

Utopia in early modern Portugal and Spain: the censorship of a nest of vipers

Hervé BAUDRY

CHAM, FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Universidade dos Açores

hbaudry@fcsch.unl.pt

Abstract

This paper revisits the issue of Thomas More's inquisitorial censorship in the Iberian Peninsula¹. Some historians have investigated the Portuguese case as *Utopia* was first censored by the Portuguese Inquisition in 1581; little critical consideration has been given to the Spanish censorship. An Iberian perspective on this question has never been previously adopted. The premise of my unifying approach is not historical, according to the Double Monarchy, or the traditional relationship within this geographical area. Both censorships appear at the same historical moment but submit the narrative and the other texts often published alongside it to different measures, legally binding through the Indexes, which suggest different receptions of More's writings in a similar context. Describing these differences leads us to distinguish two forms, or levels, of censorship, micro and macro-censorship, or, expurgation and prohibition. Both exist in this instance, proving the Portuguese reaction to the texts to be the most repressive. A second aspect is the question of the effectiveness of controlling access to books. A difficult problem when it deals with simple prohibition, the methodology of micro-censorship studies helps evaluating to some extent what was achieved by the censors. The present analysis, limited to the Portuguese data, tends to invalidate previous conclusions on a wide and lasting reception of *Utopia* in Portugal and to confirm the efficacy of the local controlling system.

Keywords: Thomas More, Erasmus, Censorship, Portugal, Spain

1. Preliminary notes

In early modern European history, *Utopia* was subjected to measures of censorship

that appear to be different from the local systems of book controlling. For instance, in France, the first translators of Latin texts "censured attacks against religion and politics" (Pierrot, abstract). The present study deals with the Inquisitorial postpress censorship. Its most visible face is reflected by sets of measures against books we conventionally describe using the expression "put in the Index". These Indexes were printed catalogs of names and works elaborated throughout much of Catholic Europe. The best known of these were Roman and entitled *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (Index of forbidden books). The Inquisitorial destiny of Thomas More's works is interesting because it reflects the variety of censorship policy within that world. In Portugal, censorship was complete, that is to say, *Utopia* was prohibited: legally, no one could possess, sell or read it. In Spain, the censorship was partial: owning, selling or reading were authorized once the texts, and not only *Utopia*, had been expurgated. This kind of censorship can be described as microcensorship. The Inquisitions of both countries published specialized Indexes for this purpose, commonly referred to as *Index Librorum Expurgatorum*, beyond the Indexes of prohibition.

The present investigation lies within the framework of both kinds of censorship, prohibitive and expurgatory. The issues of microcensorship, whatever the field, are commonly approached in a national perspective that is from the point of view of local Indexes. Fernando Moser and Pina Martins paid attention to More's censorship in Portugal (Moser, 1983); in the field of history of science censorship in Spain, José Pardo Tomás published a book reference in 1989. Moser and Martins used exclusively the Portuguese Indexes of 1581 and 1624 in the first case; Tomás, exclusively the Spanish ones (1584, 1612, 1632 and 1640). This study requires a more multilateral approach.

Microcensorship studies are intrinsically transnational and transtextual. Partially exploring the history of books, partially the history of texts, they are straightly dependent on the history of the leading texts of both histories, the Indexes. Moreover, the genealogy of this literary genre proves they all are strongly intertextual. Let us say that, methodologically, none of them can be studied in isolation. In More's case, the close dependence of both Iberian countries seems even stronger in the perspective of material bibliography. As we shall see, one censored copy possessed by the Portuguese National Library cannot be explained but with the use of a Spanish edition of the Index.

What is the relevance of these methodological and historical points? Microcensorship studies have a great deal to say about books and the reception of ideas. The present paper first describes the variety of variety of ways More's book was received by the censors in the early modern period and attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of book control. It is important to note that the short title *Utopia*, refers to More's narrative and to the successive editions (Gibson, n°. 1-37: *Utopia*; 74-77: *Collected Works*). Since 1516, but mostly from the Basilean edition of 1518 by Froben, to Raphael Hythlodæus's travel in the Utopian Republic were joined various texts by More and other authors, including Erasmus of Rotterdam, a heretic. According to the conception of the printed book as a metonymy and metaphor of the author (Betteridge, 298), the different receptions of *Utopia*'s editions in circulation in the Peninsula reflect the censor's hesitations between saintliness (More) and heresy (Erasmus). As to evaluating the effectiveness of censorship, the present study will only deal with the Portuguese side.

2. *Utopia* in the Indexes

Here follow, chronologically organized, the texts of the Portuguese and Spanish Indexes in which appear Thomas More's *Utopia*, from 1581 to 1624.

A few words about the first entry. The same year, in 1581, Antonio Ribeiro

published two Indexes, the Roman one in Latin, and a Portuguese, entitled *Catalogo dos livros que se prohibem nestes Regnos* (= Catalog of the books that are forbidden in these kingdoms; the plural is due to the royal title, King of Portugal and the Algarves). It is divided in two sections: a local list of prohibited books in Latin and in Portuguese («en Lingoajem»); a list of works to be corrected («para se emmendarem»). *Utopia* is listed in the first section under letter V; in the second section, one More's epigram must be erased from the anthology by Leodagarius a Quercu (*Flores Epigrammatum*, 1560, vol. 1).

2.2. (Portugal) *Catalogo dos livros que se prohibem nestes Regnos*. Lisboa: Antonio Ribeiro, 1581, in-4

* fl. 16^{vº}: *Utopia* Thome Mori.

* fl. Q^{vº}: Ex Thoma Moro, de Nautis efficientibus monachum. fol. 230.

2.3. (Spain) *Index librorum expurgatorum*, Madriti: Apud Alfonso Gomezium, 1584, in-8º, p. 193:

Thomas Morus.

Ex Thomae Mori, viri clarissimi, scriptis, in impres.[sione] Basileae apud Episcopium, anno 1563.

[1] *In Epistola Guilielmi Budaei ad Lupsetum, de Thoma Mori Utopia, fol. 3. epistolae, lin.[ea] ult.[ima] dele ab illis verb.[is]* Quo certe instituo Christus, usque ad, ac fata nostra regere.

[2] *Lib.[er] 1 Utopiae, pag. 31. lin. 7 delet.* Non Hercule magis, quam si essem sacerdos.

[3] *Lin. 20 eiusdem folii, deletur ab illis verb. Nam Cardinalis, usque ad, hoc quoque dictum.*

[4] *Lib. 2 Utopiae, ubi agit de religionibus Utopiensium, pag. 146 deletur in marg.[ine]* O Sacerdotes nostris longe sanctiores.

[5] *Pag. 261 ex epigrammate de novo testamento verso ab Erasmo, deletur ab*

illis verbis, Lex nova nam veteri, usque ad, Christi lex nova luce nitet

[6] Pag. 524 linea 22 epistola de morte Thomae Mori, deletur, *Multo magis licuisset hic esse tacitum*.

[7] Lin. 27 eiusdem paginae, deletur, *Simplici, synceraque conscientia errasse*.

[8] Et pag. 530 lin. 6 deletur, *Forte fefellit eum persuasio*

[9] Deletur etiam tota Apologia pro Moria Erasmi ad Martinum Dorpium.

2.4. (Spain) *Index librorum prohibitorum et expurgatorum, Madriti: apud Ludovicum Sanchez typographum regium, 1612, in-fol., p. 722-723:*

Thomae Mori Lucubrationibus adiunctae Epistolae.

Ex Thomae Mori Angliae Ornamenti eximii, lucubrationibus, etc. quibus additae sunt duae aliorum Epistolae de vita, moribus, et morte Mori, Basileae apud Episcopium, 1568 [*i.e.* 1563]

[1] In Epistola Guilielmi Budaei ad Thomam Lupsetum Anglum, cuius initium, *Gratiam sane*, pagin. 6 in fine, post illa verba, *communione legem*, dele usque ad illa, *Utopia vero*, exclus.[ive].

[2] Et pagin. 11 post illa verba, *quod Erasmi*, dele, *amicus est*, exclusive.

[3] In Epist. G. Courini [Nucerini] ad Phil.[ippo] Mont.[ano] cuius initium, *Quoniam iuxta*, pag. 524 ad finem, post illud, *malevolentia peccasse*, dele usque ad, *Hoc sibi penitus*, exclus.

[4] Et pag. 530 sub initium post illud, *quam mortem oppetere*, dele usque ad, *At demiror*, exclus.[ive]

2.5. (Portugal) *Index Auctorum dam-natae memoriae, Ulyssiponae: ex off. Petri Cræsbeck, 1624, in-fol.:*

*p. 180 (*Index Lusitanus*), T, 2^d class:

*p. 180 (*Index Lusitanus*), T, 2^d class:

Thomae Mori, viri alias sanctissimi, seu (ut habetur in editione Lovaniensi 1566

Raphaelis Hythlodaei Utopia omnino prohibetur. At vero Epistolae lucubrationibus eiusdem Thomae adiunctae, donec emendantur iuxta praescripta in Expurgatorio.

*p. 186:

Utopia Opus sic inscriptum De optimo Reip. statu, quod etiam Italico sermone circunferur in opere Francisci Sansovini De Gubernatione Regnorum et Reip. impresso Venetiis 1561.

*p. 1030 (*Index Expurgatorius*):

Thomas Morus.

Ex Thomae Mori Angliae Ornamenti eximii, lucubrationibus, etc. quibus additae sunt duae aliorum Epistolae de vita, moribus, et morte Mori, Basileae apud Episcopium, 1568 [*i.e.* 1563] sequentia expungantur.

[1 to 4] [reproduces 2.3 n°. 1-4]

[5] A primo fol. usque ad 18 continetur Utopia, sive sermo Raphaelis cuiusdam de optimo Republicae statu, incipit, *Cum non exigui momenti*, etc. qui totus praecidatur cum multa in eo commendentur a Christianae Reipub. statu abhorrentia.

[6] Eadem Utopia inserta est operi de optimo Reipub. statu edito Italico idiomate a Francisco Sansovino Venetiis anno 1561 estque totus liber 18 sive ultimus,

[7] atque adeo inde quoque praecedentis fol. 59 praefatio, sive Epistola Lutheri *Gratia et pax*, etc. tota auferatur usque ad titulum, *Respondetur ad epistolam*, etc. exclusiv.

All the following Indexes are Spanish (1632, 1640, 1707, 1747, 1790) and reproduce the text of 1612.

3. *Utopia's Iberian censorship*

The main difference between the reactions was noted above: Portuguese macrocensorship and Spanish microcensorship. Comparing A and D, the Portuguese censors reinforced the traditional prohibition by adding the Spanish expurgation of Budé's and Courinus's (*i.e.* Erasmus, according to Mesnard, 371) letters.

From 1584 onwards, all Indexes precise

the edition(s) involved, which probably signifies that the censors had it/them in hand. The error in 1612 (“1568”) does not exclude a direct consulting consultation of the text. It is reproduced in all later entries and may be due to an incorrect reading or confusion with Thomas More’s letter to Johannes Pomeranus, the only work of the English published in 1568.

Here are some remarks on the passages concerned by *Utopia*’s microcensorship (texts 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4).

In two cases, the textual difference only corresponds to how passages are located in the book, not to the contents to delete (in this case, expurgations are only suppressions; elsewhere, microcensorship instructions can specify additions or substitutions of words): inclusive style in 2.2 (indicates the first and the last words of the passage): corrections n°. 1 and 7; exclusive in 2.3 (indicates the last words before and the first after the passage): corr. n°. 1 and 3. In corr. n°. 8 (2.2), only four words should be erased; corr. n°. 4 (2.3) indicates the same passage but exclusively.

The extent of passages to expurgate is varied: from four words (2.2, n°. 8) to 63 pages (2.2, n°. 9). Their location reflects the variety of the book: three corrections into More’s narrative (2.2, n°. 2-4), Guillaume Budé’s (a French humanist also indexed at first in the 1581 *Catalogo*) letter (2.3, n°. 1-2), two More’s epigrams (2.1; 2.2, n°. 5), Courinus’s letter (2.2, n°. 6-8; 2.3, n°. 3-4), More’s letter to Dorpius on Erasmus’s *Moriae Encomium* (2.2, n°. 9) and Luther’s letter to Sebastian Schlik (2.4, n°. 5). In 1624, the Portuguese Index adds to the corrections of 1612 a letter by the heresiarch Martin Luther which can only be found in the 1566 edition (printed in Louvain).

These texts were subjected to typical deletions, following the rules that were established in Latin (from the Tridentine and Roman Indexes) and vernacular at the beginning of the Indexes. All censorship inter-ventions were made to defend the faith and good customs.

The suppressive instructions of 1584 and 1612 apply to propositions dealing with religion (2.1, 2.2, n°. 1-3) and the writings of Erasmus (2.2, n°. 5, 9; 2.3, n°.

2):

2.2, n°. 1: Pythagorean communalism was laid down by Jesus Christ, who put an end to the quibbles of civil and canon law which remain predominant. It is a typical humanist attack based on faith against medieval law practices; n°. 2: a joke against priests; n°. 3: an attack against mendicant orders; n°. 5: six verses of an epigram in praise of Erasmus’s translation of the New Testament; n°. 9: the apology of the *Praise of folly*, one of Erasmus’s prohibited works (Bataillon, 743-780). In 1612, censors followed only correction n°. 1 and suppressed laudatory words about Erasmus (2.2, n°. 2); More’s narrative remains untouched.

Beyond More’s writings, two texts of the collected works had to be expurgated. The *Epistola de morte Mori*, entitled *Expositio fidelis* in 1535, bears three (2.2, n°. 6-8) then two corrections (2.3, n°. 3-4). Their extent is limited to a few words of moral and psychological significance: on the idea that silence is much more licit than abjuration (2.2, n°. 6); that we can sin although our conscience is simple and pure (2.2, n°. 7; 2.3, n°. 3); and that More’s belief might have weakened (2.2, n°. 8; 2.3, n°. 4).

To conclude briefly on this point, some aspects can be highlighted concerning the intellectual context within which the censors (late) received *Utopia*: this follows the anti-Erasmian trend of the Counter-Reform and reflects the founding of the *persona* of Thomas More as a hero of Catholic faith. Budé, Erasmus, Luther: are all names of strongly censored humanists and the Latin editions of *Utopia* might have seemed highly problematic to the censors. But all of them did not take identical measures, showing that their perception of the danger was different. For the first censors of More’s narrative, Rafael Hytlodaeus’s discourse was perceived as a text of “high toxicity”, an expression of mine in accordance with the medical metaphors commonly used in the war against heterodoxy. We do not know what edition the men of 1581 had in hand, but it was certainly a Latin text. The text of 1624 proves the initial prohibition was not a provisional

decision, which happens when a text is forbidden until its expurgation (“prohibitor donec expurgatur”). The spirit of this full prohibition follows the radicalism of the Portuguese *Rol dos Livros defesos nestes Reinos* of 1561 (a4 v°): though Catholic, some authors ought to be prohibited because they were not aware of the perilous times they lived in and then did not see that their words might unintentionally damn.

4. The question of effectiveness

It may seem inappropriate to study More’s microcensorship, or expurgation, in a country where macrocensorship, or prohibition, was the measure taken against the book. But it is extremely difficult to attempt an evaluation of the actual censoring of books in the field of full prohibition. On the contrary, a decisive step of the microcensorship approach consists in the inventory of existing copies and the analysis of quantitative and qualitative information they may deliver, at first, the degree of achievement of the instructions provided by the Indexes, but also any institutional or individual marks of ownership and readership.

At the present time (February 2016), eleven XXIst century Portuguese libraries have been consulted. Six of them have no copy printed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In five libraries from Lisbon, Coimbra and Oporto, twenty-three copies including More’s works have been located, twelve of which include the narrative of *Utopia* (editions from 1518 to 1689), with eight in Latin and four in Italian. The rest is composed of editions of Lucian of Samosata by More and Erasmus (eight copies), More’s correspondence (two) and Epigrams (one).

Out of these statistics, one copy (Basel, 1563; Gibson, 74) was located in the old catalog (XVIIIth century) of the library of the Santa Cruz monastery (Coimbra), which is unlikely to be the one actually possessed by the City Library of Oporto.

Six copies, that is 27% of the total, show evidence of microcensorship, among

which only one copy of *Utopia* (that is 7% of the total) and five of Lucian. In this case, only Erasmus’s texts and name have been censored.

The unique copy expurgated (deleted passages) of More’s narrative is an edition of 1566. The passages deleted prove the censor used the Spanish Index of 1612: only two passages are involved (2.2, n° 1 and 2) because the rest of the pieces are not included in this edition (Gibson n° 75b). No annotation indicates the place of expurgation but it is probable that it was achieved in Spain as it can be observed through the inventory of expurgated medical books (Baudry). We do not know when it has entered the country.

Do these elements help to evaluate the effectiveness of prohibition in Portugal? Let us recall at this point that, formally, the list of 1624 remains the reference Index in Portugal at least until 1768, when the Inquisition was extinguished. In principle, during this time, no book entered the country or remained in circulation. So, one would be tempted to assert that the number of copies is an evidence of reception, hence that the book controlling was “lax”, as Patricia Manning notes about Spain (Manning, 73). But our issue deals with the long term, from the sixteenth century until the present day. Methodologically, from the material presence of an early modern print in a library we may not deduce its presence, circulation or even readership in the past. More indications are needed.

The analysis of the thirteen copies of More’s writings (one *Utopia* is expurgated, the seven Lucians do not form part of our present consideration since, in these editions commented by both humanists, only Erasmus is censored, not More) provides some interesting information about their traceability and possible readership. Only one copy has evidence of an ownership in the sixteenth century (edition of Louvain, 1566): it belonged in 1587 to Baudouin de Glen, the abbey of Hénin-Liétard (Belgium). Seven copies were possessed in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, one of which, for instance (the first translation in Italian, 1548, at the National Library of Portugal) by Cypriano

Ribeiro Freire, the first ambassador of Portugal in the United States of America (1794-1799); more interestingly, three copies of seventeenth century editions were owned by the Colegio de Santa Rita (Coimbra), founded in 1750. Of the two oldest editions of *Utopia* located (Basel, 1518, at the National Library), one belonged to Paulo de Carvalho Mendonça (1702-1770), the other, to an unidentified cleric of Isny (Switzerland), Paulus Fredericus Renzius.

None of these copies gives evidence of ownership or readership in early modern Portugal. Of course, it does not prove nobody read or possessed More's works but it suggests that we would better think in terms of a late, rather than an early, reception, at least, from the second half of the seventeenth century.

Fernando Moser and Pina Martins agree on the wide influence in early modern Portugal of Thomas More and his best-known text. But the reduced number of short references, which total fewer words than the instructions of the Indexes, say little in favor of a wide and continuous influence. Interestingly, Moser states that the printing of More's narrative in Portugal was not "essential" at the time (Moser, 20). This remark brings to the forefront the Peninsular dimension of our issue and that of the book market. Moser's argument is based on the fact that many prints from Europe and "even from Spain" were in circulation. What does this mean in practical terms?

By mid-1500, the *Utopia* was translated in vernacular (in a chronological order: German, Italian, French, English and Dutch). The majority of the non-cultivated Europeans could read or hear it in the common language. In the Renaissance, the Spanish works were dedicated to the life and martyr of Thomas More (Pedro de Ribadeneyra, 1588; Fernando de Herrera, 1592, 1617). As to a Spanish version of the *Utopia*, it was not printed until 1637, at Cordoba (and the first Portuguese translation appeared exactly three centuries later, in 1937). The translator, Geronimo Antonio de Medinilla i Porres probably followed Sanso-vino's *Del governo de regni et delle republiche antiche et*

moderne (1561) who, contrasting with the full version of 1548, only translated the second book. A long note on chapter 9, "On religion", seemingly written by him, reminds the necessary Spanish and Portuguese censorships on saints and Fathers of the Church to avoid misinterpretations of their texts written in other times. Despite his highest prestige (the word martyr appears six times, once "Santo Martyr Tomas Moro"), even More had to be corrected. But Porres warns his reader about the dangers of the chapter that deals with diversity and variety of religions. More, a true Catholic, was misinterpreted on this point by atheists and politics ("el Ateista, i Politico", More, 1637, viii v^o). Skepticism and machiavelism are the enemies he points out. This note, similar to a theologian's opinion, clearly reflects the problematic reception of More's *Utopia*. From the Spanish side, legalism, that is obedience to the partial prohibition of a martyr's writing, and fear of the effects of his originality. This note confirms, *a posteriori*, the Portuguese fear of the «*abhorrenda*», possibly not only of religious kind.

In a fascinating article, Sanford Kessler argues that "More wrote *Utopia* partly to promote religious freedom for Christians" (Kessler, 211). He insisted that on this point the English humanist preceded from long John Locke's letter on toleration (1689). The strong Portuguese opposition to *Utopia* and its cautious and late diffusion in Spain are facts that tend to consolidate his thesis.

5. Conclusion

Comparing the Indexes of 1612 and 1624 and taking into account the conclusions of Bujanda on the sixteenth century Indexes, Payan Martins disagrees with I.S. Révah claim that the Portuguese did not participate significantly in the book censorship (Martins, 2011, 71). Taking into consideration the Indexes, none is a mere compilation or plagiarism of the previous. If we calculate the number of new entries of authors and works, limited to the field of science and humanities, in the six expurgatories published until 1624 (two Spanish, two Portuguese, one Dutch

and one Roman), we can observe that the Peninsular is responsible for 47% of the total (484 entries until 1640). In this percentage, both Portuguese Indexes added almost 16% of new entries, the Spanish approximately double this (31,19%). In relation to the dimensions and capacities of these two markets, the censorship of Thomas More by the Peninsular inquisitors provides a good example of a clear rehabilitation of Révah's conclusions, at least according to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Portuguese strongly and originally contributed to the catholic crusade against heterodoxy. They significantly increased the list of works to cleanse with names like Kepler, Sannazaro or Cervantes. Vipers hissed all around.

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