Louis Marin. *Utopiques: Jeux D'Espaces*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, Collection "Critique," 1973. Pp. 358.

This is a book which has nothing to offer anyone interested in Sir Thomas More or in the Renaissance as a period. This is not to say that the book has failed in what it set out to do, as it quite clearly does not purport to deal with either of the above. Unfortunately, however, it is much easier to characterise what the book is not than to evaluate what it is.

On one level the book is an extended analysis, on semantic and structuralist lines, of the concept of Utopia, or of "utopics"—a distinction the author insists upon initially but seems to abandon in his concluding chapters. For this purpose, More's *Utopia* serves essentially as a text, the semantic analysis of certain parts of which permits the author to define and flesh out aspects of his philosophical conceptions. Whether or not the book succeeds as a contribution to the field of semantics must be judged by someone competent to meet it on its own terms and to follow all aspects of the author's intricate and very technical analysis of a purely linguistic nature, but if a layman in this area may be permitted an observation, it is a pity to see "la clarté française" reduced, as it is all too often in this book, to the level of a practically incomprehensible jargon. One hails quotations from the *Utopia*, where they appear, as a welcome relief and a "descent" into intelligibility. Raphael is a lot clearer than Monsieur Marin.

On another level the book is an example of neo-Marxist criticism. The idea for it arose, according to the author, from the revolutionary climate of the France of May 1968, and it represents an attempt to conceptualise the direct experience of "une pratique utopique dans la production des discours et des situations, expérience qu'il s'agissait de conceptualiser pour maîtriser une tactique à venir en possédant sa stratégie et son système"(p.16). Seen from this perspective More's *Utopia* inevitably coincides historically with the emergence of a capitalist form of production and represents ideologically a "prise de conscience" of the conflict between bourgeois productive forces and feudal conditions of production. If on the level of semantic analysis the book is frequently unnecessarily obscure, on this level the book is unnecessarily self-serving. Judgments of a social, political and intellectual nature are made with blissful disregard of the weighty "corpus" of More scholarship and the book moves inexorably forward, from More, through Disneyland—an example of Utopic degenerescence—to its conclusion in which the author agrees with the views expressed by Karl Marx in an article of 1858, that Utopia is not a political project. Utopia, as has been shown in this book, is no-place, is empty space. Utopia is "la praxis socialiste." One has to agree with a logic which sees the futility of waging class war in empty space and in this sense one can agree with the conclusion— "Travaillons et luttons ici."

In this book one does not sense an honest attempt to view More's *Utopia* dispassionately, critically, to meet it on its own terms. On the contrary, the writer's aim is essentially an ideological one and because of this his book does not make a serious contribution to the field of Renaissance studies. At times the insights are interesting, the perspective intriguing, as for instance when he deals with the philosophical and semantic connotations of the neuter, and when he analyses "neutral space" in various areas of More's creation. In the last analysis, however, what could have been a worthwhile linguistic analysis of the *Utopia* fails because of a lack of objectivity.

GWENDA ECHARD, *York University*