have ideas that permeated everything he wrote in a particular phase; rather, he kept returning
to the same notions, irrespective of the form he was writing in.

What does raise questions is that some non-dramatic sonnets that seem to belong together
are dated wide apart. The editors identify some pairs and “mini-sequences” (p. 17) of sonnets,
by similarities in theme or imagery, or by syntactic links. For instance, sonnets 40–42 (dated
1595–1597) concern a triangular relationship between two men and one woman, as in the
rivalry over Sylvia in Two Gentlemen of Verona (1591–92; p. 168). What is overlooked
here is the equally obvious resemblance to the triangle of sonnet 144, dated 1590–1595.
This implies that, if these sonnets were inspired by real-life events, Shakespeare went
through at least two such episodes. That is quite possible, but adherents of the traditional
reading with Fair Friend and Dark Lady may take some convincing of a chronology not
further explained in this book.

The Dark Lady myth in particular haunts this new chronology. All sonnets from 127
onwards, with three exceptions, are dated as falling within the same period, 1590–95; while
those traditionally associated with the Fair Friend are assigned to a wider timespan, from
1594 to 1604, thus having little overlap with the earliest group. The poems traditionally
associated with the Dark Lady are often claimed to form mini-sequences, yet inconsistently
so. For instance, sonnet 132 is “probably addressed to a female [largely] because of…
black being an attribute of a mistress in earlier sonnets” (p. 60). Yet sonnet 131, which
also calls the addressee “black,” “could be addressed to either a male or a female” (p. 59). Simi-
larly, the adulterous addressee of sonnet 142 is identified as a woman because the sonnet
belongs to a mini-sequence, yet in the notes to sonnet 152, whose addressee has broken
“bed-vows,” the adulterer’s gender is not specified.

A radical break with traditional autobiographical readings proves hard to make consist-
ently. The individual sonnets cannot be seen as entirely independent: there are many
obvious companion pieces, such as sonnets 29 and 30, on sorrows present and past
(though the notes link sonnet 30 to sonnet 31 instead); yet to make them tell a unified, coher-
ent story has proven equally problematic. This edition is a brave attempt to find a middle way
between these extremes but raises questions of its own that may fuel debates in years to come.

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Before Utopia: The Making of Thomas More’s Mind, by Ross Dealy, Toronto,
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“Before Utopia: The Making of Thomas More’s Mind” offers an original reading of Utopia, In
Praise of Folly, and other selected early Tudor humanist texts and translations by Erasmus and
Thomas More. Ross Dealy contends that these texts are underpinned not by rhetoric, as tra-
ditionally argued, but instead by a “set way of thinking”; specifically, a Stoic unitary two-
dimensional framework. The book also attributes Thomas More’s “radical transformation”
to this mindset to late 1504. Dealy pinpoints More’s relationship with Erasmus as the catalyst
for this transformation: More’s exposure to De taedio Iesu and Enchiridion (cf. Part II) would
have been momentous. Challenging his “martyr mentality,” the texts put forward an image of Christianity “that is not one-dimensional but both/and”—contemplative and simultaneously active (p. 86). Dealy refutes a top-down understanding of Stoicism which uses two-dimensional frames of thought: *katharothema* and *kathecon*, *honestum* and *indifferens/utile*. He sets himself the challenge of “determining how the unitary unbending/bending [Stoic] frame works out in particular situations” (p. 9). The rest of the book lays out his answer.

He begins in Part I with the biographical context of More’s spiritual journey from 1501 to 1505. Examining the influence of his mentor John Colet, the impact of translating Pico’s writings, his lectures on Augustine’s *City of God*, and his decision in 1505 to step away from a contemplative life in the Carthusian Charterhouse, Dealy establishes a central precept of his interpretation of More’s philosophy (p. 79). He suggests that More’s psychomachic vacillation between a worldly and spiritual career is informed by his real-life experience of the tyranny of Richard III, which would have challenged his reading of Augustine’s discussions on tyranny. Consequently, More’s decision to step away from a contemplative career is depicted as a deliberate resolution. Dealy argues that More “has seen a paradigm that made sense of both polarities […] truth is one thing, that spirituality can never be separated from worldly situations” (p. 82) This paradigm is a unitary two-dimensional Stoicism, made complete by a perfected Christianity found in Christ’s teachings.

Part II applies this paradigmatic interpretation of More’s life to his study of *Enchiridion* and *De taedio Iesu*. According to this “radically new paradigm,” More is following Erasmus’ own radicalisation in 1497 (p. 96). The fact that More reflects on *De taedio Iesu* in his last major work (*De tristitia Christi*) is used as evidence to support the momentous impact of his engagement with these works in 1503. Dealy considers that “while fifteenth-century humanists had made philosophy serve rhetoric, Erasmus made rhetoric serve philosophy—and so too does Thomas More” (p. 100). Biographical details, lifted from correspondence between the two scholars, are used to support this understanding of Erasmus and More’s mindset as authors. Part III contrasts aspects of More’s Lucian compositions with a unitary, Stoic mindset. Specifically, this section puts forward the case that: *Cynicus* describes Stoic *honestum* in Christian terms; *Menippus* does the same with *utile*, and *Philopseudes* describes the two terms in unity. Part III also addresses the role of truth within this framework, again using the three dialogues to investigate More’s application of this Stoicism. Part IV is a brief interlude which returns again to a biographical focus on More’s character. Erasmus’ 1519 description of his friend and his preface to *The Praise of Folly* illustrates how he views More as a person embodying the Stoic unitary. Part V seeks to place *The Praise of Folly* within this new chronology of More’s Stoic transformation. It aims to show Erasmus’ use of a Stoic framework, building here on Dealy’s previous book, *The Stoic Origins of Erasmus’ Philosophy of Christ* (2017).

Paying particular attention again to the treatment of truth, and of other values, Dealy argues that Erasmus not only has the greatest grasp of Stoicism since late antiquity (p. 159) but that he is using More’s radical transformation as a template for the text; Erasmus uses rhetoric to articulate a lesson for everyone. Having discussed at length the effect of this rhetoric within a Stoic unitary framework, Part VI sets out a Utopian Philosophy. Dealy sets out the purported Epicureanism of *Utopia*, and shows how the text in fact sets out a nuanced refutation of Epicureanism by employing a Stoic *honestum/utile* frame. This discussion contextualises the use of *recta ratio*, moral and religious absolutes, the Lesbian rule, and pleasure (*voluptas/honestum* words; virtue, happiness etc.) in Hythloday’s narrative.

*Utopia* re-formulates both philosophies, to an extent. Distinguishing between the one-dimensional framework of Epicureanism and the two-dimensional basis of Stoicism, Dealy addresses scholarship which argues that *Utopia* is based on a Platonic framework. He successfully rejects such a reading by examining the co-dependent representation of pleasure and
health in the text. Hythloday and non-Utopians are shown in Part VIII to see worldly affairs through a Lesbian lens: advantaging oneself at the expense of another (p. 262). Part VII consolidates the argument for a unitarily Stoic framework in *Utopia*: the Utopians hold a higher understanding of the truth. They have a unitary comprehension of the world, exemplified in their pacifism. Their indirect approach always has a different meaning; just as More’s indecision in 1504 displays the same mindset.

Dealy further suggests that the character “More” is misunderstood by Hythloday, and that through advocating for an indirect approach, “More” illustrates how the need for absolute precepts is not irreconcilable with Lesbian rule. Instead, the text highlights Hythloday’s faulty understanding of Christianity and through an assumption that the reader would also recognise this blindness, the text shows that truth is two-dimensional. Reiterating the importance of More’s own “radical transformation” to the text, Dealy concludes by arguing that Hythloday represents More before his transformation in 1504, and that the character “More” encapsulates the author’s complete view of unitary two-dimensional Stoic philosophy. All that the Utopians’ mindset is missing are Christ’s *honestum/voluptas* teachings (45). Ending, as he began, on a biographical note, Dealy links More’s decision to join the Tudor court as “an eminently logical extension of [...] two radically different types of value” (p. 349).

One strength of this book is its thorough engagement with existing scholarship on the philosophical parameters of *Utopia*: Dealy’s deconstruction of Eric Nelson’s “one mind” thesis and Charles Trinkaus’ programmatic reading of the text sets the foundation for his own “indirect approach” reading. Similarly, Dealy illustrates how Quentin Skinner’s understanding of Ciceronian *honestum* (as interchangeable with leisure) fails to place any importance on the use of absolutes in *Utopia* (pp. 14–16). The extensive analysis of surrounding scholarship is extremely useful in orientating the reader and providing a contextual backdrop for his own complex argument.

Dealy’s refutation of a Platonic structure in *Utopia*, while logical, is only briefly covered. He asserts that Hythloday’s treatment of Plato is placed “solidly within a Stoic-based frame” (p. 40). It does not feel that there is a convincing enough rejection of this Platonic model due to the complexity of his proposed unitary two-dimensional framework. So much of the book is devoted to setting out and illustrating his reading that there is little space for extended discussion of a model of interpretation so incompatible with his own. Another area where further explanation could have been beneficial is the analysis of Epicurean pleasure in *Utopia*. Dealy suggests that pleasure is categorised on the *utile* side of the Stoic *honestum/utile* (both/and) framework. This deduction makes sense within the logic of the book, but is a dense point made fairly briefly in Part VI. His speculative conclusion—that More assumed his readers would see that the “indirect approach” of “More” was put into practice by the Polylerites and Utopians, and that “More” is merely objecting to Hythloday’s one-dimensional mindset (p. 319)—is a big claim. However, it is a convincing claim, supported by precise literary analysis and extensive contextual evidence. The publication of this book marks an exciting shift in direction in early Tudor humanist studies, and a valuable and original contribution to the field.

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