

Zeitschrift: SPELL : Swiss papers in English language and literature
Herausgeber: Swiss Association of University Teachers of English
Band: 27 (2012)

Artikel: Shakespeare and immigration
Autor: Tudeau-Clayton, Margaret
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-323527>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 09.07.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Shakespeare and Immigration¹

Margaret Tudeau-Clayton

This paper proposes a new argument about the contribution by Hand D, widely agreed to be Shakespeare's, to the perilously topical reprise of the 1517 "Ill May Day" anti-alien riots in *The Book of Sir Thomas More* (?1593/1604). The contribution's discontinuity with the rest of the play-text is claimed to be a function less of the material conditions of production usually evoked by scholars than of an impasse between "arguments on both sides," like that in a leaked parliamentary debate about "aliens" which took place in March 1593. Combining a specific echo of this debate with an echo from a description of English victims of enclosure in the historical More's *Utopia* Shakespeare makes a case, through the eponymous protagonist, on behalf of strangers against the case made by fellow authorial hands on behalf of citizens. If this aligns him politically with the court, Shakespeare does not simply toe a court line. Rather he takes an ethical stand, summoning an alliance across the religious divide and across the century between those who speak on behalf of the dispossessed – whether European "aliens" or "Englishmen foreign," internal immigrants who are likewise victims of exclusionary violence, as Shakespeare invites his hearers, including fellow authorial hands, to recognise.

The sixteenth century saw the population of London increase fourfold. This increase was largely due to a massive influx, especially in the last

¹ This is a companion piece which develops fresh lines of argument as well as introducing new material to a forthcoming essay in *Shakespeare Survey* (Tudeau-Clayton).

three decades, of two types of foreigners or outsiders: European “aliens” or “strangers” – principally French, Dutch and Italian immigrants, many, if not all, protestant refugees – and “Englishmen foreign” – Englishmen who were not sons of freemen of the city or born within its walls (Rappaport 42). These were the categories used by the municipal authorities in surveys conducted in order to deal with the hostility towards the European strangers that resulted from the strain on material resources (housing and food). For if there were complaints about the English foreigners, who far outnumbered the European strangers (Selwood 23), it was the European strangers who were the objects of physical as well as verbal violence (Clark 52-53). Precise figures are hard to determine (Sokol 186), but Scouloudi puts at 3.69 the percentage of European strangers registered in the survey of April-May 1593 (Scouloudi 76). This was undertaken specifically to stem the unrest that followed the suppression by the House of Lords of a bill that had passed the vote by a large majority in the House of Commons in March and that had been introduced on behalf of shopkeepers and freemen of the City in order to restrict the trading practices of European strangers (Scouloudi 57-93; Chitty 141; Yungblut 41-42). This was not the first time, though it would be the last, that such a bill had been debated in parliament in the reign of Elizabeth (Dean 157). But it was the first time that the speeches were recorded in full and circulated in contravention of the traditional principal of secrecy (Love 16). An anonymous member kept a detailed journal of the 1593 session which covered the fraught issues of the subsidy and recusants as well as of strangers (Hartley III 61-175). Like the official journal this unofficial journal was subsequently lost, but not before copies had been made. Several are extant, which suggests many more were actually made – a clear indication of keen interest in the debates (Hartley III xi-xii). If modern historians have neglected the debate on strangers – J. E. Neale, for instance, makes no mention at all of it in his magisterial study of the Elizabethan parliaments – the seventeenth century antiquarian Simonds D’Ewes opens his account, compiled from the anonymous journal sometime before 1630, by evoking “the great weight of this matter touching Aliens” (D’Ewes 505). Indeed, if focused on their impact on the economy, the debate broadened to address more generally the place of “aliens” in the city, whether they were to be “entertained” (i.e. welcomed) or expelled. It was a “matter” that was of “great weight” politically because, like other issues debated in this session, it was an exacerbating instance as well as illustration of the developing tension between the court, which advocated the entertainment of strangers (primarily for economic reasons) (Yungblut 61-94), and parliament, which supported city/citizen aspiration to their control if not their expulsion. These high political stakes

may well have been one of the reasons copies of the speeches were made. The parliamentary historian Andrew Thrush has suggested (in private communication): "The level of interest in acquiring copies of speeches may have been directly related to the level of conflict between the Monarch and the House of Commons."

It is in the context of this leaked, politically charged debate on aliens/strangers that I want to look again at the playtext, known as *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, a collaboration that exists only in manuscript and that was probably never performed.² In particular I want to make a new argument about the contribution by "Hand D," now widely, if not unanimously, agreed to be Shakespeare's (Jowett 437-53). In this contribution the eponymous protagonist succeeds in subduing a revolt of artisan-citizens who are clamouring for the expulsion of European strangers in what was a perilously topical reprise of the anti-alien riots of Ill May Day 1517. Though John Jowett in his recent Arden edition of the playtext demurs (Jowett 47), the contribution by "Hand D" – let us suppose Shakespeare – has usually been judged as discontinuous with the rest of the playtext in its treatment both of the strangers (turned from predatory abusers of privilege into victims of exclusionary violence) and, especially, of the rebel citizens of London (turned from dignified individuals into ignorant mob). This discontinuity has, however, consistently been explained as a function of material conditions of production as, for instance, a symptom of "inadequate co-ordination" between authorial hands, as Brian Vickers puts it, arguing that the consequent discontinuities would not have bothered theatre audiences (Vickers 439). More recently, following Tiffany Stern's important work on the fragmentary production of playtexts Robert Miola has suggested that Shakespeare wrote the part he was assigned in ignorance of what fellow authorial hands wrote (Miola 16, cf. Jones 9). Attention to the material conditions of production, whether of playtext or performance, is of course crucial, but such exclusive attention to these conditions risks evacuating content of explanatory significance. On the contrary, I want to propose that we take Shakespeare's contribution as an ethically as well as politically charged intervention that bears not only on its own moment of production, but also on the present. For the "matter touching Aliens," or immigrants as they are now called, is once again of "great weight" not only in Britain, but more generally in Western Europe, which is confronted again by massive movements of peoples displaced by socio-economic

² If what follows raises again the question of the date of composition of the original playtext as of Shakespeare's contribution (?1593-4 or 1603-4?), I do not have the space to pursue it here. Quotations throughout will be taken from Gabrieli and Melchiori.

changes as well as by political and religious conflicts.³ There are, moreover, likenesses between “[a]rguments made” “on both sides” (D’Ewes 505) then and now, as I shall indicate, which suggest a structural problem that recurs within very different socio-political formations, notably at moments of upheaval such as those which bookend, as it were, the modern era. It is this structural problem that I want to suggest is the problem of the playtext, which exhibits the same impasse between irreconcilable views of strangers that we find in the parliamentary debate of March 1593.

Specifically, Shakespeare’s intervention which, through the figure of the eponymous protagonist, urges the charitable treatment of strangers, echoes an intervention in the debate by the member for Canterbury, Henry Finch, as scholars have noted but never explored (Maas, Gabrieli and Melchiori 26-27; see Appendix). In taking a stand on behalf of strangers Finch and Shakespeare aligned themselves, like the House of Lords, with the court. Neither, however, simply toed the court line, as we shall see. There are, moreover, significant differences between their interventions, as I shall show through comparison with a still closer and fuller echo of Finch’s intervention in a sermon preached by George Abbot (future Archbishop of Canterbury) in Oxford some 18 months after the debate, in the late summer/autumn of 1594 (see Appendix). Crucially, where Abbot echoes Finch in evoking the memory of the persecution and exile of English protestants under Mary in order to argue the contingency of the stranger’s case, Shakespeare evokes rather English victims of enclosure. This he does by combining the echo of Finch with an echo of Raphael Hythloday’s denunciation of enclosure from the historical More’s *Utopia*. Drawing attention away from religious to socio-economic grounds and forms of exclusionary violence and from religious to ethical differences, Shakespeare thus evokes an alliance, or chorus, of those that speak across the religious divide and across the century on behalf of the dispossessed and excluded. At the same time the intertextual relation to the *Utopia* serves as an ironic reminder to fellow authorial hands of their protagonist’s pre-reformation social vision which is betrayed by their treatment of strangers. Indeed this reflects less this vision than the views of those who spoke on behalf of the city against strangers in the parliamentary debate of 1593.

If, as D’Ewes comments, “[a]rguments on both sides were made,” the debate was heavily weighted in favour of the city which had actively

³ The verb “immigrate,” glossed “To goe dwell in some place,” is first recorded in Henry Cockerham’s English-English “hard word” dictionary of 1623, the noun “immigration” in Edward Philips’s English-English dictionary of 1658; the noun “immigrant” only in 1792 according to the *OED*.

lobbied members, including a top lawyer, Francis Moore (Dean 13-14, 156). Two of the arguments made by Moore (and reiterated by others) find echo in the playtext. First, the “[b]eggaring” of home retailers (D’Ewes 505) is echoed in the “bill” (1.1.103), as it is called, that the rebel citizen leader Lincoln reads out: “Aliens and strangers eat the bread from the fatherless children, . . . craftsmen be brought to beggary” (1.2.111-16).⁴ Another recurring complaint, that strangers enjoyed privileges not enjoyed by natives, is voiced by Francis Moore in the debate – “[t]heir priviledge of Denization is not to be allowed above the priviledge of Birth, and our Natives are not allowed to retail and Merchandize as they do” (D’Ewes 505) – and denounced by Lincoln in the playtext: “Shall these enjoy more privilege then we / In our own country?” (2.1.27-8).⁵ Strangers’ abuse of privilege is, moreover, foregrounded by the action of the opening scene where it is again openly denounced (1.1.72-4). To these arguments Walter Raleigh, the speaker in the debate most hostile to the strangers, added that they were cowards and hypocrites: “Such as fly hither have forsaken their own King; and Religion is no pretext for them” (D’Ewes 508). This finds echo not in the playtext, which avoids explicit references to religious motives, but in the libels posted in London in the wave of unrest that followed the suppression of the bill by the House of Lords: “Doth not the world see, that you . . . by your cowardly flight from your own natural countries have abandoned the same into the hands of your . . . enemies, and have, by a feigned hypocrisy and counterfeit show of religion, placed yourselves here. . .” (Strype IV 234). Most well known of course is the so-called Dutch church libel, which led to the arrest of Thomas Kyd and the interrogation of Christopher Marlowe, and which Matthew Dimmock has recently attributed to Thomas Deloney who was, like Marlowe, an associate of Raleigh’s: signed “Tamberlaine” and alluding to Marlowe’s other plays this accuses the strangers: “Like the Jewes, you eate us vp as bread”; “[o]ur pore artificers doe starve & dye”; “counterfeitinge religion for your flight . . .” (Dimmock, Freeman 50-1). Echoing the assertions of speakers hostile to the strangers, notably Raleigh, who may be one of their sources, these libels express the anger and frustra-

⁴ As Gabrieli and Melchiori point out (note to 106-22), Lincoln’s entire speech is taken verbatim from the principal historical source in the *Chronicles* of Raphael Holinshed (1587), a source which may itself have fed into the arguments made by speakers in the debate.

⁵ There is no equivalent utterance in the historical sources which this scene otherwise follows closely. For the recriminations leading up to the bill including complaints about how the “strangers” were “extraordinarily favoured” see Scouloudi 57. Similar arguments can be heard today: immigrants take jobs from natives and enjoy privileged treatment (accommodation and social security benefits).

tion at the suppression by the House of Lords of the collective will of the Commons as this had been expressed in the vote. As the echoes suggest, the playtext was weighted, like the debate, on the side of the city, authored as it principally was by Londoners (notably Anthony Munday and Henry Chettle). Similarly, an agent of royal authority, here the Master of Revels, Edmund Tilney sought the playtext's suppression, or revision.⁶ Both acts of suppression highlight the "great" political "weight" of "this matter touching aliens" as instance and symptom of the developing stand-off between crown and parliament.⁷

These political stakes are implicit to what scholars have taken to be the principal line of argument made by Shakespeare's *More*, namely, the imperative of obedience to royal authority (2.3.96-123; Chambers).⁸ This line of argument is shadowed, as others have noted, by the irony of *More*'s own subsequent refusal to submit to this authority (Gabrieli 32). It was an irony that could not have escaped Shakespeare whether or not he knew of its exploitation by fellow authorial hands who capitalise on its implications by drawing a parallel between the death of *More* and the death of the rebel citizen leader Lincoln (Melchiori 93), thus adding more (and *More*) to their case on behalf of citizens. If, however, this first line of argument is undermined by *More*'s own case, there is a second, relatively neglected line of argument which is rather strengthened by it. For *More* himself becomes a stranger when he is exiled from court, "estranged," as he puts it, "from great men's looks . . ." (4.4.107; cf. Miola 28). *More* himself, that is, will illustrate the contingency of "the strangers' case" (2.3.150), which is as important to the argument Shakespeare makes through him on behalf of strangers as it is to the argument made by Henry Finch in parliament.

For neither Henry Finch nor Shakespeare simply toed the court line in their respective interventions. As Raleigh would later summarise, those who argued against the expulsion of strangers did so on the

⁶ There is no space here to enter into the complex questions raised by the evidence in the manuscript of Tilney's intervention, which is comprehensively discussed by Jowett (356-62). My argument assumes as it tends to support the view put forward by Gabrieli and Melchiori that it was the original playtext plus all, or some of the additions, including the addition by Shakespeare, that was submitted to Tilney in 1593-94 (Gabrieli and Melchiori 26-29).

⁷ The reasons for the suppression of the bill were primarily economic: a contemporary points out that their retailing allowed the French and Dutch communities to contribute to the royal coffers as well as to provide relief for the "English poor" (Dean 157).

⁸ This critical focus has not been put into question since it was first proposed by Chambers who points out parallels elsewhere in the Shakespearean corpus which he takes as further evidence of authorship. It has never been considered in connection with the parliamentary debate of 1593.

grounds of charity, honour and profit (D'Ewes 508). Honour and (above all) economic profit was the court line, which was assiduously toed by John Wolley, "ever the queen's good servant" as he is politely described in the *ODNB* (Parry), who argued that "the Riches and Renown of the City cometh by entertaining of Strangers, and giving liberty unto them" citing the examples of Antwerp and Venice that thereby grew "rich and famous" and "gained all the intercourse of the World" – an argument echoed, as James Shapiro has noted, by Antonio of Venice in *The Merchant of Venice* (D'Ewes 506; Shapiro 183).⁹ This was an argument Henry Finch might well have made given the prosperity enjoyed by his constituency of Canterbury thanks to a large Walloon community of skilled workers (Oakley).¹⁰ He directs attention, however, to profit of another kind in order to make the argument from charity, urging that the strangers are "profitable among us" for their exemplary piety, thrift, hard work and honesty (D'Ewes 506).¹¹ He then proceeds to urge the law of God, citing one of three places in the Old Testament where the Israelites' lived experience of exile and persecution in Egypt is given as the grounds for the command to practice charity towards strangers (*ibid.* 507). This is followed up by an appeal to the memory of the collective trauma of "the days of Queen Mary when our Cause was as theirs is now," when, that is, English protestants were constrained to flee as exiles, or face death. Mobilising collective memory of exclusionary violence as well as biblical example Finch thus illustrates the contingency of the strangers' case, which he thrusts home by evoking a hypothetical future recurrence: "They are strangers now, we may be strangers hereafter." He closes by urging the ethical imperative logically attendant on such contingency: "So let us do as we would be done unto." This is an abbreviated version of one of Christ's exhortations in the Sermon on the Mount with which Elizabethans would have been familiar from *The Book of Common Prayer* where it features as one of the "sentences" to be spoken before Holy Communion: "Whatsoever ye would that men

⁹ As Wolley in 1593 cites the examples of Venice and Antwerp, so James VI of Scotland in 1598 would cite England: "Take exampl[e] by ENGLAND, how it hath flourished both in wealth and policie, since the strangers Craftes-men came in among them:" (King James VI and I 30).

¹⁰ The crucial contribution made by European immigrants to England's economic development in the period is pointed out in Clarkson 110-13 and fully demonstrated in a book length study by Luu. The economic contribution made by immigrants continues to be argued in their favour, though the argument now tends to be made by what is known as the liberal left, which, strange as it may appear, occupies the position held in the 1590s by the court.

¹¹ Charity is used not in the narrow economic sense it has today, but in the broader sense of benevolent disposition (or fellow-feeling); see below.

should do unto you, even so do unto them; for this is the Law and the Prophets" (*Matthew* 7.v.12). Declared by Christ to be an epitome of God's law this is a call to an ethical praxis grounded on an exercise of self-splitting in a subjunctive as well as hypothetical mode – imagining oneself, as Finch urges his hearers, as the object of one's (consequently charitable) actions as subject.

It is the ethical imperative of this biblical exhortation together with the projection of a hypothetical future experience that, as I consider below, Shakespeare takes up in his reprise of Finch's intervention. It is all *but* this imperative that George Abbot takes up in what is a still fuller reprise of Finch's intervention in a passage on the treatment of strangers in a sermon preached, as I have mentioned, in the late summer/early autumn of 1594, and not, as scholars have assumed, in 1572 when Abbot was ten years old (Sokol 60, 63; Yungblut 44).¹² The reason for this mistaken assumption is that the passage is misleadingly quoted by John Strype in his *Annals of the Reformation*, in his account of the English response, in 1572, to the massive influx of French protestant refugees following the St Bartholomew Massacre in August of that year (Strype II.i 251-52). As Strype points out, this response was the object of a critique (published in Edinburgh in 1574) by "a French author," the self-styled cosmopolitan, Eusebius Philadelphus, otherwise known as Nicolas Barnaud. It is Barnaud's complaint that the refugees were treated by the English as "French dogs" that Abbot takes up connecting this mistreatment to recurring popular conspiracies against strangers in London, perhaps with the troubles of the previous year, 1593, in mind (Abbot 87). Against this "disposition," as he calls it, he sets the disposition of the "wise and godly" who treat strangers as "brethren" responding to their distress with "lively fellow-feeling," precisely such feeling as Henry Finch and Shakespeare's More urge on their respective hearers (*ibid.* 88). He proceeds to reiterate the key points made by Finch in a passage structured by metalinguistic verbs which highlight its character as report (see Appendix): "considering," "remembering," "not forgetting" and, finally, "in brief recounting . . . their case may be our case." This summarising conclusion signals Abbot's recognition of Finch's key point, namely the contingency of the strangers' case, illustrated at once by biblical example and divine command – "the precise charge" as Abbot elaborates, "which God gave to the Israelites, to deale well with all straungers, because the time once was, when themselves were strangers in that cruell land of Egypt" – and by the memory of the "last bloudie

¹² The date of late summer/early autumn 1594 can be gleaned from the close of the sermon where "Anno. 1593" "Anno. 1594" are given as marginal glosses to discussion of an outbreak of plague in London and a recent, disastrously wet summer (Abbot 110).

persecution in Queen Maries dayes" (ibid). This virtual citation of Finch's intervention suggests how, once leaked, it circulated especially amongst those committed, like him, to protestant internationalism, as a model of the "disposition" of the "wise and godly" towards strangers, in both senses of the word, that is, as a mindset as well as a structure of arguments to be mobilised in public places of persuasion – theatre and pulpit as well as parliament.¹³ This was a commitment that Finch shared not only with George Abbot, but also with Richard Field who, in 1600, printed the series to which this sermon belongs. It was of course Richard Field who entered William Shakespeare's first essay as poet – *Venus and Adonis* – in the Stationers' Register in April 1593, the month, that is, which saw social unrest and the expression of hostility to strangers following the suppression of the bill (see above). This raises intriguing possibilities of hitherto unexplored connections. Did Richard Field offer his fellow Stratfordian an opening to a career as a poet out of recognition for a stand taken? Had this stand jeopardised a precarious start to a career as dramatist? How far does this stand imply a similar commitment to protestant internationalism?

Closer comparison of the respective interventions in playtext, pulpit and parliament suggests a commitment less to protestant internationalism than to a non-sectarian Christian humanist internationalism.¹⁴ For, if, as I indicated earlier, Shakespeare's *More*, like Abbot, echoes Finch's projection of a hypothetical future experience of exclusionary violence in order to urge the contingency of the strangers' case, he does not ground this on the memory of the "bloudie persecution" of English protestants under Mary as Finch and Abbot do. It would of course have been anachronistic, not to say searingly ironic, to have the figure of Thomas More recall English protestant victims of Marian persecution. Though Shakespeare was not above such anachronism or such irony, he draws attention rather to another form, or ground of exclusionary violence by joining the voice of Finch with the radical voice of Raphael Hythloday from the historical More's *Utopia*. He thus evokes an alliance of voices that speak across the century and across the religious divide between Protestant (Finch) and Catholic (More) on behalf of the dis-

¹³ The overlap between these three places, all more or (in the case of parliament) less public sites of persuasion where speakers sought to move hearers' feelings, perceptions and judgement is pointed up in the playtext, as in the historical events it dramatises, as the "bill" drawn up by Lincoln is read out, not in parliament, but, in the playtext, on the stage standing for "a City Street" (note to 1.1.1.) and, in the events it dramatises, from the pulpit in one of a series of sermons preached by Dr Beale in Easter week.

¹⁴ Here I join company with Jeffrey Knapp, though there are important differences between us since his view of the theatrical community precludes conflict over topical issues such as I am suggesting deeply divided it.

possessed and excluded, whether European strangers (Finch) or English victims of enclosure (More), who are all in “the stranger’s case” – a case in which, as Finch, echoed by Abbot and Shakespeare’s More, urges, anyone might find themselves.

This contingency of the stranger’s case is then argued by Shakespeare’s More, as it is by Finch, through the “what if” – hypothetical – mode. “They are strangers now we may be strangers hereafter” urges Finch, echoed by Abbot: “Their case may be our case.” Likewise summoning a future hypothetical experience like that of the strangers for his audience of xenophobic citizens Shakespeare’s More calls upon them rhetorically: “[w]hat would you think / To be thus used? This is the strangers’ case.” (2.3.149-50) If Finch’s “we” has become More’s “you,” both speakers project a hypothetical change of case – from citizen/insider to stranger/outsider – which they invite their respective audiences to imagine as theirs in order to produce a change of heart from a will to violent exclusion to a will to the mutual charity of the biblical exhortation which, as I have discussed elsewhere, is turned by Shakespeare as a response of conviction from More’s stage audience of xenophobic citizens: “Faith, ’a says true; let’s do as we may be done by” (Tudeau-Clayton 152). Where Finch, however, followed by Abbot, grounds his appeal on the memory of English protestants’ experience of persecution and exile as well as biblical precedent, Shakespeare’s More paints rather a vivid, imagined scene of exile for the citizens among hostile locals who would “[w]het their detested knives against your throats / Spurn you like dogs” (145-46) (as the English, according to Barnaud, spurned French protestant refugees [see above]). Still more importantly, he proceeds, as neither Finch nor Abbot do, to denounce such hatred as a denial of a shared human condition, which he defines, first, in relation to a common origin in God: “Like as if that God / Owed not nor made not you” (146-47); then in relation to nature as a common good: “Nor that the elements / Were not all appropriate to your comforts, / But charter’d unto them” (147-49), “chartered,” that is, to those whose violent exclusion of other humans implies an appropriation of nature as private property.

With this striking image Shakespeare takes up the intertextual relation that he introduces in the first speech through which his More seeks to change the citizens’ view of strangers. Evoking a vivid scene, as he will again in his closing speech, More invites the citizens to “imagine that [they] see the wretched strangers, / Their babes at their backs, with their poor luggage / Plodding to th’ports and coasts for transportation” (80-3). As others have noted, though without exploring the implications, this echoes a description of victims of enclosure by Raphael Hythloday in the first book of the *Utopia*, as rendered in Ralph Robinson’s 1551

translation. In a fierce denunciation of the practice Hythloday describes how those who are thus deprived of their means to live are forced to depart, “wretched souls, men, women, . . . woeful mothers with their young babes, . . . [a]way they trudge . . . finding no place to rest in. . .” (Robinson 29). Advertising a filiation between his More and the voice of Hythloday in the historical More’s *Utopia* Shakespeare invites those who hear it to recognise European strangers as in the same case as English victims of enclosure. Not only a collective memory but an ongoing brutal practice, enclosure was the principal cause of the massive internal immigration of “foreign” English men and women mentioned at the outset, driving thousands, including many from Shakespeare’s home region in the West Midlands, to London (Twynning 1; Clark 52). With an insider’s knowledge of internal exile Shakespeare invites his audience to see European “strangers” as victims, like the English foreigners, of exclusionary violence and so not to discriminate against them as they do.¹⁵ The likeness is then underscored in More’s closing speech when the violent exclusion of strangers is denounced as an inhuman denial of nature as a common good, “chartered” as if private property. For the rejection of private property – and the contrary doctrine of all things in common – constitutes the ground of the community imagined in the sustained exercise in the hypothetical mode that is the second book of the *Utopia*, an imagined ideal that is set in dialectical opposition to the brutal actual world of enclosures that is denounced in the first book.

Like Shakespeare’s More this imagined community advocates mutual charity between peoples on the grounds of a natural bond between humans (Robinson 115). Nature too “equally favoureth all that be comprehended under the communion of one shape” as humans and this equality before nature implies the ethical imperative: “Do not so seek for thine own commodities that thou procure others incommunities” (ibid. 97). The objection to enclosure was precisely that it served the profit of a few to the harm of many, witness a tract published in 1604 by a clergyman, Francis Trigge who, as Robert Miola usefully notes, quotes the passage from More echoed by Shakespeare (Miola 19). As vigorous as Hythloday in his denunciation of enclosure Trigge objects: “These enclosers respect only their own commodities, and therefore it is against charity. . .”; “They think that they may doe it lawfully; that is, they may make their own commoditie, howsoever that their brethren fare. . .” (Trigge n. pag.). Such objections were, however, countered and defeated by the argument from profit (Clarkson 20-1). The European strangers and the evicted English were, indeed, historically speaking, in the same

¹⁵ The point would have been particularly pertinent in early 1593 as the previous August had seen riots against enclosures in London (Clark 53).

case inasmuch as they were victims of what we might describe as a change in a structure of feeling, the emergence and triumph over fellow feeling (charity) of the “doctrine of self interest” as a legitimate “guide to . . . behaviour” which, together with the “institution of private property” that the practice of enclosure served, marked England’s ineluctable transition to a market economy in the sixteenth century (Clarkson 20-1).

Like Henry Finch’s evocation of the memory of persecution and exile under Mary, echoed by George Abbot, the evocation of enclosure by Shakespeare’s More served then to underscore the lived experience of precarious contingency and exclusionary violence shared by English men and women with European strangers. But Shakespeare’s combination of the contemporary voice of the protestant Finch with the voice of Raphael Hythloday from the Catholic More’s prereformation *Utopia* makes of the figure of Thomas More a spokesperson for an ongoing, non-sectarian ethical Christian humanism that sets fellow-feeling towards the dispossessed of all nations and the recognition of nature as a common good not only against national and religious partisanship, but against the mutually implicated emergent values of self-interest and private property. If Shakespeare’s contemporaries, including fellow authorial hands, appear to have been unwilling to attend to this voice, we might do worse than attend to it today faced as we are not only with massive numbers of displaced people, but also with the prospect of collective disaster, if we fail to temper self-interest and the drive to economic profit with fellow-feeling and recognition of nature as a common good.

APPENDIX

INTERVENTIONS ON "STRANGERS"
IN PARLIAMENT, PULPIT AND PLAYTEXT

PARLIAMENT

HENRY FINCH. London, March 1593. Parliamentary speech: "Their Example is profitable amongst us. . . . Our Nation is sure more blessed for their sakes . . . as the Scripture saith *Let us not grieve the Soul of the Stranger* . . . In the days of Queen Mary, when our Cause was as theirs is now, those Countries did allow us that liberty, which now we seek to deny them. They are strangers now, we may be strangers hereafter. So let us do as we would be done unto."

PULPIT

GEORGE ABBOTT. Oxford, late summer/autumn 1594. Sermon: "A French man . . . hath by occasion of the handling of their last great Masseacre, noted it to posteritie, that by a most inhospitall kinde of phrase, our Englishmen used to treat them, no better then French dogs, that fled hither for Religion and their conscience sake. Unto this joyne the many conspiracies, which by some of the meaner people, in one Citie of our land, have been oftentimes intended against outlandish folks. . . . Those which are wise and godly, make use of those aliaunts as of brethren, considering their distresses, with a lively fellow-feeling, . . . remembering the precise charge which God gave to the Israelites, to deale well with all straungers, because the time once was, when themselves were straungers in that cruel land of Egypt: not forgetting that other nations . . . were a refuge to the English, in their last bloudie persecution in Queene Maries dayes: and in brief recounting, that . . . their case may be our case: which day the Lord long keepe from us."

PLAYTEXT

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. London, ?1593/94. Contribution to *The Book of Sir Thomas More*.
Thomas More.

...

Imagine that you see the wretched strangers,
Their babies at their backs with their poor luggage,
Plodding to th'ports and coasts for transportation, . . .

...

Say now the king,
As he is clement, if th' offender mourn,
Should so much come too short of your great trespass
As but to banish you, whither would you go? . . .

Go you to France or Flanders,
To any German province, Spain or Portugal, . . .
Why, you must needs be strangers. Would you be pleased
To find a nation of such barbarous temper
That breaking out in hideous violence
Would not afford you an abode on earth,
Whet their detested knives against your throats,
Spurn you like dogs, and like as if that God
Owed not nor made not you, nor that the elements
Were not all appropriate to your comforts,
But chartered unto them? What would you think
To be thus used? This is the strangers' case;
And this your mountainish inhumanity.
All. Faith, 'a says true; let's do as we may be done by.

References

- Abbot, George. *An Exposition upon the Prophet Jonah*. London: Richard Field, 1600.
- Barnaud, Nicolas (Eusebius Philadelphus). *Dialogi ab Eusebio Philadelpho Cosmopolita . . .* Edinburgh: Jacob James, 1574.
- Chambers, R. W. "Shakespeare and the Play of *More*." *Man's Unconquerable Mind: Studies of English Writers from Bede to A. E. Housman and W. P. Ker*. London: J. Cape, 1939. 204-49.
- Chitty, W. "Aliens in England in the Sixteenth Century." *Race* 8:2 (1966-67): 127-45.
- Clark, Peter. "A Crisis Contained? The Condition of English Towns in the 1590s." *The European Crisis of the 1590s*. Ed. Peter Clark. London, Boston: G. Allen and Unwin, 1985. 44-66.
- Clarkson, L. A. *The Pre-Industrial Economy in England, 1500-1750*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1971.
- Dean, David. *Law-Making and Society in Late Elizabethan England. The parliament of England, 1584-1601*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- D'Ewes, Simonds. *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the reign of Queen Elizabeth collected by Sir Simonds D'Ewes*. London: Paul Bowes, 1682.
- Dimmock, Matthew. "Tamburlaine's Curse." *TLS*, 19 November 2010: 16-17.
- Freeman, Arthur. "Marlowe, Kyd, and the Dutch Church Libel." *English Literary Renaissance* 3 (1973): 44-52.
- Gabrieli, Vittorio. "Sir Thomas More: Sources, Characters, Ideas." *Moreana* 23: 90 (1986): 17-43.
- and Giorgio Melchiori (eds.). *The Book of Sir Thomas More*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990.
- Hartley, T. E. *Proceedings of the Parliaments of Elizabeth I*. 3 vols. London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1981-1995.
- Jones, John. *Shakespeare at Work*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Jowett, John, ed. *Sir Thomas More*. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2011.
- King James VI and I. *Political Writings*. Ed. J. P. Somerville. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Knapp, Jeffrey. *Shakespeare's tribe: church, nation, and theatre in Renaissance England*. London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Love, Harold. *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Luu, Lien Bich. *Immigrants and the Industries of London, 1500-1700*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.
- Maas, P. "Henry Finch and Shakespeare." *RES*, n.s. 4 (1953): 142.

- Matchett, William H. "Shylock, Iago, and *Sir Thomas More*: with some Further Discussion of Shakespeare's Imagination." *PMLA* 92 (1977): 217-30.
- Melchiori, Giorgio. "The Book of *Sir Thomas More*: dramatic unity." *Shakespeare and Sir Thomas More: essays on the play and its Shakespearian interest*. Ed. T. H. Howard-Hill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. 77-100.
- Miola, Robert B. "Shakespeare and *The Book of Sir Thomas More*." *Moreana* 48: 183-184 (2011): 9-35
- Neale, J. E. *Elizabeth I and her parliaments*. 2 vols. London: J. Cape, 1969.
- Oakley, Anne M. "The Canterbury Walloon Congregation from Elizabeth 1 to Laud." *Huguenots in Britain and their French Background, 1550-1800*. Ed. Irene Scouloudi. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987. 56-71.
- Parry, Glyn. "Wolley, Sir John (d.1596)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-10.
- Rappaport, Steve. *Worlds within worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Robinson, Ralph. *The Utopia of Sir Thomas More*. Introduced by H. B. Cotterill. London: Macmillan, 1958.
- Scouloudi, Irene. *Returns of Strangers in the Metropolis: 1593, 1627, 1635, 1639: a study of an active minority*. London: Huguenot Society of London, 1985.
- Selwood, Jacob. *Diversity and Difference in Early Modern London*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010.
- Shapiro, James. *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Sokol, J. B. *Shakespeare and Tolerance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Stern, Tiffany. *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Strype, John. *Annals of the Reformation*. Oxford, 1824. Repr. New York: Burt Franklin, 1966.
- Trigge, Francis. *The humble petition of two sisters; the church and Commonwealth: For the restoring of their ancient Commons and liberties, which late Inclosure with depopulation uncharitably hath taken away*. London: George Bishop, 1604.
- Tudeau-Clayton, Margaret. "'This is the strangers case': the utopic dissonance of Shakespeare's contribution to *Sir Thomas More*." *Shakespeare Survey* (forthcoming).
- Twynning, John. *London Dispossessed: literature and social space in the early modern city*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998.

- Vickers, Brian. *Shakespeare, co-author: a historical study of five collaborative plays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Yungblut, Laura Hunt. *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us. Policies, perceptions and the presence of aliens in Elizabethan England*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

