If Thomas More’s *Utopia*, with its extensive prefatory and appended materials, represents an extended conversation\(^1\) so, in a less elevated way, does this book. Apart from some minor adaptations to conform to the present publisher’s conventions, the essays republished here have been left for the most part as they were first published because they represent one side of such a conversation and stages in its development. In this respect, and others, they owe much to those who have commented on my efforts, and encouraged, cajoled or disagreed with my conclusions or methods. The profession of historian is a lifelong conversation and I am grateful to all those who have engaged with me, whether as teachers, students, colleagues, friends, adversaries or neutral observers. The essays selected here appeared over a 35-year time span. Some, more than others, bear the marks of the occasion of their publication. (Chapter 2 was a published version of a conference paper; Chap. 3 the end piece of a volume, reflecting on the contents of that volume.) Chapter 10 is, apart from the Introduction and the Conclusion, the only chapter written specifically for the present volume.

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J.C. Davis

**Note**

1. And is represented as such in Holbein’s illustration reproduced as the cover of this book.
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