First published in 1516, Saint Thomas More’s Utopia is one of the most important works of European humanism. Through the voice of the mysterious traveller Raphael Hythloday, More describes a pagan, communist city-state governed by reason. Addressing such issues as religious pluralism, women’s rights, state-sponsored education, colonialism, and justified warfare, Utopia seems remarkably contemporary nearly five centuries after it was written, and it remains a foundational text in philosophy and political theory. Precminent More scholar Clarence H. Miller does justice to the full range of More’s rhetoric in this new translation. Professor Miller includes a helpful introduction that outlines some of the important problems and issues that Utopia raises, and also provides informative commentary to assist the reader throughout this challenging and rewarding exploration of the meaning of political community.
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, hierarchical 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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