
Thomas More and Spain

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Introduction

When Thomas More was born on February 7, 1478, in the Cheapside district of London, the world was on the cusp of dramatic transformations. Pope Sixtus IV had recently authorized the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition; in Florence, the Pazzi Conspiracy (April 1478) sought to assassinate Lorenzo de' Medici, intensifying tensions between Florence and the Papal States. Meanwhile, in Muscovy, Ivan III the Great continued his expansion, consolidating territories that would form the basis of Russia. Italian city-states were pioneering financial innovations like bills of exchange, stabilizing cross-border trade. England, however, was still heavily dependent on the wool trade and financially weakened by the Wars of the Roses (1455-1487), which drained national resources.

Into this world came Thomas More, the author of *Utopia* and the creator of a genre that would evolve into modern utopian studies. A pivotal figure of the Renaissance, More's contributions spanned literature, political and religious thought, education, and philosophy, with his influence continuing well beyond his era, into ours and surely beyond. No work of his, though, has had the intense and lasting impact of the English version of his *Utopia: On The Best State Of A Commonwealth and On The New Island of Utopia. A Truly Golden Handbook, No Less Beneficial than Entertaining, by the Most Distinguished and Eloquent Author THOMAS MORE Citizen and Undersheriff of the Famous city of London* (1516) in the version translated by Robert M. Adams for the Norton Critical Edition of *Utopia* and edited by George M. Logan, Robert M. Adams and Clarence H. Miller for Cambridge University Press. Originally translated from Latin into English by Ralph Robinson, in 1551, his translation (far from error-free) was significant as it made More's Latin work accessible to English readers not long after More's death, helping to spread *Utopia's* influence in England and beyond. Robinson's translation was the standard English version for many years, but, in modern times,



among many others, Paul Turner's (1965) translation for Penguin, Clarence H. Miller's (2001) for Yale University Press, accompanied by extensive annotations (a revision of the Yale UP 1965 edition, translated by G. C. Richards) and Robert Adams' (1975) version for Norton's Critical Editions, with historical documents and critical essays (reprinted with some improvements in the above-cited CUP edition of the parallel texts) are outstanding because they provide high-quality context and insight into *Utopia*'s impact and legacy. One of the contributors to this volume, Víctor Lillo Castañ, discovered the earliest Spanish translation of Thomas More's *Utopia* (in the early 1530s) by Vasco de Quiroga, which explains the early impact of More's text in Spain and in the Spanish American provinces.

More's relationship with Spain was particularly significant within the political and intellectual exchanges of the early sixteenth century. His diplomatic role brought him into contact with key Spanish figures, and *Utopia* was conceptualized amid negotiations with the Spanish Empire over wool trade. His ties to the Spanish Habsburg dynasty and his support for Catherine of Aragon as the legitimate Queen of England led to his ultimate stance on the separation of powers and the rule of law, principles that would carry him to the scaffold.

As Henry VIII's statesman, More was deeply involved in Anglo-Spanish relations during a period when England sought balance within European power dynamics. Spain had a profound impact on European humanism, with figures such as Juan Luis Vives—a close friend of More—contributing significantly to intellectual discourse on key moral issues such as war and peace and education. The friendship triangle of Erasmus, More, and Vives (*amicorum comunia omnia*) stood as a testament to Christian humanism amidst the turbulent backdrop of the Reformation, exemplifying the cross-cultural academic dialogue between England and Spain. More's opposition to Henry VIII's annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon aligned him with Spain's defense of Catholic orthodoxy and the unity of the Church.

The socio-political climate of early sixteenth-century Spain played a crucial role in shaping the reception of More's *Utopia*. In a period marked by political upheaval and the consolidation of power under the Catholic Monarchs, More's critique of societal inequities resonated with an audience grappling with the moral implications of imperial expansion. The discovery of new lands presented both opportunities for wealth and a moral quandary over colonial practices. More's depiction of an ideal society in *Utopia*, often misunderstood,



still questioned governance and ethics, mirroring the concerns of his contemporaries over European colonial endeavors. The Renaissance, in turn, fostered an intellectual climate ripe for debates on morality, governance, and human nature, creating a receptive audience for More's ideas.

Also, the execution of Thomas More by Henry VIII had profound implications for his legacy, especially in Spain. His death coincided with a period of heightened scrutiny of authority. More's challenging perspectives on power and governance provided a counter-narrative that was both influential and subversive. His martyrdom for his beliefs and for the unity of Christendom –then also threatened by the Ottoman Empire– imbued his work with a powerful critique of the *statu quo*, eloquently persuading readers that reforms for a better, more just, world, were not just opportunities but obligations. In Spain, More's *Utopia* became not merely a text but a catalyst for critical thought, offering a new lens through which to view societal structures and power dynamics.

Our book explores some of the many complex and multifaceted connections between Thomas More and Spain, examining his enduring influence on political and intellectual thought across borders and centuries.

The opening chapter by Eugenio M. Olivares Merino, «Introducing Arias Montano to Thomas More: The Role of Erasmus of Rotterdam» looks into the connections between Arias Montano and Thomas More throughout the influence of Erasmus of Rotterdam after the inclusion of Thomas More's engraving in Philip Galle's and Benito Arias Montano's *Virorum doctorum* (1572). The Spaniard, although he inclined for Erasmus since his time in the *Complutensis Universitas*, became royal censor and oversaw the Faculty of Theology at Louvain's revision and censorial work of Erasmus' *Opera Omnia* under the rule of the Duke of Alba. This work culminated in *Expurgatio Operum Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, appended to the recently revised *Index Expurgatorius Librorum*.

Olivares Merino locates the multiple references to Thomas More contained in Erasmian texts. These generally emphasize More's support for the education of women, Christian upbringing and the study of Greek. More appears referenced in *Tomus Primus*, in the letters by Beatus Rhenanus to Charles V and Erasmus to Iohannes von Botzheim and the work *De copia*, *De conscribendis epistolis*, *De pueris instituendis*, *Ciceronianus*, *Dialogi Luciani* and *In nucem Ovidii*



commentariorum. As for the second volume, the very much expurgated *Adagia* present two important mentions to the humanist. The third volume contains Erasmus' correspondence and, as highlighted by Germain Marc'hadour, four letters are instrumental in understanding both humanists' relation: letter to Ulrich von Hutten (July 23, 1519), to Germain de Brie (June 25, 1520), to Guillaume Budé (September 1521) and to Johann Faber (1532).

In the *Tomus Quartus*, focused on Erasmus' concerns on moral education, Olivares Merino identified More's name and figure in *Moriae Encomium*, dedicated to the Englishman –however, this text was fully censored in the *Expurgatio Erasmi*. Likewise, the *Tomus Quintus* suffered a profound revision and there are only a few references to the Englishman. Finally, the last volume, *Tomus Nonus*, as the previous tomes do not address More's life or work, compiles Erasmus' apologetical texts. The *Epistola apologetica ad Dorpium theologum* (1540), the *Apologia adversus rhapsodies Albertii Pii* (1540) and *Spongia* (1540) refers to More at some point.

The second chapter, «Thomas More as Translator: Typology and Functions of some Morean Features in his Version of Lucian's *Cynicus*», delves into Thomas More's rendering style as presented in his translations of Lucian's *Cynicus*. Concepción Cabrillana Leal claims that More's translation was more likely a translation exercise rather than a desired publication. The scholar acknowledges that the English humanist used to commit to the texts. Thus, the scholar aims at observing lexical-semantic variations and their implications. She offers a detailed account of characteristics based on enhancement, irony and moral teaching. Cabrillana Leal first addresses how More rendered Greek terms that did not have a corresponding word in Latin, causing semantic displacements, extensions and intensifications as it occurs with quantifiers or noun phrases. Irony is another aspect Lucian and More also have in common. Likewise, the author identifies that the latter intensifies irony by adding intensifiers, using semantic diversification and metaphorical meanings.

Besides, this use of Latin variation, Cabrillana Leal suggests, conveys a moral weight that is often more pronounced than in the original Greek text. In terms of character names, More interestingly chose Licinius instead of Lucianus for the Cynic's interlocutor, therefore lending the dialogue an open interpretive angle. Additionally, two other insertions reflect More's distinctive style. The author identifies four areas where More's translation displays potential imprecisions or