at advancement cannot be explained in terms of Tadlowe's demise. It is more likely that the two men had cause to fall out between 1551 and 1556. Despite the apparent lack of external connections between Robynson and Tadlowe, however, an investigation of their social networks reveals that they did share an important mutual acquaintance – and it is likely that this acquaintance is the only point of interaction between the two outside of the publication of *Utopia*.

The basic details of Robynson's career are well known. He was born in 1520 in Lincolnshire. Although his place of birth and parentage are unconfirmed, a couple named George and Margaret Robynson were admitted to the Guild of St Katherine at Stamford in 1505, and are last recorded in the guild papers in 1526;<sup>78</sup> this couple may have been Robynson's kin, as he attended both Stamford and Grantham grammar schools before entering Corpus Christi College Oxford in 1536. Robynson graduated with a BA in 1540 and supplicated for his MA in 1544;<sup>79</sup> the same year that he moved to London as an apprentice to Sir Martin Bowes, a prominent London goldsmith. Bowes was appointed under-treasurer at the Tower Mint in 1544, and Robynson was subsequently employed as a clerk there between 1548 and 1551.<sup>80</sup> Struggling to support his growing family on a salary of £10 per annum, Robynson approached his former school-fellow William Cecil for support. Evidence of their correspondence exists only from Robynson's side; there are three letters from him among the Burghley papers in Lansdown MSS 2, one of which is a Latin poem presented by Robynson to Cecil as a New Year's gift.<sup>81</sup> Although possibly entering into employment for Cecil, Robynson nonetheless went on to become under-clerk of the Goldsmiths' Company and was admitted into the livery in 1557. From 1560, he lived rent-free in the clerk's house attached to the Goldsmiths' Hall.<sup>82</sup> He appears to have maintained a relationship with Bowes; in his will of 1566, Bowes bequeathed black gowns to Robynson and his wife, describing his former apprentice as 'nowe Clerk att the goldsmithes hall'.<sup>83</sup> Robynson continued to live at the clerk's house until his death in 1577; his will, made in October 1576, left everything he owned to his wife Margaret and their five children.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, papers of St Katherine's Guild (MS 266/670), fos. 55r–83v.

<sup>79</sup> Bennell, 'Robinson, Ralph'; Thomas Fowler, *The History of Corpus Christi College, with lists of its members* (Oxford, 1893), p. 384.

<sup>80</sup> C. E. Challis, 'Mint officials and moneymen of the Tudor period', *British Numismatic Journal*, 45 (1975), pp. 51–76, at p. 67.

<sup>81</sup> London, British Library, Lansdowne MSS 2 (the Burghley papers), fos. 129–134v, nos. 57, 58, 59.

<sup>82</sup> Bennell, 'Robinson, Ralph'. <sup>83</sup> TNA, RPCC, PROB 11/49.

<sup>84</sup> LMA, CLRO, London Archdeaconry Court, register of wills, MS 9051/4; Archdeaconry Court of London, probate and administration act books, MS 9050/1.



Martin Bowes seems to have been the sole mutual acquaintance connecting Robynson and Tadlowe prior to 1551. By the time of Robynson's arrival in London in 1544, Tadlowe was already acquainted with Bowes, who in 1539 had paid £1,044 and 6s for the White Horse tavern and several other of Tadlowe's occupied 'mesuages or tenements' in Langbourne ward.<sup>85</sup> That Tadlowe continued to occupy these premises is evident from his court appearance in 1543 for hosting interludes at the tavern; a landlord and tenant relationship between Tadlowe and Bowes can therefore be dated to at least five years before Robynson's apprenticeship. Tadlowe's and Bowes's relationship continued to develop after Robynson's arrival in London. Like Tadlowe, Bowes was closely involved with a variety of civic projects in the city, serving as an alderman for Langbourne ward from 1536, sheriff in 1540, and mayor of London in 1545–6. He also instigated several schemes for social reform, devising a system of parochial collections for poor relief to be regulated by London's aldermen in 1547, and planning to create a 'brotherhood' for the poor organized along similar lines to European fraternities.<sup>86</sup> Given these interests, it is unsurprising that Bowes was also one of the figureheads of the Royal Hospitals, drawing up successive orders for their regulation and becoming 'comptroller-general' when the scheme reached completion in 1557.<sup>87</sup>

This connection with the Hospitals provides a further point of interaction between Tadlowe and Bowes; they sat on several of the same committees and worked together closely during St Bartholomew's re-foundation in 1547. The hospital accounts ledger for that year is taken up over its first eight pages with a list of money received or paid 'by thandes of George Tadlowe' under Bowes's authorization; these receipts include 'paymentes... for the obtenyng of the Kinges Lettres patentes', in addition to sales of stone, lead, and iron from the two former parishes of St Nicholas and St Ewen.<sup>88</sup> It is possible that Tadlowe's and Bowes's shared interest in the Hospitals' development, and their close collaboration from 1547, may have led to Tadlowe coming into contact with Robynson. It is reasonable to suppose that Bowes may have been the mutual link between the two men, either facilitating their introduction or simply providing a point of shared contact; as a consequence, it is likely that Bowes may have been aware of, or even directly involved in, the publication of *Utopia* in 1551.

Of the network of citizens involved in the Hospitals' foundation, one other influential contemporary figure can be linked to Tadlowe; this was Richard Grafton, whose possible involvement in *Utopia*'s production has not hitherto been suggested. A member and sometime warden of the Grocers' Company, Grafton worked predominantly as a printer. After being imprisoned several

<sup>85</sup> L&P, xiv, part 1, g. 1354 (52).

<sup>86</sup> Paul Slack, *Poverty and policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988), pp. 120–1.

<sup>87</sup> Paul Slack, 'Social policy and the constraints of government, 1547–1558', in Jennifer Loach and Robert Tittler, eds., *The mid-Tudor polity, c. 1540–1560* (London, 1980), p. 110.

<sup>88</sup> London, St Bartholomew's Hospital Archives, treasurer's accounts, 1547–61, fos. 11r–4v.

times for issuing controversial material under Henry VIII, he was appointed king's printer for life to Edward VI.<sup>89</sup> In addition to being one of the most important printers of the Edwardian period, Grafton was also closely involved in civic and political projects, including working extensively for the Hospitals. His printing press was located in the Greyfriars buildings, which had become part of Christ's Hospital in 1547–8; after the city took over the site, Grafton continued to operate his press from within the precincts.<sup>90</sup> In 1552, he produced *The ordre of the hospital of S. Bartholomewes in Westmythfelde in London*, a text setting out rules and regulations for the Hospital's governing body.<sup>91</sup> Along with Tadlowe and Bowes, Grafton was one of the thirty men charged with managing the Hospitals' scheme in 1552 and was, with Tadlowe, one of the twelve men commissioned to survey St Thomas's and Christ's, of which he was appointed governor and deputy treasurer respectively.<sup>92</sup> His ties with Tadlowe are further strengthened by the fact that they appear together in the common council records;<sup>93</sup> it is even possible that Grafton may have prepared Tadlowe for the speech that he gave to the council in 1549.<sup>94</sup>

These links with Tadlowe are of particular significance when combined with the fact that Grafton also had close connections with the printers of *Utopia's* first two editions of 1551 and 1556. The 1551 edition was printed by Stephen Mierdman, an immigrant Dutchman who had collaborated with Grafton on at least three publications between 1548 and 1550, including a joint translation of the *Psalter of David* for Robert Crowley in 1549. Grafton had even stronger connections to the printer of the second edition of *Utopia*, Richard Tottel; a stationer and monopolist in books of common law, Tottel was Grafton's son-in-law and became the chief printer of Grafton's written works after his forced retirement from printing under Mary.<sup>95</sup> It is therefore possible that, although he was no longer working as a printer himself in 1556, Grafton could still have guided the second edition of *Utopia* through the press.

These connections with Tadlowe, Mierdman, and Tottel indicate that Grafton would have been well placed to be aware of, and support, *Utopia's* publication in both 1551 and 1556. A further indicator of his possible interest in the project is the fact that he was the only person to have printed an English work by Thomas More since More's death in 1535, having printed a version of

<sup>89</sup> Grafton was imprisoned twice in 1541 for printing ballads relating to Cromwell's death, and was committed to the Fleet again in 1543; L&P, xvi, no. 424; James Raven, *The business of books: booksellers and the English book trade, 1450–1850* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2007), p. 64.

<sup>90</sup> Meraud Grant Ferguson, 'Grafton, Richard (c. 1511–1573)', *ODNB*.

<sup>91</sup> *The ordre of the hospital of S. Bartholomewes in Westmythfelde in London* (1552).

<sup>92</sup> Slack, 'Social Policy', p. 110.

<sup>93</sup> LMA, CLRO, Jnl 16 (x109/058), fo. 112.

<sup>94</sup> J. A. Kingdon, *Richard Grafton, citizen and grocer of London and one time master of his company, servant and printer to Edward Prince and king and first treasurer general of Christ's Hospital. A sequel to Poyntz and Grafton* (London, 1901), p. 40.

<sup>95</sup> E. J. Devereux, 'Empty tuns and unfruitful grafts: Richard Grafton's historical publications', in *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 2 (1990), pp. 33–56, at pp. 42, 48, 52.

his *Richard III* in 1543, 1548, and 1550.<sup>96</sup> Like *Utopia*, *Richard III* had not been published in London during More's lifetime, and would have been printed from a manuscript. The copy from which Grafton set his text may have come into his hands through one of Cromwell's servants, after More's library and papers were confiscated;<sup>97</sup> it is conceivable that he might even have obtained a copy of *Utopia* in the same manner. Whether this was the case or not, the connections that Grafton has with most of *Utopia*'s producers are striking; due to his activities in both the civic sphere and the book trade, Grafton was a likely intermediary between merchants such as Tadolwe and Bowes, and printers such as Mierdman and Tottel. He therefore appears to have been one of the central figures in the publication's network, providing a connection between the sponsors of the text and its printers, and also providing a strong connection to the king himself.

#### IV

An investigation of Tadolwe and Robynson's social networks therefore produces results that directly counter the dominant historiographical assumption that *Utopia*'s producers and their friends lacked the capacity for legitimate political action. Richard Grafton had strong links to the court and to the governing bodies of the city; Martin Bowes was alderman, sheriff, and mayor of London; and William Cecil, secretary to the king, may also be added to this list of prominent and influential figures. Although not as well known as his some of his more powerful acquaintances, Tadolwe himself did not lack influence in his own social sphere. The argument that the English *Utopia* was a 'dangerous' text echoing the voices of rebels therefore seems injudicious; as this discussion has shown, the activities and the social status of *Utopia*'s producers suggest that the text was published primarily with a view to promoting and implementing reform not through rebellion and uprising, but rather through the institutions and channels of government.

Given the political interests of Tadolwe and his circle, and given their position within a wider network of reformers and governors in London, it is evident that the publication of *Utopia* in 1551 represented rather more than a thinly veiled social critique or, worse, an impotent exercise in 'literary barrel-rolling'. Instead, the translated *Utopia* represented for its producers a timely reminder of the possibilities afforded by the enactment of civic reform. This is not to suggest that *Utopia* was taken as a model to be directly replicated, or as a blueprint for wholesale social change; rather, this article has argued that the publication

<sup>96</sup> The text was printed anonymously in *The chronicle of Ihon Hardyng* in 1543 (STC 12767), and then printed with More's authorship acknowledged in *The vnion of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke* in 1548 (STC 12722) and in 1550 (STC 12723).

<sup>97</sup> Devereux, 'Empty tuns', p. 37; for Grafton's copy of *Richard III* see R. S. Sylvester, 'Appendix: Richard Grafton and the manuscript of More's English draft', in R. S. Sylvester, ed., *The complete works of St. Thomas More*, II (New Haven, CT, and London, 1963), pp. 271–6.

appeared as part of a wider movement that encompassed both practical efforts for reform, as well as theoretical discussions as to the best form that these might take.

The growing number of ideas for commonwealth reform that appeared during the mid-sixteenth century provoked comment by contemporaries. Thomas Smith, for example, found cause to complain to the duchess of Somerset in 1550 about the great number of men who ‘kneel upon your grace’s carpets and devise commonwealths as they like, and are angry that other men be not so hasty to run straight as their brains crow’.<sup>98</sup> In his preface to *Utopia*, Robynson echoes Smith’s observation that a great number of men were occupied with ‘devising’ commonwealths: he had observed, he says, ‘every sort, and kynde of people in their vocation and degree busilie occupied about the common wealthes affairs: and especially learned men dayly putting forth in writing newe inventions, and devices to the furtherance of the same’.<sup>99</sup> Whereas Smith had been critical of those ‘devised commonwealths’ that existed only in their inventors’ brains, Robynson suggests that the ‘newe inventions and devices’ of writers could contribute to the furtherance of the commonwealth in their own way. Further, his observation that the affairs of the commonwealth occupied ‘every sort, and kynde of people’ describes a reforming milieu in which the efforts of middling-citizens such as Tadlowe complemented those of more prominent figures such as Thomas Smith and William Cecil.

Contributions to commonwealth reform in the mid-sixteenth century could take a variety of forms, including new legislation, such as the Vagrancy Act; re-founded institutions, such as the Royal Hospitals; and the publication of new or translated texts, such as *Utopia*. Each of these forms provided a framework within which civic reform could be conceptualized, discussed, or enacted. In this context, *Utopia* may have appealed to Tadlowe and his circle because it provided them with a reflection of their own city, and of their roles within it. As Sara Rees Jones has convincingly argued, Thomas More modelled his description of Utopia’s capital city, Amaurotum, on the governmental and legal structures of sixteenth-century London. As a result, she suggests, the obvious parallels between Amaurotum and London may have been intended to ‘remind Londoners of the higher purpose of their own civic institutions’ which, although they were less than perfect, nonetheless contained the potential for reform.<sup>100</sup> This ‘reminder’ would have been particularly relevant during the Edwardian reformation, when the control of poverty and vagrancy became a civic responsibility after the dissolution of religious houses and institutions; Londoners were thus obliged to reform their civic institutions, and to consider

<sup>98</sup> Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 458.

<sup>99</sup> *Utopia* (1551), p. 16.

<sup>100</sup> Sara Rees Jones, ‘Thomas More’s *Utopia* and medieval London’, in Rosemary Horrox and Sara Rees Jones, eds., *Pragmatic utopias* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 122. For further comparisons between Amaurotum and London, see Lawrence Manley, *Literature and culture in early modern London* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 40–1.

their potential for 'higher purpose'. In this sense, the English *Utopia* existed as part of a dialogue of reform that extended beyond the religious changes for which the period is most noted, to the concurrent social, economic, and civic reforms that were carried out by citizens, governors, and statesmen.

The publication of the English *Utopia* in 1551 may therefore best be understood as a contribution to wider efforts to construct programmes of civic and social reform within local and national governmental structures. This context of participatory reform mirrors the definition of autonomous, self-governing citizenship as described and defended by Tadlowe in his speech to the common council in 1549; it also reflects the political system described in *Utopia*, in which citizens elect their own representatives and serve in public office by rotation. As Tadlowe had emphasized in his speech, however, this climate of active citizenship was reliant on a legitimating authority that came from the crown. The king, Tadlowe claimed, is 'our high shepherd', the primary authority unto which all citizens 'ought to hearken'.<sup>101</sup> This deference to monarchical authority aligns Tadlowe's political views with a wider contemporary belief that 'any specific reform would require the concerted action of the political classes under the initiative and with the approval of the prince'.<sup>102</sup> This emphasis on monarchical authority is central to an understanding of the English *Utopia*'s publication in 1551: the loyalty that Tadlowe professed to the Edwardian regime in his speech echoed a wider civic culture in which citizens were frequently reminded that they were 'free subjects of the monarch'.<sup>103</sup>

This emphasis on monarchical authority is reflected in an alteration that Robynson made in his translation of *Utopia*.<sup>104</sup> In the English version, Utopia's mythical founder, Utopus, is consistently referred to as 'King Utopus', whereas in More's original Latin he is designated by name only. In the marginal commentary inserted by Giles and Erasmus for the Latin editions, Utopus is given the prefix *dux* (leader); Robynson decides to translate this as 'king'. This cannot be put down to a slip in Robynson's Latin, as he inserts the word 'king' into the text even when there is no equivalent term to be translated. In Robynson's version of the text, Utopus is presented as the ideal model of a philosopher-king, rather than just a leader; it was this king who played a vital role in the foundation of the Utopian commonwealth, putting in place such laws and institutions as would ensure its best state into the future.

This change to the text of *Utopia* brings it into agreement with the monarchical republicanism of Tadlowe's speech. As Tadlowe suggested, a stable relationship between the citizenry and the monarchy is of primary

<sup>101</sup> Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, vi, pp. 289–90.

<sup>102</sup> Sacks, 'Introduction: Thomas More's *Utopia* in historical perspective', p. 68.

<sup>103</sup> Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank, 'Prologue: the travails of Tudor Literature', in Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank, eds., *The Oxford handbook of Tudor literature, 1485–1603* (Oxford and New York, NY, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>104</sup> The following discussion relies on David Harris Sacks's notes to his edition of *Utopia*: More, *Utopia*, ed. Sacks, p. 128 n. 5, and p. 72 n. 57.

importance for the well-being of a commonwealth, allowing citizens to participate in the forms and structures of their own governance. Tadlowe's political activities during the 1540s and 1550s demonstrate a practical adherence to this belief; his membership of the House of Commons and common council are indicative of the high significance that he placed on political action and association through legitimate channels, and his work for the Hospitals locates him as part of an elite circle of reformist governors and citizens spearheaded by powerful figures including Martin Bowes and Richard Grafton. These activities were all, crucially, carried out under the authority of the crown.

This reassessment of the publication of the English *Utopia* has demonstrated that the social, economic, and political ties of the text's producers were more complex, and more significant, than has hitherto been supposed. This recognition allows for a more nuanced understanding of the text itself, and, as importantly, of the wider circumstances of its production in mid-sixteenth-century London. This interpretative approach follows recent attempts by literary historians to reclaim the cultural and social significance of literary production in the mid-Tudor period. As Cathy Shrank and Mike Pincombe have argued, mid-sixteenth-century texts were intended to be social 'investments': they were 'written because something was at stake. Authors wrote to educate their compatriots... Even works of... entertainment were seen to have a purpose.'<sup>105</sup> This article has argued that publication of the English *Utopia* was both a product of and an 'investment' in the ideals of the Edwardian reformation; and that the Utopian achievement of 'humanitie and civile gentilnes',<sup>106</sup> brought to perfection under the rule of a philosopher-king and upheld by its citizens, was something towards which Tadlowe and his circle felt they could realistically aspire in 1551.

<sup>105</sup> Pincombe and Shrank, 'Prologue', p. 7.

<sup>106</sup> *Utopia* (1551), p. 118.