

"utopia" by thomas more critical essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The name of the utopian land is the Green Spit; its inhabitants refer to it simply as "The Spit". It is a spit of land that juts far into the ocean off the West coast. Lush rainforests cover about a third of it: a third is beachfront, and the final third is the city, Barrel, which was founded by a group of surfers.

In Thomas More's Utopia, "every man has some peculiar trade to which he applies himself, such as the manufacture of wool, or flax, masonry, smith's work, or carpenter's work...there is no sort of trade that is not in great esteem among them" (More 49).

Similarly, in Barrel, everybody cleaves to their passion early on in life. School and teachers devote time and energy to encourage children to find a trade that mirrors their passion. Like the Utopians, Barrelers' "women as well as men, learn one or other of the trades formerly mentioned" (More 50).

Most people in Barrel work at forestry, maintaining the rainforests, or zoology, looking after the animals in the forest, and many also work in finance. Barrelers, as they are known, enjoy an international reputation as intelligent and calm money managers. Of course, the lion share of Barrelers work in the surfing industry, manufacturing surf boards and surf equipment. Their boards outsell all international competition year in and year out.

Barrelers, as a rule, are the calmest race of people on the planet. This stems from their attitude toward work. In Thomas More's Utopia, the Utopians did not "wear themselves out with perpetual toil, from morning to night, as if they were beasts of burden...dividing the day and night into twenty-four hours, [they] appoint six of these for work; three of which are before dinner,

and three after. They then sup, and at eight o'clock, counting from noon, go to bed and sleep eight hours.

The rest of their time besides that taken up in work, eating and sleeping, is left to every man's discretion" (More 50). Barrelers, in much the same way, never work more than six hours a day. A typical work day in Barrel begins at 11am and lasts until 4 or 5 pm. The best waves come in the morning, so the majority of The Spit's population can be found on the beach between 6 and 10 am.

After work, the Barrelers usually nap for a few hours. Then they wake up, have supper, shower, and go out. Known the world over for its exhilarating night life, Barrel also boasts an inspiring live music scene. Work has its place in The Spit. Everyone is employed in work they find meaningful; however, no one ever stays at the office past suppertime. There has never been a workaholic in Barrel.

Barrelers would not be classed as religious, per se. As in Utopia, " the greater and wiser sort of them worship...[and] adore one eternal, invisible, infinite, and incomprehensible Deity" (More 103).

Barrel houses no churches. No organized religion of any kind exists there. Rather, Barrelers understand themselves as part of life, and so in essence they worship life as a god, but their worship resembles gratitude more so than blind devotion. Proselytizing has never existed in Barrel. Residents of The Spit do not impose religion, not even the religion of surfing, on anyone.

Barrelers, similar to the Utopians, do not observe the same gender politics that other nations do. In Utopia, " before marriage, some grave matron presents the bride naked, whether she is a virgin or a widow, to the bridegroom; and after that some grave man presents the bridegroom naked to the bride" (More 85).

Barrel children grow up together observing no distinction between boys and girls. All of the washrooms on The Spit are unisex. Boys and girls receive sex education from primary school onward. The Spit boasts the lowest rates of teenage pregnancy, divorce, and sexual assault on the planet. There has never been a serial killer on The Spit. In fact, the crime rate itself is negligible. Typically, when crimes are committed, the perpetrators are tourists.

In Utopia, " slavery is the punishment even of the greatest crimes; for as that is no less terrible to the criminals themselves than death, so they think the preserving them in a state of servitude is more for the interest of the commonwealth than killing them" (More 87). Similarly, criminals in The Spit are enslaved; however, the slavery itself takes on a different meaning. The Spit's legal system tries criminals in a court of law, by a jury, and if found guilty, the punishment is usually banishment.

They are sent out of The Spit, to live in other parts of the world where they become slaves to work, and slaves to money. They are never allowed to return, not even for funerals and weddings. To some this may seem harsh. However, The Spit's nearly non-existent crime rate - two murders in the last

27 years - proves unequivocally that this punishment, unlike a prison term or a death penalty in other parts of the world, actually is a deterrent to crime.

More, Saint Thomas. Utopia. 9th ed. Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 1960.
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