

Lecture 7: Utopia, Colonialism and Modern Business Ideology

Reading: M. Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818); C. Dickens, *The greatest pages of Charles Dickens* (by Stephen Leacock, 1934); C. Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1843); W. Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1890)

Topics

- ❑ Utopia and Early Religious Sects
- ❑ The Beginnings of Modern Colonialism
- ❑ The Industrial Revolution and the Luddites
- ❑ Mary Shelley and *Frankenstein*
- ❑ Charles Dickens and the Evils of Industrialization
- ❑ Utopia and Modern Business Ideology



Utopian and Dystopian Worlds

(*In Memoriam*: Michael Fellman)

- **Modern Notion was Coined by Sir Thomas More (1478-1535)**
 - *Utopia* (1516): an ideal, imaginary island nation where there is no private property and nearly complete religious toleration
 - Derived from Plato's *Republic*
 - No place for atheism: man must fear some God, else he shall act evilly and their society will weaken
 - Absence of private property led to connection to socialism

"A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias."

Oscar Wilde ; *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*



The Utopian World

- ❑ **Notion was Coined by Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) -- later Saint Thomas More**
 - ❑ Humanist scholar, Lord Chancellor (1529-1532)
 - ❑ Refused to accept Henry VIII's claim to be the supreme head of the Church of England
 - Led to his execution as a traitor.
 - ❑ *Utopia* (1516): an ideal, imaginary island nation where there is no private property and nearly complete religious toleration
 - ❑ Derived from Plato's *Republic*
 - ❑ No place for atheism: man must fear some God, else he shall act evilly and their society will weaken
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St. Thomas More



□ Sir Francis Bacon



Evolution of Utopian Notions: Utopia for Whom?

❑ Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

- ❑ Remembered as defender of the scientific revolution

- ❑ Popularized inductive methodology for scientific inquiry– the Baconian method

- ❑ Knowledge of the natural world obtained through experimentation, observation and testing of hypotheses

- ❑ “Knowledge is power”

❑ *New Atlantis* (1624)

- ❑ Improvement of society through science

- ❑ Has room for greed

Free Spirits, Lollards and Family of Love

- ❑ Notions of radical **antinomian** religious sects migrated to England from Europe – Brethren of the Free Spirit, German mystics from the Rhineland influential in 13-14th century
 - ❑ Free spirits also subject to persecution of heretics
 - ❑ Shared view with other sects: that Church was corrupt; that God was present in the human soul; and, that there was a different route to salvation than that provided by the Church
- ❑ John Wycliffe (1330-1384) and the heretical Lollards in England shared view that Church was corrupt but did not have well developed antinomian views
 - ❑ Lollards played a role in the Peasant Revolt (1381)
- ❑ Circa 1540, Free Spirits inspired antinomian Family of Love in Holland (Familists in England, precursor of Anabaptists)

Levellers, Diggers and Ranters

- ❑ Interregnum period between execution of Charles I (1649) and beginning of Restoration of Charles II (1660) witnessed rising of a number of radical political and religious groupings
 - ❑ Religious tolerance embodied in the emergence of the Commonwealth provided some impetus, but there was limits → Blasphemy Act (1650)
- ❑ Levellers were more concerned with political than religious objections, had considerable following in the New Model Army
 - ❑ John Lilburne and other leaders were imprisoned at different times starting in 1645
 - ❑ Levellers have early roots in 17th century **revolts against Enclosure movement** (levelling of hedges)
 - ❑ Levellers referred to themselves as 'Agitators'



Charles I (1600-1649)

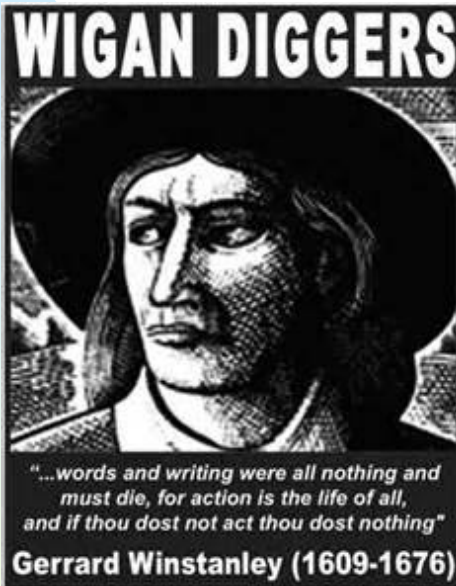
John Lilburne (1614-1657)



Winstanley and the Diggers

- Started by Gerrard Winstanley (1609-1676) as the 'True Levellers'
 - Reference to 'Diggers' due to practice started in 1649 of tearing down hedges on lands that had been enclosed, planting crops and distributing the produce to followers
 - The Diggers often recognized as early precursors of modern anarchism and **agrarian socialism**
- Winstanley based Digger principles on Biblical interpretations
 - Equality of 'men', abolition of property, wages and aristocracy
 - Such views were in keeping with the Interregnum
 - Digger colony was supposed attacked by vandals and ruffians hired by the 'owners' of the enclosed lands and the project abandoned
 - Foreboding of 'Food Riots' and Bloody Code of the long 18th century that were largely divorced from religious motivations

The Diggers



"England is not a free people, till the poor that have no land, have a free allowance to dig and labour the commons..."
Gerrard Winstanley, 1649



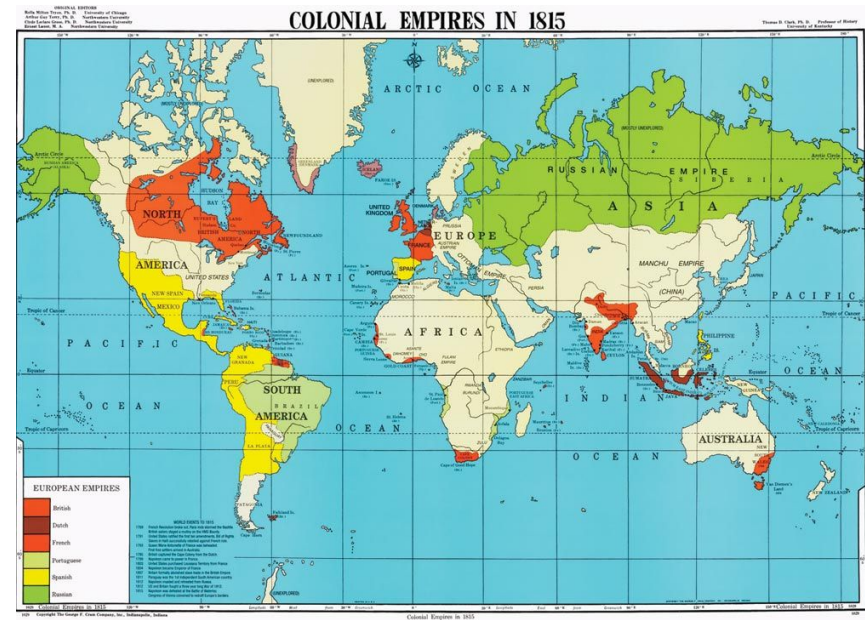
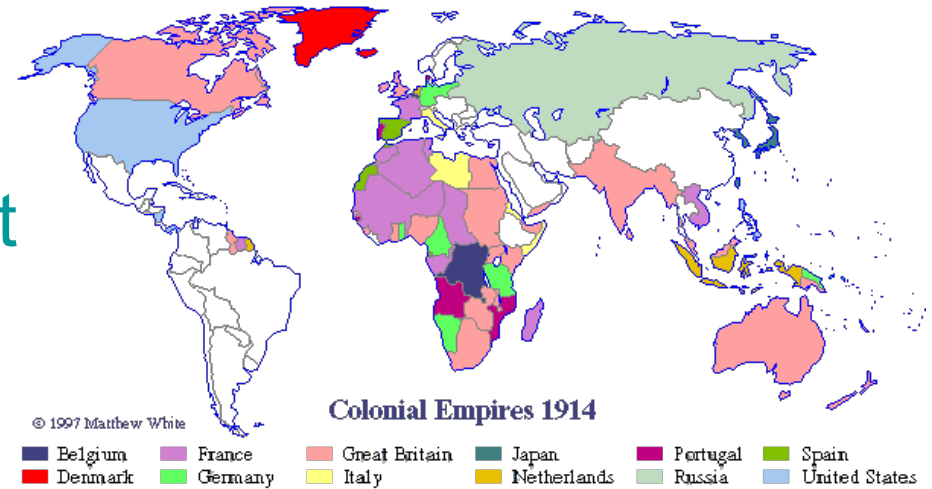
“The New Law of Righteousness” and “The Law of Freedom in a Platform” (1652) argues for a Christian society without wages and property → early contribution to communalism

The Ranters and the Yellow Press

- Circa 1650 Winstanley writes two tracts distancing the Diggers from the practices and principles of the Ranters
 - Davis, *Fear, Myth and History* (1986) claims the Ranters were a myth, a creation of the yellow press during 1650-1
 - Best guess, Ranters were a loosely organized grouping
 - Ranters practice and principle identified by Winstanley:
 - “the outward enjoyment of meat, drink, pleasures and women” – the practice
 - “the man within can have no quiet rest, unless he enjoy these outward objects in excesse” – the principle
- Ranters had a ‘liberal’ interpretation of antinomianism

The Evolution of Colonialism

- The roots of colonialism are ancient – the process is multi-faceted and takes different forms depending on the epoch and locale
- In the modern era, colonialism manifested in various forms



Methods of Colonial Control

- Unlike the Spanish and Portuguese that employed a model of subjugation and home country control, the spearheads of early European expansion by the English, French and Dutch were the **joint stock companies**, e.g., British East India Company, Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) → **colonialism and commercial profit**
 - Colonial empires of the Spanish and Portuguese collapsed with the revolt of local elites that displaced foreign rule. (esp., Simon Bolivar 1783-1830)
Regions with previous entrenched local control
 - as in India, Dutch East Indies and the like
 - evolved systems of indirect foreign control



Colonialism, Slavery and Triangular Trade

- Conquest and enslavement have ancient roots → slave trade in the modern colonial era was an evolution of Greek-Roman slave-based economy and society, e.g., manumission laws in Justinian's *Digest*
- Beginnings of slave trade in era of joint stock company colonialism commerce with early Africa trade → Elizabeth I and the voyages of John Hawkins
- Eventual evolution of the triangular trade → European goods to West Africa exchanged for slaves → transport to colonies in the Americas the provide plantation labour → transport of plantation goods to Europe
 - Note: Transport efficiency as ships carry cargo on each leg of the triangle

Basis of the Industrial Revolution

- ❑ Key events in the Industrial Revolution
 - ❑ James Watt steam engine 1775
 - ❑ A variety of advances in textile technology starting in 1769
 - ❑ Advances in iron production in the 1780's
 - ❑ Transportation revolution starting with canals in the 1780's
- ❑ Industrial 'revolution' extended well beyond industry to encompass agriculture, transportation, mining, society

Evils of the Industrial Revolution

- ❑ For the working poor, conditions in the textile mills and putting-out shops were hostile to the many children who were compelled, of economic necessity, to work there.
- ❑ Traditional methods of production in the textile trades, e.g., weavers and spinners, were made technologically obsolete creating severe hardship in some regions
- ❑ Enclosures accelerated the movement of the landless from rural to urban areas

Coalbrookdale by Night (1801)



The Luddite Rebellions (1811-12)

- ❑ Various explanations advanced for causes of rebellion → E.P. Thompson, *“The Making of the English Working Class”* (1963) argues the rebellions were a stage in the working class struggle
- ❑ An alternative perspective by the Hammonds claims:
“The outbreak of the Luddite disturbances in the Midlands in 1811-2 is an episode in the long and varied history of the relations between masters and men in the frame-work knitting trade, and as such can only rightly be understood in connection with what comes before and after ... The main feature of the disturbances in Nottinghamshire and the adjoining counties was the organized destruction of stocking frames by small bands of workmen” (Hammond and Hammond 1919, p.257).

Leader of
the
Luddites
(1812)
from a
drawing by
an officer



Causes of the Luddite Rebellions

- ❑ At the peak of the rebellion, over 12,000 British soldiers were deployed to suppress the rebellion
→ 6x more than for any previous rebellion, more soldiers than Wellington at Waterloo
 - ❑ Main areas of Luddite activity were Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire
- ❑ There were few mechanisms for adult workers to express discontent. One method was the food riot, but this was used only in extreme situations, especially when food was intolerably scarce and prices for food were high.
 - ❑ In response to conditions in a specific industry, machine-breaking was a more common and effective tool for workers to express discontent.



Modern Myths of the Luddite Rebellions

- ❑ Modern view of Luddites emphasizes the struggle against technology → ‘neo-Luddite’ is a modern reference to those fighting against relentless technological change
 - ❑ Luddite rebellions were not the first time that machine-breaking was used in worker protest
- ❑ Machinery that Luddites were breaking was not ‘new technology’ → still modern debate over the causes of the Luddite rebellions
- ❑ Luddism ended on the scaffold
 - ❑ ‘Old Corruption’ used the machinery of criminal justice administration to produce a spectacle of mass hanging instilling sufficient terror in the Luddite areas to quash the rebellions

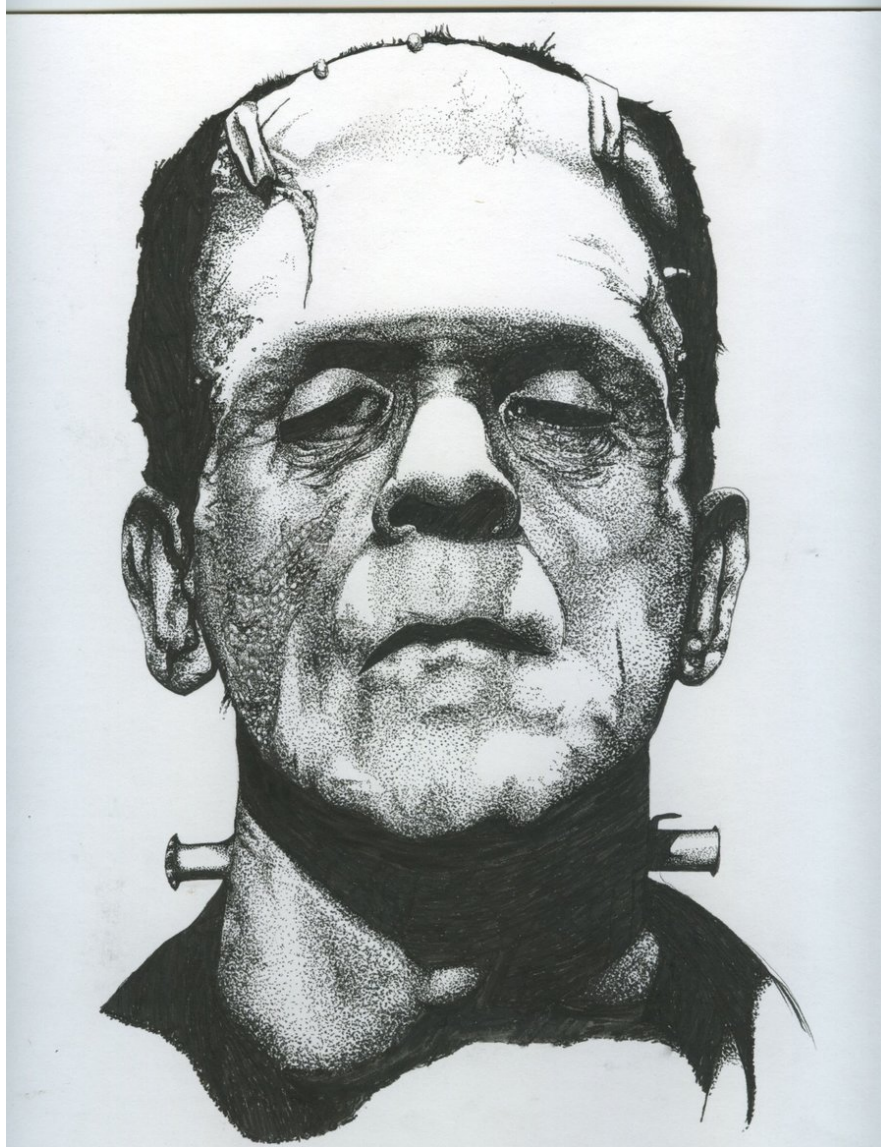
Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus

First edition in
1818

2nd ed. 1823

3rd ed. 1831

The 3rd ed.
was heavily
revised –
most
commonly
read edition
today



Brief Bio of Mary Shelley (1797-1851)

- ❑ Born Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and the British philosopher William Godwin
 - ❑ Mother died when she was 11 days old
- ❑ At seventeen started a romantic relationship with the older, married Percy Shelley → married in 1816 after the suicide of Shelley's first wife
 - ❑ That summer spent in Geneva with Shelley, Byron and *Frankenstein* conceived
- ❑ First edition published **anonymously** in 1818
- ❑ Percy Shelley dies in boating accident in 1822

Mary Shelley
(1797-1851)

Author of
Frankenstein

Contemporary of
Lord Byron



Who was Prometheus?

- ❑ Prometheus is from Greek mythology, being the Titan who created mankind.
- ❑ Being tasked by Zeus, Prometheus created a being with clay and water in the image of the gods that had spirit breathed into it.
- ❑ Prometheus taught man to hunt, read, and heal their sick
 - ❑ After tricking Zeus over the offerings that mankind was to give the gods, Zeus kept fire from mankind.
 - ❑ By bringing fire to humans, Shelley viewed Prometheus as a devil that brought hunting and killing



**Prometheus Brings Fire to
Mankind (1817)**

**Heinrich Friedrich Füger
(1751-1818)**

Why a Modern Prometheus?

- ❑ Frankenstein was the scientist, the creation was referred to as the monster, fiend (and similar)
- ❑ The Prometheus theme appears in work around this time by Shelley (1820, *Prometheus Unbound*)
 - ❑ Kant (1724-1804) uses 'modern Prometheus' to refer to Ben Franklin and his experiments with electricity
 - ❑ Around this time there were experiments being done (e.g., Giovanni Aldini) using electricity to revive dead animals

Major Works of Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

- ❑ Most of Dickens' important works appeared as weekly or monthly serials – a common method of publishing books at that time
 - ❑ *The Pickwick Papers* (Monthly serial, April 1836 to November 1837)
 - ❑ *The Adventures of Oliver Twist* (Monthly serial Feb 1837 to April 1839)
 - ❑ *Nicolas Nickleby* (Monthly serial, April 1838 to October 1839)
 - ❑ *The Old Curiosity Shop* (Weekly serial, April 1840, to Feb 1841)
- ❑ *The Christmas Carol* (1843) reputedly written in five weeks to enable Dickens to pay for his wife's pregnancy

Charles Dickens

Historical Context

Dickens was writing about the evils of industrialization prior to important legal reforms

- 1844 Joint stock company Act
- 1855-6 Revision of Joint stock company Act and general inclusion of limited liability



Utopian and Dystopian Futures

- Economic Utopias (often Utopian socialists)
 - Egalitarian distribution of goods, abolition of money, citizens only do enjoyable work for the common good, and the cultivation of the arts and sciences
 - Edward Bellamy (1850-1898), *Looking Backward* (1888)
 - William Morris (1834-1896), *News from Nowhere* (1890) – an early ecologist/environmentalist
- Other Types of Utopia
 - Political, Religious, Technological
 - James Hilton (1900-1954), *Lost Horizon* (1933); source of Shangri La

Communal Utopias

- Long history with many early communes based on religious grounds, e.g., Shakers

- Communal utopianism vs. pragmatic communalism

Some essentials characteristics of communes (*Das KommunBuch* 1996)

1) live and work together, 2) communal finances and property (land, buildings, means of production), 3) communal decision making - usually consensus decision making, 4) reduced hierarchy and hierarchical structures, 5) communal housework, childcare and other communal tasks, 6) equality between women and men, 7) low ecological footprint through sharing and saving resources

Shaker communities spread throughout eastern US from late 18th C. through 19th C., peaking in 1850's – strict believers in celibacy and shared leadership between males and females

Early 19th C. Utopian Communities (other than Shakers)

□ Owenite Communities

- Spa Fields (Islington, UK)(1821-4); Orbiston (Scotland)(1825-7); Ralahine (Ireland)(1831-3); Harmony Hall (Hampshire, UK)(1839-45); New Harmony (Indiana, USA)(1825-7); Maxwell (Ont., Canada)(1827-?)

□ Transcendental/Unitarian Communities

- Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education (Mass., near Boston, USA)(1841-7)
 - Formed by Unitarians George and Sophia Ripley as a **joint stock company** – company did not prove to be profitable

□ Noyesian Religious Communities

- Founded by John Humphrey Noyes in 1848 in Oneida, NY, survived until 1878
 - Smaller versions of **Oneida community** appear in Conn., NJ and Vermont, last community dissolves in 1881
 - Oneida communities remembered for 'free love' complex marriages and affording substantial female freedoms

Robert Owen (1771-1858)

- Early utopian socialist, Welsh manufacturer that implemented both social and industrial reforms that were models for early social reformers
 - Early advocate of the cooperative system
 - Expressed hostility to religion as obstacle to reform
- Owen remembered in modern times for the Owenite community established in 1825 on 30,000 acres at New Harmony, Indiana along lines determined by Owen
 - Community had difficulties with determining a method of governance
 - Owen left the community in 1828 having spent some £40,000, most of his fortune
 - A number of other Owenite communities were established in Britain around this time

**Robert Owen
(1771-1858)**

**Founder of
the ill-fated
Owenite
utopian
communities**



William Morris (1834-98): Revolutionary Socialism and the Arts and Crafts Movement

- Morris was born to a wealthy family from Essex, studied Classics at Oxford and trained as an architect
 - Developed an interior decoration firm, Morris & Co. developing a reputation as a designer of tapestries, wallpaper, stained glass and furniture (including Morris chair)
 - Began work as a novelist and poet starting in 1868 including *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70), *News from Nowhere* (1890) and *The Well at World's End* (1896)
 - Became a convert to revolutionary socialism after 1880, founding the Socialist League in 1884
 - In 1891, founded the Kelmscott Press to publish limited edition coffee-table books

**William Morris
(1834-1896)**

***News from
Nowhere (1890)***

Morris Chair



News from Nowhere (1890)

- Originally published as a serial, combination of utopian socialism and fantasy

Plot line: The text is narrated by William Guest

Guest falls asleep following a meeting of the Socialist League, awakening in a future society with communal ownership and the means of production controlled by democratic decisions

The Utopia is classless **agrarian** with no private property, no money system, no divorce, no court system or prisons, and no class systems. The themes in the narrative revolve around implicit explanations for perceived shortcomings of socialism.

The novel explores various characters including Ellen, a working class emancipated woman



Utopia, Dystopia and Modern Business Ideology

- ❑ What is the Utopia that modern business ideology (i.e., liberal capitalism) promises?
 - ❑ Ayn Rand *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) is an Objectivist dystopia
 - ❑ Independence and individual achievement enables society to survive and thrive
 - ❑ Forms of state intervention from totalitarianism to socialism are irretrievably flawed
 - ❑ Margaret Atwood *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) is also a modern dystopia
- ❑ “The demise of the American dream haunts the literature dating from the mid-1950’s through current publications, which grows bleaker”, *Encyclopedia of Utopian Literature*

Ayn Rand (1905-1982)
***Atlas Shrugged* (1957)**



Margaret Atwood (born 1939) in 1968

