

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RHETORICAL SATIRE IN HUMANIST LITERATURE:
ERASMUS' *THE PRAISE OF FOLLY* AND MORE'S *UTOPIA*

by

LUKE STORY

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ABSTRACT

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Luke Story, M.A.

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Supervising Professor: Kevin Gustafson

This thesis explores how early Renaissance humanists developed an effective rhetorical satire to combat the follies, injustices, and inequalities that afflicted the European population in the late Middle Ages, particularly Desiderius Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly* and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. I examine both how the humanists were able to work out of the satirical tradition that was popular in the Middle Ages as well as how they utilized the rhetorical knowledge from various classical texts that were rediscovered in the early portion of the Renaissance.

I pay close attention to how More and Erasmus used aspects of narration, characterization, and textualized voicing to create a literary environment in which a rhetorical oration can exist. I explain how this textualized oratory allows the irony to emerge that is necessary for effective satire.

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO HUMANIST SATIRE

Desiderius Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly* (1511)¹ and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) were written at the height of European Renaissance and represent the culmination of humanist learning and ideology. Renaissance Humanism can roughly be summed up as the rediscovery and application of classical Greek and Latin knowledge to social, political, and religious ideas that existed in the High Middle Ages. *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia* are ostensibly humorous in tone, yet essentially serious in content. They are simple in language and presentation, yet complex in thought and argumentation. Furthermore, of equal or greater importance, both texts were originally published in Latin, making them approachable only to the relatively small, Latin-literate, intellectual population. The texts express the humanists' discontent on an array of medieval malaises, including the poor state of affairs within the Catholic Church, misbehavior of the Christian populace, socioeconomic inequalities that were perpetuated by feudalism and mercantilism, and greed. They were meant not just to have audiences, but to affect their audiences, and in many ways they were successful in doing so. Widely circulated after their publication, *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia* have stood the test of time and are still of much significance today for scholars across multiple fields. Their popularity and relative effectiveness, in their own times and now, is due largely in part to the satire that permeates them—satire that is highly rhetorical and calculated. This satire is conveyed through a textualization of oral discourse that allowed the humanist to assimilate classical rhetorical principles into their writing and create the sense of irony that is necessary for a satirical reading of their texts. The “literary/oral setting” provides a means to use the characteristics of the narrators to establish intended literal uncertainty, making for highly effective satire.

¹Originally titled in Greek as *Encomium Moriae*, Erasmus' book can also be translated as '*Praise of More*'.

The word “satire,” in its Latin form *satira*, was first defined by Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria* (5.55).² It can be argued that satire dates back as far as Plato’s dialogues, Aristophanes’ *Old Comedy*, or even Aesop’s fables. Quintilian attributed the invention of the genre to Lucilius, a satirist of the second century BCE. *Satira* etymologically refers to a work containing an assortment of literary styles and/or a variety of subjects. It comes from the Latin *satur*, meaning “full,” whose meaning was shifted to “mixture” in the subsequent phrase *lanx satura*.³ *Satira*, by the late Classical Period, expanded to generally include most literary works that criticized folly or vices. To this day, satire has gathered a range of definitions: 1) the use of irony, sarcasm, ridicule, or the like, in exposing, denouncing, or deriding vice, folly, etc.; 2) a literary composition, in verse or prose, in which human folly and vice are held up to scorn, derision, or ridicule; or, 3) a literary genre comprising such compositions. It becomes obvious, even within these few simple definitions, that satire has multiple functions and understandings. Satire can refer to a literary device, a particular text, or an entire genre.⁴ Humanists wrote about an array of topics and utilized an array of literary tools in their writings, and their literature can be described in relation to most definitions of satire.

This paper will be concerned mainly with satire as a literary technique and will be working out the notion that humanist satire is a form of textual argumentation that uses wit, and often irony, to suggest (usually indirectly) that something is faulty or exhibits elements of fallaciousness. From this understanding, humanist satire, as a literary technique, might roughly be defined as “the use of wit to mean something other than what is being literally expressed in order to correct folly.” Satire not only allowed the humanists to make controversial and potentially dangerous arguments in a safe and agreeable way, but also to disseminate humanist ideas across Europe and transcend social, political, and religious barriers that might otherwise have been unbreachable.

² Quintilian used the word only in reference to Roman verse satire that was written in hexameter form.

³ *Lanx satura* literally translates as “a dish full of mixed fruit.”

This satire has often been mentioned in scholarly examinations of *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia*, and current discussions of the texts usually touch on some aspect of their satire. However, I do not believe that the gravity of its role within the texts has been sufficiently examined to this point. And while many authors have discussed More's and Erasmus' individual satire, relatively few have offered a discussion of humanist satire as a whole—and even fewer have discussed more specifically the related rhetorical elements of the satire in *Utopia* and *The Praise of Folly*. In the books and articles that do discuss the satire in both *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia*, the examinations are either limited in their scope or go without noting some of the most significant elements of humanist satire, such as the role of the speaker and voicing, the development and conveyance of satirical irony, or the author's own role. I believe that a more thorough discussion of the similarities and distinguishing characteristics of satirical development in the two texts, which has only partially been done, will provide a better understanding of humanist satire.

For example, Margaret Phillips, in her chapter on humor and satire in *Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance*, focuses more on Erasmus' characterization of Folly and her overall significance in the text. However, Phillips fails to offer an in-depth examination of how Erasmus uses Folly to produce the irony that is necessary for the satirical picture to emerge from. Far more detailed is Sister Geraldine Thompson's *Under Pretext of Praise: Satiric Mode in Erasmus' Fiction*. Thompson provides one of the most in-depth examinations of Erasmus' satire in *The Praise of Folly*, and one of her three main focal points is the substantial role that irony plays (x-xi). She provides a thorough explication of many of the significant aspects of irony in *The Praise of Folly*, which I will refer back to in my own examination of Erasmus' satire. And I agree with her claim that Erasmus' irony "is tantalizing in its subtlety, various in its techniques, and often doubly pronged so that it not only damns what it praises (as one expects it to do) but also damns the too-obvious alternative" (xi). Erasmus' complex satirical irony, which I will

discuss more in Chapter 2, allows him to advance his complex and often-controversial arguments in an effective and relatively safe manner.

However, I believe that Phillips' examination falls short in her stated doubt as to "whether or not irony is the most significant attribute of Erasmus' satire," given that much of her discussion supports a more argumentative reading of Erasmus' satire, such as the one I will provide in this paper (xi). Prefacing her neglect to comment on the rhetorical efficacy of the satirical irony in *The Praise of Folly*, she asserts, "Satire as an instrument of persuasion is less than a perfect tool" (xi). Furthermore (and I believe most importantly), Sister Thompson pays relatively little attention to the role that Folly plays in the development of Erasmus' satirical irony. A closer examination of Erasmus' development of Folly and his use of voicing can fill in the "gaps" that she views in his satire. On the other hand, Walter Gordon's *Humanist Play and Belief: The Seriocomic Art of Desiderius Erasmus* provides a reading of *The Praise of Folly* that pays attention to Erasmus' use of Folly to create a textualized oral discourse, thus enabling Erasmus to incorporate traditionally verbal rhetorical strategies into his written satire. Gordon observes, "Because the *Moria* is written as a declamatory speech, it has attracted many of its readers to attend to its rhetorical patterns and devices" (*Humanist Play and Belief* 181). However, Gordon also overlooks many aspects of Erasmus' satirical development.

The contemporary scholarship on More's *Utopia* is more extensive than that on Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly*, given that its innovative structure appeals to a larger audience.⁵ However, it is often discussed primarily in relation to utopian or humanist literature rather than rhetorical studies, although *Utopia* certainly has its place in the rhetoric classroom. Furthermore, it is rarely the case that *Utopia* is discussed in relation to *The Praise of Folly* in the contemporary scholarship that actually does focus on the rhetorical aspects of the satire. Like Ann Astell's article "Rhetorical Strategy and the Fiction of Audience in More's *Utopia*," Elizabeth

⁵ Here, I am referring to the fact that *Utopia* is often discussed in relation to utopian, medieval/Renaissance, novel, English lit., and rhetorical studies, while *The Praise of Folly* is often read only in graduate courses on rhetoric or medieval/Renaissance literature.

McCutcheon's article "More's Rhetoric" does a great job of explaining the rhetorical aspects of Hythloday's oration in *Utopia*. McCutcheon describes the elements of Hythloday's character that help develop his rhetoric, but she does not particularly discuss the satirical aspects of the text. Furthermore, she does not bring any information about Erasmus or *The Praise of Folly* into her argument.⁶ Little research has focused on the relation of the satire in *Utopia* and *The Praise of Folly*. John Parrish provides a partial reading of how the humanists used similar satirical methods in, but he only focuses on the authors' ideas of educational reform, which only accounts for a small portion of the similarities between the satire in *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia*. Hanan Yoran's article, "More's Utopia and Erasmus' No-place," supports the notion that the satire in *Utopia* is highly rhetorical and ties the text in with Erasmian thought. Yoran offers a close reading of the satirical development in More's text, including More's "pervasive use of irony and other destabilizing linguistic techniques," "the complex narrative that generates more than one point of view while simultaneously undermining the credibility of each," and "Utopia's literary structure and its use of literary devices thus seem to frustrate any attempt to assign the work a fixed meaning" (3-4). This reading of *Utopia* touches on many of the key aspects of More's satire, but Yoran's main focus is examining what he describes as a "hidden level of meaning which contradicts central notions of Erasmian humanism and subverts the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of humanist discourse," which does not particularly align with my argument. I am more concerned with the elements of the rhetorical satire in *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia* that are characteristically humanist.

An important aspect that has often been overlooked is that humanist satire is a product of both a medieval literary tradition and the "rediscovery" of classical Greek and Latin texts (on the topics of rhetoric, philosophy, grammar, etc.) that occurred at the end of the Middle Ages. One of the most popular forms of literature in late Middle Ages was satire, which was well-suited to handle the delicate issues being discussed and capable of conveying the authors' positions,

⁶ McCutcheon has written many other articles on the rhetoric in *Utopia*, some of which deal with aspects of satire; however, her article on rhetorical strategy aids the most to my argument.

despite how controversial they might have been. *Moral satire* that satirized both general society and the Church developed in Europe as a means to address both social and religious issues. One of the most significant moral satires is the *Piers Plowman* (c. 1360), an allegorical narrative poem attributed to William Langland. As Margaret Schlauch points out, “The most important literary document picturing the social and religious agitation of the 14th century is *Piers Plowman*” (*Medieval English Literature and its Social Foundations* 213). Following Langland’s example, *Piece the Plowman’s Crede* (c. 1393), *Mum and the Sothsegger* (c. 1400), *Plowman’s Tale* (c. 1400), and other satires emerged as a response to the shifting social structure (Schlauch 290). Like the *Piers Plowman*, these satires played off of a common convention in medieval writing, allegory, and criticized multiple positions in society. Schlauch observes, “As a satirist, Langland [and his followers] strove to concentrate his denunciations upon matters of general principles: principles accepted in advance from his religion” (216). As I will elucidate in my individual discussions of the humanists’ texts, the use of allegorical narrators and the pursuit of a proper Christian life are elements of the medieval satirical genre that surface in *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia*. The objects of criticism found in *Piers Plowman* and the numerous social satires stemming from Langland’s original design—including the folly of friars, merchants, pardoners, priests, and even bishops—are also similar to those focused on by the humanists, although the humanists might not have had Langland directly in mind while writing their works. Furthermore, the impersonal and religious-based approach to social critique in *Piers Plowman*, which became more popular at the end of the Middle Ages, is clearly apparent in humanist satire as well.

While *Piers Plowman* and its numerous descendants represent part of the medieval satirical genre that the humanists (consciously or not) wrote into, they do not account for all topics of criticism and many other aspects of the satire in *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia*. Some of the other topics of criticism in the humanists texts can be found in other satires appeared

around the same time, such as *Winner and Waster*⁷ (c. 1350) and *The Parlement of the Three Ages* (c. 1350), which are moral satires that criticize particular follies. While *The Parlement of the Three Ages* is slightly broader in its criticisms, *Winner and Waster* focuses on the socioeconomic and political problems that emerged from the wake of the Plague, such as the inconsistency and unreliability of workers resulting from the labor shortages ("The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*" 112). Both satires unravel in the form of dreams witnessed and reported by the narrators. As Anne Middleton writes, satire is developed so that the narrator "happens on truth or transformation unawares, in a place, time and state of mind where it was least looked for" ("The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*" 114). She explains that a "poem in this mode does not present authoritative truth to cognition . . . its definitive features are that its speaker has no authority and that the truth of its discourse is purely contingent" (114-15). While they break from the poetic genre, both *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia* share this feature.

Other forms of "moral satires" emerged throughout Europe in response to social inequalities and religious corruption. For instance, the *estates satire* developed in France, in which a narrator depicts various characters from all three estates—nobility, clergy, and peasantry—falling short of their moral and social obligations. After its development, it quickly spread throughout Europe. However, despite the augmented transmission of ideas from France to England and the relatively similar sociopolitical situations in the two countries, the genre was arguably nonexistent in England for a long period of time after its inception. The genre had clearly reached England by the time that Geoffrey Chaucer began writing his *Canterbury Tales* around 1387 AD, if not by means of Chaucer himself (*Medieval English Literature and its Social Foundations* 253).⁸ Chaucer's lengthy poem provides a Christian-based satire for all walks of life. This unbiased approach to cataloguing follies is repeated in both the *Utopia* and *The Praise of Folly*, which can be found throughout much of Folly's dialogue and is scattered in Hythloday's

⁷ The Middle English spelling, which often appears in contemporary criticism, was *Wynnere and Wastoure*.

⁸ It has been argued by various scholars that Chaucer personally came into contact with Petrarch and Boccaccio in his travels throughout Europe.

descriptions in Book I. While Erasmus was certainly familiar with other estates satires, because of his extensive travels and studies, there is only tentative evidence to support the claim that Erasmus personally read Chaucer's works. The textual evidence in *The Praise of Folly* and Erasmus' other works that could be used for the argument that he was familiar with Chaucer's writing might have actually come from other estates satires that Erasmus was personally familiar with, possibly even some that influenced Chaucer himself.

Satire was, especially in terms of popular literature, a prevalent genre in medieval Europe. The popularity of the medieval satirical tradition, and the fact that the moral satires were concerned with many of the same issues that the humanists still wrestled with, provided the humanists with a solid literary foundation (and provides us with an excellent starting point to unravel the complexity of humanist satire). The moral satires, with some success, sought to change the social and religious problems of medieval Europe, and the humanists wanted to develop that success further. The humanists recognized the potential that satire had in effectively communicating their controversial arguments on how to rehabilitate medieval Christendom. However, to grasp how the humanists attempted to accomplish this goal with their satire, one must look to the immediate (social, religious, political, and intellectual) setting that More and Erasmus were writing in and the unique opportunities that setting provided.

The humanist movement, as Charles Nauert explains, emerged in Italy in middle of the fourteenth century, in the midst of the Hundred Years War, quickly spreading to the rest of Europe (*Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* 4-8). While humanism, as a movement, can be summed up as the rediscovery and application of classical (Greek and Roman) knowledge to social, political, and religious ideas that existed in the High Middle Ages, that does not fully convey what the humanists were concerned with. The Renaissance humanists wanted to free Christianity from the confines of Aristotelian Scholasticism and the frivolity of logicians. They wanted to get rid of inane Catholic dogma and incongruous rituals,

which they viewed as superficial formalities that, although they may have once served more significant purposes, generally satisfy only personal motivations.

Some of the early humanists, such as Petrarch and Boccaccio, were also fond of satire, but they did not have access to the same amount of knowledge that Erasmus, More, and the later humanists did on the subject. In this light, Erasmus and More were not only writing in the medieval satirical tradition, but were writing in the humanist satirical tradition that had already been established. Furthermore, the translation efforts of the early humanists provided their later counterparts with some of the most important translations of classical texts in terms of developing effective satire. Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, for example, was not rediscovered in its entirety until 1416 by Poggio in the St. Gall monastery (Winterbottom 340). Their own translations of classical texts, as I will discuss, also helped shape their highly successful rhetorical satire.

Desiderius Erasmus, born around 1466, was the second illegitimate son of a Dutch priest (Huizinga 5). His early education was at Gouda, a town near Rotterdam. When Erasmus was nine, he was sent to a school at Deventer, which he likely attended until 1483. In 1483, the Plague struck the city, and his mother died of the infection. His father called him back to Gouda, but he soon fell victim to the Plague as well, leaving Erasmus and his brother in the hands of three guardians (Rummel 17). Around 1480, Erasmus was sent to a grammar school at Hertogenbosch, which he regarded as an intellectual waste. Eventually the guardians decided that Erasmus and his brother should be sent to a monastery, pushing them to enter the Augustinian Canons Regular at Steyn near Gouda. Around 1487, Erasmus began his novitiate, which he completed in 1492. He was ordained as a priest, and secured his bond to the Steyn monastery. Around 1493, Erasmus left the monastery on temporary assignment to serve as secretary to Henry of Bergen, bishop of Cambrai (Rummel 4). By the fall of 1495, Erasmus was at Paris, living in the strictest and most ascetic institution in the university, the Collège de Montaigu (Phillips 24-25). His studies in Paris made him dislike theology, so he left to enter the

University of Cologne in 1496. His real interests were the study of classical literature and his own ambitions to be a Latin poet. To support himself, Erasmus took on English pupils in Paris, including Lord Mountjoy. In 1499, Mountjoy invited Erasmus on a trip to England, where he stayed on a wealthy estate. On a visit to Oxford he met John Colet, who invited Erasmus to stay there (Huizinga 30). However, the next year Erasmus returned to the Netherlands and then to Paris, where he began educating himself in Greek because of his newfound interest in the subject. By 1502, Erasmus was able to read and write Greek. In 1505, Erasmus left Paris for England once again, where he met Thomas More, who was then serving as a lawyer and had also been studying Greek.

Sir Thomas More, born in London, England on February 7, 1478, was the son of a lawyer (Sargent 3). More's early education was at St Anthony's School, which was considered one of the finest schools in London at that time. From 1490 to 1492, More served as a page for the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England, John Morton, where he was first introduced to Renaissance humanism (Sargent 7). With the support of Morton, More entered Oxford University in 1492, where he met other influential humanists, such as Thomas Linacre and William Grocyn, and became proficient in both Greek and Latin (Sargent 13). At his father's request, More left Oxford in 1494 to study law in London at New Inn. He became a student at Lincoln's Inn a few years later, and he was called to the bar in 1502 (Logan 16). Between 1503 and 1504, More lived near the Carthusian monastery, located outside of London. While Erasmus was forced to join the monastery against his will, More admired the monastic life and regularly joined in the monastic exercises; however, despite his favor of monasticism, More never actually joined, and in 1504 he was elected to Parliament to represent Great Yarmouth (Logan 16). In 1505, he married Jane Colt, with whom he had four children, securing that he would never be able to enter the monastery.

In the year that they met, the two new friends worked on translating several of Lucian's satirical works, the results of which they jointly published through a Paris press in 1506. Lucian

of Samosota was a rhetorician, orator, and satirist, who wrote in the tumultuous Roman society of second century AD (Jones 6-8). As C.P. Jones points out, "Rome, and its citizens and its institutions, are constantly present in Lucian" (*Culture and Society in Lucian* 78). His satire is aimed at particularly those religious, political, and social ailments in Roman society that were within the realm of change. Lucian develops his satire in a variety of ways, often relying on voicing and irony to achieve his satirical portrayal, which is aided by his background in rhetoric. His critical arguments remain at the forefront of his writings, despite the humor that persists throughout his texts. As Francis Allinson points out, Lucian's "crushing ridicule of pagan divinities was always a consistent asset to church partisans" (*Lucian, Satirist and Artist* 10). More and Erasmus were two such individuals. Sister Thompson writes, "The two humanists found in Lucian...not only a rare and finely blended combination of wit and instruction, but abundant grist from the mills of Christian reflections" (*Under the Pretext of Praise* 22). As I will discuss in the following chapters, the time that Erasmus and More spend working on Lucian is clearly evident in their own literary works, and elements of Lucian's wit, complex irony, and sharp criticism appear in the humanists' own satire. Erasmus remained in England and stayed in close contact with his new friend until 1507, when he left for the University of Bologna.

In July of 1509, Erasmus once again returned to England, this time from Rome. On this trip to England, Erasmus stayed at More's house, where he supposedly wrote *The Praise of Folly*. As his epistolary records reveal, Erasmus' inspiration for the text came from the conversations that he and More had on the various subjects that Folly discusses. He even claims that More urged him to follow through with the idea. Its Latin title, *Encomium Moriae*, was a pun on More's name (*moria* was Greek for folly). Erasmus' stay in England was also fruitful in that he was appointed lecturer in Greek and divinity at Cambridge, where he moved in 1511.

In 1510, More was elected as one of the two undersheriffs of the City of London. Jane died in 1511, and he remarried almost immediately. He became Master of Requests in 1514, the same year in which he was appointed as a Privy Councillor under King Henry VIII (Logan

69). During August of that same year, Erasmus set out from Louvain for Basel. This trip up the Rhine allowed him to visit many important intellectual cities, such as Trier, Mainz, and Strasbourg, where the humanist movement was blossoming. During this time period, Erasmus' popularity (and infamy) made him one of the most widely-published writers in Europe. Erasmus made a brief trip to England in 1515, and soon after that More began writing *Utopia*, which he completed and published in 1516. While the friends were brought up in considerably different environments, in relatively distant regions of Europe, More and Erasmus shared many traits that influenced their literary works: a highly capable mind, strong Christian beliefs, a good sense of humor, aspirations to make a difference, and humanist education in classical Latin and Greek. The similar educations provided a large number of shared influences in their textual productions.

The Bible and other Christian texts were heralded by Erasmus and More as the most significant for study, but they embraced and utilized a variety of other literary resources. The medieval moral satires, with their similar topics of criticism and widespread popularity, provided the humanists with a strong literary foundation. The classical Greek treatises on rhetoric and philosophy (as well as some classical satires), which had been "rediscovered" in the late Middle Ages, provided the humanists with the means to develop their satire into something greater. They returned directly to the source texts, unlike the scholastics, who (in their attempt to reconcile classical learning and Church orthodoxy) focused predominately on dialectical reasoning and the views of accepted authorities. In the opening pages of his *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle says that rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic (27). The dialectic, which is structured similar to a conversation, is aimed at reaching the truth of a matter between two capable minds. However, a general consensus amongst a group of people is often hard to obtain, especially when those people vary in levels of education, wealth, and morality, and larger groups produce greater dissimilarities. Furthermore, some arguments, despite their inherent virtuosity, conflict with individual beliefs and preferences, and, in these situations, the truth or the general good is

often neglected. In the event that people cannot come to a decision on an urgent matter, rhetoric provides a means to move forward and achieve a desired/necessary outcome. In the hands of virtuous users, rhetoric can be a great tool.

Instead of seeing the classical texts merely as the products of philosophical pagans to be reconciled into the Christian faith, the humanists viewed the ever-emerging corpus of classical Greek texts as a means to escape the intellectual and social dregs of the “Dark Ages”—moreover, as a means to improve Christianity. In particular, they used the knowledge to create a satire that could be used a tool to combat the greed, corruption, and folly that plagued the Catholic Church and the general Christian populace. The satire of the Middle Ages focused on societal ailments and follies, but the humanists were not satisfied with the level to which the medieval satires were effective in producing a change. The humanists saw these follies that plagued medieval society and the corruption within the Church not as things merely to be discussed or criticized, but as matters that urgently needed to be addressed and corrected. To do so, the humanists turned to rhetoric. Some of the classical texts that proved most beneficial in the development the humanists’ satire included Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric*, Plato’s *Republic*, Cicero’s *On the Ideal Orator*, and Quintilian’s *Institutes of Oratory*. The classical rhetorical treatises that were made available to the humanists elucidated how to form an effective argument. They demonstrated what logical arguments look like and how to identify fallacious reasoning. The classics broke down and explain nearly every aspect of persuasion, including humor, irony, wit, jesting, and other key elements of satire (though, as I previously mentioned, it would not be until Quintilian that ‘satire’ actually came into use).

Cicero’s *On the Ideal Orator* provides a description of the rhetorical nature of satire. Although he does not specifically use the term, the humor that he associates with *wit* (rather than the humor that is derived from foolishness) can be correlated with satire for the sake of discussion, particularly that which is used honorably. Cicero states, “The most important way of making people laugh is to point out and mark something dishonorable in a way that is not itself

dishonorable” (*De Oratore* 2.235). In other words, Cicero’s highest form of humor is that which criticizes vices/follies in a virtuous manner—essentially, satire. In Book 2, Cicero’s Ceasar provides a succinct description of the rhetorical functions that this form of humor can provide:

It is indeed clearly fitting for the orator to stir up laughter, either because cheerfulness by itself wins goodwill for the one who has excited it; or because everyone admires cleverness, especially of someone who gives a retort, and not infrequently also of someone who provokes another; or because laughter crushes the opponent, obstructs him, makes light of him, discourages him, defeats him; or because it shows the orator himself to be refined, to be educated, to be well bred; and especially because it soothes and relaxes sternness and severity, and often, by joking and laughter, dismisses offensive matters that are not easily refuted by arguments. (*De Oratore* 2.236)

Returning to the classical terms, the humor that Cicero deems the most valuable—satire—is often developed by means of what the Greeks called *εἰρωνεία*, or *irony*, which Cicero defines as “saying something different from what you think” (*De Oratore* 2.269). This brings up a significant dilemma in reconciling classical knowledge and the medieval satirical tradition into humanist satire. Despite the information on the formation and execution of an effective argument, classical rhetoric was traditionally bound to oral discourse. As Aristotle himself defines, rhetoric is “the ability in any particular case to see the available means of persuasion,” which does not specifically refer to speech or oratory (*On Rhetoric* 37). Still, much of the classical knowledge about effective argumentation was discussed in terms of speaking to an audience. For instance, Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric*, which is arguably the most extensive treatise on the subject, defines three genres of speech—deliberative, forensic, and epideictic—to which rhetoric is bound. Even Cicero’s explications of wit, humor, and irony are discussed in terms of oration. After the development of the printing press, which allowed for texts to be copied and published with unprecedented ease, written discourse had taken over as the preferred medium for mass communication and the widespread dissemination of ideas. One of the most significant difficulties faced by the humanists in utilizing the classical knowledge of rhetoric was that, while the humanists were “speaking to an audience,” they were dealing essentially with a textual audience—or, better, readership.

To bridge this gap, the humanists had to create a literary setting that resembled the oratorical setting, where a speaker is addressing an audience. More and Erasmus developed a textualized oratory, in which a character in the text takes on the role of the orator. Unlike the textualization of oral discourse that occurred in the high and late Middle Ages (predominately in England) when the renewed interest in writing and education allowed for the oral poetry and other literature that had been developed to be written down by scholars, the humanists were dealing with a much more complex form of textual oratory (Amodio 12). The humanists, rather than using their own as the central oratorical voices in texts, which would directly link the author (and the ideas people held about them) to the texts, developed characters that would serve as the rhetoricians. These characters could be ascribed the exact traits desired by the authors. They could be developed alongside Cicero's ideal, or, for the sake of satire, characterized in a manner that plays off of certain aspects of their persona. Cicero's irony, for instance, requires "being mock-serious in your whole manner of speaking, while thinking something different from what you are saying" (*De Oratore* 2.269); however, to create a sense of irony, the humanists had to develop a sense of the manner of speech within a textual format. This had to be done via the characterization of the narrators.

CHAPTER 2

ERASMUS' BITING SATIRE IN *THE PRAISE OF FOLLY*

The Praise of Folly, originally written and published in Latin, espouses numerous controversial humanist beliefs. Erasmus' text became considerably popular, even infamous, within the Latin-literate intellectual population shortly after its initial publication. In his letter to Martin Dorp, Erasmus himself admits that "The book has gained me a certain amount of reputation, or if you prefer, notoriety" (*The Praise of Folly and Other Writings* 229). By the time *The Praise of Folly* was published, Erasmus was already a well-known scholar and writer, having published *Antibarbari*, *Adages*, *Paraphrases*, *Colloquies*, *The Handbook of a Christian Knight*, among others. However, *The Praise of Folly* differs from his other works in its highly satirical tone, despite maintaining the Christian focus of the others. Erasmus claimed that the inspiration for the book was a product of the conversations he had with More, stating in his letter to Ulrich von Hutten, "Indeed, it was he [More] that suggested my writing the *Moria*, or *The Praise of Folly*, which was much the same thing as setting a camel to dance" (*Utopia* 128). Wilkinson writes that it would "be impossible to regard it [*The Praise of Folly*] as a serious attack on religion or the Catholic Church for it is obviously not serious about anything," but I believe that Erasmus had a greater purpose in mind for *The Praise of Folly*. Erasmus himself states in many places, including his letter to Martin Dorp and the dedicatory preface of the text, that his satire was not composed "altogether foolishly" (*PoF* 5). However, I do believe that Wilkinson makes an accurate observation about the degree of sincerity with which Erasmus intended Folly's statements to be taken.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Erasmus supposedly wrote *The Praise of Folly* in 1509 at More's house, during one of his multiple visits to England, but the book was not published until 1511. The friends shared a good sense of humor, and their humanistic studies allowed them to

bring their comedic disposition into their intellectual pursuits. During Erasmus' visit to England in the year that he met More, the new friends spent much time translating Lucian's satires. In addition to those appeals to the humanist that I discussed in Chapter 1, Lucian's dialogues were highly influenced by Plato's philosophical dialogues, which appealed to Erasmus' (and More's) predilection for Platonic philosophy. In many of Lucian's dialogues, conversations between humans, gods, goddesses, animals, and even Lucian himself humorously—and, often, sharply—criticize the follies and vices of humankind. As Bryan Reardon points out, "A favorite term for Lucian in German scholarship is *der Spotter*, 'the scoffer,'" which, as I will demonstrate, is a role that Erasmus' Folly arguably assumes in her mock-encomium (*Lucian: Selected Works* xxvi). Despite Erasmus' self-established disassociation with him, many elements of Lucian's satirical mode of writing were influential on the development of the satire in *The Praise of Folly* and More's *Utopia*.

As their letters reveal, Erasmus and More also spent time discussing their personal backgrounds, beliefs, and knowledge. They soon discovered that, despite their different upbringings, they shared many opinions about social and religious issues. Many of these form the central arguments behind both *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia*. For that reason and others, the beginning of Erasmus' preface is a dedication of *The Praise of Folly* to More; however, being the intelligent and industrious person that he was, Erasmus tackled many other obstacles in his prefatory statements.⁹ The dedication was not only a means to praise his friend, but also an opportunity for Erasmus both to distance himself from the thoughts expressed in Folly's dialogue and to establish a particular reading of the text.¹⁰ Erasmus wittily notes, "For now that it is dedicated to you [More], it is properly yours, not mine" (*PoF* 4).¹¹ Erasmus turns responsibility of the text over to his friend. He even ends the preface by stating, "Farewell, most learned More,

⁹ Erasmus wrote the preface to *The Praise of Folly* after the rest of the texts. The preface was added later to address certain issues and problems that Erasmus viewed as important.

¹⁰ Throughout this thesis I will use standard conventions of capitalization when discussing 'folly'. I will use the capitalized 'Folly' when speaking about Erasmus' character, lower-case 'folly' when speaking of the attribute, and capitalized italics '*Folly*' when discussing the text in short.

¹¹ The statement also emphasizes Folly as a character, which I will discuss later.

defend *your Folly faithfully*” (*PoF* 5),¹² which further distances him from the text. Such gestures allow Erasmus to thwart the criticisms that he expected his book might receive:

I don't doubt that there will be busybodies to condemn the book, some saying that its trifles too silly to befit a theologian's dignity, others declaring that it's too sharp of tooth to accord with the modest behavior of a Christian—they will thunder out comparisons with the Old Comedy and the satires of Lucian, they will say I snap and slash at everyone like a mad dog. (*PoF* 4)

While the topics in the book were those that Erasmus viewed as of utmost importance, he knew that his position would not sit well with everyone who read it.

In his letter to Martin Dorp, Erasmus assures his later-to-become friend (and the larger audience that he knew would read the letter¹³) that, “In whatever books I've published, I always aimed exclusively at the same single objective, to do some good by my efforts,” to which he later adds, “I long ago persuaded myself to keep my writings clean of personal invective and uncontaminated by insults” (*PoF* 229, 231). Sister Geraldine Thompson clarifies: “For Erasmus, certainly all satire...is just as good as, and no better than, its capacity to effect or sustain good thoughts and godly living” (5). Erasmus takes multiple measures to reaffirm the virtuous nature of his satirical attacks. In his letter to Dorp, he goes as far as to compare his goal in writing *The Praise of Folly* to that of writing his *Handbook for the Christian Knight*, or in Latin, *Enchiridion militis Christiani*: “In the *Enchiridion* I laid out very simply the pattern of a Christian life...And now *Folly* says, though jokingly, precisely the same thing as the *Enchiridion*” (231). He specifically states in the preface, “My aim was to ridicule absurdities, not to catalogue sins” (5). He uses this defense to validate his position and target his criticisms. He goes on to ask the rhetorical question, “If someone attacks the vices of human kind without mentioning any individual by name, is he harming people or rather teaching them, admonishing them?” to which he adds, “Consider in addition on how many scores I attack my own self” (*PoF* 5). This statement calls attention to the fact that he places himself under scrutiny as well, serving as a means for him to absolve any notions that he might have an agenda against particular

¹² The italics emphasizing possession of Folly are my addition.

¹³ Erasmus' letter to Dorp was only one portion of a multipart epistolary exchange and published in editions of *The Praise of Folly*.

individuals: “When men of every different sort are censured, it’s clear that vice in general is the target, not a particular person” (*PoF* 5). Erasmus firmly aligns himself with the medieval satirical tradition, in which follies, rather than individuals, are criticized.

In a rhetorical move in the text’s preface, Erasmus moves from a defensive tone to an offensive one, stating, “So if anyone complains that he’s been harmed, it’s either his conscience that accuses him or his guilt” (5). Only after establishing the good nature of his efforts, the virtuosity of his work, and the tradition that he was writing from, does Erasmus clearly insinuate that there are people—or, better, types of people—that he has targeted in the text. Using elements of almost every rhetorical strategy available, especially those found in the rediscovered classical texts, *The Praise of Folly* was intended to be an argumentative text, written precisely to initiate change and improvement—or, at least, to raise consciousness—within the areas it criticizes. Much like his good friend, Erasmus had a strong personal desire to reform Christianity, education, and society at large. He wanted to encourage a simple, pure, and proper Christian way of life that was free of unnecessary dogmatic encumbrances. In his arguments there is also a strong desire to expand education beyond the confines of Aristotelian Scholasticism.

Satire provided Erasmus with a great vehicle for his arguments. It allowed him not only to utilize his sense of humor and to situate his writing within a fairly popular—and, relatively, successful—literary tradition, but also to protect him from potential dangers. I will spend the rest of this chapter discussing how Folly serves as a means to textualize the irony that is necessary for this satire. As Sister Thompson establishes, “In the interest of lessening his victim, or more often of stirring up a climate of opinion hostile to some vice or folly, the satirist creates a work wherein some indirection stands between the reader and the stark criticism” (*Under Pretext of Praise* 5). The means of Erasmus’ satirical indirection comes from his use of Folly as a narrator. As I previously mentioned, Erasmus evokes the notion that Folly should be seen as an autonomous entity, with a mind—and voice—of her own: “It’s a kind of compliment

to be attacked by Folly; when I chose her as my spokesperson, I was bound to observe the properties of her character” (5). Erasmus is not the only one who is bound to observe the properties of her character; the reader and his/her interpretation of Folly’s words are also bound. Folly states, “Let it [her praise of herself] be as stupid as they like, they will have to admit it’s in my character” (*PoF* 8). Here Erasmus establishes a particular reading that allows voice-based, rhetorical satire to operate within a textual setting.

As I briefly mentioned in the introductory chapter, rhetorical satire is often developed by means of irony, wit, jesting, etc., which were discussed in relation to oral discourse by classical philosophers, rhetoricians, and grammarians. Furthermore, elements of satire, particularly irony and jesting, require some sort of ambiguity or uncertainty in terms of what is being said—or, in the humanists’ case, written—to achieve the desired effect. Folly insinuates that the text should be thought of in terms of oration: “From me you can expect only an extempore and unlabored—but for that reason more truthful—oration” (*PoF* 8). Erasmus’ presentation of Folly’s “speech” evokes an understanding of the textual environment as one in which oratorical practices and conventions might—and do—appear. Guided by Quintilian, who defined irony as “saying something different from what you think”¹⁴ and advocated it because of its utility, Erasmus mastered the technique.¹⁵

The irony that Erasmus relies upon in his satire is much more intricate than Quintilian’s relatively simple definition lets on. Sister Thompson asserts, “Irony is a total arrangement of thought, a state of mind; and paradoxically, although it stands as part to the whole when considered in the embrace of satire, it has its own wholeness, of which satire is in turn just a part” (*Under Pretext of Praise* 7). For irony to be achieved textually, the words on the page have to signify to the reader something other than what is literally stated. Further developing

¹⁴ This definition is from Quintilian’s *On the Ideal Orator* (2.269), when he is discussing the various types of elegant and witty types of humor.

¹⁵ Though they have not received as much praise for it, the early humanists, such as Petrarch and Boccaccio, also used irony and satire in their works; however, given that a complete edition of Quintilian’s works (as well as many other classical sources) were not yet available to them, it is understandable that they were not as successful in their efforts.

Quintilian's notion, Sister Thompson defines satiric irony as "When a speaker knows the full import of his words, and for reprehensive or didactic purposes makes the speech literally less than true," in which "author" can be substituted for "speaker" and "text" for "speech" (*Under Pretext of Praise* 9-10). This irony may be established throughout the entire development of an oration, but it might not be discovered until a solitary sentence at the end of the oration/text; or, it can be repeated in individual smaller instances (which may or may not be part of a larger ironical picture that is being presented), as both Quintilian and Sister Thompson touch upon. Erasmus' Folly, who is also an adapted version of the allegorical narrator that was often found in the medieval moral satires, is characterized strongly in relation to Quintilian's irony. She is a character that cannot be taken seriously—or, better, literally—due largely in part to the "properties of her character" that Erasmus mentions in the preface. It is through her characterization that Folly provides the "indirection" that is necessary for satirical irony to operate.

As we gather from Folly's family lineage and the figures with whom she was raised,¹⁶ her character is derived from a complex amalgamation of humankind's numerous vices, flaws, shortcomings, and lusts. Furthermore, she is a female figure; and, since, in her own words, males were "given a tiny scruple more reason" because they were "born to be in charge of things," this casts even more doubt on her judgment.¹⁷ Her name alone conveys much of her character, which she does not hesitate to make evident. In almost every way possible Erasmus configures a predisposition to a dubious reading of Folly's statements. To put this into context,

¹⁶ Folly informs the reader that she is the daughter of Plutus, god of riches, and the nymph Neotes [Youth]. She claims to have been nursed by Methe [Tipsy] and Apaedia [Ninny] and brought up in the company of other "companions and follower," including Philautia [Self-Love], Kolakia [Flattery], Lethe [Forgetfulness], Misoponia [Lieabout], Hedone [Pleasure], Anoaia [Imbecility], Tryphe [Fascination], Comus [Festivity], and Negretos Hypnos [Sound Sleep] (*PoF* 10-11). She calls into her circle of followers, in addition to others, anyone who subscribes to any of the aforementioned allegorical figures.

¹⁷ While Erasmus' position might seem somewhat sexist to a contemporary audience, the societal norms were substantially different in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The use of Folly as a narrator, who is no doubt as wise as she is foolish, and the manner in which she is characterized was rather progressive for Erasmus' time. The knowledge espoused by Folly contradicts any real sexist reading of the text.

Folly begins her “oration” by expounding upon the ways in which she is beneficial to mankind, arguing that she is responsible for our happiness in youth and its return in our old age:

If men would refrain completely from any sort of commerce with wisdom, but spend time entirely in my company, they would never grow old, but instead would live happily in the enjoyment of perpetual youth...[!] gave rise to cities, held together empires, built legal and religious systems, erected political and religious structures; in fact, human life as a whole is nothing but a kind of fool’s game. (*PoF* 27)

In this section of the text, Erasmus provides a somewhat substantial encomium of Folly, explaining how it is essentially humankind’s follies that allow for happiness, long relationships, and successful marriages; however, underlying Folly’s narration of self-praise, there surfaces a notion that Folly is responsible for bringing life to an end, at least in the sense that she is responsible for making men have no “weariness of life or fear of death” (*PoF* 15). Aside from bringing people happiness, folly is also responsible for much of the hardship and unhappiness that beset humanity.

The beginning is actually a mock-encomium, in which Erasmus, via Folly, reveals the duplicity of human perceptions and the tentative nature of our “knowledge.” An understanding of the multiple, often conflicting, perspectives that Folly promotes is necessary to navigate the overarching satirical irony that persists throughout much of the remainder of the work. It soon becomes evident that Folly’s use of labels—such as “wise,” “fools,” and even “folly”—will be quite unconventional throughout her “oration.” As Paul Kristeller points out, “The fools are ridiculous in the eyes of the wise, whereas the wise in turn are foolish in the eyes of the fools. The truly wise are...pious Christians and...Platonic philosophers” (“Erasmus from an Italian Perspective” *PoF* 324). Kristeller provides a relatively sound summary of the general irony within the text; however, his explication of Erasmus’ irony stops there, and as a result does not adequately convey the significance of the ‘deliberate ambiguity’ that he touches upon.¹⁸

¹⁸ In Kristeller’s defense, while an understanding of Erasmus’ use of irony does reinforce his argument, further explication on his behalf is not crucial for him to make his point. Furthermore, he provides the caveat that “If my interpretation of the *The Praise of Folly* may have seemed at first a bit pedantic, it can now be affirmed that Erasmus himself was no less pedantic in his outlook.

Erasmus' contrived textual uncertainty provides a protective barrier within which he can put forth his humanist arguments, and it reinforces the sense of indirection necessary for the construction of satirical irony. Erasmus' mock-encomium of Folly can, to a certain extent, be thought of as an encomium of the text itself. Folly describes "the fool," who she claims "provides something that kings are always glad to get from any quarter, in any form—that is, jokes, jollity, a good laugh, fun," in addition to being "always direct and truthful" (*PoF* 36-37). The qualities of the fool described here are the same beneficial aspects that Erasmus utilized by choosing Folly as narrator. Folly explains, "When they [fools] speak truths, even unwelcome truths, they are received with uproarious laughter. In fact, the very same words which, spoken by a wise man, would cost him his life are accepted with incredible pleasure when spoken by a fool" (*PoF* 37-38). The fool, whom Erasmus' narrator represents in the epitomized form, can express his opinions—or, better, his observed "truths"—in a way other characters would not be able to. The fool does not care about his/her appearance or upholding an "honest reputation," because his/her character has already been illuminated (though some might say tarnished) by the qualities associated with the title. Furthermore, the fool's often welcome reception can be attributed to the manner in which he/she presents otherwise abrasive information. The fool can say one thing, while the opposite is observably true, creating a humorous (rather than baffled or annoyed) response. It is often the case that what the fool intends the audience to think or believe *is* the opposite of what he or she says.

After expounding upon the inherent "virtue" of folly, Folly turns to cataloguing the various groups that she claims belong to her circle of followers. Aside from mentioning minor examples in passing, the first group that Folly turns her gaze upon is the philosophers. At first glance, Folly appears to be criticizing them: "It's utter misery, they say to be in the clutches of folly, to be bewildered, to blunder, never to know anything for sure. On the contrary, I say, that's what it is to be a man" (*PoF* 32). While Folly is ostensibly critical of the philosophers, her view is

actually quite complex. One must keep in mind Folly's character when considering the rationality, or the lack thereof, in her statements:

So it is among all men, those are farthest from felicity who strive most earnestly for wisdom, showing themselves double fools, first as they are born men, and then because they have forgotten that basic condition, and like giants make war on nature with the machinery of their learning. (*PoF* 35)

The underlying message is that the philosophers are among the few in society who try to operate outside of folly. While the philosophers from Antiquity were often viewed as pagans or heretics by Church officials and Scholastics, Erasmus hints that their pursuit of truth might be closer to a proper Christian lifestyle than the mode of living exhibited by much of the practicing Christian population. At the same time, Folly seems to make a distinction between different types of philosophers. First, there those who believe they are wise and try to operate outside of this existence, but fall into folly regardless. There are also those who are truly wise and know that they can never escape folly, but direct their efforts on bettering this existence. Nevertheless, the overall efforts of philosophers are depicted by Folly as utterly futile in light of the constraints placed upon humanity by our corporeal confinements.

Folly's satirical discussion of philosophers develops a multifaceted ironical view. On one hand, *The Praise of Folly* is full of Erasmus' own philosophical ideas, which as we know from his previous literary works he held close to his heart. The *Handbook for a Christian Knight*, which Erasmus personally favored and compared directly with *The Praise of Folly*, provides a highly philosophical portrayal of his ideal Christian life. In the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus states that it is acceptable to engage in the study of classical authors, or "pagan poets and philosophers" as he refers to them, "provided that one engages in these studies with moderation" (66:33). He even goes as far as to recommend the Platonic philosopher, given that "much of their thinking as well as in their mode of expression they are the closest to the spirit of the prophets and of the gospel" (66:33). On the other hand, Folly provides a general argument against philosophical living, when she refutes Plato's notion of the 'philosopher king' by providing examples of real rulers that arguably demonstrate that "states were never worse off than when the kingship fell to

some philosophaster or bookworm” (*PoF* 25). However, keeping in mind Folly’s character, the examples she provides of the “worst” kingships—including even some rather popular figures like Cicero and Marcus Aurelius—are really quite exaggerated. While Folly’s examples are not completely without backing,¹⁹ many of the educated people that Erasmus would have anticipated in his audience would have seen through his exaggeration. Plato’s “philosopher king,” however historically flawed Folly demonstrates him to be, would still have seemed like a favorable alternative to the many of the rulers who had been (and currently were) in power in contemporary Europe, especially considering the discontent that many people shared for Henry VII and other European monarchs. Erasmus hints that the worst philosopher king might still be better than an uneducated, greedy, and/or malevolent one. Folly’s criticism of philosophers can, in many ways, be understood as Erasmus’ promotion of philosophical education—or, at least, of adopting philosophical principles into one’s personal life and the overall governing of society.

The satire at the beginning of *The Praise of Folly* is not all too offensive, but it is important in that it establishes the intended tone for the rest of the text. After her discussion of philosophers, Folly turns her critical gaze upon other groups that she (or Erasmus) believes are deserving of closer inspection, beginning the transition into more potentially offensive areas of discussion. Into to her circle of followers, Folly first includes people who are mad or insane, declaring that “folly of the highest order is either madness or next thing to it” (*PoF* 38). Although Folly’s tone towards all “mad people” is relatively amicable and accepting, she divides madness into two groups: madness caused by the Furies and madness that folly produces. She describes the form of madness that she aligns herself with as a relatively non-malicious error of the senses, which “comes about whenever some genial aberration of the mind frees it from anxiety and worry while at the same time imbuing it with the many fragrances of pleasure” (*PoF*

¹⁹ Robert Adams provides a brief summarization of the actions of each person that Folly criticizes at this point in the text. Some of are deserving of the criticism, while others Erasmus includes to develop and reinforce a satirical reading of his criticism of other groups later in the text.

39). Folly's madness can be associated with a general lack of rationality that provides some form of pleasure, despite however insubstantial it might be. Similar to "the mad," Folly mentions gamblers who, although she is hesitant to accept them into her circle, "provide a completely ridiculous spectacle" and people who believe in superstitions (*PoF* 41). Although Folly's statements are still not very controversial, this portion of the text is significant because it begins the ironical method of satirical criticism that Erasmus utilizes often throughout the remainder of the text. Folly, either in a joking way or in saying the exact opposite, often expresses Erasmus' own opinions. The readers, by means of their own knowledge, wit, and morality, are left to interpret the significant, if convoluted, expression of ideas within Folly's discourse.

By describing the beliefs and actions of people that he wishes to criticize in a tone of mock-admiration (with varied levels of seriousness), Erasmus (via Folly) can be highly critical of erroneous behavior while maintaining a jovial and light-hearted tone. Erasmus' criticisms remain evident and serious, while the irony in Folly's "oration" creates humor. The humorous effect produced by the irony that Erasmus relies on early in the text softens his transition to the more serious areas of discussion that he knew might raise objections with his readers. Even after the convivial ironic humor dwindles out of Folly's discourse, the reader is bound (both by Erasmus' declarations in the preface and the information that Folly provides in her self-portrait) to read what Folly says as if she were saying it with the intent to provide humor; therefore, while Folly's statements and questions may appear to become more scathing, Folly's inherent relation to humor provides a buffer for Erasmus to work within. This buffer becomes central especially when Folly's tone becomes less playful and Erasmus' own critical voice begins to surface.²⁰

When she begins to mention the superstitions that relate to religious beliefs and practices, Folly's witty comments become sharper and more directed at revealing faults. Folly

²⁰ As we see in Erasmus' letter to Martin Dorp and More's defenses of his friend's book, there were still many people that were critical of the views that Erasmus expressed in *The Praise of Folly*. On a positive note, More was able to learn from some of Erasmus' mistakes; and, as I will discuss in the next chapter, many aspects of the satire in *Utopia* were developed as a means to preemptively combat the criticisms that Erasmus received after publishing *The Praise of Folly*.

begins to mention people such as those who “like to hear or tell tall tales about miracle or other prodigious lie,” idolaters, and “those who happily delude themselves with forged pardons for real sins” (*PoF* 41-42). However, along with this shift in focus towards religious folly, Erasmus’ satire gains a level of complexity in terms of diction. Adams clarifies, “In attacking current abuses within the Christian Church, Folly heightens the tension of her discourse; she must, accordingly, choose her words carefully” (*PoF* 41). Erasmus, who was well-aware that his popularity offered only minimal protection, knew that the Church had the means, and desire, to suppress opposition; and, while Erasmus wanted to reform—or, better, restore—Christianity to a purer state, there were certain things that, for the sake of his personal well-being, he could not say, even via the fictitious Folly. For instance, Erasmus is clear only to attack “forged pardons and indulgences,” as to not offend the Church, which accepted and practiced the sale of indulgences. Erasmus did not believe in direct confrontational methods, unlike Martin Luther, who blatantly attacked the abuses that he perceived in the Catholic Church and placed himself in much danger by doing so.

Erasmus’ satire is still able to convey his controversial opinion, despite the fact that he had to be careful in selecting Folly’s particular phrasing. The criticism of “forged” pardons and indulgences offers a general criticism of the actual practice, despite the minor distinction. Furthermore, by including the sale of pardons and indulgences in his list of religious superstitions, Erasmus pairs the practice with other superstitious acts that would likely have been viewed as ridiculous by at least some in his initial audience. Erasmus viewed these superstitions as detractions from a true Christian life; and, as we know from the views he expressed in his *Handbook for a Christian Knight*, Erasmus believed that a good Christian’s actions should be dictated by his/her faith and adherence to will of God. Proper Christian living would provide ultimate and infinite happiness, rather than the temporal happiness folly provides. After discussing how men foolishly ask of saints only “things pertaining to folly” (instead of divine wisdom), Folly jokingly observes, “It’s so agreeable to know nothing, that mortals pray for

anything else rather than release from folly" (*PoF* 43). As Erasmus' dissatisfaction begins to surface, Folly explains that "the whole life of Christians everywhere is infected with idiocies of this sort; yet priests tolerate them without misgivings, and even encourage them, being well aware how much money can be coined out of them" (*PoF* 43-44). Like the greed that he here attributes to priests, Erasmus is critical of actions that are produced from desires other than being in God's good graces, such as the fulfillment of self-love by obtaining praise, flattery, or material possessions. Folly argues that these provide an escape from the harsh reality of life and, thus, provide a sense of happiness: "But, they say to be deceived is to be miserable; not so, I answer, it is truly miserable *not* to be deceived. How wrong men are when they suppose that human happiness lies in things themselves" (*PoF* 46). Once again, Folly's joking comments carry a rather serious message.

The content of Erasmus' satire becomes more serious as the text progresses, and the narratorial voice begins to fluctuate. As Folly moves further into her criticism of religious and educational figures, whom she classifies as "those men who maintain some pretence to wisdom and try at least to grasp at the golden bough," the narration begins to sound like Erasmus' own voice, at least insofar as can be determined from his previous literary works (*PoF* 51). While Erasmus maintains Folly's position as the central narrator, the poignancy of her attacks reflects Erasmus' own degree of concern for the chosen topics of criticism, which was heightened by his own unsatisfactory experiences. Erasmus was likely aware of the shifts in Folly's tone; however, as Erasmus reasserts in the preface, "Good wits have always been allowed the liberty to exercise their high spirits on the common life of men, and without rebuke, as long as their sport doesn't become savagery" (*PoF* 5). In fact, given Folly's unreliable character, changes in her direction of thought and the tone of her voice should be expected. It should be anticipated that Folly would speak in a manner that would otherwise be offensive and/or inappropriate, such as if spoken by a scholar or religious figure like Erasmus himself. Once again breaking from

Cicero's notion of the ideal orator, Erasmus makes full use of Folly's "disreputable reputation," allowing his own elevated character and virtuous intent to be preserved in the process.

The satire in *The Praise of Folly* is probably influenced as much by Erasmus' personal experiences as it is by his particular beliefs. Erasmus directs Folly's satirical bite towards the fallacious behavior he had observed during his experiences as student, monk, and priest. As Margaret Phillips observes, Erasmus did not reflect highly upon his early education at Deventer and Bois-le-Duc, nor did he enjoy his studies at the "arduous and ascetic" College de Montaigu, which he attended after becoming a priest with the intentions of obtaining a degree in theology (*Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance* 24-25). Throughout his academic studies, he felt confined by the rules of grammarians, the unfulfilling pursuits of Aristotelian Scholasticism, and the inane theological questions that he was often presented with. Furthermore, as we know from his personal accounts, he felt that many of the people who claimed to be the "enlightened providers of knowledge" at the various educational institutions he attended knew little more than what could be used to bolster their own images. Speaking of grammarians, Folly declares, "What they teach their students is utter gibberish, but they think their own critical discernment is far beyond that of the greater grammarians, like Palaemon or Donatus" (*PoF* 52). As Folly continues in her critical description, *The Praise of Folly* begins to sound like Erasmus' other works. Erasmus writes, "There are as many grammar books as there are grammarians, or even more; for my friend Aldus alone has produced more than five of them, overlooking none, however barbarically or badly written," referring directly to his friend, the Venetian printer, Aldus Manutius (*PoF* 53). Then, in a rhetorical move—while he clearly verges on taking the narratorial position—Erasmus steps away from being a critic and places himself under the scope of Folly's scrutiny, allowing her to digress into a light-hearted description of the folly of poets and the "halfwits who expect to achieve immortal fame by writing books" (*PoF* 54). Erasmus goes as far as to mention that "Most enchanting of all is the spectacle when they start flattering one another back and forth with epistles dedicatory, and commendatory verses, and mutual complimentary

allusions”—which comments much on the preface to *The Praise of Folly* and his own relationship with More. He even includes a small diatribe against lawyers, indirectly referring to his friend’s dissatisfactions with the profession that he held when Erasmus met him. The ironical humor provided in these passages of the text adds a degree of subtlety to Erasmus’ transition into more-serious discussions.

As Erasmus continues to develop his satirical picture, the instability of the narratorial voice continues to play a significant role. After allowing Folly’s voice to become prominent in the narration once again, Erasmus vehemently—though hesitantly—embarks on his reformatory satirical criticism of theologians. Erasmus uses Folly to expound his beliefs on their unpleasant character and problems that he viewed with their general handling of affairs:

Perhaps I ought to pass over the theologians in silence and ‘just not go near that open sewer’ or touch that stink-weed. They are a class of men so arrogant and irritable that they’re likely to attack me by squadrons with their six hundred conclusions and force me into a recantation; then if I refuse, they’d promptly have me up for a ‘heretic.’ This is the thunderbolt with which they terrify anyone who for some reason has got in their black books...Meanwhile, they protect themselves with a hedge full of academic definitions, logical, argumentations, inferential corollaries, explicit and implicit propositions. (*PoF* 57)

Erasmus believed that theologians should be concerned in their studies with pursuits pertaining to living a better Christian life, rather than “discovering,” for the sake of their personal benefit alone, irrelevant bits of information, tentative paradoxes, or textual inconsistencies. Erasmus, being careful not to allow his own voice to surface during this part of the discussion, uses the example of the lives of the apostles, the first Christian scholars, to serve as foils to problems that he has observed in the pursuits of theologians. As he did in the *Handbook for a Christian Knight*, though managed through different literary means, Erasmus develops his notion of the proper Christian life. Folly declares, “The apostles baptized far and wide, but never taught what are formal, material, efficient, and final causes of baptism,” to which she later adds, “The apostles constantly preached grace, but they never distinguished between actual grace and sanctifying grace” (*PoF* 59). From Erasmus’ perspective, the apostles fulfilled God’s desires, while the theologians of the time bordered on blasphemy. Folly objects, “As censors of the

whole world, they demand retraction of all ideas that don't exactly square with their explicit and implicit conclusion" (*PoF* 61). Erasmus uses Folly's joking remarks to convey the real sense of danger that he perceived with the power that has been granted to theologians. To Erasmus, academic endeavors should be aimed at providing intellectual and spiritual guidance, rather than those benefits that pertain to an individual's image or reputation.

Religious reform was equally as important to Erasmus as academic reform, if not more so, and his highly critical satire of religious figures reflects his level of concern. Using Folly's examination of theologians as a transition from educational to religious positions, Erasmus continues his discussion of the folly that he attributes to the full scope of religious figures, beginning with "those who are popularly called 'men of religion' and 'monks'" (*PoF* 62). Elsewhere Erasmus makes it clear that, while he agreed with it in principle, he believed that monasticism in practice had become a corrupt institution. Erasmus' own involvement with monastic life and his experiences as a priest provided him with much fuel for his satirical fire, and the irony that could be achieved with the aid of Folly as his narrator allowed that fire to burn with an intense heat. From this section of the text to the end of his cataloguing of the follies attributed to various groups, Erasmus' satirical mode strongly resembles that utilized by Lucian. The relationship is clearly evident in earlier instances, but the satire throughout this portion of *The Praise of Folly* is sharp and highly-critical, often relying on wit that is not necessarily humorous. Erasmus' main point in the section about monasticism—though surely not his only one—is that monks, whose lives are supposed to set examples for common laypeople, often fall short of the responsibilities they took on by joining an order. Monks should, by virtue of their station, be focused on living a Christ-like life away from the impediments of societal living. Folly continues, "They all try as hard as possible not to agree with each other in their way of life; they are far less interested in resembling Christ than in differing among themselves" (*PoF* 63). In one of the most interesting and rhetorically effective passages in the text, Folly directly quotes

Christ to express his disappointment with the state of monasticism. Erasmus, via Folly, via Christ, wittily reveals a clear portrayal of his personal perspective:

Where did this new race of Jews come from? I recognize no law but my own, and about it I hear nothing whatever. Long ago, speaking openly and using no intricate parables, I promised that my father's kingdom would be granted, not to cowls, prayers, or fasts, but to works of faith and charity. Nor do I recognize those who make too much of their own merits and want to seem more sanctified than me; let them go live in the heavens of Abraxa or, if they want, get a new heaven built for them outside mine by the men whose foolish traditions they have preferred before my commandments. (*PoF* 63)

Similar to the direct way that Lucian develops the satirical irony in his dialogues, Erasmus pushes the contradiction to be observed—moreover, felt—by his audience to the forefront of his argument. Folly rails against the inconsistency between foundational monastic principles, which are modeled after Christ's life and which Benedict carefully set forth, and the actual practice of monks. Folly elucidates that “most of them avoid religion as much as they can, and wherever you go you can't help running into these men who've ‘withdrawn’ from the world,” adding, “A good many of them make an excellent living out of their beggars' rags” (*PoF* 62). While Folly's jokes again tread lightly on what Erasmus felt passionately about, the underlying truth is brought to the forefront.

Erasmus' satire of monks, given his background, is very detailed and touches upon more than the general medieval dissatisfactions with monasticism. For instance, Erasmus' dedication to educational (and linguistic) reform also surfaces in Folly's attack of monks as well. Folly declares, “They think it a main point of piety to be ignorant of good letters, preferably not to be able to read at all” (*PoF* 62). Erasmus is commenting on the lack of literacy that was common amongst monks, despite their strong dependence on the Scripture. Further outlining the poor education of “men of cloth,” Folly provides her audience with a thorough (and rather humorous) description of how monks, despite lacking any real knowledge of the subject, incorporate a number of rhetorical strategies into their performances; the product is nothing more than what would be expected from “street-corner charlatans,” who, as Folly comments, “are better performers” (*PoF* 66). Erasmus believed that monks especially should have a

thorough knowledge of language (including the vernacular, Latin, and Greek) to adequately study the Scripture and other pertinent religious texts.²¹

Erasmus' satirical mode is relatively consistent in this section of the text, and Folly's voice stays clearly in the fore of the narration. However, Erasmus briefly changes the direction of his satirical focus, and Erasmus' denunciation of monastic practices shifts, somewhat abruptly, into a seemingly disconnected discussion of princes and courtiers, who, as Folly declares, "seek my favors quite openly and unabashedly" (*PoF* 66). This transition is significant in that, by providing the requirements for a good prince, such as he did for soldiers in the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus is able to describe his ideal Christian life in terms of social involvement. While monks are *supposed* to live secluded lives, the lives of princes and courtiers are enmeshed in social interaction. Following Aristotle's advice about tailoring one's oration to its audience (as could be expected given the power of the position being criticized), Erasmus is careful in his choice of words in discussing princes; and, while there is some jesting, it is much less cutting than Folly's treatment of monks. The bite of Folly's satire only comes back when courtiers, a safer and easier target, come under her gaze: "Though generally they're the most meeching, slavish, stupid, abject creatures conceivable, they [courtiers] favor themselves the most distinguished of men" (*PoF* 68). Folly complains that courtiers are concerned with impressions and flattery more than anything else. Erasmus seems to view courtiers as one of the least valuable positions in society, but he does not waste much time discussing their follies. Instead, Erasmus sets Folly loose on other religious figures, such as priests, Bishops, Cardinals, and even the Pope.

The bite of Folly's satire is arguably at its sharpest during this section of the text, which is also one of the most controversial and potentially offensive passages. Her discussion of these religious figures paints a more-critical-than-humorous picture of the vanity, greed, corruption, and arrogance that Erasmus viewed within the Catholic Church. Erasmus believed that the

²¹ Erasmus himself dedicated years of his life to learning Greek.

Church officials were so concerned with obtaining personal wealth and luxury that they neglected their duty to spread the word of God. Folly observes that lower priests are so concerned with upholding an image similar to their superiors that they will do or say anything to get more tithes from the congregation, and “The more sharp-witted among them rummage through ancient documents for precedents to terrify the poor people and extort from them even more tithes” (*PoF* 72). Instead of using their knowledge to do God’s will, Erasmus points out that the priests who are somewhat intelligent only use their “gifts” for personal gain. Folly jokingly summarizes, “In the same way those popes who are busiest getting in the money harvest delegate their properly apostolic labors to the bishops, the bishops to the priests, the priests to their vicars, the vicars to the mendicant friars, who finally pass the job along to those who will be shearing the sheep” (*PoF* 73). The way that it is depicted in Folly’s examination, the Catholic Church as a whole more resembles a capitalist organization than a religious institution. Folly makes the joke that Bishops have forgotten the meaning of their title, which is “overseer,” implying concern and service for the public, but they do not generally care about the people until “it comes to raking in the revenues,” at which time “they’re sharp-sighted enough” (*PF* 69). Folly’s joke reiterates the extent to which greed had corrupted even the most respected of Church positions. Erasmus is direct—or, at least, as direct as he can be while using Folly as a narrator—in his criticisms, but he is still careful not to name any individuals by name or say anything that might raise too much controversy.

Overall, Erasmus’ use of Folly as his narrator in *The Praise of Folly* to create a sense of irony in the “voicing” of her “oration” allows him to develop a highly rhetorical and effective form of satirical argumentation. Using his wit and the tools provided by his humanist education, Erasmus effectively conveys his notion of the ideal Christian life. Folly’s humorous yet sharp criticisms of the various follies and abuses in medieval society express Erasmus’ ever-present discontent and desire for reform. *The Praise of Folly* is certainly one of the most significant literary works of the early Renaissance in terms of the proliferation of humanist thinking.

However, an examination of the satirical development in *The Praise of Folly* alone is not enough to form an adequate understanding of the humanists' rhetorical satire, which ultimately made their works as popular as they were and helped secure their position of significance in academia to this day. In order to develop such an understanding of humanist satire, therefore, I must now turn to an examination of Sir Thomas More's somewhat different, but considerably related, satirical development in *Utopia*.

CHAPTER 3

MORE'S SUBTLE SATIRE IN *UTOPIA*

Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, which he began while serving as an envoy in Flanders in 1515, is comparable to Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly* in terms of proliferating humanist thinking. Like *The Praise of Folly*, *Utopia* was originally written and published in Latin, limiting its audience to a small intellectual population. While Erasmus was bound to the Catholic Church by his profession, making him susceptible to much criticism and potential danger by espousing his beliefs,²² Sir Thomas More was bound in many ways to England and King Henry VIII, who presented him with an equal—if not greater—difficulty in expressing his controversial views. For this reason and others, More was initially hesitant to publish *Utopia*. It was not until he received encouragement from his good friend Erasmus and a handful of other humanists that More decided to print the book in Leuven, late in 1516, after his return to England. More mentions his hesitation in publishing *Utopia* in his first letter to Peter Giles (which I will discuss in greater detail later), sounding much like Erasmus in the preface to *The Praise of Folly*: "I'm still of two minds as to whether I should publish the text or not" (*Utopia* 111). He explains, "For men's tastes are so various, the tempers of some are so severe, their minds so ungrateful, their tempers so cross, that there seems no point in publishing something, even if it's intended for their advantage, that they will receive only with contempt and ingratitude" (*U* 111). The book was not published again until November of 1518, when More printed a revised edition of the text in Basle. For many religious and political reasons, *Utopia* was not printed in England until 1551, many years after More's execution, when Ralph Robinson offered an English translation.

More's writing, like that of Erasmus, was heavily influenced by his personal background and humanist education; and, similar to his friend, his satire was shaped by the rhetorical

²² Erasmus was charged, multiple times, with various charges, including heresy.

knowledge found in the texts of classical authors, including Plato, Aristotle, Lucian, Seneca, Cicero, and Quintilian. Also like *The Praise of Folly*, *Utopia* expressed many of its author's controversial views by means of complex and highly-rhetorical satire. However, the satire in *Utopia* is slightly more complex—and often more subtle—than that of *The Praise of Folly*. Satire in the former relies both upon elements of characterization and voice as well as its overall structure, while satire in the latter is developed primarily by means of Erasmus' characterization and narratorial voice alone. Erasmus' text contains (not counting Erasmus' self-inclusion) only one central character, its allegorical female, Folly. She, as I discussed in the previous chapter, provides a single long-winded "oration" on the follies of humanity, which serves as the body of the text. *Utopia*, on the other hand, is divided into two books and contains an equal level of complication in terms of narration. Book 1 records an account of a conversation that More—or a fictional representation of More—supposedly had with his friend, Peter Giles, and a new acquaintance, Raphael Hythloday.²³ Book 2 provides More's secondhand report of Hythloday's description of the island society of Utopia, which he claims to recount from memory.

Although it was written after Book 2, I believe it is best to first examine the development of the satire in Book 1, because More's textual sequencing is, in itself, a significant part of the *Utopia's* satirical effectiveness. Like *The Praise of Folly*, though arguably more so, Book 1 shows much influence from both Plato's philosophical dialogues and Lucian's satires (in content and in form). The voice of criticism in *Utopia* comes from a fictional character, Raphael Hythloday, which is similar to Erasmus' use of Folly. Using a fictional speaker with specific characteristics to create a textualized oral discourse allows More to distance himself from the criticisms in the text and develop a sense of satirical irony. As Robert Adams notes, "The first root of 'Hythloday' is surely Greek *huthlos*, meaning 'nonsense'; the second part of the name may suggest *daien*, to distribute, i.e., a nonsense peddler" (*Utopia* 5). Hythloday's name, like Folly, suggests to the audience that what he says should not automatically be taken at face

²³ The ambiguity of characters' authenticity is an important part of More's satire that he was both aware of and promoted.

value.²⁴ Adding another level of complexity to his character is his first name, Raphael, which would have conjured attributes of the sociable archangel in the minds of More's audience. This association promotes a virtuous reading of Hythloday's satirical criticisms. While Adams is hesitant to make any declarative statement about More's intentions, I believe that Adams makes a notable observation when he writes, "A fantastic trilingual pun could make the whole name mean "God heals [Heb., *Raphael*] through the nonsense [Gr., *huthlos*] of God [Lat., *dei*]" (U 5).²⁵ A fictional character describing a fictional place that could be considered nonsense by some, Hythloday voices More's humanist ideas of social and religious reform, and is in that respect the means by which More seeks to heal Christendom of its follies.

More could not rely entirely on characteristics associated with Hythloday's name, given that there is no historical figure, mythical or factual, named Hythloday. Furthermore, the meaning of Hythloday's name would have been observed only by the Greek-literate portion of More's Latin-literate audience. Though many of the humanists were fond of Greek authors and their works, many of them relied solely on Latin and vernacular translations of the classical Greek texts. Even fewer of the intended non-humanist members of More's audience would have picked up on the nominal significance. However, the limited recognition of the Greek roots of Hythloday meant that More had more room to shape the character of *Utopia*'s "secondary narrator" at will.²⁶ More was able to emphasize the aspects of Hythloday's background and personality that he wanted his audience to have in mind while reading the text. As we learn from More's fictional version of Peter Giles before introducing the fictional More to him, "He [Hythloday] studied Greek more than Latin because his main interest is philosophy, and in that field he found that the Romans have left us nothing very valuable except certain works of

²⁴ However, as I will soon discuss, the references of Hythloday's name would not be picked up by all of More's audience.

²⁵ More was highly fond of puns, which, given his sense of humor, fits into his personality. The ambiguity of *moria* in the title of Erasmus' text hints at his friend's fondness.

²⁶ I refer to Hythloday here as the "secondary narrator" of the text on the grounds that More is providing a recollection of Hythloday's comments; however, I might later simply refer to Hythloday as just the narrator of the story.

Seneca and Cicero" (U 5). More's characterization of Hythloday in this passage and others, which is defined by Hythloday's "own" ²⁷ preferences and perspective, points to the humanist background of his character. Hythloday's statements often directly allude to the classical influences that aided in the development of *Utopia*. The characteristics evoked by Hythloday's name, in addition to those traits ascribed to him by More, create part of the "indirection" that "stands between the reader and the stark criticism" that Sister Thompson refers to in *Under Pretext of Praise* (5).

Another significant part of the indirection comes from More's self-inclusion in the text. While Erasmus kept himself out of the main text of *The Praise of Folly*, clearly establishing his own voice only in the dedicatory preface, More strategically makes himself one of the central interlocutors in the conversations that comprise Book 1. The fictional More²⁸ is often the character that raises objections to what Hythloday says. It is often the case that Hythloday seems to represent the real More's opinion more than the fictional More does. The ambiguity of authorial and narratorial voice adds to the irony of the dialogue.

Furthermore, Folly's statements, despite Erasmus' efforts, likely would have been associated with Erasmus' own by his audience on the grounds that she is a fictitious character.²⁹ The same cannot be said for Hythloday's statements with More. The latter describes the former as if he were a real person. Moreover, More does not clearly establish that *Utopia* is fictional and should be read as such, whereas Erasmus is clear on the fictitious nature of his text. In fact, More plays on this ambiguity to aid in the development of his satire. While the story is told as if it were true, More provides many textual clues that it *is* fictional and should be read as such. And yet, none of the textual evidence explicitly denies any part of the account

²⁷ I use parentheses around "own" here to signify that, while it appears that Hythloday is the one with the preferences, he is still a fictional character that was developed by the real Sir Thomas More; therefore, his preferences are only the ones that More wanted to exhibit, making them essentially More's own preferences.

²⁸ From this point on, I will refer to the character in *Utopia* as "fictional More" and the author as just "More."

²⁹ The initial reaction of Martin Dorp to *The Praise of Folly* is only one of many that demonstrate that perhaps Erasmus' characterization of Folly was not enough to protect him from critics.

being real. Rather, More strategically develops a sense of credulity for the content of his book, essentially heightening the rhetorical effectiveness of his satire by emphasizing the irony of his—or, better, his character's—statements.

The ambiguity of the text's factuality was intentionally augmented by More, Erasmus, Peter Giles, and other humanists in a series of epistolary exchanges that started before *Utopia* was published. Adams states that More's "chief concern" in initiating the "bewildering epistolary roundabout" was "to prevent the book from being taken too seriously by either naïve or pedantic readers," which was, as the book's reception would prove, a practical concern (*U* 108). From a different perspective, however, throughout all of the letters that were written and published with various versions of the text, More never consents that the events in the story were fictitious. Adams observes, "The verisimilitude of *Utopia* did impose on some readers...They assumed that Utopia was a real place, and that Raphael Hythloday had visited it," which is what More intended (*U* 108). First of all, maintaining the possibility that the island society of the Utopians could be real, even if it was dubious for some (or most) of the book's audience, supports the particular reading of the text that More had in mind. More knew that if Utopia was perceived as a real place, the similarities drawn between Utopia and England could be argued as entirely the result of the audience's perceptions, and any offense taken to perceived criticisms would be the result of an individual's guilty conscience. However, critics would have much more ammunition to form a counterattack against More if they knew for certain that Utopia was just a place that he made up to prove his point.

One of More's most blatant attempts to offer credulity to his text can be found in a series of letters written within the humanist circle around the time of *Utopia's* publication. The humanists' letters, in addition of expressing some interesting (and humorous) insight into More's argumentative approach, reveal the seriousness of the matters being discussed in *Utopia* and show his attempt to position himself in the overall context of the narrative. In the opening sentences of his first letter to Peter Giles, More writes, "As you were well aware, I faced no

problem in finding my materials, and had no reason to labor over the arrangement of them. All I had to do was repeat what you and I together heard Raphael describe" (*U* 109). More hands the responsibility for *Utopia* over to Hythloday, just as Erasmus hands responsibility of *The Praise of Folly* over to More in the preface to his text. More assures Giles, and the larger audience that he knew would read the exchange, "Truth is the only quality at which I should have aimed, or did aim, in writing this book" (*U* 109). As Adams explains, Giles received the first letter from More and an additional letter from Erasmus telling him to pass along a copy of the manuscript to Jerome Busleiden. Giles, knowing that he had not been part of such a conversation and picking up on More's intentions, wrote a letter to Busleiden in which he "elaborated the hoax by inventing circumstances to explain the vagueness of Utopian geography, fabricating a special Utopian alphabet, and actually composing some limping verses in 'Utopian'" (*U* 113). Giles, if only as a joke, reaffirmed the possibility that Hythloday and Utopia could be real. Giles' letter was published in some of the first editions of the text, encouraging the ambiguous—and, effectively, ironical—reading that More intended for *Utopia*.

The epistolary roundabout presents a hilarious scene to the informed modern reader, who is both well aware of text's fictional content and has the benefit of looking at the whole perspective as an outside observer, but the main significance of the exchange comes from its relative effectiveness in providing a protective barrier behind which More can set forth his controversial arguments. Book 1, aside from the humor that it features, contains some of More's most direct critical comments about the state of society in England and Europe as a whole. Most of the potentially offensive comments, as I previously mentioned, are voiced by Hythloday. More can safely allow Hythloday to "say what he wants"³⁰ by maintaining that the story's narrator is a real person with his own beliefs and perceptions. Much in the way Folly catalogues various groups in her circle of followers and points out the follies of each, Book 1 contains

³⁰ I use parentheses here to signify, once again, that, while there is an illusion of autonomous thinking, it is really More's desire rather than Hythloday's.

Hythloday's observations of the follies—and wisdoms—that he has encountered throughout his wide travels and diverse experiences.

Some of the first groups that Hythloday scrutinizes are princes and courtiers. More is critical of his own position in the court of Henry VIII, which, as Erasmus mentions in his letter to Ulrich Von Hutten, More accepted with much hesitancy. He reaffirms the virtue of his satire by writing himself into the line of fire, much as Erasmus did with his self-criticism in *The Praise of Folly*. After much prying from the fictional More and Giles as to why he has not “entered some king's service,” Hythloday explains his reasons for not aspiring to be a courtier, which strongly resemble Folly's observations:

In the first place, most princes apply themselves to the arts of war, in which I have neither ability nor interest, instead of to the good arts of peace. They are generally more set on acquiring new kingdoms by hook or by crook than on governing well those that they already have. Moreover, the counselors of kings are all so wise already that they need no other knowledge (or at least that's the way they see it). At the same time, they approve and even flatter the most absurd statements of favorites through whose influence they seek to stand well with the prince. (U8)

Hythloday associates princes and courtiers with greed and vanity. He explains how these follies of the social “elite” produce damaging consequences for the rest of society. Furthermore, Hythloday claims that the princes and courtiers often neglect any real wisdom that is brought forth. Redirecting his subtle criticisms, More, via Hythloday, directly suggests a relation to England, stating, “Such proud, obstinate, ridiculous judgments I have encountered many times, and once even in England” (U9). As he will continue to do throughout the text, More suggests that the follies being discussed are those of his own people (here nationally and later religiously). To add support to Hythloday's observations, More includes another representation of a factual figure into his text, “the reverend prelate John Cardinal Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and in addition at that time Lord Chancellor of England,” which Adams notes was a distinguished prelate that More personally served as a page for from 1490 to 1492 (U9). He also mentions some of the actual events that happened in England around that time, for

example, the Cornwall Revolt of 1497.³¹ The factual people and events that More includes in his text further promote a literal reading of *Utopia*.

More's personal experiences are significant to the satire in *Utopia* in other ways as well. Whereas Erasmus provides us with only a brief paragraph dedicated to the follies of lawyers, given More's background in the profession it should come as no surprise that he spends considerably more time discussing the follies and inadequacies of the European (particularly English) legal system. One such folly—which leads to much injustice and behavior unbecoming of a good Christian, as Hythloday would have it—is that thieves receive the death penalty. More provides us with an account of Hythloday's recollection of a conversation that he had with the Cardinal on the topic. As I will briefly discuss (though there is certainly more to be said on the subject), the dialogue in the beginning of the scene strongly resembles one of Plato's philosophical dialogues, while the later portion of the dialogue takes on more elements of Lucian's satirical mode of writing.

Although Hythloday makes some lighthearted remarks, the early exchange between Hythloday and the Cardinal is comparatively serious and didactic in feel. More uses Hythloday's discussion of the death penalty with the Cardinal as an example of how far European—particularly English—laws have strayed from those of God and how this is the source of much suffering and despair: "Simple theft is not so great of a crime that it ought to cost a man his head, yet no punishment however severe can withhold a man from robbery when he has no other way to eat" (*U* 10). He explains that to sentence starving people to the death penalty for theft does not deter anyone from committing the crime, given that without food the people would die anyway. He later points out that having the same sentence for theft and murder only makes the probability of worse crimes greater because there is nothing to deter the thief from killing any witness to protect himself. Furthermore, Hythloday, explains that such crimes go against the will of God, given that "God has said, 'Thou shalt not kill'" (*U* 15). Revealing part of More's

³¹ Adams explains that the men of Cornwall attempted a revolt in protest of Henry VII's high taxation but "were defeated at Blackheath and savagely slaughtered" (*U* 9).

humanist perspective and his ideas about social reform, Hythloday explains how making changes to the social, economic, and political structure would better serve to eliminate crime than the overly-harsh penalties that are in place. He suggests that providing food for the people would not only put an end to much theft, but also improve the overall state of society. As the text plays out, the rest of More's satirical portrayal of the ideal Christian England comes into view, and his controversial notions of a "socialist utopia," as it has often been described, become clearer.

In the twice-recalled conversation between Hythloday and the Cardinal, More reveals to his audience other pieces of his perspective on the socioeconomic inequalities and unjust social stratification that plagued England and the rest of Europe, including problem as broad as widespread greed and as specific as the enclosure of land. Speaking to the Cardinal about landholders and "even some abbots though otherwise holy men," Hythloday boldly states, "Living in idleness and luxury, without doing any good for society, no longer satisfies them; they have to do positive evil. For they leave no land free for the plow: they enclose every acre for pasture" (*U* 12). He continues, "They destroy houses and abolish towns, keeping only the churches, and those for sheep-barns" (*U* 12). Hythloday sees the enclosure of land as the source of much of the socioeconomic disparity that existed in England at the time. Land enclosure provided benefits for only a small portion of the population, while the rest were left either to do the hard labor—or, worse, without employment whatsoever. Hythloday states, "To make [the] hideous poverty worse, it exists side by side with wanton luxury. Not only the servants of noblemen, but tradespeople, farmers, and people of every social rank, are given to ostentatious dress and gluttonous greed" (*U* 13). The excessive and sinful behavior attributed to the small portion of the population that can afford to live such lives seems much worse when viewed in relation to the overall state of society.

In keeping with the medieval satirical tradition, More, via Hythloday, is critical of people from different walks of life, including princes and courtiers as well as abbots, monks, and other

religious figures. Hythloday's criticisms are directed at general folly and misbehavior rather than individuals. More, like Erasmus, is careful to pose his satirical arguments in a manner that is evident and clear but does fall into invective. Hythloday's critical, but refined, satirical remarks are the primary medium for More's potentially offensive arguments. But Hythloday's is not the only voice in the development of satire in Book 1; other characters, such as the Cardinal, the friar, and More himself, also play a large role. For instance, throughout the entirety of Hythloday's discussion with the Cardinal, More often portrays the latter in agreement with—or, at least, not in objection to—the former. As Hythloday mentions, "He was a man, my dear Peter (for More knows about him), as much respected for his wisdom and virtue as for his authority... At the time when I was in England, the king depended greatly upon his advice, and he seemed the chief support of the nation as a whole" (U 9). The Cardinal is characterized as an intelligent and virtuous Christian. More adds a degree of validity to Hythloday's perspective and heightens the rhetorical effectiveness of his satire by portraying the Cardinal as a person of reputable character, who is in agreement with Hythloday (rather than opposing him). The only character who supports Folly's statement in *The Praise of Folly*, with the exception of Erasmus in the preface, is Folly. More was able to learn a lot from the reception of his friend's satirical text, and, as I will discuss more in my examination of Book 2, voicing and characterization were not the only elements of his satire that benefitted from this knowledge. For now, however, I will focus discussion on More's use of characterization and voice in Book 1 to develop his rhetorical satire.

Lucian's influence on More's satire, as I mentioned earlier, becomes more evident as the conversation between Hythloday and the Cardinal progresses. His satirical comments become sharper and more directed, and a sense of ironical sarcasm is pushed to the forefront. Paying homage to Erasmus—more so than in using Hythloday as a narrator—More brings one of Folly's own into the text when Hythloday introduces "the fool" into his story, explaining how he had been listening to the conversation and interjected with his own keen observations. After

someone jokingly asks about how to take care of “the poor whom sickness or old age has kept from earning a living,” the fool steps forward and wittily responds, “I would make a law sending all these beggars to Benedictine monasteries, where the men could become lay brothers, as they are called, and the women could be nun” (*U* 18). The friar responds with a joking comment about not being able to get rid of beggars “unless you take care of us friars, too”; however, expressing More’s discontent with the group, the fool retorts, “You have been taken care of already...The Cardinal provided for you splendidly when he said vagabonds should be arrested and put to work, for you friars are the greatest vagabonds of all” (*U* 18). While expressed in a very joking way (being expressed as jokes), the fool’s comments contain More’s own serious perspective. In this light, the comments of More’s fool operate in much the same fashion as Folly’s remarks were discussed in Chapter 2.³² At the same time, however, the lack of admonition from the Cardinal to the fool for his witty remarks lends additional support to the underlying criticisms.

The satirical irony in *Utopia* is largely developed through the complex voicing. The fictional More, upon the conclusion of Hythloday’s recollection of his conversation with the Cardinal, demonstrates the opinion of his real counterpart: “You have given me great pleasure, my dear Raphael, for everything you’ve said has been both wise and witty” (*U* 20). However, More is cautious not to let his perspective be associated with Hythloday’s comments. He maintains, “Still, I don’t give up my former opinion: I think if you would overcome your aversion to court life, your advice to a prince would be of the greatest advantage to mankind” (*U* 20). While he maintains his position of difference, the real More aligns himself with Hythloday’s virtuous intent and desire to better society. Once again echoing Folly, the fictional More states, “Your friend Plato thinks that commonwealths will become happy only when philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers” (*U* 20). The real More shared affinity for Platonic philosophy with Erasmus. As in *The Praise of Folly*, Plato’s philosophical ideas serve as part of

³² Hythloday’s description of the Utopians’ view of fools in Book 2 further supports the notion of a beneficial fool.

the backbone for More's vision of the ideal Christian society in *Utopia*, even as he directs the conversation back towards his ideas about proper Christian living.

More does not stop his criticisms of various follies after first mention. Throughout the remainder of Book 1, Hythloday continues to provide the reasons why his philosophical and logical perspective would fit in well with court life. He provides a figurative story about being a courtier in a French court, and, in mentioning the various complications that he envisions, further elucidates the follies of court life. To add points of reference to his discussion, Hythloday mentions various fictional civilizations that he describes as having different—essentially, “utopian”—values and socioeconomic/political structures, such as the Achorians and Macaridians, whose seemingly odd customs are described in a commendable manner (*U* 21,25). These societies seem to function exceptionally well, despite being free of the “necessary” encumbrances of courts and other characteristically European features. However, the fictional More, commenting on the real More's personal dilemma between idealistic and functional philosophizing, still tries to defend courtiers, stating, “You must strive to influence policy indirectly, handle the situation tactfully, and thus what you cannot turn to good, you may at least...make less bad” (*U* 26). Furthermore, portending the underlying irony of Book 2, More observes, “For it is impossible to make all institutions good unless you make all men good, and that I don't expect to see for a long time to come” (*U* 26). As we will see in Book 2, Hythloday makes Utopian society appear to be an exception to More's observation. Utopia, as its name suggests, is a land where European follies seem not to exist. While the Utopians still seem capable of sin and folly their laws and customs prevent these behaviors from hindering their society's overall prosperity.

The satire in Book 2, though equally effective, is much more subtle than in Book 1, and is developed in a substantially differently way. In terms of Hythloday's rhetorical oration, Book 2 “constitutes the ‘proof’ or confirmation of his proposition or thesis,” as McCutcheon points out in “More's Rhetoric” (*The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More* 57). Book 1 takes the form of a

conversation, which, as I have previously discussed, allows for the textualization of oral discourse, but Book 2 (with the exception of a few paragraphs at the very end, in which More reflects upon what Hythloday has said) contains only Hythloday's description of Utopia. The satire in Book 2 is developed only through the readers' relation of the fictional society to their own. Therefore, More provides a very detailed description of Utopian society. Book 2 is divided into fourteen topically-named sections: "Geography of Utopia"; "Their Cities, Especially Amaurot"; "Their Work-Habits"; "Social and Business Relations"; "Travel and Trade in Utopia"; "Their Gold and Silver"; "Their Moral Philosophy"; "Their Delight in Learning"; "Slaves"; "Marriage Customs"; "Punishment, Legal Procedures, and Customs"; "Foreign Relations"; "Warfare"; and, the longest of the sections, "Religions." More provides a well-rounded portrayal of Utopian society, as can be gathered from the names of the sections alone, but he focuses on areas that are common in reformative thinking. This broad, but selective, portrait of Utopian society predominately features indirect criticism, which comes about through the Utopian's negation of European follies. And, while Book 1 shows a strong influence from the philosophical and satirical dialogues of Plato and Lucian, Book 2 draws more upon Plato's *Republic*, though elements of Lucian's satire are still present. Utopia is, in many ways, More's reinvention of Plato's ideal republican state. The subtle satire in this half of the book comes from a sense of irony that is developed by the similarities—and, of equal or greater significance, differences—between the Utopian and English (as well as the greater Christian) societies.

More develops the satire in Book 2 by making Utopia seem like a real place, similar to the way that he portrays Hythloday as a real person. In "Geography of Utopia" and "Their Cities, Especially Amaurot," Hythloday provides a detailed and realistic description of the Island, which, if a reader was uncertain as to whether or not the story was fictional, might persuade him or her towards believing that it was a real account. He describes the particular aspects of the island's geography that allowed the Utopians to develop a successful and flourishing society, giving a rational explanation for the relative uniqueness of their prosperity: "The island of the Utopians is

two hundred miles across...crescent-shaped...[and] the whole inner coast is one great harbor” (*U* 31). He adds, “The coast is rugged by nature, and so well fortified that a few defenders could beat off the attack of a strong force” (*U* 31). Aside from explaining how the Utopians were able to create such a unique and successful society, More’s description of Utopia aids the development of the large-scale irony that produces most of the satire in Book 2. As Adams notes, “The island is about the size of England” (*U* 31), and many of the island’s other features, such as the protected bay and the numerous harbors, are very similar to the topography of England. The similarities between Hythloday’s description of Utopia and England would undoubtedly have been noticed by More’s original audience. Additionally, Amaurot, “the most worthy of all” the Utopian cities (as Hythloday would have it), which can be considered their capital, is described very similar to sixteenth-century London.

Part of what makes the subtle satire in Book 2 so rhetorically effective is that More provides a clear example of what at least one alternative to the corrupt and misled society of sixteenth century England might look like. In “Their Work-Habits” and the next few sections that follow, only after More has established the intended representational relationship between the island society and his own, he begins to paint the satirical picture of what he believes English society could aspire to if its follies were remedied. In these sections, More goes about cataloguing and critiquing various societal follies, which is similar to the satirical process that we have discussed already. However, as I briefly mentioned above, More’s argument is developed by means of negation rather than explicit statement. The sense of irony in this section as well as the rest of Book 2 comes indirectly for the audience’s own observations. Hythloday begins by stating that “agriculture is the one occupation at which everyone works, men and women alike, with no exceptions” (*U* 36). Unlike English (and the greater European) society, in which part of the population was expected to perform the laborious agricultural duties for the benefit of everyone, Utopians share the responsibility of the necessary task of producing food equally everyone. We are also informed that, “Besides farm work (which, as I said, everybody

performs), each person is taught a particular trade of his own," which means that all of the necessary goods and services are provided for everyone (*U* 36). As we begin to see, More's vision of the ideal Christian society is a utilitarian one, in which laborious duties are thankfully attended to rather than avoided. Everyone's needs are provided for because everyone contributes.

The Utopians' way of life produces their prosperity, instead of being a product of it. Their manner of living, which is enforced by their laws and customs, eliminates the sins, vices, and other follies that detract from the overall good of their society. Hythloday explains, "Why would anyone be suspected of asking for more than is needed, when everyone knows there will never be any shortage? Fear of want, no doubt, makes every living creature greedy and avaricious—and, in addition, man develops these qualities out of pride" (*U* 42). Instead of relying on the harsh and unnecessary laws that were discussed in Book 1 (such as the death penalty for theft), the Utopians preemptively ameliorate criminal behavior by means of their general way of life, which is aided by their laws and other governing procedures.

More's satirical picture goes so far as to comment on topics that a modern audience might view as insignificant in comparison to religious views and legal systems, such as clothing. Hythloday explains, "Throughout the island people wear...the same style of clothing, except for the distinction between the sexes, and between married and unmarried persons" (*U* 36). As Erasmus explains in his letter to Ulrich von Hutten, "He [More] likes to be dressed simply, and does not wear silk, or purple, or gold chains, except when it is not allowable to dispense with them" (*U* 127). The Utopians share More's practical approach to dress. Instead of caring about the superficial aspects of attire, which Folly criticizes religious figures for doing in *The Praise of Folly* (and, as I will discuss later, More does as well), Hythloday tells us that "their clothing is attractive, does not hamper bodily movement, and serves for warm as well as cold weather; what is more, each household can make its own" (*U* 37). Greed does not influence the Utopians' decisions in clothing either; as Hythloday mentions, "There is no reason at all why he

should want any others, for if he had them, he would not be better protected against the cold nor would he appear in any way better dressed" (*U* 40). Without ever directly mentioning European customs, More is able to develop his satirical picture in a completely inoffensive way. As well as presenting his argument in an effective manner, the subtle irony makes for humorous and engaging reading of the text. Utopian society, despite its admittedly few flaws, is depicted in a very becoming manner. While it should not be taken out of context, More even writes, "For they are much inclined to think that no kind of pleasure is forbidden, provided harm does not come of it" (*U* 44). More wanted his Utopia to be as desirable to his audience as possible, thus allowing for his underlying arguments to be communicated most effectively. Furthermore, establishing a favorable disposition towards the Utopian society early makes More's transition into some potentially objectionable topics smoother and softens the bite of his criticisms.

The favorable disposition to Utopian society that More attempts to establish early on in the text is significant because, beginning in "Their Gold and Silver," More's satire becomes slightly sharper in its criticism and begins to reveal more of his Christian- and humanist-based beliefs. Hythloday prefaces his discussion by stating, "It is a general rule that the more different anything is from what people are used to, the harder it is to accept" (*U* 46). He continues, "But, considering that all their other customs are so unlike ours, a sensible man will not be surprised that they use gold and silver quite differently than we do" (*U* 46). More uses Hythloday's discussion of the Utopian's views on gold and silver to satirize the greed and ignorance behind European customs. Hythloday explains, "Human folly has made them [gold and silver] precious because they are rare" (*U* 46). The Utopians do not treasure gold, silver, or other precious metals, or gems. because they serve no real function, and because promoting a desire for these "precious" things would only foster sinful behavior. Relaying more of More's essential Christian beliefs, the Utopians adhere to the value that God placed on particular things (i.e. the utilitarian value of an object) rather than the useless values that mankind has falsely ascribed to them.

The subtleness of More's satire from the beginning of Book 2 begins to fade in the following sections, such as in "Their Moral Philosophy" and "Their Delight in Learning." Here, More continues to elucidate the satirical contrast between Utopian and European societies in an indirect manner, but the underlying targets of his criticisms become more evident. Hythloday enumerates, "They are amazed at the foolishness of any many who considers himself a nobler fellow because he wears clothing of specially fine wool" (*U* 49). More maintains, though indirectly, a focus on European customs and society. Hythloday states, "They do not understand why a dunderhead with no more brains than a post, and who is about as depraved as he is foolish, should command a great many wise and good people, simply because he happens to have a pile of gold" (*U* 49). He does not yet go as far as to criticize the follies of any specific group, but More's language become more passionate and his satire more heated. Significantly contradicting the fictional More's sentiments at the end of Book 1, Hythloday states, "These and the like attitude the Utopians have picked up partly from their upbringing, since the institutions of their society are completely opposed to such folly, and partly from instruction and reading their good books" (*U* 49). However, Book 2 does not go completely without scrutinizing particular groups, and Hythloday soon brings into the satirical picture one of the humanists' intellectual adversaries, the scholastics. Allowing Lucian's fire to enter once again into the text, More writes, "But while they equal the ancients in almost all other subjects, they are far from matching the inventions of our modern logicians," listing after that a number of what the real More believed to be ridiculous logical abstractions in a tone that seems to be one of admiration (*U* 49). Hythloday appears to praise the logicians, but the compliment is clearly insincere.

The section about the Utopian's moral philosophy is most significant in terms of laying out More's ideal form of Christianity. Although they are not described as Christians, their moral philosophy is described in very Christian terms:

Their religious principles are of this nature: that the soul of man is immortal, and by God's goodness it is born for happiness; that after this life, rewards are appointed for our virtues and good deeds, punishments for our sins. Though these are indeed religious beliefs, they think that reason leads men to believe

and accept them...Without religious principles, a man would have to be actually crazy to pursue harsh and painful virtue...For if there is no reward after death, a man has no hope of compensation for having passed his entire existence without pleasure, that is, miserably. (*U 50*)³³

Their moral philosophy, despite its lack of Jesus as a central figure, is essentially an explanation of More's Christian beliefs. Going back to my earlier mention of the Utopians' embrace of pleasure, their moral philosophy—and More's ideal Christianity—is strongly tied to pleasure and happiness. However, their idea of happiness is more specific than the general notion of the term. As Hythloday mentions, "The Utopians believe that happiness is found, not in every kind of pleasure, but only in good and honest pleasure. Virtue itself, they say, draws our nature to this kind of pleasure, as to the supreme good" (*U 50-51*). He adds, "They define virtue as living according to nature; and God, they say, created us to that end" (*U 51*). As he expressed in some of his other texts and epistolary writings, More believed that true Christian happiness could only be obtained by doing God's will. In a voice close to that of More's own, Hythloday explains that "the first rule of reason is to love and venerate the Divine Majesty to whom men owe their existence...The second...is to lead a life as free of anxiety and as full of joy as possible, and to help one's fellow man toward that end" (*U 51*). Along these lines, the Utopians differentiate between true and false pleasures: true pleasures relate to the veneration of "the Divine Majesty"³⁴ and come from helping others live similar happy lives, while false pleasures are those that provide only temporary gratification and often satisfy selfish desires.

Not all of the satire in Book 2 is indirect. Hythloday lists the people that the Utopians view as "devotees of this false pleasure" in a manner similar to the way that Folly catalogues her followers in her mock-encomium (*U 52*). Hythloday includes those "who think themselves finer fellows because they wear finer clothes," those who "plume themselves on their nobility,"

³³ In this section of the text, Hythloday's narration shares elements Seneca's satire, which one might expect more to find in Book 1. Adams points out a particular reference to Seneca's *Moral Epistles* 16 (*U 54*).

³⁴ While More's language seems very similar to Christianity, specifically "Divine Majesty"; however, as Hythloday mentions in the section about their religion, the Utopia God is not necessarily the same as the Christian God, despite their similarities.

people who are “mad for jewelry or gems,” “pile up money,” or enjoy “gambling,” and other groups that Folly would be proud to call her own (*U* 52-54). More, to prevent seeming like he is only cataloguing follies, also provides a list of the true pleasures that the Utopians seek out. The greatest of these pleasures—and the one they seek the most—are “those of the mind...because most of them arise from the practice of the virtues and the consciousness of a good life” (*U* 55). While the section on the Utopians’ moral philosophy provides an overview of their religious beliefs (and an indirect criticism of the misdirection in lives of the English Christian populace), More reserves his criticisms of particular religious positions and general follies within the Church for his section on the Utopians’ religion(s), which as I mentioned earlier is the longest section in Book 2. However, prior to an in-depth examination of his satire in the section on religion, I would like to discuss some interesting satirical developments in the other sections leading up to it, particularly in “Slaves,” “Marriage Customs,” and “Punishments, Legal Procedures, and Customs.”

More’s description of Utopian society might have seemed somewhat farfetched to his audience, but he adds a sense of realism to his depiction of the fictional society by not trying to portray all Utopians as completely virtuous, though they are depicted as being free of most of the follies and other ailments that English citizens suffered from. Some Utopians commit crimes. More’s background in law becomes evident in his ideas about social reform, and it should come as no surprise that he devises a unique legal system for the Utopians. Slavery exists in Utopia, but it is a seemingly virtuous institution; however, “Most of their slaves are either their own former citizens, enslaved for some heinous offense, or else men of other nations who were condemned to death in their own land” (*U* 59). Furthermore, “They punish adulterers with the strictest form of slavery...But a second conviction of adultery is punished by death” (*U* 62).³⁵ While this seems like a rather severe punishment, in contrast to the punishment of death for

³⁵ The relevance of that More places on adultery and faithful marriages might seem odd; however, More was quite serious about preserving the institution of marriage, and, as the events that transpired with Henry VIII demonstrate, More adhered to his beliefs until his life was brought to an end.

theft, it should not be considered too extreme. Hythloday informs us that “no other crimes carry fixed penalties; the senate sets specific penalties for each particular misdeed, as it is considered atrocious or venial” (*U* 62). Unlike England, where the court proceedings were dictated—and, often, muddled—primarily by precedents, the Utopians’ legal system provides what More viewed as appropriate punishments for crimes. Moreover, like Erasmus does in *The Praise of Folly*, More brings himself under scrutiny, as Hythloday explains: “As for lawyers, a class of men whose trade is to manipulate cases and multiply quibbles, they have no use for them at all” (*U* 63) He adds, “They think it is better for each man to plead his own case” on the grounds that “This makes for less ambiguity, and readier access to the truth” (*U* 63). Serving a similar function as Erasmus’ self-satire, More reaffirms the virtue of his arguments by turning his critical gaze upon himself.

In the final section, “Religions,”³⁶ More implements a variety of techniques in the development of his satire, attacking a broad spectrum of religious figures and practices.³⁷ Hythloday begins by observing that “There are different forms of religion throughout the island, and in each particular city as well”; however, as he explains, most of the Utopians share a monotheistic view:

Most Utopians...and among these all the wisest...believe in a single power, unknown, eternal, infinite, inexplicable, far beyond the grasp of the human mind, and diffused throughout the universe, not physically, but in influence. Him they call father, and to him alone they attribute the origin, increase, progress, change, and end of all visible things; they do not offer divine honors to any others. (*U* 73)

While the most popular (and, in Hythloday’s opinion, wisest) religious view in Utopia is described in very similar terms as Christianity, More makes sure to clarify that the Utopians only encountered Christianity after Hythloday and his companions introduced it to them. Hythloday

³⁶ Though I will not spend much time More’s sections on the Utopians’ “Foreign Relations” and “Warfare,” they do provide a lot of insight into More’s diplomatic ideas. Furthermore, considering that the humanist movement emerged in the midst of warfare, these are important sections in terms of understanding More’s relative perspective on the subject (and are, by all means, worthy of further investigation).

³⁷ I will only be able to examine a small portion of his criticisms in this section, due to its sheer length; however, the satirical mode that I discuss is used throughout the rest of the section.

states, "Either through the mysterious inspiration of God, or because Christianity is very like the religion already prevailing among them, they were well disposed toward it from the start" (*U* 73). More's decision not to make the Utopians Christian is as argumentative as it is witty. By portraying the Utopians as, in many ways, more "Christianly" than the European people who claimed to be Christians, More emphasizes the irony of his satirical criticisms. If More would have allowed for Utopians to know about Christ and develop their society as Christians, he would have weakened the effectiveness of his argument. Virtuous behavior is expected of Christians, but when non-Christians are portrayed as acting more-virtuously than Christians, the significance of their conduct is emphasized.

Similar to many of the other significant areas of criticism in the *Utopia* and *The Praise of Folly*, the satire in this section is developed largely from the author's own background. However, More's desire for clerical and monastic reform came from his position as a reverent admirer and supporter of monasticism, whereas Erasmus' beliefs about religious reform, especially in terms of monastic and ecclesiastical corruption, were inspired by his personal experiences with priesthood and monastic life. More allegedly practiced religious asceticism³⁸ on his own, and, as Erasmus tell us in his letter to Ulrich von Hutten, "He applied his whole mind to religion, having some thought of taking orders, for which he prepared himself by watchings and fastings and prayers and such like exercises" (*U* 129-130). While Erasmus was forced into monastic life, More aspired to it. Erasmus continues, "And indeed there was no obstacle in his adopting this kind of life, except the fact, that he could not shake off his wish to marry," pointing out that, knowing his personal faults, More ultimately chose to live a virtuous life as a husband rather than potentially corrupting the position that he greatly respected (*U* 130). With this in mind, it should come as no surprise that More spends much time presenting his ideal version of monasticism. More's correction of monasticism comes in the form of those Utopians "who for religious motives reject learning, pursue no studies, and refuse all leisure, but devote their full

³⁸ Reports of More's ascetic religious practices include wearing a hair-shirt under his clothing and flogging himself with a whip.

time to good works" (*U* 76). This type of monasticism places society at the center of attention rather than the monks. More never actually uses the term "monk" in reference to the position, but it is clear that he is referring to monastic life by way he depicts their role in Utopian society. Hythloday provides a favorable picture of these religiously devout individuals: "While constantly engaged in heavy labor themselves, they secure leisure for others, and yet they claim no credit for it" (*U* 77). These devoutly pious men are actively involved in the happenings of society, but they do not take any vow to withdraw from the world to begin with. They live a life of service in a very functional and selfless fashion and, like most all people in Utopia, religious or not, make contributions to society.

The rest of More's satirical picture of, at least the possibility of, an ideal Christian world comes into view in this last section. More's subtle satire of clerical abuses in Book 2 is developed by portraying a society in which such problems are not present, if possible at all. Hythloday states that in Utopia "the priests are men of great holiness, and therefore are very few" (*U* 77). Instead of taking direct issue with overabundance of clergy (like Erasmus did with *Folly*), More, via Hythloday, simply portrays the value and esteem of the position in Utopia. Utopian priests are only distinguished from other people because they carry a candle. The candle is symbolic of their function within society, which is to offer guidance and consultation. The priests do not wear additional adornments or unnecessary articles of clothing except for when they go to church. Then, Hythloday states, only "to remind them of God's benefits toward them," the priests wear "a robe of many colors, wonderful for its workmanship and decoration, though not of any materials as costly as one would suppose" (*U* 80-81). Like the rest of the members of their society, religious figures in Utopia do not use their appearance as a way of displaying or obtaining money, given that such behavior is viewed as illogical; rather, the priests' clothing choice is a matter of functionality.

Furthermore, Hythloday reveals that the Utopia priests do not hold secular positions, preventing the possibility of them becoming too concerned with social and political affairs. The

Utopian priests' main responsibilities are to offer spiritual guidance and to counsel people in religious areas. After Hythloday concludes his description of the religious customs in Utopia, he brings the discussion back to European society: "And in fact I have no doubt that every man's perception of where his true interests lies, along with the authority of Christ our Savior, would long ago have brought the world to adopt Utopian laws," to which he adds, "if it were not for one single monster, the prime plague and begetter of all others—I mean Pride" (U 84). The focus of More's satire is once again established, and, having concluded the majority of his potentially offensive statements, More allows himself to reenter the text's narration. More takes the precaution in the last few paragraphs to separate himself from the comments in the rest of the book, stating, "When Raphael had finished his story, it seemed to me that not a few of the customs and laws he described as existing among the Utopians were quite absurd," though he adds, "Yet I confess there are many things in the Commonwealth of Utopia that I wish our own country would imitate" (U 84, 85). More distances himself from the source of the comments, but directly suggests that there is something to be gained from Hythloday's "nonsense."

Through his rhetorical satire, More, like Erasmus, successfully develops "very simply the pattern of a Christian life," though arguably more so because of the portrayal of Utopian society in Book 2. Hythloday provides the indirection that stands between More's controversial criticism and his audience and, similar to Erasmus' use of Folly, allows More to develop the irony that is necessary for the underlying message of the narration to be conveyed. The textualized oratorical setting of Book 1 permits More to directly establish the aim and general purpose of his rhetorical satire, and Book 2 more than adequately operates as the confirmation of his argument. Reading *Utopia* alongside *The Praise of Folly* elucidates the extent to which the satire in the former is indebted to the latter. There are indeed many aspects of More's satirical development in *Utopia* that I, regrettably, have not been able to include in this paper, as is also the case with my discussion of *The Praise of Folly*. However, I hope that the information that I have provided above is enough to see that humanist satire is a complex and effective

mode of argumentation that More and Erasmus were able to develop, due to the unique intellectual opportunities provided by the rediscovery of classical knowledge, in order to convey their controversial notions of a proper Christian society.

AFTERWORD

As I briefly noted in Chapter 1, *Utopia* is still currently read in a variety of settings, ranging from high school to graduate courses. It remains popular within utopian and novelistic studies, which the book helped originate, and it appears in discussions over humanist, late medieval/early Renaissance, and English literature. On the other hand, *The Praise of Folly's* contemporary readership has dwindled, despite its appearance on the syllabi of some upper-level college courses. *The Praise of Folly* is discussed in some rhetoric classes and various courses in medieval, Renaissance, or humanist literature, but the amount of contemporary scholarship on *Utopia* is still much greater. The difference in the amount of contemporary scholarship on the two similar texts is likely due to the fact that, while the criticism in both texts are focused on the follies of medieval European society, the structure of Book 2 and its colorful descriptions of the fictional island society offer an appeal to readers outside of the scholastic setting. Erasmus' satire effectively conveys his arguments and is a shining example of humanist thinking, but the timeliness of the text prevents it from appealing to a larger audience. *Utopia* is often read outside of its original context, and More's innovative structuring allows for such readings.

However, through the discussion of the humanists' texts that I have offered in this paper, I hope to have demonstrated that an examination of the development of rhetorical satire in *Utopia* and *The Praise of Folly* is quite beneficial to rhetorical studies. It could potentially expand the scope of what medieval or Renaissance literature can be classified as rhetorical. Furthermore, a closer examination of the rhetorical satire in these humanist texts develops a further understanding of how the humanists implemented their rhetorical knowledge and utilized the best means of persuasion that were available to them. Viewing how the humanists develop their satire within their texts and understanding the various influences that shaped the

development of that satire also help bridge some gaps in the overall history of rhetoric. I would go as far as to say that the humanists' satire can arguably be viewed as the culmination of their rhetorical knowledge.

This and similar investigative endeavors can prove beneficial to scholars in other areas as well, such as utopian and humanist studies. Scholars outside of the field of rhetoric who are still concerned with *Utopia* and *The Praise of Folly* often focus only on the particular issues and topics that the humanists were concerned with, neglecting the particular manner in which the humanists conveyed their arguments. Looking only at what they were concerned with, instead of how they were thinking about those issues only provides a surface-level understanding of humanist thinking. Furthermore, I hope that my research can help stimulate further interest in Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly* and More's *Utopia*, on the grounds that I believe the literary, social, and rhetorical significance of both texts is still far from depleted. While I have certainly left out many important areas of discussion in my examination of the texts, with hope, other scholars will soon pick up (at least some part of) the task where I have left off.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Luke Story, born in Fort Worth, Texas, graduated from Graham High School in 2004. That fall, Luke entered Texas Christian University as a business and political science major. However, he soon found that he was more interested in other areas of study, and in 2007 he transferred to the University of Texas at Arlington, where he enrolled as an English major. After getting involved with the English program at UTA and becoming better acquainted with his professors and colleagues, Luke narrowed his academic emphasis to rhetoric and composition. During this period of time, Luke taught English at Premier High School and tutored for UTA. After receiving his B.A. in English, Luke entered into the Master's program at UTA in 2009, where he continued to study rhetoric and composition with professors such as Dr. Kevin Gustafson, Dr. James Warren, Dr. Timothy Richardson, and Dr. Kevin Porter. After discussing aspects of the works in multiple courses, Luke developed an interest in Desiderius Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly* and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, particularly in how the humanist authors used satire as the vehicle for their arguments. Luke's interest in these works became the foundation for his thesis, which explores how More and Erasmus were able to develop the highly rhetorical satire that permeates their texts in great detail.

After he graduates in May of 2012, Luke plans to enter into a doctorate program in rhetoric. His ultimate goal is to teach rhetoric at the university level.