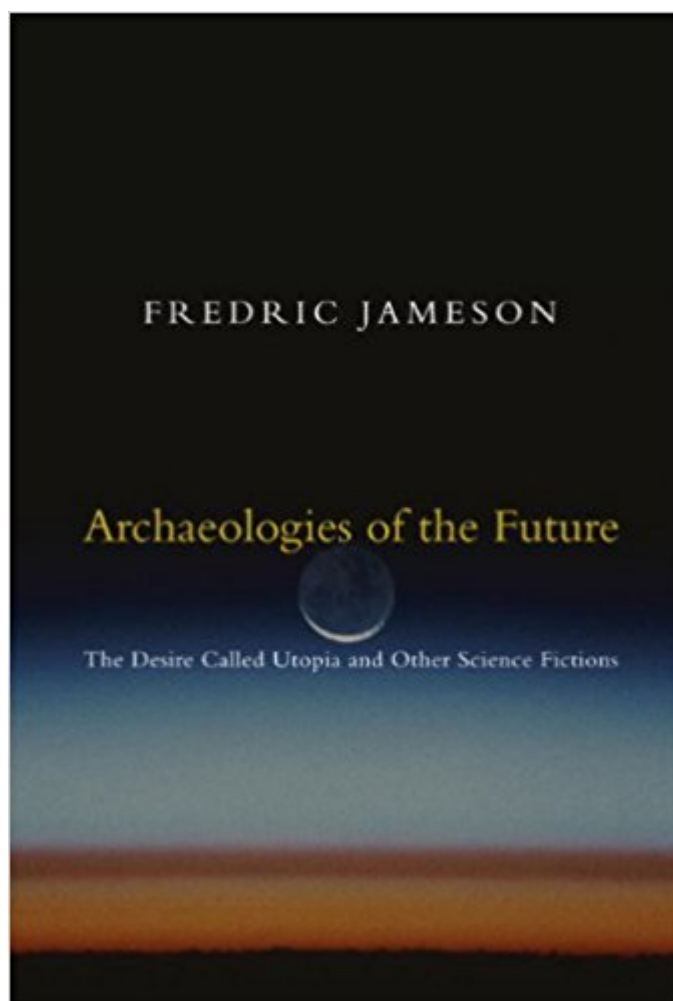


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Archaeologies Of The Future: The Desire Called Utopia And Other Science Fictions



Synopsis

In an age of globalization characterized by the dizzying technologies of the First World, and the social disintegration of the Third, is the concept of utopia still meaningful? *Archaeologies of the Future*, Jameson's most substantial work since *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, investigates the development of this form since Thomas More, and interrogates the functions of utopian thinking in a post-Communist age. The relationship between utopia and science fiction is explored through the representations of otherness — alien life and alien worlds — and a study of the works of Philip K. Dick, Ursula LeGuin, William Gibson, Brian Aldiss, Kim Stanley Robinson and more. Jameson's essential essays, including "The Desire Called Utopia," conclude with an examination of the opposing positions on utopia and an assessment of its political value today.

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Customer Reviews

"*Archaeologies of the Future* is certainly among the most stunning studies of science fiction ever produced ... a vast treasure trove of a book, crammed with brilliant aperçus ... Jameson is one of the world's most eminent cultural theorists, but he is also a peerless literary critic in the classical sense of the term." —Terry Eagleton, *London Review of Books*

"Jameson's skill in connecting diverse materials and theories, the suggestiveness of many of his insights and his passionate conviction make this an exciting book." —*Times Literary Supplement*

Fredric Jameson is Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature at Duke University. The author of numerous books, he has over the last three decades developed a richly nuanced vision of Western culture's relation to political economy. He was a recipient of the 2008 Holberg International Memorial Prize. He is the author of many books, including *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, *The Cultural Turn, A Singular Modernity*, *The Modernist Papers*, *Archaeologies of the Future*, *Brecht and Method*, *Ideologies of Theory*, *Valences of the Dialectic*, *The Hegel Variations* and *Representing Capital*.

A non-apologetic review of the science fiction genre through the eyes of America's leading postmodernist thinker. You will need to bring your knowledge of the Western Canon and contemporary philosophy with you in order to fully appreciate this text. Its division into books I and II enables regular science fiction readers to access straight forward reviews in Book II. Expect to learn from this book and don't expect him to enshrine SF into the Western Canon but rather to provide you with an understanding of the zeitgeist of the history of the genre and ourselves. Authors reviewed range from Dick to Robinson, Brunner to Le Guin. With a focus on utopianism and dystopia the subjects covered are sex and society, aliens and psychoanalyst, and the motifs and mechanics of this writing field. Jameson also remarks on the differences between hard science fiction and fantasy. He clearly traces the link between the utopian members of the Western Canon and the rise of science fiction's paraliterature, and the societal needs for these works and their roots in the human collective consciousness. He also notes the limits of critical literature and the "drift" of high literature into the domain of science fiction in recent years as a result of our postmodern condition and the limits of critical literature to deal with the disassociative nature of the contemporary experience. The reader will be left with an understanding of the genre, our times, and our historical basis. He or she will also be perplexed as to how science fiction was replaced by fantasy as the popular literature of our times at the same moment it matured as a literary entity. One will also begin to understand how the internal dynamics of science fiction and its authors went from the popularizers of American modernism and imperialism to become the primary opponents of modernism in our times. Be forewarned that Jameson does not see Marxism as a bad word but rather a critical tool for evaluating society.

This book provides a thorough exploration of the concept of utopia throughout history and builds the foundation for the postmodern era's vision of the ideal community.

"Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." Frederic Jameson is well-known as a marxist literary theorist. He is published by Verso Books, which is dedicated to disseminating marxist writings. Given that position, I hold Jameson to Marx's stance in his 11th Thesis on Feuerbach, quoted above. I found virtually nothing in this book that I can use as a tool or as inspiration to change the world. It may be considered an impressive work of literary critique by specialists, but for those of us outside the field who look to Jameson as a source of marxist theory rather than just literary theory, *ARCHAEOLOGIES OF THE FUTURE* is not worth reading. I read most of it while sitting in a coffee shop in central Berlin on Karl-Liebknecht-Straße, near Alexanderplatz and what was once the center of East Berlin in the DDR (East Germany). From where I sat I looked directly out across the street at the Marx-Engels Forum, statues of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. I kept at it, plowing through Jameson's atrocious prose, hoping for a turn for the better that never came. (I have a Ph.D. and have no problem with dense academic writing, but Jameson is practically unreadable.) His political judgement is dubious -- why is full employment progressive, but a guaranteed basic income is reactionary? Is he not familiar with the extensive literature and activism for a basic income in Europe, for instance the excellent book *Basic Income: The Material Conditions of Freedom?* And while he discusses some of my favorite SF authors, including Delany, Dick, and LeGuin, he fails to include some notable utopias such as Bruce Sterling's great "The Shores of Bohemia," found in the collection *Globalhead*, and Michael Moorcock's *The Dancers at the End of Time*. The best Jameson can do, after an entire book (which is just part of this book -- it also includes a number of previously published essays) on utopias, is to say that it is important that there are utopian visions, that they constitute a disruption of the TINA proclamation of Capital (via Margaret Thatcher) -- There Is No Alternative! -- and represent an important discursive strategy. Since we already knew that, we come away with nothing to assist us in the struggle. (verified library loan)

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