Science Fiction Utopias & Dystopias

I202 Social Informatics

Larry Yaeger

Professor, Dept. of Informatics, Complex Systems group
Core Faculty, Cognitive Science Program
Indiana University

What Are Utopias & Dystopias?

- Scholarly dissertations address this subject, but the best are also good common sense...
  - Utopia
    - A place where life is better than we have
    - May or may not be perfect
    - Often totalitarian
  - Dystopia
    - A place where life is worse than we have
    - May or may not offer hope of escape or improvement
      - Dystopias without hope referred to as anti-utopias
    - Often totalitarian, sometimes anarchic
- *topian visions are often *prescriptive*, suggesting specific methods whereby their visions may be fulfilled

Whose Utopia?

- Note that both utopias and dystopias share a preponderance of totalitarian visions
- Utopia (dystopia) is in the eye of the beholder
  - One man's utopia is another man's dystopia
- Everybody polka!
  - "In Heaven there is no beer
    (No beer?!)
    That's why we drink it here
    And when we're all gone from here
    Our friends will be drinking all the beer."
  - (The U. of Iowa marching band was forbidden to celebrate Hawkeye basketball victories by singing this song, because it ostensibly promoted binge drinking)

Origins of Utopian Visions

- Plato's *Republic* (380 BC)
  - Described a perfect society, without crime or poverty
  - Eliminated jealousy by abolishing families
  - Proposed eugenics – "the best men must have intercourse with the best women as frequently as possible, and the opposite is true of the very inferior"
  - Recommended infanticide (or close) – "children of good parents they will take to a rearing pen in the care of nurses living apart in a certain section of the city; the children of inferior parents, or any child of the others born defective, they will hide, as is fitting, in a secret and unknown place"
  - Rigid class hierarchies—every man in his proper place; women and children are property
  - Endorsed censorship

Religious Utopias – The Garden of Eden

- Historical and literary research suggests Genesis was *redacted* from older materials around 440 BC

Franco-Flemish Adam & Eve (late 15th century)

Religious Utopias – Jerusalem, Paris, …

- The City of God (written 413–426) by Augustine of Hippo, describes an ideal city, the "eternal" Jerusalem, the archetype of all modern Christian utopias

Origin of the Word "Utopia"

- Sir Thomas More's "Utopia" (1515)
    - Derived from the Greek "ou topos" (no place) and "eu topos" (good place)
    - Story told by Raphael Nonsenso
    - Poet laureate of Utopia is Mr. Windbag
        "Plato's Republic now I claim / To match or beat at its own game"
    - A kinder, gentler Republic
    - Democratic society in which family is retained
        - Adultery leads to "penal servitude of the most unpleasant type" and "a second conviction means capital punishment"
        - "Any boy or girl convicted of premarital intercourse is severely punished, and permanently disqualified from marrying, unless this sentence is remitted by the Mayor."
    - Ironically, espoused religious tolerance
        - More was put to death for his refusal to endorse the Church of England's break from the Catholic Church

Sir Thomas More's "Utopia" (1515)

# Whose Utopia? (A Slight Return)

- Plato described a rigid class structure, with only philosophers being suited to the ruling class

- More described a classless society, yet exempted only intellectuals from otherwise shared work

- Both societies placed their creators at the top of the heap, even when the existence of a heap was denied

- *topias are most effective at telling us about the aspirations or the fears of the society and time in which they are written

The Value of Utopian Visions

- "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 world is now too dangerous for anything less than Utopia." —R. Buckminster Fuller

Utopian Architecture & Urbanisation

- Leonardo Da Vinci (1487-1490)
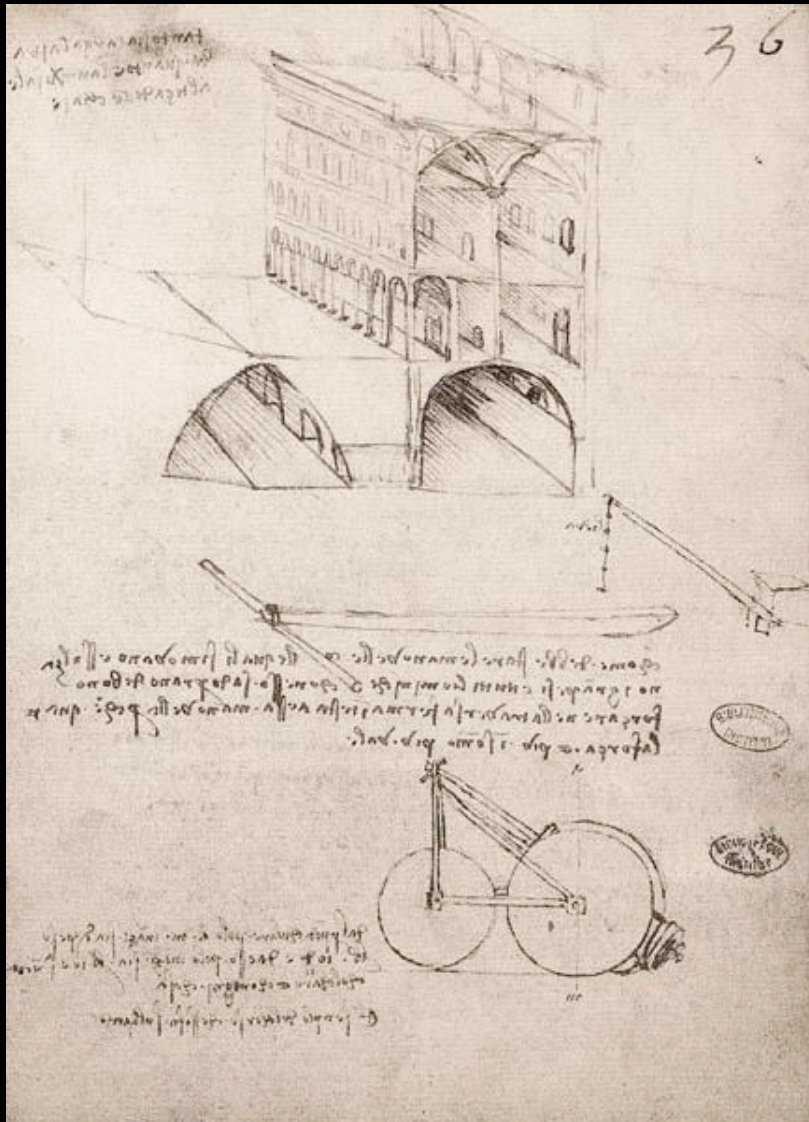
The Real World
– The "New World" (1522 & 1590)

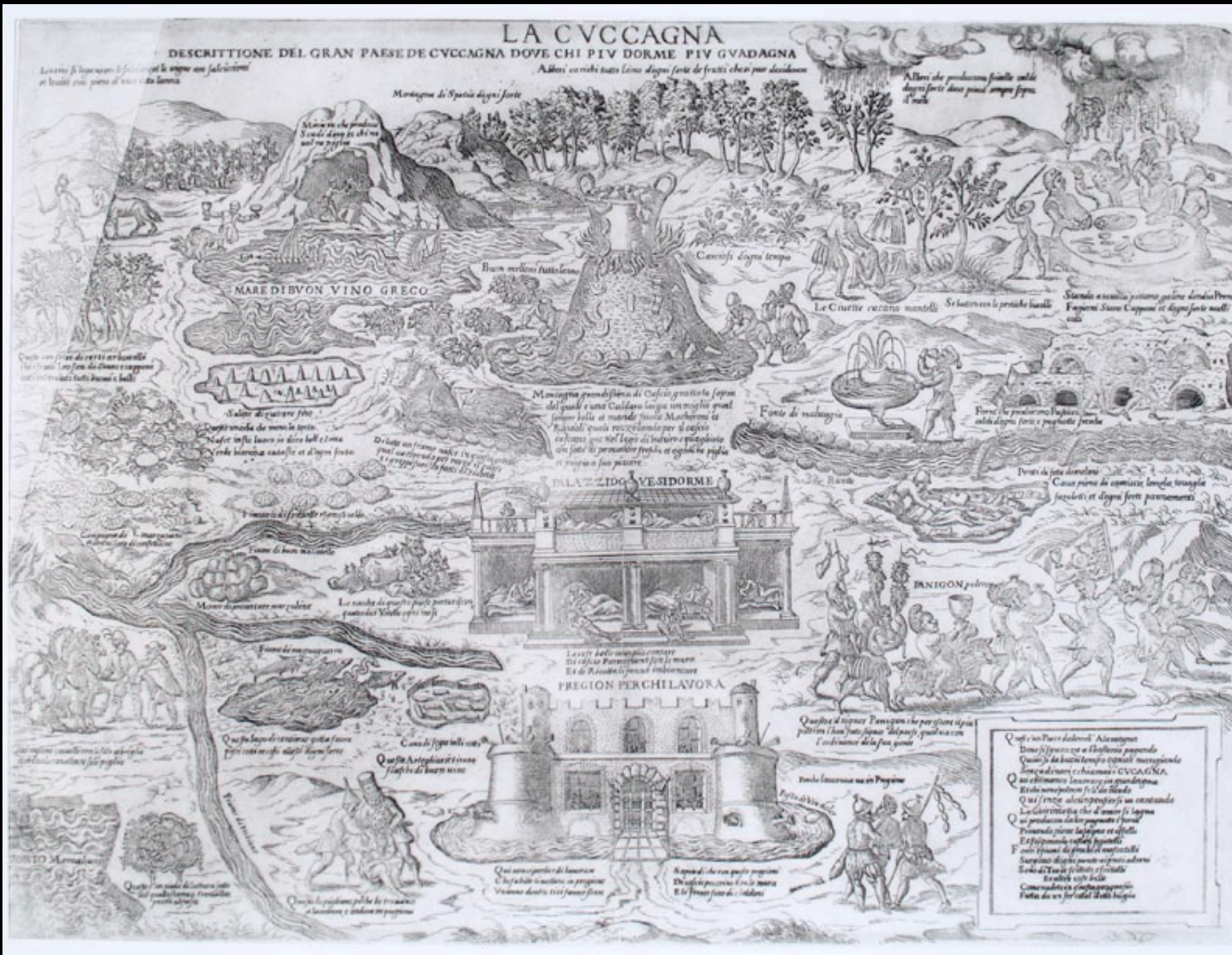Christopher Columbus Discovers the New World
Burin (1522)

Theodore deBry after John White
Secota, from America Pt 1 (1590)

The Real World
- The "New World" (1505)

La Cuccagna (late 1500s)

England: The Cockaigne

Italy: La Cuccagna ("where he who sleeps the most earns the most")

Germany: Schlarraffenland ("land of milk and honey")

Dutch: Luilekkerland ("lazy luscious land")

Mountains of grated cheese sit in a sea of Greek wine, roasted birds fall from the sky like rain, trees produce ripe fruit all year round, owls lay fur coats, artichokes are always ripe for picking, and people are arrested for working.
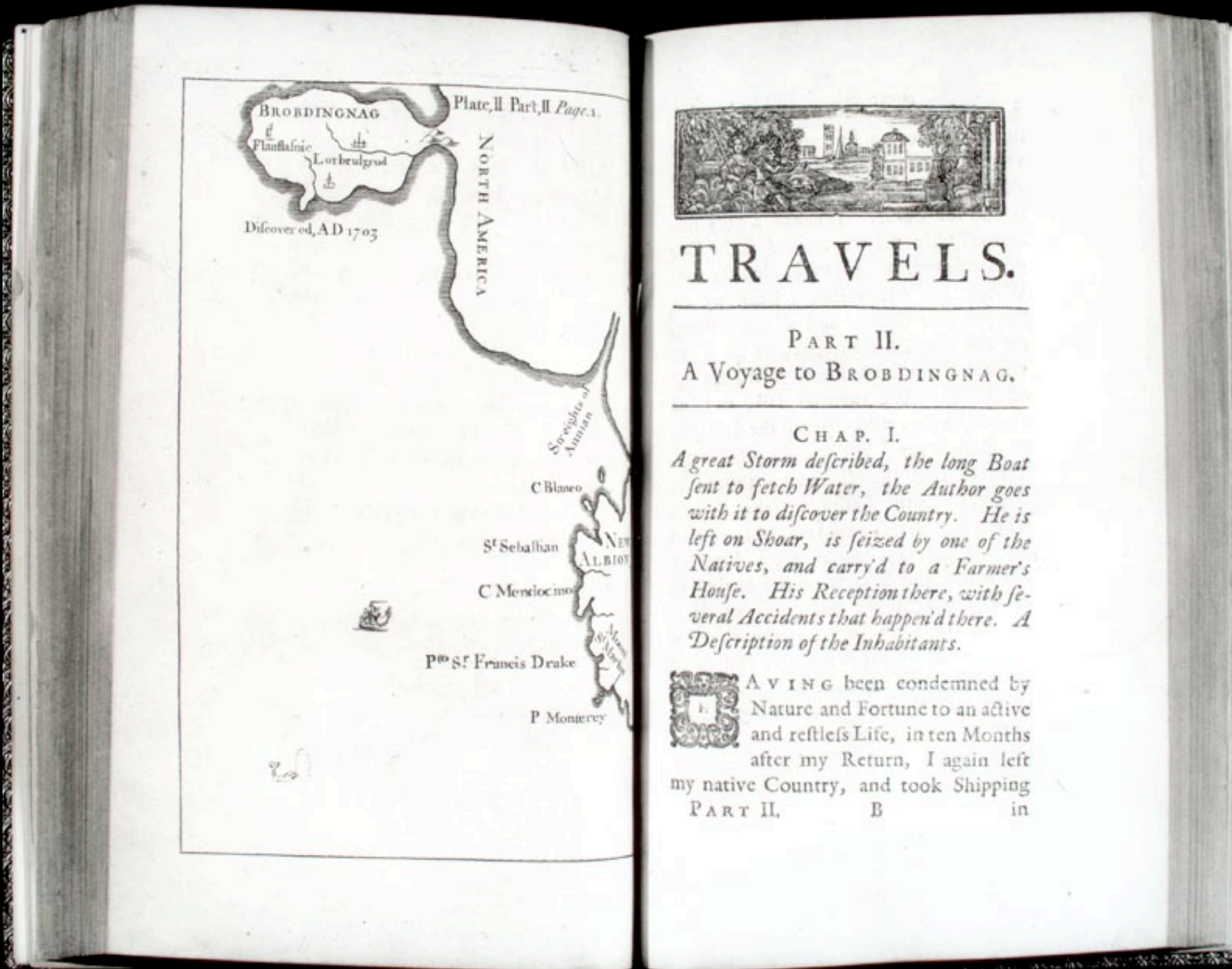
Utopian Architecture & Urbanisation
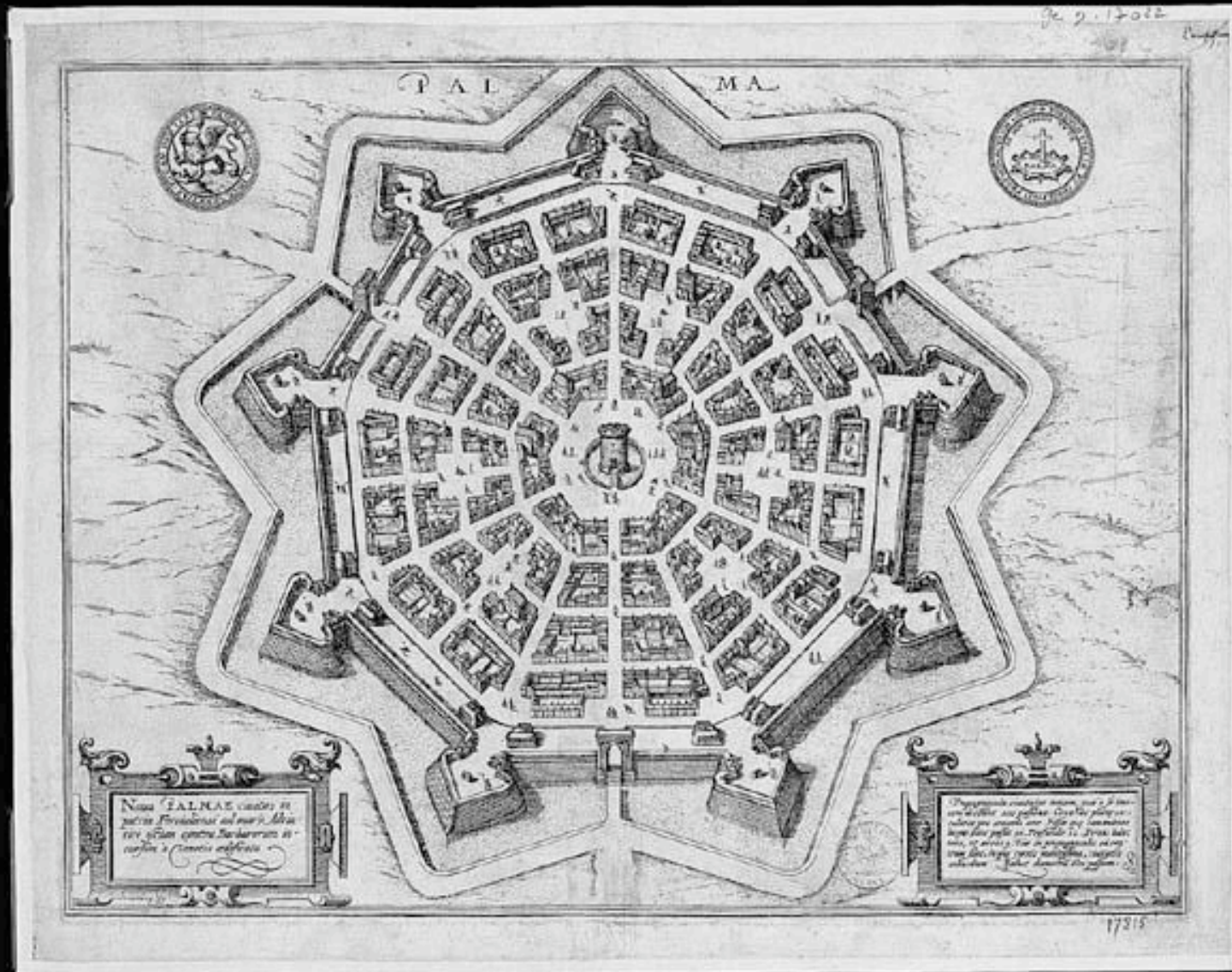
Georg Braun, Frans Hogenberg – Palma Nova (1598)

The Real World
- *In Search of Paradise* (1708)

Jonathan Swift – Gulliver's Travels (1726)

Utopian land of rational (but prideful) upright talking horses, Houyhnhnmland, used primarily to contrast with humans at their animalistic worst (Yahoos)

"The Best of All Possible Worlds"

- Voltair's *Candide, or Optimism* (1759)
  - Satirizes Gottfried Liebniz's statement in his *Théodicée* that we must live in "the best of all possible worlds" because it was made by a perfect God
  - A naïve Candide, having learned this precept, travels the world experiencing a series of adventures that drastically disproves it, all the while clinging to it
  - The novel presents a dystopic showcase of the horrors of the 18th century, even as Candide and his mentor, Dr. Pangloss (Liebniz), proclaim "everything is for the best" and they live in "the best of all possible worlds"

The Real World
– New Social Contracts

Thomas Jefferson
U.S. Declaration of Independence
1776

Niquete LeJeune
Declaration of the Rights of Man
1789

The Real World
– New Lanark, Scotland (1799-1825)

John Minter Morgan, Hampden in the Nineteenth Century; or Colloquies on the Errors and Improvements of Society, Vol. 2

The Real World
– Robert Owen's New Lanark

Mr OWEN'S INSTITUTION, NEW LANARK.
(Quadrille Dancing)

The Real World – New Harmony, Indiana (1814-1826)

Historic Marker
(photo by Ruth Reichmann)

NEW HARMONY
Location of two attempts at communal living: The Harmonists under Reverend George Rapp, 1814-1825, and the Owenites under philanthropist Robert Owen, 1825-1826. New Harmony remained an important cultural center for many years thereafter.

New Harmony Inn
(Historic New Harmony photo)

Community House (Dormitory) Number Two
Built in 1822 to house 40 to 60 single members of the Harmonist Society, this is the largest dormitory built in New Harmony. The photo also shows the Kitchen (Kilbinger House).

David Lenz House, with Bake Oven
(photo by Ruth Reichmann)

Labyrinth
(Historic New Harmony photo)

Thrall's Opera House
(Historic New Harmony photo)

Satirical Views of Real World Utopias (1848)
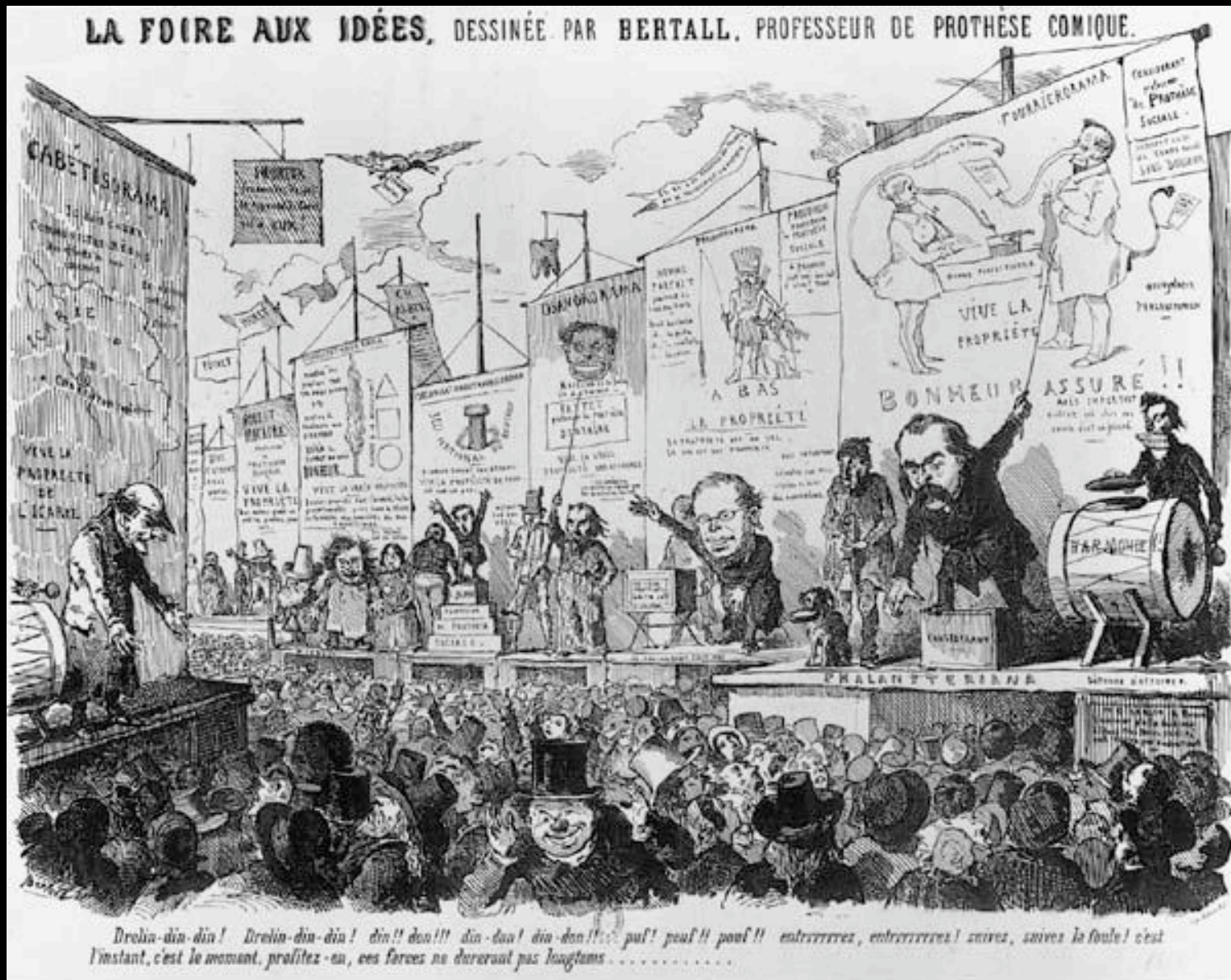
The Real World – Communism (1848)

- The writings of Karl Marx (*The Communist Manifesto*, 1848, with Friedrich Engels) on communism strongly resembled More's Utopia

- Before the realities of an all-powerful state bureaucracy manifested themselves, many people thought Communism to be the first nation-wide attempt at establishing a utopia

William Morris – *News from Nowhere* (1892)

- Morris's "Nowhere" reflects his own socialist and anti-industrialist points of view and depicts a post-revolutionary society free of class division, formal education, governmental structures, money, poverty, crime, and industrial pollution.

Religious *and* Real World
– Rastifarian Africa

Real World Visions of Utopia & Dystopia

Fictional Utopias in the Real World

Cavendish, New Blazing World (1666)

Harrington, Oceana (1656)

Brobdingnag - Swift, Gulliver's Travels (1726)

Abyssinia - Johnson, Rasselas (1760)

Taprobana [Sri Lanka] - Campanella, Città del sole (1603)

Bensalem - Bacon, New Atlantis (1626)

El Dorado - Voltaire, Candide (1759)

Burgh, The Cessares (1764)

Lilliput - Swift, Gulliver's Travels (1626)

Java - I.D.M., Antangil (1616)

Tahiti - Diderot, Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville (1772)

?More, Utopia (1516)

?Macaria - Stiblin, De Eudae-monensium republica (1555)

Capharsalama - Andreae, Christianopolis (1619)

Terra Australis Incognita - Hall, Mundus alter et idem (1605); Neville, Isle of Pines (1668); de Foigny, La terre australe (1676); d'Allais, Histoire des Séverambes (1677); Philips, New Athens (1720)

Technological Utopian Visions – Villemard *In the Year 2000* (1910)

Aerial Firemen

Technological Utopian Visions – Villemard *In the Year 2000* (1910)

Aerial Tennis

Technological Utopian Visions – Villemard *In the Year 2000* (1910)
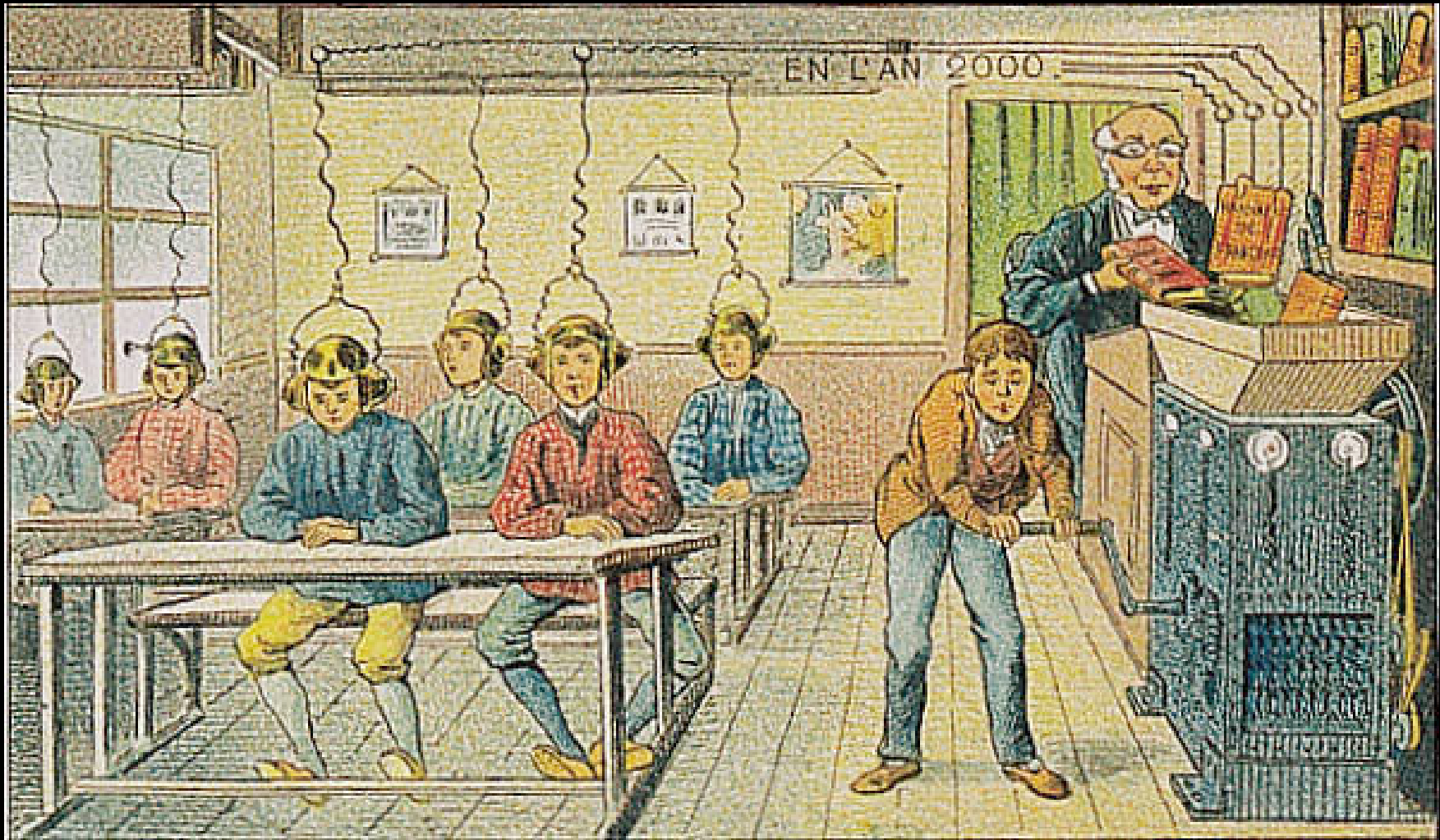
At School

Technological Utopian Visions – Villemard *In the Year 2000* (1910)

EN L'AN 2000

Automobiles of War

Technological Utopian Visions – Villemard *In the Year 2000* (1910)
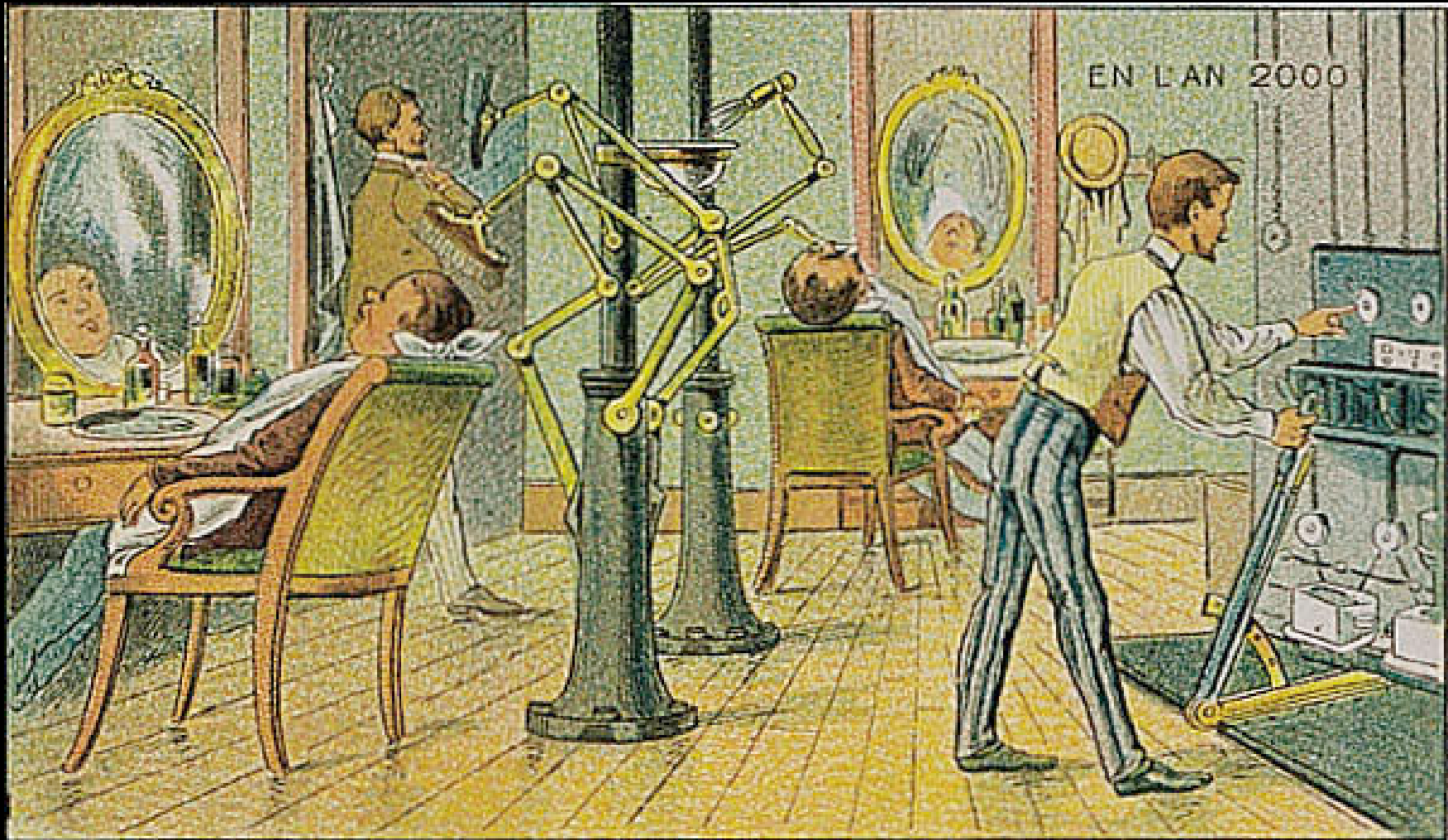
Barber

Technological Utopian Visions
– Villemard *In the Year 2000* (1910)

Car Shoes

Technological Utopian Visions – Villemard *In the Year 2000* (1910)
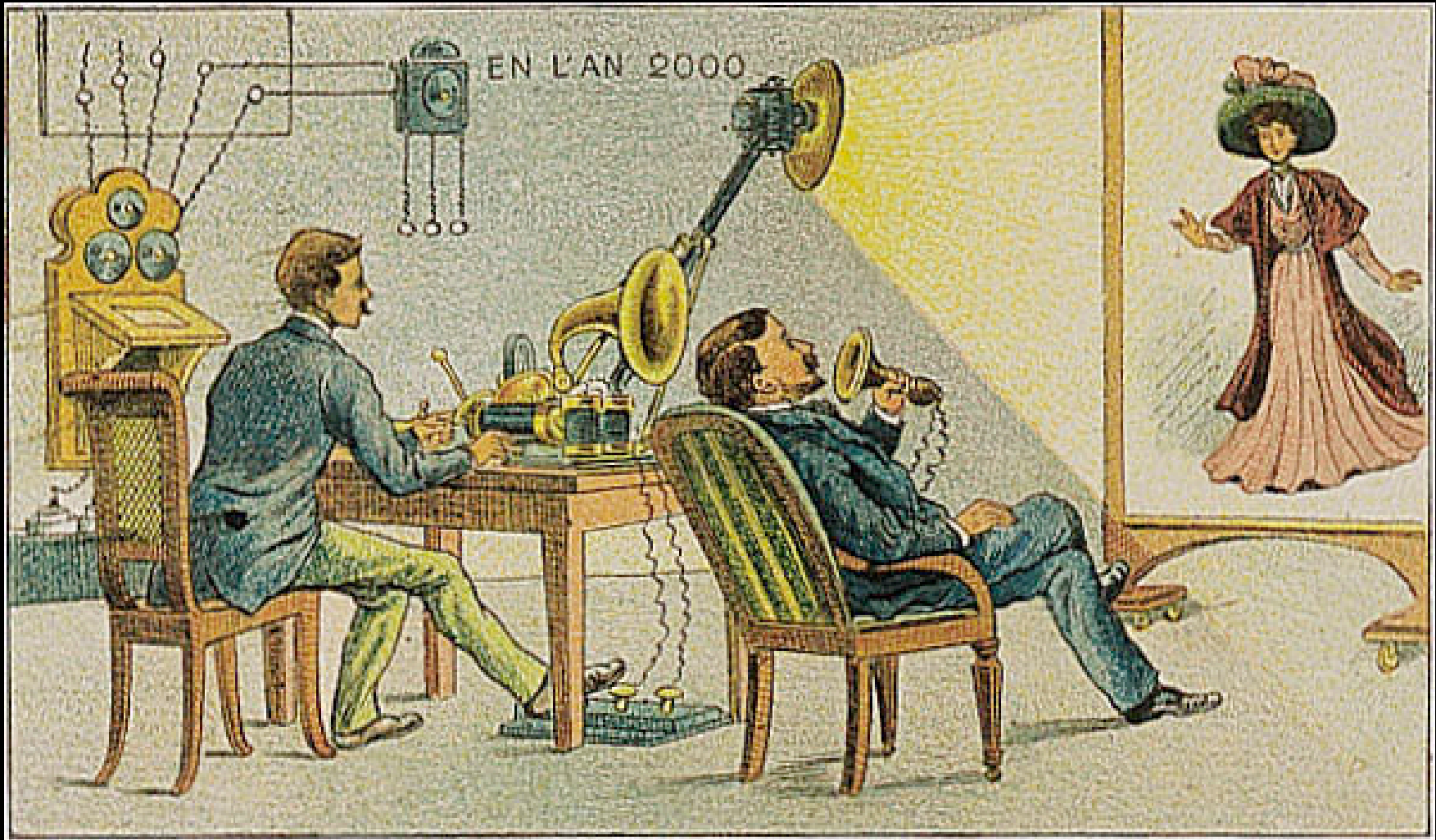
Correspondence – Cinema, Phono, Telegraphy

Technological Utopian Visions – Villemard *In the Year 2000* (1910)
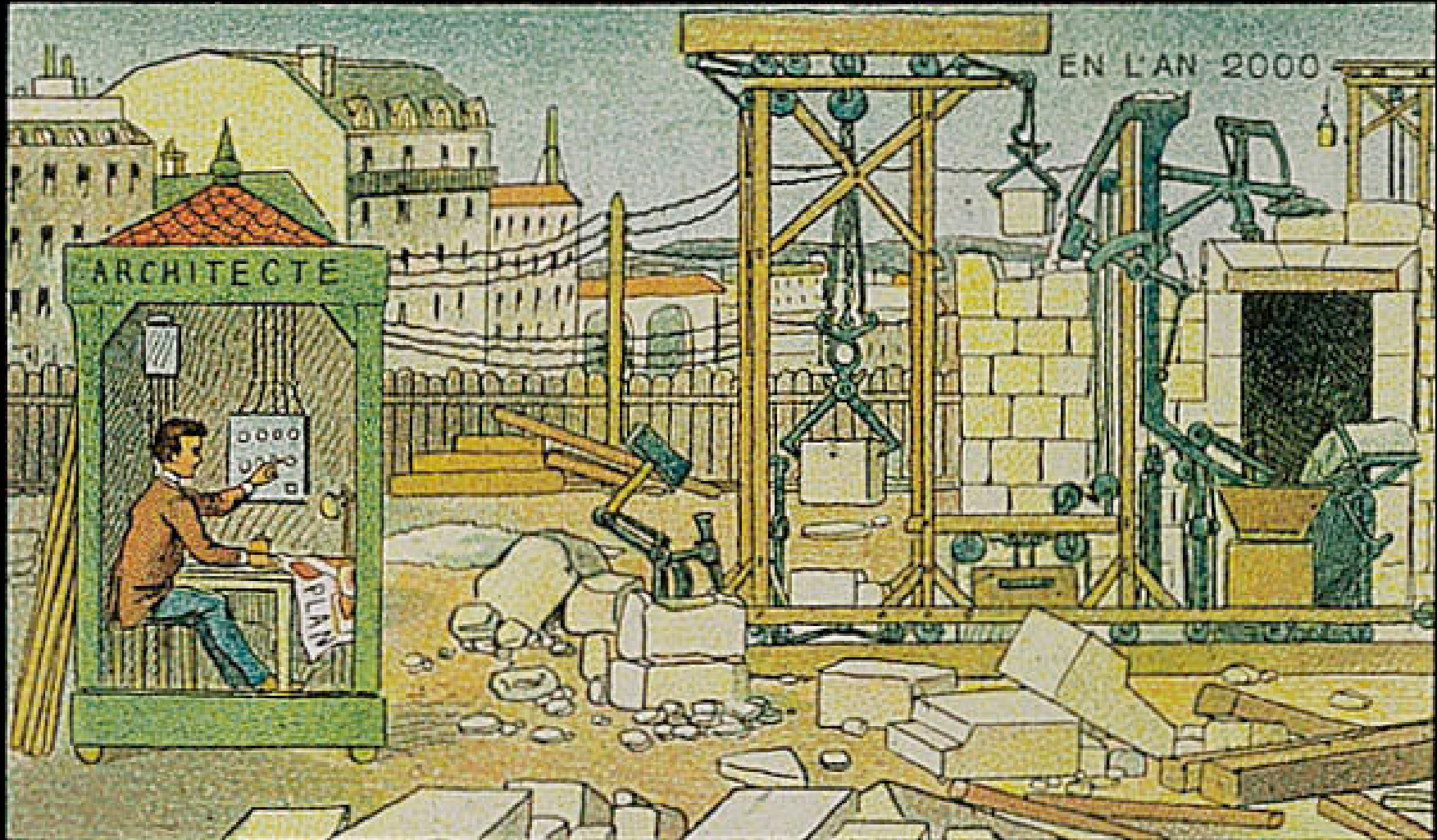
Electronic Construction

Technological Utopian Visions – Villemard *In the Year 2000* (1910)
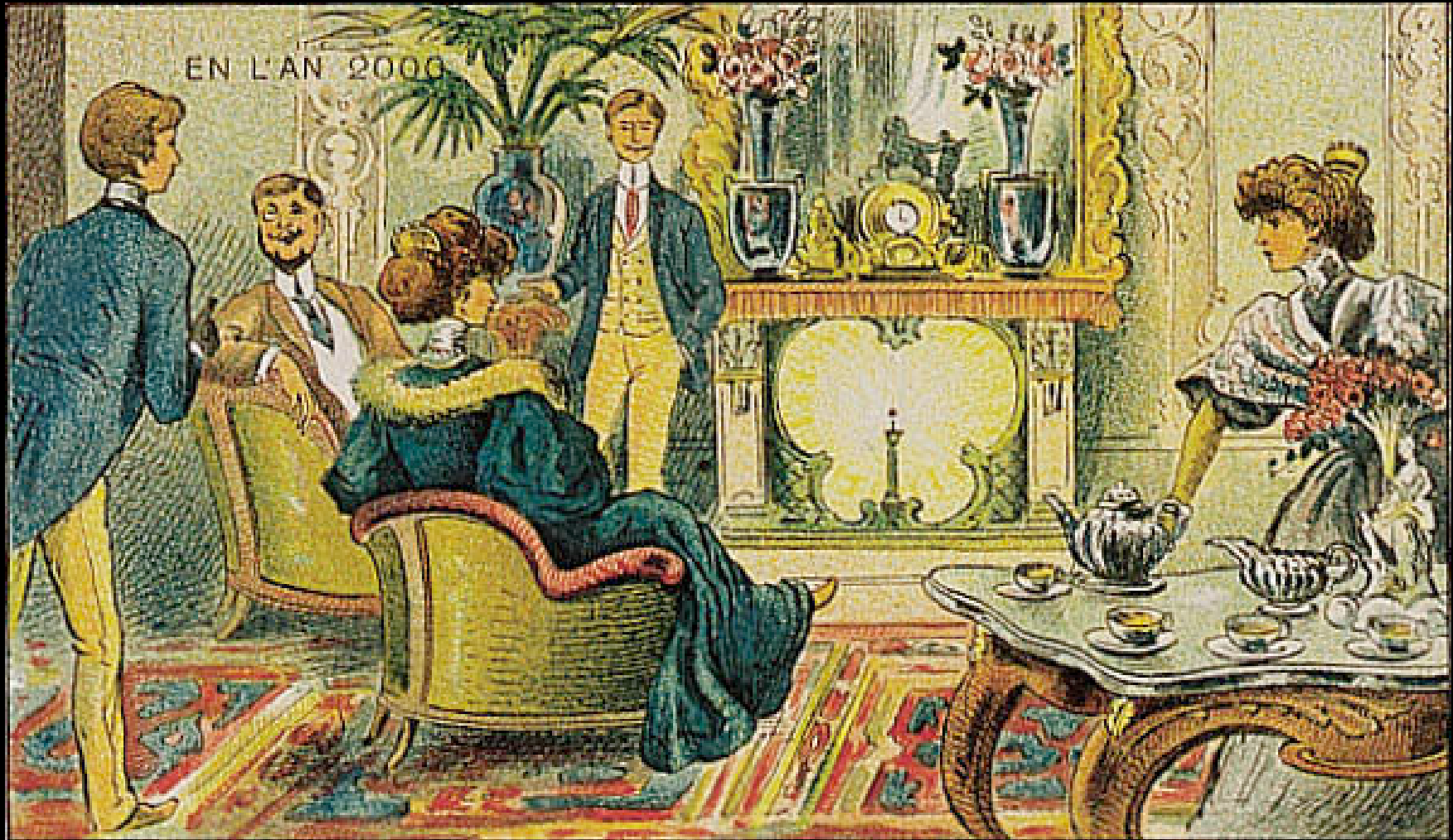
Heating with Radium

Technological Utopian Visions – World's Fairs (1851 to Present)

NORMAN BELLE GEDDES 1939 GE WORLD'S FAIR PAVILION
FUTURAMA

Technological Utopian Visions – Communism
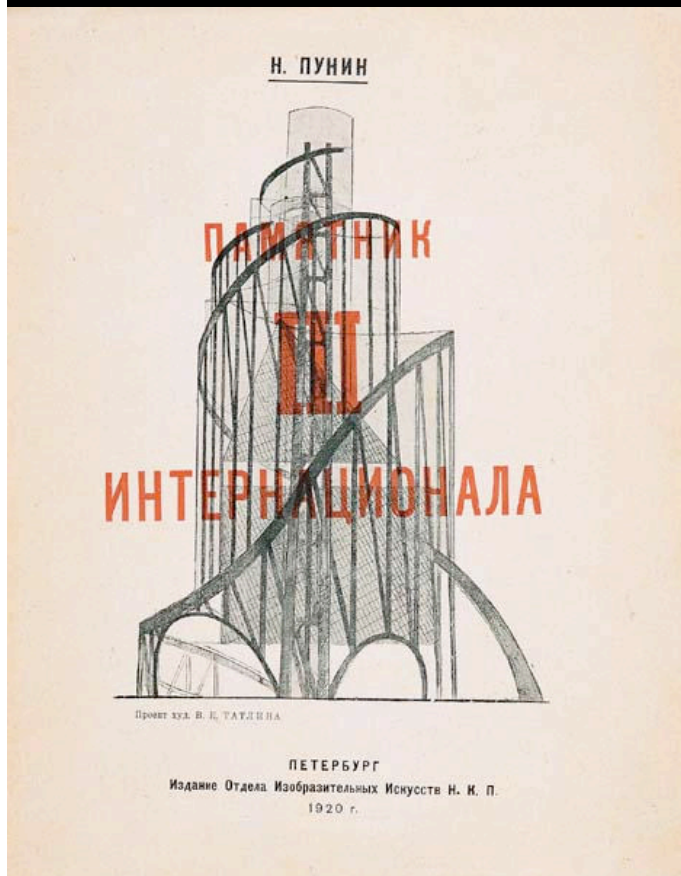
Pounine, Petersburg (1920)
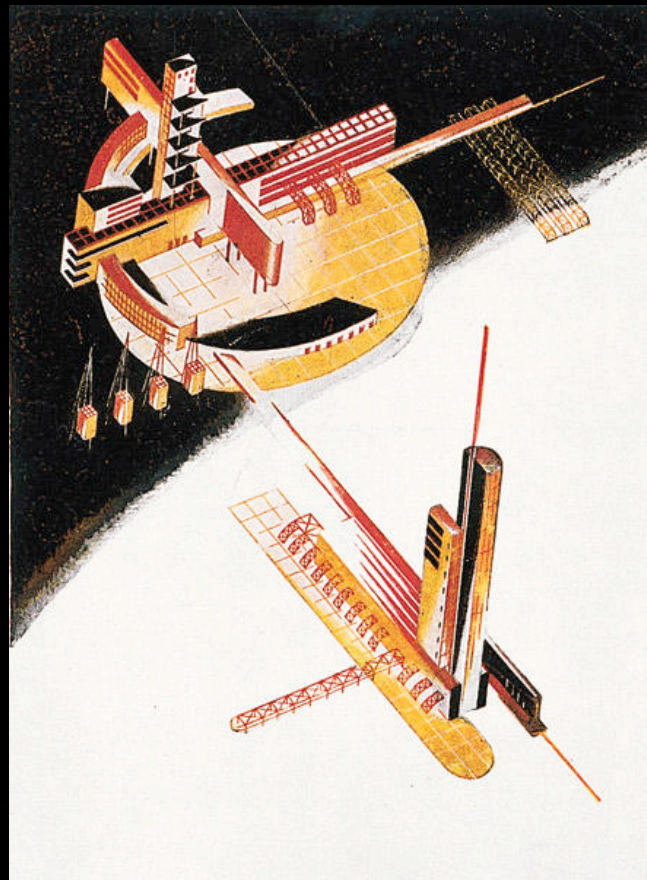
Iakov Tchernikov, Fantasy Architecture (1933)

Technological Utopian Visions – Communism

H. G. Wells Visits the Soviet Union (1932)

Technology Embraced by the Arts

Futurist Manifesto 1913

Metal Books (~1934)

Technology Embraced by the Arts

ЦИКЛ

ЛЕКЦИЙ
Н.И. ПУНИНА.

Malevich
Rose
for Petersburg
conference on
"suprematist
esthetics"
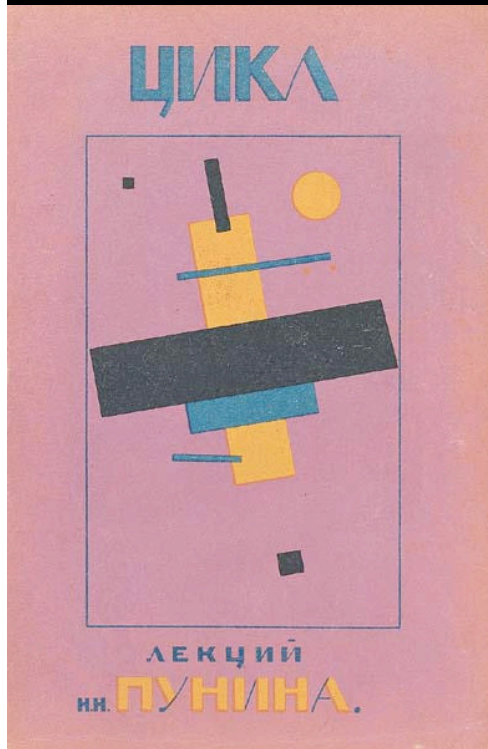
Ferdinand Léger
Machine as Subject
(1924)

Malevich
Architectone Zeta
(~1925)

Laszlo Moholo-Nagy
Photoplastique
(1926)

The Role of Technology

- Generally, technology is no more good nor bad than a rock or a bone (as depicted by Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*)

- It is how humans, individually and en masse, use technology that defines its value and/or its danger

- Nonetheless, "with great power comes great responsibility", and the leverage offered by more and more powerful technologies requires a degree of responsible behavior that is elusive for humans

  - A recognition of this is why much science fiction, though based on extrapolated technology, is dystopic, and features repressive governments and/or technological holocausts

"A power so great, it can only be used for good or evil."
— Firesign Theatre

Spin

- Everyone has a point of view, and, as we saw, it can be the difference between a utopia and a dystopia
- In the world of politics, especially, and advertising, we call this "spin"
  - Sometimes it is deliberately misleading
  - Sometimes it is more accurate
  - Usually *misleading* vs. *more accurate* is debatable
- Kling (questionably, to my mind) elevates positive or negative spin to utopian or dystopian discourse
  - His lead example is a positive statement about video-conferencing (which probably will not lead to a utopia)
  - Note that the author of that quote makes a comment about sociologists that can be considered unflattering
- It is important to recognize, interpret, & understand spin

Science Fiction Literary Utopias

- Plato's Republic (400 BC) was, at least on one level, a description of a political utopia ruled by an elite of philosopher kings, conceived by Plato.
- The City of God (written 413–426) by Augustine of Hippo, describes an ideal city, the "eternal" Jerusalem, the archetype of all "Christian" utopias.
- Utopia (1516) by Thomas More a Gutenburg text of the book
- The Anatomy of Melancholy (1621) by Robert Burton, a utopian society is described in the preface.
- The City of the Sun (1623) by Tommaso Campanella
- The New Atlantis (1627) by Francis Bacon
- Oceana (1656) by James Harrington
- The section in Gulliver's Travels (1726) by Jonathan Swift depicting the calm, rational society of the Houyhnhms, is certainly utopian, but it is meant to contrast with that of the yahoos, who represent the worst that the human race can do.
- Voyage en Icarie (1840) by Etienne Cabet
- Erewhon (1872) by Samuel Butler
- Looking Backward (1888), by Edward Bellamy
- Freiland (1890) by Theodor Hertzka
- News from Nowhere (1891), by William Morris; see also the Arts and Crafts Movement founded to put his ideas into practice a Gutenberg text of the book
- Utopia, Limited (1893) is a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta in which a small island nation reforms itself along British lines, with amusingly utter success.
- Intermere (1901) by Wiliam Alexander Taylor.
- A large number of books by H.G. Wells, including A Modern Utopia (1905)
- Herland (1915), by Charlotte Perkins Gilman; an exclusively female utopia and its journey towards "bi-sexuality" as presented by one of three male explorers who "discover" the country.
- Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932) can be considered an example of pseudo-utopian satire (see also dystopia). One of his other books, Island (1962), demonstrates a positive utopia.
- Islandia (1942), by Austin Tappan Wright
- B. F. Skinner's Walden Two (1948)
- The Cloud of Magellan (1955) by Stanislaw Lem
- Andromeda Nebula (1957) is a classic communist utopia by Ivan Efremov
- Star Trek (1966) science fiction television series by Gene Roddenberry
- The Dispossessed (1974), a science fiction novel by Ursula K. Le Guin, is sometimes said to represent one of the few modern revivals of the utopian genre, though it is notable that one of the major themes of the work is the ambiguity of different notions of utopia. Le Guin presents a utopian world in which ditches do need digging, and sewers need unblocking — this drudgery is divided among all adults, and is contrasted, in the language of the utopia, with their everyday, more satisfying work.
- Woman on the Edge of Time (1976) by Marge Piercy is a feminist science fiction novel in which the protagonist must act to win the utopian future over an alternative, dystopian, one.
- Ecotopia (novel) (1975) by Ernest Callenbach
- The Three Californias Trilogy (especially The Pacific Edge (1990)) and the Mars trilogy by Kim Stanley Robinson
- The Giver (1993), a novel by Lois Lowry, depicts a "perfect" society of the far future whose elimination of war, disease, fear, &c. comes at the inherent price of the repression of human emotions, individuality and free will.
- most of the stories in Future Primitive - The New Ecotopias (1994), edited by Kim Stanley Robinson
- The Hedonistic Imperative (1996), an online manifesto by David Pearce, outlines how genetic engineering and nanotechnology will abolish suffering in all sentient life.
- The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You (1997) by Dorothy Bryant
- The Matrix (1999), a film by the Wachowski brothers, describes a virtual reality controlled by artificial intelligence such as Agent Smith. Smith says that the first Matrix was a utopia, but humans disbelieved and rejected it because they "define their reality through misery and suffering." Therefore, the Matrix was redesigned to simulate human civilization with all its suffering.
- Equilibrium (2002), is a film and describes a future in which feelings are forbidden.
- Xen: Ancient English Edition, (2004) is a novel about a true Utopia, with a bias toward Matriarchy, in the distant future of Earth, "translated" by D.J. Solomon

Science Fiction Literary Dystopias

- 1984 by George Orwell
- Among the Hidden by Margaret Haddix
- Animal Farm by George Orwell
- Anthem by Ayn Rand
- Ape and Essence by Aldous Huxley
- Battle Royale by Koushun Takami
- Brave New World by Aldous Huxley (This could perhaps be considered a utopia, as the people in that society are certainly happy, but it is more generally regarded by critics as a dystopian satire, as they actually have no choice in whether they are happy or not.)
- The Children of Men by P.D. James
- A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess
- Chung Kuo by David Windgrove
- Dayworld by PHillip Jose Farmer
- Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick
- Doc and Fluff by Pat Califia
- Die Andere Seite by Alfred Kubin
- The Domination by S. M. Stirling
- Elvissey by Jack Womack
- Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury
- Feed by M. T. Anderson
- A Friend of the Earth by T. C. Boyle.
- The Giver by Lois Lowry (Again, perhaps a Utopia, however it is at a cost)
- The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood
- "Harrison Bergeron'" by Kurt Vonnegut
- The Iron Heel by Jack London
- Incal (and spinoffs) by Alejandro Jodorowsky
- It Can't Happen Here by Sinclair Lewis
- The Jagged Orbit by John Brunner
- Jennifer Government by Max Barry
- Kallocain by Karin Boye
- Level 7 by Mordecai Roshwald
- Logan's Run by William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson
- The Machine Stops by E.M. Forster
- Make Room! Make Room! by Harry Harrison
- Neuromancer by William Gibson.
- Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood
- Planet of the Apes by Pierre Boulle
- Player Piano by Kurt Vonnegut
- Random Acts of Senseless Violence by Jack Womack
- Snow Crash by Neal Stephenson
- Starship Troopers by Robert Heinlein
- The Man in the High Castle by Philip K. Dick
- The Running Man by Richard Bachman, a pseudonym for Stephen King.
- The Sheep Look Up by John Brunner
- The Shockwave Rider by John Brunner
- Stand on Zanzibar by John Brunner
- This Perfect Day by Ira Levin

Mary Shelley

- *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818)
  - Not *topian, but clearly a speculative warning about pride and the misuse of science
  - Considered by some to be the very first science fiction book
    - Shelley conceived of the book after having read German ghost stories and having been challenged by Lord Byron, along with her husband-to-be, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Byron's personal physician, John William Polidori, to create her own scary story
  - The story's relevance to the field of Artificial Life was raised and discussed by Doyne Farmer and others at the second ALife conference

H. G. Wells

- *The Time Machine* (1895)
  - Classism evolved to its extreme
  - Working-class Morlocks literally eat the leisure-class Eloi
- *A Modern Utopia* (1905)
  - Part essay, part story. Visitors to a utopian world find a common language, sexual, economic, and racial equality, in a society ruled by socialist ideals, enforced by an austere, voluntary elite—the Samurai.
- *Men Like Gods* (1923)
  - A trip to an alternate dimension reveals a world whose history is very much like Earth's, except…
  - Private property in all but personal things has been abolished
  - People are open with strangers in thought and deed
  - There are no more sexual predators, and people go about naked
  - People have become taller, stronger, more beautiful and more intelligent
  - Said to be an inspiration for Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*

Franz Kafka

- In short stories and novels ranging from 1904 to 1927 (with all of the novels published posthumously, against his express wishes), Franz Kafka produced surrealistic, yet deeply penetrating observations of bureaucracy's stultifying effects on the human condition

- This is particularly evident in

  In the Penal Colony (1914),

  The Trial (1925), and

  The Castle (1926),

  though metaphorical analogies to the loss of individuality and identity abound in Kafka's writing

Yevgeny Ivanovitch Zamyatin

- Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1920) describes the One State, ruled by the great Benefactor, and segregated from the rest of the world by the Great Wall
  - Citizens have only numbers for names
  - The protagonist, D-503, is helping to build a space ship, the Integral, meant to spread the One State's values to other worlds
  - Difficulties ensue when he falls in love with I-330.
- "Inspired" by events in the young Soviet Union, it finally saw publication there in 1988
- It clearly influenced Orwell's *1984*, as well as George Lucas's *THX-1138*

Aldous Huxley

- Author of classic dystopian novel *Brave New World* (1932) and classic utopian novel *Island* (1962)

- *Brave New World* presages developments in reproductive technology, eugenics, and mind control that together are used to create a new society. In it, humanity is carefree, healthy, and technologically advanced, warfare and poverty have been eliminated, all races are equal, and everyone is permanently happy. However, all these things have been achieved by eliminating many core attributes of humanity—family, cultural diversity, art, literature, religion, and philosophy. Mankind is no longer human.

- *Island* illustrates a key problem with non-totalitarian utopias: corruption from within

  - It takes just one greedy individual with a desire for a disproportionate share of the communal wealth to destroy a utopia

Aldous Huxley

Brave New World (1932)	Island (1962)
Drug use for pacification	Drug use for enlightenment
Group living for the elimination of individuality	Group living for children to avoid unalloyed exposure to parental neuroses
Trance states for indoctrination	Trance states for super learning
Meaningless sex	Easy access to contraception, expressive sex

George Orwell (Eric Blair)

- Best known for his anti-Stalinist *Animal Farm* (1945) and anti-totalitarian and quintessentially dystopic *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)
  - Fought in battle for socialist POUM (Worker's Party of Marxist Unification) in Spain, was shot in the neck, and had to flee Spain or be arrested as a "Trotskyite", when the Spanish Communist Party, with help from the Soviet Union and its secret police, brutally moved to suppress POUM and more anarchist socialists
  - He believed firmly in a form of democratic socialism

- Big Brother enforces conformity through indoctrination, propaganda, fear, and ruthless punishment. Surveillance is everywhere; privacy is non-existent. History is rewritten to suit the state. And language itself is being simplified to reduce the ability to even think complex or dissenting thoughts.
  - This is spin taken to its dystopian extreme

Ursula Le Guin

- Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974), "An Ambiguous Utopia" presents two worlds:
  - Anarres, based on anarchist and non-authoritarian communist principles, is a utopia that turns out to be deeply flawed
  - Urras, based on capitalism, is a dystopia, with a strong and repressive government and a significant sub-population of "dispossessed", yet it boasts great wealth, and great cultural and scientific accomplishments
  - Shows flaws in both civilizations, with human foibles the ever-present fly in the ointment

Iain M. Banks

- "Culture" books present a galaxy-spanning civilization that is one of the least authoritarian and most dynamic utopias in the history of literature, with a strong emphasis on *both* personal freedoms and personal responsibilities
  - *Player of Games* (1988)
  - *Use of Weapons* (1990)
  - *Excession* (1996)
  - *Look to Windward* (2000)
- Non-culture book, *The Algebraist* (2004), presents multiple star-faring races, all of which have their strengths and their flaws
  - Some are clearly despicable, but others appear beneficent or totalitarian, good or evil, in turn, depending on context and point of view
  - Replaces good vs. evil themes with personal responsibility themes

Utopia vs. Practicality

- Wells, Star Trek, and Banks utopias need secret societies to deal with hidden and/or major threats

- Otherwise idealistic communes of the 60's typically dissolved not over differing philosophies, but over differing personalities, and, as often as not, who was going to have to wash the dishes tonight

- A single dissident can destroy a utopia, as in Huxley's *Island*, where one well-placed individual decided he really did want more than his fair share

- Socialism, a perfectly egalitarian system—from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs—broke down completely in the Communist experiment, due to highly uneven distribution of goods and power mongering (human foibles)
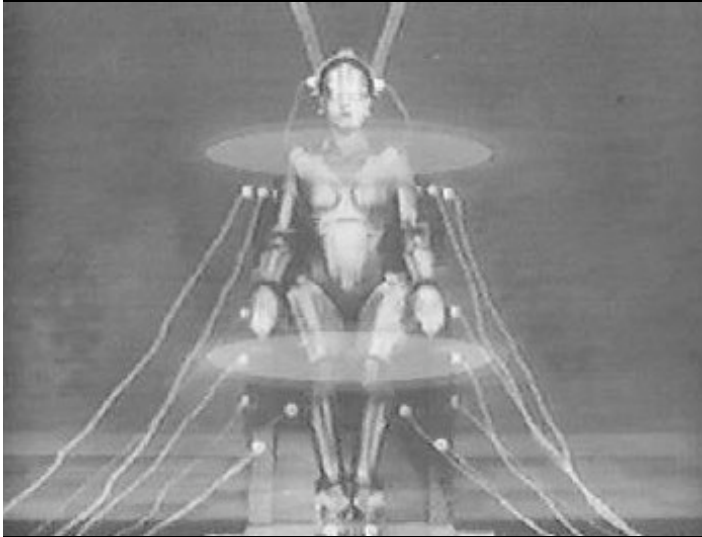
Science Fiction Film Utopias

- *The Lost Horizon (of Shangri-La)* (1937)
  - A rare film attempt at a utopia
  - "Love thy neighbor"
  - "All things in moderation"
    - Should include moderation
- *Radar Men from the Moon* (1952)
  - Not really a utopia, but technology (a jet pack) creates an action hero
- Star Trek TV & films (1966-2005, RIP)
  - Star-spanning "Federation" features a nearly utopian, peaceful Earth civilization
  - Follows on the heels of a dystopian era of war, both nuclear and conventional

Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *Metropolis* (1927) - A story of class divisions between planners, that live in luxury high above the earth, and workers, who live underground, toiling to sustain the world of the privileged. Image of man as a cog in a machine has recurred throughout cinema history.
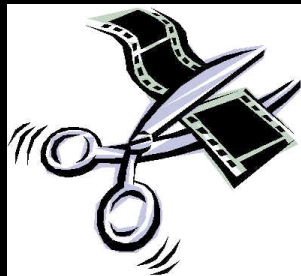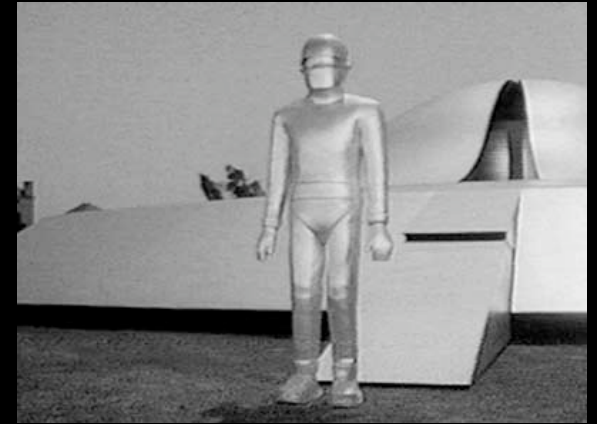
Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *Frankenstein* (1931, 1910, ...) - A scientist's creation causes great trouble, though the "monster" is more sympathetic than many of the humans.

- *Things To Come* (1936) H.G. Wells - 30 years of war and despotism are finally ended by a benevolent race of airmen, using their power of flight and a "gas of peace". Decades later, dissidents resenting technological progress try to stop the firing of a "Big Gun" to launch men into orbit around the moon.

Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) - Humankind's intolerance and fear almost get us destroyed. A prescient warning.

- *1984* (1956, 1984, TV-1954, book-1949, …) George Orwell
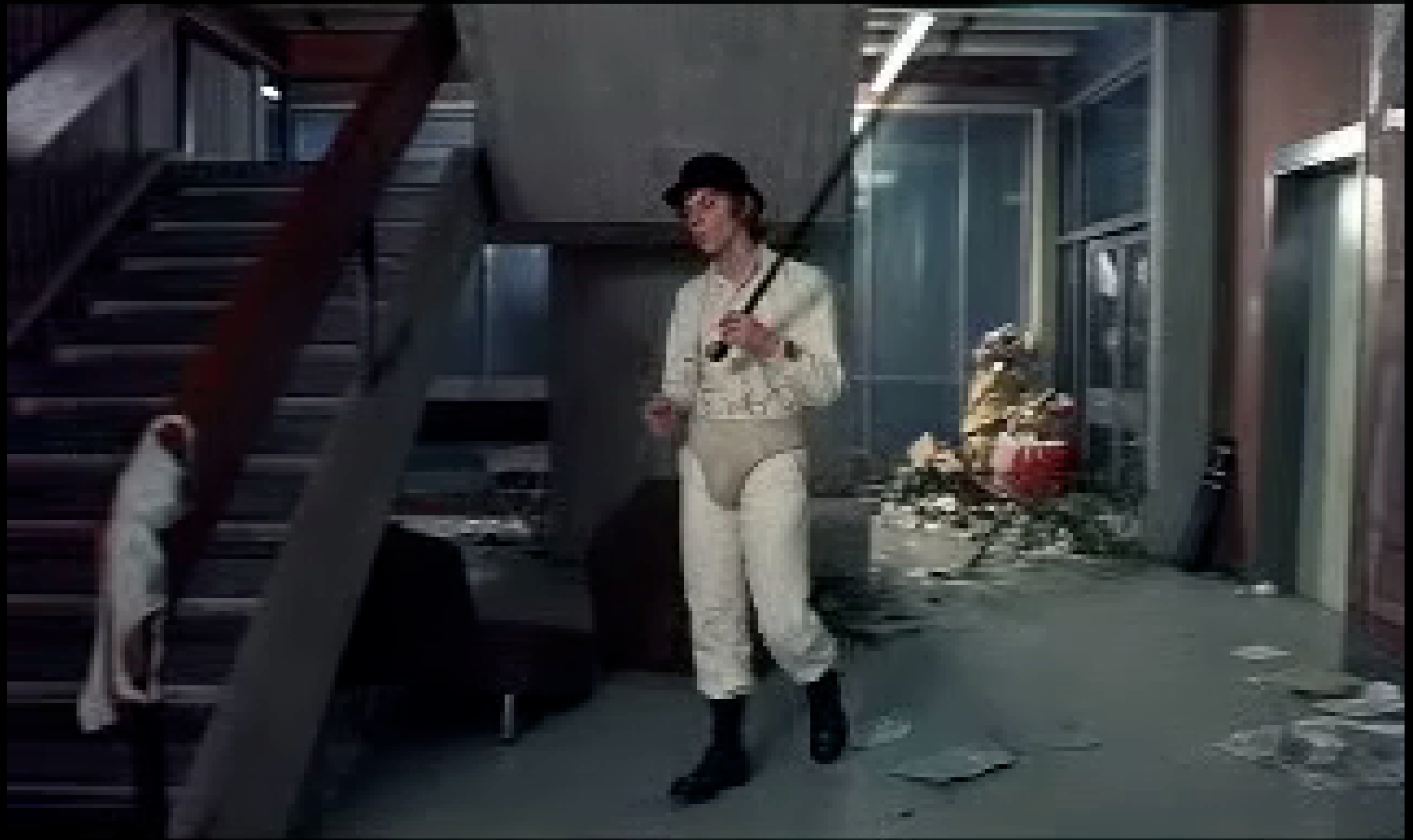
Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *27th Day* (1957) - Current civilization is unfit for citizenship in the galactic community, unless we solve a cryptic puzzle and eliminate all evil people in one rather Draconian fell swoop.

- *The Time Machine* (1960) - The gentle Eloi live a peaceful life above ground, but serve as food for the Moorlocks, eternally toiling below ground.

- *La Jetée* (1962) - Earth has all but destroyed itself, so a man is sent back in time to change history. (Inspired Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys*.)

- *Fahrenheit 451* (1966, book-1953) Ray Bradbury - A repressive government seeks to eliminate critical thought through ubiquitous censorship. The job of a "fireman" is to burn any and all books. The title comes from the temperature at which paper burns.

Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *THX-1138* (1971, short-1970) George Lucas - A repressive government drugs its citizens to eliminate sex and violence.

- *A Clockwork Orange* (1971; book-1962) Anthony Burgess, Stanley Kubrick - Society is plagued by violence. A government attempt to use mind control to combat the violence backfires.
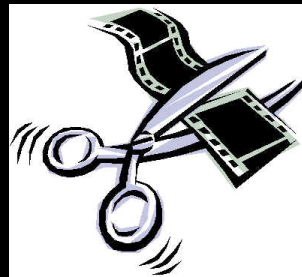
Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *Soylent Green* (1973) - The human population explosion has resulted in a world that is devoid of natural resources, overcrowded, polluted, and generally dismal, with food being the scarcest resource.

- *Sleeper* (1973) - Woody Allen is awakened from cryonic suspension in the future to help rebels fight a repressive government. Cleverly observes how growing scientific understanding can completely reverse well-accepted, dominant beliefs.

- *A Boy and His Dog* (1975) Harlan Ellison - After a global nuclear war, mankind is divided into struggling pockets of survivors above ground and a repressive, corruption-ridden, but well-off civilization (Bush's America) living the good life underground.
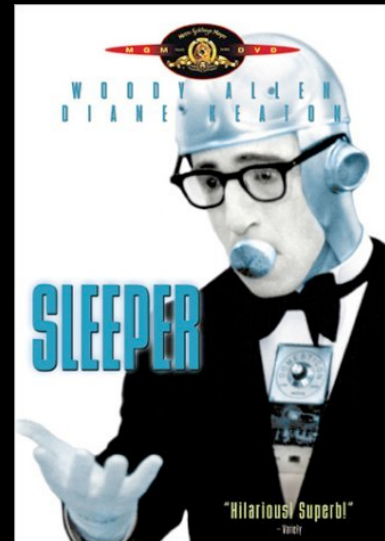
Post-Apocalyptic Dystopias (too numerous to list in depth)

- *Planet of the Apes* (1968 & 2001; TV-1974)

- *The Bed-Sitting Room* (1969) Spike Milligan

- *Colossus: The Forbin Project* (1969) - US and Soviet military supercomputers link up and decide to wrest control of the world from humanity. (Clearly presages Terminator's "Skynet".)

- *The Omega Man* (1971) - A biological weapon has devasted the Earth, leaving only a dwindling band of immune humans and an infected, psychopathic mob of light-hating quasi-vampires.

- *Mad Max/Road Warrior* films (1979, 1981, 1985) (quintessential post-apocalyptic films)

- *Le Dernier Combat*, Luc Besson (1984)

- *The Postman* (1997) - War has destroyed civilization as we know it, but by re-establishing a network of communication, there is hope for reviving it.

Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *The Stepford Wives* (1975, 2004) - Whose utopia?
- *Logan's Run* (1976) - An ideal society is stabilized by a state religion and early forced suicide, promising a kind of reincarnation called "renewal".
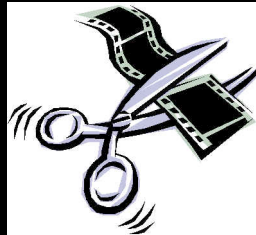
Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *Star Wars* (1977-2005?) - Evil, totalitarian empire; a new hope in the rebel alliance.

- *Blade Runner* (1982) - A corporation-driven society has huge class divisions, with juxtaposed opulence and squalor, runaway pollution, over-population and crowding, and life-threatening technology. It is, however, saved, after a fashion, by technology. And some *replicants* exhibit more humanity than the humans.
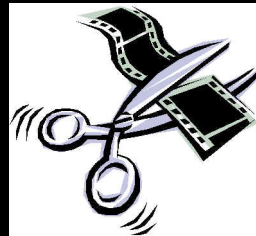
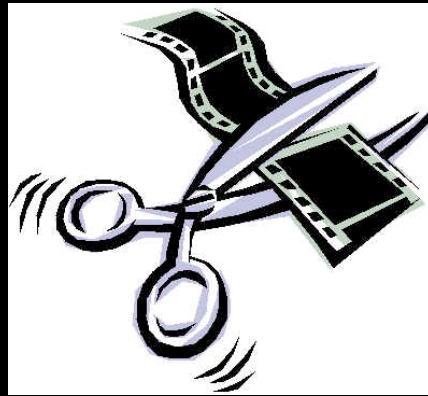# Totalitarian Society Endorses State-Supported Violence

- *The 10th Victim* (1965 & 2006?)
- *Death Race 2000* (1975)
- *Running Man* (1987)
- *Rollerball* (1975 & 2002)

Societies Stabilized Through Excessive Imprisonment

- *Escape from New York* (1981)
- *Escape from LA* (1996)
- *Fortress* (1993)
- *Fortress 2* (1999)
- …

Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *Brazil* (1985)

Technology Used to Manipulate Minds and Reality

- *Total Recall* (1990) - Memories are manipulated for fun and profit.

- *Dark City* (1998) - Aliens manipulate our reality.

- *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) - Mind-altering technology touted as bringing relief from terrible memories takes away who we are and who we care about.

Social Commentary, Often Involving Technology Gone Awry

- *Dawn of the Dead* (1978 & 2004)

- *Land of the Dead* (2005)

- *Shaun of the Dead* (2004)

- *X-Men 1 & 2* (2000, 2003, 2006?) - Shows a dystopia for those who are different, with mutants standing in for Jews or blacks or Muslims and Arab-Americans now or Japanese-Americans during WWII or homosexuals or...

- *O Lucky Man* (1973) - Holds a dark and surrealistic mirror up to 1970s England; still speaks to today.
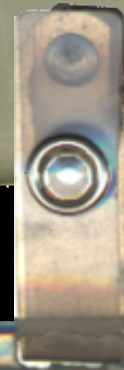
Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *Terminator* films (1984, 1991, 2003) - Mankind's technological creations destroy the world, in order to wrest control of it from humans. Clearly dystopic, and yet technology ultimately saves the day.

"T2" and Technology
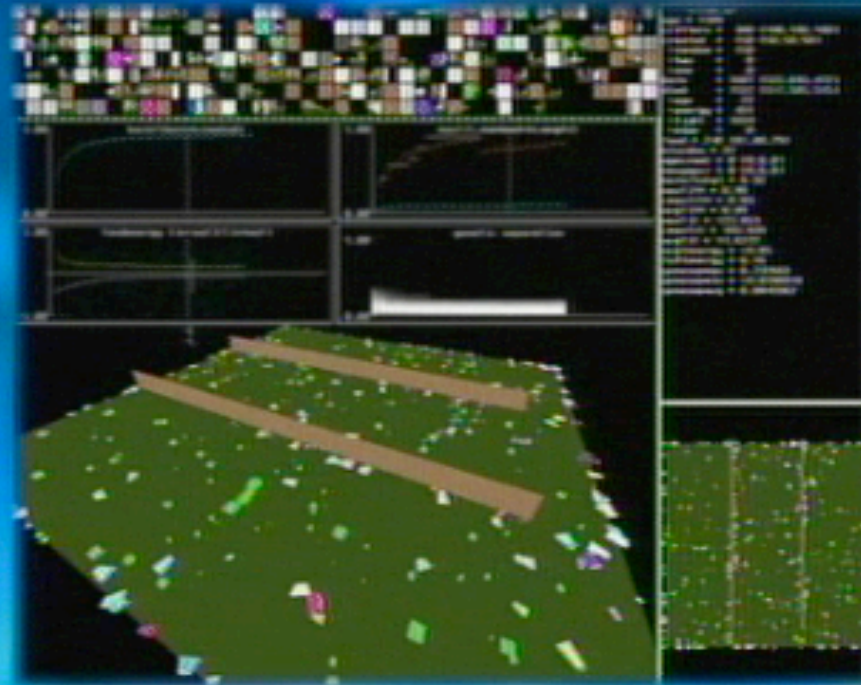## by Larry Yaeger

Introduction

This section is about some of the technology found in "Terminator 2" — both the science fiction variety and the real-world science upon which it is based. After this brief introduction,

and his obvious intelligence had
served him well; his references to
learning machines and neural net-
works are perfectly in keeping with
our best understanding of such sys-
tems to date.

A brain
"wiring diagram"
from Yaeger's
Polyworld Artificial
Life simulator

evolution of neural systems in a complex ecology. In my ecological simulator, "PolyWorld", genetically coded neurophysiologies define the brains of a population of organisms that must feed

the most current research on the sub-ject. In order to convincingly portray the burgeoning technology of neural net processors, the production contact-ed Larry Yaeger, a principal engineer in Apple Computer's Vivarium Program.

Yaeger —whose background includes
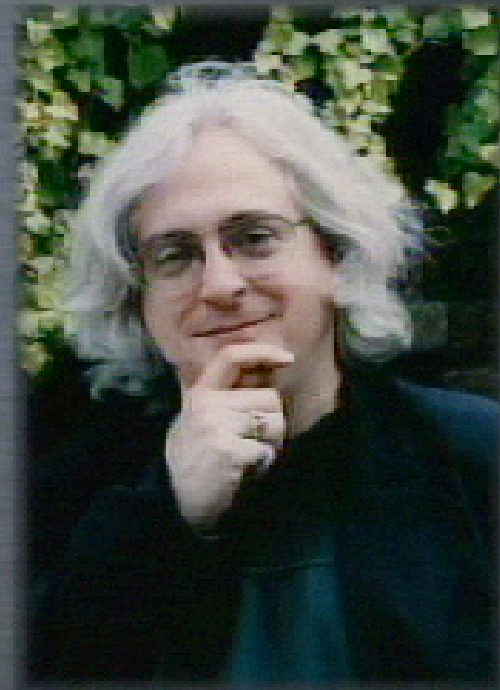
Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *Robocop* (1987...) Corporate greed and crime use technology to sedate and intimidate the world's populace, until one piece of technology is imbued with human morals and a conscience.

- *Gattaca* (1997) People's career and life opportunities are entirely defined by their genes. Individual aspirations have no value.

- *Tank Girl* (1995) After a natural holocaust (a comet strikes the Earth), a repressive regime controls all water resources. A wise-cracking punk chick and some mutant kangaroos fight back.

- *12 Monkeys* (1995) Terry Gilliam - Earth has all but destroyed itself, so a man is sent back in time to change history.

Science Fiction Film Dystopias

- *Matrix* films (1999, 2003) Mankind first enslaves and then wars with his own sentient AI creations. We lose, until a visionary bridges the gap between us and the AIs.

- *Serenity* (2005, TV-2004 as *Firefly*) Joss Whedon - A repressive government creates a utopia for some, but a dystopia for many, and rules with a hard totalitarian fist. (Buy or rent the DVDs! You won't be sorry!)

Speaker's Point of View

- I like to think my view of technology is that of a realist, even if optimism sometimes leaks in.
- Technology itself is neutral; it is not intrinsically good or bad. Its benefit or detriment is defined entirely by humanity's use of it.
- Most technology is invented because someone thinks it will be beneficial, but most technology can also be misused and/or have unintended consequences.
- Personally, I would seldom choose to suppress invention out of fear.
- But always remember to look for the author's—any author's—intentions and (even unintended) prejudices when assessing their arguments and central thesis.
- The progress of utopian visions from being rigidly totalitarian to being based on personal freedoms (and responsibilities) is one of the most positive trends in human thought or behavior.

References

- http://dc-mrg.english.ucsb.edu/WarnerTeach/E192/bladerunner/Dystopia.Blade.Runner.Hoffpauir.htm
- http://users.erols.com/jonwill/utopialist.htm
- http://www.newspeakdictionary.com/ns-prin.html
- http://www.newspeakdictionary.com/
- http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery?method=4&dsid=2222&dekey=Utopia
- http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery?method=4&dsid=2222&dekey=Dystopia
- http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/rws1001/utopia/map.htm
- http://expositions.bnf.fr/utopie/
- http://utopia.nypl.org/
- http://wikipedia.org/
- http://www.beanblossom.in.us/larryy/T2Tech.html
- http://www.strangehorizons.com/2005/20050905/stupid-utopias-a.shtml