

Making ebooks out of the “classics”

**Part 2 of 2: *Around the World
in Eighty Days***

Week 4 • September 26–30

today's outline

- The content of *Around the World in Eighty Days*
 - (specifically, technoutopianism, colonialism, and imperialism)
- The medium of *Around the World in Eighty Days*
 - (specifically, serial publication in Victorian daily newspapers)

Note that this week's lecture is split into two parts – one on the history of ebooks, and one on *Around the World in Eighty Days*

The content of *Around
the World in Eighty Days*

a quick summary

- This is a story about an Englishman and a Frenchman who travel the world as fast as they can, using cutting-edge transportation and information technologies, to win a bet.
- It's written by a Frenchman (Jules Verne) in 1872, shortly after France's defeat by Germany in the Franco-Prussian War (in which Verne was conscripted)
- This is the heart of the Victorian era, roughly 30 years after the Industrial Revolution
 - Lots of "steam power" (aka coal power) and gas
 - Before electricity is "normal"

vocab word:
techno-utopianism

**the belief that new technologies
can, should, or will bring about
utopian social change**

Voyages extraordinaires

- I'd argue that Verne embodies "techno-utopianism"
- *Eighty Days* is the eleventh in a series of fifty-four adventure novels (called the "Voyages extraordinaires" or "Amazing Journeys")
- According to Verne's editor Pierre-Jules Hetzel, the goal of the Voyages was "to outline all the geographical, geological, physical, historical and astronomical knowledge amassed by modern science and to recount, in an entertaining and picturesque format ... the history of the universe."



it can be hard today
to believe technology
is “progress”

“Techno-utopianism is dead: Now is the time to pay attention to the inequality, marginalization, and biases woven into our technological systems.” —
Your Computer Is On Fire
(2021)

vocab word: **colonialism**

the subjugation or pacification of a people, and taking of a pre-populated land

vocab word: **imperialism**

a state policy of expanding a country's power over a larger geographic area, often through colonialism or military conquest, or through other forms of political and economic control



Only 22 countries have never been invaded by Britain

All the countries invaded by Britain throughout history

The countries never invaded by the British:

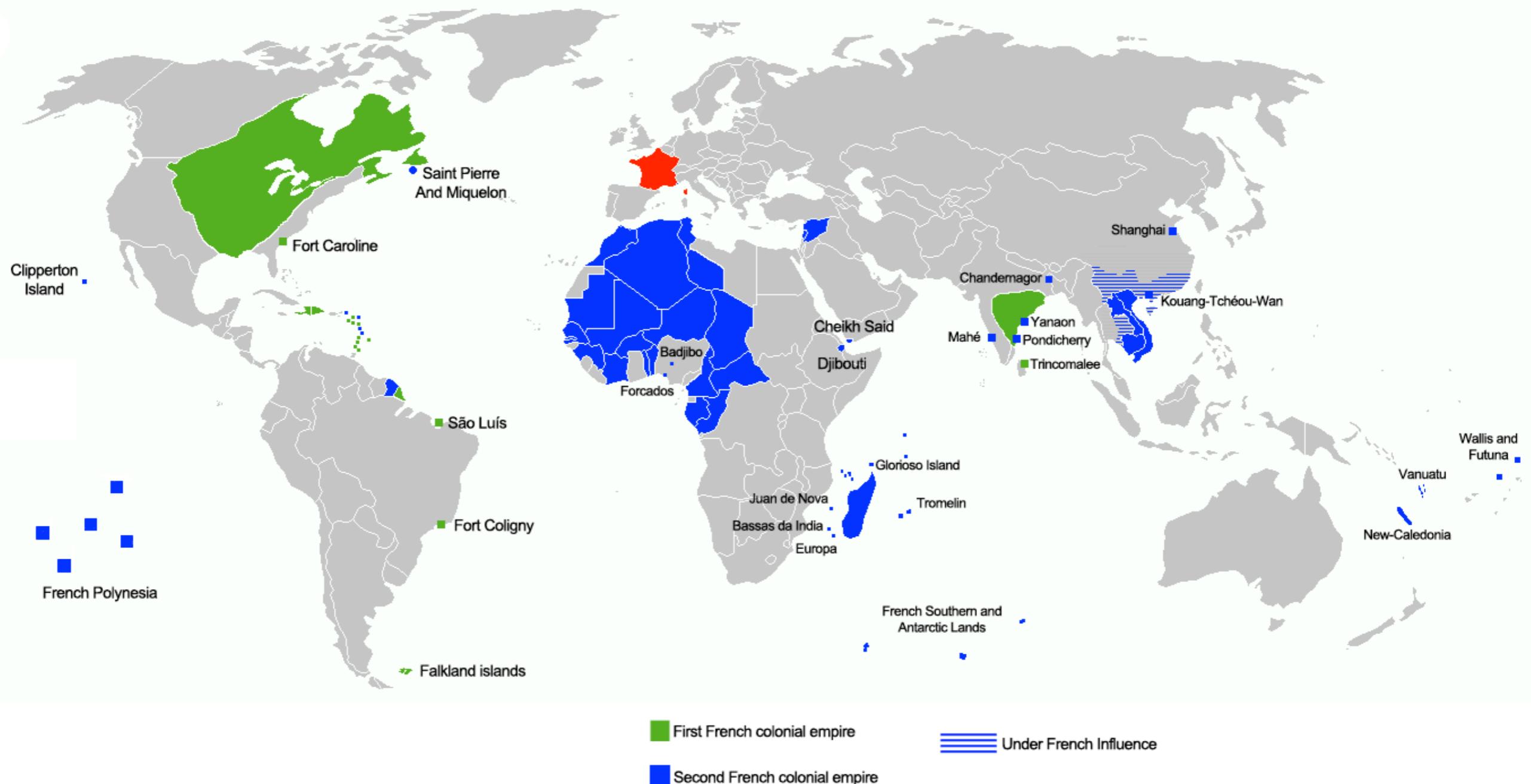
-  Andorra
-  Belarus
-  Bolivia
-  Burundi
-  Central African Republic
-  Chad
-  Congo, Republic of
-  Guatemala
-  Ivory Coast
-  Kyrgyzstan
-  Liechtenstein
-  Luxembourg
-  Mali
-  Marshall Islands
-  Monaco
-  Mongolia
-  Paraguay
-  Sao Tome and Principe
-  Sweden
-  Tajikistan
-  Uzbekistan
-  Vatican City



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Source: All the Countries We've Ever Invaded: And the Few We Never Got Round To

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The medium of *Around
the World in Eighty Days*

serial publication

- The story was published a chapter at a time in the daily newspaper *Le Temps*, from November 6 to December 21, 1872 (a period of 45 days).
- December 21, 1872 is also the date that Fogg has to arrive back in London, which led some readers to think the story was not fictional

my takeaways

- In *Around the World in Eighty Days*, Verne's technoutopianism often rests on the assumption that colonial imperialism is a positive force to spread "civilization"
- The original medium of the story (serialized in a daily newspaper) made readers aware of the fast-paced movement of information and people around the world
 - Although the specific affordances of the story's medium are completely different when we read it as an ebook today, there can be a similar effect of distractibility

housekeeping

- Note that this week's lecture is split into two parts – one on the history of ebooks, and one on *Around the World in Eighty Days*
- Next week we'll be talking about the video game 80 Days, which I'm streaming 8pm EST on Oct 3