

Michaelmas Term 2017

MPhil Modern and Contemporary Literature Core 1

Seminar tutor: Dr Marcus Waithe (Magdalene)

Victorian Utopias

This session considers the rise of utopian writing in the 1880s and 1890s, paying particular attention to the dialogue between William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890), and Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (1888). Among other questions, we will discuss technological and narrative means of reaching the future, the welcome received by guests in utopia, the political character of these new societies, and the role of fiction in eliciting change. More broadly, we will address the relationship between novelistic writing and utopian writing, the legacy of the Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia* among the Victorians, and the more optimistic character of Morris's and Bellamy's work as compared with earlier works such as Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), or Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871).

Core Reading

- William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, in *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (Penguin, 2004), pp. 41-230.
- William Morris, "'Looking Backward': A Review of *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy", in *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer, pp. 351-358.
- Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward 2000-1887*, ed. Matthew Beaumont (Oxford University Press, 2009)

Contextual Sources

- Plato, *The Republic* (c. 380 BC)
- Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516)
- Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race* (1871)
- Samuel Butler, *Erewhon* (1872)
- H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* (1905)

Suggestions for Secondary Reading

Cary, John, ed., *The Faber Book of Utopias* (London: Faber & Faber, 1999)
Kumar, Krishan, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987)
Levitas, Ruth, *The Concept of Utopia* (1990)
MacCarthy, Fiona, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (Faber and Faber, 1994)
Thompson, E. P., *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, rev. edn (London: Merlin Press, 1977)
Waithe, Marcus, *William Morris's Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006)