Document généré le 7 mai 2024 19:50

Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme

Building Opposition at the Early Tudor Tower of London: Thomas More's Dialogue of Comfort

Kristen Deiter

Volume 38, numéro 1, hiver 2015

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1088690ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v38i1.22781

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)
2293-7374 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article

Deiter, K. (2015). Building Opposition at the Early Tudor Tower of London: Thomas More's Dialogue of Comfort. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, *38*(1), 27–55. https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v38i1.22781

Résumé de l'article

Les monarques anglais du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance ont représenté la Tour de Londres comme un symbole du pouvoir royal, mettant ainsi en place une idéologie de la Tour promouvant la royauté. Toutefois, la signification culturelle de la Tour a subi un retournement rapide lorsque Thomas More a écrit A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation (1534), alors prisonnier à la Tour ; l'ouvrage a en effet posé les fondations d'une tradition littéraire et culturelle présentant la Tour comme un lieu d'opposition à la couronne. Dans le Dialogue, à travers quatre étapes progressives de contestations à l'égard d'Henri VIII, More remet en question l'idéologie royale de la Tour, et la redéfinit comme un symbole de résistance à la tyrannie royale.

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2015

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

https://www.erudit.org/fr/

Building Opposition at the Early Tudor Tower of London: Thomas More's *Dialogue of Comfort**

KRISTEN DEITER
Tennessee Tech University

Medieval and early modern English monarchs constructed the Tower of London's iconography to symbolize royal power, creating a self-promoting royal ideology of the Tower. However, the Tower's cultural significance turned sharply when Thomas More wrote A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation *(1534) as a Tower prisoner, laying the foundation for an early modern tradition of literary and cultural representations of the Tower as oppositional to the Crown. In the* Dialogue*, through four progressive transgressions against Henry VIII, More defies the royal ideology of the Tower and refashions the Tower itself as a symbol of resistance to royal tyranny.*

Les monarques anglais du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance ont représenté la Tour de Londres comme un symbole du pouvoir royal, mettant ainsi en place une idéologie de la Tour promouvant la royauté. Toutefois, la signification culturelle de la Tour a subi un retournement rapide lorsque Thomas More a écrit A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation *(1534), alors prisonnier à la Tour ; l'ouvrage a en effet posé les fondations d'une tradition littéraire et culturelle présentant la Tour comme un lieu d'opposition à la couronne. Dans le* Dialogue*, à travers quatre étapes progressives de contestations à l'égard d'Henri VIII, More remet en question l'idéologie royale de la Tour, et la redéfinit comme un symbole de résistance à la tyrannie royale.*

In the mid-1530s, Henry VIII had Thomas More imprisoned in the Tower of London and beheaded on Tower Hill to assert royal control over his obstinate subject. Yet, despite Henry's objective, these events also enlarged More's popularity and facilitated his martyrdom and sainthood. The king could not control the cultural significance of More's imprisonment and execution at the Tower. Nor has twenty-first-century historical scholarship altered the popular mythology surrounding More's Tower imprisonment. By tradition, More's prison cell was the lower floor of the Bell Tower. In 2000, Geoffrey Parnell, then Keeper of Tower History, having "track[ed] More through reams of documents on Tower history," publicized that "[t]here isn't a shred of evidence that More

*I would like to thank Brian J. Williams, Ula Klein, M. Scott Stenson, Beth Powell, Jeremy Ekberg, Anne M. O'Donnell, and the editor and anonymous reviewers at *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance*

was ever held" in the Bell Tower.[1] Nevertheless, the Tower's Yeoman Warders persist in proclaiming daily to thousands of visitors that More was imprisoned in the Bell Tower. As these examples illustrate, the lore surrounding More and the Tower of London has transcended both royal intent and documentary history and helped define the Tower's cultural meaning for nearly five centuries. More himself contributed significantly to rewriting the Tower's early modern cultural geography: when he wrote *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* (1534) as a Tower prisoner, he initiated a literary and cultural tradition of defying the Tower's enduring symbolism as an icon of royal power.[2]

Figure 1. The Bell Tower, Tower of London, Exterior

Figure 2. The Bell Tower, Tower of London, Interior

---

et Réforme for their incisive responses to drafts of this essay. Special thanks also to Alvin Vos, Bridget Clifford, and Jason Deiter.

1. Maev Kennedy, "Historians Scorn Claims over Thomas More's Cell," *The Guardian* (London), 9 January 2000, accessed 1 December 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/jan/10/maevkennedy.

2. Thomas More, *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 12, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, ed. Louis L. Martz and Frank Manley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), hereafter cited parenthetically as *Dialogue*.

Prior to More's detainment, the English monarchy had, with few exceptions, controlled the Tower's meanings to serve royal interests. In the late eleventh century, William the Conqueror ordered the construction of a Norman castle in southeastern London to symbolize and maintain his dominance over the city, and over the next two centuries English kings developed this stronghold into a concentric castle that displayed their supremacy: the Tower of London.[3] Medieval and early modern monarchs invested this castle with meaning as a symbol of royal power, creating a self-promoting royal ideology of the Tower. That is, through their spoken and written words and actions, they constructed the Tower's iconography, to their advantage, as a reflection of themselves and their authority. By the early sixteenth century, the Tower had served numerous royal functions that reinforced this ideology: a royal residence, fortress palace, armory, and arsenal; a site of royal victory celebrations, tournaments, entertainments, receptions, and marriage processions; the location of the royal Menagerie and a branch of the Royal Mint; a repository for the kingdom's records; a site of the Great Wardrobe, including royal jewels and coronation regalia; a showplace and attraction for foreign and domestic visitors; and the traditional starting point of coronation processions. It had represented aggressive royal power as a prison for enemies of the state, heretics, and foreign captives; an imperial refuge from rebellious subjects; and the location of traitors' executions. Medieval subjects had occasionally besieged the Tower to resist royal oppression, briefly subverting the Crown's Tower discourse. Nonetheless, Caroline M. Barron contends, to medieval Londoners "the Tower always symbolized the hostile power of the king."[4] Although several murders took place at the Tower in the Middle Ages, regal festivities were held there until the 1530s. The Tower's reputation for royal terror developed in the sixteenth century.[5] Once the Henrician Reformation began, Henry VIII, more than any previous king, employed the Tower to incarcerate and sometimes execute religious

3. Edward Impey and Geoffrey Parnell, *The Tower of London: The Official Illustrated History* (London: Merrill, 2000), 15–39.

4. Caroline M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200–1500* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 242. On the royal ideology of the Tower, see Kristen Deiter, *The Tower of London in English Renaissance Drama: Icon of Opposition* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 54; on resistance to this ideology, and the Tower's functions, see 27–47.

5. Deiter, *Tower*, 42–47.

dissenters as traitors.[6] The Tower became notorious for this function during the imprisonment and beheading of Henry's first non-clerical Catholic martyr, Thomas More.[7]

No early-Tudor subject understood the royal ideology of the Tower better than More, for he had enforced it by sending Protestants accused of heresy to the Tower in his role as lord chancellor, "a position second only to Henry," from 1529 to 1532.[8] More resigned the chancellorship in May 1532 because he opposed Henry's new clerical policy, and on 17 April 1534 he was committed to the Tower for refusing to take the oath attached to the Act of Succession, which endorsed Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn and implicitly rejected papal authority by declaring Henry to be supreme head of the Church in England.[9] After nearly fifteen months of incarceration, during which time the 1534 Act of Treasons made it high treason to deprive the king of his dignity or title, More

6. Brian A. Harrison, *The Tower of London Prisoner Book: A Complete Chronology of the Persons Known to Have Been Detained at Their Majesties' Pleasure, 1100–1941* (Leeds: Royal Armouries, 2004), 2–162.

7. On More as post-Reformation England's first Catholic martyr, see Nicholas Harpsfield, *The Life and Death of Sr Thomas Moore, Knight*, Early English Text Society, o.s. 186 (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 209.

8. More sent Thomas Phillip to the Tower in 1531; see Harrison, 126; and Thomas More, *The Apologye of Syr Thomas More, Knyght*, Early English Text Society o.s. 180 (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 142–43. He sent James Bainham there in 1531 and 1532 (Harrison, 127). On More's role in trying heretics, see Arthur Irving Taft's introduction in More, *Apologye*, ix–x, lxi, lxxx–lxxxi. For the quotation and the dates of More's chancellorship, see Jamie Goodrich, "Thomas More and Margaret More Roper: A Case for Rethinking Women's Participation in the Early Modern Public Sphere," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 39.4 (2008): 1024. On More's public career, see J. A. Guy, *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980).

9. Some sources erroneously attribute More's resignation to his disapproval of Henry's divorce, and More's imprisonment to his refusal to take the Oath of *Supremacy*. However, More resigned because Henry appropriated clerical jurisdiction; see William Rockett, "The Case against Thomas More," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 39.4 (2008): 1065–66; and Peter Marshall, "The Last Years," in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, ed. George M. Logan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 116. More's refusal to take the oath attached to the Act of *Succession* resulted in his April 1534 imprisonment (Marshall, "Last," 122–23). In November 1534 the Act of *Supremacy* was passed, stating that Henry "shall be taken, accepted, and reputed the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England," and More was *then* "belatedly attainted of misprision of treason under the terms of the Succession Act" (Marshall, "Last," 126). See also Thomas More, "Letter 216, To Margaret Roper," in Elizabeth Frances Rogers, ed., *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947; reprinted 1970), 556/9–39.

was tried and convicted of high treason on 1 July 1535 and, five days later, beheaded on Tower Hill.[10]

Literary evidence demonstrates that, before More's imprisonment, very few writers had represented the Tower in any way that contradicted the royal discourse. Some medieval writers, such as the twelfth-century William Fitzstephen and the fifteenth-century William Dunbar, had represented the Tower in highly favourable terms.[11] Several medieval Tower prisoners had written poetry during their incarceration, including Charles d'Orléans after his capture at Agincourt in 1415, and James I, Prince and, later, King of Scotland, who was imprisoned in the Tower several times in the early fifteenth century; More may have been familiar with these precedents, in which the poets occasionally mention their prison without disparaging either the Tower or the king.[12] In one sentence of Malory's late-fifteenth-century *Le Morte Darthur*, Sir Mordred attacks the Tower, but his efforts prove fruitless as Queen Gwenyver holds the castle and is protected therein.[13] Edmund Dudley's *The Tree of Commonwealth,* composed during his Tower imprisonment in 1509–1510, could be read ironically as resistance when it praises Henry VIII and exhorts him to good government, though this is not quite the same as attacking the royal Tower discourse.[14]

10. On the law and the trial, see Henry Ansgar Kelly, Louis W. Karlin, and Gerard B. Wegemer, ed., *Thomas More's Trial by Jury: A Procedural and Legal Review with a Collection of Documents* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2011), 138–39, 173–85. For the dates and beheading, see William Roper, *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore, Knighte*, Early English Text Society o.s. 197 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 86, 103.

11. William Fitzstephen, "Description of the Most Noble City of London," in John Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. Henry Morley (1598, 1603; Guernsey, Channel Islands: Sutton, 1997), 23; William Dunbar, "In Honour of the City of London," in *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1290–1900*, ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1931), 26–27.

12. Charles d'Orléans et al., *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle: A Critical Edition of BnF MS. FR.25458, Charles d'Orléans's Personal Manuscript*, ed. John Fox and Mary-Jo Arn, trans. R. Barton Palmer, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 303, Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 34 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, with BREPOLS, 2010); Linne R. Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn, eds., *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems,* Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2005). For the dates of James I's imprisonments, see Harrison, 85, 97.

13. Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd, Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 2004), 679, 681.

14. Edmund Dudley, *The Tree of Commonwealth: A Treatise*, ed. Dorothy Margaret Brodie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948).

Generally, More's predecessors who did contradict the royal ideology passively reported royal injustice at the Tower, barely hinting that such injustice should be resisted, such as Robert Fabyan's claim, posthumously printed in 1516, that Richard III's nobles conspired against Richard because of rumours that he "hadde within the Tower put vnto secrete deth the ii. sonnes of his broder."[15] A notable exception is Matthew Paris's thirteenth-century description of the Tower as the setting of a Londoner's dream of rebellion.[16] However, as More became Henry's archetypal victim of royal terror at the Tower, I argue that he also became the first of many early modern English writers who challenged the Crown's dominant Tower iconography.

The Tower's cultural and historical significance turned sharply when More wrote the *Dialogue*, laying the foundation for an early modern tradition of literary and cultural representations of the Tower as oppositional to the Crown. As the cultural geographer Tim Cresswell explains, the meanings ascribed to places evolve as historical contexts change, and these meanings are significant for developing and maintaining ideologies.[17] Such ideologies can be "challenged, resisted, and transgressed, leading to revisions."[18] A place that is used "to control people" can become "a site of meaningful resistance" through acts that "attempt to reinvent [that] space" and "manipulate the power of established geographies."[19] As the following evidence demonstrates, such was the case when writers and other artists built upon More's subversive representations of the Tower, starting around 1590. Late-sixteenth-century opposition to royal persecution of recusants, often at the Tower, and the first published account of More's life and death in 1588, may have stimulated dramatists' interest in his writings at that time.[20] In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, at least sixteen English playwrights

15. Robert Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France, in Two Parts* (London, 1811), 670.

16. *Matthew Paris's English History, From the Year 1235 to 1273*, 3 vols., trans. J. A. Giles, Bohn's Antiquarian Library (London: Bohn, 1852–54), 1:326–27; see Deiter, *Tower*, 35–36.

17. Tim Cresswell, *In Place / Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 150.

18. Cresswell, 161–62. On transgression, see also 8, 163–76.

19. The first two quotations are from Cresswell, 163; the last two, from 175.

20. On recusants' persecution at the Tower, see Deiter, *Tower*, 15–18. The first published account of More's life and death was Thomas Stapleton's *Three Thomases*, a Latin treatise on More, Thomas the Apostle, and Thomas Becket; see Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 255.

represented the Tower as a symbol of resistance to the government.[21] To avoid censorship and punishment, these representations were necessarily oblique, often implying analogy between contemporary and past events.[22] Yet they were consistently oppositional. All twenty-four extant English history plays that represented the Tower from 1579 to ca.1634 destabilized, contradicted, and/or resisted the received image of the Tower as a symbol of royal power, portraying it in ways that challenged royal oppression.[23] We can better understand these representations of the Tower as part of an early modern tradition that began with More's *Dialogue*. Although More could not have foreseen how his portrayals of the Tower would influence later works, in the *Dialogue* he models new, resistant ways of thinking about the Tower and the Crown's Tower rhetoric. He composed the *Dialogue* with several intentions: to comfort himself, his co-religionists, and readers experiencing any kind of tribulation; to build opposition by encouraging Catholics to resist Henry VIII; and to defy his oppressive king, partly by reinventing the Tower, the ultimate symbol of royal power. Inadvertently, he also created a model for subsequent texts that opposed the royal Tower ideology. As a literary ancestor to these works, the *Dialogue* epitomizes Cresswell's concept of a transgression as "a blueprint—a dress rehearsal—for radical change."[24]

While the *Dialogue* can be read on various levels,[25] I focus here upon its analogical significance, which deserves renewed attention in light of recent research on the Tower in early modern English literature and culture. I argue that, in the *Dialogue*, More implicitly recasts the Tower as a symbol of resistance to royal tyranny, unsuspectingly setting the stage for playwrights, poets, and others to follow suit in the literary and visual arts.[26] More was one of the first early modern writers, if not the first, whose literary representations of the Tower subverted the royal iconography of that space. Greg Walker mentions More's *Dialogue* as part of "a revolution in English literary culture" during the

21. Deiter, *Tower*, 1–2.

22. Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England, with a New Introduction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984; reprinted 1991), 55.

23. Deiter, *Tower*, 1–2, 54–100.

24. Cresswell, 165.

25. Louis L. Martz and Frank Manley, Introduction, in More, *Dialogue*, lxvi, lxvii, cxxxiv.

26. On Henry VIII as a tyrant, see Greg Walker, *Writing under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1–26, 224–38, 414–32.

Reformation.[27] I contend that the Tower's representations in the *Dialogue* are a significant component of this revolution. My argument goes beyond readings of the *Dialogue* as generally oppositional: an attack on "the king in the king's own prison"; a rejection of royal power to control subjects' religious beliefs; and/or prison writing that "undermines the power of the prisoner's persecutor" by extending the author's fame.[28] As illustrated above, the Tower was no mere royal prison, and other scholars have not read the *Dialogue* in the context of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Tower literature—as an act that challenged, resisted, and transgressed the Crown's ideology of the Tower and refashioned the Tower as a symbol of opposition to royal tyranny.

More defies the royal ideology of the Tower through four progressive transgressions against Henry VIII. First, through his character Anthony, he represents himself as a pious Roman Catholic, justifying his supposed treason and thus reshaping the Tower as the site of a new travesty of royal justice. Second, he repeatedly minimizes the hardship of imprisonment until his incarceration resembles freedom, while also imagining the imprisonment and death of a king. Significantly, More represents this prison as a castle, evoking and describing the Tower as he nullifies its terrifying power. Third, from the Tower, where More could hear his monarch's lions roaring in the Menagerie, he represents Henry not as a leonine king but as a bloodthirsty lion in the biblical lion's den and as a scriptural lion-like devil against whom Christians should fight, recasting the Tower as a site where Christians are justified in resisting royal terror. Finally, he transforms the Tower into a gateway to glory by preparing for and celebrating his anticipated martyrdom and sainthood after his expected beheading on Tower Hill, refashioning Tower imprisonment as a blessing and elevating himself over Henry, whom More imagines in hell.[29] Thus, his resistance to the Crown's Tower ideology in the *Dialogue* is unprecedented because it is severe, sustained, and sequential.

27. Walker, 6; the quotation is from 414.

28. The first two points are from Martz and Manley, Introduction, cxxxiv; the third, Rivkah Zim, "Writing behind Bars: Literary Contexts and the Authority of Carceral Experience," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72.2 (2009): 306.

29. It is possible that More did not anticipate his execution until after he completed the *Dialogue*, as Seymour Baker House suggests in "A Martyr's Theology of Assent: Reading Thomas More's *De Tristia Christi*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 29.2–3 (2005): 53–54. However, House also acknowledges that the *Dialogue*'s final chapter deals with martyrdom (53, 56).

Although More could not have known it at the time, he had prepared himself to reshape the Tower's symbolism when he wrote *The History of King Richard III,* probably between 1514 and 1518.[30] In the *History*, he destabilized the Tower's iconography by representing abuses of power there—the deceitful Council, Hastings's execution, the Princes' alleged murder. Although More did not finish or publish the *History*, it circulated in manuscript and was published in 1557, and, starting in 1543, part of it appeared in Tudor chronicle histories that Shakespeare and other dramatists knew and used in writing four plays about Richard III.[31] Thus, *as a source*, the *History* influenced the Tower's representation in these plays, though the playwrights themselves built upon More's foundation to portray the Tower with far superior creativity and defiance than More did in the *History*. Despite the Richard III story's popularity, and the *History*'s being the first extensive treatment of Richard's reign and the first history of his reign in English (in addition to Latin), More's resistance to the Crown's Tower discourse in the *History* was limited and derivative. His portrayals of Richard, and thus of the Tower, are those "which his age bequeathed to him," as several histories of Richard III preceded More's.[32] Richard S. Sylvester emphasizes, "What has not often enough been recognized is that a great many of the details which More embodied in his narrative had already been recorded by other historians of Richard's reign. […] [O]thers had originated the account of Richard's 'crimes.'"[33] Although the *History* and its sources directly identify the Tower by name, whereas the *Dialogue* does not, they also associate the Tower with royal injustice primarily through brief and simple reporting, without actively challenging the Crown's Tower discourse or reshaping the Tower's symbolism, as More does in the *Dialogue*.

30. On the dating, see Richard S. Sylvester, Introduction, in Thomas More, *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 2, *The History of King Richard III*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), xx, lxiii–lxiv, lxxxvi, xc.

31. Sylvester comments on the *History* being unfinished (Introduction, xx, xxvii, lxi, ciii) and unpublished in More's lifetime (ciii), its circulation in manuscript (xvii, ciii), its publication in More's *Workes* in 1557 (xviii), and the similarity between More's and Shakespeare's Richard (lxxvii). The first published version in English was Richard Grafton's 1543 addition to John Hardyng's chronicle (xx). On the plays, see Deiter, *Tower*, 73–76.

32. Sylvester, Introduction, *Richard III*, lxvi. On earlier historians of Richard's reign, see lxx–lxxviii; and Richard S. Sylvester, "Commentary," in More, *History*, 216, 261–62.

33. Sylvester, Introduction, *Richard III*, lxxviii.

While the *History* continued a medieval tradition of representing the Tower in ways that promoted a negative attitude toward that space, its innovation lay in its possible use of the Tower to caution Henry against tyrannical rule.[34] More may have begun to doubt Henry VIII in 1513, when Henry ordered Edmund de la Pole's execution.[35] De la Pole had been imprisoned in the Tower by Henry VII in 1506 and detained there until his beheading on Tower Hill in 1513, and More may have seen parallels between Richard's and Henry VIII's violent uses of the Tower.[36] Yet More sought royal patronage while writing the *History*, and Richard's misuse of the Tower contributed to the Crown-sponsored myth that the Tudors had rescued England from Richard.[37] Perhaps for these reasons, in the *History*, More avoided representing individuals' opposition specifically to Richard's use of the Tower: More revealed the hypocrisy of the royal Tower rhetoric but avoided attacking that rhetoric. By contrast, in 1534 he was uniquely equipped and motivated to resist the royal Tower discourse in the *Dialogue*, having destabilized the Tower's iconography in the *History*, having deployed the Tower as Henry's chancellor, and having experienced the Tower as a prisoner of conscience. While the *History* illuminates the Tower as a site and symbol of royal injustice that *should* be resisted, the *Dialogue* actually *resists* the Crown's ideology and refashions the Tower as a symbol of that resistance.

The *Dialogue* is one of More's three major prose compositions as a Tower prisoner, known collectively by modern critics as the "Tower Works."[38] The writings "were in manuscript circulation shortly after his death if not immediately upon completion," and the *Dialogue* was published in 1553, when the

34. On negative representations of the Tower, see Deiter, *Tower*, 27–44. See also Barron, *London*, 242; and medieval images of the Tower in Impey and Parnell, 25, 29, 92. On cautioning Henry VII against tyrannical rule, see Sylvester, Introduction, *Richard III*, cii–civ.

35. Sylvester, Introduction, *Richard III*, ci.

36. Harrison, 120.

37. On More's seeking royal patronage, see John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 22. On the Tudor myth, see King, 21–23; and Sylvester, Introduction, *Richard III*, lx, lxx, lxxvi, xcviii–xcix, ciii.

38. The other Tower Works are *A Treatise upon the Passion*, which was probably nearly complete before More's imprisonment; *De Tristitia Christi*; and several shorter texts. See Seymour Baker House, "'The field is won': An Introduction to the Tower Works," in *A Companion to Thomas More*, ed. A. D. Cousins and Damian Grace (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009), 226–27.

Catholic Mary I acceded to the throne.[39] It was reprinted in 1557 in *The Workes of Sir Thomas More Knight*, and a second edition of the *Dialogue* appeared in 1573.[40] As Seymour Baker House argues, More's "committing his meditations to paper and secreting them out of the Tower" shows that he wanted others to read them.[41]

These subversive acts and intentions suit the *Dialogue*'s form and content; in fact, More's religious, political, and literary background had prepared him well to write a dialogue that contravened the Crown's Tower iconography. As a young man he translated and published "subtle dialogues by Lucian," and, since he loved liberty and hated tyranny, he also wrote a response to Lucian's dialogue *Tyrannicide*, in which More accepts the justice of laws supporting tyrannicide.[42] He later composed book 1 of *Utopia* as a conversation, and parts of his *Dialogue concerning Heresies* and *Confutacion of Tyndales Aunswere* are written in dialogue.[43] Additionally, Boethius's medieval dialogue and "classical work of prison literature," *The Consolation of Philosophy*, which, like More's *Dialogue*, comments on the irony of the free prisoner, was a favourite book of More's.[44] More refers to it in the Alington letter which he, perhaps with his daughter Margaret, composed in the Tower as a dialogue between themselves in August 1534.[45] The letter closely parallels one of Plato's dialogues, further demonstrating More's facility with this ancient form.[46] In the letter, after discussing his service to King

39. The quotation is from House, "field," 227. For the date, see Martz and Manley, Introduction, xxi; and House, "field," 227.

40. Martz and Manley, Introduction, xxi–xxii.

41. House, "field," 225. Before his execution, More sent his daughter Margaret "a letter […] contayned in the foresaid booke of his workes" (Roper, *Lyfe*, 99).

42. Gerard B. Wegmer, *Young Thomas More and the Arts of Liberty* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 53n4, 53, 58–62. On More's hatred of tyranny, see also Sylvester, Introduction, *Richard III*, c.

43. On *Utopia* and the *Dialogue concerning Heresies*, see Taft, Introduction, in More, *Apologye*, xi. On the *Confutacion*, see Rainer Pineas, "Thomas More's Use of the Dialogue Form as a Weapon of Religious Controversy," *Studies in the Renaissance* 7 (1960): 193.

44. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. Douglas C. Langston, Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 2010). The quotation is from "Letter 206, Margaret Roper to Alice Alington," in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*, 519n203.

45. "Letter 206, Margaret Roper to Alice Alington," in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*, 514–32. On the Alington letter, see Goodrich, 1024.

46. "Letter 206, Margaret Roper to Alice Alington," in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*, 514/Headnote.

Henry, More comments, "as Boece saith, one man to be prowde that he beareth rule ouer other men, is much lyke as one mouce would be prowde to beare a rule ouer other myce in a barne."[47] This implicit diminution of Henry accords with More's subtle defiance in the *Dialogue*.

The *Dialogue*'s fictitious conversation takes place between Anthony (or Antony) and his young nephew Vincent.[48] It is set in Buda, Hungary—a steadfastly Christian kingdom—which, as More perceived England, was threatened by a religious tyrant.[49] More sets the *Dialogue* between the "Hungarian defeat at Mohács on 28 August 1526 by the forces of the Ottoman Empire under its sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent" and Suleiman's second invasion in 1529.[50] With a Turkish invasion imminent, Vincent visits Anthony, seeking advice for coping with their country's oppression, and, within a theological argument, Anthony discusses strategies for facing various types of persecution. Their conversation comprises three books. Book 2 takes place several days after book 1; and book 3, a few hours after book 2, building to a climax in the final chapters, where Anthony contemplates torture and execution.[51]

It has recently been argued that, unlike More's earlier dialogues such as *Utopia* and *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, into which More wrote "a fictionalized version of himself," he "intentionally and pointedly chose to write himself out of," or "eliminated his identity" from, the *Dialogue*, and that he also "wr[ote] the prison out of the Tower works."[52] However, More wrote the *Dialogue* under very different circumstances than those of his previous dialogues. Since he was imprisoned in the Tower of London and anticipating execution while composing the *Dialogue*, his representations of himself and the Tower within it are understandably oblique—but they are also ubiquitous. Although Anthony is not

47. "Letter 206, Margaret Roper to Alice Alington," in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*, 519–20/203–06.

48. Leland Miles, "The Literary Artistry of Thomas More: *The Dialogue of Comfort*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 6.1 (1966): 10.

49. On the setting, see Martz and Manley, Introduction, lxxxvii. On Hungary, see cxxii.

50. Andrew W. Taylor, "'In stede of harme inestimable good': *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*," in *Cambridge Companion*, 216, 217.

51. On the setting of the books, see Martz and Manley, Introduction, lxviii.

52. Ruth Ahnert, "Writing in the Tower of London during the Reformation, ca. 1530–1558," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72.2 (2009): 186–92. The first two quotations are from 188; the others, 189 and 190. A version of this article also appears in Ruth Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2013.

in prison, the situation that motivates the *Dialogue* resembles More's situation as a Tower prisoner, awaiting his possible torture and execution. Despite More's social rank, he feared physical torture.[53] As a Tower prisoner, he wrote in a letter to a priest, "And I truste bothe that thei will vse no violente forceble waies, and also that if thei woulde, God woulde […] giue me strength to stande."[54] His letters also reveal that as his imprisonment progressed, he feared death less but expected it more, specifically that he could "leese his head" and die "violently" and "painefully."[55] In fact, Louis L. Martz and Frank Manley argue that throughout much of the work, More explores "his own fears and motives in the Tower."[56] They compare "the imaginary scene of a conversation in Hungary and the real scene of a man alone in a cell in the Tower of London"; and contend that the *Dialogue*'s scriptural quotations compose "chains of association" where the text "seems most autobiographical, where More seems to be speaking most directly of his own situation: his imprisonment, […] his ambivalent attitude toward the king, his fear of torture […], and the probability of a shameful and painful death." In the *Dialogue*, as in much early modern English literature, the "associative link" lies "not in the text, but in the context," as "simultaneous disguise and revelation were part of the essential form and meaning of the work."[57] More disguises *and reveals* both himself and the Tower in the *Dialogue*.

Readers since Nicholas Harpsfield, in his mid-sixteenth-century biography of More, have interpreted the *Dialogue* as an analogy for Henry's

53. More was personally concerned with the prospect of "painful death through physical torture" (Miles, 12); see also Marshall, "Last," 125. Although the earliest extant official warrant for torture in England dates to 1540 at the Tower, John H. Langbein acknowledges, in *Torture and the Law of Proof: Europe and England in the Ancién Regime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), "some use of torture predates the surviving warrants" (81). More's course of action "was almost certain to lead to his death" (Martz and Manley, Introduction, lxxii).

54. Thomas More, "Letter 213, To Master Leder," in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*, 549/17–20.

55. See these letters by More in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*: "Letter 202, To Margaret Roper," 509/19–22; "Letter 208, To Dr. Nicholas Wilson," 537/148–51; "Letter 210, To Margaret Roper," 542–43/80–132; "Letter 211, To Margaret Roper," 546–47/68–101; "Letter 214, To Margaret Roper," 552/61–68, 553/92–97; and "Letter 216, To Margaret Roper," 557/47–61, 558/95–104. The quotations are from 542/105–06 and 543/121–22.

56. Martz and Manley, Introduction, cii.

57. Martz and Manley, Introduction, cxlvii, cxlviii–cxlix, cli, clvii, cxxxiv.

persecution of Catholics, especially More.[58] Leland Miles observes that, on the title page, More claims "(not very convincingly) that the *Dialogue* was written first by a Hungarian in Latin, then translated into French, and finally translated into English" to support the analogical "smokescreen behind which to attack Henry VIII."[59] Scholars generally agree that More represents himself "in the persona of Anthony."[60] Anthony is a persecuted Catholic, aged, and ill (*Dialogue*, 75, 4, 78), and More, a persecuted Catholic who turned fifty-six in 1534, suffered from poor health in the Tower.[61] Additionally, in the Alington letter, More punned on his name in Greek—*Morus*, meaning "fool"—as his friend Erasmus had done in the prefatory letter to *The Praise of Folly*. In the *Dialogue*, Anthony advises Vincent to play the Pauline "fool for Christ's sake," which More exemplified as a Tower prisoner.[62] Indeed, More employs "folly," "fool," and their derivatives 107 times in the *Dialogue*, ninety-five of which Anthony voices, as in the self-referential "such an old fole am I" (262). And he uses "more" over three hundred times, as in the self-allusive comment that, during the apostle Paul's imprisonment, God "saw more in saynt paule, than saynt paule saw hym selfe" (29). While these self-references may have begun

58. Harpsfield, *Life*, 133–34. Harpsfield's biography was completed by 1557, and "eight extant manuscripts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggest a fairly wide, long-standing circulation" (Gregory, 270). The analogy is established in Miles, 14–16; A. D. Cousins, "Role-Play and Self-Portrayal in Thomas More's *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation,*" *Christianity and Literature* 54.4 (2003): 457–59; Louis L. Martz and Richard S. Sylvester, Introduction, *Thomas More's Prayer Book: A Facsimile Reproduction of the Annotated Pages*, trans. Martz and Sylvester (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), xxxiv–xxxvi; and Martz and Manley, Introduction, civ.

59. Miles, 14.

60. Alison V. Scott, "More's Letters and 'the Comfort of the Truth,'" in *Companion to Thomas More*, ed. Cousins and Grace, 63. See also Miles, 16; Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 36, 57, 45; and Cousins, "Role-Play," 457, 459, 463. An exception is Ahnert in "Writing," 186–92.

61. In the *Dialogue*, More refers to the "catholique Church" (75, 133), "christes trew catholike faith" (200), and "Catholiques" (314) in a strikingly modern sense. Though the Reformation had just begun in England in 1534, it had been raging in Europe since 1517, and More had been "England's most prolific and virulent Catholic apologist," as House states in "A Martyr's Theology," 50. On More's illness, see these letters in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*: "Letter 206, Margaret Roper to Alice Alington," 514/10–13; and Thomas More, "Letter 214, To Margaret Roper, 553/92–95.

62. "Letter 206, Margaret Roper to Alice Alington," in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*, 518–20/162–209; see Cousins, "Role-Play," 465–66.

as "in-jokes […] for More's closest family and friends to enjoy," early modern Catholics, poets, and dramatists understood them, too, and often alluded to Thomas More and Catholicism through puns on "fool" and "more."[63]

I agree with literary critics who argue that the *Dialogue* "develops complex overlapping patterns of […] analogy" rather than "an historical and autobiographical allegory"; however, this analogy includes other characters and places that resemble, and historically have been read as corresponding to, people, places, and ideas in More's England.[64] Anthony imparts wisdom to Vincent, whom Martz and Manley have read as yet another surrogate for More, comforting himself in the Tower.[65] More's tyrannical Suleiman or Great Turk has been read as typifying Henry VIII.[66] Scholars have interpreted the Hungarians as symbolizing English Catholics and the Turkish army as signifying Protestants.[67] "[T]he Turkes fayth" (195) is conventionally read as "a thinly veiled reference to the Henrician religious settlement."[68] These parallels were clear to sixteenth-century readers such as More's biographer Thomas Stapleton, who also noted in 1588 that More's Hungary represents England.[69] Rivkah Zim has recently reaffirmed that More's setting of "Hungary in 1526" is code for "England in 1534."[70]

If Anthony and Vincent, the Hungarians, the Great Turk and his army, Islam, and Hungary can respectively represent More, English Catholics, Henry VIII and Protestants, Henry's reformed Church, and England, then many (not all) of the *Dialogue*'s hundreds of references to prison can be—and, I posit, originally would have been—interpreted as references to More's prison: the

63. Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion, and Resistance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 174–79. The first quotation is from Ahnert, "Writing," 190.

64. The quotation is from Taylor, 218. Martz and Manley likewise consider the *Dialogue* to be a "loose, metaphoric analogy" rather than an "allegory" (Introduction, cxxxiv).

65. Martz and Manley, Introduction, lxxxviii n.3.

66. Martz and Manley provide a history of the Turkish invasions (Introduction, cxxii–cxxviii). Miles identifies parallels between the Great Turk and Henry ("Literary," 15–16). Walker compares their tyranny (*Writing*, 6).

67. Miles, 16.

68. Gregory, 107–108; see also Ahnert, "Writing," 190.

69. Thomas Stapleton, *The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More, Formerly Lord Chancellor of England (Part III of "Tres Thomae," Printed at Douai, 1588)*, trans. Philip E. Hallett (New York: Benziger, 1928), 65.

70. Zim, 308.

Tower.[71] More represents prison metaphorically and in various contexts in the *Dialogue*, and part of the power of these representations is that they are allusive and resonate in multifaceted ways. I am not suggesting that More uses the word "prison" as code for "Tower of London" throughout the *Dialogue*; rather, I argue that he often alludes to the Tower when discussing imprisonment. Although More's general sixteenth-century readers might not have known details that modern readers glean from his personal writings, as Ruth Ahnert has recently pointed out, they would have known the basic facts about one of Henry VIII's most important statesmen and martyrs, "Catholic England's prime hero."[72] The title page of the 1553 edition names him: "Syr Thomas More KNYGHT." The *Dialogue*'s title page in More's 1557 *Workes* identifies him: "Sir Thomas More Knyght, sometime Lorde Chauncellor of England." And the 1573 edition's title page specifies that "Sir Thomas More, sometime L. Chanceller of England," wrote the text "in the Tower of London, An.1534" and includes a woodcut resembling the Holbein portrait of More in his chain of office, labelled "THOMAS MORVS ANGLUS AETETIS 50," and a poem in Latin and English honouring More's "whole life, and […] death."[73] Martz and Manley probably referred to readers of the unpublished manuscript when they wrote that the *Dialogue* primarily addresses "the general reader who presumably had no way of identifying the author."[74] With each successive publication of the book, greater numbers of More's sixteenth-century readers would have recognized both More and the Tower in the *Dialogue*, as his modern editors do.

As stated above, in the *Dialogue*, More contravenes the Crown's Tower discourse in four major ways, the first of which is to fashion the Tower as the site of a new royal injustice. The Tower was a notorious prison where royal injustices had taken place, but since 1532, Henry also had been imprisoning

71. More uses "prison" and its derivatives 205 times, mostly in book 3.

72. Ahnert, "Writing," 190. The quotation is from Wilson, 174.

73. Thomas More, *A dialoge of comfort against tribulacion, made by Syr Thomas More KNYGHT…* (London, 1553), *Early English Books Online* (hereafter, *EEBO*), accessed 29 November 2014, http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home; Thomas More, *The Workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght, sometime Lorde Chauncellor of England* (London, 1557), *EEBO*, accessed 29 November 2014, http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home; Thomas More, *A Dialogve of Cumfort against Tribulation, made by the right Vertuous, Wise and Learned man, Sir Thomas More, sometime L. Chanceller of England, which he wrote in the Tower of London, An. 1534* (1573), *EEBO*, accessed 29 November 2014, http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home.

74. Martz and Manley, Introduction, cxxii.

Catholics there for denying his supremacy over the Church in England.[75] Henry's new use of the Tower, to imprison subjects for their religious beliefs rather than for political reasons, renewed the Tower as a setting of royal miscarriage of justice, and More wielded that fact against him. More represents Anthony—and thus himself—as a devout Catholic, in contrast with the "cruell Turke" (6)—Henry VIII—suggesting that Henry, whom the pope in 1521 had dubbed Defender of the Faith, was far less Christian than his Tower prisoner.[76] Through Anthony's piety, More continually portrays his imprisonment as a product of royal tyranny, thereby liberating himself from the early modern stigma of incarceration and empowering himself to refashion the Tower more directly throughout the text.[77] More portrays Anthony as an imitator of Christ, much as "More resembled Christ."[78] For example, Anthony extensively quotes canonical and deuterocanonical biblical texts, revealing More's knowledge and use of traditional Roman Catholic writings.[79] As Anthony quotes Romans 8:31, he identifies, and identifies with, its holy author: "yf god be with vs / sayth saynt paule / who can stand agaynst vs" (23). More's citing "saynt paule"—who had been imprisoned in Rome and, by order of Nero, beheaded for his Christian beliefs—also suggests parallels that privilege More and his faith over Henry.

More implicitly justifies his supposed crime, further demonstrating the injustice of his Tower imprisonment for his religious beliefs, through his clear "conscience," a term that appears forty-five times in the *Dialogue*. The word also ironically alludes to Henry's assurance that More was free to follow his conscience in the royal divorce controversy, and to Henry's supposed reliance upon his own conscience to justify the divorce.[80] Anthony describes a man with a clear conscience who has "a false cryme put vppn hym, […] & he falsely punyshid" (33). By indirectly juxtaposing his clear conscience and imprisonment,

75. In 1532, Thomas Abel and Lawrence Cook were the first to be imprisoned in the Tower for denying Henry's supremacy over the Church in England (Harrison, 127).

76. On Henry VIII as Defender of the Faith, see J. H. and R. V. Pinches, *The Royal Heraldry of England* (Rutland: Tuttle, 1974), 139.

77. Thomas S. Freeman, "The Rise of Prison Literature," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72.2 (2009): 136–41.

78. Cousins, "Role-Play," 459. The quotation is from Gregory, 266.

79. Martz and Manley, Introduction, cxlviii–clxii.

80. Rockett, 1070–71; J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 153–55.

More asserts his innocence and convicts Henry through one of the king's favourite words: "conscience." More's being "falsely punyshid" for his Catholic beliefs recasts the Tower as a location where a new royal injustice is served—a strike against the royal discourse.

Having recast the Tower as the instrument of his unjust suffering for his faith, More had ideally situated himself to censure Henry from within the Tower. In fact, as Martz and Manley show, Anthony frequently quotes from the deuterocanonical Book of Sapientia in the Vulgate—a text that exemplifies Roman Catholic orthodoxy—including passages emphasizing "the fall of an unjust king" and "a moral exemplum addressed to kings, urging them to rule with justice," which "seem like a direct warning to Henry VIII."[81] Because the king/subject hierarchy and the royal iconography of the Tower reinforced each other, More's warning the king as a Tower prisoner simultaneously inverted this hierarchy and subverted the Crown's Tower rhetoric.

More's second oppositional tactic for reshaping the Tower is to minimize the hardship of captivity until his imprisonment resembles freedom, while rhetorically imprisoning Henry—first in Henry's sins, and then in the Tower. Anthony assures Vincent that, should the Great Turk imprison them, their loss would be negligible (252). He cautions against overvaluing one's freedom and abusing one's liberty by sinning and expresses the commonplace notion that sin, or alienation from God, is a kind of imprisonment (252–53), implying that Henry is captive, having sinned in divorcing his wife and breaking from the Church of Rome. More probably also viewed as sinful the fact that, in 1534, Henry's government "broaden[ed] the definition of treason" with deadly consequences for More.[82] Here, in response, More expands the concept of prison, empowering himself to incarcerate Henry. He further argues that "euerlastyng libertie" awaits those who accept imprisonment for adhering to their faith (254). Thus, after imprisoning Henry, More symbolically frees himself from the Tower.

At this point, More begins to substitute the word "castell" for "prison"—as the Tower, unique among London's prisons, was a castle—and develop images of a king imprisoned in a castle. Anthony wonders, if two men are detained in a "greate castell," one in a larger room than the other, whether both or only one

81. Martz and Manley, Introduction, clviii, clix, clxi.

82. Rockett, 1082.

is a prisoner (258). Alluding to his incarceration, More suggests that imprisonment only slightly limits one's freedom (258). He progresses to the claim that even all princes and "the great Turke" are imprisoned (259). And, to clarify that "the great Turke" represents Henry, both Vincent and Anthony refer to "a kyng kept in prison" (259, 260). Anthony integrates the imprisoned king and castle-prison images: "that kyng, that had […] the whole castell to walke in […] is prisoner […] though not so strayghtly kept […] as he that lieth in the stokkes" (260). He suggests that the prisoner in the castle-prison is free, provided that the prisoner has "the wisedome & the grace to […] hold hym selfe content with that place" (261). Since More, incarcerated within the Tower, had this wisdom and grace, he again rhetorically imprisons Henry—in a castle-prison—and frees himself.

He then alludes more overtly to his imprisonment, describing the Tower and his experiences there, only to free himself again. More describes his circumstance in the Tower:

> yf there were a man attayntid of treason or felonye / & after iudgment given of his deth […] it were determynid that he shuld dye / onely the tyme of his execucion delayed till the kynges ferther pleasure knowen / & he thervppon delyuerid to certeyne kepers, & put vpp in a sure place, out of which he could not scape […]. (264)

He describes his treatment in the Tower:

> what yf for the tyme […] betwene his attaynder & his execucion, he were so favorably handlyd, that he were suffred to do what he wold […] & to haue the vse of his landes & his goodes, & his wife and his children licence to be with hym / & his frendes leve at liberty to resort vnto hym […]. (264)

He describes the Tower: "that the place were a grete castell royall / with parkes & other pleasures therin a very greate circuyte about […]" (264). And he describes his anticipated execution on Tower Hill: "that whan he were callid for / to deth & execucion he shuld […]" (264). Finally, he asks, "what wold you call this man / a prisoner […] or no prisoner […] [?]" (264). Elsewhere, More acknowledged that he had been attainted of treason and was alive at the "Kyng*is*

plesure."[83] Also, at least in 1534, More's wife, children, and friends visited him in the Tower.[84] The Tower was "a grete castell royall": for the first twenty years of Henry's reign, it was still used as a royal residence, and Henry had made significant improvements on the palace buildings, especially for Anne Boleyn's coronation in 1533.[85] At that time, the Tower complex included gardens and a "gallery intersecting the gardens in the fashionable Continental style"—More's "parkes & other pleasures therin"—within its concentric curtain walls, More's "greate circuyte."[86] In composing the Tower Works, the imprisoned More did "what he wold." More's argument that imprisonment is a state of mind reshapes the Tower itself as a symbol of liberty, especially when he concludes that, being no more vulnerable to death than anyone else is, he is "no prisoner."

He soon returns to the imprisoned-king motif, emphasizing that everyone including the king is God's prisoner whose death is unavoidable (266–67). Besides presumably decreasing More's terror of his imprisonment and anticipated execution, this metaphor further diminishes Henry's power over More by comparing Henry to More in the Tower. Less obliquely, More then elaborates upon an imprisoned king's death as an execution in a prison: "the griesly cruell hang man deth […] shall […] rygorowsely & fiercely gripe hym by the very brest, & make all his bones ratle / & so by long & diuerse sore tormentes strike hym starke dede in this prison" (268). He describes how the king's body would be "cast into the grownd in a fowle pytt within some corner of the same, there to rott & be eaten with wretchid wormes of the earth / sendyng yet his sowle owt ferther vnto a more fearefull iudgment" (268). More reinforces this link to his imprisonment: "euery man is in this world a very prisoner, sith we be all put here into a sure hold to be kept till we be put to execucion, as folke alredy condempnid vnto deth" (270). And he again extends the metaphor to include

83. On the attainder, see Rockett, 1081–82. The quotation is from Thomas More, "Letter 214, To Margaret Roper," in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*, 553/96.

84. In "Letter 209, From Margaret Roper," in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*, Margaret states that More had enjoyed the company of his wife, children, and "bedesfolke" (539/11–16) as a Tower prisoner and had recently talked with them "in the gardeine" (539/18–19) before he was "shette vp in close prison in the Tower" (538/Headnote), or had these privileges revoked, in 1534. More also refers to these events in his reply, "Letter 210, To Margaret Roper," 540/7–21.

85. Impey and Parnell, 51–52.

86. On the gardens, see C. Paul Christianson, *The Riverside Gardens of Thomas More's London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 9, 36–41. On the gallery and wall, see Impey and Parnell, 51, 32.

God, "the chiefe gaylour ouer this whole brode prison / the world" (271), implying that even Henry is subject to spiritual death, physical death, and final judgment.

He sharpens this image of Henry's imprisonment by alluding to an "extremely painful chronic ulcer […] on [Henry's] thigh," which had afflicted him probably since 1528.[87] More interprets such ailments as another type of imprisonment by "God our chiefe gaylour" (274). He writes, "Some prisoner of a nother gaole syngeth […] dawnceth in his ij feters" while "goddes prisoner that hath his one fote feterid with the gowte lieth gronyng on a cowch" (275). More implies that his Tower imprisonment is pleasant compared to Henry's bodily imprisonment. In contrast to Henry as "goddes prisoner," More evokes himself singing and dancing in his fetters, again imprisoning Henry and freeing himself. The cumulative effect of these passages is that More refashions the Tower as less terrifying; and Tower imprisonment, less of a deterrent to other Catholics who might resist Henry.

Building upon his suggestion (modelled after Boethius in *The Consolation of Philosophy*) that physical imprisonment can facilitate spiritual freedom, More has Anthony claim that imprisonment is often misperceived as harsher than it is and that freedom is overrated. Anthony praises cloistered monks, nuns, anchorites, and anchoresses—all Roman Catholics—and finds common ground with them as prisoners-by-choice (276). Anthony even describes a prisoner, perhaps More, who "with mattes of straw […] had made yt so warme / both vnder the fote & round about the walles […] for kepyng of his helth," and compares being locked into one's prison at night to the security of locking one's doors and windows at home (277). As England's former chancellor, More knew Henry's power to threaten subjects with Tower imprisonment; his incarceration had accentuated that royal prerogative and the Tower's terrifying cultural energy. By indirectly comparing the Tower to a safe, comfortable house, he again neutralizes the Tower's threat and diminishes royal power.

More's third transgression in the *Dialogue* is to counter the Crown's Tower ideology by representing Henry, through two biblical allusions, as a brutal lion and a lion-like devil. More mentions the biblical Daniel, whose faith in God and imprisonment in the lion's den as a punishment for praying to God instead of King Darius, resonated with his situation in the Tower: "In prison was danyell,

87. Scarisbrick, 485.

& the wild lions about hym / & yet evyn here god kept hym harmlesse" (279). More employs the word "lion(s)" fifteen times in the *Dialogue*, always referring to wild predators rather than majestic creatures, and scholars have interpreted these lions as allusions to Henry: "in the medieval-renaissance system of correspondences the lion and king were regarded as analogous since both were the prime representatives of their respective species."[88] The Royal Arms of England, which King Richard I "the Lionheart" originated, have always featured lions (or leopards), strengthening these biblical lions' association with England's king.[89] More himself had compared Henry to a lion in a 1532 conversation with Thomas Cromwell.[90] Thus, he deflates royal power and insults Henry when Anthony comments that the feared lion is sometimes "no lyon at all / but a sely rude roryng asse" (111).

More's readers also would have associated lions with the Tower of London. By the 1530s, Londoners had been visiting the lions in the Tower Menagerie for centuries.[91] From his cell, More would have continually heard Henry's roaring lions, a constant reminder of the king's power over his Tower prisoner. Twenty-five years later, when Elizabeth I began her coronation procession from the Tower, having been imprisoned there in 1554, she too recalled the lions and compared her deliverance to Daniel's.[92] These allusions to Daniel demonstrate the terrifying impression the lions' roars made upon Tower prisoners. But they also rewrite the Tower's iconography, refashioning it as the biblical lion's den, recasting the Tower prisoner as another faithful Daniel who is rewarded for resisting the sovereign in matters of religion, and reinterpreting the monarch as a tormentor of Christians whose misuse of the Tower would prove ineffectual—all of which undercut the Crown's rhetoric.

In another biblical lion image, borrowed from 1 Peter 5:8, in the *Dialogue*'s final chapter More describes the devil, who imprisons Christ's followers to tempt them, as a lion. Because the king and the Tower were already associated

88. Louis L. Martz and Frank Manley, "Commentary," in More, *Dialogue*, 380.

89. Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *The Art of Heraldry: An Encyclopaedia of Armory* (New York: Arno, 1904; reprinted 1976), 122; Pinches, 2–3.

90. Roper, *Lyfe*, 56–57.

91. J. N. P. Watson, "Going to See the Lions: The Tower Menagerie," *Country Life* 154 (1978): 1637.

92. Richard Mulcaster, "The Queen's Majesty's Passage through the City of London to Westminster the Day before Her Coronation," in *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney, 2nd ed. (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 132.

with lions, and privy councilors had interrogated More during his Tower imprisonment and told him Henry would "shew mercy" and might release him if he swore the supremacy oath, this lion-like devil represents Henry in relation to More, who believed the king had imprisoned him to tempt him to risk damnation by swearing against his conscience.[93] He asserts, "The devill shall send some of you to prison, to tempt you […] And therfor sayth S. Peter […] Stand agaynst the devill […] And hym selfe in the meane while compasseth vs, runnyng & roryng like a rampyng lyon […] sayth S. Peter […] your adversary the devill lyke a roryng lyon" (317–18). More repeatedly quotes "S[aint] Peter," the first pope, and advocates fighting this lionesque devil—or rather the king whom it emblematizes: "whan he roreth out vppon vs by the threttes of mortall men / let vs tell hym that […] we […] intend to stand & fight with hym" (318). This Tower prisoner's defiance of Henry refashioned the Tower itself, royal lions and all, as a site and symbol of active resistance to royal tyranny.

As More's fourth transgression, just as Anthony advocates turning tribulation to one's "spiritual advantage," More recasts his Tower imprisonment and imminent execution as a pathway to martyrdom and even sainthood, thereby reinventing the Tower and Tower Hill as landmarks on that path.[94] A. D. Cousins has shown that More concludes the *Dialogue* with Anthony's "long meditation on the Passion," through which More "designed a self-portrayal that would both memorialize him and turn him into an *exemplum* of adherence to the old religion."[95] Through this meditation, More compares his suffering in the Tower to Christ's suffering and thus represents himself as a Christian martyr.[96] The *Dialogue*'s final chapter begins, "… [I]n suffryng […] Imprisonment, & […] paynefull deth […] yf we could […] conceyve in our myndes a right Imagynacion & remembraunce of Christes […] passion […] we shuld fynd our

93. The councilors questioned More in May and June 1535, according to these letters in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*: Thomas More, "Letter 214, To Margaret Roper," 550–54; and "Letter 216, To Margaret Roper," 555–59. The suggestion of Henry's mercy is from 552/52–60; the quotation, line 57. On More's beliefs about his imprisonment's purpose of temptation, see Thomas More, "Letter 207, To Dr. Nicholas Wilson," in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*, 532/2, 12–13.

94. "In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, rather than waiting for papal approval, Catholics assumed the saintly status of the recent martyrs" (Gregory, 301; see also 303). The quotation is from Martz and Manley, Introduction, xcv.

95. Cousins, "Role-Play," 460, 458.

96. House, "field," 228.

selfe […] glad & desierouse to suffre deth for his sake" (312–13). Here, More preemptively shapes his image as a martyr, and celebrates his martyrdom, as a Tower prisoner. At this point in the *Dialogue*, More treats the Tower as a vehicle to glorious, Catholic martyrdom, implicitly urging his coreligionists to defy Henry and rejoice in the consequences at the Tower.

Because Catholicism has always emphasized "tradition," "continuity," and "the early Christian martyrs," Brad S. Gregory observes, early modern Catholics facing execution for their religion "patterned themselves on previous martyr-saints."[97] In the *Dialogue*, More notes analogies between his situation and those of past martyrs, but also meditates on the Christian martyr's reward of eternal life and sainthood, in contrast with an imagined destiny for Henry, whom he again rhetorically imprisons—in hell.[98] More introduces another biblical prisoner, martyr, and saint: "S Iohn the baptist was […] [in prison] while herode & herodias sat full mery at the fest, & the daughter of herodias delytid them with her daunsyng / till […] she daunsid of S. Iohns hed" (279). As More's descendants have noted, the image suggests a comparison between Salome, who delighted King Herod and requested the imprisoned John the Baptist's head, and Henry's young temptress, Anne Boleyn, whose royal marriage More had refused to sanction in the succession oath, triggering his Tower imprisonment and anticipated beheading on Tower Hill.[99] He adds, "& now sittith [John the Baptist] with great fest in hevyn at goddes bord / while herode & herodias […] sytt in hell burnyng […] & to make them sport withall, the devill with the damysell daunce in the fire afore them" (279). He imagines the spiritual judgment that may await Henry after More's expected beheading. By contrast, in drawing parallels between himself and "S[aint] Iohn the baptist" in heaven, More envisions his afterlife as superior to Henry's, reversing the king/subject and reformed/Roman Catholic hierarchies that his imprisonment was intended to reinforce, and suggesting imprisonment in the Tower, even when it leads to execution, as preferable to "the prison of hell" (279).

Writing the *Dialogue* enabled More not only to redefine his imprisonment by using it for his intellectual and spiritual edification, as Ahnert has

97. Gregory, 122.

98. On the Christian martyr's reward, see Gregory, 28. See also 266, 303.

99. On the similarity between Salome and Boleyn, see John Guy, *A Daughter's Love: Thomas More and His Dearest Meg* (Boston: Houghton, 2009), 235, 223. More's fellow Tower prisoner, Bishop *John* Fisher, was also analogous to *John* the Baptist.

rightly argued, but also to transform the Tower into a vehicle to martyrdom and sainthood, and to celebrate his anticipated martyrdom and its heavenly reward at the Tower, thwarting the king's intention of punishing him and privileging himself over the king.[100] Alluding to both Henry and himself, More's Anthony declares, "god […] exalteth not euery good man vp to the glory of a martire" (246). As More wrote in his final letter to Margaret, he thought it "very meete" that he would be executed on 6 July, the octave of the feast of "Sainte Peter" and the eve of the anniversary of the translation to Canterbury Cathedral of the bones of "S. Thomas [Becket]," who had likewise defied a King Henry (Henry II) regarding clerical authority.[101] Gregory notes, "[m]artyrs […] reinforced English Catholic identity because of the dichotomy between the martyrs and the authorities responsible for their deaths. […] [T]he contrast between the glorious and the wicked was plain to see."[102] More's frequent self-identification with saints in the *Dialogue*, and envisioning Henry and his queen in hell, all as Henry's Tower prisoner, radically subverted the Crown's Tower iconography.

It is important to contextualize the distinctiveness of More's representations of the Tower in the *Dialogue*, and the circumstances of his imprisonment, in light of previous Tower prisoners and their writings. More was not the first Tower prisoner of the English Reformation; he was neither the first subject committed to the Tower for denying Henry's supremacy over the Church in England, nor the first Tower prisoner who had opposed or denounced Henry's divorce.[103] Nor was he the first Tower prisoner to compose literature during his confinement, as I have shown above. More was not even the first to oppose

100. Ahnert, "Writing," 189–90.

101. Zim, 307, 307n43; the quotations are from Thomas More, "Letter 218, To Margaret Roper," in Rogers, ed., *Correspondence*, 564/19–21; see 564n20. See also Guy, *A Daughter's Love*, 263.

102. Gregory, 314.

103. Humphrey Monmouth was imprisoned in the Tower in 1528, "committed under suspicion of bringing heretical books [copies of Tyndale's translation of the *Holy Bible*] from overseas" (Harrison, 126). Thomas Abel and Lawrence Cook in 1532, and others, preceded More as Tower prisoners for denying Henry's supremacy over the Church in England (Harrison, 127, 130–31). Opposition to Henry's divorce was a secondary reason for Abel's 1532 imprisonment, and the reason for others' imprisonment (Harrison, 127–30).

Henry VIII in his Tower writings, which John Frith had done in anti-Catholic texts while imprisoned for heresy in 1532.[104]

However, More's refashioning the Tower of London into a literary motif for resisting royal tyranny was a radical act in the *Dialogue* and a turning point for the Tower's representations in English literature and culture. Although his imprisonment and execution epitomized the Crown's Tower ideology, in which the monarch controls and privileges himself over the subject, More challenged that discourse in four significant ways in the *Dialogue*. Challenging the royal Tower ideology acknowledged the power of this royal discourse but also demonstrated early modern subjects' capacity to resist it. And More's committing these transgressions as a Tower prisoner intensified their defiance by refashioning the Tower itself as the site of his resistance to royal oppression. His transgressive representations of the Tower in the *Dialogue* paved the way for the Tower's oppositional role in late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century plays by Davenport, Dekker, Drayton, Drue, Fletcher, Ford, Hathway, Heywood, Legge, Marlowe, Munday, Peele, Rowley, Shakespeare, Webster, Wilson, and several unknown playwrights, who incorporated some of More's literary transgressions into their Tower plays.[105] To illustrate, nearly all twenty-four Tower plays represent a king or queen's imprisonment in the Tower, the release of a sovereign's prisoner from the Tower, the monarch's use of the Tower as a warrant for rebellion against a monarch, the Tower's role in a rebellion against the sovereign, and/or the Tower's role in creating English martyrs, as the *Dialogue* indirectly does.[106] Likewise, when Perkin Warbeck is sent to the Tower in Ford's *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck: A Strange Truth*, he echoes the *Dialogue*'s representation of the free Tower prisoner: "Noble thoughts / Meet freedom in captivity. The Tower— / […]!"[107] And, as in the *Dialogue*, Dekker and Webster's *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyat* portrays Tower imprisonment not as a hardship but as a "comfort."[108]

104. On Frith, see Taft, "Introduction to More," in *Apologye*, xxxii–xxxiii; and Harrison, 128.

105. Deiter, *Tower*, 1–2.

106. Deiter, *Tower*, 79–88, 90–92, 135–46.

107. John Ford, *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck: A Strange Truth*, ed. Peter Ure, The Revels Plays (1634; London: Methuen, 1968), 5.2.128–29.

108. Thomas Dekker and John Webster, *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyat,* The Tudor Facsimile Texts (New York: AMS, 1970), F3v.

In the play *Sir Thomas More*, Anthony Munday and his collaborators celebrated More's opposition to Henry, and his imprisonment and execution at the Tower, in ways that particularly resonate with the *Dialogue*.[109] Lady More's dream in which she and More sink in their boat on the Thames, "opposite the Tower," suggests the powerlessness that the royal ideology of the Tower had instilled in many early modern English subjects (4.2.8–26). However, Roper immediately entreats her to "Give no respect […] to fond dreams" and, by implication, to the Crown's Tower iconography (4.2.27), and all subsequent references to the Tower similarly oppose the royal discourse. As a Tower prisoner, [John Fisher, Bishop of] Rochester asserts, "The Tower and I will privately confer / Of things wherein at freedom I may err," thereby aligning himself with the Tower in opposition to the king and privileging Tower imprisonment over freedom (4.3.16–17), as Anthony does in the *Dialogue*. Likewise, rather than subscribe to the king's articles, More chooses to "go unto the Tower" and "add / [his] bones to strengthen the foundation / Of Julius Caesar's palace" (4.4.151–54), reinforcing the connection between the Tower and More's/Anthony's defiant willingness to be executed. A few lines later, More adds, "To a great prison, to discharge the strife / Commenced 'twixt conscience and my frailer life," emphasizing his unjust imprisonment through his clear conscience, as in the *Dialogue* (4.4.160–61). This arrest scene concludes with More's declaration that he goes "to prison," and then "to heaven," representing Tower imprisonment as a path to martyrdom (4.4.173). More calls the Tower "my strong house" (5.2.32), possessing it and neutralizing its implications, and as he enters the Tower he addresses it in a soliloquy emphasizing that his "comfort" is his clear "conscience" (5.2.57–69, esp. 64, 62). Likewise, a woman calls More "the best friend that the poor e'er had," epitomizing his righteousness just before the Gentleman Porter tells More to "enter through the Tower gate" (5.2.43–44). On the eve of his execution, More assures his family, "here [in the Tower] I can sit and talk / With my honest keeper […], / Laugh and be merry"; and "Tomorrow I shall be at liberty," evoking the *Dialogue*'s images of the merry prisoner and the free prisoner (5.3.72–74, 80). As More's family bids him farewell, Roper, punning on More's name as More does in the *Dialogue*, laments, "More heavy hearts ne'er

109. Anthony Munday et al., *Sir Thomas More*, ed. Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori, The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), hereafter cited parenthetically.

parted in the Tower" (5.4.130). When More comments to the Lieutenant of the Tower, on his execution day, "It were fair walking on the Tower leads," he implies that his imprisonment was pleasant, and the Lieutenant—an officer of the Crown—weeps and blesses More, who comforts him (5.4.12–27). And on the scaffold, More tells his executioner that upon his death, he will "fly up to heaven," suggesting martyrdom and sainthood (5.4.107). By centring the final scenes on More and the Tower, the playwrights evoke More's *Dialogue* and commemorate his wresting the Tower's meaning from royal control.

Other artistic works from around 1600 likewise represent the Tower in ways that echo or extend More's transgressions in the *Dialogue*. A broadside ballad and woodcut celebrate a cultural hero who had been beheaded at the Tower for treason. A portrait defiantly alludes to a rebellion and a plot to seize the Tower. A delftware plate incongruously praises Elizabeth I with an image of the Tower featuring Traitor's Gate, alluding to her imprisonment there.[110] Authors of Tower plays similarly depicted the Tower in opposition to the Crown in their nondramatic poetry and Lord Mayors' Shows, in ways that resonate with More's *Dialogue*; for instance, both Drayton and Heywood represent execution at the Tower as a vehicle to martyrdom.[111]

More's role in reshaping the Tower's literary and cultural meanings, particularly its dramatic meanings, in the *Dialogue* cannot be overstated. Miles has noted More's dramatic training and demonstrated acting skills as a youth in Bishop Morton's court, as well as the dramatic nature of the *Dialogue*'s form. He contends, "The best passages would play well on stage" and suggests that, had More been a playwright, he "might well have contributed something significant to the history of English drama."[112] Yet More did contribute something significant to the history of English drama and English literature and culture more broadly: the early modern period's first substantial refashioning of the Tower as an icon of opposition to royal tyranny, in a dramatic, dialogic form that, like many plays of subsequent decades, refashioned the monarch's iconography of

110. Deiter, *Tower*, 101–12.

111. On the Tower in poetry, see Kristen Deiter, "Locating Lady Jane Grey and Elizabethan Opposition: The Tower of London in Michael Drayton's *Englands Heroicall Epistles,*" *Philological Quarterly* 89.4 (2010): 435–56, esp. 445. On the Tower in Lord Mayors' Shows, see Kristen Deiter, "'What Citadels, what turrets, and what towers': Mapping the Tower of London in Thomas Heywood's Lord Mayors' Shows," in *Comparative Drama* 47.4 (2013): 473–503, esp. 495.

112. Miles, 19–20.

the Tower. As I pointed out earlier, Cresswell asks, "To what degree can transgression provide a blueprint—a dress rehearsal—for radical change?"[113] As a precursor to the Tower plays and other early modern texts that represented the Tower, radically, in opposition to the Crown's Tower iconography, More's transgressive *Dialogue* set the stage for a new, oppositional cultural geography of the Tower of London.

113. Cresswell, 165.