More's Utopia

4 For the account of Colet's sermon see CWE 8, 242-3 (Allen, IV, 525-6).
   On the background to the expedition see Steven Gunn, "The French wars of
   Henry VIII", in J. Black (ed.), The Origins of Warfare in Early Modern Europe
7 CWE 2, 253 (Allen, I, 531).
8 Yale 3, pt 2, 452, 11. 109-14, also reprinted in no. 190.
9 Yale 3, pt 2, no. 194. As More remarks in Utopia (Y, 52), Celenos rapaces,
   'ravenous Celaenae', the swifter Harpies of epic tradition, are common
   enough — unlike wise citizens.
10 Yale 3, pt 2, 489, 611. Cf. Erasmus's comments on Ammonius's Paenitentiarum
   ad Henricum VIII, 'my own very special approval goes to your practice
   of depending for your effects on the bare narrative and your concern
   for displaying the subject rather than your own cleverness' CWE 2, 271
   (Allen, I, 545).
11 Phillips, p. 307, LB, II, 554E.
12 Phillips, p. 318, LB, II, 965C-D.
13 'perinde quasi principatus nihil aliud sit, quam ingens negotiatio' (Phillips,
   p. 238; LB, II, 536E). Cf. Utopia, Y, 240. It may be that both passages
   recall Augustine's words 'Take away justice, and what are states but massive
   frauds?' City of God, IV, 4.
14 CWE 3, 246 (Allen, II, 206).
15 Phillips, p. 235; LB, II, 871C-D. The Iliad passages are 11. 130-9 (Agamemnon
   to Achilles) and 564-7 (Zeus to Hera).
16 Phillips, pp. 271-2; LB, II, 771E-E.
17 Phillips, p. 277; LB, II, 774B.
18 Phillips, pp. 288-9; LB, II, 779A-C.
19 CWE 3, 115 (Allen, II, 93).
20 CWE 3, 135 (Allen, II, 111).
22 Yale 15, 27.
23 On Budé's digressions in the De Ave, which More could have read at his
   leisure in Antwerp, see David O. McNell, Guillaume Budé and Humanism
   (Geneva, 1975), pp. 29-34. For his endorsement of Erasmus's position see
24 Yale 18 (I), 179.

CHAPTER 5

Narrative Credentials

We have already encountered the idea, traceable to Erasmus's 1519
letter to von Hutten, that More wrote Utopia backwards, devising
first the account of the island in Book I when he had leisure, and
then adding the dialogue of Book I in London as time allowed.
Even without J. H. Hexter's arguments in favour the idea seems
persuasive enough; besides, Erasmus, who was directly involved
in the production of the book, had no motive for inventing such
a story. The issue is actually more interesting than mere textual
archaeology since it clarifies the gradual development in More's
elaboration of his political fantasy. After the imaginary projection
of a society in which private greed is curbed by common ownership
of all property, More moves on to probe the ways in which such an
ideal system relates to the realities of European life in 1515, and,
indeed, to human experience in general. Thus, all the additions
that he makes to the initial account of this remarkable island are
concerned with established patterns of behaviour which are all
too familiar to the reader. Inevitably, this contrast opens up the
perennial question of how proposals for reform can penetrate the
ideological crust which surrounds established institutions. Indeed,
one can even speak of a two-way traffic here, since the final form
of Utopia tacitly encourages the reader to infiltrate the ideal order
presented in the fiction; the teasing and ambiguous relationship
which More develops between Utopia and Antwerp, or for that
matter, London, is a necessary part of the intellectual experience
offered to the reader. It dramatizes the moral challenge of
reform.

The infiltrative process by which an ideal model is introduced
into the familiar world of the reader is acted out by the layers
of More's fiction, in which the unique experience of Raphael
Hythlodaeus, his encounter with the Utopians, is disseminated
among the audience in Antwerp and, thanks to More's conscientious reporting, among those who read the book. By the time the original narrative, Raphael's account of the Utopian world, has reached the reader it has been filtered through the discussion sited in an Antwerp garden; in other words, the initial response to Raphael's narrative has already been made by Pieter Gillis and Thomas More as they hear him speak at first hand. The transparent nature of More's reporting means that we over hear the discussion, including the initial response of the fictional audience to Raphael's ideas, and as a result the vision of Utopia reaches us in a controversial form which provokes us to interpretative acts.

Thomas More had, we may guess, completed Book II, the actual report on Utopian life, by the time he returned to London from Bruges late in October 1515. When, eleven months later, he sent the completed manuscript to Erasmus this report had been encased in the dialogue between Raphael, Gillis and More which constitutes Book I and the closure of Book II. Along with the manuscript More sent a prefatory letter, addressed to Gillis, which is an integral part of his fictional design. The combined effect of these additional elements completed in England, the dialogue and this letter, is to give the whole Utopian experience an aura of sham historicity which may appear to be playful but which has a serious intent.

For one thing, there is a chronological plausibility in the book which serves to underpin the development of the fiction. Raphael's trip to Utopia, which provides the basis for the whole work, arises from Amerigo Vespucci's fourth voyage to the New World in which he was one of the group left in the fort which the expedition built at Cape Friio in Brazil. Vespucci's historical voyage lasted from May 1503 to June 1504 and the group at Cape Friio was left there in April; Raphael then set out with five companions to explore other lands, some of which we hear about in the course of Book I. His actual wanderings are left as vague as possible, though the narrator does mention the possibility of a second instalment; all we learn is that he has spent five years among the Utopians before making his way to what is now known as Sri Lanka (Taprobaneus) and thus back to Europe. Even if we leave aside the period in Utopia, his progress cannot have been swift and it is unlikely that we should picture him reaching Europe much before 1511; the later the better, of course, since it brings us closer to his recorded encounter with More at Antwerp in 1515.

This may be only a game, but it is a game which More wanted us to play, elaborating the general scheme of the fiction out of those specific details he provides. If we consider the dialogue which he constructs around the original traveller's tale of a remote island, this too is quite firmly placed within a moment of history, his own visit to Antwerp in the summer of 1515 after negotiations had been temporarily suspended in July. The scene in the garden as Raphael recounts his adventures is given a tantalizing appearance of reality, a charge of ontological ballast, by the introduction of historically verifiable persons. The prefatory letter to Gillis, the last part that More wrote, carries the device a stage further: he regrets that it has taken him so long, almost a year, to write down his report of their talk, a time-scale which closely matches the facts. And yet the preface is very much part of the fiction as More calls on Gillis to confirm his recollection of the length of the bridge in the Utopian capital of Amouroton; it is important to get these things right, so will Gillis check with Raphael?

One effect of all this is to blur the frontier between fiction and history, though blur may be too negative a term. We could say that the political fantasy which lies at the core of the narrative leaks out from Raphael's highly specific account of the island called No-place to splash around the ankles of people who live in an identifiable world. Gérard Genette has drawn attention to the disturbing effects caused by what he terms 'narrative metalesis', in which figures from one narrative level intrude into another, rupturing the reader's sense of fictional distance.1 As the first level of narrative, the 'present' which provides the base for the book, we have the encounter and discussion in Antwerp. From this base Raphael recalls episodes in the past, his visit to England in 1497, his stay in Utopia and related experiences, while his auditors, More, Gillis and John Clement, participate in the fiction but also belong to the historical world which includes the reader. Finally, by means of his letter to Gillis, More appears to disengage himself from the narrative and speak in propri persona; yet he alludes to the bridge, asks Gillis to check with Raphael and generally extends the fantasy into a world which gives all the signs of being 'real'. Raphael is the one figure to inhabit all three zones; it is his function to project the ideal model out into a recalcitrant world. Though we may be fully conscious of the fictionality of the procedure, issues take on an immediacy lacking in the single-level narrative
of Plato’s Republic; it is hard not to feel some sympathy with the theologian whom More conjures up in the letter to Gillis, who had petitioned the pope that he might be nominated as bishop of the newly discovered islanders, thus dramatizing the compulsion we feel to enter the imaginary world.

There is, then, a direct relation between the way More’s fiction operates and the stages in which it evolved between July 1515 and September 1516, from the original monologue or declamatio in praise of Utopian institutions, through the mediating layer of dialogue, to conclude with the prefatory letter composed as the manuscript was dispatched to Gillis. In other words, the process of composition is the reverse of that intended for the reader. So the letter, the last thing to be written, operates as an initiatory control, provoking a response of intrigued disbelief which prepares us for the issues of Book I. The interweaving of historical elements and fantasy, which is a striking feature of the pre-Utopian part of the book, alerts us to the sensitive boundary between imagination and experience: we only encounter Utopia itself at a stage when we have been fully prepared for the onslaught of the unfamiliar by a provocative debate over custom and the established norms of society.

The reader who opened Thiey Marten’s edition, once he had absorbed the significance of the title page, was confronted by a map of the unknown island and several other items which appeared to support its authenticity: the Utopian alphabet, a short poem in Utopian with a Latin translation and a further poem in Latin by Raphael’s nephew, Anemolus. This opening section was followed by the commendatory letters and verses provided by several humanists, the ‘glowing testimonials’ which More had asked Erasmus to solicit. The body of this introductory material, the parerga or ornaments of the text, plays a subtle part in the elaboration of the fiction, and the most important thing for the moment is to note the way in which it lures the reader into the Utopian game through such apparently objective features as the map and the alphabet. Even the commendatory letters, despite their basis in the real world, do nothing to dispel the pretence; in fact, they lend it the official stamp of scholarly approval. The whole exercise seems designed to disorient the literal-minded.

Obviously, the initiative in all this was More’s own, and his letter to Gillis sets the tone. But there are signs of a conspiracy in the final stages of publication: Erasmus collected the materials, Jean Desmarais (Paludanus), public orator of the University of Louvain, and Gerard Geldenhouwer (Noviomagus), chaplain to Prince Charles, played some part in the dealings with Thierry Marten’s printing house and contributed pieces to the parerga, while Pieter Gillis set the seal on the whole enterprise by his contributions. For one thing, there is his letter to Busleyden, which not only enters into the spirit of More’s facetia but also appears to claim responsibility for the Utopian alphabet and verses as well as the marginal annotations. Whatever the truth about that claim, and it may be that More and Erasmus also had some part in devising the ‘apparatus’ for the text, it is clear that Gillis had a privileged understanding of the whole operation as is only fitting for one of Raphael’s original interrogators, and his letter is not only a further endorsement of the fiction but a delighted participation in its inventive spirit.

A common feature which binds together the Utopian tetrastich and the hexastich attributed to Anemolus with Gillis’s letter is their emphasis on the graphic palpability of Utopia, a quality which distinguishes it from abstract philosophy. In this respect it is, as Gillis happily asserts, superior to Plato’s republic; in the words of Anemolus,

\begin{quote}
Nunc civitatis aemula Platonicæ,
Fortasse victrix, (nam quod illa literis
Delinavit, hoc ego una praestiti, 
Viris & opibus, optimisque legibus); 
\end{quote}

(Y,20)

(‘Now I am the rival of the Platonic city, even perhaps its conqueror; for what that sketched out by means of words, I alone have demonstrated with men, resources and the most beneficial laws.’)

The claim made here is that popularized by many apologists for fiction in the Renaissance: in Sidney’s words, the poet ‘yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description, which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul so much as that other doth’. The implied criticism of Plato’s city, that in effect it is ‘but a wordish description’, must be intended to alert the informed
reader to Utopia's indebtedness to the *Republic* and, more particularly, to one of the more cryptic passages when, at the close of Book IX, Glaucon understands Socrates to imply that the ideal city which they have discussed for so long exists only in words (τῇ ἐν λόγοις κειμένῃ (592b)), and is to be found nowhere on Earth. It is a passage of direct relevance to the genesis of Utopia and we shall encounter it again. But the use made of it by Gillis, both in the verses and in his letter to Busleyden, is to assert the artistic superiority of More's work and, in particular, to praise the strongly visual character of his performance.

Gillis designed his letter so that it would prepare the reader for the interpretive demands of More's preface, but it is also a response to More's own mock-serious presentation of himself as a plodding literal-minded narrator who lacks any rhetorical skills except those of accurate recall. Gillis uses hyperbole both to praise More and, slyly, to blow his cover: quite simply, the narrative has something which Raphael's original account failed to provide, 'As often as I read it I seem to see even more than I heard from the actual mouth of Raphael Yeti today'. Raphael was a man of exceptional eloquence (even if he was, as More asserted, better acquainted with Greek than Latin), moreover he was describing something which he had seen with his own eyes and not simply repeating what he had learned from others; yet, paradoxically, Gillis claims that 'when I contemplate the same picture as painted by More's brush, I am affected as if I were sometimes actually living in Utopia itself'. There is an intentional ambiguity about the reference to More's brush: in fact the phrase 'pincello depicta' can mean equally 'painted by brush' or 'described by pen', and the effect, either way, is to stress the visual power of More's words. The quality which Gillis praises is that expressed in the rhetorical term *enargeía*, described by Quintilian as that 'which makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence'. The hyperbole is taken a stage further when Gillis is inclined to believe that one may learn more from More's description than Raphael learned from five years' residence in Utopia. The world of art, of story, transcends that of nature.

While Gillis in this way surreptitiously exposes the author he pretends to uphold the main fiction by alluding to the vexed question of the island's location, an issue that leads inevitably to the whereabouts of the one man who has seen it, Raphael. Unfortunately, at the moment when Raphael revealed the location, during their conversation in Antwerp, More was distracted by a servant, and Gillis missed it because of someone's coughing. The whole journey to the ideal is left hanging, unless of course Raphael can be found; some reports suggest that he is dead, yet others that he could no longer rest in his own country and has made his way back to Utopia, the victim of philosophical nostalgia. The joke, which has its obvious similarity to Lucian's absentee Plato in a *True Story*, is only superficially concerned with geography or even Raphael's whereabouts, and masked behind it is the epistemological issue basic to More's concern: the elusive point of contact between our projected worlds and the directing forces of our actual lives.

By virtue of its active endorsement of the Utopian hoax Gillis's letter wins its place in the fiction, even if he does slyly direct us back to More as the only begetter. But More's letter to Gillis, the preface proper, is the thread around which the remainder of the *parerga* crystallizes and it alone is printed with marginal annotation in the manner of the main text. Notes of this kind, bolstered by the commendatory letters, serve to compound the joke since they give to the book the kind of format usually associated with a learned work: they dress up *Utopia* in the trappings of an established classic. Further, the presence of such notes in the preface underlines More's fictional scheme as a trial run to the opening encounter in Antwerp, one which exercises the reader in the kinds of attention demanded by the main work.  

With More's letter to Gillis we enter into the fiction proper, so it will be as well to make a clear distinction here between the historical More, ambassador to Prince Charles and author of *Utopia*, and the fictional character who participates in the Antwerp debate and claims to report the discussion for our benefit. To reinforce the distinction the latter, fictional More will be referred to by the Latin form Morus, though that does not reflect the difference which the alert reader can sense between the Morus of the dialogue and the leaden-footed correspondent who is supposedly responsible for the letter to Pieter Gillis. Indeed, the first issue to surface in the letter is that of authorial responsibility: Morus argues for the objective nature of the whole account on the grounds that he has played a passive role, reporting the day's discussion without further intervention. Even the hurried and impromptu
yet it does stand in striking contrast to that most unattached and mobile of observers, Raphael Hythlodaeus.

None the less, in between the struggle to meet social obligations, a struggle which seems very distant from the balanced activities of the Utopian day, some time has been found to complete the book. And though the reporter may be deficient in eloquence, and even in intelligence and learning, at least his memory is reliable. Still the loose ends remain: the length of the bridge, the location of the island. Morus's pedantic concern with topographical issues in a book directed towards moral and political debate is highlighted by an odd marginal note: where the earnest reporter declares, 'I would rather utter a lie than lie, since I would rather be honest than clever' ('potius mendacium dicam, quam mentiar, quod malum bonus esse quam prudente'), the margin solemnly abjures the reader to 'Note the theological distinction between lying and uttering a lie' (Y, 40). The editorial note in the Yale edition refers to a similar distinction in the Notitia Atticae of Aulus Gellius but can find no basis for a theological distinction. But there is in fact such a distinction, one which the theologians adopted from the moralists; Aquinas proposes three categories of lie: the functional (mendacum officiosum), the frivolous (mendacum iocosum) and the harmful (mendacum perniciosum). Then, referring to Augustine's gloss on the stern meaning of Psalm 5, 'You will destroy all liars', pedes omnes qui loquentur mendacio, he separates the first two categories from the condemnation due to the third. Although they both involve falsehood neither aims at it as a material end, in fact the mendacum officiosum is a lie told for a good purpose. Augustine's treatment of the topic had been incorporated into the code of canon law and More certainly knew it since in The Apology that he wrote in his own defence in 1533 he attributes to 'saynt Austyn' the distinction between 'a lye very perryncouse', 'an ydle lye' and one 'of any good purpose'.

Whoever devised the marginal note, be it Gillis, Erasmus, or even More himself, must have had the Augustinian text in mind. But the differentia theologica had its roots in a much earlier analysis of lies, that undertaken by Plato in the Republic; this was a sufficiently notorious feature of his political speculation to have prompted Lucian's sardonic reference to philosophical lies at the beginning of A True Story, where they are ranked with travellers' tales. Plato's analysis is part of his attack on traditional mythology, those fables
Notable Credentials

The first page of the text appears to be a continuation of the previous one, discussing the concept of a higher reality and the deceptions in figures such as Plato and his doctrines. The text mentions the importance of distinguishing between real and false ideas, as well as the role of the senses in perceiving reality. It also touches on the influence of ancient philosophies on modern thought.

More: Utopia

The second page begins with a discussion on the nature of Utopia and its implications on society. It explores the idea of a perfect society and the challenges in achieving it. The text critically examines the utopian ideal, questioning its feasibility and the potential for it to lead to ethical and social problems. The discussion delves into the contrast between ideal and reality, highlighting the complexities in trying to implement utopian ideals within the constraints of human nature and society.

The pages continue with an analysis of the philosophical underpinnings of Utopia, examining its impact on subsequent thinkers and societies. It also touches on the role of literature and the use of narrative in conveying philosophical ideas, suggesting that the portrayal of Utopia in literature serves as a reflection of the aspirations and dilemmas of its time.
Among them we meet the simi, the snub-nosed, who are like the solemn misreaders of the Epistolarum Obscurorum Virorum and dread the long nose of satire as one bitten by a mad dog fears water. Others are wholly negative in their criticism, plucking each author by the hair while they remain well out of danger, smooth-shaven so there is nothing to catch hold on. In fact, these smooth-shaven critics sound suspiciously as though they are tonsured, just as the Franciscans who have plotted to misread Erasmus. Finally, there are those who devour the book but disregard the author. In their various ways these abusers of books evade the interpretive encounter which a book presents, resisting the rhetorical devices which guide the reader into it and refusing the dialogue which is its ultimate goal. Thus the letter to Gillis, which has used its own subtle means to initiate the reader into the peculiar nature of the narrative which follows, concludes with an indirect admonition to play the part of a disciplined, and even a generous, unraveller of the text. More’s ironical address to himself at the end of this excursus on reading shames us into cooperation, ‘Go now, and prepare a banquet at your own cost for men of such delicate palates, such various tastes, whose minds are full of thanks and gratitude’.7

The reader of More’s preface is thus prodded to reflect on the question of authority; who is in charge of the narrative? While Raphael is the ultimate source, his words are mediated by Morus, and the most peremptory reading indicates that even that name masks more than one identity. There is the verifiable figure of More as lawyer, diplomat, breathless performer on the treadmill of affairs, who nevertheless leads his secret life as author, corresponding anxiously with Erasmus about the publication and reacting with evident pleasure to any indication of approval for his book. But there is also the interlocutor, the projected self, who first meets Raphael in Antwerp; there are good grounds for distinguishing between this interlocutor Morus, who argues the case for prudent accommodation with the world as it is, and the literal-minded Morus who addresses the preface letter to Gillis and prefers honesty to cleverness. At any rate, we need to recognize that More’s assumed persona is neither simple nor strictly consistent but is modified by the demands of the fiction. At the very least one has the sense that part of the strategy behind the preface is to alert the reader to the necessity of distinguishing the voice of Morus as participant from that of More as the veritable author. An ironical gap is created which is Chaucerian in spirit and, conceivably, in inspiration. Not only does this underline the problematic relationship between mental constructs and social reality, but it warns against too facile an identification of the controlling voice. Once our complicity in the fiction has been gained and we have stepped out of the ranks of the literal-minded, we are left to grapple with the main fiction on our own.

If it was the case, as Erasmus asserted, that More composed Book I ‘in the heat of the moment’, at a time when he was under great pressure of work, then it is not surprising that he drew on themes, and possibly materials, which had preoccupied him over several years. The proximity of many of the issues revolved in Utopia to those which concerned Erasmus no doubt explains why at least one early reader of the work concluded that Book I was actually by him.8 And it is true that one immediate feature which must strike any reader is the way in which it is directed against the assumptions that bolster established social forms; for most of the time the reader is placed in a world which is identifiable not only by its geographical location but by its standards of behaviour. So the only hint at a radically fresh perspective is provided by the alien figure of the wandering Portuguese Raphael, an uncompromising pilgrim of the absolute.

Emerging from the prefatory letter, the initiated reader enters with circumspection into the opening scene of the actual narrative, where the embassy and the concrete circumstances of the encounter with Raphael are described in the flat tones of historical report. It is easy to pass over the fulsome titles that Morus gives in the opening sentence to the two princes behind the diplomatic dispute, since our attention is drawn on to the elaborate but informal praise extended to the leading negotiators, Cuthbert Tunstall and de Themseke. But these titles have their point: certainly, by the end of Utopia when the reader is invited to reflect on the relevance of such slippery qualities as ‘nobilitas, magnificentia, splendor, maiestas’ to the health of the community (Y, 244), it is harder to miss the ironic potential of terms like invictissimus and serenissimus, ‘the most invincible King of England’ and ‘His Serene Highness, Charles Prince of Castile’. In that most outspoken of Erasmus’s attacks on kingship in the 1515 Adagia, ‘Scarabeus aquilam querer’, both invictis (invincible) and serenissimus (most serene) are included among the string of magnificent lies which must be added to royal titles,
they must be called gods, who are scarcely men, Invincible who never came out of a battle except defeated, Magnificent, when they are midgets, Most Serene, when they shake the world with the tumults of war and senseless political struggles, Most Illustrious, when they are darkened by the profoundest ignorance of all that is good, Catholic, when they have in mind anything but Christ.  

So while More's opening has all the marks of a neutral reference to the diplomatic mission on which he was engaged in 1515, there is a sense in which the codes of protocol and heraldic address are exposed as covers for the less imposing realities of the political world. To anyone acquainted with the attacks on kingship in the 1515 Adagia such a conclusion would be inevitable. Erasmus might admire the exemplary ruler of political theorists, but he is doubtful whether such princes are to be found even in the republic of Plato. Such a contrast between kingship and Plato's guardians is implicit too in More's opening pages since the occasion of the embassy, an exercise in practical politics, leads on to the encounter with Raphael, an incident which evokes the circumstances of the Republic. Plato sets the opening of his narrative in the port of Piraeus where the dialogue arises from the chance meeting of friends after a religious festival, a scenario which is duplicated in its essentials by Lucian in The Ship. By placing Morus's encounter with Gillis and Raphael after the hearing of Mass in the busy port of Antwerp, More establishes the relationship of his text to Plato's.

The reader has, of course, come across the name of Raphael Hythlodaeus in the preface, but this seems to be the appropriate point to examine its significance. The best that we can say about Raphael is that he had angelic associations, specifically with the angel who guides Tobias (Tobit 5:4); the name may be interpreted as 'physician of salvation' or, in a formula that More could find in Pico's De dignitate hominis, it could become 'heavenly physician'.

Hythlodaeus, on the other hand, is More's own invention, one of the several fantastic Greek names that are part of the Utopian game. In it he combines ὅλος (nonsense) and ὅλος (skilled) to give the paradoxical name 'skilled in nonsense'. This may sound witty, and it certainly encourages a long hard look at the Portuguese traveller, but it does not help us to construe the text. Unless, that is, we actually turn to Plato's Republic for a clue: there, early in the first book, Socrates enters into argument with the cynical realist Thrasyamachus. The central part of the work is generated by this initial clash in which Thrasyamachus mounts an abusive attack on Socrates' idea of justice:

And don't you be telling me that it is that which ought to be, or the beneficial or the profitable or the gainful or the advantageous, but express clearly and precisely whatever you say. For I won't take from you any such drivel as that. (336d)

The key word is 'drivel', otherwise 'nonsense' or ὅλος. If Raphael is skilled in nonsense then there is a strong likelihood that it is some Socratic nonsense, some talk about 'that which ought to be', or a world of ideal justice beyond the contamination of ordinary politics. Raphael, an angelic visitor, would seem to be a very appropriate witness to such a world.

Put together, Raphael and Hythlodaeus point to the ambiguity of his role in the book; he is either a visionary thinker or a blinkered irrelevance. At the very least the wise reader, one who shares in some measure Raphael's own competence in Greek, will be alert to the disconcerting implications of our sole guide to the Utopian polity. Even his physical appearance casting him as an outsider, hospe, a stranger to familiar custom, is 'a man of advanced years, with sunburnt countenance and long beard and cloak hanging carelessly from his shoulder, while his appearance and dress seemed to me to be those of a ship's captain'. (Y, 48)

Such a figure would certainly be at home in a port like Antwerp, but the beard and the cloak tossed nonchalantly over the shoulder suggest Lucian's stock image of the philosopher; and the term used to convey the careless style of the cloak, 'neglectim', echoes that 'careless simplicity', 'neglectam simplicitatem', of his extemporaneous Latin style which Morus, in the letter to Gillis, is so anxious to reproduce.

Yet the supposition that Raphael might be a ship's captain is brushed aside by Pieter Gillis who supplies in its place a more subtle and perplexing portrait of the man who will guide us to Utopia. It is natural enough that travel is a dominant issue in this description: Raphael's obsessive interest in distant lands is made clear from the way in which he has got rid of his patrimony so as to have the liberty to see the world. This is the feature in his
portrait which connects in a suggestive way with the comparable
gesture in The Life of John Picus when Pico sold his patrimony to
his nephew at a knock down price so that 'he might lead his life
in rest and peace'. Freedom from obligation is the motive in
both cases. But then Gillis goes on to compare Raphael to three
rather unexpected travellers from the ancient world: his sailing,
we learn, has not been like that of Palinurus, the helmsman of
Aeneas, but like that of Ulysses or, better still, Plato. Palinurus
is not an encouraging model in any case, since he was lulled to
sleep at the helm by the god Somus and fell to his death in the
waves. In contrast the adventures of Ulysses or Odysseus,
that archetypal wanderer, during his ten-year voyage home from
Troy could be said to cover a fair compass of human experience
and were sometimes seen as an allegory of the moral life. As Gillis
observes in his letter to Busleyden, Raphael is 'a man with more
knowledge of nations, peoples and business than even the famous
Ulysses'. But against any such high-minded view we must set
the typically sceptical perspective of Lucian who opens A True
Story with a diatribe against travellers' tales and labels Odysseus
as a 'guide and instructor in this kind of charlatanery'. So there
is some ambivalence about the use of Ulysses as an exemplary
figure and the situation is not made any clearer when Raphael
is compared to Plato; Plato is the very person that Lucian has
in mind when he goes on to complain that lying has become
endemic even among philosophers. At least the Lucianic narrator
can claim to be honest; he openly admits that he tells no truth
but writes of things 'which, in fact, do not exist at all and, in
the nature of things, cannot exist'. When he does, at length,
arrive at the Elysian fields, where cups grow on trees and fill
with wine as soon as they are plucked, the one notable absence
among the worthies gathered there is Plato and he, it is reported,
'was living in his imaginary city, under the constitution and laws
which he himself wrote'. And anyone living in an imaginary city
is, of course, living nowhere.

But Plato's involvement with travel cannot simply be dismissed
as a Lucianic joke. More would have been familiar with Cicero's
reference in the De Finibus (V, 87) to Plato's journeys to Egypt
and to Sicily in quest of wisdom. Behind that reference lay Plato's
own account in the Seventh Epistle of his abortive attempt to assist
Dionysius of Syracuse in the establishment of a philosophical state.

Such associations intensify the idea of travel as a metaphor of the
intellectual search for truth.

So there is no clear indication of what we should make of the
exemplary travellers whom Gillis uses to introduce Raphael.
Ulysses can be taken as a type of wisdom or as a subtle liar; Plato
sails in search of enlightenment but away from reality. Do we take a
moralistic or a Lucianic view? The puzzle is, in fact, not unlike that
represented by the conflicting names Raphael and Hythlodaeus,
and it may be that More, from the outset, intended his imaginary
traveller to dramatize the perplexities which hover around moral
idealism. In Plato's myth of the cave, those who return to the
shadows after their encounter with reality only provoke laughter
or resentment. At the best, then, Raphael's travel is driven by
something higher than idle curiosity, a view that is supported by
his preference for Greek literature over Latin. This point, already
touched on by Morus in the preface, marks him as a moralist,
especially since he only approves Cicero and Seneca among the
Lithins. The corollary would seem to be that he has a pretty
functional view of language and distrusts the blandishments of
rhetoric; his own directness of expression reinforces the impression
of moral intensity which he conveys and points the way to his later
brush with Morus over the practicalities of political reform.

Whatever the nature of Raphael's intellectual journeying, Pieter
Gillis is able to pin him down to some very specific voyages
to the New World; he has, in fact, 'accompanied Vespucci on
the last three of his four voyages, accounts of which are now
common reading everywhere'. Vespucci returned from his final
voyage in June 1504, leaving behind 24 men from the crew of the
wrecked Capitana to hold the fort they had constructed, and his
Lettera delle Isole Novamente trovate appeared in the following year.
Two years later a Latin text of the voyages was included in Martin
Waldseemiüller's Cosmographiae Introductio (St. Dié, 1507) and an
English summary was printed at Antwerp sometime around 1510
under the title Of the Newe Landes. It was no exaggeration, then,
for More to describe Vespucci's exploits as common reading; yet
there is one small twist in Gillis's statement that Raphael only went
on the three later voyages of Vespucci. The first voyage, supposed
to have taken place in 1497–8, is now recognized to have been a
hoax and there were those in 1515 who were well aware of this.
Apparently More was among them, and at the very point when
he inserts his fictional traveller into an authentic expedition he carefully dissociates him from a voyage that never took place. 13

Eventually Raphael, with his five companions, set out from the fort where Vespucci had left six months' provisions, to make his way through many strange lands before his arrival in Ceylon, thus becoming, at least in theory, the first man to circumnavigate the globe. Perhaps Vespucci's deception was not such a grave lapse: the reports which were brought back by travellers from the New World were inevitably a strange fusion of objective report with subjective fantasy, and such intermingling of the real world with fiction as we find in Utopia was not unusual. Columbus read the millenarian prophecies of Joachim of Fiore as well as the Travels of Sir John Mandeville. The blurring of frontiers between actuality and possibility - an inherent feature of political idealism - was likewise a natural consequence of these new discoveries, and it provided the perfect setting for such an enterprise as the imaginative creation of an ethical polity remote from the corruptions of Europe. In that sense Utopia is very much a book of a particular moment in European history, stimulated by the interaction between new experiences and old fantasies. Both Sir John Mandeville and Raphael surface at Ceylon. 14

If these details give us some glimpse of the spirit of the man who will introduce us to Utopia, the most forceful impression is conveyed by the aphorisms that are constantly on his lips: 'The man that has no grave is covered by the sky'; and 'The road to heaven is equally short from all places'. Such terse maxims were a delight to Renaissance authors from Erasmus to Montaigne, they give the air of travelling light while their implications point to a comprehensive moral attitude; they mean more than they say. This brevity gives them something of the enigmatic quality later to be associated with imprese; the device declares its meaning but draws attention back to its possessor. In this case it is interesting to note the similarity between the second saying and More's reported words to Dame Alice in the Tower almost twenty years after Utopia: charged with behaving like a fool for staying in prison when he need only do what the best minds in the realm have already done More replies, 'Is not this house . . . as nigh heaven as my owne'. 15 Raphael's statement, 'Undique ad superos tantundem esse viae', represents a slight adjustment of the saying attributed to the Ionian philosopher Anaxagoras in Cicero's Tusculan Disputations (I, 104), 'undique enim ad inferos tantumde viae est' ('from any place the road to the under world is just as far'); in the spirit of Christian syncretism More adapts 'underworld' to 'heaven' as the true home of the soul, transforming the pessimistic acquiescence of Anaxagoras into spiritual optimism. The earlier adage, too, has a classical source, in this case Lucan's De bello civili (VII, 819), though More would have encountered it in his reading of Augustine's City of God 16 and it likewise indicates a spiritual detachment from material conditions and restrictive conventions. After all, More was in prison when he echoed Raphael's dictum, and in Europe the frustrated Raphael is a Platonic prisoner, shackled in the cave. Raphael's indifference to normal human aspirations, notably those to property and to local association, marks him out as a man of prophetic intensity, the austere observer of human folly who stands above the impulsive enthusiasms of the crowd.

This introductory sketch of the traveller who will be our guide to Utopia is clearly of importance for our understanding of More's enterprise. And the first thing to be said about it must be that it is ambiguous, to use a word that will become increasingly shop-soiled as we explore the book. As such it undercuts that kind of confident interpretation which claims Raphael as the ideal type of Christian humanist. 17 The ambiguity can be traced to the tension between the Lucianic and the Platonic, as we move from the mocking humour of A True Story, with its elaborate send-up of travellers' tales, to the more serious questions raised by Plato's excursions over the very practicality of ideal political schemes, such as that attempted in Syracuse. If Plato was absent from the Isles of the Blest this was because he had evaporated into some mental construct of his own and, when the laughter is over, we are still left with serious questions about the presence of the ideal within the material order. By inserting these serio-comic themes into Pieter Gillis's portrait of Raphael, Thomas More both tantalizes and perplexes the reader. And by the reader we must mean here the humanistically trained reader, able to spot the point behind a Greek name and responsive to the literary allusions woven into the text. Following on the devices of the preface, this prelude to the main discussion 'de optimo reipublicae statu' leaves us unsure as to what we are about to meet and consequently on our guard.
The setting for the debate over the best state of a commonwealth is the garden of Morus's lodging, to which the party resorts after their initial meeting. This semi-rustic spot, provided with turf benches, evokes the locus amoenus customary in literary dialogues at least since Plato set the Phaedrus on a bank under a plane tree. The development of the dialogue in Book I is designed to guide the reader towards the account of Utopia, opening with Raphael's resumé of his adventures which are summarily reported by Morus, and leading up to the critical point at which he claims that 'unless property is entirely done away with, there can be no fair or just distribution of goods, nor can mankind be happily governed'. It is in order to substantiate this claim that Raphael, after the company has dined, proffers his account of Utopian life.

So the form of Book I consists of the discussion between Raphael, Morus and Pieter Gillis over the general issue of participation in public affairs, but into this Raphael inserts three exemplary episodes which support his case and, incidentally, prepare the reader for the extended survey of Utopia in Book II. Even the summary account of his travels bears on the main theme since we are expressly advised that the talk was not of 'Scyllas and ravenous Calaenos and man-eating Laestrkyonians', typical creatures in travellers' tales, but of that rarer creature, the well-instructed citizen. The ironical structure of the Latin sentence here is worth studying since it is so characteristic of More's tendency to litotes: 'Nam Scyllas & Celenos rapaces, & Lestrigonas populi vore, atque eissemodi immania portenta, nusquam fere non invenias, ut sane ac sapienter institutos cives hanc reperias ubilibet' (Y, 52-4) ('For Scyllas and ravenous Calaenos and man-eating Laestrkyonians and fearful monsters of this kind you may encounter easily enough, but well-instructed citizens you can scarcely discover anywhere.') Quite apart from the substantive contrast between mythical monsters culled from Homer and Vergil and the well-instructed citizen, More's use of the double negative in 'nusquam fere non invenias' - literally, 'nowhere scarcely you may not find' - serves to distance the already improbable monstratosities, only to reveal that good citizens are even further out of reach. They are, in effect, nowhere. Moreover, the verbs employed here, 'invenias' and 'reperias', carry the two-fold meaning to 'meet' or 'discover' on the one hand, and to 'invent' or 'devise' on the other. By the end of the sentence all hope of ideal politics appears to have receded into the far distance,

more remote from the reader than the fantastic inventions of the poets.20

It is important to note that the preliminary survey of Raphael's travels follows a comparative line: he relates many ill-considered customs that he has seen among the new peoples as well as pointing to those which can serve as correctives to the errors of Europe. It is again typical that More should resort to litotes, 'haud pauca' ('by no means a few') to introduce the idea that there are lessons which these unknown lands can offer to Europe, and that this should immediately precede the first mention of the Utopians themselves. Their customs and manners are to be the main concern of the book, prefaced by the conversation which leads up to Raphael's account of their extraordinary commonwealth.

This conversation, then, covers the issue of participation in politics - by implication the responsibility of the well-instructed citizen - and provides a series of episodes which illustrate Raphael's assertions and culminate in the account of Utopia. So there is a gradual development in the argument as it moves from Pieter Gillis's innocent remark about Raphael's adventures (Y, 55) to the closing reflections of Morus at the end of Book II (Y, 245). The fictional progression of the opening book introduces the exemplary episodes of Raphael's visit to Cardinal Morton's household and the two imaginary council sessions which Raphael devises to underwrite his point that the wise man cannot take part in politics in their current debased form. The trigger that sets this whole sequence in motion is Gillis's suggestion, perhaps only half serious, made in response to Raphael's account of the varied customs encountered on his travels, that he should enter the service of some prince.

That is, of course, the very issue that Andrea Corneto had put to Pico della Mirandola and which prompted the irate letter which More translated in The Life of John Pius, 'Ye writ unto me, that it is tyme for me now to put my selfe in houshold with some of the great princes of Italie'.21 Gillis's intervention unwisely touches on the matter of the profit, both for Raphael himself and his relatives, which might be expected from such an arrangement, and it is this which prompts Raphael to reveal his voluntary surrender of his patrimony to these very relatives.

It is clearly no accident that the first direct intervention by Raphael is so reminiscent of Pico's stance, and it lends support to the supposition that Raphael, with his angelic name, is somehow