

A. D. Cousins and Damian Grace, eds. *A Companion to Thomas More*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009. 253 pp. \$58. ISBN: 978-0-8386-4215-3.

George M. Logan, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. xxv + 302 pp. \$90. ISBN: 978-0-521-18886-2.

*A Companion to Thomas More* begins with Germain Marc'hadour's "Latin Lives of Thomas More," describing not only biographies in Latin, for example, by Erasmus and Stapleton, but also early English source books. Marc'hadour has long pointed out that Erasmus was the earliest biographer of More, and that the first and longest of his four biographical letters was written thirty-five years before William Roper penned what is more aptly called a memoir to serve as notes for Nicholas Harpsfield, both of whom begin their works by acknowledging their debt to Erasmus.

This collection contains three articles by authors who seem to be less well informed about their subjects than a reader might wish. Brendan Bradshaw's cautionary note that "the all too human More of the revisionists constitutes as great a travesty as the all too saintly More of the hagiographers" (*JEH* 36, 537) might perhaps be applied to Michael Ackland's "Modern Biographies of Sir Thomas More," with its author's tendency to unresearched flippancy concerning the early biographers, resulting sometimes in confusion of persons in More's life and in referring to serious subjects as "incidents."

In "More's Letters and 'the Comfort of the Truth,'" Alison V. Scott works on the supposition that More wished in his letters to fashion a self for posterity. She equates sincere with artless and rhetorical with artful, without really explaining why that which is well written is insincere. Her apparent refusal to distinguish among the many categories of More's letters with the subsequent separation from context often leaves her analysis of More's epistolary style and tone lacking in substance.

In "Virtue, Transformation, and Exemplarity in *The Lyfe of Johan Pico*" L. E. Semler finds that "distinctions between what is real and what is representational break down" (96) in More's *Life of Pico*; he therefore tries to offer some analysis of the real and the fictive, relying often on sources subsequent to More's writing. Semler doubts that Giovanni Pico's attachment to Savonarola was as deep as his nephew depicts it, but seems unaware of subtextual references in More's translation as well as of his sensitive position as a public man writing about a political figure condemned as a heretic.

In addition to Marc'hadour's opening presentation, this collection includes several other excellent articles. In "Inhabiting Time: Sir Thomas More's *Historia Richardi Tertii*" Arthur Kinney — through an incisive rhetorical exploration of speeches of major characters — demonstrates how consummately More "knew how to imply the opposite of what the speaker seemed to be saying" (118), thus ultimately allowing the reader to draw contrasts between, for example, Edward IV and Richard III.

In “The Epigrams of More and Erasmus: a Literary Diptych” Clarence Miller is both professional and warmly human in delineating and differentiating the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional characteristics of the two devoted friends, and in thereby interpreting their respective literary productions. In “Erasmus and More: Exploring Vocations” Bruce Mansfield also compares and contrasts the life-roles of the English husband, father, lawyer, judge, king’s councilor, and ultimately Lord Chancellor and martyr, with those of the Dutch sometime-friar-and-always-priest, scholar, teacher, publisher, inveterate correspondent and traveler, ultimately left brokenhearted by the turn of affairs in England.

*Utopia* is treated in two articles, one of that name by Damian Grace and another by Dominic Baker-Smith, who, in “*Civitas philosophica*: Ideas and Community in Thomas More,” studies civic humanism and the influences leading More to a heightened awareness of “the role of custom in human affairs” (168). Grace’s article is a rich literary and philosophical analysis and interpretation of Utopian policies and attitudes that leads readers to think beyond conventional politics concerning the best state of a commonwealth.

An unfortunate occurrence: in footnotes throughout the book references to the journal *Moreana*, a consecutively numbered publication, are indicated by volume number (which includes three or four issues), thus making it very difficult for a researcher to locate any given issue.

*The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More* is dedicated to Clarence H. Miller and arranged in three parts. “Life, Times and Work” opens with Caroline Barron’s “The Making of a London Citizen,” a description of whatever is known of More’s London ancestors, established at least as far back as his great-great grandparents. She then carefully explores the available information concerning his education at St. Anthony’s Threadneedle Street and at Lincoln’s Inn, as well as his experience in Lambeth Palace as a page to Archbishop of Canterbury John Morton and later as a visitor-worshipper in the London Charterhouse.

In his “Thomas More as Humanist,” James McConica introduces the subject with Humfrey of Gloucester’s 1430 bequest of his library to Oxford University, and recapitulates the classical and patristic sources of humanism as well as those of the twelfth-century Renaissance and the medieval university, noting More’s emergence “from precisely the milieu for which this blend of traditional and new influences was appropriate” (25).

Naturally following a study of humanism is Elizabeth McCutcheon’s probing of its central tenet, *bonae literariae*, in “More’s Rhetoric.” Pointing out that “More excelled in each of the rhetorical kinds he used” (46), she analyzes his technical and literary practices, outlines the functions his letters could serve, and discusses three of More’s favorite metaphors, showing how they marry ornament and essence as he develops them. With “More’s Public Life,” Cathy Curtis studies the period 1518 to 1532, basing her declarations on More’s own in his epitaph. She presents the public man as discreet and loyal to his monarch as long as his principles allowed him, endorsing Harpsfield’s description of More as “the Christian Socrates” (88).

In “Thomas More and the Heretics: Statesman or Fanatic?” Richard Rex answers the question by considering More’s polemical writings, his role as chancellor, and his “attitudes and actions in the context . . . of the English and European politics of the 1520s and 1530s” (94). Readers may wish that the article distinguished the persecution from the prosecution of heretics. It is the latter that More swore to when taking the oath as Lord Chancellor. Finally, in this section placing More in his literary and historical context, lies Peter Marshall’s richly philosophic “The Last Years,” a narrative beginning the afternoon of 16 May 1532, when the Lord Chancellor handed back to Henry the Great Seal of England, continuing into the Tower, and concluding with *De tristitia Christi*.

Part 2, “Five Major Works,” begins with Dominic Baker-Smith’s “Reading *Utopia*.” Cautioning readers that More wrote a work of fiction and not a philosophical treatise, Baker-Smith explores literary rather than systematic coherence, looking at both Morus the character and More the author. In “More on Tyranny: *The History of King Richard the Third*,” George M. Logan notes that *Richard* was written concurrently with *Utopia*, the two constituting More’s political works, and both being “supreme achievements of Renaissance humanism.” (168) As Baker-Smith does with *Utopia*, Logan stresses that *Richard III* is a literary masterpiece to be understood and interpreted as such.

In “The comen knowen multytude of crysten men’: *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* and the Defence of Christendom,” Eamon Duffy disputes those who consider the focus of *Heresies* to be the rejection of *sola scriptura* or a concern with biblical matters in general. He observes that More’s final authority is not clerical, but rather “the shared belief of the Church as a body” (199).

Andrew Taylor’s “In stede of harme inestimable good’: *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*” differentiates More’s third dialogic composition from *Utopia* and *Heresies*, in which More plays a role. The interlocutors of *Comfort* are both fictional Hungarians suffering under the Turkish invasion: “the threat of the infidel Turk to Christendom offered a rich source of analogy for the censuring of faithlessness or heresy among Christians at a time of growing religious and political turmoil” (217). In “The lessons of Gethsemane: *De Tristitia Christi*,” Katherine Gardiner Rodgers presents the circumstances of composition as best they can be determined, and — since More provided posterity with “a clear and legible holograph” (240) — his authorial practices, and the relationship of *De tristitia* to other Tower works.

In “Afterlives” — the single article that constitutes part 3, “Reception” — Anne Lake Prescott focuses on “the person and his two most influential books,” *Utopia* and *The History of King Richard III* (265). Her treatment of these three afterlives and the significance of the subject matter they suggest to her is so rich in substance and skillful in expression that it defies summarizing.

The book’s concluding “Foundational Resources for More Studies” lists useful publication details of the Yale Edition of The Complete Works of St. Thomas More. Its only omission is the name of Germain Marc’hadour as a volume 7 editor (of *Supplication of Souls*). Since this collection belongs to the series Cambridge

Companions to Religion, its capable authors avoid the secularization of the sacred, which often mars scholars' full appreciation of literature of religious provenance.

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