Dr. Katherine Forsyth

'Worthy to be hadde and redde of euerye Englishe man': the private, public and political contexts of Thomas More's English *Workes*.

Beneath these, five learn'd poets, worthy men
Who do eternise brave acts by their pen,
Chaucer, Gower, Lidgate, More, and for our time
Sir Philip Sidney, glory of our clime:
These beyond death a fame to monarchs give,
And these make cities and societies live.[1]

John Webster, Monuments of Honour, 1624

Almost ninety years after Thomas More's death, the playwright John Webster lauded him as a learned and worthy poet, placing him alongside Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate and Philip Sidney. It is clear that More was celebrated by Webster not only for the quality of his literary writing, but also for the wider political, social and historical influence of his literary output. This article uses the production of the 1557 folio of More's English *Workes* to explore the literary, political and religious influence of More's writing in the 1550s and beyond, and situates More's *Workes* within the wider context of folio production in Renaissance England. It also explores how the publication of More's *Workes* in folio established a distinct literary position for Thomas More in the mid-1550s, and highlights the unusual nature of the folio's compilation and production within the mid-Tudor book trade.

Keywords: Thomas More, Mary Tudor, Geoffrey Chaucer, Book Trade, Folios.

******

---

[1] John Webster quoted in Rev. Alex Dyce, ed. *Appendix to the works of John Webster* (London: William Pickering, 1838), 10.

In April 1557 the folio edition of *The workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght, sometyme Lorde Chauncellour of England, wrytten by him in the Englysh tonge* was printed 'at London in Fletestrete at the sygne of the hande and starre, at the coste and charge of Iohn Cawod, Iohn Walley, and Richarde Tottle'.[2] This magnificent and hefty volume has been relatively overlooked by modern historians and literary critics. When considered, it is often as an additional example to further a project's broader goal: for example in explorations of early modern martyrdom or prison writing.[3] Very little scholarship has explored the more 'literary' nature of More's folio, unlike those of

---

[2] Thomas More, *The workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght, sometyme Lorde Chauncellour of England, wrytten by him in the Englysh tonge* (London: John Cawood, John Walley and Richard Tottel, 1557), Zv[v]. The folio contains: *The life of John Picus Erle of Myrandula; The history of king Richard the thirde; A Treatyce (vnfynshed) upon these woordes of holye Scrypture; A Dialogue concernynge heresyes; The supplicacion of soules; The Confutacion of Tyndales Avnswer and The second Boke; A letter of sir Thomas More knight impugning the erroniouse wryting of John Frith; The apology of syr Thomas More knight; The Debellacyon of Salem and Bizance; The answer to the first part of the poysoned booke; A dyalogue of comfort; A treatice to receaue the blessed body of our lorde, sacramentally and virtually; A treatice upon the passion of Chryste (unfinished); Here folowe certaine deuout and vertuouse instruccions, meditacions, and prayers made and collected by syr Thomas More knight; Here folow foure letters which syr Thomas More wrote after he had gyuen ouer the office of lord Chauncellour of England and before he was imprisoned; Here folow certeyn letters and other thynges which syr Thomas More wrote while he was prisoner in the towre of London.*

[3] In particular see Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England Under Mary Tudor* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009); Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Brad C. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1999); and Ruth Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature in the Sixteenth Century* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Geoffrey Chaucer, Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare, as well as the explosion of folio publications from the 1590s onwards. This article will explore the kinship circle responsible for shaping More's legacy. It will then address four key areas. . Firstly, the decision to produce More's *Workes* in folio. Secondly, the construction of Thomas More as a great literary figure, to be placed alongside Chaucer.. Thirdly, the ways in which More's work was a key intervention in religious and political controversies in Marian England. Fourthly, to bring together these two themes, this article will consider the claims that rival Protestant and Catholic traditions made to Chaucer and More respectively. Doing so will reveal the remarkable nature of the 1557 folio within the context of the mid-Tudor book trade and some of the central debates of the Marian period.

The More Circle

William Rastell has attracted the most scholarly attention for his involvement in the folio's publication. However, a complex network of people as far back as the Henrician period, were important for the eventual publication of the folio.

William Rastell was the son of the eminent lawyer-printer John Rastell, and More's sister Elizabeth; and whilst he had a brother and a sister of his own (his sister was later to marry the playwright John Heywood), the More children – Margaret, Ciceley, Elizabeth and John – were closer to William's age than were his own siblings. Consequently, it is believed that William spent much of his time with the More children, and indeed with More himself, establishing close and important relationships during the formative years of his life.[4] By 1529 William had set up his

---

[4] Cecil H. Clough, 'Rastell, John (*c.*1475–1536)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23149> (accessed 26 March 2017);

own printing press, coincidentally at the same time as John Rastell and More irreconcilably fell out over John's adoption of evangelicalism. [5] As a result of becoming a committed reformer John transferred his support from More to Thomas Cromwell under whose patronage John Rastell introduced draft legislation into Parliament which attempted to overturn some of More's most important beliefs.[6] More consequently sought a new printer for his English works and turned to William. William printed successfully between 1529 and 1534, making some significant contributions to English law printing (such as the first edition of the register of writs), and in 1534 he turned his attention to legal study. Having been admitted to Lincoln's Inn (the legal home of both his father and More), in 1539 he was called to the Bar, and in 1546 was called to the Bench.

It is unlikely, though, that Rastell would have had the depth of material from which to draw when compiling the folio without the wit, intelligence, and bravery of More's daughter Margaret. Born in 1505, the daughter of More and his first wife, Jane Colt, Margaret Roper was famed for her advanced education and a 'high minded

Arthur W. Reed, 'The Editor of Sir Thomas More's English Works: William Rastell', *The Library* 4 (1923): 26.

[5] J. H. Baker, 'Rastell, William (1508–1565)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23151> (accessed 27 March 2017).

[6] M.L. Bush, *The Pilgrims' Complaint: A Study of Popular Thought in the Early Tudor North* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 104; John Guy, *A Daughter's Love: Thomas and Margaret More* (London: Harper Perennial, 2009), 5.

disposition' that was greatly encouraged by More.[7] After More's execution, although it was extremely dangerous to possess his unprinted works, Margaret managed to collect all of her father's works which he had composed in the Tower of London. Shortly after, she was summoned by Thomas Cromwell to appear before the Privy Council where she was accused of 'attempting to propagate a cult and of concealing her father's papers'. She replied 'I have hardly any books and papers, except for a very few personal letters, which I humbly beseech you to keep.' She was allowed to leave unharmed, and through her bravery, preserved both her freedom and More's books and papers which she eventually handed over to William Rastell.[8]

A final early relationship that was central to the eventual formulation of the 1557 folio was the friendship between Thomas More and Antonio Buonvisi. Whilst Buonvisi was not directly involved in the production of More's *Workes,* it was his friendship with More that led him to protect the extended More family as well as the More papers and manuscripts during the reign of Edward VI. Whilst living in London Buonvisi became acquainted with the young More who became 'not a guest but a continual nurseling' in his house.[9] Harpsfield reported that, 'Sir Thomas More was wont to call [Antonie Bonvice] the apple of his eye'.[10] Following More's arrest in 1534, Buonvisi continued to support More and John Fisher in the Tower, providing food and drink for them during their imprisonment and a silk camlet gown for More

[7] Margaret Bowker, 'Roper [More], Margaret (1505–1544)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24071> (accessed 25 March 2017).

[8] Guy, *A Daughter's Love*, 6.

[9] Quoted in C. Desmond Ford, 'Good Master Bonvisi', *Clergy Review* 27 (1947): 228.

[10] Dominic Baker-Smith, 'Antonio Bonvisi and Florens Wilson', *Moreana*, 43 (2006): 83; Ford, 'Good Master Bonvisi', 232.

to wear to his execution.[11]   Wriothesley called him a 'rank papist' and, with the coming of the first Act of Uniformity in 1549, Buonvisi fled to Louvain.[12]

During the reign of Edward VI many members of the More circle found themselves in Louvain, and it became 'the nearest harbour of the faith to which Englishmen driven out for the faith might run to refuge'.[13]   William Rastell, along with his wife Winifred (the daughter of More's adopted daughter Margaret Giggs and her husband, the humanist scholar, John Clements) resided in Bonvisi's house during this time, along with other Catholic exiles such as the Ropers, the Clementses, and Nicholas Harpsfield. [14] It was probably whilst in exile in Louvain that Harpsfield began work on his biography *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More*, which is believed to have been composed to accompany the English *Workes*.[15] Louvain was also the location for much of the planning and work towards the compilation of a More folio.

Similarly, during the reign of Edward VI, Mary Bassett, the learned granddaughter of More and daughter of Margaret Roper, established herself amidst a learned network of translators, both at home and abroad that centered on Princess Mary, her household and the staunch group of religious conservatives based in

---

[11] C.T. Martin, 'Antonio Bonvisi', rev. Basil Morgan, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2860> (accessed 26 March 2017).

[12] *Ibid.*.

[13] Ford, 'Good Master Bonvisi', 235.

[14] Guy, *A Daughter's Love*, 272.

[15] Thomas S. Freeman, 'Harpsfield, Nicholas (1519–1575)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12369> (accessed 3 April 2017).

England and on the Continent, most notably in Louvain.[16] At some point between 1547 and 1553 Bassett set about translating Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, now read by critics as coded opposition to religious reform and by 1557, the date of the folio's publication, Bassett had established herself as a skilled and politically-astute translator within the conservative faction that had developed on the Continent during this time.[17] Given her close familial connection to Thomas More and her political abilities as a translator, it is unsurprising that she was the translator of More's *De Tristitia* for the 1557 folio. The translation was introduced with a preface by 'The printer to the gentle reader' which extols its virtues. The 'lately englished' work 'full of good and godly lessons', it argues,

> Goeth so nere Sir Thomas Mores own English phrase that the gentlewoman (who for her pastyme translated it) is no nerer to hym in kynred, vertue and litterature, than in hys englishe tongue: so that it myghte seme to haue been by hys own pen indyted fyrst, and not at all translated.

He continues, stating that, 'somewhat I had to doo ere that I could come by thys boke' because

---

[16] Andrew Taylor, 'How to hold your tongue: John Christopherson's Plutarch and the Mid-Tudor Politics of Catholic Humanism', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 41 (2014): 412. For further details of this recusant group on the Continent see James K. McConica, 'The Recusant Reputation of Thomas More', CCHA, *Report* 30 (1963): 47-61.

[17] Jaime Goodrich, 'The Dedicatory Preface to Mary Roper Clarke Basset's Translation of Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History', *English Literary Renaissance* 40 (2010): 311; Eugenio M. Olivares-Merino, 'Some Notes about Mary Roper Clar(c)ke Bassett and her Translation of Eusebius', *Moreana* 46 (2009): 151 and Goodrich, 'The Dedicatory Preface', 308.

> The ge*n*tlewoma*n* which tra*n*slated it, semed nothing willing to have it goe
>
> abrode, for that (she sayth), it was firste turned into englishe, but for her owne
>
> pastyme and exercyse, and so reputeth it farre to symple to come in many
>
> handes.[18]

Whilst emphasizing the skill of Bassett's translation, Tottell's preface also provides an insight into the potential printing scene of the *De Tristitia*. He notes Mary's, probably conventional, reluctance to have the work printed but also the eagerness of many to see it published in a unique volume. This was not the first time, however, that Bassett had expressed reluctance in sharing her work. Harpsfield noted other translations he claimed she had suppressed out of modesty.[19] By 1557, though, not only did Tottell want to print the *De Tristitia* in the *Workes* but, because of the quality of the translation, he wanted also to print it separately.

> And some ther were that fayn wold haue had it sette furth in prynte alone,
>
> because the matter is so good and eke so well handeled, that it were to be
>
> wished it mought be readde of all folkes: which mo would bye, set out alone,
>
> than with so many other of hys woorkes: and happely so shall it be hereafter at
>
> more leasure.[20]

---

[18] More, *Workes*, 'The prynter to the gentle reader', 2Q7^v.

[19] Caroline M. K. Bowden, 'Bassett [Roper], Mary (*d.* 1572)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45808> (accessed 28 March 2017).

[20] More, *Workes*, 2Q7^v.

With the death of Edward VI and the accession of Mary I the More circle returned to England and began to plan the publication of the folio of More's English *Workes*. What had been planned and discussed in Edwardine Louvain could now be produced and disseminated in Marian London.

Whilst undeniably seeking to memorialize his uncle, William Rastell also played an important part in the restoration of Catholicism and the fight against Protestantism. The promotion of More's memory by Rastell and More's son-in-law William Roper is inextricably tied to the bureaucracy behind the re-Catholicization of Canterbury under Reginald Pole. Both were MPs for Canterbury and both were very active campaigners against heresy. Rastell was a legal councillor for Canterbury from 1555 whilst Roper joined the Canterbury heresy commission established in April 1556. Both Roper and Rastell sat on the national heresy commission that was established in 1557..[21] Rastell and other members of the More circle were therefore greatly involved in the bureaucratic processes that saw the restoration of Catholicism in England and the attack on Protestantism, and the folio was intended both to serve a part in this and memorialize More. To achieve this, Rastell assembled a team comprising the stationers Richard Tottell, John Cawood and John Walley to help in the compilation and printing of the folio edition. Thomas Paynell would provide a detailed index to the *Workes*.

The chief printer of the More folio, Richard Tottell, is perhaps best known for his printing of the verse miscellany *Songes and sonettes* (more commonly known as *Tottell's Miscellany*) published in the summer of 1557. His reputation in the sixteenth century, though, was made through his printing of legal works. Tottell was well-

---

[21] Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 179.

connected with the London legal elite which allowed him to build a virtual monopoly for the printing of legal publications, culminating in the royal privilege to do so. [22] He was one of the few London printers to continue in their trade with the accession of Mary and indeed benefitted from Mary's accession, securing much stock-in-trade from exiled and dispossessed printers.[23] His religious allegiances, though, are harder to define than those of many Marian printers: his privilege was granted under Edward and he served as legal printer-in-chief to Elizabeth I. It is clear, though, that he was willing to print Catholic works and maintained links with many notable Catholics, in particular the Cholmeleys and William Rastell, during Mary's reign. It is through Tottell's involvement in the London legal scene that his connection to this group of notable Catholics may be explained. Byrom has suggested there was a direct connection between Redman, Tottell and the Chomeleys through the printing of law books. He has also noted that the Chomeleys were members of a group of lawyers based at Lincoln's Inn that included Ralph Rokeby, William Rastell, William Roper, Richard Heywood, John Peyghan and his relative William Peyghan.[24]

Byrom claims that Tottell owed his position as the printer of choice for law books through these associations; however, Tottell's connection to these men as early as 1553 has recently been disputed by Peter Blayney.[25] It is important to note that

---

[22] Anna Greening, 'Tottell , Richard (*b.* in or before 1528, *d.* 1593)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27573> (accessed 28 March 2017).

[23] H.J. Byrom, 'Richard Tottell – His Life and Work', *The Library* VIII (1927): 203-4.

[24] *Ibid*., 202.

[25] *Ibid*., 202-3; Peter Blayney, *The Stationers' Company and the Printers of London, 1501-1557*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 2: 645-6.

William Rastell spent much of his time in Louvain composing important legal works which, when he returned to England, he had printed by Tottell.[26] Given the purging of Protestant printers at the start of Mary's reign, it seems unlikely that Tottell would have been allowed to remain in England and print, let alone have retained and benefitted from his privilege, had his religious allegiances been questionable. Equally, given William Rastell's staunch Catholicism and Tottell's connections to this Catholic legal elite, Tottell's involvement may have stemmed as much from shared Catholic sympathies as it did from his ability as a printer of legal texts. Tottell, therefore, was an unsurprising choice as chief printer of the *Workes*. He had established connections with William Rastell and had worked with him in producing both Rastell's own work and also More's *Dialogue of comfort* in 1553, as well as maintaining more general connections to the wider More circle based at Lincoln's Inn.

Rastell also involved the Queen's Printer, John Cawood, in the printing of More's *Workes*. Cawood's Marian output is fairly substantial − 132 works printed between 1553 and 1558 − and it was his appointment as Queen's Printer, and the production of texts,both official and unofficial, subsequent to this appointment that quickly led to new-found wealth.[27] Cawood was an important and influential member of the Stationers' Company; he acted as Warden of the Company from 1554 and is listed as an Upper Warden in the royal charter of the Stationers' Company on 4 May 1557.[28] It seems unlikely that Cawood would have been appointed to the position of

---

[26] Byrom, 'Richard Tottell', 206.

[27] Alec Ryrie, 'Cawood, John (1513/14–1572)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4958> (accessed 28 March 2017).

[28] *Ibid.*.

Queen's Printer had his religious position been doubted. Whilst there is no firm evidence of Cawood's religious beliefs, much that we do know of him points to a staunch Catholicism: his lack of printed output before 1553 which still saw him elected as royal printer; his Marian printed output, and his membership and actions in the refounding of the Guild of the Holy Name of Jesus, all attest to Cawood's Catholic beliefs.[29] A final point that further increases the likelihood that Cawood was a committed Catholic was that his son Gabriel, also a Stationer, was known during Elizabeth's reign to maintain Catholic sympathies.[30] Given the large size of the folio and the fact that both Cawood and Tottell were very able printers with active presses, one would expect them to have shared the printing, but Cawood appears to have been responsible for the printing of the first quire only. Why was this the case? A logical surmise is that as Queen's Printer, Cawood had a substantial workload and simply did not have time alongside his royal obligations. However, the lack of parliamentary activity between December 1555 and January 1558 meant he was not required to print parliamentary proceedings which formed one of the most substantial parts of his Marian output, and he also produced just twelve works in 1557. His limited contribution to the printing of the *Workes*, therefore was not due to being overloaded

---

[29] A point with which Peter Blayney concurs. See Blayney, *The Stationers' Company,* 2: 754.

[30] For further information see James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450-1850* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 73; Nancy Pollard Brown, 'Robert Southwell: The Mission of the Written Word' in Thomas M. McCoog (ed.) *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits: Essays in Celebration of the First Centenary of Campion Hall* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1996), 193-215 at 200; and Patrick Collinson, Arnold Hunt, and Alexandra Walsham, 'Religious Publishing in England, 1557-1640' in D.F. McKenzie and John Barnard eds. *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol.4,* 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4: 45.

with official works. It seems, therefore, that his involvement might have been financial rather than practical, a point which is affirmed by both the imprint and the colophon to the *Workes* which state that the text was imprinted 'at the coste and charge of Iohn Cawood, Iohn Walley, and Richard Tottle.'[31] Cawood was certainly financially capable of supporting this production – Blayney notes that in 1556 he was the wealthiest member of the Stationers' Company making generous donations - and, from a marketing perspective, his name, as Queen's Printer, provided More's *Workes* with further authority. [32]

The final stationer who formed the printing syndicate, John Walley, has proven to be the most elusive. Walley had worked as a publisher in conjunction with numerous printers including Nicholas Hill, Robert Copland, John King, William Copland and John Day. Blayney believes that in 1555 he set up as a master printer and that many of the books he published, either alone or in partnership, were printed for him by a number of other established printers because his output was so small.[33] So how can Walley's involvement in the publication of the *Workes* be explained? It seems that the simplest conclusion is the likeliest – Walley provided the publishing aspect of the syndicate, whilst Tottell and Cawood took care of the printing, marketing and financial side of the venture. Rastell, therefore, established a powerful printing syndicate made up of important and wealthy members of the Stationers' Company who not only brought financial aid to the folio's production, but also professional prestige.

---

[31] More, *Workes*, 2Zv[v].

[32] For further details see Blayney, *The Stationers' Company,* 2: 767-8.

[33] *Ibid*., 787-8.

Finally, Rastell commissioned Thomas Paynell to compose a detailed thematic table of contents. Germain Marc'hadour has noted the importance of Paynell's role as annotator in creating the marginal glosses in the folio; 'the nature of the references – scriptural rather than legal or historical – points to a cleric, not a lawyer as Rastell was'.[34] Paynell was an Augustinian canon, perhaps most famous for his works of translation, and under Henry VIII he had worked on several that were published by the King's Printer, Thomas Berthelet.[35] These included the *Regimen sanitatis Salerni*. *This boke techynge all people to gouerne them in helthe* (1530) which provided information on 'a temperate and moderate dyete' that 'prolongeth mans life'.[36] A devout Catholic – John Bale said of him that 'if monkish superstitions had not got in his way he was a man born to help those around him' – Paynell's involvement in More's *Workes* is understandable on religious grounds. [37] However, it can be argued that there was also a practical reason for Rastell approaching him for his folio. In his Henrician translation of the *Regimen Sanitatis*, Paynell's extensive contents page

---

[34] Germain Marc'hadour, 'Three Tudor Editors of Thomas More', in R.J Schoeck, ed., *Editing Sixteenth Century Texts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 59-71 at 61.

[35] For further information on Paynell see, Helen Moore, 'Gathering Fruit: The 'Profitable' Translations of Thomas Paynell' in Fred Schurink, ed. *Tudor Translations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 39-57; James Kelsey McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965),138-40 and Geoffrey Eatough, 'Paynell, Thomas (*d.* 1564?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21661> (accessed 29 March 2017).

[36] Thomas Paynell, *Regimen sanitatis Salerni: This boke techynge all people to gouerne them in helthe, is translated out of the Latyne tounge into englishe by Thomas Paynell. Which boke is amended, augmented, and diligently imprinted* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1530), Aiii[r]; Eatough, 'Thomas Paynell', *ODNB*.

[37] *Ibid.*.

provides a detailed synopsis of what is included in the text, as well as guidance on how to locate the relevant page.[38] Just as in Paynell's extensive table in More's *Workes*, his table in the *Regimen Sanitatis* is carefully divided within each quire by subject matter. It was clearly of great importance to Paynell that readers understood how the table worked and were able to use it correctly. He stated:

> To understande this table, witteth that euery lettre of the alphabete in the boke hath iiii. leaues, and euery leafe is .ii. pages or sydes. The nombre that standeth at the lynes ende, sheweth what page or syde of the queyre the thyng is in that ye wolde knowe.[39]

He then provides an explanation of what is to be found in each quire. The detailed table that Paynell provided for the 1557 *Workes* is very reminiscent of this earlier table. It can be argued therefore, that the main reason for his involvement was his skill in compiling and composing such comprehensive guides for readers. The article will later note the importance that was placed on the table to ensure that readers could use the folio both as a work of spiritual and moral guidance, and as a polemical aid in the refutation of heretical beliefs.

By now it may be seen what a family and kinship project the 1557 *Workes* was. The compilation and publication of the *Workes* allowed the More circle to celebrate and memorialize Sir Thomas and to develop, as Michael Questier has explored, a carefully constructed image of More. As he explains, 'We know, of course, that Sir

---

[38] *Ibid.*.

[39] Paynell, *Regimen sanitatis Salerni*, Aiii^v.

Thomas More was a cultic figure soon after his execution in 1535, and particularly among his relations'.[40] Jaime Goodrich has explored how, as well as providing the translation of the *De Tristitia*, Mary Bassett also helped fund the folio because of the need to 'secure More's profile as the foremost English martyr of his era' in the face of competition from John Fisher.[41] It is not a coincidence then that those involved in the production of More's *Workes* had close familial ties and can easily be placed into the – relatively small – More circle. As well as controlling the majority of the English printing of More's works, members of this group were also behind the two biographies of More by William Roper and Nicholas Harpsfield that emerged in the 1550s, Roper – More's son-in-law, husband of Margaret More and father of Mary Bassett – providing the oral and written evidence that was the source material for Harpsfield's biography. It is believed, though, that Roper's text was written for Harpsfield's personal use and was never intended for publication.[42]

The choice of folio

The folio runs to a total of 1,458 pages with the majority of the text laid out in two columns. The prefatory material includes a grand title page, Rastell's dedication of the folio to Queen Mary, Thomas Paynell's table and More's four youthful works. A table of contents is to be found which lists twenty-five 'workes and things conteyned in thys volume' ranging from some of More's most notable and weightiest theological

---

[40] Michael Questier, 'Catholicism, Kinship and the Public Memory of Sir Thomas More', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 3 (2002): 483.

[41] Goodrich, 'The Dedicatory Preface', 309.

[42] Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Roper, William (1495x8–1578)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24074> (accessed 3 April 2017).

treatises to letters he composed whilst imprisoned in the Tower of London between April 1534 and July 1535.

Of the twenty-five English items included in the main body of the *Workes*, twelve had been printed previously in England. *The Life of John Picus, Earl of Mirandola* was first printed by John Rastell in 1510 and then re-printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1525. William Rastell, prior to his editorship of the *Workes,* printed *The Supplycacyon of Soulys* (two editions in 1529), *A Dyalogue Touchyng the pestylent sect of Luther and Tyndale* (1529), both parts of *The Confutacyon of Tyndales Answere* (1532 and 1533 respectively), *The Answere to the Fyrst Parte of the Poysened Booke* (1533), *The Apologye of Syr Thomas More, Knyght* (1533), *The Debellacyon of Salem and Bizance* (1533) and *A Letter of Syr Thomas More, Knyght Impugnynge the Erronyouse Wrytyng of Iohn Fryth* (1533). 1534 saw William Rastell's final printing venture for More with his *Treatise upon the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar,* which is also to be found in the 1557 volume. There then followed a nineteen-year gap in the printing of More's works in England before Steven Mierdman and Abraham Veale printed the first English translation of *Utopia* by Ralph Robinson in 1551. Whilst *Utopia* is not included in the *Workes*, a point discussed at greater length below, a second edition was produced in 1556 printed by Tottell. Tottell had also printed *A Dialogue of Comfort* in 1553. This means that all of the English works printed by William Rastell prior to 1557 are included in the 1557 volume, and that de Worde was the only printer other than John and William Rastell and Tottell to print one of the texts included in the folio. This confirms the closeness of the More circle to, and its hold on, the printing of More's works in English. It also reinforces William Rastell's claim to the editorship of the 1557 project as he printed nine out of the sixteen (56%) English works of More printed prior to 1557.

The first reason, therefore, for More's *Workes* to be published in folio format is that this was the only format suitable if all material was to appear in one volume. It is, therefore, a 'folio of necessity' according to Steven Galbraith's taxonomy of folio publication, which Galbraith explains is

> chosen because the amount of text to be printed is so great that no other format could reasonably contain it. Often, these books are set in double columns of smaller type that fills the page as completely as possible.[43]

However, whilst this provides an obvious and practical reason for the printed format of the *Workes*, there are further points to be noted about the format chosen which have wider effects on the literary and religio-political position of Thomas More.

Publishing the *Workes* in folio situates More within a privileged literary position. It was highly unusual, firstly, for authors at this time in England to have their writings collected in a single *Workes* and, secondly, for this collected edition to be published in folio. The only authors in England before 1557 to have their writing collected in such manner were Thomas Lupset and Geoffrey Chaucer, and out of these two only Chaucer's *Workes* were printed in folio.[44] This is an important literary and bibliographical point that has been overlooked in scholarship on More's *Workes*.

---

[43] Steven K. Galbraith, 'English literary folios 1593-1623: studying shifts in format' in John N. King, ed. *Tudor books and readers: materiality and the construction of meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 46-67 at 48-9.

[44] *The workes of Geffray Chaucer newly printed with dyuers workes whiche were neuer in print before: As in the table more playnly dothe appere* (London: Thomas Godfray, 1532).

Whilst there was a practical reason for including More's *Workes* within a folio volume, it was also an affirmation by those involved in its production of More's place within English (and European) literary culture. William Rastell's dedication to Queen Mary gives a variety of reasons for the compilation of the folio volume with a particular emphasis on the benefit to the Marian reader in attaining

> gret knowledge, aswel for the incresing of al kindes of godly vertues and holy liuinge, as for the confirming of his owne faith, and eschuing and confuting of all peruerse opinions, false doctrine, and deuillyshe heresies, if he be not vtterly destitute of Gods grace, and blinded both with obstinate and stubburne malice, and also with proude and arrogant presumptio*n*.[45]

More's literary legacy

It is clear, therefore, that Rastell intended this volume to serve a political and religious purpose, and this is something that will be returned to. However, scholars have tended to overlook Rastell's fashioning, in the preface, of More as a great English literary figure whose writings furthered the development of English vernacular literary culture. Rastell emphasizes the 'English' nature of the *Workes* deploying a lexicon of nationhood throughout his preface, particularly on the first page of his dedication. He emphasizes that his uncle 'sometyme lorde Chauncellour of *England*'

> wrote in the *Englysh* tonge, so many, and so well, as no one *Englishman* (I suppose) euer wrote the like, whereby his workes be worthy to be hadde and redde of euerye *Englishe* man, that is studious or desirous to know and learne, not onelye the eloquence and propertie of the *English* tonge, but also the trewe

---

[45] More, *Workes*, **C**ii^v.

doctryne of Christes catholike fayth, the confutacion of detestable heresyes, or the godly morall vertues that appertaine to the framinge and fourminge of mennes maners and consciences, to liue a vertuous and deuout christen life …[46] [Emphases mine].

A number of claims about More's writing are made here by Rastell. Firstly, he is clearly fashioning More as an advocate of vernacular writing and whose folio is a celebration and demonstration of the virtues of writing in the English language. In addition, More is an Englishman, writing for an English readership in the English tongue: this will help Mary to ensure her subjects live a virtuous and devout Christian life via the comprehension of the true Catholic faith and the shunning of 'detestable heresyes'.[47] However, perhaps the most ambitious claim made by Rastell in the dedication is that no one has ever written as prodigiously and effectively in the English language as More. Whilst scholars have acknowledged and explored the More circle's fashioning of More as an ideal martyr to educate and inform a Marian readership amidst the martyrdom controversies of the 1550s, Rastell's claim that More is the pre-eminent producer of vernacular English works has remained relatively unexplored. It is unsurprising that Rastell was keen to emphasize the 'greate eloquence, excellent learninge, and morall vertues' which are to be found in More's writings in the folio which he has been keen to collate and compile into one volume to ensure 'not onely that euery man *tha*t will now in our dayes, maye haue and take

---

[46] *Ibid*., **C**ii[r].

[47] It is important to note that collected editions of More's Latin works were not seen until the 1560s and that they were printed on the continent (1563 in Basle and 1565 in Louvain). In the 1550s, therefore, it seems the priority was the publication of More's works in the English language for an English readership, to assist in the re-Catholicization of England.

commoditie by them, but also that they may be preserued for the profit likewise of our posteritie'.[48] He believes that More's writings are so important that they needed to be compiled to ensure their preservation which will, in turn, allow people to profit from More's writings in perpetuity. Rastell emphasises More's preeminence as an English writer, suggesting his position alongside such celebrated writers as Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate. Prefatory remarks are often, of course, subject to hyperbole. Nevertheless, Rastell affirms the importance of More's writing both to educate those interested in the virtues of writing in English, and also to influence thinking on weighty theological matters. Hence the suggestion that More assumes a position of hitherto unrecognized literary standing in Marian England.[49]

Rastell's folio, though, should be understood alongside other attempts both to celebrate vernacular writing and influence religious and political matters. One particularly revealing example in relation to the 1557 volume was William Thynne's sixteenth-century folio editions of the *Workes* of Geoffrey Chaucer, a poet whom More admired.[50] Geoffrey Chaucer was the only English author before Thomas More

---

[48] More, *Workes*, **C**ii[v].

[49] Rastell's enthusiasm to emphasize the beneficial combination of eloquence and religious utility to be found in More's *Workes* may also have been due to a need to repair More's reputation in the 1550s that had been damaged by various attacks from Protestant reformers. Indeed, there was also a lack of enthusiasm for his writings, by this time, due to their often abstruse nature.

[50] Various academics have explored Chaucer's influence on More's writing. In particular see Thomas Betteridge, *Writing Faith and Telling Tales: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Work of Thomas More* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013); Alistair Fox, 'Chaucer, More, and English Humanism', *Parergon* 6 (1988): 63-75; Germain Marc'Hadour, 'Geoffrey Chaucer and

to have his works compiled into a unifying, authoritative, single folio volume in England. Chaucer's authority and fame was discussed as early as the fifteenth century with manuscripts attesting to his standing. These, as Louise M. Bishop has shown, 'used a number of expressions to denote Chaucer's preeminence as English poet, with "master" the special favourite'.[51] The poet John Lydgate claimed that Chaucer 'Gan oure tonge firste to magnifie, / And adourne it with his elloquence', a position supported by a procession of English Renaissance authors, from Roger Ascham to William Shakespeare, who venerated Chaucer's writing.[52] It can be seen, therefore, that the 1557 folio by title (*Workes*) and size alone inherently situated Thomas More in exalted English literary company. As Alistair Fox has shown More and his contemporary circle were great admirers of Chaucer so to situate More alongside him was significant. [53] Indeed, an attempt to further associate More with writers of unchallenged authority whose works were published in the similar *Opera Omnia* format on the Continent might be seen to begin even earlier than the 1557 folio. More's *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation* which was published by Richard Tottell in London in 1553. One striking feature of this volume is the Ovidian scene of the death of Pyramus and Thisbe on the title-page. Critics have found this an odd choice in relation to the matter of the text itself. Whilst there are implicit

---

Thomas More', *Moreana* Vol.41, 159 (September 2004): 37-63; Francis X. Ryan, S.J., 'Sir Thomas More's Use of Chaucer', Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, Vol. 35, No.1 (1995): 1-17.

[51] Louise M. Bishop, 'Father Chaucer and the Vivification of Print', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106 (2007): 339.

[52] Christopher Cannon, 'The Myth of Origin and the Making of Chaucer's English', *Speculum* 71 (1996): 646; For a brief overview of Renaissance views on Chaucer see Helen Cooper, 'Poetic Fame' in James Simpson and Brian Cummings eds., *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 361-378 at 364.

[53] Fox, 'Chaucer, More, and English Humanism', 65.

messages about More's martyrdom here, it also raises questions about literary association. By deploying the woodcut of Pyramus and Thisbe, Tottell situated the *Dialogue* within a substantial literary framework, a who's who of notable and influential classical and medieval literary figures who employed the story of Pyramus and Thisbe – Ovid, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Gower. As Helen Cooper explains,

> Poetry is nothing without fame: it needs to be known. If in addition it carries the name of a famous poet, then that itself authorizes and validates the work. When an early modern poet, a humanist poet, wanted to write in English, he looked for such validation: for a model of fame that would not only give him something to emulate or imitate, important as that was, but that would authorize his work in the eyes of his reading public.[54]

Tottell's frontispiece has puzzled critics who have struggled to see an obvious relationship between Ovid's story and More's *Dialogue*, but perhaps Tottell's choice of image was as much an attempt at an implied association between More and figures from the literary pantheon as it was about picking an image that suitably matched the subject matter of the *Dialogue* itself. However, Rastell's intentions for the 1557 folio were not just literary.

More's work as a religious and political intervention in Marian England

---

[54] Cooper, 'Poetic Fame', 361.

As Wizeman notes, the infamous Marian persecutions and burnings were underpinned with an 'intellectual and emotive' textual fervor. [55] The Marian regime strove to maintain the compliance of the English people to both the persecutions and the Catholic faith by producing works which confronted the Protestant problem head-on and engaged directly with ideas of martyrdom. In tackling the problem of the Protestant 'pseudomartyr', as well as constructing an opposing image of true martyrdom, the figure and writings of Thomas More were significant . Eamon Duffy explains, 'Here was a carefully presented pattern of martyrdom radically different from the strident protestant heroics that the apologists for the regime felt were so beguiling the blind and foolish London crowds'.[56] More had been a central and authoritative voice in the 1530s regarding the ideas of true martyrdom, so it is unsurprising that it was to his writing that people turned in Marian England. [57] As Anne Dillon shows, More argued that 'a variety of people dying for a variety of differing causes and, moreover, mutually opposed to one another could not be martyrs; because the martyr was the symbol of the true Church, which was, by definition, one in body, belief, and worship.' This encapsulated a major strand of the Marian regime's stance on Protestant heretics.[59] Equally, there was a concern that the English people who witnessed these executions would be converted by the seemingly

---

[55] William Wizeman, *The Theology and Spirituality of Mary Tudor's Church*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006), 154.

[56] Duffy, *Fires of Faith,* 181.

[57] For further discussion of More's understanding of 'true martyrdom' see Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 24.

[59] *Ibid*., 23.

brave deaths of these 'anti-martyrs'.[60]   Indeed, there are numerous examples of conversion to Protestantism by those who witnessed valiant Protestant deaths at the stake. For example, Julins Palmer had been a staunch Catholic and outspoken critic of Edward VI's Protestant reforms during his time at Magdalen College, Oxford, but after witnessing the executions of Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, embraced Protestantism.[62]   The Marian regime, therefore, needed to assert what they saw as true claims to martyrdom to counter the onslaught of false Protestant claims The 1557 folio edition of More's *Workes* offered an authoritative 'truth' about Catholic martyrdom. The publication of More's anti-Lutheran polemics in the *Workes* ensured that his extensive writings on heresy and the nature of martyrdom were available within Marian England, and the publication of More's 'Tower Works' and personal letters allowed William Rastell to fashion, and the Marian regime to exploit, the figure of More as a martyr himself. Rastell hoped to elevate More's literary reputation via the publication of the folio, but he also intended to elevate More's reputation as a persecuted and Christlike figure, refashioning his image as a true martyr, and making available his vernacular anti-heretical polemics and considerations of martyrdom.[63] As Dale B. Billingsley has shown, the second half of the *Workes*, 'from the Dialogue of Comfort to the last letter […] moves the reader through a journey to martyrdom; which sees the emergence of More as a 'martyr-

---

[60] William Wizeman, 'Martyrs and Anti-Martyrs and Mary Tudor's Church', in Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer, eds. *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England c.1400-1700* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), 166-80 at 167.

[62] Jasper Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs: The Story of England's Terror* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2001),150-2.

[63] Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature*, 162; Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 179-80.

icon''.[64]   The importance of creating and presenting More as the ideal Catholic martyr, it can be argued, can be perceived in the choices made by William Rastell regarding which works to include or exclude in the volume. It appears that Rastell was more concerned with presenting More on a journey to martyrdom than in maintaining the pure Englishness of the volume. The inclusion of Mary Bassett's translation of More's *De Tristitia* suggests that Rastell was willing to include English translations of Latin works and it is notable,, therefore, that a translation of *Utopia* was not included. The first English translation, by Ralph Robinson, was printed in 1551 by Steven Mierdman for Abraham Veale at the Sign of the Lamb in St. Paul's Churchyard, and the second English edition in 1556 by Tottell for, again, Veale; so there was a translation that would have been available for Rastell to use. Perhaps since Veale had acted as the work's publisher in both 1551 and again in 1556, the More family did not have the same hold over *Utopia* that it had over some of More's other works which had been printed by members of the wider More circle. Consequently, it might be that *Utopia* was not included in the *Workes* because of Veale's prior involvement and his stake in printing it, which he was unwilling to allow the More circle to infringe upon. Another potential reason for the omission of *Utopia* is a fear of the book being misread, or that it might detract from the polemical message constructed throughout the folio. To include *Utopia* which extensively discusses the religiously-tolerant Utopian society that permits 'everyone could cultivate the religion of his choice' based on a belief that 'it was arrogant folly for anyone to enforce conformity with his own beliefs on everyone else by means of

---

[64] Dale B. Billingsley, 'The Editorial Design of the 1557 English Works', *Moreana* 89 (Feb. 1986): 46, 41.

threats or violence'[65] and which willingly accepted the possibility of a change in religion if God revealed one more acceptable to Him, would most certainly not support the aims and intentions of More's *Workes*. The inclusion of a work that represented a religiously-tolerant society that prohibited the persecution of people based on their faith would counteract the intentions of the folio to promote uniformity of belief amidst a period of persecution and violence in Marian England.

Not only would it detract from the polemical message of the *Workes* but due to its satirical nature there must have been a concern that Marian readers might misunderstand and misread it. More had himself said to Erasmus:

> if any man would nowe translate *Moria* in to Englyshe, or some workes eyther that I haue my self writt*en* ere this, albeit ther be none harm therin, folke yet beyng (as thei be) geuen to take harme of t*hat* that is good, I would not onely my derlinges bokes but mine owne also, helpe to burne them bothe w*ith* myne owne handes, rather then folke should (though through theyr own faut) take any harme of them, seyng that I se them likely in these dayes so to doe.[66]

More may well have been thinking of *Utopia* when he wrote this.

Perhaps, though, another reason for its exclusion is simply because it does not present More in a martyr's light. The importance of presenting More as a martyr even through the publication of writings which do not fit the description of 'English works', can also be seen through the inclusion of 'certein deuout and vertuouse

---

[65] Thomas More, 'Utopia' in Stephen Greenblatt et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume B: The Sixeenth Century and the Early Seventeenth Century* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2012): 636.

[66] More, *Workes*, 2dvii^v-2dviii^r.

instruccions, meditacions, and prayers made and collected by Syr Thomas More knight while he was prisoner in the towre of London'.[67] As Billingsley states, the 'editorial principle of the Tower section is inclusivity: More the martyr is to be represented as completely as his extant writings – whatever their form or tongue – will allow'.[68] The inclusion of More's Latin instructions, letters and prayers therefore shows the importance William Rastell placed on emphasizing More's journey to martyrdom; he was so keen to emphasize this that he was willing to break the vernacular design of the *Workes*. As Eamon Duffy has shown, the inclusion of these letters and more personal writings were particularly potent in contrast to the prison letters from various Protestants that were circulating in Marian England at this time. They established More as 'a noble and almost quietist catholic saint, following a very different road to martyrdom from what the regime saw as the arrogant and presumptuous self-immolation of the victims of the Marian burnings'.[69] In departing from the vernacular pattern of the *Workes* as a whole Rastell could easily have left these Latin elements untranslated, yet translations are provided. This suggests that he was keen to ensure a greater access to these works than leaving them untranslated would have allowed, thus reinforcing the idea that the image of More, the Catholic martyr, was being used in a didactic and exemplary way.

Thomas More and Geoffrey Chaucer

---

[67] Ibid., 2Xiii^r.

[68] Billingsley, 'The Editorial Design of the 1557 English Works', 42.

[69] Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, 180.

It has already been noted that in presenting More's *Workes* as an authoritative, unified single-author folio an attempt was made to position More as a literary figure of a status comparable to Geoffrey Chaucer In this context, the shaping of the reputation of both writers had religious implications. It is also important to note, however, that the political and religious framing of More's folio is also reminiscent of similar intentions for William Thynne's folio editions of Chaucer's *Workes* in the 1530s, 40s and 50s.

A variety of Chaucer's writings had found their way into print from the earliest days of the English book trade. *The Parliament of Fowls*, *Anelida and Arcite,* and *The Canterbury Tales* were printed by William Caxton in 1477 followed by Chaucer's translation of Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* the following year. Over the next twenty-five years *The Parliament of Fowls*, *The Canterbury Tales*, the *House of Fame*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and *The Love and Complaints of Mars and Venus*, appeared in print from the presses of Caxton, Richard Pynson, Wynkyn de Worde, Julian Notary, and John Rastell. It was not until 1532 that William Thynne's complete, uniform folio edition of Chaucer's *Workes* appeared, which claimed in its very title that is was setting forth 'dyuers workes whiche were neuer in print before'. It therefore claimed a unique literary position: not only was it the first 'complete' collection of Chaucer, but it also included previously unprinted works. Thynne's folio had a clear agenda – to compile and collate a hitherto incomplete printed canon of Chaucer's writings.

Thynne's folio included a fairly lengthy dedication to Henry VIII in which he established the reasons for compiling Chaucer's works into this folio volume, the sentiments of which are similar to those we have seen employed by Rastell twenty-

five years later in his dedication to Mary.[70] Like Rastell, Thynne stated his desire to

unite the works of Chaucer in one place for posterity; to highlight and celebrate

Chaucer as a champion of writing in the English tongue; and finally, to offer up his

folio to the monarch in defense of the nation. It was, the preface claims, to defend the

> renoume, and glorie heretofore compared, and meritoriously adquired by
>
> dyuers princes, and other of this said most noble yle, wherevnto nat onely
>
> straungers vnder pretexte of highe lernyng & knowlege of their malycious and
>
> peruers myndes, but also some of your owne subiectes, blynded in foly &
>
> ignorance, do with great study contende.[71]

Both Thynne and Rastell make clear that part of the reason for assembling the works

of Chaucer and More in a printed folio volume was to ensure their survival and

posterity in a uniform and accurate printed edition. As Thynne says:

> Whervnto in processe of tyme, nat without coste and payne I attayned, and nat
>
> onely vnto such as seme to be very trewe copies of those workes of Geffray
>
> Chaucer, whiche before had ben put in printe, but also to dyuers other neuer
>
> tyll nowe imprinted, but remaynyng almost vnknowen and in oblyuion.[72]

---

[70] Greg Walker has found a number of sources that suggest that Sir Brian Tuke composed the Preface to Thynne's *Workes*, writing in the first person as if he were William Thynne. For simplicity, this article will refer to the author of the preface as Thynne. For further details on the relationship between Thynne and Tuke see Greg Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Chapter 4, 'Reading Chaucer in 1532', 56-72.

[71] Chaucer, *Workes*, Aiii^r.

[72] *Ibid.*, Aii^v.

It is clear that Thynne believed he was providing a definitive collection of Chaucer's works, the true copies of earlier printed texts compiled alongside works by Chaucer that his volume rescued from oblivion. Rastell echoes this sentiment in 1557:

> And when I further considered, that those workes of his were not yet all imprinted, and those that were imprinted, were in seuerall volumes and bokes, whereby it were likely, that as well those bokes of his that were already abrode in print, as those *tha*t were yet vnprinted, should in time percase perish and vtterly vanish away (to the great losse and detriment of many) vnlesse they were gathered together and printed in one whole volume, for these causes (my most gracious liege Lady) I dyd dilige*n*tly collect and gather together, as many of those his workes, bokes, letters, and other writinges, printed and vnprinted in *th*e English tonge, as I could come by, and the same (certain yeres in the euil world past, keping in my handes, very surely and safely) now lately haue caused to be imprinted in this one volume, to thintent, not onely that eueryman t*hat* will now in in our dayes, maye haue and take commoditie by them, but also that they may be preserued for the profit likewise of our posteritie.[73]

Both Thynne and Rastell emphasize the great efforts they have gone to to ensure that their folio collection provides the most authentic, authoritative and comprehensive collection of Chaucer's *Workes* and More's *Workes* in English. Equally, both editors emphasize in their dedications the importance of their respective author in the development of English vernacular writing. Indeed, Thynne spends a substantial

---

[73] More, *Workes*, **C**ii^v.

amount of time in his dedication discussing the nature of writing in a vernacular tongue, with considerations of vernacular works from other European countries, and introduces Chaucer within a wider European vernacular framework:

> Hervpon ensewed a great occasion & corage vnto them that shulde write, to compone and adorne the rudenesse and barbariete of speche, and to forme it to an eloquent and ordynate pefectyon, wherevnto many and many great poets and oratours haue highly employed their studies and corages leauyng therby notable renoume of themselues, and example perpetuell to their posterite.[74]

He goes on to say that England has not lacked men who have 'right well and notably endeuoyred and employed them selues, to the beautifyeng and bettryng of thenglysh tonge' before finally introducing Chaucer himself as

> That noble & famous clerke Geffray Chaucer, in whose workes is so manyfest comprobacion of his excellent lernynge i all kyndes of doctrynes and sciences, suche frutefulnesse in wordes, well accordynge to the mater and purpose, so swete and plesaunt sentences, suche perfection in metre, the composycion so adapted, such freshnesse of inuencion, compendyousnesse in narration, suche sensyble and open style, lackyng neither maiestye ne mediocrite couenable i disposycion, and suche sharpnesse or quycknesse in conclusyon, that it is moche to be marueyled.[75]

---

[74] Chaucer, *Workes*, Aii[v].

[75] *Ibid.*, Aii[v].

Both editors emphasized the fact that these folio editions are English, vernacular collections and framed this as a key reason for compiling their respective *Workes*. Both expressed a keen sense of national pride and duty in their dedications; a belief that their *Workes* were both a demonstration and celebration of exceptional writing in English, and also that their compilations served a national purpose. Thynne says that

> I thought it in maner appertenant vnto my dewtie, and that of very honesty and loue to my cou*n*trey I ought no lesse to do, tha*t* to put my helpyng hande to the restauracion and bringynge agayne to lyght of the said workes, after the trewe copies and exe*m*plaries aforesaid.[76]

With Rastell arguing that not only is the 1557 folio

> worthy to be hadde and redde of euerye Englishe man, that is studious or desirous to know and learne, not onelye the eloquence and propertie of the English tonge, but also the the trewe doctryne of Christes catholike fayth, the confutacion of detestable heresyes, or the godly morall vertues that appertaine to the framinge and fourminge of mennes maners and consciences, to liue a vertuous and deuout christen life[77]

---

[76] *Ibid.*, Aiii[r].

[77] More, *Workes*, **C**ii[r].

but also that 'it beinge red of many, as it is likely to be, shall much helpe forwarde youre Maiesties most godly purpose, in purging this youre realme of all wicked heresies'.[78]

It is clear, therefore, that in 1532 and again in 1557 both Thynne and Rastell believed that their folio editions were more than just collected English works of literary interest, but that they in fact served a national and political role in assisting Henry VIII and Mary I in the defense of the realm.

Much critical debate has centered on the extent to which William Thynne's 1532 folio was deployed as a religio-political tool to aid the Henrician regime. As Greg Walker has pointed out the very fact that Chaucer's *vernacular* writings were chosen to be compiled in a uniform folio volume, was inherently political, and Thynne's framing of Chaucer's writing amidst a pan-European context inserted him into the 'competition between states for political and cultural respectability, a conscious claim for the inheritance of the political and scholarly legacy of the classical past…in which all the significant European powers played a part'.[79] Yet various critics have read Thynne's dedication to Henry, and thus the wider folio, as an active intervention within the religious and political turmoil in England in the early 1530s, as a work of propaganda to support Henry's break with Rome. As Louise M. Bishop has explored, Thynne's folio, produced in a year of parliamentary, royal and clerical uncertainty, that included Thomas More's resignation, "exemplifies the complicated and unsteady alliances publishers and printers make with (dead) poets, living

---

[78] *Ibid.*, **C**ii^v.

[79] Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, 30.

monarchs and authoritarian national politics'.[80] Jeffrey Todd Knight also sees Thynne's folio as 'certainly tailored to the needs (and fears) of the moment',[81] with Walker explaining that much of the scholarship that has focused on the Thynne folio has seen it as reflecting England's growing independence and self-sufficiency from Roman control and supporting Henry as Supreme Head of the Church of England; propaganda to support the idea of England as an 'empire'. Chaucer's writings offered a 'self-sufficient dignified English language and literature' independent from, and of equal merit to, other European languages..[82]

However, Walker argues that to view the 1532 Thynne folio as 'an incendiary contribution to the reforming campaign' is to fundamentally misread Thynne's political intentions. Thynne, he argues, was deploying Chaucer in a far more conservative manner. His folio was instead a 'subtly coded call for religious stability' that attempted to 'draw Henry VIII back from the brink of religious and political revolution, and restore a sense of equilibrium to domestic politics and political culture'.[83] Helen Cooper has also argued that 'the 1532 volume claimed Chaucer for England rather than for Protestantism'.[84] The religious and political intentions for Thynne's first edition are still debated because whilst the dedication states a political intent, the precise meanings of his statements are open to interpretation, and the rest of the folio does not necessarily suggest a reformist appropriation of Chaucer.

---

[80] Bishop, 'Father Chaucer', 345.

[81] Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections and the Making of Renaissance Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013),163.

[82] Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, 33.

[83] *Ibid.*, 56.

[84] Cooper, 'Poetic Fame', 370.

However, the later editions of 1542 and 1550 do begin to shape Chaucer as a Protestant poet, and this consequently sheds new light on the political claims in Thynne's dedication. As Cooper argues 'just how far this prefatory matter could be read as Protestant is indicated by its continuing appearance in the editions published both under Edward VI in 1550 and by John Stow in 1561.'[85] Indeed, whilst there is not a substantial amount of difference between the 1532, 1542 and 1550 folio editions of Chaucer's *Workes*, what is generally seen as the driving force for Chaucer's transformation into John Foxe's 'right Wicklevian'[86] poet is the inclusion of the apocryphal anti-clerical *Plowman's Tale* from the 1542 edition onwards. The inclusion of this tale, , combined with Thynne's politically-charged prefatory material ensured that, as James Simpson has argued, Chaucer 'became the key literary counter in the radical reshaping of the English past necessitated by the English Reformation. In short, Chaucer became a Protestant and a champion of English insularity'.[87]

In 1557, therefore, Chaucer, the only other English author to have his collected works printed in folio, had been appropriated for the Protestant cause, and was being deployed as England's proto-Protestant national poet. Thynne's folios of 1532, 1542 and 1550 had seen Chaucer deployed for national and political ends, and from 1542 for religious purposes too. His literary standing had become inextricably tied to religious and political concerns – England's 'national poet', the defender and

---

[85] *Ibid.*, 370.

[86] John Foxe, *Ecclesiasticall History Contaynyng the Actes and Monumentes of Thynges Passed in Euery Kynges Tyme in This Realme*, 2nd ed. (London: Iohn Daye, 1570), 2: 965.

[87] James Simpson, 'Chaucer's presence and absence, 1400-1550' in Piero Boitani and Jill Mann, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 251-63 at 263.

innovator of writing in English, the voice of the nation, had been tainted by Protestantism.

Instead, therefore, of trying to reclaim Chaucer, it can be argued that Thomas More was deployed to fill a comparable position for Catholic England. In Marian England, it was Thomas More not Geoffrey Chaucer who spoke as the authoritative, historical, English voice of the nation, and whose works harnessed the English tongue to support a *Catholic* cause. Chaucer did not fall out of favour, but Thomas More was seen as a more suitable and overtly useful national author to discuss the pressing political and religious issues of Marian England Like Chaucer in Henrician and Edwardine England, More was deployed in Marian England to serve a national cause. Both Chaucer and More were raised to positions of vernacular literary prestige, and in contemporary circumstances that literary privilege was inherently tied to political and religious concerns. It was this emphasis on vernacular literary superiority that gave weight to their work being deployed for polemical ends. Chaucer's English voice had been appropriated to support a nationalistic and Protestant cause in Henrician and Edwardine England – even the medieval Father of English poetry was a Proto-Protestant and aided in the fashioning of an England free from the shackles of Roman control. Partly in response, More was employed comparably in Marian England to support an overtly Catholic cause; as Rastell said to Mary in his dedication, he hoped that it was the reading of More's works that would help 'in purging this youre realme of all wicked heresies'.[88] To print a single-author vernacular folio prior to 1557 was both a literary and political statement. . The folio editions of both Thynne and Rastell moulded Chaucer and More into Webster's 'learn'd poets, worthy men / who

---

[88] More, *Workes*, **C**ii^v.

do eternise brave acts by their pen' whose writings 'beyond death a fame to monarchs give / and these make cities and societies live'.[89]

This comparison of the Thynne folios of Chaucer alongside Rastell's 1557 volume has shown that these early celebrations of an author's vernacular writing were inherently political, and that their celebration as champions of writing in the vernacular had religious and political implications. Having demonstrated how similar the intentions of the first English single-author folio editions of Chaucer and More were, and how More was fashioned in a comparable way to Chaucer, so the article will now illustrate how different the 1557 folio's production was within the context of wider early modern English book trade practices.

It has already been noted how unusual it was, prior to the explosion of folio publication from the 1590s onwards, for authors to have their works compiled in a uniform, complete single-author folio. However, the production in this format did not determine its sale as a single volume. There are examples both before and after Rastell's 1557 volume of folios which, whilst appearing to be distinct editions intended to be sold as a whole folio, were in fact often made up of discrete works which could be sold individually. This was quite probably the case for Thynne's folio of Chaucer's *Workes*. Jeffrey Todd Knight has shown that there are at least two examples of individual works from Thynne's folio which were pulled from the complete edition and which circulated independently.[90] Equally it seems that both Samuel Daniel's *Workes* from 1601 and Edmund Spenser's *Workes* from 1611 and

---

[89] Webster, *Appendix*, 10.

[90] Knight, *Bound to Read*,161-62.

1617 had composite sections of the folio circulate independently from the volume itself. Daniel's *Workes* saw each of the individual constituent items included in the volume prefaced with its own unique title page and printer's signature and there are examples of individual parts of the folio bound in original vellum covers.[91] Similarly, Spenser's folio editions of *The Faerie Queen: The Shepheardes Calendar: Together with the other works of England's arch poet, Edmund Spenser: collected into one volume*, published in 1611 and 1617, were fashioned around unsold copies of the 1609 edition of *The Faerie Queen* and 'three other bibliographically independent parts, all printed in 1611'.[92] As Knight explains, these volumes were issued in separate sections which could be compiled into a folio edition, or could be kept as distinct, individual editions.[93] In contrast, evidence from the folio itself suggests that it was not Rastell's intention for the 1557 More folio to be a malleable edition, one that could be sold as a whole, or sold as constituent parts. Firstly, the prefatory material suggests this. Not only is a contents page provided – 'the table of vvorkes and thinges conteyned in thys volume' which shows that the volume is continuously paginated (it is also continuously foliated), but a second, more detailed table is provided – 'A table of many matters conteined in this booke. Collected and gathered together by Thomas Paynell preist'.[95] The is arranged into thematic sections which are then referenced within the text by page number and section letter – for example to find out about the antichrist being the head of heretics you should turn to page 287, section H. In addition to portraying More's journey to martyrdom, the folio could thus

---

[91] *Ibid.*, 167.

[92] *Ibid.*, 168.

[93] *Ibid.*, 168-69.

[95] More, *Workes*, **C**iii[r], **C**iiii[r].

also be used as a work of spiritual, theological and ecclesiastical reference, and as a polemical source to counter Protestant claims to martyrdom and other arguments. As Rastell stated, his volume was to serve in the 'confuting of all peruerse opinions, false doctrine, and deuillyshe heresies'.[96] The dedication envisages readers perusing the text in order to 'attain gret knowledge, aswel for the incresing of al kindes of godly vertues and holy liuinge'.[97] The explicit recommendations for meditative and contemplative perusal, and the detailed cataloguing and referencing by Paynell according to subject and theme, suggests that the *Workes* was intended to be consulted on specific points, rather than, or as well as, being read from cover to cover. These instructive and didactic intentions, would be lost were the folio edition to be also available to buy as constituent parts. The power of More's writing in 1557 was to be found in the instructive and polemical depth that the folio as a whole provided.

Another bibliographical feature suggesting that the *Workes* was intended to be a distinct unit is the lack of demarcation provided between individual works. Thynne's Chaucer, Daniel's *Workes*, and Spenser's 1611 and 1617 folios, all include distinct title pages that demarcate the end of one work and the start of another, and which make those texts more easily removable and marketable as discrete publications in their own right. Rastell's folio makes no such clear distinctions. The start of each new work is signaled only by a title directly above the relevant work, sometimes not even at the start of a new page. For example, the *Supplication of Souls* is begun on the same page as the end of the *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* and the *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* is begun on the same page as the ending of the

---

[96] Ibid., **C**ii[v].

[97] *Ibid.,* **C**ii[v].

Supplication of Souls. Two possible explanations for this conservative use of space can be offered. Firstly, that Rastell intended his folio as a complete collection, to be used for spiritual and polemic reference. As well as having the opportunity to read each text in its entirety, readers should be as interested in using the work as a source of guidance on various matters laid out in the table, and therefore would be consulting a variety of sections from various texts. Secondly, we can turn back to Galbraith's taxonomy and our definition of the 1557 folio as a 'folio of necessity' to explain why works were run together onto the same page without title pages. Whilst it would be aesthetically pleasing to have each new work begin on a new page, Rastell and his main printer, Richard Tottell, probably attempted to keep costs as low as possible and were reluctant to leave large sections of paper unprinted. This sparing use of paper may also reflect a more utilitarian aim for the text on the part of Rastell. Rastell clearly viewed the publication of the folio as serving an instructive and didactic purpose, to provide moral and spiritual guidance. Therefore, this rejection of a luxurious mise-en-page may be more reflective of the sober, practical and devotional purpose that Rastell and his printers intended the folio to serve.

The final piece of evidence from the text that points to an intention to preserve the folio as a unified whole is offered in Tottell's discussion of the printing of Mary Bassett's translation of the *De Tristitia*. There was evidently a demand for Bassett's translation to be issued individually. Tottell acknowledges this when he argues that, more people would buy the translation 'set out alone, than with so many other of hys woorkes'.[98] The fact that Tottell says that it will be set forth in print individually 'hereafter at more leasure' suggests that those versions printed in 1557 were intended *only* for inclusion within the folio as a whole, and were not also to be sold

---

[98] More, *Workes*, 2Q7ᵛ.

separately.[99] It is worth noting that Tottell did not reprint the *De Tristitia* separately between April 1557 and Mary's death in November 1558.

So perhaps the main reason for Rastell's creation of a folio that could not be broken up was to maintain the political and religious purpose of the folio outlined above – the creation of More as an ideal martyr. Whilst the folio was intended to educate and inform its readers as to the true Catholic faith, its polemical purpose was to present More the true martyr to counteract the Protestant pseudomartyr. Again, the power of Rastell's edition to do this lay in the *complete* folio's presentation of Thomas More, from a youthful writer, to an anti-Lutheran polemicist, to a contemplative and pious Catholic martyr.[100] The folio's very design was politically inflected, allowing the More circle to control and fashion a carefully-constructed image of More, which both suited their memorializing aims, and also deployed More in a potent way to support the Marian cause.

There was therefore a striking interplay of personal and religio-political factors behind the composition of Rastell's 1557 volume. The *Workes* is unique within the wider context of single-author folio productions because of the complex interplay between the personal and the political; its dual purpose to both memorialize

---

[99] *Ibid*., 2Q7ᵛ.

[100] A.W. Reed noted the importance of the inclusion of More's four youthful works arguing that 'it takes us back to the days of More's youth and helps us in the very necessary duty of seeing him as he really was, unchanged at heart, whatever his fortunes, always the same witty, grave and humorous figure, facing, clear-sighted, the facts and fun of life.' See A.W. Reed, 'William Rastell and More's English Works' in R.S. Sylvester and G.P. Marc'hadour, eds. *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More* (Hamden: Archdon Books, 1977): 436-46 at 443.

and politicize. The loyalty of the group to Thomas More *and* the Catholic faith, and the vested interests that various members had to the posthumous representation of More contributed to the sophisticated and protean nature of the folio. Indeed, situating the 1557 folio within the wider context of early modern English folio production has shed new light on a number of different aspects of the volume. The comparison of Rastell's folio to that of Thynne's *Workes* highlighted the precedent for Rastell's elevation of More's literary status, and also suggested that to produce a single-author folio up to 1558 was inherently literary *and* political,. In addition, Rastell's deliberate fashioning of More in a comparable light to Chaucer allowed him to deploy More as a unique, authoritative, Catholic literary figure, as the key figure in the initiation of a Catholic English literary tradition in Marian England. It was Thomas More not Geoffrey Chaucer who spoke as the authoritative, literary and historical English voice of the Marian nation, and whose works employed the English tongue to support the Catholic cause.

Rastell's text raises questions as to the relationship between literature, politics, religion, and the material text in mid-Tudor England, and it should also be considered as laying some of the foundations for the more studied single-author folios of the 1590s. Many of the aspects that are of interest to scholars focusing on folios from the Elizabethan period onwards are to be found in Rastell's Marian folio. In summary, Rastell's volume is a key text in the development of early modern literary folio production and should be recognized as a highly complex, multifaceted and sophisticated product of the wider early modern English book trade.