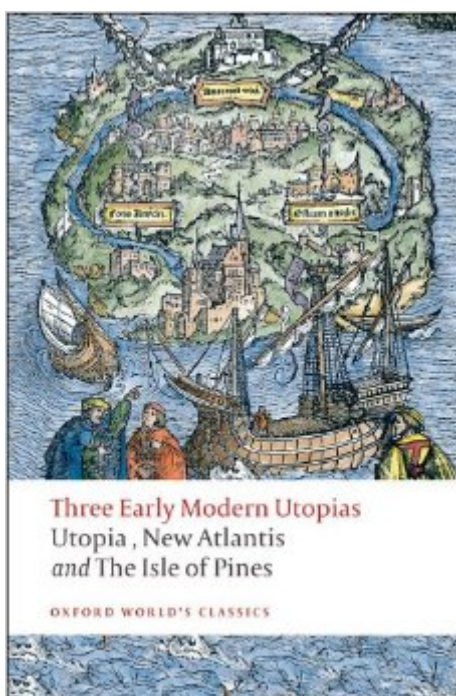


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Three Early Modern Utopias: Thomas More: Utopia / Francis Bacon: New Atlantis / Henry Neville: The Isle Of Pines: Sir Thomas More's "Utopia", Francis Bacon's "New A (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

Thomas More: Utopia/ Francis Bacon: New Atlantis/Henry Neville: The Isle of Pines

With the publication of Utopia (1516), Thomas More introduced into the English language not only a new word, but a new way of thinking about the gulf between what ought to be and what is. His Utopia is at once a scathing analysis of the shortcomings of his own society, a realistic suggestion for an alternative mode of social organization, and a satire on unrealistic idealism. Enormously influential, it remains a challenging as well as a playful text. This edition reprints Ralph Robinson's 1556 translation from More's original Latin together with letters and illustrations that accompanied early editions of Utopia. Utopia was only one of many early modern treatments of other worlds. This edition also includes two other, hitherto less accessible, utopian narratives. New Atlantis (1627) offers a fictional illustration of Francis Bacon's visionary ideal of the role that science should play in the modern society. Henry Neville's The Isle of Pines (1668), a precursor of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, engages with some of the sexual, racial, and colonialist anxieties of the end of the early modern period. Together these texts illustrate the diversity of the early modern utopian imagination, as well as the different purposes to which it could be put.

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Customer Reviews

This is a first-rate biography of the sainted Thomas More. Ackroyd's goals in this biography are to present a non-anachronistic depiction of More, and through his portrait of More, to give readers a sense of the late Medieval world destroyed by the Reformation and the emergence of nation-states. Ackroyd presents More as a man exemplifying the late Medieval ethos. Deeply religious, highly intelligent, and well educated, More existed with a profound sense of human fallibility and saw all aspects of his world as manifestations of a divine order. The world as the body of Christ, a metaphor to which Ackroyd returns repeatedly, is a recurring theme. The temporal world is transient and a necessary preparation for the eternal and in a crucial sense, less real than the eternal world of Christian teachings. This world is bound by custom and inherited legal and religious traditions, hierarchial and paternalistic in its structure of authority, and deeply enmeshed in rituals that mirror the structure of divine authority. More was not, however, a reactionary except when the radicalism of the Lutherans pushed him to stringent and violent acts needed to defend the integrity of his perception of the Christian world. A prominent member of the Northern European Humanist movement, More was dedicated to the recovery of a renovated faith based on a new reading of the Patristic fathers, attention to classical, particularly Greek neoplatonic authors, and disdain for complex scholastic theology. He and his fellow Humanists hoped for reformation of the Church without abandoning the unity of Christendom, the apparatus of ritual and hierarchy that defined so much of their lives, and the primacy of papal authority. Ackroyd's efforts to present More and the late medieval ethos are very successful.

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