IMPERIALIST CRITIQUE IN ANGLO-AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION

2018 Ph.D dissertation by

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, Anglo-American science fiction has been read as a form of literature that is complicit in the imperialist project—as "empire's propaganda arm, its R&D lab", as Gerry Canavan (2012) has noted. Although a number of influential 'imperial turn' SF scholars (John Rieder, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Andy Sawyer, Jessica Langer, David Seed) have acutely diagnosed the subgenre in this way, they have largely failed to identify and examine the longstanding tradition of incisive imperialist critique that also exists in this field. From another angle, critics who *do not* regard Anglo-American SF as ultimately complicit in colonialism (Adriana Craciun, Patrick Parrinder, W. Warren Wagar, Rob Latham, David Ian Paddy) tend to see only vaguely defined and historically transient imperialist contexts in this literature; or they read imperialism as a secondary context, a "hidden skeleton," as one critic puts it, not worthy of further consideration.

This thesis seeks to address the line of enquiry opened up in this critical gap, by re-examining certain key works of Anglo-American SF in relation to specific imperialist contexts. In chapter one, I look at Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) in 18th- and early-19th-century mercantile imperial contexts, from the exploits of the British Royal Navy to contemporary discourses of 'classic' colonial racism. In chapter two, H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) and *The War of The Worlds* (1897) are read as critiques of Victorian-era Social Darwinist imperialism, insofar as the latter is manifested in the morphological social ordering and biological racism put forward by both scientists and political imperialists. Chapter three focuses on J. G.

Ballard's early trio of eco-disaster novels, *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1965), and *The Crystal World* (1966), in the context of biopolitical imperialism, and the strict measurements, boundary markers and time-codes of eugenics that are so central to this model. And the final chapter begins by revisiting two more Ballard novels, *Crash* (1973) and *Hello America* (1980), by way of postwar American techno-spectacle imperialism, as defined by Edward Said and Jean Baudrillard. It concludes with a (focused and concise) survey of post-war American SF, considering this, too, in terms of American techno-spectacle imperialism, and in turn, reinforcing the overarching argument that there is a rich tradition of imperialist critique to be found in the sub-genre of Anglo-American SF.

INTRODUCTION

Imperialism has been so socially and politically pervasive over the last two centuries that, as Edward Said writes, "virtually nothing escaped it."[1] Whether one recognises it or not, it has shaped social, cultural and political orders to an unparalleled extent. Furthermore, it has done so through a multitude of ever-changing and evolving channels of control—thus indicating that imperialism is best understood "not by trying to pin it down to a single semantic meaning but by relating its shifting meanings to historical processes."[2] In light of the pervasive and multifaceted networks of control—several of which I will analyse in this thesis—employed by imperialism throughout history, we must take it seriously, read it closely, and strive fully to understand its workings.

In addition to historians, cultural theorists, journalists, and filmmakers, novelists have been instrumental in both analysing and bringing to light the social effects of imperialism over the past two centuries. As Said writes of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), for example, it "illuminates the special energy, and practical attitude characterising European imperialism" on the African continent during the nineteenth-century.[3] Further, Conrad's text encapsulates and dissects two distinct aspects of nineteenth-century European imperialism: "the idea that it [was] based on the power to take over territory, an idea utterly clear in its force and unmissable consequences; and the practice that essentially disguises or obscures this by developing a justificatory regime of self-aggrandising, self-originating authority interposed between victim of imperialism

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[1] *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), 62.

[2] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism / Postcolonialism* (1998), 26.

[3] *Culture and Imperialism,* 64.

and its perpetrator."[4] In writing *Heart of Darkness,* then, Conrad not only exposed a unique vision of Africa that brought many Europeans as close to the reality of that continent as they would ever come; he also helped to uncover the particular mechanics behind European colonialism-imperialism during this era. As such, Conrad's novel was pivotal in calling this particular history into question. Said would also argue that it was instrumental in placing the nineteenth-century imperial model under permanent suspicion.[5]

Crucially, scholarly works such as Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), have helped illuminate the ways in which literary texts such as *Heart of Darkness,* Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1904), and Albert Camus's *L'Etranger* (1942) and *La Peste* (1947), examine and dissect various imperial contexts. Moreover, these critical reflections have helped to bring certain texts toward the centre of the social discourse that relates to imperialism. *Heart of Darkness,* for example, is a common way of reading the perspective of a conflicted but ultimately complicit white male colonist in the context of nineteenth-century African imperialism. Kipling's *Kim*, by contrast, is a lens through which one may read the domineering viewpoint of a white man in colonial possession of India and, essentially, Indians; as well as being a vehicle for interpreting "the perspective of a massive colonial system whose economy, functioning, and history had acquired the status of a virtual fact of nature."[6] Finally, Camus's *L'Etranger* and *La*

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[4] *Culture and Imperialism,* 64.

[5] Since Chinua Achebe's "An Image of Africa" (1977) there have, of course, been counter-readings that seek to show Conrad's *complicity* in the imperial project. Edward Said, for example, argues that although Conrad succeeded in calling Victorian imperialism into question and placing it under suspicion, he was nevertheless prone to unconscious or unacknowledged discomfort with Otherness and / alterity. For further discussion see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

[6] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 136.

Peste are no longer confined only to commentary on the Spanish Civil War, 1930s-40s fascism, and issues of poverty and social injustice as treated from within socialist discourse. Rather, they are also read by critics (such as Said) as works that uncover the precise nature and effects of French imperialism in Algeria during the first half of the twentieth century.[7] All of these literary novels are thus perceived as being important, as well as historically and culturally distinct, critiques of imperialism.

Postcolonial science fiction offers insightful and historically distinct criticism of imperialist contexts as well. Furthermore, postcolonial SF texts and their respective imperialist commentaries are widely taken seriously by critics, many of whom are currently attempting to push these texts forward into the socio-political milieu. As Gerry Canavan points out, postcolonial SF is widely considered by critics to be both aligned with, and a serious part of, the "on-the-ground fight for global justice."[8] In *Postcolonialism and Science Fiction* (2011), Jessica Langer argues that postcolonial SF writers (and filmmakers) are uniquely placed to take up the role of negotiating anti-imperialist identity because they can envision new or future worlds from the perspective of the Other. From this position, postcolonial SF writers can conceivably reimagine alternative political, economic, cultural, and intellectual scenarios.[9]

Langer specifically argues that the postcolonial Japanese author Tsutsui Yasutaka, in his futuristic novella *Betonamu Kanko Kosha* (1967), negotiates a separate identity from that imposed by both Japanese and American twentieth-century imperialist frameworks. In relation to

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[7] *Culture and Imperialism,* 175.

[8] "Decolonizing the Future" (2012), 495.

[9] *Postcolonialism,* 8.

Eden Robinson's "Terminal Avenue" (published as part of a collection of postcolonial writing entitled *So Long Been Dreaming* in 2004), Langer suggests that the author incisively addresses the long and continuing history of oppression of native peoples in Canada. Robinson's text, writes Langer, examines a culture of public punishment of colonised peoples—their "bodies have often been sites of abuse and torture in the name of actualising, consolidating and maintaining colonial power."[10] Further, Robinson addresses the ongoing commodification of indigenous iconography by overarching imperialist power structures. Overall, writes Langer, Robinson's text represents a terrifying "hemming-in," both historically and contemporaneously, of native peoples by Canadian colonial-imperial frameworks.[11] Rather than acquiescing to this oppressive framework, however, Robinson disrupts the hegemonic process, places it under a microscope, and ultimately, works toward an undoing, or 'un-hemming', of Canada's domineering imperialist structures.

Chinese-American-Canadian author Larissa Lai also offers an incisive critique of Canada's 'identity politics' in her novel *Salt Fish Girl* (2002). She does so by presenting racially Other characters as literally and figuratively marginalised to the ghettoised outskirts of Canadian life. Further, Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* (2000), argues Langer, satirises the 'classic' colonial-imperial characterisation of untouched, unharvested land as representative of a feminine boundary marker that must be penetrated.[12] *Midnight Robber* is further subject to 'classic' colonialist metaphor, in that, the antagonist of the story repeatedly describes the untouched zones as

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[10] *Postcolonialism and Science Fiction,* 49.

[11] Ibid*,* 53.

[12] See Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather* (1995) for further discussion of 'classic' colonial-imperial characterisation of space / territory as feminine.

dark places, fringe zones as yet outside a metaphorical colonial cartography; and as yet without enlightenment, as it is conceived in 'classic' colonial discourse. Langer argues that these texts, alongside Robinson's "Terminal Avenue" and the entire *So Long Been Dreaming* anthology, are critical in terms of the overarching project of fomenting a destabilisation of imperialist hegemony.

The recent critical anthology, *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World* (2011), edited by Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal, also underscores the importance of postcolonial SF in critiquing imperialism. Suparno Banarjee, for example, argues that Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996) aims to carve out a space from where the subaltern can speak by exploiting the slippages in British-Indian colonial-imperial narratives. Further, Grant Hamilton's essay argues that Vandana Singh's novella "Delhi" (2004) astutely contests British imperial history in India. In "Delhi," writes Hamilton, "the past and present is shown to inhere and subsist in the reality of the other, the European idea of history as something that explains an earlier time is no longer either conceptually viable or valuable."[13] Singh, then, sheds light on "mythic and oral histories of indigenous cultures that simply could not be incorporated into the scientific enterprise of Western history."[14] "Delhi" is read by Hamilton as a work of rebellious alterity, one that both critiques the suffocating measures of British-Indian imperialism, while also presenting an alternate indigenous sociopolitical paradigm. Milan Kundera further summarises the alternative ideology of Singh's text: it is "the realm of the approximate, the invented, the deformed, the

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[13] "Organization and the Continuum: History in Vandana Singh's "Delhi"," in Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal (Eds.), *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World* (2011), 52.

[14] Ibid, 54.

simplistic, the exaggerated, the misconstrued."[15] Such a problematic and unstable view of history is, writes Hamilton, the explicit recognition "of both the infinite mutability of the past as it is perceived, conceived, and rendered, and the legitimation of heterogeneous narratives that such mutability (or variation) instructs."[16]

Unlike explicit postcolonial SF—broadly defined by Andy Sawyer as literature by authors who might genuinely be thought of as 'Other'; authors who write "from outside the traditional strands of Western Science Fiction"[17]—Anglo-American SF is neither typically looked to nor taken seriously in terms of imperialist critique. Instead, it is commonly read—particularly in recent years—as imperially complicit, as written from within the empire and on behalf of the empire; or as Uppinder Mehan writes, it is thought of as being "as Western as Coca Cola, big cars and computers."[18] In the last twenty years (approximately), a period that has overseen what many refer to as an 'imperial turn' in SF scholarship, Anglo-American SF has been consistently criticised for its role in enabling Western imperialism to go largely unchecked. Not only that, it has also been criticised for its role in helping to foster the development and expansion of Western imperialism. On this point, Gerry Canavan writes that 'imperial turn' scholarship has been pivotal in terms of situating Anglo-American SF as "empire's propaganda arm, its R&D lab, prototyping the weapons of the future and accommodating us to tomorrow's genocides today."[19] An-

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[15] Quoted in Grant Hamilton, "Organization and the Continuum," 54.

[16] Grant Hamilton, "Organization and the Continuum," 54.

[17] "Foreword" to *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World* (2011).

[18] "The Domestication of Technology in Indian Science Fiction Stories" (1998), 57.

[19] "Decolonizing the Future," 494-95.

glo-American SF, then, is widely considered to be not just "an ally (of imperialism) but yet another object for anti-colonialist critique."[20]

Let us consider Istvan Csicsery-Ronay's "Science Fiction and Empire" (2003), as an example of scholarship that argues for the imperial *complicity* of Anglo-American SF. Csicsery-Ronay argues that late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century Anglo-American SF assumes a privileged position for representing and analysing modern technological imperialism.[21] It can both imagine and examine largely untapped aspects of a worldwide technological empire "that is managed, sustained, justified, but also riven by simultaneously interlocking and competing technologies of social control and material expansion."[22] Despite this privileged position, however, there have been precious few attempts at resisting or critiquing the effects of these decentralised and global imperialist networks, according Csicsery-Ronay. Instead, Anglo-American SF has mostly worked to bolster and promote the expansion of modern "communication / control nets,"[23] to therefore help in facilitating the growth and increasing pervasiveness of modern imperialist networks.

In "The Course of Empire: A Survey of the Imperial Theme in Early Anglophone Science Fiction" (2010), David Seed analyses a different but apparently no less imperially complicit sphere of SF. In considering nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century texts that deal with imperialist themes of "invasion and conquest of home territories, or with voyages of exploration and

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[20] Ibid, 495.

[21] "Science Fiction and Empire," 235.

[22] Ibid, 236.

[23] Ibid, 240.

acquisition of new lands,"[24] Seed aims to show that SF generally imagines relationships between conquered and conqueror in parallel with the classic Victorian imperialist paradigm of colonial expansionism. SF and Victorian imperialism thus, argues Seed, worked side by side to reinforce imperialist networks of control. On this point, he writes that the expansionist impulse was "rarely questioned" by SF writers during the Victorian period.[25] To fortify this line of argument, Seed conducts a highly selective survey of novels including John Jacob Astor's *A Journey To Other Worlds* (1894), Garrett P. Serviss's *A Columbus of Space* (1894), and William R. Bradshaw's *The Goddess of Atvatabar* (1892)—all texts that unabashedly glorify the 'manifest destiny' ideology that underpinned much historical colonial-imperial expansionism.

Critics such as Andy Sawyer, Jessica Langer, William Poole and Andrew Strombeck have made similar arguments in recent years. Poole, for example, argues that allegories of colonial expansionism have readily pervaded SF since the origins of the genre;[26] while in "The Network and the Archive: The Specter of Imperial Management in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*" (2010), Strombeck argues that the managerial imagination of Gibson's iconic novel is shaped by Victorian imperialist structures. The novel therefore recapitulates networks of control without critiquing these overarching schemas of quasi-Victorian imperialism. Undoubtedly, though, the seminal text in terms of promulgating the idea that Anglo-American SF is complicit in imperialism, is John Rieder's *Colonialism and The Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008).

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[24] "The Course of Empire," 230.

[25] Ibid, 236.

[26] "Introduction" to Francis Godwin's *The Man In The Moone* (2009).

Rieder's analysis is limited to SF texts produced at the height of the Victorian era (1871-1901). He rightly argues that colonialism-imperialism was a vital part of the genre's texture at this time; a persistent, important component of its displaced references to history.[27] Rieder purportedly sets out from a standpoint of critical ambivalence: "early SF is a space intimately shared by the critical metaphor and the uncritical spectacle, thus communicating an ingrained ambivalence when it comes to colonial ideology."[28] Crucially, however, he suggests that "uncritical" representations of colonial-imperial ideology ultimately overwhelm "critical metaphors" across the majority of SF texts from this period. SF therefore predominantly falls into uncritically presenting Victorian imperialist motifs, including feminised geography and concomitant penetrative metaphors, racist appropriations of territory as justified on the basis of Social Darwinist paradigms, and ignorance toward the cognitive effects of radical colonial-imperial persecution of Native cultures and peoples. On the one hand, argues Rieder, H. G. Wells questions imperialist hegemony by variously satirising both anthropocentrism and Social Darwinism in *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), and *The War Of The Worlds* (1897). On the other hand, however, Wells ultimately reinforces imperialist frameworks; his anti-imperialist critique is ultimately "drowned" by imperial complicity as a result. Even a novel such as John MacMillan Brown's *Riallaro: The Archipelago of Exiles* (1901), which is highly explicit in its anti-colonialism and anti-racism, cannot disentangle itself from uncritically representing imperi-

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[27] *Colonialism and The Emergence of Science Fiction,* 15.

[28] Ibid, 117.

alism, according to Rieder.[29] The Victorian SF novel is, then, ultimately bound to stay "within the ideological and epistemological framework of the colonial discourse."[30]

Without question, Rieder's text has exerted considerable influence within the SF critical field in recent years. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to find a work of imperialist SF criticism from the last ten years that does not, at the very least, mention *Colonialism and The Emergence of Science Fiction.* I would argue that one conceivable result of Rieder's widely referenced analysis is that Anglo-American SF has, in recent years, been more frequently consigned to the imperialist propaganda arm by critics than at any other point in the history of SF criticism. Crucially, it is not just Victorian-era SF that has been limited to imperialist complicity, but Anglo-American SF in toto, as will become clear over the course of this dissertation. From another angle, those critics who do not see Anglo-American SF as complicit have often tended to interpret only vaguely defined and historically transient imperialist contexts; or they have read imperialism as a secondary context, one not worthy of a great deal of analysis. I further emphasise this point below. Before that, however, I must turn to further SF scholarship in order to acknowledge the fact that I am by no means entering completely uncharted waters in arguing that Anglo-American SF has represented anti-imperialist values. Instead, I am building and expanding on a body of previous scholarship.

Some recent 'imperialist turn' scholars have indeed pointed to the anti-imperial facets of Anglo-American SF. Judith Leggatt, for example, argues that while on the one hand this type of SF has often affirmed imperialist desires, it has also at times been critical of the overreaching

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[29] Ibid, 74.

[30] *Colonialism and The Emergence of Science Fiction*, 10.

arm of empire.[31] David M. Higgins argues that iconic Anglo-American SF texts such as Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965) and Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) criticise both classic territorial colonialism and Cold War American "neo-imperialism". They do so, writes Higgins, by depicting the inner spaces of human characters as landscapes that have been "colonised by social norms and unconscious psychological urges."[32] Even Csicsery-Ronay has argued that some post-World War Two Anglo-American SF can help us to see how specific cultures have been damaged by what he calls "techno-culture" imperialism. More specifically, Anglo-American SF has occasionally shown us how this type of imperialism has impinged upon the innovative and artistic potential of diverse cultures by instilling domineering and homogenising value systems. These texts, writes Csicsery-Ronay, can "begin to challenge us to also see the world differently."[33]

Predating these critiques, Clyde Wilcox argued that the New Wave SF of the 1960s had great anti-hegemonic, and by extension, anti-imperialist value. Works by the likes of Philip K. Dick, J. G. Ballard, Brian W. Aldiss, and Judith Merrill, writes Wilcox, could challenge "political scientists to expand their thinking about the ways that different cultures develop different politics."[34] Further, he writes, "such thought experiments can stretch the imagination, and help us to rethink our theories, categories, and hopes."[35] W. Warren Wagar's *Terminal Visions: The Litera-*

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[31] "Other Worlds, Other Selves: Science Fiction in Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*" (2002), 109.

[32] "Psychic Decolonisation in 1960s Science Fiction" (2013), 228.

[33] "Science Fiction and Empire," 243.

[34] "Guest Editorial in *Extrapolation"* (1993), 171.

[35] Quoted in W. Warren Wagar, "Governing the Future" (1997), 502.

ture of Last Things (1982) makes similar claims for the anti-imperialist potential of New Wave SF in particular. Further, in *H. G. Wells: Traversing Time* (2004), Wagar extends arguments for anti-imperialism and sociopolitical satire to encompass the Victorian novels of H. G. Wells.

In fact, SF scholarship has a long history of arguing along the lines that Anglo-American SF *should* ideally work against cultural hegemony. Kingsley Amis, for example, in *New Maps of Hell* (1959), argues that the most vital SF often satirises hegemonic culture. In *Billion Year Spree* (1973), Brian W. Aldiss similarly contends that the best SF is a vehicle for criticising dominant socio-political values. Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979) argues that SF which engages in anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist practice *should* constitute the genre's aesthetic core because of its unparalleled capacity for contributing to neo-Marxist discussions. Several Marxist scholars followed in Suvin's footsteps, each attempting to foreground SF texts that could potentially represent neo-Marxist, and in turn, anti-capitalist ideals—Carl Freedman's *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (2000), M. Keith Booker's *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964* (2002), and Steven Shaviro's *Connected: Or What It Means to Live in the Network Society* (2003).

Turning back to more specifically imperialist contexts, we can see—and I make this point at length in chapter one—that scholars including John Rieder, Betty T. Bennett, Mary Poovey, Anne K. Mellor, Andrew Smith, Anca Vlasopolos, H. L. Malchow, and Adriana Craciun, have

all, to varying degrees, considered the anti-imperialism of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*[36] In relation to the Victorian SF of H. G. Wells, too, critics such as Patrick Parrinder, David C. Smith, Paul A. Cantor, Peter Hufnagel, W. Warren Wagar, Timothy Christensen, Jennifer DeVere Brody, and John S. Partington, have considered anti-imperialist contexts.[37] Even the New Wave and largely surrealist SF author, J. G. Ballard, has been considered, albeit often implicitly, in terms of anti-imperialism by critics including Jeannette Baxter, Rob Latham, David Ian Paddy, Thomas Richards, Roger Luckhurst, Jen Hui Bon Hoa, and Emma Whiting.[38] As I show, though, the general issue with these critiques (a few notable exceptions aside) is that they tend to overlook both the gravity (or depth) and historical specificity of imperialist contexts in Mary Shelley, Wells,

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[36] John Rieder, *Colonialism and The Emergence of Science Fiction,* 99-104; Betty T. Bennett, *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction* (1998), 6-12; Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984), 122; The chapter entitled "Promethean Politics" in Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (1988); Andrew Smith, "Scientific Contexts" in *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein* (2016); Anca Vlasopolos, "Frankenstein's Hidden Skeleton: The Psycho-Politics of Oppression" (1983); H. L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain" (1993); and Adriana Craciun, "*Frankenstein's* Politics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein* (2016).

[37] Patrick Parrinder, *Shadows of the Future* (1995); David C. Smith, *H.G. Wells, Desperately Mortal* (1986); Paul A. Cantor and Peter Hufnagel, "The Empire of the Future: Imperialism and Modernism in H.G. Wells" (2006); W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells: Traversing Time* (2004); Timothy Christensen, "The 'Bestial Mark' of Race in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*" (2004); Jennifer DeVere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* (1998); and John S. Partington, *Building Cosmopolis: The Political Thought of H.G. Wells* (2003).

[38] Jeanette Baxter, *J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination* (2009) and "Visions of Europe" (2008); Rob Latham, "Biotic Invasions: Ecological Imperialism in New Wave Science Fiction" (2007); David Ian Paddy, "Empires of the Mind: Autobiography and Anti-imperialism in J.G. Ballard" (2012); Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive* (1993); Roger Luckhurst, "Ballard/*Atrocity*/Conner/*Exhibition*/Assemblage," in *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions* (2012), 35-46; Jen Hui Bon Hoa, "Pornographic Geometries: The Spectacle as Pathology and as Therapy in *The Atrocity Exhibition,"* in *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions* (2012), 71-88; and Emma Whiting, "Disaffection and Abjection in J. G. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash,*" in *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions* (2012), 88-105.

Ballard, and post-War American SF in general. As such, they tend to both downplay and dilute the respective imperialist commentaries of SF texts by these authors. Instead of being specific, imperialist contexts are often only broadly defined and interpreted; that is, little attention is paid to the specific facets of particular historical imperialisms, and to how these facets are presented in the novels themselves.

Moreover, the anti-imperialism of these authors is rarely afforded much weight by critics; it is hardly ever viewed as a major context of their respective works. Instead, it is often read as a secondary context that supplements the more major themes and trajectories. For example, Anca Vlasopolos argues that Mary Shelley's colonial-imperial resistance in *Frankenstein* is cursory—a minor, or suppressed, level of the text. The same is commonly said of Ballard: that he only obliquely (if at all) resists hegemonic and / or imperialist politics. It is perhaps only Wells who has been considered at length, and by various critics, as an anti-imperialist. But even then, I would suggest that the specific imperialist contexts of Wells have often been overlooked; and further, that the recent spate of criticism aligning him with imperialism calls for re-evaluation and reinforcement of the anti-imperialist qualities of his SF.

Instead of adhering to this vague sense of anti-imperialism in relation to Mary Shelley, Wells, Ballard, and some key works of post-War American SF, I read both imperialist contexts and critiques more acutely. It is only by reading these texts in relation to their respective imperialist contexts that we are able to accurately assess their stances on imperialism. In terms of defining the imperialist contexts of *Frankenstein* more specifically, I consider it in relation to mercantile imperialism as furnished along three lines of enquiry: historical works such as Kathleen Wilson's *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England 1715-1785* (1995)

and Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995);[39] the imperialist propaganda of contemporaneous non-fiction such as John Barrow's *A Chronological History of Voyages Into The Arctic Regions* (1818) and Mungo Park's *Travels in the African Interior* (1799);[40] and the social philosophy of the post-revolutionary radical British thinker, Mary Wollstonecraft.[41] By considering *Frankenstein* in relation to these three different forms of enquiry, one can see that Mary Shelley engaged with and critiqued the mercantile imperialism of her era on a number of different levels—philosophical, rhetorical, and socio-political levels.

When it comes to H. G. Wells's SF, I analyse it in relation to the Social Darwinist imperialism of the Victorian era. Again, I draw on both history and contemporaneous socio-political philosophy in order to understand more fully this particular type of imperialism. For Social Darwinist history, I draw on James Morris's *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire* (1968),

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[39] See also Paul Kennedy, "Continuity and Discontinuity" (1984); John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "Imperialism and Free Trade" (1953) and *Africa and the Victorians* (1961); Denver Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (2013); Daniel Owen Spence, *A History of the Royal Navy: Empire and Imperialism* (2015); Robert Booth, *Mad For Glory: A Heart of Darkness in the War of 1812* (2015); Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1982); Philip J. Stern, "Gentility, Knowledge, and African Exploration" (2004)

[40] See also Robert Southey, *The Life of Nelson* (1813-1843), Daines Barrington, "The Probability of Reaching the North Pole Discussed" (1775), and "Instances of Navigators Who Have Reached High Northern Latitudes" (1778), and Bryan Edwards's *History, Civil and Commercial, of the West Indies* (1793).

[41] *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1895).

William L. Langer's *The Diplomacy of Imperialism* (1935), and other works.[42] And for socio-political philosophy I look back much further, to Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics: or, The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified and the First of Them Developed* (1850), and Karl Pearson's *National Life From the Standpoint of Science* (1905).[43] By analysing these two kinds of sources, we are able to more fully understand that Wells's SF engages not just the social conditions of contemporaneous imperialist contexts, but also the specific philosophical trajectories that underlie these Social Darwinist circumstances.

I read J. G. Ballard's early eco-disaster SF in relation to the biopolitical imperialist contexts that evolved (from Social Darwinism) during the first half of the twentieth-century. Defining the 'biopolitical' means looking to Michel Foucault's cultural-historical analysis (*The History of Sexuality, Volume I: The Will to Knowledge* [1976]). I turn also to three further kinds of works in establishing the biopolitical imperialist context: works of historical analysis, such as Thomas Richard's *The Imperial Archive* (1993) and Daniel J. Kevles *In the Name of Eugenics* (1995);[44]

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[42] Rutledge Dennis, "Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race" (1995); Michael J. Barany, "Savage numbers and the evolution of civilization in Victorian prehistory" (2014); Paul Crook, "Social Darwinism and British 'new imperialism'" (1998); J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (1902); and M. D. Bidiss, "The Politics of Anatomy: Dr Robert Knox and Victorian Racism" (1975).

[43] See also H. F. Wyatt's "The Ethics of Empire" (1897), and Winwood Reade's *The Martyrdom of Man* (1872).

[44] See also David J. Galton and Clare J. Galton, "Francis Galton: and Eugenics Today" (1998); Sumiko Otsubo and James R. Bartholomew, "Eugenics in Japan: Some Ironies of Modernity, 1883–1945" (1998); Juliette Chung, *Struggle for National Survival* (2008); James A. Tyner, "The Geopolitics of Eugenics and the Incarceration of Japanese Americans" (1998); Sonya Grypma, *China Interrupted: Japanese Internment and the Reshaping of a Canadian Missionary Community* (2012); and Mark Eykholt, "Introduction: The Nanjing Massacre in History," in *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (2000).

philosophical studies studies by Herbert Spencer, Homer Lea, and Montaville Flowers;[45] and eugenicist tracts, such as Francis Galton's *Natural Inheritance* (1889) and *Inquiry into Human Faculty and its Development* (1907), and Yamanouchi Shigeo's *Human Heredity* (1913). Historical, philosophical and quasi-scientific works enable us to see that Ballard's early fiction not only relates to biopolitical theory, but that it also connects in multifarious ways to the specific historical conditions of biopolitical imperialism that the author himself experienced when he was interned in a World War Two-era Japanese prison camp. We are thus able to gauge more acutely Ballard's investment in biopolitical critique, from both theoretical and social standpoints.

Finally, for Ballard's mid-period novels, I read these works in the contexts of American techno-spectacle imperialism as theoretically diagnosed and deconstructed by Jean Baudrillard (*America* [1986]) and Guy Debord (*The Society of the Spectacle* [1967]).[46] These two critical works have often been juxtaposed, as a way of determining both the roots (Debord) and the development (Baudrillard) of postmodernist culture. By contrast, I am using them to ascertain one particular current of thought, which emerges from the meeting-point of technology and media, and gives rise to certain relations of power—namely, to the specific conditions of American techno-spectacle imperialism. In furthering this line of enquiry, I examine Edward Said's wide-ranging historical survey, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), and Ballard's own personal reflec-

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[45] Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology* (1855); Homer Lea, *The Valor of Ignorance* (1909); and Montaville Flowers, *The Japanese Conquest of American Opinion* (1917).

[46] I also refer to György Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1961).

tions, *Miracles of Life: Shanghai to Shepparton, an Autobiography* (2008).[47] This particular combination of texts—critical and historical theory, aligned with autobiographical rumination—works to indicate that the prevailing social and psychological conditions in Ballard's mid-period fiction (along with works by several other Anglo-American SF writers, as I note) can best be understood by moving beyond the prevalent postmodern or late-capitalist readings, and looking instead to the philosophy and practice of post-war American imperialism.

Crucially, this multi-disciplinary approach underscores the fact that imperialism itself is a fluid, ever-mutating, and ever-evolving apparatus of control—rather than simply a Victorian framework of 'classic' colonial-imperial domination. Its basis has moved, as the specific contexts above help us to realise, from romanticised mercantile colonialism, to a Social Darwinist hierarchical ideology, to the rigorous latticework of biopolitical measures, to an American post-war technological and 'spectacle' framework, and to its current grounds in the decentralised networks of late capitalism.

At the core of imperialism has always been a will to power and control over global populations, finances and resources. What has changed, however, is the apparatus through which this will to power has been distributed. As this specific approach further reveals, the conditions of imperialist sublimation have shifted over time as well—from direct physical colonisation and domination, to more indirect modes of psychological colonisation with the emergence of the atomic age and advanced telecommunications. Short of recognising the ever-changing contours

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[47] See also Richard W. Van Alsytne, *The Rising American Empire* (1960); The UNESCO commissioned report, *Many Voices, One World* (1980); Anthony Smith, *The Geopolitics of Information* (1980); Herbert I. Schiller, *The Mind Managers* (1973), and *Mass Communications and American Empire* (1969); and Armand Mattelart, *Transnationals and the Third World: The Struggle for Culture* (1983).

of imperialism, it is easy to overlook all the ways in which we have been acted upon imperialistically over the last two centuries. It is possible, for example, to discount the imperialist mechanics and effects of the post-war United States because we have a fixed view of what imperialism is and how it works—that is, in the 'classic' sense. Moreover, as Richard W. Van Alsytne points out, so ingrained is this view that those who suggests otherwise—that the US is imperialist, in other words—are roundly dubbed 'heretical'.[48] Furthermore, scholars such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have more recently suggested that the modern networks of late capitalism present us with a decentralised and largely utopian 'empire', rather than with an imperialist model of control.[49] Again, the imperialist effects of this modern situation—largely tied to psychological sublimation / colonisation as developed through network dependence—are ignored because Hardt and Negri's view of imperialism is rooted in 'classic' contexts. They are not *looking* for signs of colonial-imperial domination, because in their view, without the old frames of imperialism this kind of sublimation could not take place.

Of course, Edward Said has convincingly argued that imperialism shifts from one history and culture to the next; and he has brought this mutating paradigm to light via analysis of narrative fiction in relation to imperialist culture. To build on Said's discussion in *Culture and Imperialism,* and take it in a different critical direction, I argue that studying Anglo-American SF from across the last two hundred years enables us to interpret the shifting nature of imperialism from a new angle that reveals new insights. Patricia Kerslake argues that SF exhibits a unique capacity to examine "our today and our tomorrow through the microscope of the future and, equally as

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[48] *The Rising American Empire* (1960).

[49] *Empire* (2000).

often, through the lens of the past."[50] What she means is that SF has the power to extrapolate, to take hypotheses to their ends, in a way that no other fictional form can. In turn, the genre is therefore uniquely poised to test various imperialist formations, push them to their extremes, and encourage us to reflect on where imperialism *could* possibly be taking us. Furthermore, it can help us to reflect on the potential for *future* imperialist effects in, say, the late capitalist 'empire' culture, or the post-war American techno-spectacle configuration, in ways that realist, socially and politically engaged fiction cannot. By reading into the future—whether that means five hundred years or five minutes ahead—SF can reveal the potential and possibilities of various imperialist contexts in advance of any other literary genre.

I have chosen to read and uncover the shifting nature of imperialism primarily through Mary Shelley, Wells and Ballard for a number of reasons. First, doing so enables one to firmly demonstrate how the contexts of imperialism have evolved and mutated over the course of the last two hundred years. Furthermore, these authors enable one to show how Anglo-American SF has indeed tracked those changes and, more importantly, how it has, through certain texts, acutely and incisively critiqued various imperialist modes by showing the devastating and all-encompassing outcomes that could potentially arise from unfettered imperialism. These authors, then, all allow us to view the manifestations and effects of various imperialisms in full flight, so to speak. Another factor that binds these authors together is that in addition to concertedly critiquing imperialism, they each put forward alternate socio-political paradigms—the kinds of paradigms, moreover, that conceivably connect to the ethical and egalitarian standards of the post-colonial ideologies worked out by cultural theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi K.

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[50] *Science Fiction and Empire* (2007), 12.

Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. Together, then, these SF authors show us not only how Anglo-American science fiction has a capacity to reveal specific imperialist contexts and their potential effects, nor simply how this sub-genre has acted anti-imperialistically throughout its history; but also, how it has, at times, worked alongside explicitly postcolonial works toward the recognition of alternate socio-political paradigms.

It may seem excessive to devote an entire chapter to *Frankenstein* alone, especially considering the overwhelming amount of criticism devoted to this novel already. But considering the text's unparalleled weight in both the SF canon—many see it as the ur-text of the genre—and in literary studies more broadly; and in light of the fact that to date it has not been thoroughly considered as anti-imperialist literature, I would argue that it is necessary to look closely in chapter one at the mercantile imperialist contexts of *Frankenstein* in order to augment and advance 'imperial turn' scholarship.

First, I read the often overlooked character of Robert Walton in the context of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century imperialism. I do so by connecting Walton's role as a shipping captain to the profoundly imperialistic context of the contemporaneous British navy. I also consider Walton's romantic Arctic narrative in line with inherently imperialistic travel narratives such as Sir John Barrow's *A Chronological History of Voyages Into the Arctic Regions* (1818). I further show that Walton's romantic language, along with his lofty claims and ambitions, closely mirrors the work of other inherently imperialistic writers and poets of the era—Robert Southey's *Life of Nelson* (1813), and James Thomson 'Rule Britannia' (1740), for example. Finally, I argue that rather than simply invoking and uncritically presenting the naval man of mercantile imperialism,

Mary Shelley adopts the critical gaze of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in order to satirise Walton's romantic imperialist ideals, his ignorant and dangerous imperialist actions, and his overall ineptitude in setting an appropriate course for mankind.

Beyond Walton, I consider correlations between Victor Frankenstein and the mercantile imperialist landscape as well. Specifically, I consider how Victor's Promethean ambitions to conquer a boundless imperium of knowledge and control mirrored those of contemporaneous European imperialists. In addition, I show how the penetrative metaphors employed by Victor in relation to his Promethean project (to bring the creature to life) are analogous to those metaphors used by mercantile imperialists in describing geography as gendered space, borders as feminised gateways, and imperialist brigades as penetrative and phallic fleets.

In chapter two, I turn to the imperialist contexts of H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) and *The War of the Worlds* (1897). Initially, I point out the ways in which these novels draw upon what I call broad, or 'classic', colonial-imperial tropes. That is to say, colonial-imperial contexts that existed across a broad sweep of history—depictions of fiendish, vicious and animalistic racial Others, for example. Despite the broad or generalised colonial-imperial references of Wells's SF novels, however, I argue that there is a much more historically fixed imperialism at work as well; and that it functions in more comprehensive and multifaceted ways in these novels than is generally recognised among critics. More specifically, I argue that Wells's representations of imperialism are rooted in Social Darwinist contexts, which I demonstrate by by considering the agendas of the founder of the Imperial Maritime League, H. F. Wyatt, alongside the ideals of the prominent Victorian imperialist, Lord Rosebery. I further contextualise this

argument as it relates to Wells's fiction by drawing upon the histories of Victorian-era Social Darwinian imperialism mentioned above.

In chapter three, I consider J. G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1965), and *The Crystal World* (1966), in the contexts of biopolitical imperialism, drawing on Foucault's late work. I analyse Ballard's repeated references to linear time and its concomitant clock-face in the aforementioned eco-disaster novels. Time—this most linear unit of measurement—is the key metaphor for both human life and order in these texts. Central characters, I argue, are therefore metaphorically held within a rigorous framework that one might readily align with Foucault's sense of the biopolitical. Other Ballardian precision motifs reinforce this conception—principally, the repeated employment of biopolitical devices such as maps, temperature-controlled atmospheres, obsessive geomagnetic readings, medical treatments, microscopic biological analysis, taxonomic systems to categorise flora and fauna, and strictly policed boundary markers.

Crucially, I argue that these factors not only draw upon Foucault's theory, but also conceivably represent the rigorous biological, social, and policing networks that were set in place by imperialists from the Victorian era until the end of the Second World War. I pay particularly close attention to Japanese biopolitical imperialism because, of course, Ballard suffered firsthand under this regime during his internment in a Shanghai prison camp at the height of the Second World War. I also look to recent critical studies, such as Daniel Kevles's *In the Name of Eugenics* (1995), to argue that these biopolitical ideas were taken up by an inherently imperialistic Nazi Germany as well.

In the final chapter, I consider two further Ballard novels, *Crash* (1973) and *Hello America* (1980), in the contexts of post-war American techno-spectacle imperialism. Both technology and spectacle loom large in these texts; in fact, the central characters of these works are psychologically colonised by techno-spectacle culture. In *Crash,* for example, both Vaughan and the eponymous James Ballard become increasingly fixated upon integrating with both the technological contours of automobiles, and with the images of screen actresses—they live for this sense of integration. In *Hello America,* too, central characters such as Charles Manson have effectively become one with the technologies of nuclear weapons and surveillance, while also immersing ever more deeply into spectacle cultures of celebrity, consumerism and iconography. But, as I argue, the deeply pervasive techno-spectacle culture of these texts does not conform simply to the 'uninterrupted interface' of postmodernity; nor is it most appropriately aligned with the decentralised, late capitalist framework that has been put forward by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire* (2000). Rather, these themes most acutely align with American-techno spectacle imperialism, as framed by theorists and cultural critics such as Jean Baudrillard and Edward Said.

In the final section of this chapter, I move from Ballard to a survey of post-war American SF. Doing so enables me to briefly consider how techno-spectacle imperialist contexts are significant in other major works of the post-war era. Initially, I argue that many critics have overlooked the imperialist contexts of American SF, largely reading these texts in late capitalist and / or postmodern contexts instead. In terms of the primary texts themselves, I argue that a novella such as Harlan Ellison's "A Boy and His Dog" (1969), novels such as Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* (1957), Philip K. Dick's *The World Jones Made* (1956) and *Dr. Bloodmoney*

(1965), and films such as Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), may be read and viewed as critiques of American atomic warfare. By extension, they may therefore be interpreted as critiques of a particular facet of American techno-spectacle imperialism.

Due to the limited scope of this dissertation, it is only possible to closely analyse four major imperialist trajectories in relation to Anglo-American SF: mercantile imperialism; Social Darwinian imperialism; biopolitical imperialism; and post-war American techno-spectacle imperialism. I conclude by arguing that late capitalist, network imperialism could be more comprehensively considered in relation to Anglo-American SF. Indeed, some recent SF works invoke a relevant and intriguing dialectic about the type of imperialist hegemony that prevails in the twenty-first century: Is it network imperialism? Or are we still living in the age of American imperialism? Further analysis of SF texts, I suggest, can help to bring these important debates to the fore.

Of course, it is absolutely vital that 'Other' voices—those outside traditional strands—be brought forward by scholars; and not just in terms of imperialist critique, but across all contexts. I do not set out to diminish postcolonial SF by suggesting that its voices of alterity are not imperative in the ongoing struggle against imperialism. Rather, I seek to argue for the importance of SF scholars in taking fuller account of and reevaluating the imperialist contexts of Anglo-American SF. A large-scale collaborative project is particularly relevant now because, as David M. Higgins points out, we are currently "witnessing new variations of old imperial ideals and practices" on a more ubiquitous scale than perhaps ever before.[51] It is thus essential for SF scholars to acknowledge that those living inside Empire's reach—such as Anglo-American SF writers—can and have been

[51] "Colonialism and Ideological Fantasy" (2009), 133.

highly effective in criticising imperialism; that they too have utilised postcolonial modes, as theorised by critics such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, and thus have engaged in imperialist critique in earnest. In doing so, we can show that there is a common anti-imperialist tradition shared across cultural, national and racial lines.

CHAPTER ONE: Mercantile Imperialist Critique in *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus*

In 1816, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (soon to be Shelley) set out to write *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818). At the same time, influential members of Britain's Royal Navy were campaigning for further exploration of the 'untamed' Arctic regions. The Second Secretary of the Royal Admiralty, Sir John Barrow (1764-1848), led the charge. In the *Quarterly Review*, Barrow proposes expeditions to "correct the very defective geography of the Arctic Regions" by "attempting a direct passage over the pole."[52] Later, in *A Chronological History of Voyages Into The Arctic Regions* (1818), Barrow writes that the new enterprise to the Arctic should be characterised as "one of the most liberal and disinterested that has ever been undertaken, and [in] every way worthy of a great, a prosperous and an enlightened nation."[53] Instead of imperialistic, then, the expedition was framed as altruistic; as a mission that stood to benefit all mankind, not just Britain, by extending the boundaries of scientific knowledge and human potential. Echoes of Barrow's claims appeared almost a hundred years later in Ernest Shackleton's justification for his Antarctic voyage: "Men go out into the void spaces of the world for various reasons. Some are actuated simply by a love of adventure, some have the keen thirst for scientific knowledge, and others again are drawn from the trodden paths by the 'lure of little voices,' the mysterious fascination of the unknown."[54]

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[52] "Article XI" (1816), 204.

[53] *A Chronological History* (1818), 378.

[54] Quoted in David Grann, "The White Darkness: A Solitary Journey Across Antarctica," in *The New Yorker* (2018), 51.

But try as Barrow did to frame his Arctic interest in altruistic terms, his writing inevitably gives way to imperialist ambitions. Late in *A Chronological History,* for example, Barrow argues that Britain needs to capture the elusive Northern shipping passage through the Arctic before the other great nations of Europe, or the newly emergent United States, could do so. Capturing both this passage and the Arctic zone in general would signify a great addition to the British Empire, argues Barrow; it would mean the British controlled the most efficient trade routes to Asia. Further, he writes that if "England had quietly looked on, and suffered another nation to accomplish almost the only interesting discovery that remains to be made in geography," it would have been a great misstep on the part of the world's pre-eminent Empire.[55]

In January 1818—the same month that *Frankenstein* was published—the British Admiralty, in accordance with Barrow's relentless appeals, outfitted several ships for a large and costly Arctic expedition. It was the first major navy-backed voyage to the Arctic since before the American War (1774-1785). Other imperialist movements also gathered momentum following the conclusion of the French Wars, in 1815. Mary Shelley was acutely aware of this re-emergence of mercantile imperialist schemes in Britain. For one, she notes having read Barrow's articles in the *Quarterly*.[56] Her reading list also indicates that she was well versed in the work of contemporary colonial explorers such as Mungo Park and Brian Edwards; and in the work of natural chemists such as Humphrey Davy whose strident assertions, as I will show, were intertwined with the romantic ideals of mercantile imperialism.

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[55] *A Chronological History*, 365.

[56] *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814-1844* (1987), Ed. by Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert. Mary Shelley notes having read Barrow's articles in the *Quarterly* on May 29-30, 1817.

Furthermore, both Mary and Percy Shelley had travelled through France in 1816 where they witnessed a war-torn and impoverished landscape following the defeat of Napoleon's forces less than a year before. It surely served as a potent reminder of the kinds of devastation Britain's imperial forces could wreak upon its adversaries. Lord Byron, for one, had been deeply affected by the site of the Waterloo battlefield when he visited in May, 1816. He laments the excessive loss of life in the epic *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), writing that the British triumph over the French was a "king making victory" that would restore detestable English imperial rule for many years to come.[57] It is tempting to assume that Byron's trepidation over the reinvigoration of British mercantile imperialism not only factored into the final two cantos of *Childe Harold,* but also served as the source of much conversation between himself, Mary Shelley, Percy Shelley and Dr. John Polidori, when the group famously rendezvoused on the banks of Lake Geneva, Switzerland, in the summer of 1816.

The need to challenge and respond to the imperial mood that was reclaiming a strong hold over Britain in the wake of the French Wars must have seemed urgent for Mary Shelley. In *Frankenstein,* she takes up this challenge by deftly critiquing certain facets of mercantile imperialism. As I will show, the incisive satirical trajectories of *Frankenstein* specifically target the mercantile imperial naval officer, scientist, aristocrat and colonialist. In doing so, Mary Shelley establishes the foundations of an incisive and historically rooted tradition of anti-imperialism within Anglo-American SF. Moreover, I will show that her critique also establishes significant, albeit ahistorical, connections with later transhistorical postcolonial theory and criticism. Before

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[57] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* Canto 3, stanza 17.

we turn to *Frankenstein* itself, however, it is important to clear some critical terrain and establish why this argument for *Frankenstein* as specifically anti-mercantile imperialism is necessary.

The Critical Landscape

Mary J. Elkins writes, "We pick up still one more book or article on *Frankenstein* with reluctance and suspicion, wondering what we'll find this time: what new and offbeat thesis."[58] There has been more scholarly attention paid to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* over the last two centuries than to perhaps any other work of modern Western literature. As Elkins points out, this has led to some fairly offbeat and spurious theses. Perhaps that is because seemingly all pathways to any kind of conventional readings have been exhausted. As Timothy Morton writes, just in the last twenty years alone there have been in excess of 2,500 texts published on, or at least partially on, *Frankenstein*.[59] To be sure, several of these publications have added value to *Frankenstein* criticism. Discussions looking at the novel by way of ecocritical, queer, female gothic, and post or transhuman theory, for example, have provided particularly fruitful and at times new ways of interpreting the text.[60] Nevertheless, it is fair to suggest that *Frankenstein* is, to say the least, well-worn critical terrain.

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[58] "Reinterpreting 'Frankenstein'" (1981), 218–219.

[59] "Frankenstein and Ecocriticism," in Andrew Smith (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein* (2016), 143.

[60] See, for example, Timothy Morton, "*Frankenstein and Ecocriticism"*; George E. Haggerty, "What is Queer About *Frankenstein?"* (2016); Andy Mousley, "The Posthuman" (2016); Angela Wright, "The Female Gothic" (2016); Adriana Craciun, "*Frankenstein's* Politics" (2016); Helena M. Feder, "Nature's 'Negative' and the Production of Monstrosity in *Frankenstein"* (2014).

Still, it is quite remarkable how seldom the novel has been read in imperialist contexts. In fact, what is often considered to be the ur-text of the SF genre has largely been swept aside by imperial critics.[61] The eminent 'imperial turn' scholar, John Rieder, has touched upon some of what he calls the "explicit colonial content" of *Frankenstein.*[62] For example, he argues that the naval explorer, Robert Walton, embodies the coloniser in his account of seeing Victor Frankenstein's creature traverse the Arctic ice-shelf. Rieder also briefly discusses Henry Clerval's 'Orientalist' ambition to forge a career as a colonial merchant. Further, Rieder discusses the creature's role in the context of colonial racism, suggesting that like Native peoples, the creature is only turned monstrous after being rejected and attacked by every European he meets. One may easily connect this dynamic to the unjust treatment of racially 'Other' subjects in the colonies of the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth centuries, and their subsequently violent responses.[63] But Rieder's imperial reading of the novel is brief, and he soon turns instead to his main topic: Victorian SF novels that apparently connect more explicitly to colonial-imperial contexts.

Rieder's cursory treatment of *Frankenstein* is indicative of a wider critical culture that has either overlooked or downplayed the novel's connections to imperial-colonial contexts. As noted in my introduction, critics such as Anca Vlasopolos have suggested that imperialist themes, if they operate at all in *Frankenstein,* do so in hidden or suppressed ways.[64] Lee Sterrenburg takes things further in "Mary Shelley's Monster: Politics and Psyche in

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[61] Carl Freedman, "Hail Mary" (2002); and Brian Aldiss's *Billion Year Spree* (1973).

[62] Rieder, *Colonialism and The Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008), 99.

[63] Rieder, *Colonialism,* 99-104.

[64] "Frankenstein's Hidden Skeleton: The Psycho-Politics of Oppression" (1983).

Frankenstein" (1979), arguing that *Frankenstein* neglects to make any imperial or political commentary whatsoever; instead, allusions to the revolutionary ideology of romantic idealism are limited to the domestic sphere in the text, which was apparently Mary Shelley's primary concern.[65] George Levine similarly argues that *Frankenstein* is a romantic allegory, confined to the contexts of the creative imagination and the romantic, 'Byronic' hero.[66] Depoliticised readings of *Frankenstein* have existed since the novel was published, according to Betty T. Bennett who claims that early critics of the text considered politics a male subject, and thus were eager to overlook the political import of *Frankenstein*.[67] Adriana Craciun similarly asserts that the pursuits of *Frankenstein's* protagonists are often read by critics as mythic and literary, and as therefore bound to "an apolitical and internalized poetic frame."[68]

It should be noted that several scholars have discussed *Frankenstein* in relation to imperialist contexts. In *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction* (1998), for example, Bennett argues that Mary Shelley's novels, particularly *Frankenstein,* exemplify the author's reformist sociopolitical and anti-hegemonic ideology. It is an ideology, argues Bennett, that aligns Mary Shelley with the egalitarian domestic ideals of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft.[69] Although the feminist scholar Mary Poovey was more focused on *Frankenstein's* rebuke of the "monstrous

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[65] "Mary Shelley's Monster: Politics and Psyche in *Frankenstein*" (1979).

[66] "*Frankenstein* and the Tradition of Realism" (1973).

[67] *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction* (1998), 3.

[68] "*Frankenstein's* Politics," 90.

[69] *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction*, 6-12.

self-assertion" of romantic poetry, she also reads the text as a feminist response to oppressive sociopolitical contexts.[70]

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's article, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985), juxtaposes the implicitly imperialist *Jane Eyre* (1847)—it is especially imperialist, argues Spivak, with regards to author Charlotte Brontë's un-ironic and uncritical depiction of the racialised and animalistic character of Bertha Mason—and the more anti-imperialist *Frankenstein.* In *Jane Eyre,* Brontë essentially sacrifices the racialised Bertha "as an insane animal for her (white, upper-middle-class) sister's consolidation."[71] *Frankenstein,* by contrast, sees the creature's demise as tragically brought on by imperialist forces, unleashed by Victor Frankenstein himself. It is therefore not so much the racialised figure that is depicted by the author as 'insane', as the imperialist one. The creature is only the victim of imperialism, who is gradually turned insane and monstrous *by* imperialist forces and impulses, as they arise through both Victor and the broader white colonialist context of the novel.

As far as Spivak is concerned, then, Mary Shelley offers a questioning voice when it comes to imperialism. Her novel, unlike Brontë's, or even Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargosso Sea* (1966), does not easily deploy the axiomatics of imperialism, but rather proves that "the discursive field of imperialism does not produce unquestioned ideological correlatives for the narrative structuring of the book."[72] On this point, Spivak argues that Mary Shelley looks specifically at Victor Frankenstein's war not only against God, the 'maker', but also against the female womb.

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[70] *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984), 122.

[71] "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," 6.

[72] Ibid, 9.

It turns out to be a disastrous war in the text, one that drives those who are entangled in it to insanity, and ultimately, to a gruesome death. Shelley's point in rendering this disastrous war in what Spivak calls "overly didactic" but nonetheless compelling terms, is to not only critique a "hysterical masculism", but also to critique the Western male utilitarian and/or imperialist vision of the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth centuries, which held that social engineering should "be based on pure, theoretical, or natural-scientific reason alone."[73]

But although she argues that *Frankenstein* questions imperialism, Spivak ultimately stops short of commending Mary Shelley for writing a completely successful imperialist critique. By way of example of the novel's shortcomings in this area, Spivak argues that the simple suggestion that the "monster is human inside but monstrous outside and only provoked into vengefulness is clearly not enough to bear the burden of so great a historical dilemma" as the imposition of imperialism on subjected peoples.[74] Imperialism, then, while not "unexamined" and "covert" as are the axiomatics of imperialism in *Jane Eyre,* is not critiqued in an overly substantial way, according to Spivak.[75] Instead, Mary Shelley too often offers "time-bound pieties" and "tangential unresolved moment[s]" with regards to imperialism.[76] Ultimately, the novel may only be read in a "politically useful way" in relation to early-nineteenth-century imperialism. What is 'useful' about it in this context, writes Spivak, is that it offers an "enlightened universal secular" perspective, as opposed to a "Eurocentric Christian" one. In other words, it attempts—not always suc-

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[73] "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," 10.

[74] Ibid, 11.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

cessfully or eruditely—to offer an alternative to the imperialist view of history in the footsteps of enlightened thinkers of the post-French Revolutionary period, including Mary Shelley's own parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft.

More specifically relevant to this study is the work of another feminist scholar, Anne K. Mellor. In *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (1988), Mellor examines several intersections between *Frankenstein* and the romantic ideologies of political philosophy as it stood during the early-nineteenth century. She does so in order to assert that Mary Shelley's fiction, particularly *Frankenstein,* expressed a largely anti-hegemonic position. Andrew Smith further develops Mellor's conception, arguing that *Frankenstein* explicitly engages the strident and invasive methodologies of imperial scientists such as Humphrey Davy and Luigi Galvani in order to critique them.[77] Although Anca Vlasopolos situates politics as a subtext in "Frankenstein's Hidden Skeleton" (1983), her argument for *Frankenstein's* sustained critique of aristocratic politics is nevertheless useful in my discussion of representations of aristocracy in the text. I extend this aristocratic dimension into mercantile imperialist contexts, and thus expand upon the foundation of Vlasopolos's work. Vlasopolos's discussion of the novel's connection to colonial racism underpins my discussion of the role of the creature in the text also; as does H. L. Malchow's "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain" (1993).

The Imperial Grey Zone

Perhaps the traditional segregation of *Frankenstein* from political discussion is indeed linked to a culture of critical misogyny, as Bennett argues. But there is another reasonable explanation as to

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[77] "Scientific Contexts" (2016).

why criticism has often downplayed, or even overlooked entirely, the novel's imperialist critique. As imperial historian Paul Kennedy points out, the period between the end of the French Wars and 1870, has traditionally been considered by historians to be an anti-imperialist phase in British history:

> The age of preclusive colonialism and mercantilism gave way to that of *laissez-faire* and free trade; and again in the early 1870s, when Disraeli's famous Crystal Palace speech and slightly later policies showed that the anti-imperialist era was being replaced by a 'new imperialism' which would last until the First World War itself.[78]

Further studies, such as J. R. Seeley's *The Expansion of England* (1883), H. E. Egerton's *A Short History of British Colonial Policy* (1897), C. A. Bodelson's *Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism* (1924), and R. L. Schuyler's *Fall of the Old Colonial System* (1945), serve to reinforce Kennedy's point. In other words, they each focus on eighteenth-century imperial wars, before turning to analyse the nature of Britain's 'formal' military rule over India from the 1870s on-wards. The period in between is largely portrayed as more permissive of responsible self-gover-nance, particularly in the predominantly 'white' colonies such as Canada and Australia. For scholars who adopted this perspective, writes Kennedy, "such a loosening of Whitehall's control could only mean that imperialistic policies had been given up by the early-to-mid century."[79]

By no means were these early scholars entirely mistaken in their assertions. As R. L. Schuyler rightly points out, the period between 1815 and 1870 oversaw the abolition of some major mercantile economic measures of control: protective tariffs, colonial business monopolies,

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[78] "Continuity and Discontinuity," in essay anthology *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (1984), 21.

[79] "Continuity and Discontinuity," 22.

the Navigation Acts, to name but a few.[80] Moreover, Britain certainly reduced its formal annexation of overseas territory during this time too; while direct colonial rule was scaled back. Instead, Britain predominantly opted to install Anglo-Saxon 'stock', as J. A. Hobson calls it in *Imperialism: A Study* (1902), in positions of power in the colonies.

This conception of mid-Victorian British imperialism, or a lack thereof—Kennedy calls it a "cosy consensus"[81]—dominated the critical sphere until John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson published "Imperialism and Free Trade" (1953), which was followed by *Africa and the Victorians* (1961). They argue that although the imperial picture had ostensibly altered during the period between 1815 and 1870, the British government nonetheless asserted a variety of control strategies tantamount to the preservation and expansion of the British Empire: "By informal means if possible, or by formal annexations when necessary, British paramountcy was steadily upheld."[82] After 1815, the preferred route for the British was what Gallagher and Robinson call 'informal' imperialism—the installation of the colonial self-governance referred to above. But whether colonies were 'formally' or 'informally' governed during this time, they were no less beholden to the trading terms set out by Britain than they had been prior to 1815.

When informal imperialism did not work, as in China, Latin America and along the African coast, Britain engaged in what Gallagher and Robinson call 'quasi-imperialism'.[83] This involved partial military intervention, or at least the threat of military intervention, to protect

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[80] R. L. Schuyler, *Fall of the Old Colonial System* (1945).

[81] "Continuity and Discontinuity," 19.

[82] "The Imperialism of Free Trade," 3.

[83] "The Imperialism of Free Trade."

British interests. More specifically, quasi-imperialism "involved pressure, threats, requests, cajolings by a British government and its citizens upon another polity."[84] Kennedy calls it "gunboat diplomacy" at its best.[85] By employing this strategy, British consuls and naval commanders were able to exert enough pressure to ensure both the signing of favourable trade agreements and the opening of treaty ports.

The threat of violence was usually enough to achieve the desired imperialist ends. But when quasi-imperialism failed, British forces did still resort to traditional modes of formal colonialism. For example, Britain annexed Singapore in 1819, the Falkland Islands in 1833, Aden in 1839, and Hong Kong in 1842. Furthermore, the British Empire exerted what could only be described as formal colonial-imperial rule over Native societies such as the Punjabis, Maoris, and Basutos, during this time.[86] By one means or another, the British Empire expanded by an average of about 100,000 square miles per annum during the period between 1815 and 1870. Moreover, apart from the Ionian Islands and certain other small areas, no existing territorial possessions were relinquished by Britain during this period.[87] The idea that the mid-nineteenth century was a period of anti-imperialism thus seems misleading to say the least.

Numerous radicals and politicians touted Jeremy Bentham's call to emancipate the colonies, argues Kennedy; and moreover, a considerable body of liberal politicians, identifying as 'minimalists', "disapproved of further annexations, wanted cuts in the military and naval bud-

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[84] Paul Kennedy, "Continuity and Discontinuity," 28.

[85] Ibid, 24.

[86] Ibid, 28.

[87] Ibid, 29.

gets, and looked somewhat askance at the imperial federation campaign for tighter ties with the self-governing colonies."[88] But despite widely publicised anti-imperialist rhetoric, the reality, as revealed by Gallagher and Robinson, is that anti-imperialism was not often practiced on material terms during this era.

Gallagher and Robinson's thesis became widely accepted among post-World War Two historians, though there were some who objected to it. Notably, Oliver MacDonagh argues that although there is much truth in the Gallagher-Robinson view of a stable and aggressive mid-Victorian imperialism, "it is also true that this imperialism was continuously—and not altogether unsuccessfully—challenged."[89] Between 1840 and 1870, the 'Manchester School' certainly believed in genuine free trade, argues MacDonagh; as did liberal statesmen such as Richard Cobden (1804-1865). These anti-imperialists did not align with the Whigs who, according to Cobden, were opportunistic and disingenuous about free trade: "What a bold farce it is now, to attempt to parade the whig party as free traders par excellence! I will be no party to such a fraud."[90] Unlike many Britons at the time, Cobden also clearly sought to avoid wars and formal annexations.[91]

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[88] Paul Kennedy, "Continuity and Discontinuity," 27.

[89] "The Anti-Imperialism of Free Trade" (1962), 490.

[90] Quoted in Oliver MacDonagh, "The Anti-Imperialism of Free Trade," 491.

[91] Paul Kennedy, "Continuity and Discontinuity," 27.

D. C. M. Platt argues that Gallagher and Robinson frequently misread British expansionism in the nineteenth century.[92] They do so by asserting that expansionist movements were imperialistic when in fact they had no connection to the British Empire whatsoever. Typically, argues Platt, the British government avoided supporting individual commercial enterprises during the mid-nineteenth century; and many of the annexations were not enforced by British imperialists. Instead, annexations fell to land-hungry settlers and ambitious soldiers; and they arose due to factors such as Native wars and crumbling frontiers. According to Platt, anti-imperial politicians were asserting real influence in Britain, it was just that rogue forces—those outside of imperialism—were simultaneously asserting what looked very much like formal imperial tactics of control in the colonies. Kennedy makes a similar point in a memorable summary:

> Explorers, missionaries and concession-hunters were penetrating Arabia and pushing inland from the African coast; settlers were moving across the Great Plains of Canada or the Veldt in search of fresh land; beachcombers, firearms dealers, planters and traders were leaving Australia for the Pacific islands; naval officers were eyeing potential new bases which could act as coaling-stations.[93]

Wherever one stands on the state of imperialism in the mid-nineteenth century, what is clear is that the time-frame between 1815 and 1870 has become something of an imperial 'grey zone' for critics. This grey zone has notably influenced the cultural theory of esteemed scholars such as Edward Said. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said's analysis of imperial literature begins (in earnest) in the late-nineteenth century with texts by the likes of Rudyard Kipling and

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[92] Platt's rejections of the Gallagher-Robinson theses are expressed across "The Imperialism of Free Trade: Some Reservations" (1968), 296-306; "Further Objections to an "Imperialism of Free Trade" 1830-1860" (1973), 77-91; and "The National Economy and British Imperial Expansion before 1914" (1973), 3-14.

[93] "Continuity and Discontinuity," 28.

Joseph Conrad. It was only then, writes Said, that the British Empire had emerged as something more than "merely a shadowy presence."[94] Said's idea of a "shadowy presence" is an apt metaphor for the ways in which many other literary critics have treated mid-nineteenth century imperialism. It is a phase unclear, somewhat shapeless, a site that produces no clear consensus, and even one to be avoided due to the longstanding critical divisions over this period's ties to empire. By contrast, the period after 1870 offers much clearer and more explicit contours of British imperialism. It is not that the shape of British imperialism between 1870 and 1914 has gone uncontested; in fact, critics have long debated both the forms and impact of imperialism during this time.[95] There is, however, scarcely a critic who would argue that British imperialism *did not exist* during this time, and further, that it did not reach its zenith here.

This 'grey area' approach, whereby mid-nineteenth-century British imperialism is conceived of as either non-existent, shadowy and / or greatly diminished in comparison to the late-Victorian period that followed, has, I argue, implicitly worked to diminish the concerted and acute anti-imperialist commentary of the ur-text of SF, *Frankenstein*. As noted, it has generally been omitted or discussed cursorily in analyses of colonial-imperial SF. Furthermore, this imperially dismissive approach to *Frankenstein* also diminishes the genealogy of anti-imperialist Anglo-American SF at large. It does so by consigning its origins to the Victorian age, thereby cutting off earlier texts such as *Frankenstein* from consideration under the frameworks of imperialism. It also diminishes the impact of earlier social contexts in and of themselves by implicitly suggesting that British imperialism only really began after 1870. By contrast, I want to argue in

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[94] *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), xvi.

[95] Gallagher and Robinson, "Imperialism and Free Trade" (1953); and *Africa and The Victorians* (1961).

this chapter that mercantile imperialism was prevalent and socially resonant in the lead-up to the publication of *Frankenstein,* and that this context essentially emanates from the pages of Mary Shelley's novel in ways that are insightful and trenchantly oppositional.

In addition to reading *Frankenstein* as the earliest example of incisive imperialist critique within Anglo-American SF, I also want to argue that Mary Shelley inflects her imperial satire with an alternate ideological paradigm. This paradigm connects to Mary Wollstonecraft's notion of domestic affections as put forward in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1895). The pattern of staunch anti-imperialism, coupled with the presentation of an ethical alternative to imperialism, is repeatedly reinforced through several key trajectories of *Frankenstein*. These trajectories, I argue, enable one to read the novel in connection with transhistorical postcolonial contexts, thus allowing one to interpret *Frankenstein* as an even more vital imperialist critique.

The Naval Man

The character of Robert Walton has typically been read as a secondary figure in *Frankenstein,* or as simply a reiteration of Victor Frankenstein himself.[96] Walton's story is certainly secondary to Victor's, but it is nevertheless a far richer narrative than many critics suggest. I want to argue that more than merely acting as a shadow of Victor, Walton is a vehicle for a separate critique of a particular facet of the contemporaneous mercantile imperialist context. More specifically, I want to argue that Walton is, in several respects, the embodiment of the mercantile naval culture that stood at the heart of imperialism during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

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[96] Richard J. Dunn, "Narrative Distance in *Frankenstein*" (1974); Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley* (1988), 57; Andrew Griffin, "Fire and Ice in *Frankenstein*" (1979).

Anne McClintock argues that imperial power across all of Europe was contingent upon sailors and conquistadors during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was these men who were primarily charged with the colonisation of new territories, with crossing thresholds and boundary markers into the 'white spaces' of the maps.[97] The British Empire was especially dependent upon its navy due to the country's geographical position. Britain is, as Tudor courtier John Dee put it, "blest" by its geography which "arose from out of the azure main."[98] To interpret this geography as "blest" is perhaps debatable, but it is inarguable that Britain is an island nation. If it was ever going to become a powerful imperial force it simply had to rely first and foremost upon its maritime strength; it would need to be a nautical empire by nature.

During the eighteenth century, Britain's navy secured colonial outposts in territories such as China, Australia, India, and the Falkland Islands. The navy also acquired control of several Caribbean islands such as St Lucia, Tobago and Guiana; Mediterranean islands such as Malta and the Ionian Islands; and territories in the North Sea such as Heligoland. These colonial campaigns culminated in the naval battle for Cape Verde, in 1806. The British navy triumphed over the French and Dutch forces during this battle, consequently seizing control of the island which Daniel Owen Spence refers to as "the jewel at the centre" of a British controlled archipelago along the East India trading route.[99] By the time the Treaty of Paris was signed, in 1815, the Royal Navy had secured an unmatched imperial network across the globe.

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[97] *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995), 25.

[98] Quoted in Denver Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (2013), 85.

[99] *A History of the Royal Navy: Empire and Imperialism* (2015), 27.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, control of global shipping lanes had become the crucial factor in Britain's imperial prosperity.[100] The navy was essential in terms of protecting these routes; in fact, only the navy was capable of securing control over global trade, as Thomas Lediard writes: "Our trade is the mother and nurse of our Seamen; our seamen the life of our fleet; and our Fleet the security and protection of our Trade; and that both together are the WEALTH, STRENGTH, and GLORY of GREAT BRITAIN."[101] By the end of the century a basic equation had come to dictate Britain's imperial fortunes: "no sailors, no navy; no navy, no empire."[102]

Given the inherent connections between British mercantile imperialism and the naval man, one could surely make the argument that Robert Walton is an imperialist. But although Walton seeks nautical accomplishment, the question could still be posed: is his voyage *really* connected to British naval imperialism in any way, or is it a voyage of a more personal and romantic nature? We first encounter Walton as he prepares for a nautical expedition to the perilous Arctic regions. He has several ambitions in mind prior to embarkation. First, he hopes to prove the theory that a Hyperborean sea—"a region of beauty and delight" as he calls it—exists over the North Pole.[103] He also aims to discover a northern shipping passage that he thinks will lead to the betterment of all mankind. Primarily, though, Walton sets out to discover "a paradise of [his]

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[100] Denver Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity,* 23.

[101] Quoted in Denver Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity,* 6.

[102] Ibid.

[103] *Frankenstein,* 49.

own creation" in the Arctic—a land previously unclaimed by Europeans that he can take for himself.[104]

There are two clear markers in terms of reading Walton and his ambitions in the context of mercantile imperialism. First, his Arctic voyage occurred during a time when the cultural and imperial significance of Arctic navigation was pronounced in Britain.[105] Mary Shelley must therefore have known that in sending Walton to the Arctic, she was explicitly entering him into the imperial fray. Second, Walton seeks a northern passage through the Arctic, and therefore closely aligns with a specific imperialistic ambition of the British naval man, Sir John Barrow. Mary Shelley had read several of Barrow's articles, and thus must have known that Walton's intention to establish a 'Northern passage' complied with the imperialist goals of Barrow and others.

There are other markers indicating Walton's imbrication with mercantile imperialism, too. For example, he sets out from the port of Arkhangel'sk (in Russia), which is significant because over two hundred years earlier (in 1554) the wreckage of the inaugural British Navy-sponsored voyage to the Arctic had washed ashore at the same port.[106] From the outset, then, Walton's voyage is symbolically linked to British imperialist escapades in the Arctic regions. Moreover—and this is a point I will come to more fully later on—the link is not a positive one: Arkhangel'sk symbolised the wreckage and failure of British imperialist missions.

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[104] *Frankenstein,* 51.

[105] Jessica Richard, "'A Paradise of My Own Creation': *Frankenstein* and the Improbable Romance of Polar Exploration" (2003).

[106] Sir John Barrow, *A Chronological History* (1818), 71.

In the first letter to his sister, Walton writes, the Arctic "presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight"; and further, "there… sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe."[107] I agree with Mary Poovey, Mellor and Jessica Richard, all of whom have read these remarks as references to the idea of a temperate sea over the North Pole.[108] This idea had gained traction in British imperialist circles during the late-eighteenth century. In a paper delivered to the Royal Society under the title "The Practicability of Circumnavigating the Arctic" (1772), Honorable Judge and Arctic enthusiast, Daines Barrington, made the case for the existence of a temperate sea over the North Pole. Barrington's high public office, coupled with his enthusiasm, helped to convince the Admiralty to commission a two-ship expedition under the command of Constantine John Phipps, in 1773. Barrington further speculated that such a discovery would yield inestimable riches for the British Empire. The possibility of financial reward, as Barrow points out, enticed the Crown to immediately sanction the voyage "with every encouragement that could countenance such an enterprise, and every assistance that could contribute to its success."[109]

Captain Phipps was unsuccessful in his search for a temperate sea. Subsequently, several of Phipps's crew members openly criticised Barrington's polar sea theory.[110] But Barrington con-

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[107] *Frankenstein,* 50.

[108] Jessica Richard, "A Paradise of My Own Creation"; Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley*; Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984).

[109] *A Chronological History* (1818), 304.

[110] Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African, Written by Himself* (1789).

tinued to argue his hypothesis late into the eighteenth century;[111] and more importantly, the Admiralty continued to support his notions, commissioning another expedition under the command of Phipps (this expedition also failed). Despite a series of failed expeditions, the Polar Sea theory retained practical support from the Admiralty into the nineteenth century. Barrow asserts, for example, that Barrington's theory had not been disproven because of a few failed voyages. Rather, the ongoing possibility of discovering a Polar Sea should encourage further Arctic exploration.[112]

Several scholars have argued that Walton's connections to travel narratives primarily serve to situate him in the contexts of romantic literature and poetry. The Polar Sea theory, as it stands in Walton's narrative, is one example of a link between Walton and romantic literature, according to Jessica Richard.[113] The critic Rudolph Beck further establishes this correlation, arguing that theories of a Hyperborean zone over the Pole characterised the classical mythologies of Pindar (in *Pythian* x), Herodotus (iv. 32), Virgil (*Georg.* III), and Pliny (IV. 89). Even more resonant, argues Beck, are connections between Walton's notions of a Hyperborean sea and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667).[114] Milton's epic was a favourite of "the utopian dreams of the Romantic age and the age of revolutions," writes Beck.[115] The poem notably inspired Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), for example.

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[111] Daines Barrington, "The Probability of Reaching the North Pole Discussed" (1775); "Instances of Navigators Who Have Reached High Northern Latitudes" (1778).

[112] *A Chronological History* (1818), 304.

[113] "'A Paradise of My Own Creation': *Frankenstein* and the Improbable Romance of Polar Exploration" (2003).

[114] Rudolf Beck, "'The Region of Beauty and Delight': Walton's Polar Fantasies in Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein'" (2000).

[115] Ibid, 29.

There are several other notable parallels between writers like Barrow (and Walton) and Romantic literature. Richard notes that "Barrow's history of polar exploration provides a cultural correlative to Patricia Parker's theory of romance as a genre which "simultaneously quests for and postpones a particular end, objective, or object"."[116] Polar historians such as Barrow, argues Richard, constantly promise progressive discoveries, "the attainment of higher and higher latitudes, and finally the Pole."[117] But invariably progress is deferred in order to relay further anecdotes. The narrative is thus fixed in one geographical place, "rehearsing the past, speculating about the future—telling tales."[118] This type of postponement is constitutive of romance, argues Patricia Parker: "romance is that mode or tendency which remains on the threshold before the promised end, still in the wilderness of wandering, 'error', or 'trial'."[119]

Barrow's Arctic stories certainly comply with this romantic formula. For example, although the explorers of *A Chronological History* never quite succeed in conquering the northernmost regions, they are always successful in adding further anecdotes to the overarching Arctic narrative. These anecdotes are repeatedly deployed by Barrow as markers of promise and progress. He thus imagines, as Richard writes, the polar explorer always "on the threshold of attainment, wandering blindly among icebergs, working from incomplete maps and error-prone instruments of observation, hoping at every moment to see a fissure leading out of the wilderness of ice into the open sea."[120]

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[116] "A Paradise of My Own Creation," 303.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

[119] *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (1979), 5.

[120] "A Paradise of My Own Creation," 304.

Barrow's anecdotes further resonate with Romantic literary contexts in terms of language and mythological themes. The epigraph to *A Chronological History,* taken from Purchas's collection of travel narratives (one of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's favourites), is notable in this regard. Purchas ascribes mythological qualities to the mariner and the sea on which he travels. The mariner is purportedly a man of "heroicke courage"; a man able to brave the perilous zones "where the *Tritons* and *Neptune's* selfe would quake with chilling feare, to behold such monstrous icie ilands."[121] Critically, Barrow not only introduces *A Chronological History* through Purchas's language, but also carries this kind of rhetoric forward into the body of the text. For Barrow, Arctic navigation calls for godlike heroism and zeal in order to conquer a mythological northern region. For example, the fourteenth-century explorer, Zichmni, is described as "a man of great courage and valor" who was "determined to make himself lord of the sea."[122] Barrow's contemporaries are similarly described as "experienced navigators," "men eminent for their learning and science," and men of the utmost "zeal" and "abilities."[123] They are thus qualified, in Barrow's view, to take part in this most "arduous enterprise" of Arctic exploration.[124] The heroism of his contemporaries, argues Barrow, is symbolic of the "proudly pre-eminent" spirit of England.[125] Notions of heroism are also ascribed implicitly to the mariners on account of the ter-

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[121] Quoted in *A Chronological History,* 10.

[122] *A Chronological History*, 18.

[123] Ibid, 371.

[124] Ibid, 378.

[125] Ibid, 365.

rain they face in their travels, which Barrow often describes in gargantuan terms: Arctic zones guarded by "interminable barriers of ice."[126]

In addition to recycling the language of his poet contemporaries, Barrow also draws upon certain myths and spurious histories to recount the history of the Arctic. A man named Flocke, writes Barrow, discovered Iceland by providing "himself with a raven, or, as some say, four ravens, which, like Noah, might serve as a guide for him to follow… he followed the course taken by the bird, and found the land he was in quest of."[127] Furthermore, one of Barrow's major sources in terms of constructing an Arctic history is Paul Henri Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* (1770). Specifically, Barrow refers to a section of this text entitled "A Translation of the Edda" which, far from being historical, explicitly relies on what Mallet calls 'Ancient Icelandic Mythology'. In addition to reinforcing the claim that Flocke followed ravens to discover Iceland, Mallet makes statements such as, "Formerly in Sweden reigned a king named Gylfe, who was famous for his wisdom and skill in magic."[128]

Barrow also writes of a mysterious European colony in Eastern Greenland that had become closed off from the rest of the world by a coastline that was "bound in chains of thick ribbed ice."[129] The ribbed ice purportedly formed around the island during the thirteenth century: "Hitherto, all endeavours have been fruitless, but the recent disruption of the ice from that coast may afford the opportunity of examining into the fate of the wretched inhabitants."[130] He further

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[126] Ibid, 372.

[127] *A Chronological History,* 3.

[128] *Northern Antiquities,* 1.

[129] *A Chronological History,* 13.

[130] Ibid.

argues that research into the fate of the colony is "at least an object of rational curiosity."[131] And yet, in 1792, M. Eggers made a widely accepted argument that no such European settlement ever existed, which would suggest that further research was in fact not rational at all.[132] It is a telling example in terms of revealing Barrow's willingness to heed the anecdotal (and mythological) histories of much older and more unreliable sources, as opposed to reliable contemporary sources.

In repeatedly cleaving to the language and mythological underpinnings of Romantic literature, Barrow's work is ultimately "an act of creation, like poetry," according to Richard.[133] Despite undeniable Romantic underpinnings, however, it is critical not to overlook the fact that Romantic rhetoric and ideology, like Barrow's, had real implications in the context of eighteenth and early-nineteenth century mercantile imperialism. For example, Barrow's written campaigns—printed in the *Quarterly* and in *A Chronological History*—were pivotal not only in terms of launching three Arctic expeditions, but also in procuring a 20,000 pound prize from the British government as a material incentive for Arctic discovery.[134] Looking further afield, Daniel Owen Spence argues that writers, poets, and artists, often helped to spread the popularity of imperialist culture by depicting naval men as archetypal heroes.[135] James Thomson's patriotic anthem 'Rule Britannia' (1740), for example, enshrined the legacy of Vice-Admiral Vernon's victory over the Spanish at Porto Bello, in 1739. Much like Barrow's or Walton's prose (let us not forget that

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[131] Ibid.

[132] *History of Voyages and Discoveries made in the North* (1792).

[133] "A Paradise of My Own Creation," 296.

[134] *A History of the Royal Navy,* 35.

[135] Ibid*,* 85.

Walton's narrative is delivered through a series of fictional letters written to his sister), the anthem conveys the boundless glory of the British spirit—"Britons will never be slaves" because they "rule the waves."

Naval imperialists like Vernon were frequently portrayed as towering figures with "manly hearts", as figures that helped to spread the concept of liberty across the world so that other "cities shall with commerce shine […] And every shore it circles thine."[136] It was clearly a "rose-colored" period, writes Kathleen Wilson, during which the likes of Vernon "embodied the spectacular, if imaginary, vision of empire."[137] In reality, literary depictions concealed what Wilson calls "brutality and the face of corpulence and grotesque."[138] Such depictions were therefore "guilty of romanticising and obscuring the brutal effects of colonialism."[139] Furthermore, writes Wilson, the romantic discourse on Vernon in particular influenced "the strategies of both government and opposition and stimulated grassroots initiatives," leading to a "heady brew of empire, liberty and national aggrandisement" in the second half of the eighteenth century.[140]

This kind of imperialist propaganda continued into the nineteenth century as well. Robert Southey's immensely popular series of texts, *The Life of Nelson* (1813-1843), for example, depicts Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson as "a dutiful, patriotic and courageous gentleman."[141] To Southey, Nelson was *the* exemplar of glorious imperialist culture, a role-model who emphasised

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[136] Daniel Owen Spence, *A History of the Royal Navy,* 85.

[137] *The Sense of the People: politics, culture and imperialism in England 1715-1785* (1995), 161.

[138] Ibid, 174.

[139] Ibid, 157.

[140] Ibid, 152.

[141] Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People,* 88.

the notion that "conflict cleansed character," and that "by conquering and governing imperial territory, young British gentlemen were readied for leadership back home."[142] *The Life of Nelson* influenced all echelons of British society, especially during the early-to-middle part of the nineteenth century. In fact, it had become an established part of the British school curriculum by the end of that century.[143] In looking for further imperialist literature from this time, one might also turn to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Friend* (1804), or to Captain Frederick Marryat's novel *The Naval Officer, or Scenes in the Life and Adventures of Frank Milmay* (1829). Both texts portray naval officers as romantic, chivalrous, paternalistic and commanding gentlemen, and in doing so add to a veritable mountain of imperialist literature from the nineteenth century.

Romantic literature that served to aggrandise empire was, then, more than mere entertainment in the era of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* Like all effective propaganda, it had notable effects in terms of ensuring the overarching sociopolitical agenda—to wit, British imperialism. As Spence aptly points out, it "provided a moral compass at a time when readers in Britain and across the empire were questioning" imperial designs.[144] Notably, this compass was geared heavily toward asserting the moral ascendency of imperialism. *The Life of Nelson,* for example, was essential in terms of creating a myth of national character and 'manifest destiny' among the British citizenry.

Given the close parallels between Walton's narrative and the inherently imperialist stories of, say, Barrow and Southey, it is difficult to read this particular trajectory of *Frankenstein* as

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[142] Ibid.

[143] Daniel Owen Spence, *A History of the Royal Navy,* 89.

[144] Ibid, 91.

confined only to romantic contexts. Instead, we must read Walton's romantic narrative—as we must read *The Life of Nelson* and Barrow's articles—as part and parcel of the contemporaneous British imperialist context. Unlike her contemporaries, however, Mary Shelley does not portray the naval imperialist as a conventional hero. Instead, she works to satirise mercantile imperialist contexts through Walton's story—to depict his mission as one of utter failure, in order to subvert the Romantic-imperial ideals that underpin it.

In a rare and telling moment of clarity—and one suspects it is Mary Shelley essentially writing through the character—Walton concedes that his education, focused as it was on Romantic-imperial literature exclusively, has left him at the age of twenty eight "more illiterate than many school boys of fifteen."[145] Instead of reality, he has been exposed only to "extended and magnificent" day-dreams that "want (as the painters call it) *keeping* (perspective)."[146] In lieu of a mature perspective, Walton finds himself regressing to a state of childhood as he prepares for his voyage: he readies himself "with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river."[147] This sense that Walton is isolated in a field of Romantic-imperial ideology is enhanced through his inability to relate to the gruff merchants, sailors, and various other outcasts in Arkangel'sk. More than simply an inability to relate to the society of men, though, Walton suggests that these men actually come to despise him for his Romanticist values.[148]

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[145] *Frankenstein,* 53.

[146] *Frankenstein,* 53.

[147] *Frankenstein,* 51.

[148] *Frankenstein,* 53.

Following his narrow education and awkward social relations, Walton sets out for the Arctic in a mist of ignorance. As Richard explains, it is in keeping with the doggedly optimistic tradition of the romantic Arctic traveller to overlook failure and press on regardless: "In the era of eye-witnessing and empirical experiments, failed attempts to reach the pole only encouraged further experiments as each explorer sailed north to confront the polar ice for himself."[149] So overcome is Walton by Romantic-imperial ideology that he is quite literally unable to interpret the "cold northern breeze" of the late summer in Arkangel'sk as anything other than a "wind of promise."[150]

Walton's all-encompassing Romantic-imperial fantasies are quickly undone by the harsh realities of the Arctic regions, however. The speed—less than two months—with which his Arctic ambitions are exposed as utterly impractical is significant because it shows just how little stock Mary Shelley puts in Walton's many years of education in the fields of Romantic-imperial literature and history. But even as his ship is "surrounded by mountains of ice, which admit of no escape, and threaten every moment to crush [his] vessel," Walton insists on pushing ahead.[151] His "courage and hopes do not desert [him]" despite the seemingly insurmountable conditions.[152] Walton's language at this point clearly marks him as completely detached from reality. While his men are dying around him, he envisions the impenetrable ice mountains will somehow "vanish before the resolutions of man."[153] He thus takes refuge in the language of "lofty design and hero-

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[149] "A Paradise Of My Own Creation," (2003), 296.

[150] *Frankenstein,* 49.

[151] *Frankenstein,* 234.

[152] *Frankenstein,* 234.

[153] *Frankenstein,* 235.

ism" at this point, insisting that the hopeless expedition should continue no matter what the cost;[154] or if all is lost then he is resolved to retreat into the tale of the Roman poet Seneca, who purportedly committed suicide "with a good heart."[155] Ultimately, all Walton can offer in the face of devastation is what Richard calls "the language of romance";[156] which, as demonstrated above, was also the language of imperialism in Mary Shelley's era. It falls to the more pragmatic crew to mutiny, seize control of the vessel, and ultimately save the romantic Walton's life.

Instead of rendering Walton as a hero in the mould of Admirals Nelson or Vernon, then, Mary Shelley depicts him as nothing more than a naïve fool who has been totally corrupted by Romantic-imperial ideals. This depiction is in keeping with the tone of much political radicalism in Britain following the French Revolution. In *Enquiry Into Political Justice* (1793), William Godwin calls the British hegemony a "ferocious monster," which seems at least partly analogous to Mary Shelley's scathing critique of imperialist hegemony through Walton's story. But although the novel itself is dedicated to Godwin, Mary Shelley's critique of imperialism here cleaves more closely to that of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. In particular, it draws on *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which Mary Shelley notes having re-read in the lead up to writing *Frankenstein*.[157]

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[154] *Frankenstein,* 236-7.

[155] *Frankenstein,* 234.

[156] "A Paradise Of My Own Creation," (2003), 297.

[157] The full title of Wollstonecraft's text is *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects.*

Wollstonecraft writes that imperialist power, in the late-eighteenth century, fell to aristocrats who made decisions primarily based on "low calculations of doting self-love."[158] They were part of a governing culture of "idiotism" rooted in "romantic notions of honour."[159] She further equates this so called honour to a kind of "ornamental drapery" that acts to conceal the deformity of an irrational mind.[160] Overall, *A Vindication* is a searing and sustained critique of the romantic male imperialist—referred to by Wollstonecraft as a "dead weight of vice and folly."[161] Crucially, Wollstonecraft points to the naval man as particularly emblematic of this toxic culture. "Sailors, the naval gentlemen" comply with this culture of idiotism, writes Wollstonecraft; "only their vices assume a different and a grosser cast."[162] They are "more positively indolent when not discharging the ceremonials of their station."[163] The Army commander is depicted as somewhat more in touch with the general society of men, and therefore with reality. The naval man, however, in his profound indolence and unsociability, is cut off from society to the greatest possible extent. His isolation within the schema of romantic imperialism renders him a particularly acute representation of its ideals. As I have shown, Mary Shelley mirrors and elaborates upon this highly critical interpretation through the character of Walton, and in turn, reiterates and expands upon Wollstonecraft's critique of the naval imperialist.

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[158] *A Vindication,* 21.

[159] *A Vindication,* 55.

[160] *A Vindication,* 55.

[161] *A Vindication,* 28.

[162] *A Vindication,* 28.

[163] *A Vindication,* 28.

But although Walton is a potent representation of Mary Shelley's pointed imperialist critique in *Frankenstein,* he is not the ultimate embodiment of the scathing critical lengths to which she goes in the novel. That role falls to Victor Frankenstein who, unlike Walton, is in fact totally isolated in his mercantile imperialistic realm of pseudo-scientific obsession. Walton, by contrast, still exists in a community of other sailors; he is somewhat isolated within that community, no doubt, but he is nevertheless surrounded by others in his delusional pursuit of arctic conquest. His obsessions with romantic-heroic ends are thus at least somewhat foiled by the context we find him in. As a result, he presents a more limited expression of Mary Shelley's criticism. Victor Frankenstein, to whom we shall now turn, on the other hand, delivers fully on the idea of what becomes of a man who lives and breathes the heroic and Promethean delusions of the mercantile imperialist creed.

The Colonial-Imperial Chemist

Turning now to the character of Victor Frankenstein, many critics have read Victor in parallel with the emerging scientific contexts of the late-eighteenth and- early-nineteenth centuries. With few exceptions, according to A. B. MacWilliams, early critics focused exclusively on the issue of scientific materialism in the text.[164] John Wilson Croker, for example, describes the text as a relatively one-dimensional moral abomination on account of its suggestion that scientists could usurp divine authority and create sentient life.[165] Further, the reviewer for *La Belle Assembleè*

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[164] A.B. MacWilliams, "It came from the laboratory: Scientific professionalization and images of the scientist in British fiction, from "Frankenstein" to World War I" (2008).

[165] *Quarterly Review* (January 1818), 379-385.

called the novel a cautionary allegorical fable in which the attitudes of the materialist scientist are roundly punished.[166]

One could certainly argue that unlike Walton's navalism, Victor's science does not align easily or literally with imperialism. Still, there are some literal connections between the natural chemist and the empire. Sir Humphrey Davy, who is widely thought of as having inspired the character of Victor Frankenstein, was closely aligned with British imperialism. His scientific projects long relied upon patronage, with some even accusing him of "blatant reliance upon aristocratic interests."[167] He was ultimately appointed to the role of President of the Royal Society, in 1820. David Miller argues that the Royal society was dominated socially and politically by the aristocracy and the landed gentry at the time of Davy's appointment.[168] In other words, it was dominated by central agents of British imperialism. They, like previous sponsors, endorsed Davy because the principles of his natural chemistry largely reflected those of mercantile imperialism. As MacWiliams argues, Davy's romantic science provided a strong correlation with the aggressive and overly romantic beliefs that characterised the mercantile imperialist movement.[169] In depicting Victor as a mirror of Davy, then, Mary Shelley is perhaps inserting him into an inherently imperialist context.

But it is the imperial metaphors of Victor's project that principally enable one to read him as a representative of mercantile imperialism. On this point, consider the ambitions behind Vic-

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[166] *The Belle Assemblee* (March 1818), 139-142.

[167] David Miller, *The Royal Society Of London 1800-1835: A Study In The Cultural Politics Of Scientific Organization* (1981), 250.

[168] Ibid, 244.

[169] "It came from the laboratory," 31.

tor's project: he seeks "the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life"[170] in order to create a human being. This creation will build upon the work of other scientists who, as Professor Waldman tells him, "have acquired new and almost unlimited powers" to "command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world."[171] Victor's project will attempt to go much further still—it will attempt to claim scientific mastery over nature, and to usurp divine power in the process. His scientific ambitions clearly mirror those of British mercantile imperialists in this sense. As early as the seventeenth century, argues Anne McClintock, European mercantile imperialists dreamed "of dominating not only a boundless imperium of commerce but a boundless imperium of knowledge as well."[172] Kathleen Wilson similarly notes that eighteenth-century British imperialist designs were predicated on the basis of a constant push toward further acquisition of land, territory, dominion, and power.[173]

These ideals of god-like grandeur and domination are emphasised, according to Hans Turley, in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).[174] Turley reads the character of Crusoe as emblematic of the eighteenth-century mercantile imperialist. Like the imperialist, Crusoe is one who seeks total subjugation of non-Western society, and justifies this pursuit according to the long-held Protestant pretense of superiority over racial Others. Crusoe's dominion, in the first novel of Defoe's trilogy, is the desert island where he seeks to both tame the land and to reproduce the designs of the British Empire. He succeeds in this plan, subsequently noting that "the

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[170] *Frankenstein,* 69.

[171] *Frankenstein,* 76.

[172] *Imperial Leather,* 23.

[173] *The Sense of the People,* 154.

[174] "Protestant Evangelicism, British Imperialism, and Crusonian Identity" (2003).

whole country was my own mere property."[175] But although he can call himself "Lord of the whole manor; or if I pleased, I might call my self king or emperor over the whole country which I had possession of," he remains unsatisfied.[176] According to Turley, Crusoe's dissatisfaction with his limited territorial domain in the second and third novels of the trilogy is symptomatic of his mercantile imperialist urge to continue to conquer territory until, quite simply, there is no more territory left to conquer.[177]

For a material example of similarly domineering imperialist ideals, one might turn to the British penetration of the African interior during the late-eighteenth century. Africa, argues Philip J. Stern, became territory that was open to being utterly devoured by the imperialist elite at this time.[178] It was no longer sufficient to remain on the African coastline, instead it became imperative to conquer the almost mythical interior—one of the great uncharted white spaces remaining on the imperial map. This need to conquer the interior arose despite the pronounced existential threat of disease that came with traveling in Africa at this time. As Stern writes, a European had somewhere between a thirty and seventy percent chance of dying on the continent in his first year. This level of threat, argues Stern, rendered the African expedition an "audacious, almost quixotic, pursuit."[179]

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[175] Ibid, 180.

[176] *Robinson Crusoe,* 139.

[177] "Protestant Evangelicism, British Imperialism," 188.

[178] "Gentility, Knowledge, and African Exploration," in Kathleen Wilson (Ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire* (2004), 121.

[179] Ibid, 117.

The rapacious and irrational desire to colonise the African interior shows just how ingrained the idea of total domination and control was in the imperialist psyche at this time. Like Crusoe's pursuit, Victor's need to enter, conquer, and control the amalgamated body on his worktable is commensurate with such obsessive imperialist pursuits. As was the case for classic imperialists, like those who entered the African interior, it is not necessity that drives Victor's project forward but rather an overwhelming Promethean desire to dominate as much territory as possible.

Like contemporaneous African explorers, Victor also employs penetrative metaphors to describe his project. He is, for example, deeply inspired when Waldman states that scientists "penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places."[180] Victor carries this idea forward into his own project, noting that "with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding places."[181] Mercantile imperialists often presented geography as a dialectic between two gendered spaces. They ritualistically feminised borders and boundaries of the known world, writes McClintock:

> Female figures were planted like fetishes at the ambiguous points of contact, at the borders and orifices of the contest zone. Sailors bound wooden female figures to their ships' prows and baptized their ships—as exemplary threshold objects—with female names. Cartographers filled the blank seas of their maps with mermaids and sirens. Explorers called unknown lands "virgin" territory. Philosophers veiled "Truth" as female, then fantasized about drawing back the veil.[182]

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[180] *Frankenstein,* 76.

[181] *Frankenstein,* 82.

[182] *Imperial Leather,* 23.

The ongoing imperial mission toward totalised territorial conquest thus became a matter of penetrating and exposing "a veiled, female interior; and the aggressive conversion of its "secrets" into a visible, male science of the surface."[183] Colonel Mark Beaufoy's map of the Arctic regions, published in 1818, provides an excellent illustration of this point (one can turn to Jessica Richard's "A Paradise of My Own Creation" for a copy of the map itself). As Richard points out, Beaufoy's map depicts phallic fissures in the Arctic ice coming from all directions. He imagines that eventually these "fissures in the polar ice will open up to English prows to reveal liquid warmth."[184]

Fantasies of penetration into feminine space have long characterised male hegemony. However, these fantasies more acutely characterised mercantile imperialism than any other preceding political movement. On this point, Kathleen Wilson argues that such fantasies were particularly apparent in eighteenth-century Britain, where *effeminacy* posed both a real and imagined threat to the hegemony. There was a significant malaise in the mercantile imperialist movement during the 1750s, following the loss of the Battle of Minorca to the French, writes Wilson.[185] This malaise gave rise to the notion that Britain was sliding toward a culture of effeminacy, most notably among the aristocratic class. This 'feminine' trajectory led to the widespread use of penetrative metaphors in arguments for the reinvigoration of a masculine British Empire.[186]

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[183] Ibid.

[184] Jessica Richard, "A Paradise of My Own Creation," 302.

[185] Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of The People,* 195.

[186] Ibid, 197.

McClintock argues that notions of violent penetration and the effeminate threat of "engulfment" were as much a product of male paranoia as they were of actual historical circumstances. On the one hand, there existed the real geographical threat of "catastrophic boundary *loss*" to France and others; while on the other hand, British imperialists were beset by deep and irrational fears of psychological boundary loss to effeminate values.[187] Men feared that the encroaching culture of effeminacy would lead to impotence and infantilization and, ultimately, to masculine transformation.[188] In response, the mercantile imperial quest for penetration adopted what McClintock calls an "implacable rage of paranoia" to combat perceptions of a grave existential threat.[189] As a result, the "massive thrust of male technology" into feminine space culminated in several devastating confrontations of heightened violence with foreign armies and colonised peoples during the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth centuries.[190] It also led to increased sublimation and oppression of females in the domestic sphere at this time.

Victor's utter obsession with his "penetrative" project, along with the psychological and physical illnesses he suffers whilst invading and destroying feminine nature, can certainly be read in the context of imperialist paranoia and megalomania. Consider, for example, the extent of Victor's malaise: he moves so far from overtly feminized nature—the beautiful season, the plentiful harvest, and ripe vines outside the window of his solitary chamber—that all he has time for is his Promethean project. He thus evinces an extreme myopia that, in retrospect, he views as

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[187] *Imperial Leather,* 29.

[188] Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People,* 197.

[189] *Imperial Leather*, 28.

[190] Robert Booth, *Mad For Glory: A Heart of Darkness in the War of 1812* (2015).

"unlawful" for the way in which it corrupts his natural tranquility.[191] Furthermore, he becomes increasingly ill over the course of his project—his cheek grows pale, and he becomes emaciated. As the project nears completion, he is "every night oppressed by a slow fever," while also being "nervous to a most painful degree."[192] There is a striking resemblance here between Victor and the borderline psychotic mercantile imperialist as conceived by McClintock. Like the imperialist, Victor is "filthy, ravenous, unhealthy and evil smelling" in his paranoid and obsessive pursuit to combat the largely imagined effeminate threat.[193]

Victor Frankenstein: The Imperialist Snob

One can now turn to Victor's romantic rhetoric to demonstrate that it invokes contemporaneous imperialist propaganda. For example, it is evident that in repeatedly associating his project with notions of heroism and glory, Victor draws upon the language that was used to bolster contemporaneous imperialist projects (such as those of Admiral Nelson). I have already made this argument in relation to the character of Walton; I will now turn to what might be called Victor's imperialist attitude of social exclusion.

Let us first consider Victor's contrasting attitude toward Professors Krempe and Waldman. He despises Krempe from the outset because he is "a little squat man, with a gruff voice and repulsive countenance."[194] Further, Victor does "not feel much inclined to study the books which [he] procured at [Krempe's] recommendation"; nor can he "consent to go and hear that

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[191] *Frankenstein,* 83.

[192] *Frankenstein,* 85.

[193] *Imperial Leather*, 28.

[194] *Frankenstein,* 75.

little conceited fellow deliver sentences out of a pulpit."[195] Victor's initial view of Professor Waldman, by contrast, is very positive: "He appeared about fifty years of age, but with an aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence; a few grey hairs covered his temples, but those at the back of his head were nearly black. His person was short, but remarkably erect; and his voice the sweetest I had ever heard."[196]

Although both men hold the same professional status—they are both Professors at the University of Ingolstadt—it is clear that Victor places them in different spheres of the social hierarchy. On the one hand, Krempe is squat, gruff and generally repugnant, whilst Waldman is clearly characterised as upper class. The distinctions Victor makes in this instance are emblematic of an elitist character trait that leads one to read Victor as further embodying the mercantile imperialist.

A chasm divided the European gentry and aristocrats from the lower classes in the eighteenth century. Distinctions between upper and lower classes were not as pronounced in Britain as they were in France prior to the revolution, according to Roy Porter.[197] The French aristocracy were utterly detached from the peasantry, and they were unwilling to commune with the lower classes in any way. Ultimately, such elitism paved the way for the French Revolution, in 1789. But although the boundaries were somewhat more flexible in Britain, they were nonetheless still strict. As Porter writes, "the English social ladder was indeed precisely graded."[198] Further,

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[195] *Frankenstein,* 75.

[196] *Frankenstein,* 75-6.

[197] *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1982), 49.

[198] Ibid.

Porter estimates that by the nineteenth century the British elite owned roughly one quarter of the nation's wealth.[199] Such a concentration of goods, capital and power meant that the elite were the key instigators of imperialist campaigns in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; or as Porter writes, the elite were "the warrior champions of Church, State, and Britannia," always pushing for further territorial and commercial expansion.[200]

Philip J. Stern characterises the British elite as prone to "demonstrations of refined and exclusive education, taste, leisure, and wealth."[201] On this point, Porter suggests that as the elite became wealthier throughout the eighteenth century, they became increasingly enchanted by "a conspicuous show of the good life."[202] In material terms, they hosted lavish dinner parties and boasted large wine cellars, whilst also embracing Palladianism,[203] French fashions, Italian music and artistic connoisseurship. These were not trends that went unnoticed by scholars and critics of the era. Mary Wollstonecraft, in particular, scorned the British elite for their obsessions with what she calls "polished manners," "air[s] of fashion," and a "courtly mien".[204]

According to Porter, if one did not exhibit a lavish lifestyle it was impossible to be counted among the elite.[205] He further argues that as the British elite became increasingly obsessed

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[199] Ibid, 48.

[200] Ibid*,* 66.

[201] "Gentility, Knowledge, and African Exploration," 118.

[202] Quoted in Stern, "Gentility, Knowledge, and African Exploration," 118.

[203] A grandiose European style of architecture derived and inspired by Venetian architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580).

[204] *A Vindication,* 26, 27, 29.

[205] *English Society in the Eighteenth Century,* 65.

with lavish effects throughout the eighteenth century, many of them "grew more snooty about the vulgar world."[206] The Earl of Cork's scorn, for example, is evident in his appraisal of the commoners he was forced to welcome into his home in order to procure their votes during a late-eighteenth-century election season: "Our doors are open to every dirty fellow in the country that is worth forty shillings a year; all my best floors are spoiled by the hobnails of farmers stamping about them; every room is a pig-stye."[207] The Statesman, Horace Walpole, made a similar, albeit more sarcastic, complaint about having to lower himself to interact with the peasantry during an election campaign, in 1761: "I have borne it all cheerfully; nay, have sat hours in *conversation*, the thing upon earth that I hate; have been to hear the misses play on the harpsichord, and to see an Alderman's copies of Rubens."[208] Perhaps the most resonant example, however, is found in remarks made by the Duchess of Buckingham who expressed her distaste for the Methodist religion because it conflated peasant and elite peoples: "It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting and at odds with high rank and good breeding."[209]

As Porter indicates, distaste toward the peasantry—the "dirty fellows" and "common wretches"—was abundant among elites during the late-eighteenth century. This culture of disdain fed into a deepening culture of elite seclusion. Seclusionist tendencies among the elite reached a zenith around 1800, according to Porter.[210] Stern also argues that elite society was ex-

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[206] Ibid.

[207] Quoted in Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century,* 65.

[208] Quoted in Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century,* 65.

[209] Quoted in Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century,* 48-49.

[210] *English Society in the Eighteenth Century,* 71.

tremely difficult to penetrate from the outside at this time, to the point of being utterly prohibitive.[211] It was a tight and privileged ring of landowners, a "self-producing oligarchy of the rich and powerful", working diligently to keep the social hierarchy in place, and in turn, to keep the lower classes on the outside of exclusive clubs.[212] Often this culture of exclusion and seclusion manifested itself through architectural structures, notes historian Stephen Hague.[213] Porter reiterates this point in writing that the elite's world "was a charmed family circle radiating out from great houses."[214] This culture of seclusion was reinforced by those walled-off spaces outside the home as well. Consider, for example, Marie Antoinette's memoirs in which she remarks upon the decadence and secluded privacy of the carriage in which she travelled alongside King Louis XVI from Choisy to Paris.[215]

Victor Frankenstein is conditioned in a similar way by his "remarkably secluded" upbringing in his Father's lavish house in Geneva, Switzerland. Further, the Frankenstein family is "one of the most distinguished of that Republic," and as a result, Victor's interactions are confined to a close inner-sanctum of fellow elites, and to relations with clearly subjugated nurses and house servants.[216] The deep imprint of this secluded and elite upbringing is clearly carried into the outside world by Victor. One can see it in his description of the "invincible repugnance"

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[211] "Gentility, Knowledge, and African Exploration," 121.

[212] Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century,* 57.

[213] *The Gentleman's House in the British Atlantic World, 1680-1780* (2015).

[214] *English Society in the Eighteenth Century,* 56.

[215] Mary Antoinette, *Memoirs of the Private life of Marie Antoinette, Queen of France and Navarre* (1823), 79.

[216] *Frankenstein,* 63.

of Krempe's lowly countenance, for example;[217] or in his persistent longing for the secluded spaces of his youth. Further, consider the sequence of events following the creature's awakening: Victor flees in horror to the streets of Ingolstadt where he discovers that the 'common' environment is just a little less horrifying than the creature himself. He states, "I traversed the streets… My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear; and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me."[218] It is only when he sees a standard-bearing stage coach approaching that he feels any level of comfort. In fact, the sight of the coach breaks Victor's state of panic—he stops pacing listlessly and becomes transfixed by the coach for several minutes.

A further example of Victor's retreat from repugnant common space into private elite space is evident in his dislike of the "rawness of the atmosphere" among the crew members on Walton's ship.[219] He engages in very little communication with the crew due to this "rawness," instead confining himself to the secluded space of the Captain's cabin, and to conversations with Walton. Furthermore, he is clearly disturbed when the privacy of Walton's cabin is invaded by the rough crew members. In fact, Victor has very little communication at all with anyone of a lower-class status throughout the novel. Instead, he dismisses the lower-class characters from his presence as quickly as possible, thereby returning to his elite and private space. Note, for example, his eagerness to dismiss the servant who brings him breakfast at one point; or his decision to remain detached from the dancing festivities of local peasants.[220] Occasionally he is forced to

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[217] *Frankenstein,* 74.

[218] *Frankenstein,* 87.

[219] *Frankenstein,* 59.

[220] *Frankenstein,* 89, 98.

voice his desire that servile characters remain silent and devoid of agency in the presence of the elite: "I told the servants not to disturb the family."[221]

Analysis of the relationship between the character of Justine Moritz and Victor helps to further uncover the protagonist's imbrication with a culture of elite exclusion and seclusion. Justine is employed by the Frankenstein family as a young servant. Later, she is convicted of the murder of William Frankenstein. Even though Victor knows it is a wrongful conviction because the creature-turned-killer has murdered his brother, he does not speak out for the servant girl. Despite his apparent feelings of remorse, the excuse he gives for not speaking out against this miscarriage of justice is unconvincing: "A thousand times rather would I have confessed myself guilty of the crime ascribed to Justine; but I was absent when it was committed, and such a declaration would have been considered as the ravings of a madman."[222] It appears that he is in fact more concerned with damaging his reputation as a sane man than he is about preserving Justine's life. Regardless of Victor's attempts at misdirection, then, in reality he adopts a similar perspective to Lord Chesterfield, who in the late-eighteenth century, "look[ed] on with unconcern at a [lower-class] man struggling for life in the water."[223] Not only does Victor fail to speak out *for* Justine during the trial, he is unable to even speak *to* Justine in the hours leading up to her execution. Instead, he cowers in a dark corner and recoils when Justine comes toward him in the prison cell.[224] One might attribute Victor's reaction here to shock, or to an overwhelming sense of guilt

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[221] *Frankenstein*, 98.

[222] *Frankenstein,* 108.

[223] Quoted in Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century,* 72.

[224] *Frankenstein,* 114.

and grief, especially considering he is the indirect cause of Justine's plight. But it is also possible that Victor backs away and is unwilling to help the girl, or even to look at her, because his exclusive upbringing has conditioned him to recoil from a face like Justine's. It would certainly be in keeping with the contemporaneous elite to respond in this way.

Further on this point, Wollstonecraft writes that the elite generally viewed the lower classes as "servile parasite[s]".[225] The likes of Justine are thus consigned to dirty, parasitic status—almost like a disease. It is only natural, then, for an elitist person such as Victor to back away from Justine, to find himself unable to speak, and to show signs of repulsion and anxiety. The Victor-Justine dynamic is recapitulated in Victor's response to the elderly Irish nurse who is appointed to his care while he awaits trial for the murder of Henry Clerval: "Her countenance expressed all those bad qualities which often characterise that class."[226] Victor further states that "The lines on her face were hard and rude…Her tone expressed her indifference; she addressed me in English, and the voice struck me as one that I had heard during my sufferings."[227] Almost immediately, he "turns with loathing from the woman," thus reinforcing his desire to be segregated from the peasantry.[228] Moreover, he turns from the woman because her voice reminds him of that of the creature. The nurse is thus compared to the ultimate vision of monstrosity, as Victor would have it. Further, he asserts that she has a similar "expression of brutality" to that of the creature as well.[229]

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[225] *A Vindication,* 28.

[226] *Frankenstein,* 201.

[227] *Frankenstein,* 201.

[228] *Frankenstein,* 202.

[229] *Frankenstein,* 202.

By contrast, Victor's description of Mr Kirwin is replete with the same kind of romantic adjectives as those used to describe Waldman: "Mr Kirwin had shewn me extreme kindness…he ardently desired to relieve the sufferings of every human creature"; and, "his countenance expressed sympathy and compassion."[230] Kirwin is the local magistrate in the Irish town where Victor is being held as a prisoner. This position makes him the most powerful figure in the area, thus situating him as a person of elite status. Victor therefore feels a sense of kinship with Kirwin—it is perhaps most clearly expressed through the fact that only Kirwin can understand Victor's native language. It is a bond that when considered in juxtaposition with Victor's impression of the nurse, further heightens our awareness of the stark elitist class distinctions made by Victor in *Frankenstein*.

Although Victor clearly aims to seclude himself from servile characters such as the nurse and Justine Moritz, his attitude toward them pales in comparison with his treatment of the creature. He persecutes the creature throughout the text, vilifies and tortures him, and ultimately seeks to destroy him altogether. Victor variously refers to the creature as a "monster", a "wretch", a "devil" or "fiend", a "vile insect", and a "villain". In the mercantile imperialist context, it makes sense that he regards the creature as distinctly more vile and contemptible than even the peasant classes. Servile whites, writes historian Howard Zinn, were treated very differently by European colonialists than African slaves or Native peoples. Although whites could be subjugated economically and largely excluded socially, they had civil rights and could not be persecuted at will, according to Zinn.[231] The savage Others—the African slave classes, or Native

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[230] *Frankenstein,* 202-3.

[231] *A People's History of the United States* (1980), 23-38.

peoples—however, were repeatedly vilified and persecuted, much like Victor's creature. In analogously punishing his creature, Victor is further aligned with imperialist contexts.

The Racist Colonialist

As nations expanded their overseas interests toward the end of the eighteenth century, the presence of a racial Other became increasingly central in the European mindset. In Britain, there were especially deep sociopolitical divisions in terms of how this racial Other should be integrated into the social hierarchy. Radicals (such as Mary Shelley's parents), working in the footsteps of eighteenth-century philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), were principally opposed to exploitation and the enslavement of such peoples. By contrast, prominent figures such as Samuel Purchase and Richard Hakluyt "injected into English popular culture, as well as the European political and intellectual discourse, the paranoid fears, sexual fantasies and, indeed, the whole range of racial stereotypes already current in Jamaican planter society."[232] Crucially, these negative depictions were often shaped in such a way "as to administer a crude justification for economic penetration and religious conquest."[233] Further, argues H. L. Malchow, the racial Other was shaped in negative, even monstrous ways in order to reflect the longstanding hierarchical mentalities of European aristocrats.[234]

Victor's depiction of the creature, and his actions toward him, parallels both Mungo Park's *Travels in the African Interior* (1799) and Bryan Edwards's *History, Civil and Commer-*

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[232] H. L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain" (1993), 99.

[233] Ibid, 93.

[234] Ibid.

cial, of the West Indies (1793); indeed, Mary Shelley acknowledges having been utterly absorbed in Park's text prior to writing *Frankenstein*.[235] Mungo Park (1771-1806) was a member of the African Association, a group that was patronised by wealthy statesmen including Sir Joseph Banks. More than just a member, in fact, Park was appointed to lead the second major British scientific expedition into the African interior, in 1795. His instructions were to "ascertain the course, and if possible, the rise and termination" of the Niger River.[236] Upon falling ill during the early stages of the journey, Park stayed with Dr. John Laidley, a well established slave-trader in Pisania (approximately two hundred miles up the Niger river). Park himself had been a slave-owner prior to the journey, and he remained opposed to the abolition of the slave trade until his death. After a period of recuperation, Park continued into the African interior on horseback, accompanied by at least two of Laidley's slaves. Though he was not often welcomed with open arms by the locals, Park was allowed to move through Africa mostly unchallenged because he presented himself not as a merchant trader or a colonialist, but as a botanist.[237]

The British historian, Christopher Fyfe, portrays Park as chivalrous, courageous and fair-minded.[238] But in reality, Park was a slave-owner whose major work, *Travels*—a best-seller in 1799, with three editions published in the first year—was vital in encouraging the British Empire to undertake further colonial expeditions on the African continent. In fact, Park was even ap-

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[235] *Mary Shelley's Journal*, Ed. by Frederick L. Jones (1947), 32, 71.

[236] Quoted in Christopher Fyfe, "Park, Mungo (1771–1806), traveller in Africa" (2004), in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[237] I say mostly unchallenged because he did encounter a few hostilities from militant West African Muslims who identified as Moors. For further discussion see Park's *Travels*; and Christopher Fyfe's "Park, Mungo (1771–1806), traveller in Africa."

[238] "Park, Mungo (1771–1806), traveller in Africa."

proached as a potential leader of a major colonial expedition to the African interior, in 1803. He declined the first offer, but in 1805, upon a commission from the British government, Park led a company of 35 soldiers and several slaves along the Niger. Dismissing local custom, Park did not ask for permission from local leaders to pass along the river. Skirmishes broke out and several Africans were killed; Park himself was eventually slain in one of the battles. A trader named Amadi described the behavior of Park's company as "needlessly slaughterous."[239]

Victor Frankenstein's description of the creature's physiognomy closely follows Park's description of the Native African. In addition to being large, strong and "capable of enduring great labour," Park describes the so called 'Mandingo' Africans as incredibly agile: one of them "mounted up the rocks, where indeed no horse could follow him, leaving me to admire his agility."[240] Such descriptions clearly correlate with Victor's description of the creature: "I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing toward me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of a man."[241]

Mary Shelley had spent "all evening" reading another colonial-imperialist narrative in the lead up to writing *Frankenstein* as well: Brian Edwards's *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (1793).[242] Edwards was a conservative British politician, pro-slavery advocate, Jamaican planter, and a member of the British colonial assembly in Ja-

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[239] Quoted in Christopher Fyfe, "Park, Mungo (1771–1806), traveller in Africa."

[240] *Travels,* 21, 239.

[241] (1947), 125.

[242] *Mary Shelley's Journal*, 73.

maica between 1787 and 1792. In *The History,* he describes the archetypal African slave as possessing much more brute strength and agility than the white man. He also suggests that the African is able to withstand the extreme heat of tropical climates for long periods of time, whereas white men quickly become enervated.[243] Recapitulating the creature's words—speaking as him and for him—Victor similarly notes: "I was more agile," he says, "than they, and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame."[244] In addition to recycling colonial-imperialist conceptions of strength, agility and resilience here, this example also employs the idea of a coarse diet which, as we learn in the novel, is predominantly made up of foraged berries and plants. As Malchow points out, several slavery apologists, including Edwards, "defended a subsistence slave diet of maize and water with the claim that the Negro race did not require the white man's luxuries of meat and drink."[245] Certainly Park also helped to foment the idea that Africans were 'colossal' vegetarians and naturally predisposed to living in the woods.[246] This notion was an important colonial-imperialist device, in that it contributed to the framing of African and Native peoples as primitive species, thus further consigning them to the lowest end of the social hierarchy.

In a further correlation with colonial-imperialist narratives by figures such as Park and Edwards, Victor delivers an assortment of scathing epithets to describe the creature's character. In one of his most concentrated outbursts, he calls it an "Abhorred monster! Fiend that thou art!

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[243] *The History,* 95.

[244] *Frankenstein,* 131.

[245] "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," 105.

[246] *Travels,* 279-80.

The tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for thy crimes. Wretched devil!"[247] Clearly Victor perceives the creature as both vengeful and utterly monstrous at this point; it is a perspective that only deepens throughout the narrative.

A large compendium entitled *Great, Complete Universal-Lexicon of All Sciences and Arts* (1750), which circulated widely throughout Europe during the eighteenth century, describes North American Indians on similar terms: "all very malicious, primitive, cruel, and of generally bad disposition."[248] African slaves transported to the Americas were also depicted as "fiendish negro brutes," and "rapacious, menacing" negroes.[249] They were further characterised using a "demeaned, animal-like image—cannibalistic, animalistic."[250] "From time immemorial," writes Johann Heinrich Zedler, in 1732, "they have been considered shameless and disloyal. They are, moreover, cruel, false, malevolent, frivolous, avaricious, and blasphemous."[251] Mungo Park similarly describes Africans in the Upper Niger region as a "warlike race" who were capable of "savage indifference."[252] And Edwards, too, depicts a depraved negro who is partial to a "ferociousness of disposition."[253]

It is not just a general wretchedness of character that comes up repeatedly in the mercantile colonial-imperialist literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but a sense that the

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[247] *Frankenstein,* 125.

[248] Quoted in Eugene E. Reed, "The Ignoble Savage" (1964), 53.

[249] Jelani Cobb, quoted in documentary feature film *13th* (2015), Dir. by Ava DuVernay.

[250] Henry Louis Gates Jr, quoted in documentary feature film *13th* (2015), Dir. by Ava DuVernay.

[251] Quoted in Eugene E. Reed, "The Ignoble Savage" (1964), 54.

[252] *Travels,* 235.

[253] *The History,* 59.

African Slave and / or Native person is particularly vengeful. John Leyden, for example, writes that the African negro is "addicted to hatred and revenge."[254] Park reinforced this image in his description of the "Feloops" near the Gambia River, writing that they "are supposed to never forgive an injury";[255] whilst Edwards writes that the Negro slaves in Jamaica possessed an "implacable thirst of revenge," that when carried out took the form of unnatural cruelty exercised "without restraint or remorse."[256] This view came to define the propaganda of Jamaica's planter class, according Malchow.[257] In the Jamaican Parliamentary Register of 1796, for example, prominent politician Henry Dundas describes Jamaican negroes as inclined to commit "the most dreadful ravages upon the wives, children and property of the inhabitants."[258]

Edwards further writes that Africans not only carried out dreadful schemes of revenge on white settlers, but "literally drank their blood mixed with rum."[259] Cannibalism was a widely used trope among slavers for describing "frenzied blacks" who were obsessed with depraved and irrational vengeance.[260] Victor similarly describes the creature as "his own vampire" in *Frankenstein.*[261] Although he does not otherwise depict the creature as explicitly cannibalistic, the impli-

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[254] *Historical and Philosophical Sketch of the Discoveries and Settlements of the Europeans in Northern and Western Africa at the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (1799), 98.

[255] *Travels,* 16.

[256] *The History,* 34, 74.

[257] "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," 108.

[258] Quoted in H. L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," 108.

[259] *The History,* 60.

[260] H. L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," 110.

[261] *Frankenstein,* 119.

cations are nonetheless clear throughout the text. Consider, for example, Victor's recapitulation of William Frankenstein's remarks on being confronted by the creature: "Ugly Wretch! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces."[262]

The idea of rampant cannibalism amongst African populations was closely connected to ideas of lust and sexual violence in eighteenth-century literature. On this point, Malchow argues that depictions of white women not only being eaten, but also being sexually brutalised by black men of great size and strength, became a fixture of popular literature.[263] Edwards, for example, writes that Negroes were possessed of dangerous sexual desires that were "mere animal" in nature.[264] Often the threat was connected specifically to ideas related to oversized genitalia. One slavery propagandist, Edward Long, argues that the Negro was particularly libidinous and possessed an unusually large phallus.[265] Victor also describes his creature as "proportionably large";[266] and his reaction on first seeing the living creature further evokes the image of a threatening and engorged phallus: "Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath."[267]

Victor's depiction of the creature-turned-monster's murder of Elizabeth Lavenza clearly re-articulates colonial-imperial conceptions of African sexual violence. The monster, claims Vic-

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[262] *Frankenstein,* 167.

[263] H. L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," 112.

[264] *The History,* 74.

[265] Cited in H. L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," 111.

[266] *Frankenstein, 85*

[267] *Frankenstein,* 85.

tor, attacked Elizabeth in her bedroom where he strangled her to death. This scene, as Malchow notes, "is emotionally and suggestively that of rape as well as murder, or rather, as murder in lieu of rape."[268] The monster is obviously suffused here with a dangerous male sexuality that runs parallel to colonial-imperialist conceptions of the savage and libidinous Native and / or African slave. As a final example on this point, consider that the 'British Annual Register for the Year 1816' (published the same year Mary Shelley began writing *Frankenstein*) circulated reports that rebellious Negroes in Barbados had sacked the colonialists and were flying, in place of the Union Jack, a flag portraying a "black chief, with a white woman, with clasped hands, imploring mercy."[269]

The Critical Turn

Far from allowing Victor to inhabit a prosperous position in the imperial scheme, Mary Shelley ultimately depicts him as falling into an almost endless well of tragedy and psychological ruin. It is through this disastrous capitulation that the author satirises Victor, and in turn, the imperialist. In terms of cannibalism, for example, although Victor endeavours to frame the monster as metaphorically cannibalistic, it is in fact he who ironically acts more like a cannibal. He tears the bodies he finds in cemeteries and charnel houses to pieces in order to satiate his rapacious needs, and he later disassembles and destroys the female mate he had begun to construct for the monster. Furthermore, he evinces the insatiable thirst for revenge that he had first attributed to his

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[268] H. L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," 113.

[269] Quoted in H. L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," 115.

monster. Ultimately, writes Mellor, Victor himself becomes ironically indistinguishable from the urges attributed to the monstrous savage: "the creator has become the creature."[270]

Even more ironic is the fact that although Victor claims it is the creature who is primitive in nature, it is actually he who is ultimately more ignorant. For example, when the creature first awakens, Victor immediately flies from the chamber in condemnation; and on their next meeting, he instantly says, "Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall."[271] Victor cannot "Be calm!", as the creature entreats, because he is unable to look beyond the creature's physical Otherness. He chooses instead to immediately cast the creature as "the fallen angel."[272] It is only when the creature covers Victor's eyes that he can consent to listen even momentarily to what he has to say. Ultimately, Victor breaks his promise to create a mate for the creature—a promise that seems to be a more than equitable compromise, given the circumstances. The ignorant Victor does not see it that way, however, and considers the monster's subsequent acts of violence to be utterly disproportionate in relation to his own actions. In fact, he continues to view himself as a sympathetic character until his death, as a fallen hero whose only crime was that he, like Icarus, flew too close to the sun.

It is Victor's own actions, then, that ultimately lead to his doom. It is worth noting the scope of this doom, too, because doing so can further reveal the extent of Mary Shelley's critique of the imperialist character. Victor's actions, as he himself rightly points out, are a "deadly

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[270] *Mary Shelley,* 135.

[271] *Frankenstein,* 126.

[272] *Frankenstein,* 126.

weight" around his neck, one that forever drags him down.[273] This deadly weight thwarts any chance of happiness for him. For example, he notes an attempt to "shake off [his] chains" of misery when staying in the British city of Oxford, only to have this attempt at happiness immediately (in the same sentence, in fact) torn asunder by further misery: "but the iron had eaten into my flesh, and I sank again, trembling and hopeless, into my miserable self."[274] A mirrored example occurs only a few paragraphs earlier when Victor states, "I enjoyed this scene; and yet my enjoyment was embittered both by the memory of the past, and the anticipation of the future."[275] He is thus metaphorically enslaved by misery to the point where he cannot even escape it momentarily. In fact, his attempt to "shake off the chains", only to immediately be reminded that he cannot do so, clearly evokes the conditions of slavery. In Victor's case, however, his flesh has indeed merged with iron, connoting a deeper kind of enslavement—in other words, a perennial yoking with slavery, and therefore the death of all hope for liberation.

As noted, Victor's misery also manifests as severe mental illness and paranoia. The point is worth expanding upon. By the time he encounters Walton, "His eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness… Sometimes he gnashes his teeth."[276] In addition to signifying madness, the gnashing of teeth seems to indicate another ironic representation of Victor as a savage cannibal. Walton also observes that Victor has a "double spirit" at this point in the novel.[277] One might associate this portrait with modern definitions of bipolar disorder and / or

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[273] *Frankenstein,* 177.

[274] *Frankenstein,* 185.

[275] *Frankenstein,* 185.

[276] *Frankenstein,* 58.

[277] *Frankenstein,* 60.

manic depression, defined by the United States Institute of Mental Health as contingent upon moods that "range from periods of extremely 'up,' elated, and energized behaviour, to very sad, 'down,' or hopeless periods."[278] Significantly, this language was also used by colonialists to describe depraved Africans. Leyden writes, for example, that although Negroes were more "malevolent, and proportionately more violent," they were equally susceptible to bouts of intense "love, affection, and gratitude."[279] Victor, then, is further ironically situated in the role of the wretch, or fiend, on account of his inherently colonial-imperialist actions.

Ultimately, Victor's profoundly ironic misery and mental illness lead him to one of the most treacherous and barren places on earth: the Arctic region. As noted, the Arctic was a literal oblivion of impassable ice during Mary Shelley's era. By consigning Victor to death in this territory, the author effectively foregrounds the depths to which his 'unhallowed' project has taken him. In a sense, the Arctic regions are the closest earthly representation of the fabled hell of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*—a text repeatedly referenced throughout *Frankenstein.* Of course, Milton's hell is made of fire, whereas the Arctic is made of ice. But these binary characteristics only serve to emphasise what P. D. Deane calls metaphorical inversion, whereby pairs of conceptual metaphors employ the same mapping strategies while exhibiting reverse topic-vehicle orientation.[280] Several critics have also equated Victor's fall with that of Faust.[281] In Johann Wolfgang

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[278] "United States National Institute of Mental Health Overview of Bipolar Disorder." Retrieved from the National Institute of Mental Health website.

[279] *Historical and Philosophical Sketch* (1799), 98.

[280] "On Metaphoric Inversion: Metaphor and Symbolic Activity" (1993).

[281] Theodore Ziolkowski, "Science, Frankenstein, and Myth" (1981); and Brian Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree* (1973).

von Goethe's *Faust* (1808), the title character is ultimately dragged down to hell by Mephistopheles (and other fallen angels) to serve an eternity of damnation. Victor suffers similarly, as he himself points out, and as the ultimate oblivion of the Arctic affirms.

By depicting Victor's misery and damnation as analogous to that of Faust, whilst also invoking Milton's oblivion, Mary Shelley issues a strong rebuke of the mercantile colonial-imperialist character. Indeed, in its own way it rivals, and perhaps even surpasses, the blistering critique of imperialists made by Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication.* Moreover, Mary Shelley situates Victor, the failed and miserable imperialist, alongside Mary Wollstonecraft's model of domestic affections. In doing so, she opens the path to reading *Frankenstein's* anti-imperialism in connection with transhistorical postcolonial themes, to which I will now turn.

Postcolonial Alignment

Mellor argues that like Wollstonecraft before her, Mary Shelley provides an ethical alternative to the political hegemony in *Frankenstein*.[282] This alternative has often been called a paradigm of 'private', or 'domestic', affections. Mellor offers this definition: "At every step one must balance the abstract ideal one serves against a moral obligation to preserve the welfare of living individuals, especially those family members most dependent upon one."[283] More than simply preserving a measure of welfare and equality, then, this paradigm also invokes a holistic marriage of rational

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[282] *Mary Shelley,* 85.

[283] Ibid.

and domestic spheres.[284] It is further characterised by "an atmosphere of rational companionship, mutual concern, and love."[285]

One may recognise a minor embodiment of the domestic affections paradigm in Walton's sister, Margaret Saville. Although Margaret only speaks implicitly through Walton, one may infer that she is sceptical of his Arctic enterprise: Walton asks for his sister's "leave" in putting his trust in preceding navigators;[286] he also implies that she deems him to be a hopeless romantic for undertaking the expedition.[287] Moreover, Walton indicates that he will likely receive Margaret's letters if she is inclined to write to him, and yet no correspondence arrives. Margaret's silence is, I suggest, further evidence of her scepticism in relation to her brother's voyage. Through inaction, Margaret conceivably calls into question the "absurd sophisms" of naval imperialism "which daily insult common sense."[288] In doing so, Margaret fulfills the role of a rational agent in both Wollstonecraft's and Mary Shelley's views. She also indicates a holistic marriage between the rational sense and the domestic sphere—a notion made evident when Walton writes to Margaret, "you have a husband, and lovely children, and you may be happy."[289]

One must concede, however, that we ultimately do not know enough about Margaret Saville to argue that she is a clear embodiment of the domestic affections paradigm. Her silence leaves too many unanswered questions as to the true scope of her values. Nevertheless, Margaret

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[284] D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf, "Introduction to *Frankenstein"* (2nd Ed.), 16.

[285] Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley,* 3.

[286] *Frankenstein,* 49.

[287] *Frankenstein,* 53.

[288] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication,* 20.

[289] *Frankenstein,* 234.

at least raises the notion that connections may be made between the novel and postcolonial themes. Moreover, she potentially invokes what Gerald Gaylard calls a transhistorical postcolonial spectre by implicitly offering a liberal and ethical political alternative to imperialism, whilst not acting to supplant it.[290] Looking further afield, the character of Elizabeth Lavenza provides a more in depth embodiment of an ideological counterpoint to the mercantile imperialist. Early in the novel, Elizabeth is described by Victor as intelligent but ultimately lacking in his ability for application. She is apparently also prone to the "aerial creations of the poets."[291] She is, then, aligned with the contemporaneous romanticist movement. When able to speak for herself in the form of a letter written to Victor, however, Elizabeth demonstrates a different kind of persona. In discussing her younger nephew (Frankenstein's brother) Ernest, she writes:

> I…proposed that he should be a farmer; which you know, Cousin, is a favourite scheme of mine. A farmer's is a very happy life; and the least hurtful, or rather the most beneficial profession. My uncle had an idea of his being educated as an advocate (a judge)… But… it is certainly more creditable to cultivate the earth for the sustenance of man, than to be the confidant, and sometimes the accomplice, of his vices… A prosperous farmer… they were at least a happier species of occupation than that of a judge, whose misfortune it was always to meddle with the dark side of human nature.[292]

In this letter, Elizabeth represents Mary Shelley's own moral purpose as it is loosely defined by Percy Shelley in the original Preface to *Frankenstein*: "the exhibition of the amiableness of do-

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[290] "Postcolonial Science Fiction: The Desert Planet," in Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal (Eds.), *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World: Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film* (2011).

[291] *Frankenstein,* 66.

[292] *Frankenstein,* 91-2.

mestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue."[293] Mary Shelley herself elaborates upon this definition in *Frankenstein*:

> A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule. If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections, and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind.[294]

As this excerpt makes clear, Mary Shelley was committed to "an ethic of cooperation, mutual dependence, and self-sacrifice."[295] As the case of Elizabeth Lavenza affirms, one might also think of it as a commitment to existing in harmony with nature—"an ecological system of interdependent organisms."[296] There is a touchpoint with the natural chemist and philosopher Erasmus Darwin (grandfather of Charles) here. In the preface to the first edition of the novel, Percy Shelley himself noted Darwin's influence on the plot: "The event on which this fiction is founded has been supposed, by Dr. Darwin, and some of the physiological writers of Germany, as not of impossible occurrence."[297] Mary Shelley, however, later remarked that Darwin's work had little to do with Victor's experiment *per se*: "I speak not of what the doctor really did or said that he did, but, as more to my purpose, of what was then spoken of as having been done by him."[298]

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[293] Preface to *Frankenstein* (1818).

[294] Preface to *Frankenstein* (2nd Ed.) (1831).

[295] Anne K. Mellor, "Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein*" (1982), 13.

[296] Anne K. Mellor, "Possessing Nature," 13.

[297] Preface to *Frankenstein* (1818).

[298] Preface to *Frankenstein* (2nd Ed.) (1831).

Where Darwin certainly was influential in terms of *Frankenstein*, though, was in helping to shape Mary Shelley's notions of domestic affections and its employment in the text.

Darwin often gave "detailed and reverent descriptions of nature," writes Mellor.[299] In the late-eighteenth century, he set out to catalogue and describe the physical universe in influential texts such as *The Botanic Garden* (1789), *Zoonomia; or the Laws of Organic Life* (1793), *Phytologia* (1800), and *The Temple of Nature* (1803). By 1803, he had brought to light the hypothesis that an evolution of species had occurred over the course of millions of years.[300] During this evolutionary process, argues Darwin, nature gradually moves "from simpler things to more compound things,"[301] thereby becoming increasingly complex. He was humbled by this gradual and vast organic schema, as is evident in the couplets of *The Temple of Nature*:

> Nurs'd by warm sunbeams in primeval caves
> Organic Life began beneath the waves…
> Hence without parent by spontaneous birth
> Rise the first specks of animated earth[302]

Instead of looking to aggressively meddle in evolutionary processes, Darwin advocated the "careful observation and celebration of all-creating nature."[303] No attempts should be made, he argues, to "radically change" the gradual trajectories of nature.[304] In *Frankenstein,* an analogously 'nurturing' system is employed by Mary Shelley in characterising the De Lacey family. The

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[299] *Mary Shelley*, 89.

[300] Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley,* 96.

[301] *Phytologia,* 118.

[302] Quoted in Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, 96.

[303] Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley,* 97.

[304] Ibid*,* 95.

De Laceys embody a virtuous, mutually dependent, and nurturing social structure; or as Mellor writes, the De Laceys are "a living illustration of benevolence, affection, industry, thrift, and natural justice."[305] They are, moreover, a thriving family unit: despite facing hardships that include being forced into poverty by Safie's tyrannical father, along with the debilitating blindness of Felix's father, the egalitarian atmosphere between the family members "diffuse[s] gladness through the cottage, dispelling their sorrows as the sun dissipates the morning mists."[306]

The creature develops his own moral disposition through observing the generous and mutually dependent De Lacey family. When he realises that pilfering food stocks is causing hardship for the De Laceys, for example, he ceases this behaviour, consigning himself instead to berries, nuts and roots.[307] He also secretly chops wood for the family when he realises that doing so will contribute to their happiness. From another angle, the books uncovered by the creature near the De Lacey hovel have a profound effect on him. Mellor aptly summarises the impact of this literature:

> From Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Romans* he learns the nature of heroism and public virtue and civic justice; from Volney's *Ruins…* he learns the contrasting nature of political corruption and the causes of the decline of civilizations; from Milton's *Paradise Lost* he learns the origins of human good and evil and the roles of the sexes; from Goethe's *Werther* he learns the range of human emotions, from domestic love to suicidal despair, as well as the rhetoric in which to articulate not only ideas but feelings.[308]

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[305] Ibid, 97.

[306] *Frankenstein,* 112.

[307] *Frankenstein,* 137.

[308] *Mary Shelley,* 49.

After reading these texts and observing the De Laceys for several months, the creature emerges as a virtuous character: "I felt the greatest ardour for virtue rise within me, and abhorrence for vice…Induced by these feelings, I was of course led to admire peaceable law-givers…perhaps if my first introduction to humanity had been made by a young soldier, burning for glory and slaughter, I should have been imbued with different sensations."[309] He adopts a compassionate and egalitarian value system, thereby situating himself in opposition with those soldiers who "burn" for glory.

The creature's virtuous nature is further emphasised by the fact that he is brought to tears upon hearing stories of the "the hapless fate" of Native Americans.[310] He clearly feels empathy, but perhaps this scene also indicates a deeper and more complex connection to Native peoples as well. Like the creature, Native American culture often exemplified a compassionate and egalitarian social value system. For example, on encountering the Iroquois people in the 1650s, one French Jesuit priest notes that "Their kindness, humanity and courtesy not only makes them liberal with what they have, but causes them to possess hardly anything except in common."[311] In addition to egalitarian ethics, the balance of power between men and women in Iroquois tribes was much more equitable than it was in Europe during the middle ages. On this point, Howard Zinn writes:

> Women were important and respected in Iroquois society… The senior women in the village named the men who represented the clans at village and tribal councils. They also named the forty-nine chiefs who were the ruling class for the Five Nation confederacy of the Iroquois. The women attended clan meetings, stood be-

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[309] *Frankenstein,* 154.

[310] *Frankenstein,* 144.

[311] Quoted in Howard Zinn, *A People's History,* 20.

> hind the circle of men who spoke and voted, and removed the men from office if they strayed too far from the wishes of the women.[312]

This more equitable balance of power led to more even-handed divisions of labor in Iroquois society as well. Women tended crops and oversaw village affairs, while men were usually responsible for hunting and fishing. Women also had some say over military matters, according to Zinn. Overall, as Gary B. Nash notes, "power was shared between the sexes and the European idea of male dominancy and female subordination in all things was conspicuously absent in Iroquois society."[313] Columbus and his imperialist successors were therefore not entering an empty wilderness in the Americas, but instead were arriving "into a world which in some places was as densely populated as Europe itself, where human relations were more egalitarian than in Europe, and where the relations among men, women, children, and nature were more beautifully worked out than perhaps any place in the world."[314]

Furthermore, although Native Peoples were frequently persecuted to a genocidal degree, they often still strove for peaceable and reasonable cohabitation with European colonialists. As Las Casas writes, despite the brutality they had endured, "endless tesimonies… prove the mild and pacific temperament of the natives."[315] Chief Powhatan, for example, allowed English settlers to live on his land without violence; he even fed them when the winter came. All he asked in return was for peace between the two sides. Again, there is a clear correlation here in terms of the creature's willingness to "reason" with Victor and embrace him despite past transgressions. De-

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[312] Howard Zinn, *A People's History,* 20.

[313] *Red, White and Black* (1974), 62.

[314] Howard Zinn, *A People's History,* 21.

[315] Quoted in Howard Zinn, *A People's History,* 6.

spite the creature's reasonable request that Victor create a mate for him, however, Victor ultimately betrays and continues to torment the creature relentlessly. Similarly, Powhatan's reasonable request was at first met with approval, only for the English to later fall upon his people without provocation. They killed fifteen or sixteen Natives, and took Powhatan's family into boats from which they threw the children overboard and shot them in the water.[316]

Land treaties between Native peoples and Americans in the early-nineteenth century largely unfolded along similarly deceitful lines, writes Zinn: "Every time a treaty was signed, pushing the Creeks (a large native tribe from the American south) from one area to the next, promising them security there, whites would move into the new area and the Creeks would feel compelled to sign another treaty, giving up more land in return from security elsewhere."[317] Similar betrayals continued on a large scale under the Indian Removal bill of 1828, which, as Chief Black Hawk explains in a letter of surrender, led to scores of "white men, who came year after year, to cheat them and take away their lands."[318] On this point, Chief Powhatan further writes:

> Why will you take by force what you may have quietly by love? Why will you destroy us who supply you with food? What can you get by war? We can hide our provisions and run into the woods; then you will starve for wronging your friends. Why are you jealous of us? We are unarmed, and willing to give you what you ask, if you come in a friendly manner…[319]

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[316] Howard Zinn, *A People's History,* 12.

[317] Howard Zinn, *A People's History,* 129.

[318] Quoted in Howard Zinn, *A People's History,* 130.

[319] Ibid, 13.

Powhatan's plea evokes the creature's repeated attempts to elicit reason and fairness from his maker: "Have I not suffered enough, that you seek to increase my misery?.. I will be even mild and docile… if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me."[320]

It is not clear that Mary Shelley had researched American Native society in the lead-up to writing *Frankenstein*. Nevertheless, the connections between the value systems of such societies and the alternate ideological paradigms of the creature, Elizabeth Lavenza, and the De Lacey family, are striking. Furthermore, these connections enable one to read Mary Shelley's alternate ideological paradigm in the social context of the Other, as it is understood within postcolonial studies. Broadly speaking, the postcolonial critic adopts and / or focalises the perspective of the Other in order to revise and, sometimes, outright reject Eurocentric values and historical records. The postcolonial critic thus attempts to rewrite facets of colonial-imperialist history in order to recover ground for what Gayatri Spivak calls the subaltern subject.[321] More than just offering a sympathetic portrayal of Otherness in order to counteract imperialist attitudes, then, the post-colonial writer both challenges the imperialist paradigm and offers alternatives to that paradigm. These alternatives are positioned within an ethical framework; one built around ideas of responsibility, equality and justice. The trajectories of imperialist critique in *Frankenstein,* coupled with the ethical alterity as voiced most potently through the racialised creature, enable one to at least broadly connect the novel to this postcolonialist mandate.

Something must be said, though, of the fact that the domestic affections paradigm essentially remains domesticated in *Frankenstein*—it is not deployed at a social level that exists be-

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[320] *Frankenstein,* 126.

[321] *Can The Subaltern Speak?,* (1988).

yond private spheres. Moreover, the agents of this alternate paradigm are actively silenced (Elizabeth is murdered, for example; while Margaret Saville is not allowed to speak at all). Does this silence indicate that *Frankenstein* may not actually be read in connection with postcolonial contexts? On the contrary, I would argue that *Frankenstein* is not cut off from postcolonial contexts by virtue of the fact that it does not offer a 'public' alternative to colonialism and / or mercantile imperialism. Rather, the fact that Mary Shelley does not subsume imperialist contexts altogether in presenting her alternative viewpoint indicates alignment with the transhistorical postcolonialism movement that evolved in the wake of failed nationalist attempts at decolonisation.

Transhistorical postcolonialism critiques imperialism, whilst also elucidating alternative ideological paradigms to those of the hegemony. Critically, however, transhistorical texts, such as Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), do not seek to install alternative regimes to the seat of absolute power. Writers like Fanon were all too aware of the fact that violent, binaristic revolution all too often "ironically enthrones precisely what it is reacting against, even if what it enthrones initially appears different."[322] Fanon, along with later cultural theorists, including Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, sought instead to problematise, or destabilise, homogenising imperialist frameworks. In doing so, they sought to carve out a place within discourse from where the subaltern could speak and be heard.

Said's *Orientalism* (1978) was pivotal in the transhistorical—also called transnational[323]—movement toward opening up space for alternative values to be presented alongside Western ones. Critically, Said does not advocate nationalist overthrow of Western im-

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[322] Gerald Gaylard, "Postcolonial Science Fiction: The Desert Planet," 10.

[323] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

perialism altogether, but instead only the integration of alternative ideologies and histories into sociopolitical considerations. He thus recognises a need for hybridity and free will, a need to move away from any sort of totalising or homogenising vision of humanity. He writes,

> Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems genuinely divided, into clearly defined cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly? By surviving the consequences humanly, I mean to ask whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division, say, of men into "us" (Westerners) and "they" (Orientals). For such divisions are generalities whose use historically and actually has been to press the importance of the distinction between some men and some other men, usually towards not especially admirable ends.[324]

According to Said, then, society needs to encompass hybrid understandings if it is to survive humanely. Furthermore, it needs to embrace the idea of polyvalent voices speaking and being heard in a global culture of free will. Ultimately, writes Gaylard, although the transhistorical approach tended to be sceptical, as one might imagine of a movement filled with post-revolutionary fatigue, it nevertheless sought a long-term escape from imperialism.[325] To this extent it was idealistic, even utopian. But this escape would need to be a gradual *process* of adopting more holistic and sustainable alternatives. It would not be achieved suddenly, nor through violent rebellion.

Novels such as Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996) follow in the footsteps of Fanon and Said by creating slippages in imperialist history. These slippages open the way for alternative modes of interpreting history to rise to the fore; they open the way for "knowledge possessed by social outcasts and practiced in secret, knowledge that is never acknowledged as

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[324] *Orientalism,* 45.

[325] "The Desert Planet," 5.

such."[326] Ultimately, as Suparno Banerjee writes, Ghosh imaginatively brings together the opposing qualities of (Western) science and (Eastern) supernatural logicality and irrationality; and in doing so, creates a more egalitarian and polyvalent social context.[327] As the characterisations of the creature, Elizabeth Lavenza, and to a lesser extent, Margaret Saville, make clear, *Frankenstein* similarly pushes alternative political paradigms to the fore without completely overwhelming hegemonic ones. Mary Shelley's aim, like Ghosh's, is not to supplant imperialism altogether, but to move previously suppressed modes of understanding onto equal footing with the dominant Western narrative.

Like Said, Fanon, and others of the transhistorical movement in postcolonialism, Mary Shelley had seemingly learned not to be overly militaristic about her alternative ideology. For postcolonialist scholars, nationalist attempts at decolonisation had proven bitterly disappointing, in that, they (generally) ultimately enthroned what was essentially just another imperialist regime operating under a new name. The French Revolution had worked analogously, to a large extent—beginning from a position of progressive ideology, only to end up with the 'reign of terror' and a despotic leader in Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. It makes sense, then, that Mary Shelley, like later transhistorical postcolonialists, had reservations in terms of positing an entirely new paradigm. Instead, the goal could only be to present alternatives, to carve out a place for the creature and others to speak in *Frankenstein*, and thus, to non-militaristically problematise and / or destabilise imperialism.

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[326] Suparno Banerjee, "*The Calcutta Chromosome:* A Novel of Silence, Slippage and Subversion," in Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal (Eds.), *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World: Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film* (2011), 31.

[327] Ibid, 42.

Reading *Frankenstein* in connection with transhistorical (instead of nationalist) postcolonialism is, I argue, important because it further supports the notion that the imperialist critique of the text is both potent and progressive. No other writer, argues Said, was more vital to the project of twentieth-century imperialist critique than Frantz Fanon. That is because, as already mentioned, he engages in the hybrid *process* of transhistorical postcolonialism, rather than in the destructive upheaval of nationalism. In doing so, he brings to the fore the idea that new alter-histories should be factored into sociopolitical schemas; that society must heed the voices of the East and West equally if it is to become just and stable.

Said writes that Fanon ultimately aimed to "bind native and European together in a new non-adversarial culture of awareness and anti-imperialism."[328] This project toward heterogeneity and equality is, of course, deeply problematic for Western imperialism, which seeks, above all, dominance across the sociopolitical spectrum. Further, Fanon arguably did succeed in cracking the homogenising veneer of imperialism in *The Wretched of the Earth,* subsequently inciting the process of bringing new voices to light; voices that had rarely been heard from before. For Said, the anti-identitarian process undertaken by Fanon set the tone for the most progressive and fruitful works of anti-imperialist thought during the twentieth century. These works, including Amilcar Cabral's "The Weapons of Theory" (1966) and "National Liberation and Culture" (1970); Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1988); and Said's own *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism,* called into question twentieth-century imperialism and dominant Western histories. Furthermore, they also destabilised these histories in both scholarly and public discourse.

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[328] *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), 274.

Many revisionist histories emerged in the slipstream of the transhistorical movement, such as Zinn's widely read and deeply powerful, *A People's History*. As a result of such texts, space has been created for alternate voices—Said calls them "fugitives, outcasts, hounded intellectuals"[329]—to speak and be heard. By engaging in a similarly hybrid *process,* Mary Shelley aligned with the very heart of effective and progressive imperialist critique in *Frankenstein*, and she did so long before the postcolonial movement had even begun to take shape. To date, this trail-blazing trajectory of her much vaunted novel has gone largely undiscussed. The present chapter has sought to highlight the fact that imperialism is a major context of *Frankenstein*; and furthermore, that it is a context that is critiqued in sustained, insightful, historically resonant, and progressive ways.

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[329] *Culture and Imperialism,* 272.

CHAPTER TWO: Social Darwinian Imperialist Critique in H. G. Wells

There is a great deal of what one might call broad anti-imperialist sentiment in H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). By that I mean Wells draws upon colonial-imperialist themes from across a broad sweep of history, not just from those inherent to the Victorian era in which he lived. For one, *Moreau* is predominantly set on a fictional volcanic island located somewhere in the Caribbean. European colonialism in the Caribbean dates back to the middle of the seventeenth century, notes Colin Clark, when colonisers began to ship African slaves to the region for the purposes of plantation slavery.[330] Abolitionists largely oversaw the demise of slavery in the region during the eighteenth century, but it was not until 1885 that the final act of emancipation was signed to liberate the people of Cuba. In setting *Moreau* in the Caribbean, then, Wells is drawing more clearly from prior epochs of colonial-imperialist history than he is from his own time when the brutal dynamics of slavery had at least formally been dissolved.

In another example of Wells's broad colonial-imperialist critique, the island in *Moreau* is called "Noble's Isle" which of course invokes Jean-Jacques Rousseau's conception of the "Noble Savage."[331] Although Rousseau popularised the notion in the mid-eighteenth century, "the noble savage" was actually coined much earlier, in 1672, by John Dryden.[332] In situating his racialised Others on Noble's Isle, then, Wells is essentially traveling back in time to align with anti-colonial renderings from over a hundred years prior to the publication of *Moreau.* Furthermore, consider the descriptions of the so called "Beast Folk" by the novel's European male characters. The char-

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[330] "Colonialism and its Social and Cultural Consequences in the Caribbean" (1983).

[331] *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality Among Men* (1755).

[332] *The Conquest of Grenada* (1672).

acterisation of these figures repeatedly draws on a long history of colonialist descriptions of Native peoples and African slaves. M'ling, the "black faced" human-animal amalgam, for example, is perceived as a devilish and monstrous creature with "eyes of fire."[333] In the previous chapter we touched upon how similar visions permeated colonial-imperialist narratives of the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-centuries—visions of fiendish, vicious, and animalistic 'negroes'. Of course, such descriptions remained prevalent in the racist imperialist narratives of the Victorian age. In fact, SF scholars such as John Rieder and Patricia Kerslake, along with cultural theorists like Anne McClintock and Patrick Brantlinger, have argued that racist propaganda reached its apotheosis in the colonial-imperialist narratives of the Victorian era.[334] But this rise in racist propaganda does not negate the fact that depicting racial Others on monstrous terms was a long-standing colonial-imperialist trope; and that in drawing on this trope, Wells is in turn connecting to a broad history instead of a specific one.

In addition to repeatedly presenting "black faced" physiognomy, Wells's narrator in *Moreau,* Edward Prendick, draws further parallels with broad colonial-imperialist contexts. Consider, for example, his descriptions of the Beast Folk's constant struggles to uphold Doctor Moreau's laws and not regress to their natural states; the constant struggle to not, for example, slurp at drinking water but to sip it properly, or to remain upright on two feet instead of walking on all fours. Even more indicative of their primitive urges, according to Prendick, is the fact that they are unable to remain monogamous and non-cannibalistic. Before long they abandon the

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[333] *Moreau,* 20.

[334] John Rieder, *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008); Patricia Kerslake, *Science Fiction and Empire* (2007); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (1995); and Patrick Brantlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (2011).

laws altogether and fully regress; or as Prendick states, they become a wild mass of drunk (on both alcohol and blood) black figures dancing around a bonfire.[335] Further, the female creatures stop wearing concealing garments, and both males and females dismiss monogamy protocols and begin having sex in public.[336]

This view of the regressive, sexually depraved and cannibalistic racial Other was present in some of the earliest colonial-imperialist depictions of the "discovery" of America. Consider, for example, Jan van der Straet's drawing from 1575, which Anne McClintock calls "Porno-Tropics: Women as Imperial Boundary Markers."[337] In the foreground we see naked and "erotically inviting" Native women, while in the background a cannibal scene is in progress. The cannibals appear to be roasting a human leg on an open fire. Straet's painting illustrates a standard trope of mercantile imperialist narratives, portraying racial Others as "frenzied blacks" who were all but unable to avoid regressing to the "demeaned, animal-like image—cannibalistic, animalistic."[338] Patrick Brantlinger's *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (2011) further develops a detailed account of how depictions of sexually depraved and cannibalistic savages filled mercantile imperialist narratives prior to the Victorian era. Despite "colonizing missions," argues Brantlinger, it remained a constant within imperialist narratives from the Enlightenment through to the Victorian age to describe the behaviour of inferior races as always threatening to regress to

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[335] *Moreau,* 110.

[336] *Moreau,* 123.

[337] *Imperial Leather,* 25-27.

[338] Henry Louis Gates Jr., quoted in documentary feature film *13th* (2015).

savagery despite the strict rigour and discipline enforced by European missionaries and colonisers.

Wells's depictions of Doctor Moreau, Montgomery and Prendick as 'Masters' of the Beast People further connect to a broad spectre of imperialism. Consider, for example, that at various points in the novel all three men wield whips to control the Beast Folk. The use of the whip to subdue inferior beings has clear colonial-imperialist implications dating back at least as far as the birth of the African slave trade. Howard Zinn provides shockingly vivid examples on this point in *A People's History of the United States* (1980). In "Penalty and the Colonial Project" (2008), Michael Moranze further illustrates the prominence of the whip in enforcing discipline in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British colonies.[339] Up until the mid-nineteenth century, in fact, the whip and whipping post were disciplinary tools utilised by Planters and Slavers in the British colonies of the Caribbean to punish racial Others who stepped out of line.

Taken collectively, these examples begin to indicate that Wells's *Moreau* offers a range of broad colonial-imperialist representations. Indeed there are many other instances in the novel that connect with classic colonial-imperialist tropes as well. Consider, for instance, the character of Montgomery and his treatment of M'ling, who lives in a kennel behind his master's quarters. Sometimes, writes Wells, "[Montgomery] would notice it, pat it, call it half-mocking, half-jocular names, and so make it caper with extraordinary delight; sometimes he would ill-treat it, especially after he had been at the whisky, kicking it, beating it, pelting it with stones or lighted fusees. But whether he treated it well or ill, it loved nothing so much as to be near him."[340]

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[339] "Penality and the Colonial Project: Crime, Punishment, and the Regulation of Morals in Early America" (2008).

[340] *Moreau,* 73.

Montgomery's volatile attitude toward M'ling connects to a wide variety of colonialist abuse narratives from across a broad sweep of history, as both Howard Zinn and Anne McClintock point out.[341]

One might also turn to the ways in which the character of Prendick draws upon notions of divine punishment in order to instil quasi-religious laws and a deep sense of fear among the Beast Folk. This ploy clearly echoes missionary colonialist contexts, as Rieder points out.[342] In a further stark alignment with broad colonialist contexts, Prendick allows the "Dog Man" slave who guards his bed chamber to repeatedly kiss his hand as a sign of sublimation and devotion. With the exception of this Dog Man, Prendick intends to kill every last one of Moreau's remaining creatures, so he tells his slave. This desire stems from his intense paranoia over being raided and killed by the Beast Folk. Such violent megalomania and paranoia over the threat of the Other clearly connects to the eighteenth-century mercantile imperialist contexts unpacked in both Kathleen Wilson's *A Sense of the People* (1995) and McClintock's *Imperial Leather* (1995).

But despite the many broad references in *Moreau,* I want to argue that there are also more specific imperialist contexts at play in this novel and in *The World War of the Worlds* (1897). I therefore want to argue that rather than simply offering broad commentary, Wells had many pointed things to say about the imperialism of the Victorian era under which he lived and wrote his most famous SF. It is important to note that leading Wellsian scholars such as Patrick Parrinder, David C. Smith, and W. Warren Wagar have read Wells's SF oeuvre as generally anti-im-

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[341] *A People's History of the United States*; and *Imperial Leather.*

[342] *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction,* 104-110.

perialist.[343] They are not alone. In fact, there is a long history dating back to the earliest SF scholarship of regarding Wells as *the* vital colonial-imperialist critic within Anglo-American SF. In *Voyages to the Moon* (1948), for example, Marjorie Hope Nicholson argues that unlike western science and technology fetishists such as Jules Verne, Wells often critiques brutal colonialist enterprise and ambition.[344] In *Billion Year Spree* (1973), Brian W. Aldiss furthers this notion by arguing that Wells was an incisive colonial-imperial satirist, particularly in *The War of the Worlds* (1898*), The Time Machine* (1895), and *The First Men In The Moon* (1901). Other prominent early SF scholars and critics, including Darko Suvin and Kingsley Amis, put forward similar arguments aligning Wells with social criticism and colonial-imperial satire.[345]

Crucially, however, there is not a resounding sense that Wells's colonial-imperial antipathy connects to the Victorian era specifically. This lack of specificity has, I argue, led to widespread misreadings and dismissals of the colonial-imperial implications of Wells's SF in recent years. I will come to these misreadings and to my own arguments for Wells's specific anti-imperialism anon, but first I want to focus further on those critiques that have lacked specificity in terms of linking Wells's SF to Victorian imperialist contexts.

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[343] Patrick Parrinder, *Shadows of the Future: H.G. Wells, Science Fiction, and Prophecy* (1995); David C. Smith, *H.G. Wells, Desperately Mortal: A Biography* (1986); and W. Warren Wagar, *H. G. Wells: Traversing Time* (2004).

[344] *Voyages To The Moon,* 247.

[345] Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979); and Kingsley Amis, *New Maps of Hell* (1960).

The Critical Field

In *Shadows of the Future* (1995), Patrick Parrinder argues that Wells's SF often expresses the view that private possession and monopoly of land is the major cause of inequality and subsequent social ruin. The species of Eloi in *The Time Machine* (1895), for example, embody the future imperialist who is doomed to live in "a pastoral setting amid their ruined palaces and temples like a race bereft of energy, foresight and cultural memory."[346] Meanwhile the vicious subterranean species, the Morlocks, have become so maligned and deformed that they nightly feast upon the aloof Eloi. So disastrous and vast have class divisions become, then, that what was once a single species of human beings has split into utterly differentiated and opposed entities. Similar themes pertaining to the dehumanising and disastrous consequences of imperialism carry through Wells's early SF, argues Parrinder. For example, Wells transposes a vision of imperial collapse not just in *The Time Machine,* but also in the "dead London" of *Worlds*.[347] However, Parrinder primarily links Wells's imperial satire to Roman imperialist contexts; and while he does often overlap the Roman model with contemporaneous Victorian imperialism, he mostly overlooks the ways in which Wells draws specifically upon the Social Darwinism that largely constitutes the Victorian imperialist context.

In the excellent biography, *H.G. Wells, Desperately Mortal* (1986), David C. Smith locates Wells's early SF in the context of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism on account of the author's socialist utopian world view. Smith argues that Wells's SF, particularly *Moreau,* is a vicious attack "from the centre of the scientific community on bad science, unethical science, sci-

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[346] *Shadows of the Future,* 71.

[347] Ibid, 73.

ence which is not only not pure, but ultimately evil."[348] But Smith does not bring these two elements together—politics and science—to discuss how Wells's SF not only attacks bad science and colonialism separately, but also attacks them collectively insofar as they culminated in Social Darwinist imperialism. Science and imperialism are thus held as mutually exclusive entities by Smith, and the Victorian imperialist context is largely overlooked as a result.

In "The Empire of the Future: Imperialism and Modernism in H.G. Wells" (2006), Paul A. Cantor and Peter Hufnagel argue that while on the surface Wells's SF largely mirrored imperialist romances such as Rider Haggard's *She* (1886) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1882), the reality was very different. Instead of following these swashbuckling adventure narratives, Wells satirically questions Victorian imperialism by invoking what Cantor and Hufnagel call 'proto-modernism'. To put it simply, proto-modernism, according to Cantor and Hufnagel, encompasses themes of individualism, anti-classism, anti-Eurocentricism, and anti-colonial racism.[349] Critically, their arguments are mostly confined to how Wells conveys this proto-modernism through satirising race and class conflict as it stood under British colonial rule. They are right to point out that there is a lot of anti-colonialist sentiment in Wells's SF, but the anti-colonialism discussed by Cantor and Hufnagel mostly connects to broad colonial-imperialist contexts. For example, they write that "The Beast People Moreau creates correspond to natives in the British colonial imagination; imperialist romances often pictured non-Europeans as animals."[350] While this statement is true enough, it lacks specificity. Such colonial-imperialist ren-

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[348] *H.G. Wells, Desperately Mortal,* 14.

[349] Of course, the very concept of 'proto-modernism' is arguable because a great deal of modernism *is* in fact Eurocentric and colonialist.

[350] "The Empire of the Future: Imperialism and Modernism in H.G. Wells," 52.

derings of non-Europeans as savage animals appeared in imperialist propaganda long before Wells's time, as has been made clear already.

Others, too, have connected Wells's SF to a general and even vague sense of colonial-imperialist criticism over the years. Among them is the excellent historian and literary critic W. Warren Wagar, whose work in excavating the philosophical tracts that underpinned Wells's career has been instrumental in furnishing my own understanding of Wells's ideology. Wagar does at times connect Wells's anti-imperialist SF to Social Darwinism specifically, and in doing so, temporally fixes Wells's commentary to the Victorian era. But more often than not, he instead links Wells's antipathy to an overly general sense of imperialism. In *H.G. Wells: Traversing Time* (2004), for example, Wagar argues that *Worlds* might be thought of as a 'politically correct' indictment of European and North American conquests into colonial territory.[351] To be sure. But does a claim like that not also reduce imperialism and colonialism to a generalised spectre that spans several hundred years? Is there not something more specific about Wells's imperialist commentary in *Worlds*?

In Timothy Christensen's "The 'Bestial Mark' of Race in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*" (2004), connections between Moreau's treatment of the Beast Folk and the coloniser's treatment of the racial Other are made. But again, a clearly defined imperialist context for this discussion is lacking. Even in the section titled "The Vocabulary of Racial Science in *The Island of Dr. Moreau,*" where Christensen claims that race in *Moreau* consistently connects "to the sociocultural evolutionist discourses of Wells's contemporaries," there is a distinct lack of discus-

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[351] *H.G. Wells: Traversing Time,* 56.

sion of Social Darwinist theory and history itself.[352] Instead, Christensen takes it as a given that Social Darwinism existed in the late nineteenth century, and that it had a profound influence on the social sphere at that time. As a result of unsubstantiated assumptions, *Moreau* remains largely detached from a clearly situated sociopolitical context in Christensen's argument.

To reiterate a point made earlier, the culture of broad critical conceptions of Wells's colonial-imperialist contexts has left a lacuna in Wells scholarship. It is a significant lapse in that it dampens Wells's legacy as a historically precise colonial-imperialist critic. It also impoverishes the tradition of Anglo-American SF imperialist critique in general by essentially denying it access to the full weight of Wells's criticism. This broad view has also left the way open to misconstruing Wells's SF as either imperially ambivalent, vaguely critical of empire, or worse, imperially complicit.

John Rieder goes some way toward encapsulating recent misreadings in *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008). To reiterate a point made in my introduction, Rieder reads Wells's SF in the context of Victorian imperialism to argue that it, along with other SF of the 'High' Victorian era (1871-1898), offers a space intimately shared by the critical metaphor and the uncritical spectacle. Wells's SF thus communicates an ingrained ambivalence toward colonial-imperialist ideology, according to Rieder.[353] But crucially, it is not conceived of as a balanced ambivalence by Rieder. Instead, the Victorian SF writer—Wells being the most prominent of them—is *more* complicit in colonial-imperial ideology than he or she is critical of it. In *Worlds,* for example, Wells introduces "a naturalising, biological analogy by modeling the rela-

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[352] "The 'Bestial Mark' of Race in *The Island of Doctor Moreau,*" 579.

[353] *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*, 117.

tionship of Mars to Earth on the imaginary relationship of Europe to the Tropics."[354] The Martians cast their gaze to Earth because compared with their own habitat it is warm, luscious and abundant in terms of natural resources. Their own harsh habitat on Mars has hardened their hearts while simultaneously brightening their rational instincts. Given the depletion of resources it is time for the Martians to venture to Earth and appropriate its rich vegetation while mercilessly subduing its inferior inhabitants in the process. This trajectory, argues Rieder, conforms with "contemporary racist ideology's belief in the natural superiority of Europe's temperate climate over the unchallenging tropics as a spur to civilisation."[355] Before he goes on to satirise the act of colonisation, then, Wells apparently establishes a potent racist paradigm that ultimately aligns him with contemporaneous imperialist ideology.

This view of imperial-leaning ambivalence has been particularly influential in the years since the publication of Rieder's *Colonialism*. Scholars including Andy Sawyer, Ericka Hoagland, Reema Sarwal, and Jessica Langer, have mobilised around Rieder's position. Bed Paudyal also explicitly aligns with Rieder, arguing that Wells's *Worlds* is ultimately complicit in the colonialist enterprise. On the one hand, suggest Paudyal, the novel clearly shows Wells's sympathy toward the plight of brutally persecuted colonial subjects. But "there are also countervailing motifs and strategies in *The War of the Worlds* that suggest covert defence of the empire."[356] These countervailing elements ultimately show that Wells predominantly sought to

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[354] *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*, 132.

[355] Ibid.

[356] Bed Paudyal, "Trauma, Sublime, and the Ambivalence of Imperialist Imagination in H. G. Wells's "The War of the Worlds" (2009), 102.

defend British imperialism despite the fact that his humanitarian instincts occasionally got in the way.

Despite growing consensus among scholars, however, the thesis that Wells's SF is mostly complicit in imperialism is seen to be inaccurate when one considers the primary SF texts in close relation to both Wells's career as a sociopolitical commentator, and to contemporaneous imperialist contexts. For one, the ideology that underpinned Wells's entire career flies directly in the face of the Social Darwinist imperialism that had begun to guide political agendas in the Victorian age. One needs only to take a thorough look at Wells's philosophical and non-fiction works, as I will do in the next section, to bear out this point. With this ideological foundation in place, I will then argue that two of Wells's most iconic SF texts, *Moreau* and *Worlds,* offer sustained and incisive satirical critiques of Social Darwinist imperialism specifically. In doing so I aim to build upon other discussions that have interpreted Wells's SF as anti-Social Darwinism, and in turn, anti-imperialism. These marginal arguments may be found in works such as Jennifer DeVere Brody's *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* (1998), and John S. Partington's *Building Cosmopolis: The Political Thought of H.G. Wells* (2003).

Significantly, I do not deny Wells's colonial-imperialist ambivalence altogether. Wells did make several politically insensitive statements during his career, and these missteps may encourage one to view him as a racist and / or imperialist thinker. Furthermore, his inherently Western sociopolitical ideologies make it very difficult to read him as a postcolonial author, as I will make clear later on. It is important not to overlook these flaws in Wells's attitudes. Despite these blind spots, however, it remains clear overall that Wells viewed the applications of Social Dar-

winist imperialism as monstrous and unnatural, and that this perspective is voiced on no uncertain terms in some of his most important works of SF.

The Philosophical Background of H. G. Wells

One way to recalibrate the critical view that Wells's SF is either soft or broad when it comes to imperialism, is to home in on how his most influential SF connects with and critiques Victorian imperialism specifically. Doing so leads to a more accurate appraisal of the imperialist dimensions of Wells's SF by giving proper weight to its specific historical references. Furthermore, doing so also serves to reposition Wells, as we have thus far attempted to do with Mary Shelley, on a continuum of sociopolitically specific and incisive imperialist critics within the history of Anglo-American SF. Before taking this approach to the SF texts themselves, however, I would like to focus on the philosophical and political ideologies that underpinned Wells's work. Thoroughly examining Wells's beliefs, which were deeply important to his work throughout his life, provides a solid basis from which we might more credibly assert the argument that he enacts a concerted and specific anti-imperialist agenda in his SF.

Of course, the notion that Wells's political and philosophical beliefs aligned with anti-imperialism does not preclude the potential for an imperialist viewpoint in his fiction. As was famously the case with Joseph Conrad's *Heart Of Darkness* (1899), the author's 'beliefs' did not necessarily translate into textual explication without other factors intervening—such as unconscious or unacknowledged discomfort with alterity or Otherness. Edward Said explores this idea at great length in relation to *Heart of Darkness* and Conrad's work more generally in both *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). In Wells's case, however, his anti-imperialist

beliefs do, I argue, largely transfer to his landmark SF novels. I will show how that is the case in the following section.

Duncan Bell is correct in noting that "Wells is often viewed as an avatar of scientific rationality, convinced of the need to bring science to bear on all social problems."[357] G. K. Chesterton, who was both a literary critic and Wells's close personal friend, goes some way toward substantiating Bell's point by arguing that Wells believed fervently that "science would take charge of the future."[358] Others have similarly asserted that Wells's scientific education under the famous Biologist, T. H. Huxley, aligned his sociopolitical beliefs with the scientific principles of Natural Law. However, this popular assessment overlooks the extent to which "Wells wielded his pragmatist skepticism against inflated claims of scientific certainty," particularly when those claims were translated to a social context.[359]

Wells clearly argued on several occasions that scientists and sociologists were dangerously prone to projecting their abstractions onto the reality of the social sphere. In *First and Last Things* (1908), for example, he writes that "the man trained solely in science falls easily into a superstitious attitude; he is overdone with classification."[360] Consequently, the scientist and sociologist comes to believe that "exact knowledge" is possible everywhere, and in doing so, they dismiss the validity of any belief systems that preclude scientific proof.[361] In a later essay entitled "The So-Called Science of Sociology" (1914), Wells reinforces this position, arguing that the

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[357] Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist" (2017), 10.

[358] G. K. Chesteron, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904), 15.

[359] Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism," 10.

[360] *First and Last Things,* 36.

[361] *First and Last Things,* 36.

magnificent results of physics and chemistry have misled many scientists, sociologists, political economists and politicians into believing "that classification and generalisation were reliable means of producing objective truth."[362] On the contrary, writes Wells, the success of a generalisation "was no proof whatever of its final truth."[363]

Many contemporary scientists and sociologists had used Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) to vindicate rigorous sociopolitical positions—which is an idea that I will expand upon further in the next chapter's discussion of the 'biopolitical'. But Darwin himself, argues Wells, had dissolved classifications and demonstrated that there is an "element of inexactness running through all things."[364] Social ideologies revolving around "counting, classification, measurement, the whole fabric of mathematics" in the name of Darwinism were thus spurious at best.[365] The fact is, writes Wells, that "the uniqueness of human individuals is the objective truth."[366] He further argues that each human individual is so vast that it is impossible to fully isolate the characteristics of large groups of people: "They come, they go, they fuse, they separate."[367] With this point in mind—which Wells counted as a clearly observable fact of life—he expressed a great deal of surprise that Social Darwinists were "persuaded by such blatantly deceptive strategies" contained in methodologies of social generalisation, measurement and clas-

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[362] "The So-Called Science of Sociology," 214-15.

[363] Ibid.

[364] Ibid, 197.

[365] Ibid.

[366] Ibid.

[367] Ibid, 201.

sification.[368] Thinkers such as the influential eugenist Francis Galton had been deeply misled in his application of eugenist abstractions to society, according to Wells. As a social paradigm, the eugenics model, which proffered a natural hierarchy of human existence based on race and anatomical features, was, according to Wells, untenable and socially iniquitous.[369]

Social Darwinian political economists, who had "for the purposes of fiscal controversy discovered economic types," were the subject of much of Wells's ire as well.[370] He writes that they were obsessed with "torturous abstraction[s]" comprised of not much more than "a hopeless muddle of social assumptions and preposterous psychology, and a few geographical and physical generalisations."[371] As Bell rightly points out, upon such fallacies "rose an intellectual edifice that aped the authority of natural science, relied on an opaque technical jargon and falsely proclaimed the discovery of immutable laws."[372]

Specifically, Wells took issue with the sociologists and political economists, Emile Durkheim, Vicomte Combes de Lestrade, and Herbert Spencer. Durkheim credited Lestrade with originally "extending natural law to societies."[373] And Lestrade himself believed his sociological system to be "as exact and universally valid as mathematics."[374] He thus consequently viewed

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[368] Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist" (2017), 12.

[369] H. G. Wells, *Mankind in the Making* (1903), 37-40.

[370] H. G. Wells, "The So-Called Science of Sociology," 201.

[371] H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* (1905), 61-62.

[372] Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 13.

[373] Quoted in Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 13.

[374] Quoted in Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 13.

the whole of the universe as measurable and predictable once subsumed by the ordered hierarchy of knowledge. Others credited Herbert Spencer with initiating the imposition of Natural Law on the social sphere. At any rate, many sociologists of the Victorian age followed the "Comte-Spencer tradition" of trying to find "general laws" by way of evolutionary speculation rather than through rigorous scientific observation.[375] Wells, by contrast, argues that this type of sociological thinking exposed its practitioners as "pseudoscientific interlopers."[376] Of Lestrade's theoretical model, for example, Wells argued that it was illegible in the context of the real world. Spencer's influential positions frustrated Wells even more—he wrote that Spencer's "mind was invaded by the idea of classification, by memories of specimens and museums."[377] He misled the public and policy makers, argues Wells, through his overly simplistic pseudoscientific commitment to out-dated views on evolutionary processes in which "the universe, and every sort of thing in it, moves from the simple and homogeneous to the complex and heterogeneous" in a neat and orderly hierarchy.[378]

It should now be clear that Wells repeatedly protested the pseudoscientific ordering impulses of Social Darwinists. But where did he stand on practical questions of race, and how to manage racial relations? Did he capitulate to the Social Darwinists on the question of what to do with the racial Other in the expanding colonial world? Certainly his remarks in *Anticipations* (1901) seem to indicate that is the case:

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[375] Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 13.

[376] "The So-Called Science," 192-193.

[377] *An Englishman Looks at the World* (1914), 245.

[378] Ibid.

> [What to do with] those swarms of black, and brown, and dirty-white, and yellow people, who do not come into the new needs of efficiency?
>
> Well, the world is a world, not a charitable institution, and I take it they will have to go. The whole tenor and meaning of the world, as I see it, is that they have to go. So far as they fail to develop sane, vigorous, and distinctive personalities for the great of the world future, it is their portion to die out and disappear.[379]

It is a deeply regrettable statement that certainly problematises any clear conception of Wells as anti-Social Darwinism. After all, that is exactly what he seems to be advocating here—that lesser races should be sublimated and supplanted by superior ones. W. Warren Wagar argues that perhaps more than any of Wells's many political manifestos, *Anticipations* raises the question of whether Wells really was setting out to write politically sensitive and informed indictments of Victorian imperialism and Social Darwinism in his SF. Or was he in fact producing exactly the opposite; that is, apologias for Western imperialism? Indeed, Wagar emerges ambivalent as to whether or not Wells meant to condemn racist colonial-imperialist campaigns.[380] He is also unsure as to whether Wells was ultimately opposed to the actions of those chief Social Darwinists in *Worlds*, the Martians, who slaughtered with even less compunction than their terrestrial counterparts.[381]

But while Wagar does leave the question of whether Wells was ultimately for or against the inherently racist Social Darwinian imperialist project open, his arguments for the latter are more convincing. In commenting on Wells's embarrassing remarks in *Anticipations,* for example, Wagar argues that such comments need to be read in context; that is, with an understanding that

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[379] *Anticipations,* 340-341.

[380] *H.G. Wells: Traversing Time,* 56-57.

[381] Ibid.

they were written when populations of European descent were increasing steadily at the expense of all other races.[382] The scenario depicted by Wells, then, conceivably seemed close at hand whether he liked it or not. Perhaps Wells was thus simply affirming what most members of his generation saw as inevitable. More importantly, soon after the publication of *Anticipations,* Wells explicitly disavowed racism and racial science. In *A Modern Utopia* (1905)*,* for example, he writes that the social delirium around race and racial struggle was instigated and legitimised by "a vast edifice of sham science."[383] Moreover, this sham racial science, argues Wells, had to be confronted because it was underpinning some of humanity's worst problems—namely, the persecution of racial Others in the colonial-imperial world.[384]

Confront it Wells did in an article entitled "Race Prejudice" (1907). He writes, "There is no more evil thing in this present world than Race Prejudice; none at all…It justifies and holds together more baseness, cruelty and abomination than any other sort of error in the world."[385] As Bell points out, although Wells sometimes used national and ethnic stereotypes, and occasionally racist language, he consistently rejected the authority of racial science as derived from eugenics and other Social Darwinist platforms throughout his career. For Wells, the claims of racial science were little more than "oil-lamp anthropology," carrying as little scientific credibility as mythology.[386]

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[382] W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells: Traversing Time,* 57.

[383] *A Modern Utopia,* 224.

[384] Ibid.

[385] "Race Prejudice," in *The Independent* 62 (Feb, 1907), 381-84.

[386] *Anticipations,* 124.

A Modern Utopia is Wells's most sustained attack on the sham racial science of Social Darwinism. In it, Wells argues that the "crude classifications and false generalisations" of racial science were the "curse of all organised human life."[387] He further suggests that widespread belief in racial science meant that the "vileness, the inhumanity, the incompatibility of alien races is steadily being exaggerated."[388] As a result, the Victorian era was alarmingly being driven by pseudoscientists who had naively "donned the scientific mantle of Darwin" for their racist causes.[389] Racial prejudice, writes Wells, was both "shaping policies and modifying laws," and leading the way to a "large portion of the wars, hardships and cruelties" of the Victorian age.[390]

To counteract such poorly reasoned prejudices, Wells turned to what he calls a pragmatic "philosophy of the unique."[391] In fact, pragmatic philosophy was Wells's answer not just to racial pseudoscience, but to the overly classificatory impulses of Social Darwinism in general. Duncan Bell argues that Wells cannot be properly understood without recognising his commitment to pragmatism.[392] Although somewhat less specific in terms of elucidating Wells's roots in pragmatic philosophy, both Parrinder and Wagar point us in a similar direction as Bell. Indeed, Wells had been influenced by Darwin's followers, and most prominently by his teacher in the field of Biology at the Normal School, T. H. Huxley. But like Huxley, Wells also saw that human social evolution had to become an "artificial" as opposed to a quasi-natural process; it had to become a

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[387] *A Modern Utopia,* 215, 219.

[388] Ibid, 219.

[389] Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 17.

[390] H.G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia,* 219.

[391] *A Modern Utopia,* 216.

[392] Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 14.

process in which humankind collectively took charge of its own future, repudiated the blood-thirstiness of nature, and found ways to ensure its survival and progress with the least possible cost to all of its children.[393] Society therefore needed to form its own pragmatic evolutionary paradigms, rather than naively and dangerously transposing the organic 'survival of the fittest' model without question or qualification.

In the Edwardian decade (1901-1910), Wells explicitly aligned with the philosophers William James and F. C. S. Schiller—arguably the leading European proponents of pragmatism at that time. In step with these theorists, Wells believed that pragmatism would lead the way to discovering the best "artificial" and ethical means for overseeing the process of human social evolution. Wells's own philosophical works from this period—*A Modern Utopia* (1905), *New Worlds For Old* (1908), and *First and Last Things* (1908)—as he informed Schiller in personal correspondence in 1908, were written on "sound pragmatic lines."[394] Essentially this meant that the works were arranged according to four major components: a nominalist metaphysics, a pragmatist theory of truth (roughly, as verification through experiment), a version of James's "will to believe" that helped to motivate Wells's strong advocacy of a future liberal-socialist utopia, and a conception of philosophy as dedicated to solving problems in order to facilitate better practice.[395]

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[393] W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells: Traversing Time,* 36.

[394] Quoted in Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 17.

[395] Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 4.

Nominalism was a key factor for Wells. He argues that the nominalist revolution "consists in the reassertion of the individual instance as against the generalisation."[396] Generalisation, classification, intellectualism, and abstraction were all philosophically suspect in the pragmatic-nominalist view. To Wells, nominalist pragmatism meant the "abandonment of infinite assumptions" and the "extension of the experimental spirit to all human interests."[397] Absolute truth was therefore conceived as utterly false and chimerical. Even Scientific "laws" were provisional hypotheses always in a state of "becoming," according to Wells.[398] These so called laws were fallible products of repeated experimentation and practical verification.

Ultimately, as Bell argues, Wells combined his pragmatic demands for epistemic humility and individualism with a hugely ambitious vision of how to shape human destiny.[399] While absolute truth might have been inaccessible, Wells contended that it was essential to develop political and moral ideals, for without them concerted human action was impossible. To this end, Wells combined principles of nominalist metaphysics and political pragmatism, leading toward his fervent belief in socialism and eventually to his obsession with the idea of a utopian world-state. But what did Wells's utopian world-state look like?

Wells published his thoughts on the viability of a socialist world order in *New Worlds For Old*, and followed it with *First and Last Things,* in 1908. He also joined and became an active member of the Fabian Society—a prominent group of socialist intellectuals; though he soon re-

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[396] "The Contemporary Novel" (1911), 163.

[397] *First and Last Things,* 43.

[398] Ibid.

[399] "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 6.

signed this post when he realised that he could not convert this group into a large and dynamic movement. Indeed, Wells was serious about a hybridised socialist movement on a global scale, and remained so throughout his long career. He revered the success of V. I. Lenin in successfully "evolving an extraordinarily similar scheme, the reconstructed Communist Party."[400] He also despised the ruthless capitalism and individualism of Western states. But Wells soon became critical of Marxism and the notion that class warfare could instigate a social equilibrium. As Wagar points out, he came to argue that both classical and Marxist economic theory must be "scrapped…and replaced by a truly scientific economics, embodying the latest insights of industrial psychology and scientific management."[401] One could easily confuse "scientific management" with notions of Social Darwinism. On this point, consider the wealthy American industrialist, Andrew Carnegie's, remarks on the scientific management of the Social Darwinian capitalist organism:

> We assemble thousands of operatives in the factory, in the mine…to whom the employer is little better than a myth. All intercourse between them is at an end… Under the law of competition, the employer of thousands is forced into the strictest economies, among which the rates paid to labor figure prominently, and often there is friction between the employer and the employed, between capital and labor, between rich and poor…and while the law may sometimes be hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department.[402]

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[400] H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), 566.

[401] *The Open Conspiracy: H.G. Wells on World Revolution* (2001), 14.

[402] Quoted in John Rieder, *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction,* 116.

In contrast with the likes of Carnegie, Wells was vehemently opposed to such strict divisions between capital and labor, between rich and poor. He himself had grown up as part of the lower-middle class, and according to Wagar, he never forgot his struggles to escape his "predestined incarceration" there; nor did he ever forget the plight of millions of others like him in Britain, or the needless misery and destitution of most of the people of Earth.[403] For Wells, scientific management of global order was therefore not a capitalist or Social Darwinist measure, but a pragmatic utopian paradigm with socialist roots.

Wells repeatedly foregrounded the importance of the pragmatist movement throughout his writing career. This perspective shapes the trajectories of both *A Modern Utopia* and *New Worlds For Old*. Further, in the autobiographical novel, *The New Machiavelli* (1910), the central character states that he has always been a pragmatist, and that this philosophy "bases itself upon a denial of the reality of classes, and of the validity of general laws."[404] By contrast, as Bell points out, the novel's antagonists, the Baileys, "classified everything," and also adhered to the crude 'realist' view that "classes were *real* and independent of their individuals."[405] As such, "they failed to comprehend the latent world and its possibilities."[406]

In Wells's utopian world-state, as underpinned by pragmatic philosophy, control of much of the economy would be transferred from private to public hands. In texts including *Anticipations* and *The Open Conspiracy* (1928), he developed the details of how a central authority

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[403] *H.G. Wells: Traversing Time, 16.*

[404] *The New Machiavelli,* 174.

[405] Duncan Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 6.

[406] Ibid.

should be set up to command the global monetary and financial systems. Diverging from Marxism, Wells did not believe that revolution and subsequent governance should be led by the working class. Rather, the new globalised regime would be formed and led by an elite of intelligent and creative recruits from across all classes. More specifically, Wells envisioned these creative types as the sorts of people who "understood in depth how the modern world functioned, and who had mastered the practical technical skills essential to keep it running."[407] They would therefore include physicians, engineers, scientists, skilled designers and artists, and managers of industry—all of whom were to be united across racial, cultural, and national lines "by the belief in a common theory of social order."[408]

The fact that Wells's formula for global revolution and governance fell largely on deaf ears, or that it was subsequently derided by critics and scholars for being reductive and overly sanguine, is largely beside the present point. It does become a factor when discussing Wells's connection to postcolonial contexts, but we are not at that stage yet. The point here is that Wells clearly believed in a quasi-socialist, intercultural, interracial, and interclass social model, and that he explicitly fought for this collaborative framework throughout his career. The pseudoscientific racial, cultural, and class biases of Social Darwinism, along with the naive mechanical and dispassionate ordering of society based on these biases, were thus at stark odds with Wells's pragmatic and open-minded world view. Perhaps, as pointed out above, this antipathy toward central Victorian ideals is somewhat obscured by Wells's at times stereotypically racist remarks. But when these remarks are placed in the context of Wells's relentless sociopolitical activism against

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[407] W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells: Traversing Time,* 18.

[408] H. G. Wells, *Anticipations,* 179.

the stereotypical racism of the age, one can see that in fact it is much more reasonable to read Wells not as a proponent of racial science but as an opponent of it. The question thus becomes, does Wells's staunch anti-Social Darwinism carry over into his fiction?

Social Darwinian Imperialist Contexts

To reiterate, the vocabulary of European culture throughout early history repeatedly reminds one that the racial Other is "inferior", or part of the "subject races" prone to "dependency" on authoritarian Anglo Masters.[409] G. L. Buffon's *Natural History* (1797), and Arthur de Gobineau's infamous *The Inequality of the Human Races* (1853), helped to enshrine these principles.[410] To go deeper still, Rutledge Dennis rightly points out that notions of racial inferiority and the association of race with intellectual capacity date back to Biblical contexts.[411] Crucially, however, it was not until the late nineteenth century that these racist notions took on an explicitly scientific configuration. As a result, racism was no longer just a wholesale belief without a logical framework, but a belief system supported and verified by pseudoscientific discourse. As Dennis argues, it was not that Social Darwinism created racial discrimination or oppressive behaviour; it simply enabled white imperialists, *laissez-faire* capitalists and industrialists, to more concretely justify longstanding ideological assumptions, policies, and behaviours toward racial Others and subordinate classes.[412]

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[409] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), 9.

[410] Full title of Buffon's text is *Barr's Buffon: Buffon's Natural History—Containing a theory of the Earth, a general history of man, of the brute creation, and of vegetables, minerals etc.* (1797).

[411] "Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race" (1995).

[412] "Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race" (1995).

In terms of arguing that racism assumed a decidedly different and apparently more scientific configuration in the Victorian era, let us first consider Michael J. Barany's revealing study. Barany demonstrates that efforts were increasingly made in the wake of Darwin's groundbreaking evolutionary theory to quantify racial difference using finite numbers. Numbers were used as "value-laden assemblages of ideas and practices that shape[d] theories, classifications and arguments" throughout the Victorian era.[413] Instead of anecdotes and instinctual beliefs about racial superiority-inferiority, then, Victorians endeavoured to draw a tighter cast around hierarchical racial distinctions using measurements, data and observations. These methods led to various numerical representations of race.[414]

On Barany's point, one could of course consider the pseudoscience of eugenics.[415] As Anne McClintock explains in *Imperial Leather*, the founder of eugenics, Francis Galton (1822-1911), appropriated Darwin's evolutionary model to create a strict classificatory "Morphological Tree of the Human Races."[416] A range of so called "scientific" criteria were put in place by Galton and others with the end result being, as McClintock writes, that "the features of the face spelled out the character of the race."[417] This tree of human order offered a natural genealogy of power in accordance with Darwin's Natural Law. The notion of a 'Morphological Tree' became increasingly popular as the nineteenth century progressed. On this point, McClintock writes that eugenics widely became figured as a linear, non-revolutionary progression, which

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[413] "Savage numbers and the evolution of civilization in Victorian prehistory" (2014), 243.

[414] Ibid, 240.

[415] Note that I consider eugenics at greater length in chapter three.

[416] *Imperial Leather,* 37.

[417] Ibid*,* 49.

naturally contained the human social hierarchy—racial and class differences were conceived as categorical distinctions made in nature.[418] The social hierarchy was therefore imagined as a natural, familial order—something like "paternal fathers ruling benignly over immature sons."[419]

Also leading the way toward data-driven methods for quantifying the racial hierarchy were philosophers and political thinkers such as Herbert Spencer. Spencer's work was immensely popular in both Britain and North America during the Victorian period. He argued as early as 1850 that "instead of civilization being artificial, it is part of nature—all of a piece with the development of an embryo and the unfolding of a flower. The modifications mankind have undergone, and are still undergoing, result from a law underlying the whole organic creation."[420] Spencer thus imagined society as another natural organism, and he subsequently embarked on a series of essays that based social progress securely on the most important theory of the period: the theory of evolution. As Robert Thorne writes, "what Spencer did in the decades following the 1850s was to give the organic analogy and functionalist thinking based on the biological concepts of structure, function, organism and adaptation" to "ideas in psychology, sociology, anthropology and political theory."[421] Spencer was the author of the phrase the "survival of the fittest," and in the name of this principle loosely appropriated from Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, he condoned "the starvation of the idle and the shouldering aside of the weak by the strong."[422]

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[418] *Imperial Leather,* 45.

[419] Ibid.

[420] *Social Statics: or, The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified and the First of Them Developed* (1850), 14.

[421] "Spencer and 'Inevitable' Progress" (1987), 19.

[422] Ibid, 21.

It is worth noting that Charles Darwin himself focused on the biological evolution of animal species, and almost never addressed the cultural or social implications of this theoretical paradigm in the human sphere. When he did, writes L. T. Hobhouse in *Democracy and Reaction* (1904), Darwin noted "that the development of the moral consciousness in man involves from the first a suspension of the blind struggle for existence."[423] Darwin thus gestured away from the view that the evolutionary model of nature would or should be applied in the social sphere. Even still, Spencer crudely reasoned that "Darwinist principles were intended to buttress the case that biological evolution could be equally applicable to human societies."[424]

Late in his life, Spencer was horrified to learn that Social Darwinism, of which he had been a major founder, had been used to justify imperialist policies and brutal colonialist mandates in places such as Jamaica and India.[425] According to Robert Hofstadter, Spencer was a vocal non-interventionist and anti-imperialist late into his career; he was a somewhat benevolent pacifist, on a rhetorical level at least.[426] Nevertheless, his principles of Social Darwinism undoubtedly helped to fuel the rationalisations behind some of the most shocking imperialist atrocities of the Victorian era. Additionally, nineteenth-century American industrialists and *laissez-faire* capitalists—or 'Robber Barons' as they are sometimes called—such Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, often defended their systems for accumulating wealth by citing Spencer's theories.[427] As established above, the entire principle of organisation in Carnegie's business phi-

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[423] *Democracy and Reaction,* 84-85.

[424] Rutledge Dennis, "Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race," 244.

[425] Robert Thorne, "Spencer and 'Inevitable' Progress," 22.

[426] *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1992).

[427] Robert Thorne, "Spencer and 'Inevitable' Progress," 19.

losophy was inherently Social Darwinist—he imagined his factories as organisms, with the lower class workers as little more than cogs in a wheel, utterly depersonalised and separated from their elite masters.

In light of this chapter's line of argument, it is important to further note how Social Darwinism and its inherently racist and classist ideologies, as derived from Spencer and others, largely came to inform Victorian imperialism. As James Morris writes in *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire* (1968), many imperialists took Spencer's ideas and interpreted the progress of the empire on evolutionary terms: "Britain, of course, was the fulfilment, *populus sapiens.* The self-governing colonies were great apes among the species… And down at the bottom, inchoate and utterly dependent, lay the primitive territories of Africa and Asia, dressed in scales."[428] According to Morris, Social Darwinists were thus infiltrating the centre of Victorian imperialist culture.[429]

In *Culture and Imperialism,* Edward Said makes only brief mention of how Social Darwinism *per se* influenced the imperial sphere. But the Social Darwinist implications are nonetheless clear when he writes that during the Victorian era the indolent native was figured more prominently than ever before by the British imperialist as "someone whose natural depravity and loose character necessitate a European overlord."[430] Said further draws upon the rhetoric and practice of several colonial-imperialist agents, including Lord Cromer, Hugh Clifford, and John

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[428] *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire,* 23.

[429] Ibid.

[430] *Culture and Imperialism,* 167.

Bowring, to affirm that such ideology was representative of imperialists at this time. In Said's perspective, then, a kind of institutionalised scientific racism had come to inform imperialism.

William L. Langer's *The Diplomacy of Imperialism* (1935) was a pivotal text in terms of popularising the notion that "biological interpretations of foreign policy" set the course for British and American imperialism in the late nineteenth century.[431] He writes:

> The tone of realism, not to say ruthlessness and brutality, that was so striking a characteristic of imperialism was due in a measure to the general cast of sociological thought prevailing at that time. A large number of contemporary writers remarked upon the tremendous vogue of Darwinian theories of social evolution. The phrases *struggle for existence* and *survival of the fittest* carried everything before them in the nineties.[432]

According to Paul Crook, Langer's argument that Social Darwinism set the course for Victorian imperialism is based on a "rather thin collection of genuinely Darwinistic British works on empire or foreign policy."[433] It is true that Langer's use of sources such as C. O. Ovington and Hobhouse is ironic, because these men were in fact predominantly against the crude transfer of Darwinist theory from nature to society. Nevertheless, Crook's antipathy toward Langer is, in my view, more semantic than anything else. Just because the words "Social Darwinism" did not often appear in the rhetoric of Victorian imperialists, it does not mean that they were not engaging its ideology. Nor does it mean that notions implicitly derived from Social Darwinism were not rife and threatening to ever more deeply infiltrate the imperial centre at this time. Michel Foucault makes this point emphatically:

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[431] *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902,* 86.

[432] Ibid, 86-87.

[433] "Social Darwinism and British "new imperialism"" (1998), 8.

> We can understand, first of all, the link that was quickly—I almost said immediately—established between nineteenth-century biological theory and the discourse of power. Basically, evolutionism, understood in the broad sense—or in other words, not so much Darwin's theory itself as a set, a bundle of notions (such as: the hierarchy of species that grow from a common evolutionary tree, the struggle for existence among species, the selection that eliminates the less fit)— naturally became within a few years during the nineteenth century not simply a way of transcribing a political discourse into biological terms, and not simply a way of dressing up a political discourse in scientific clothing, but a real way of thinking about the relations between colonization, the necessity for wars, criminality, the phenomenon of madness and mental illness, the history of societies with their different classes, and so on.[434]

To further emphasise the idea that imperialists held Social Darwinist views, one might turn to the opinions of H. F. Wyatt. Wyatt, who was the founder of the Imperial Maritime League, suggested that the degree to which Social Darwinist policies were adopted would dictate the rise or fall of the British Empire. The higher Anglo-Saxon race, in Wyatt's view, needed to continue superseding the lower races in the colonies by continuing to wage war against them in order to further expand imperial borders. Such action needed to be taken, according to Wyatt, because without constant assertions of dominance "the evolution of man [and society] would come to an end."[435] Moreover, in an essay entitled "The Ethics of Empire," Wyatt makes a case for brutal force against racial Others—force that is "unfettered by the haunting presence of unnecessary moral doubt."[436]

Wyatt follows other Victorian-era Social Darwinists in his assertion that constant war should be waged against lower peoples, and that it should be done so without moral obligation.

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[434] "Society Must Be Defended," in Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (Eds.), *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76* (2003), 256-257.

[435] "War as the Supreme Test of National Value" (1899), 216.

[436] "The Ethics of Empire" (1897), 521.

In the infamous *Natural Life From the Standpoint of Science* (1900), for example, Karl Pearson argues that the British Empire should mercilessly seek a quantitative approach whereby success was measured only in terms of capital and territory acquired from the colonies. It was therefore to be measured numerically and without empathy. No thought was to be given, in Pearson's view, to the cost of life among colonial subjects, nor to the pain and suffering of the colonised races. Racial Others were less than people, according to Pearson, who took his cues from eugenics; they were a lesser species to be exploited at the discretion of colonialists, and in the name of Natural Law.

Other Victorian imperialists, such as Lord Rosebery, used disturbing medical jargon to describe the racial Other in relation to a biological hierarchy, or 'Morphological Tree', of human beings. The British were apparently a "conquering and imperial race" whose duty it was to "inoculate the universe with [their] institutions," and keep the "colonial microbe" subdued.[437] Such dehumanising conceptions of race and racial hierarchies were alarming to some. Notable among them was T.H. Huxley—Wells's mentor.[438] J. A. Hobson's *Imperialism: A Study* (1902) also expresses great concern for the "powerful hold which biological conceptions have obtained over the pioneers in the science of sociology."[439] Hobson further points to the dire scenario in the colonies, where the validity of Social Darwinism was being used to defend "the righteousness of maintaining [power] to the point of complete subjugation or extermination [of] races and types of

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[437] Quoted in Paul Crook, "Social Darwinism and British "new imperialism"," 4.

[438] Paul Crook, "Social Darwinism and British "new imperialism"," 7.

[439] *Imperialism: A Study*, 162.

civilisation."[440] Still, sympathetic to the eugenics movement as Hobson was, he opposed the "spread of degenerate or un-progressive races" beyond their colonial outposts.[441] He also makes several crude pseudoscientific racial assumptions about the "primitive instincts" of various racial Others in *Imperialism.*[442] Even for a liberal thinker, as Hobson surely was during his era, the racist ideology derived from a background in eugenics and Social Darwinism still permeates his analysis. This further emphasises just how ubiquitous and pervasive pseudoscientific racism was at the time.

I am not arguing that Social Darwinism and its alarmingly dispassionate and brutal pseudoscientific racist ideology had wholly permeated imperialist designs during the Victorian era. I agree with Crook's assertion that imperialist policies and campaigns still largely appealed to more traditional theodicies and moralities at this time. I suggest only that the evidence discussed heretofore makes it clear that Social Darwinism was also guiding imperialism to a significant degree; and that the idea that it most definitely should do so to an even greater degree, as promoted by the likes of Pearson and Benjamin Kidd, was undoubtedly palpable during the late nineteenth century. This rising Social Darwinian imperialist context would have been especially apparent to a writer and political thinker such as H. G. Wells.

***Moreau* and *Worlds* in the contexts of Social Darwinist Imperialism**

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[440] Ibid, 163.

[441] Ibid.

[442] Ibid, 160-167.

With the above contexts in mind, I now want to argue that the character of Doctor Moreau represents the unfettered core of the Social Darwinian imperialist's ideology. From the opposite angle, he is perhaps also the manifestation of the monstrous apotheosis of this racist movement as conceived by anti-Social Darwinists such as Hobson and Huxley, who each had grave fears over the direction in which this amoral ideology could lead society. Of course, to accept this argument about Moreau is to first accept that the so called Beast Folk are clear manifestations of racial Others. As discussed above, I believe there is ample textual evidence to support that assertion. For further explicit clarification, one might look to Doctor Moreau's claim that the "Ape Man," who has been constructed from Gorilla parts, is "a fair specimen of the negroid type."[443] Moreau is thus clearly willing to bundle his creatures together with racial Others. Second, one must of course establish Doctor Moreau's distinct connections to the Social Darwinism movement, and to the horrifying scope of those connections.

Moreau feels literally no remorse for his terrible actions toward his racialised creatures. He differs from a character like Victor Frankenstein in this way. Victor's remorse is self-centred, but he nevertheless clearly feels a deep sense of regret following his heinous experiment. Moreau, by contrast, feels nothing at all toward the mutilated specimens that populate his island community. For example, when Prendick suggests that Moreau's vivisection experiments are depraved because of the pain they inflict on the creatures, Moreau dismisses him: "'Never mind that,' said Moreau. 'At least spare me those youthful horrors'."[444] But despite Moreau's explanation of why it is necessary to carry out such horrors, Prendick remains unconvinced: "'I still do

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[443] *Moreau,* 76.

[444] *Moreau,* 70.

not understand. Where is your justification for inflicting all this pain?'"[445] To which Moreau responds that sympathising with the creatures on account of their pain is a product of the "artificial modification and perversion of instinct" inherent in a moral education.[446] Moreau sees the pain of his creatures as "such a little thing," then, so negligible that it should be overlooked completely in the name of science.[447]

What does Moreau's total disregard for the pain and suffering of his racially Other creatures communicate to the reader—that Moreau is an irrational sadist, or a psychopath who feels no empathy toward other creatures who are conceivably also human? Are we thus to simply accept his actions as senselessly violent, as Prendick first interprets them? Or is there something else at play in Moreau's remorseless infliction of pain?

Moreau's belief that morality is a frivolous artificial construct, I argue, closely aligns him with Social Darwinian imperialists. We have already discussed how those such as Pearson and Wyatt wished to proceed in the oppression of colonised racial Others without moral obligation; but this point bears further discussion. In terms of the dehumanising and morality-free qualities of biological racism, Jessica Leigh Davies argues that it went so far as to delineate particular humans "as insects at the same time that it anthropomorphises those very beings into hyperbolic colonial others."[448] She further writes that such delineation represented the overall logic of the biological racism and Social Darwinism put to work during the Victorian era. On the one hand,

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[445] *Moreau,* 73.

[446] Ibid.

[447] *Moreau,* 71.

[448] "Life Expectancies: Late Victorian Literature and the Biopolitics of Empire" (2010), 39.

this paradigm dehumanised the Other, while on the other it simultaneously anthropomorphised them, thus producing "a species that is both like and unlike the human."[449] This separation of the Other from the white species, except where it was convenient to see them as human for labour purposes, amounted to an abandonment of moral obligation. As a result, the pain and suffering of colonial Others was largely overlooked because as animals, or insects, they were abstracted from moral values.

Creatures that were separated from humankind, and therefore from morality, were considered prime subjects for vivisection. The infamous French physiologist, Claude Bernard, led the charge in terms of arguing that animals could amorally be dissected whilst alive, if doing so contributed to scientific progress. Bernard did not suggest the vivisection of racial Others, though he did argue at one point that convicted felons might be viable candidates for vivisection procedures. But the link between the Victorian conception of the racial Other as quantifiably animalistic, inferior, and therefore abstract from moral obligation, and Bernard's widely publicised conception that animals who were devoid of moral agency should be remorselessly subjected to the cruelest acts imaginable, is suggestive of the subhuman status afforded to racial Others in Victorian times. Indeed it prompts the question: Did Social Darwinists, many of whom must have known of Bernard's procedures and arguments, consign racial Others by proxy to the category of those who should be vivisected by rendering them as animalistic and devoid of moral agency?

Through Moreau*,* Wells mirrors and responds to the alarmingly amoral Social Darwinist mood that was potentially paving the way toward such heinous acts as the remorseless vivisec-

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[449] Ibid.

tion of racial Others. Perhaps it is going too far to suggest that the situation would have led to the vivisection of human beings; or perhaps not. On this point, consider the notorious experiments purportedly carried out by Josef Mengele at the Auschwitz death camps during the Second World War. Mengele—often referred to as the 'Angel of Death'—maimed and eventually killed a range of Jewish and Roma ("gypsy," as they were called) subjects in the pursuit of quasi-scientific evolutionary progress. One should not overlook the fact that Mengele was operating on behalf of the Nazi party—a political party, as M.D. Bidiss points out, more ideologically committed to the pseudoscientific eugenicist view of the racial hierarchy than any other faction in human history.[450] Connections between the amoral Social Darwinist vivisectors Mengele and Moreau have not gone unnoticed. Lucius Shepard's harrowing short story "Mengele" (1989) is a condensed rewriting of Wells's novel, with the eponymous Doctor Mengele replacing Moreau. As Elana Gomel points out, this connection indicates more than just a postmodern recycling of plots; rather, it indicates "the ideological continuity between Nazism and the fin-de-siécle bio-ideologies reflected in Wells's great novel."[451]

In addition to espousing the amorality of the Social Darwinist, Moreau adopts this figure's penchant for pain—most vividly expressed through his acts of vivisection. In fact, the infliction of pain and torture on an inferior species in order to achieve evolutionary transcendence is at the heart of evolutionary theory itself. Darwin wrote, in 1860, of his inability to persuade himself "that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the bodies of Caterpillars, or that a cat

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[450] "The Politics of Anatomy: Dr Robert Knox and Victorian Racism" (1975), 245.

[451] "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime" (2000), 408.

should play with mice."[452] In light of this comment and others, I suggest that Elana Gomel is correct in asserting that one inescapable conclusion of Darwin's overall theory is that what stands out in terms of the processes of evolution is the recurrence of pain. She writes, "Natural selection works by discarding literally millions if not billions of lives in order to achieve even a minor adaptation, and this winnowing out of the unfit is accompanied by relentless suffering."[453] In inflicting so much pain on the inferior racialised Other during his experiments, then, Moreau is conceivably following Darwinian Natural Law. But by transposing these laws onto the human social sphere, as Moreau does, he also enacts the logic of Social Darwinism to an extreme degree—one that prefigures the profound cruelty enacted by the likes of Dr. Josef Mengele in the service of Hitler's governing principles.

As Gomel argues, pain and suffering became ennobled as the "tools of evolutionary transcendence" during the Victorian era, and in turn, they became the emotional bedrock of Social Darwinism.[454] Winwood Reade's *The Martyrdom of Man* (1872) suggests that at the centre of nature, of the 'survival of the fittest' paradigm, is the pain and suffering of lesser species. He argues that such pain and suffering should therefore be accepted in the social sphere if society is to be built in the name of progressive eugenics and Social Darwinism:

> …it is when we open the Book of Nature, that book inscribed in blood and tears; it is when we study the laws regulating life, the laws productive of development—that we plainly see how illusive is this theory that God is Love. In all things there is cruel, profligate, and abandoned waste. Of all the animals that are born only a few can survive; and it is owing to this law that development takes place. The law

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[452] Quoted in Elana Gomel, "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime," 409.

[453] "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime," 412.

[454] Ibid, 414.

> of murder is the law of growth. Life is one long tragedy; creation is one long crime.[455]

Growth, or progress, toward the pinnacle of evolution is therefore at the heart of the Social Darwinist's vision. The fact that growth is depicted by Reade as intrinsically intertwined with murder—"the law of murder is the law of growth"—essentially marks a vindication of murder in the name of social progress.

Instead of indignation, then, the "grim picture of a universal abattoir evokes admiration" among Darwinists and Social Darwinists alike, because it is interlaced with the inexorable ascendence toward evolutionary divinity.[456] Murder and torture allegedly move us forward from "the amoeba to the ape to the 'savage' to the European."[457] Moreau, the ultimate amoral torturer and murderer thus becomes the ultimate example of Social Darwinism. Repeatedly, and mercilessly, he transposes supposed Natural Laws of pain and murder onto the social sphere in the starkest ways through his vivisection experiments. In doing so, Moreau succeeds in totally shifting his focus from the "artificial" morality that encumbers society, thereby seeing his own cruelty, which is apparently congruous with natural cruelty, as sublime. The focus has thus been shifted by Moreau, writes Gomel, "from the individual body writhing in agony to the collective body of humanity which, by virtue of its sheer enormity, overwhelms the senses and drowns sympathy and pity in the calm contemplation of evolution's irresistible power."[458]

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[455] Quoted in Elana Gomel, "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime," 415.

[456] Elana Gomel, "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime," 397.

[457] Ibid.

[458] Ibid, 398.

Moreau apparently transcends to a state of nature itself through his amoral infliction of pain in accordance with Natural Law. As he explains to Prendick, "The study of Nature makes man at last as remorseless as Nature."[459] Indeed, he has reached this stage whereby he feels a sublime immunity from pain and pleasure, just like Natural Law: "Pain! Pain and pleasure—they are for us only as long as we wriggle in the dirt."[460] He has transcended this vision of man to become what Gomel calls the elevated "New Man" of natural principles, one defined by Natural Law exclusively.[461] To prove the extent to which he has reached a higher evolutionary stage, thus becoming a man who is beyond pain and morality, Moreau unflinchingly thrusts a penknife into his own thigh as he talks to Prendick. This gesture proves, as Gomel writes, that Moreau is "a body, true, but a body invulnerable to pain, impervious to agony, perfect and immortal, the body of the "One Man," the future goal of evolution."[462] Moreau himself reiterates this point: "Then with men, the more intelligent they become the more intelligently they will see after their own welfare, and the less they will need the goad [of pain] to keep them out of danger."[463] Moreau's only pleasure, so he claims, is in achieving "the strange colourless delight of…intellectual desires."[464] He has achieved this amoral numbness in his cold and calculated pursuit of painful evolutionary progress. His body has therefore become the ideal Social Darwinist body devoid of sensation and without interiority.

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[459] *Moreau,* 74.

[460] *Moreau*, 73.

[461] "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime," 409.

[462] Ibid.

[463] *Moreau,* 75.

[464] *Moreau,* 78.

George Romanes, a prominent scientist and writer during the late nineteenth century, writes that "it does appear that the scheme [of nature], if it is a scheme, is the product of a Mind which differs from the more highly evolved type of human mind in that it is immensely more intellectual without being nearly so moral."[465] It is as though he is describing Moreau's mind as well as that of Nature here; indeed they have conceivably fused. This "New Man" who is elevated above pain and morality in the name of evolutionary progress, thereby becoming the embodiment of evolutionary law itself, is configured as sacred by many Social Darwinists of the late nineteenth century. As Gomel writes, "Nature, as revealed by science, becomes the new Gospel, a guide to both private and public conduct."[466] Certainly the likes of Pearson, Reade, and Benjamin Kidd propagated prescriptions for the biological regeneration of human society "with the fervour of prophecy rather than the calmness of expert opinion."[467] This view would culminate in the ideological underpinnings of Nazism as the "New Man" of eugenics was transformed into the "New Man" of fascism on a terrifying scale. The infamous head of the Nazi Party Chancellery, Martin Bormann, made this point clear in arguing that "The power of nature's law… is what we call the omnipotent force, or God."[468] The Nazis imagined this God-like force of Natural Law, the "New Man", as inhabiting a "steel carapace".[469] Inhabiting the steel carapace signified stepping beyond morality and biological weakness to become the utterly impenetrable and invincible "New Man" of Natural Law.

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[465] Quoted in Elana Gomel, "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime," 410.

[466] "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime," 410.

[467] Ibid, 413.

[468] Quoted in Elana Gomel, "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime," 408.

[469] "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime," 408.

Certainly Moreau has been received by some critics as adopting this role of the Social Darwinist God. Frank McConnell, for example, interprets Moreau as a "post-Darwinian Christ."[470] To be sure, Moreau sees himself in this way as well. He offers, for example, a stereotypical recycling of the precepts of the "sacred science" of Darwinism when he says to Prendick: "Then I am a religious man, Prendick, as every sane man must be. It may be, I fancy, that I have seen more of the ways of the world's Maker than you—for I have sought His laws, in *my* way, all my life, while you, I understand, have been collecting butterflies."[471] Such games as "collecting butterflies" hide the true face of a stern amoral natural God immersed in pain on his path to evolution, according to Moreau.

As Prendick becomes convinced of Moreau's ideology, and of his cause to naturalise society through inflicting pain and death on the inferior species of the Beast Folk, he also comes to see Moreau as a clichéd God-like figure: "A white-faced, white-haired man, with calm eyes. Save for his serenity, the touch almost of beauty that resulted from his set tranquility and from his magnificent build, he might have passed muster among a hundred other comfortable old gentlemen."[472] Moreau's pitilessness is thus imagined not as senseless violence by either himself, Prendick, or (by extension) the Social Darwinists of the late nineteenth century, but as the amoral and unimpeachable power of nature.

Certainly Moreau's brutal and amoral actions toward racial Others align him with those other iconic creatures of Wells's making: the Martians in *Worlds*. The Martians are therefore

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[470] Quoted in Elana Gomel, "From Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele: The Biological Sublime," 413.

[471] *Moreau,* 70.

[472] *Moreau,* 59.

aligned with Social Darwinist principles and tropes as well. In fact, I would argue that they have even more deeply imbibed the central tenets of Social Darwinism than Doctor Moreau has, and that they in turn obliquely represent the ultimate state to which Moreau and the likes of Josef Mengele aspired. In *Worlds,* the figure of Moreau has been transformed or enhanced in the form of an army of Martians who set about eliminating inferior humankind and colonising Earth from the safety of their impenetrable machines—their steel carapaces. As the nameless narrator in *Worlds* points out, the Martians set about exterminating humanity "as men might smoke out a wasp's nest."[473] They do not slow or stop at perceiving the pain and suffering of the Other—that is, the pain of humankind. In fact, the Martians relentlessly dip humanity into something analogous to what Moreau calls the "bath of burning pain."[474] As the narrator states:

> They do not seem to have aimed at extermination so much as at the complete demoralisation and the destruction of any opposition. They exploded any stores of power they came upon, cut every telegraph, and wrecked the railways here and there. They were hamstringing mankind. They seemed in no hurry to extend the field of their operations.[475]

The Martians are thorough and methodical in their infliction of pain and death. As this excerpt makes clear, they are "in no hurry" to complete the painful extermination process. Their only priority is to utterly destroy humans and their means of reprisal. As the narrator remarks later in the novel, the Martians crush the town of Leatherhead and every soul in it without provocation, just "as a boy might crush an anthill in the sheer wantonness of power."[476] The Martians

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[473] *Worlds,* 90.

[474] *Moreau,* 78.

[475] *Worlds,* 105.

[476] *Worlds,* 173.

further utilise heat rays which turn humans into ash, and something called "Black Smoke" which presages some of the torturous effects of chemical weapons deployed during World War One. Those humans who are captured are used as food by the conquering Martians. They are not killed and eaten, however, but instead their blood is "run directly by means of a little pipette into the recipient canal" of the Martians.[477] This process is slow and, one would assume, both emotionally and physically excruciating.

The Martians are therefore, like Moreau, exemplars of the pain principle behind Natural Law. Moreover, the Martians also show absolutely no sympathy toward the human beings they drain of blood, as the narrator observes. This painful process is simply the optimal way for them to feed and survive, just as their scorched Earth policy is apparently leading toward the optimal result in terms of establishing the Martian colony. They have thus been "lifted above all these organic fluctuations of mood and emotions."[478] In turn they have become "a mere selfish intelligence, without any of the emotional substratum of the human being."[479] As such, they are able to kill and maim *en masse* without any conscience whatsoever.

Thus far it has been established that both Doctor Moreau and the Martians exemplify the brutal and amoral principles of Social Darwinists. But we must now ask, what is Wells's motivation for rendering them in this way? In doing so, did he intend to parallel unnatural Social Darwinism, or did he intend to represent the workings of Natural Law itself? Patrick Parrinder has argued that the amoral extermination of humanity by the Martians extrapolates from Wells's un-

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[477] *Worlds,* 125.

[478] *Worlds,* 126.

[479] *Worlds,* 127.

derstanding of the Darwinist principles of evolution in nature.[480] In that case, Wells is supposedly showing what it is like to be subjected to the brutality of amoral yet Natural Law, not to unnatural Social Darwinism. Through the lens of the English narrators, then, one inhabits the position of the slaughtered rabbit, or the unsympathetically slaughtered ant colony, to experience what it feels like to be subordinated by unimpeachable nature. John Rieder has also suggested that the novel might be read as a depiction of inter-species warfare and the subsequent eradication of an apparently lower species as part of brutal yet natural evolutionary processes.[481] In *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Ape* (1996), Peter Kemp similarly avers that Wells "qualmlessly entertained the idea of mass-extermination" in *Worlds* because it fit seamlessly with his deeply engrained belief and understanding in the overarching scheme of Natural Laws of evolution.[482] The extermination in *Worlds*, then, is apparently a natural event. Kemp's text is one of the more sustained efforts to insert Wells's early SF into the context of the evolutionary principles that Wells imbibed in his training under Huxley.

It has also been argued that Wells's purpose in writing *Worlds* was similar to those purposes of other "future war" genre writers of the Victorian age. In *Voices Prophesying War* (1992), I. F. Clarke, for example, argues that many writers from developed nations between 1870 and 1914, Wells included, imagined their countries being attacked and virtually wiped out by the invading hordes of a more highly evolved species.[483] By and large, argues Clarke, the point of

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[480] "Introduction" to *The War of the Worlds*" (2005), *xxii.*

[481] *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction,* 132.

[482] *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Ape: Biological Imperatives and Imaginative Obsessions* (1996), 219.

[483] The full title of Clarke's text is *Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars, 1763-3749.*

these future war texts was not to condemn the brutal principles of biological evolution, but to accept them and subsequently aid in the imagination of strategies and preparations through which developed societies could conduct ever-more sophisticated kinds of warfare in order to defend themselves. In other words, a text like *Worlds* was a call to arms for societies to become more highly evolved by creating increasingly sophisticated war machines. Doing so meant that they would be able to counteract any threat of extraterritorial overthrow. In this light, *Worlds* is read as not only accepting the inevitability of Natural Laws of evolution in the social sphere, but as pro-militarism and imperial expansionism.

But is the extermination and overthrow of humankind by the Martians really conceived as part of a natural evolutionary process by Wells? On the contrary, I suggest that *Worlds* does not naturalise the Martian ascendency; nor does it aim to sharpen societal dependence on a 'survival of the fittest' Social Darwinist mentality and on the colonial-imperialist war machine that goes with it. Instead, Wells shows that the amoral program of extermination waged by the Martians amounts to a crude imposition of Darwinist Natural Law onto the social sphere.

One might credibly make the case that *Worlds* is an allegory of Natural Law if the relationships between the Martians and humankind were analogous to relations between humankind and biologically inferior species—such as insects or lower mammals. By the same token, one could also make the case that *Moreau* is an allegory of Natural Law if the Beast Folk were not in fact imagined as racialised Others. In other words, one could make this case if the relationship was between two totally abstract forms of intellect and biology. Wells's narrator in *Worlds* alludes to this kind of dynamic when he equates the extermination of humankind by the Martians

to our own decimation of animal species such as the Bison or Dodo.[484] He also repeatedly refers to this relationship as analogous to that of human and insect. But there is another relationship dynamic mentioned in connection with the Martian-human one, and it is this dynamic that reveals Wells's intention: "The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years."[485] In this context, the Martians are to humankind what colonial-imperialist forces were to First Peoples such as Tasmanian Aboriginals. The dynamic is therefore shifted from natural inter-species struggle for survival, to racially motivated extermination.

To make this correlation, and to therefore suggest that Wells intended for his Martians to represent unnatural Social Darwinian racists, we must reliably establish the humanness of the Martians. At first glance it is difficult to do so because as the narrator states on first seeing the Martians up close, they are "the most unearthly creatures it is possible to conceive."[486] The narrator's initial anatomical descriptions bear this point out to some extent. On closer inspection, however, the narrator realises that despite their apparent Otherness, the Martians are not so dissimilar from humankind. Moreover, after having observed the creatures for a while he remarks that "it is quite credible that the Martians may be descended from beings not unlike ourselves, by a gradual development of brain and hands… at the expense of the rest of the body."[487]

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[484] *Worlds,* 9.

[485] *Worlds,* 9.

[486] *Worlds,* 124.

[487] *Worlds,* 127.

Instead of being a different species, then, the Martians are conceivably human beings who have evolved in a very specific direction. That direction has essentially rendered them, as the narrator succinctly remarks, as "merely heads."[488] Below their huge heads dangle two bunches of tentacles, which the narrator perceives as the remnants of human hands. The rest of the body, including legs and digestive tracts, are gone; or as the narrator puts it, the head and tentacles are "the sum of the Martians organs."[489] Such a dramatic mutation of human physiology raises the question, why has the human form mutated in this particular way? To which I believe Wells provides a clear answer.

The Martians are, according to the narrator, essentially human beings minus the emotional baggage. They are what is left when the human is distilled down to its cerebral parts exclusively. What has this distillation made them into in material terms? Aside from their physiological aesthetic disfiguration, one might look to the ways in which the Martians have merged with technological tools of warfare and destruction. As the narrator states, "Yet though they wore no clothing, it was in the other artificial additions to their bodily resources that their great superiority over man lay."[490] On this point, one can see that the Martians have merged with sophisticated machinery that works as a "complicated system of sliding parts moving small but beautifully curved friction bearings." These systems, deployed in *Worlds* as weapons of mass destruction and domination, seem to the narrator "infinitely more alive than the actual Martians" who control

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[488] *Worlds,* 126.

[489] *Worlds,* 126.

[490] *Worlds,* 129.

the machines.[491] Quite literally, then, these giant human brains have merged with their steel carapaces to become the cold, ruthless, and seemingly invincible, manifestations of the "New Man".

On the point of the calculating intellects of the Martians, one might look to the examples of their amoral infliction of pain and destruction provided above. But we might also look to the pure calculus, and the utterly unemotional and hyper-rational decision-making demonstrated elsewhere as further salient points. For example, it is reasoned by the narrator that the Martians gradually abandoned their human bodies over time, thus destroying most of their organic physicality and allowing it to instead be supplemented by artificial machines, because it made the most practical sense to do so. Moreover, they cannot enjoy the pleasures of sex, they do not experience the emotional fluctuations concomitant in poor bodily health, and they do not see the full array of colours perceived by human beings. These functions are unnecessary in the minds of the Martians who are governed by strict and unemotional reason exclusively. Indeed, much more practical and mostly artificial methods have been discovered, allowing them to ascend to an increasingly unemotional and cerebral state over time.

Through relentless demonstrations of cold intellect that occur without emotion or a humanistic sense of morality, and through the fact that their physical forms have literally merged with the cold and brutal machinery of domination, the Martians have evolved into the ideal Social Darwinist state. But they are nonetheless still extensions of ourselves, still essentially human creatures who oppress other humans. If Moreau was the beginning of the slide toward a pathological imbibing of the crude laws of Social Darwinism, then the Martians are the end result of this potential human trajectory. Rieder has made a similar point, arguing that the Martians can

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[491] *Worlds,* 130.

conceivably be read as not so much representative of "an extraterrestrial evolutionary development," but instead of the "future of mankind itself."[492] This type of mankind as represented by the Martians, argues Rieder, is conceivably a cold and monstrous outcome of a Social Darwinist model taken to the end of its course.[493]

But although the Martians are essentially men who, like Moreau, persecute their fellow human beings, how does one in fact know that Wells is unequivocally satirising the Martians as unnatural Social Darwinists? Could he instead be celebrating the ways in which they have clearly appropriated Natural Law? For that matter, how does one know that Wells is criticising Doctor Moreau for the same reasons? Could Wells be another Karl Pearson or Josef Mengele hiding behind the artifice of his prose?

Let us begin addressing these questions by looking at the Martians. For one, they are aesthetically monstrous creatures made so over time by their all-encompassing amoral and hyper-rational reasoning. The narrator is made physically ill by the sight of these creatures at first, and at one point their actions are so ghoulish that he cannot bear to describe them. The idea of becoming these Martians is therefore, as the narrator writes, surely "horribly repulsive to us."[494] The idea of becoming Moreau, the brutal and morality free vivisector, was surely equally repulsive to Wells's readers. Not so much because Moreau is aesthetically displeasing, physiologically speaking, but because he, like the Martians, is engaged in such relentlessly heinous acts that issue from his deeply imbibed Social Darwinist ideals. Any number of critics would concede, and

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[492] *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction,* 134.

[493] Ibid.

[494] *Worlds,* 20.

have conceded, that both Moreau and the Martians are monsters, and that Wells intended it that way.[495] Given the relentless horror of these characters, how is there scope to read these novels as anything but critiques of the central antagonists and their motivations?

One might plausibly argue that just because Wells clearly depicts both Moreau and the Martians as monstrous figures, it does not necessarily mean that he is criticising them. After all, it was the way of Natural Law to act monstrously in the process of evolution. Perhaps, then, Wells's characters were conceived as simply mirroring nature in their persecution of racially Other humans. What ultimately substantiates the view that both Moreau and the Martians are intended as unnaturally monstrous figures is neither their physical appearances nor their heinous and amoral crimes against humanity. It is the fact that they utterly fail to live up to the infallible promise of the 'survival of the fittest' paradigm they so deeply adopt. The fact, I argue, that the Martians end in ruin, and that Moreau cannot eradicate what he calls "mark of the beast,"[496] exposes these figures for what they are: not infallible Natural Law representatives, but embodiments of those who crudely appropriate the biological paradigm and apply it to the social sphere.

In both *Moreau* and *Worlds* it appears, at first glance, as though the Social Darwinists might in fact be true embodiments of the all-encompassing sacred science of Natural Law. It does seem, for example, as though Moreau actually masters the chemical rhythms of his creatures, thereby sculpting natural form into his own shapes and wielding Natural Law for himself. Perhaps, then, McConnell's description of him as a "post-Darwinian Christ" is accurate; and by

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[495] Paul Cantor and Peter Hufnagel, "The Empire of the Future"; Robert Philmus and Darko Suvin, *H.G. Wells and Modern Science Fiction* (1977); and Peter Kemp, *H.G. Wells and the Culminating Ape: Biological Imperatives and Imaginative Obsessions*.

[496] *Moreau,* 78.

the same token, perhaps Prendick's framing of Moreau as the iconic male figure of divinity is warranted. The Martians appear to be even more infallible and God-like masters of nature. The conflict between them and humankind is perceived by the narrator not as "a war, any more than there's a war between men and ants."[497] Their intelligence and power is so utterly aligned with the pure and complete logic of Natural Law that they have achieved infallible control over existence. Indeed they have apparently worked out and even transcended biological nature through their artificial machines; and through the "perfection of [their] chemical devices."[498] Through these seemingly perfect devices, the Martians have apparently superseded the slow processes of natural selection, thus artificially speeding the way to physical and biological diminution until all that is left is the brain—the single "cardinal necessity."[499] They are not just Natural Law, then, but artificially enhanced versions of nature. They have achieved the ability to tweak and tamper with evolutionary processes, and in turn, they have become embodiments of Natural Law and more.

Eventually, however, serious cracks in the idea that these figures represent Natural Law emerge. Moreau cannot "burn out all the animal," as he remarks to Prendick.[500] Despite the fact that he repeatedly vivisects and re-sculpts animals into racialised human-like creatures, something constantly eludes his control:

> It is in the subtle grafting and reshaping one must do to the brain that my trouble lies. The intelligence is often oddly low, with unaccountable blank ends, unex-

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[497] *Worlds,* 152.

[498] *Worlds,* 127.

[499] *Worlds,* 127.

[500] *Moreau,* 78.

> pected gaps. And least satisfactory of all is something that I cannot touch, somewhere—I cannot determine where—in the seat of the emotions. Cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange hidden reservoir to burst suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature with anger, hate, or fear.[501]

As Doctor Moreau notes, the central issue is that he cannot penetrate the secrets of the brain and manipulate them as he ideally would like to. He thus cannot go beyond the level of crudely imitating human form. In fact, he does not even remotely understand what is missing in his practice, nor what lies at the root of his problems in this area of brain mapping. Instead, he is effectively groping in the dark—stabbing and dissecting one creature after another in the vain hope that he will stumble upon the answer to what is certainly a deeply complex problem.

In light of the fact that Moreau is ill-equipped to shape the brain into human form, the Beast Folk begin to regress toward their original selves: "As soon as my hand is taken away from them the beast begins to creep back, begins to assert itself again."[502] Ultimately, the remaining Beast Folk murder Moreau and revert fully to their original animal forms—a pig, ape, sloth, and so on. Nature therefore reasserts its provenance, and in the end nothing material is left of Moreau's experiments.[503] Literally all that is left behind is Prendick's memory of the horrendous trail of pain and terror inflicted by Moreau. Moreau's experiments are thus finally rendered as pointless and senselessly violent by Wells. Nature has reclaimed its territory in full, and Moreau consequently stands as the supremely arrogant and naive figure in the novel who never in fact usurped the role of nature, but succeeded only in repeatedly inflicting tremendous amounts of physical and psychological trauma through his crude appropriation of nature's ideals. Through

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[501] *Moreau,* 78.

[502] *Moreau,* 78.

[503] *Moreau,* 5.

the ultimate humiliation and failure of Moreau, Wells announces that the text has in fact been a starkly critical satire of Social Darwinism all along.

The God-like Martians are also exposed as not truly being able to understand or wield Natural Law when they are abruptly destroyed by nature. Moreover, it is bacteria that destroys them—"the humblest things that God, in his wisdom, has put upon this earth."[504] Far from adopting or usurping the all-encompassing power of Natural Law, then, the Martians are obliterated by the simplest natural organisms. Their utter ineptitude when it comes to the application of total knowledge and power over existence is thus demonstrated. The genocide of their fellow human beings, coupled with their artificially mutated biological form, is thereby exposed by Wells as nothing more than the dire results of unnatural Social Darwinism. Like Moreau, they leave behind only the physical and psychological trauma of having committed "reckless slaughter", as the narrator puts it in the novel's epilogue.[505] Senseless pain and anguish are the only legacies of Social Darwinism, as Wells sees it; that, and the utter humiliation of having been so comprehensively rebuffed and destroyed by the Natural Law which the Martians had claimed to have distilled.

In considering the sound humiliation of the Social Darwinist agents of *Moreau* and *Worlds,* one does not find ambivalence or advocacy of the Victorian colonial-imperialist project. Instead, one finds relentlessly stark satire of the ideologies that largely underpinned this period of imperialism. These are two very vivid and powerful satires of Social Darwinist imperialism that

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[504] *Worlds,* 168.

[505] *Worlds,* 178.

serve to bolster Wells's later claims that ethical solutions must be utilised to shape the social sphere because biopolitical ones invariably amount to crude and deadly social outcomes.

Wells in Postcolonial Contexts

In conclusion, I would like to briefly make the point that although Wells was fundamentally opposed to Social Darwinist imperialism, it nonetheless remains difficult to read either *Moreau* or *Worlds* in postcolonial contexts. Whereas Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* clearly establishes a sociopolitical paradigm that promotes alterity, or Otherness, Wells's SF does not. He did, as Duncan Bell points out, consistently intend to "expose the existing contingency of institutions (such as property) and values (such as capitalist hyper-competitiveness), and to help fabulate more attractive alternatives to help guide human action."[506] In *The Future In America* (1906), for example, Wells himself writes: "It is curious how little we, who live in the dawning light of a new time, question the intellectual assumptions of the social order about us…only by correcting [its] ideas, changing ideas and replacing ideas are any ameliorations and advances to be achieved in human destiny."[507] Clearly he intended to propose alternatives to the imperialist status quo, but it is the nature of these alternatives that problematise any clear postcolonial reading of Wells's SF.

As we have established, Wells's sociopolitical agenda was geared toward establishing a socialist utopia. In theory, this idea implies an egalitarian future devoid of pain, suffering and sorrow for all races and creeds; it therefore seemingly does bolster the interests of all classes and races by abolishing social hierarchies. In this light it seems as though Wells's SF, which cleaved

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[506] "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 14.

[507] *The Future In America,* 101-2.

closely to his sociopolitical agenda, may in fact lend itself to postcolonial readings. Moreover, Wells clearly established himself as deeply opposed to both institutional racism and sexism during his career.[508] Despite what at first might read as a postcolonial agenda, however, gives way to the fact that under the surface Wells retained an elitist and Eurocentric viewpoint throughout his career. His "modern utopia" was decidedly European in its values; it was designed as an "intensely personal Utopia of a Western Republic."[509] To be sure, this utopia would rescue black and white, man and woman, from the scourge of what Wells regarded as the deep ignorance of racial and sexual persecution. In doing so, it would place these peoples on equal footing with white European males from a sociopolitical standpoint. But it would do so by integrating the Other into a devoutly Western version of utopianism.

There are no considerations of alternate systems of government by Wells, or, say, Eastern philosophical perspectives. Instead he cleaves only to the socialism of Marx, and to the pragmatism of Schiller and William James, in formulating his egalitarian world order. Doing so amounts to an incoherent account of equality, and to a Western utopian perspective that overlooks alternatives in its formulation.[510] Additionally, Wells's utopian system, well intentioned though it was, posits the idea that European 'efficients' would in all likelihood be charged with devising the most equitable policies on behalf of Other peoples. Calibrated by European 'efficients', these policies would provide strong safeguards against the "merciless obliteration of the weak."[511] The

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[508] *A Modern Utopia*; and *The Future In America*.

[509] H. G. Wells, "The So Called Science," 217.

[510] "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," 22.

[511] *Anticipations,* 168.

non-European was weak because he or she had no longstanding tradition of Western education, according to Wells. They would perhaps, with time, be brought along to adopt their place on equal footing with the efficient whites. But in the interim they were to be cared for and nurtured in the new Western utopia.

Wells's myopic utopian perspective would apparently also oversee not just the enculturation of the non-European by Western values, but the obliteration of any alterity over time:

> It will aim to establish…a world-state with a common language and a common rule…It will tolerate no dark corners where the people of the abyss may fester, no vast diffused slums of peasant proprietors, no stagnant plague-preservers. Whatever men may come into its efficient citizenship it will let come—white, black, red or brown; the efficiency will be the test.[512]

Wells's naive belief that white Europeans such as himself would establish this efficient culture of equality for the all the world's people, and that in the process all other cultures would and should be abandoned for the greater good, is testament to the fact that alterity did not factor into his thinking. He was compassionate toward non-Europeans; and he also believed that they should be considered equals. But the doctrine of that equality needed to be constructed by the European exclusively, not by the European working in conjunction with the Other, or heaven forbid, by the non-European alone. Wells is guilty of adopting the classic gaze of what Edward Said famously calls 'Orientalism' here. That is, he takes on the role of a white European who constructs and facilitates the Oriental, or non-European, on behalf of the unheard voice or culture of Otherness.

The postcolonial author, by contrast, attempts to prepare us for something other than conventional Western imagination, as Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal point out.[513] Or as Robert

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[512] *Anticipations,* 177.

[513] "Introduction" to *Science Fiction, Imperialism, and the Third World,* (2010), xv.

Young notes, postcolonial literature "seeks to intervene, to force its alternative knowledges into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west."[514] Certainly Wells does not take up the alternate sociopolitical perspectives that are endorsed by these postcolonial scholars. Instead he suppresses and aims to speak for the Other in his quest for equality. He does, however, fulfil the postcolonial mandate to some extent, in that, he unquestionably contests what Ania Loomba calls "colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism."[515] Still, it remains nonetheless difficult to situate Wells in any postcolonial context due to his profoundly western vision of equality.

Despite not being able to situate Wells and his SF in postcolonial contexts, however, it is nonetheless important to have situated him firmly in the anti-imperialist tradition, as this chapter has aimed to do. Doing so grounds the sociopolitical legacies of *Moreau* and *Worlds* in their rightful contexts, and shows how such texts insightfully reveal the contours of specific imperialisms. It also brings closer to the forefront the notion that a powerful anti-imperialist trajectory has taken root within the field of Anglo-American SF since the inception of this sub-genre. We have thus far located the seminal works of two vital SF writers on this continuum, and in the third chapter of this dissertation, I would like to turn to another author whose SF novels have also largely been overlooked or dismissed in relation to specific imperialist contexts: J. G. Ballard.

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[514] Quoted in Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal, "Introduction" to *Science Fiction, Imperialism, and the Third World,* xviii.

[515] *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998), 12.

CHAPTER THREE: Biopolitical Imperialism in J. G. Ballard's Early Science Fiction

Prior to the Japanese occupation of Shanghai in 1937, the city had been a space of "constant negotiations," writes Ackbar Abbas; "a polycentric, decentred city controlled by many different hands."[516] It was occupied by more than fifty national groups, and it had developed what Abbas calls its very own "cosmopolitanism of extraterritoriality."[517] Belinda Kong explains this concept of polycentric extraterritoriality, writing that prewar Shanghai was "neither subject to the sole power of the country in which it was located geographically nor to any one power that claimed it as a semi-colonial territory."[518] As such, it could identify "along plural lines, among plural states and centres of power."[519] It was a vast community where life "most visibly organise[d] itself into different permutations through self-governance, sometimes along seemingly "unnatural" fault lines, but ultimately on the base line of pure or naked human life."[520] As a young man, J. G. Ballard experienced this highly diverse and decentralised social order (or disorder) of Shanghai.[521] He also witnessed the complete obliteration of it from the late-1930s onwards, the subsequent rigour with which the Japanese established their totalitarian imperialist control of the city, and the devastation of that order by a new imperial power at the end of the Second World War.

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[516] "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong" (2000), 774.

[517] Ibid.

[518] "Shanghai Biopoliticians: Wartime Colonial Cosmopolis in Eileen Chang's 'Love in a Fallen City' and J. G. Ballard's 'Empire of the Sun'" (2009), 293.

[519] Ibid.

[520] Ibid, 294.

[521] Ballard was born in Shanghai in 1930, and lived there until 1945 when his family returned to England.

The Japanese prison camps surrounding Shanghai, in which the Ballard family and other British delegates were interned during the Second World War (from 1943-1945), epitomised what may be called biopolitical imperialist order. Ballard famously recapitulates this order in the semi-autobiographical *Empire of the Sun* (1984). Throughout *Empire,* the character of Jim repeatedly remarks on the unflappable discipline and rigour of the Japanese soldiers as they carried out their duties in the camp. They are calculated and amoral, as demonstrated toward the end of 'Part One' when the young Jim watches as lines of starving Chinese prisoners are literally worked to death in laying the runway to Langhua airport: "laying their own bones in a carpet for the Japanese bombers who would land upon them."[522]

In *Empire,* the rigour of the imperial soldier is backed up by the clearly defined boundary markers of the Langhua camp. The camp is ordered by the Japanese according to national and racialised hierarchies. As Kong puts it, the novel "manifests a hyper-consciousness of ethnic and national identity markers, so that even the distant cry of a child gets distinctly marked as "British"."[523] Further, the British prisoners are treated much better by their Japanese captors than the Chinese prisoners. Jim is given food and accommodation by the Japanese, while the Chinese are worked to the bone and killed on a whim in accordance with their low biopolitical status. The former extraterritoriality of Shanghai is literally abolished and reordered hierarchically as well. In the place of extraterritoriality stands a proliferating set of boundaries and borders marked by images of barricades, fences, thresholds, gates, and checkpoints. The spatial imagination of the characters in *Empire of the Sun,* especially Jim's imagination, becomes colonised on the strictest

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[522] *Empire of the Sun,* 123.

[523] Belinda Kong, "Shanghai Biopoliticians," 294.

possible terms as a result. Ultimately, the world of the camp is one that aligns with Stephen Toulmin's description of classical Greece's ideal cosmopolis in which the orders of nature and society meet and unite fully.[524] In other words, it is a consummate microcosm of biopolitical imperialism.

The concept of the 'biopolitical' requires some explanation here. The key theorist in terms of understanding biopolitics, or 'bio-power', is Michel Foucault. One could of course point to Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995) as a key work of biopolitical theory as well. But I want to focus specifically on Foucault's argument as expressed in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: The Will to Knowledge* (1976). I will examine this text in more detail as it becomes relevant to do so later in this chapter, but for now it is important to simply underscore some key tenets and definitions as they will frame much of the discussion moving forward. One might immediately ask, what does sexuality have to do with biopolitics? To which Foucault answers that deployments of biopolitical power were directly connected to control of the body.[525] Body control, or sex control, is thus a metaphor for a broader biopolitical apparatus of domination.

Understanding sexuality as a metaphor for a broader biopolitics, argues Foucault, comes from the recognition that it

> was at the pivot of the two axes along which developed the entire political technology of life. On the one hand it was tied to the disciplines of the body: the harnessing, intensification, and distribution of forces, the adjustment and economy of energies. On the other hand, it was applied to the regulation of populations… It fitted in both categories at once, giving rise to infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, extremely meticulous orderings of space, indeterminate medical or

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[524] *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (1990), 67-68.

[525] *The History of Sexuality,* 153.

> psychological examinations, to an entire micro-power concerned with the body. But it gave rise as well to comprehensive measures, statistical assessments, and interventions aimed at the entire social body or at groups taken as a whole.[526]

In addition to illustrating the notion that addressing sexuality is also a way of interrogating broader social contexts, Foucault points to some biopolitical parameters and definitions in this passage. To reiterate, biopolitics equates to "infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, extremely meticulous orderings of space, indeterminate medical or psychological examinations, to an entire micro-power concerned with the body" and social body alike.

Critically, these infinitesimal biopolitical controls led to the instigation of a 'science' of sexual sterilisation and classification from the mid-nineteenth century onwards—what Foucault calls a '*scientia sexualis'*. This s*cientia sexualis* established itself as the supreme authority in matters of hygienic necessity, "taking up the old fears of venereal affliction and combining them with the new themes of asepsis, and the great evolutionist myths with the recent institutions of public health; it claimed to ensure the physical vigor and the moral cleanliness of the social body; it promised to eliminate defective individuals, degenerate and bastardized populations."[527] Biopolitical agents, such as the eugenicists, used the *scientia sexualis* to justify the racism of the state; to ground this racism in truth.[528] As a result, racism adopted a 'biologising' statist form in the late nineteenth century.[529] Social divisions were thus clearly and intricately drawn along

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[526] *The History of Sexuality*, 145-6.

[527] *The History of Sexuality*, 54.

[528] Ibid.

[529] Ibid, 149.

racial lines, but they were also drawn along lines of degeneracy, moral cleanliness, bastardisation, physical and mental fitness, class and gender, to name but a few modes of segregation.

Overall, biopolitical frameworks were widely utilised at a social level—becoming the key theme of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century hegemonic politics, according to Foucault.[530] Of course, Nazism provides the ultimate example of this type of framework in action, as I will discuss later on. Under such regimes, biopolitical controls were not just administered via segregation measures, but through a whole series of 'measuring' interventions and strict regulatory controls; by a comprehensive "administration of bodies and [a] calculated management of life."[531] For example, rigorous biopolitical administration dictated the arrangements of prison camps (or concentration camps) around strictly ordered and policed boundary markers. Perhaps more importantly, it envisioned the arrangement of the entire social body in a similar way—as held within a rigorously formulated and tightly controlled hierarchy. It also, according to Foucault, heavily influenced the highly prescriptive and 'biologising' modes of psychoanalysis.[532] Biopolitics, then, seemingly became a strict and all-encompassing social power grid: a "whole politics of settlement (*peuplement*), family, marriage, education, social hierarchisation, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health, and everyday life."[533]

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[530] Ibid, 146.

[531] Ibid, 139.

[532] *The History of Sexuality*, 149.

[533] Ibid.

Of course, the biopolitical structures of Japanese imperialism crumbled with the detonation of the atomic bomb over Nagasaki, in 1945. In *Empire of the Sun,* Jim perceives this event as an atomic "flash of light" that produces a "second sun" and a "pale halo" on the horizon.[534] After the atomic flash, Jim walks along the open road back toward Shanghai, along which he sees the junkyard ruins following the abrupt exodus of the Japanese military. The world Jim inhabits has been returned to a kind of anarchy, though it is much more apocalyptic than pluralistic prewar Shanghai had ever been. The road—this newly opened and apocalyptic landscape—is figured as "an empty meridian circling a planet discarded by war."[535] Alongside it are "bombed-out trenchworks and blockhouses" stretching into paddy fields that are "riddled with bomb craters."[536] It is at this moment that Jim and the others around him revert back to the barest state of species identity. The "veneers of human beings' self-brandings, such alibis as empire, nation, and race…come undone in the space of the fallen polis."[537] This naked status continues until Jim is able to perceive the emergence of something new in the wake of nuclear destruction toward the end of *Empire of the Sun.*

'Part Three' of the novel imagines the rise of a new American imperialism out of the ashes of the old British and Japanese empires. Jim wanders through the Shanghai wasteland in the final stages of the text, as though he himself were an atomic survivor. He acknowledges that "Peace had come," but also senses that "it failed to fit properly."[538] Instead of proper peace there

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[534] *Empire of the Sun,* 210, 228.

[535] Ibid, 220.

[536] Ibid, 216.

[537] Belinda Kong, "Shanghai Biopoliticians," 294.

[538] *Empire of the Sun,* 235.

is a sense of foreboding about the onset of the new imperialist landscape: "He was sure now that the Second World War had ended, but had World War III begun?".[539] Emblematic of the new imperialist power is of course the American atomic bomb, but also the American ships that are docked in the Shanghai harbour where Jim is finally reunited with his parents at the end of the novel. We may conceive of a transition between imperialist powers here as Jim moves from the biopolitical Japanese sphere to the awe-inspiring, and yet, awful technological might of a new American empire. Behind this transition is an expanding spectre of devastation and apocalyptic possibilities, as Jim goes from witnessing biopolitical genocide to the even greater devastation of nuclear fallout. There is a sense that the new empire will preside over the fate of the planet, and ultimately, its obliteration; in other words, a sense of what Robert Jay Lifton calls "ultimate annihilation—of cities, nations, the world," and a "profound sense of *death in life.*"[540]

It is this kind of imperialist transition that is played out over the course of Ballard's exceptional career, not just in *Empire of the Sun.* In his early SF novels—*The Drowned World* (1962)*, The Drought* (1965) (otherwise known as *The Burning World*)*,* and *The Crystal World* (1966)—Ballard metaphorically deconstructs biopolitical imperialism in order to reconfigure human consciousness and identity in a landscape of apocalypse and new psychological possibilities. Later, in his mid-period novels *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), *Crash* (1973) and *Hello America* (1980)*,* he shifts to analyse the deconstruction of American techno-spectacle imperialism in order to dissect some of the apocalyptic physical and psychological effects of this culture. Ballard, then, is a writer deeply invested in imperialist contexts and effects. It is a sensibility

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[539] Ibid, 265.

[540] *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (1967), 14, 27.

rooted in his childhood experience of Shanghai as it transitioned from pluralism to biopolitical imperialism; and further, as it transitioned to an apocalyptic vacuum and wasteland following the atomic bomb; and finally, to a sense of new and perhaps even more threatening imperialism with the arrival of the Americans.

Ballard was himself often eager to place his work in the imperialist contexts of his youth. During a 1994 interview, for example, he stated that virtually all of his fiction can be linked to his childhood in Shanghai, and particularly to those years of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945).[541] It took roughly forty years for him to write explicitly about his experiences of Shanghai in *Empire of the Sun*, but, notes Ballard in retrospect, he had really always been writing about it, always attempting to excavate and examine those childhood experiences under Japanese imperialist rule: "Although I was writing something nominally called science fiction, set in the future, I was really in many ways writing about the past, and there are elements in all my novels of my China background."[542] Moreover, Ballard suspected that without this Shanghai background he probably would not have gone on to become a writer at all, such was its importance to his work.[543]

Post-Second World War American techno-spectacle imperialism was repeatedly, albeit obliquely, referenced by the author in relation to his work as well. From *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970) onwards, notes Ballard, much of his fiction is steeped in the all-encompassing techno-spectacle culture of the United States. In the next chapter, I will discuss how the three mid-period

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[541] "J. G. Ballard interview with the BBC" (1994).

[542] "Writers in Conversation: J. G. Ballard" (1984).

[543] "Face to Face: an interview with J. G. Ballard" (1989).

novels mentioned above draw upon the atomic bomb and the "nightly atrocities" shown on television in order to highlight the spectre of American techno-spectacle imperialism.[544] In effect, these novels, as Ballard writes in the introduction to *Hello America,* show that "However hard we resist, our dreams still carry the legend "Made in U.S.A"."[545] For now, though, I want to focus on how three of Ballard's early eco-disaster novels, *The Drowned World, The Drought* and *The Crystal World* each specifically address biopolitical imperialist contexts.

Ballard: The Critical Field

Despite Ballard's childhood and his various references to the imperialist contexts of his fiction, the vast majority of Ballard scholarship has overlooked connections between his novels and imperialism. *Empire of the Sun,* of course, has often been noted for its imperialist themes. But Ballard's earlier SF is usually divorced from this context and viewed on other terms by scholars. Famous early SF critics, such as James Blish and Peter Nicholls, dismissed Ballard as little more than a nihilist, albeit a stylish one. Blish writes that in reading Ballard's early eco-disaster novels, one is "under absolutely no obligation to do anything about it but sit up and worship it";[546] while Nicholls argues that Ballard's oeuvre advocates the meaningless and sudden deaths of "yourself and those you love."[547] His nihilism, argues George Barlow, is exemplified by his obsessive and rudderless "representations of mutilation, suicidal passivity, and the embrace, the positive will-

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[544] "BBC profile: J. G. Ballard" (2003).

[545] *Hello America* (1980), iv.

[546] *More Issues at Hand* (1970), 128.

[547] "Jerry Cornelius at The Atrocity Exhibition: Anarchy and Entropy in New Wave Science Fiction" (1975), 31.

ing, of death."[548] Ballard himself pushed back against these arguments in a 1976 interview, suggesting that his stories are not "disaster-oriented," but are instead about "psychic fulfilment."[549] Really, states Ballard, "I'm trying to show a new kind of logic emerging, and this is to be embraced, or at least held in regard."[550] Subsequently, scholars such as Gregory Stephenson began to argue that Ballard's novels were positive narratives of psychic transcendence, not narratives of pessimistic nihilism. There was mystical-psychological fulfilment to be had in Ballard's work, the discovery of new paradigms that lead us away from rational thinking and towards enlightenment.

In *Out of the Night and Into the Dream* (1991), Stephenson argues that Ballard is a mystic, an explorer of transcendence on the lookout for an ontological Eden.[551] Further, he writes that Ballard's fictions "subvert ego-consciousness in favour of a timeless inner landscape that is barred from our view by the meretricious rationality of modern culture."[552] According to Stephenson, this inner-landscape is a pastiche of archaic mythic structures, the landscapes of English romanticism, and surrealist art. In the end it leads toward what Roger Luckhurst calls a "religiose extreme" encoded by either a "pseudo-Jungian-Christian mishmash of transcendence," or a Freudian entropic death-drive consciousness.[553] It is not a playful subversion either; instead,

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[548] Quoted in Roger Luckhurst, "The Many Deaths of Science Fiction: A Polemic" (1994), 36.

[549] "J. G. Ballard interview with James Goddard and David Pringle" (1976), 40.

[550] Ibid.

[551] Full title is *Out of the Night and Into the Dream: A Thematic Study of the Fiction of J.G. Ballard.*

[552] W. Warren Wagar, "A Review of *Out of the Night and Into the Dream*" (1992), 261.

[553] Roger Luckhurst, "The Many Deaths of Science Fiction: A Polemic" (1994), 36.

Ballard is quite serious about the need to seek salvation outside of space and time. The specific motives behind why Ballard seeks this inner-salvation are all but meaningless as far as Stephenson is concerned. In fact, he pays little attention to the external catalysts for this psychological transcendence, besides occasionally referring to it as a meretricious modern culture. Lawrence J. Firsching is also uninterested in the "external" politics of Ballard's early novels. In his article, "J. G. Ballard's Ambiguous Apocalypse" (1985), he argues that specific political structures and / or social frameworks are irrelevant. What counts in Ballard are the intriguing ways in which the characters of his eco-disaster novels retreat into various states of psychic transcendence. The external world matters only insofar as it signifies the approach of certain death and psychological entropy.[554]

In "J. G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia" (1991), W. Warren Wagar writes that Ballard's novels are fables of "self-overcoming in perilous confrontation with the world."[555] Crucially, Wagar does not read these narratives of "self-overcoming" in connection with any clear sociopolitical agenda. Rather, Ballard is transvaluing "traditional Western wisdom" in order to enforce his "thinly veiled pantheist or mystical world-view that permits, and indeed requires, belief in a *summum bonum* above all conventional goods and evils."[556] David Pringle largely reinforces this argument, suggesting that Ballard offers psychic transcendence in the face of arbitrary human conceptions of time and the phenomenology of the universe.[557] Roger Luckhurst

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[554] Lawrence J. Firsching, "J. G. Ballard's Ambiguous Apocalypse," 301.

[555] "J. G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia," 53.

[556] Ibid, 54. Note that "*summum bonum"* is defined by Merriam Webster as "the supreme good from which all others are derived."

[557] *Earth is the Alien Planet: J.G. Ballard's Four-Dimensional Nightmare* (1979), 40.

also argues that Ballard is subverting the metaphysical bounds of time and space, as well as "rationally motivated instrumental consciousness'."[558] He does so, according to Luckhurst, in order to suggest that death "is to be re-figured as the metaphorical transgression of the bounds of the bodily into an ultimate, ecstatic (re-)unification and (re-)integration."[559] Umberto Rossi has further argued that Ballard's eco-disaster novels work to subvert human time as codified in the great clock faces of European cities such as London, Paris and Berlin: "The human, historical time of the city, whose rhythm was stressed by clocks, has been definitively lost."[560] He performs this subversion, according to Rossi, in order to subsequently imagine a type of time-less psychological transcendence.

But are Ballard's referents, against which the inward-facing psychologies of his characters respond, really as broad as these arguments suggest? Are they simply meant to invoke human notions of space and cosmic time, along with traditional Western values and / or metaphysics? Or do Ballard's characters and plot lines push back against more historically rooted factors? In other words, do 'time' and 'space' have specific historical contexts in the early eco-disaster novels?

Some recent scholarship has suggested that Ballard's characters are responding to more concrete sociopolitical conceptions. For example, in *J. G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination: Spectacular Authorship* (2009), Jeannette Baxter reads *The Crystal World* in both postcolonial and surrealist contexts. In "Visions of Europe" (2009), Baxter also accounts for Ballard's views on

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[558] *The Angle Between Two Walls: The Fiction of J.G. Ballard* (1995), 53.

[559] "The Many Deaths of Science Fiction: A Polemic," 36.

[560] "Images From the Disaster Area: An Apocalyptic Reading of Urban Landscapes in Ballard's *The Drowned World* and *Hello America*" (1994), 82.

globalisation in the novels *Cocaine Nights* (1996) and *Super-Cannes* (2000).[561] Rob Latham attempts to locate Ballard in the milieu of eco-critical and postcolonial writers emerging in the 1960s. This group formed around ideas of pushing back against hegemonic imperialist designs of technocracy, according to Latham.[562] Ballard's early novels purportedly work in the same way. But is Latham's argument specific enough? Technocracy, or technocratic imperialism, is apparently the paradigm that Ballard is resisting in the early novels, alongside a range of other eco-critical, feminist, queer and postcolonial authors of the period. But what is technocracy? Latham defines it as technological determinism encompassed in the technophilic optimism of the 'hard' SF of the 1940s-50s. According to Latham, these texts essentially delivered on the "imperialist vision of white men conquering the stars in the name of Western progress."[563] But does "technocratic determinism" not also conceivably apply to later timeframes that were more acutely determined by those pervasive global media landscapes and late-capitalist technologies that had the power to essentially colonise the mind? Is it not a term, then, that also applies to novels such as Ballard's *Crash* and *Hello America*?

I suggest that technocracy, or technological determinism, actually applies much more easily to Ballard's later novels than it does to the eco-disaster works of the early 1960s. Instead, the earlier texts deal more with ideologies of biopolitical Social Darwinism than they do with techno-spectacle cultures of pervasive late capitalism or post-war imperialism. I would further argue that by suggesting Ballard's early novels function as attacks on technocratic imperialism

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561 "Visions of Europe," in *J. G. Ballard: Contemporary Critical Perspectives"* (2008).

562 "Biotic Invasions: Ecological Imperialism in New Wave Science Fiction" (2007), 105.

563 "Biotic Invasions," 107.

without actually defining the historical parameters of that typology, Latham is essentially diluting the specific colonial-imperialist concerns of the early novels. He is also essentially lumping these concerns in with those vastly divergent technocratic fixations of novels like *The Atrocity Exhibition, Crash* and *Hello America.* We need to be more specific about what colonial-imperialist ideologies Ballard is addressing rather than consigning his work, and the ideologies behind it, to vague fields of view.

In "Empires of the Mind: Autobiography and Anti-imperialism in J.G. Ballard" (2012), David Ian Paddy addresses the imperialist contexts of Ballard's work more concertedly than almost any previous critic. He argues that Ballard wrote counter-myths that aimed to "dismantle, deconstruct and destroy accepted ideologies and worldviews."[564] More specifically, it is clear, writes Paddy, that "Ballard's perspective is rooted in the context of a Britain coping with the fading legacy of its empire."[565] But while Paddy alludes here to the idea that Ballard witnessed the death knell of classic Victorian-type imperialism during his time in Shanghai, and that he subsequently attempted to deal with this death in his early fiction, there is apparently a more acute focal point of Ballard's anti-imperialism. Paddy calls it "psychic imperialism," which is defined as the conquest and colonisation of the mind by consumerist ideology as promulgated by a media landscape.[566] Paddy argues that this psychic, media-driven form has been the primary imperialist context of Ballard's novels all along.[567] While I agree that psychic or post-war imperialism was

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[564] "Empires of the Mind: Autobiography and Anti-imperialism in J.G. Ballard," in *J. G. Ballard Visions and Revisions* (2012), 180.

[565] Ibid.

[566] "Empires of the Mind," 189.

[567] Ibid, 189-190.

certainly pervasive throughout the author's career, I do not view it as the major imperialist context of Ballard's early eco-disaster novels. Moreover, I suggest that Paddy, like Latham, over-generalises the imperialist contexts of these early works by attaching them to those of Ballard's later fiction. In doing so, he overlooks the central imperialist contexts of the early texts. One must therefore turn elsewhere for substantial critical support.

Thomas Richards's *The Imperial Archive* (1993) is often regarded as an important historical study of the Social Darwinist coloration of the Victorian empire. It is not, as far I know, often cited for its literary criticism. Nevertheless, I would argue that Richards puts forward one of the most viable historical contextualisations of Ballard's early fiction. He argues that Ballard's *The Crystal World* performs an important reversal of Darwinist morphological interpretation, and in turn, reacts against the biological conception that an entire accounting of existence was feasible.[568] The crystal materials of Ballard's novel, argues Richards, call into question the unities of formal evolution as conceived by morphologists; they represent the catastrophic mutations that Darwin himself foresaw as problematic for the formation of a complete picture of existence.[569] Irrevocably, these mutations take over the environment; in fact, writes Richards, *The Crystal World* is full of all sorts of mutations in addition to the crystals—"random variations, strange viruses, rare diseases, new kinds of matter."[570] This new environment represents Ballard's message that formal unities and complete biological understandings are untenable. Fur-

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[568] *The Imperial Archive,* 66.

[569] *The Imperial Archive*, 67.

[570] Ibid, 68.

thermore, the transformation / mutation shows that formal unity is no longer a viable metaphor for imperialism either.

I want to now build upon Richards's arguments, extending his concepts to include not just *The Crystal World,* but also *The Drowned World* and *The Drought.* In doing so, I aim to form a more complete picture of how Ballard's early eco-disaster novels metaphorically critique the intensified biopolitical imperialist frameworks that Ballard had himself experienced firsthand under the Japanese. Moreover, I will argue that Ballard does not just aim to metaphorically critique the biopolitical ideologies of imperialism that were well and truly on the wane in the post-war period, but also to oversee a profound dissolution and total annihilation of these imperialist ideologies. He therefore, as Richards writes, presents a "myth of decolonisation" without leaving any agency behind for the imperialists.[571] In doing so, Ballard aligns with the nationalist post-colonial movements that were gathering momentum in the 1950s-60s. One way of reading the beautiful, all-encompassing, and inscrutable crystal, then, is as a metaphor for nationalist movements in the postcolonial world. But, as I will show, Ballard's respective postcolonial coups are decidedly unique—one could say they are decidedly Ballardian. He did not imagine a new totalising postcolonial regime of equitable human governance, but a total reinstitution of natural dominance over the planet and a complete reordering of the biological hierarchy. He therefore imagines an ecological nationalist postcolonialism. It is here that the apotheosis of Ballard's 'inner-space' lies: In the naturalisation of a new plane of consciousness, one devoid of anthropocentrism and calibrated only to cater to the rhythms of an ever-more encompassing nature. Those charac-

[571] Ibid, 66.

ters who adopt this new plane, such as Doctor Robert Kerans in *The Drowned World,* find an entropic ecological consciousness that represents new postcolonial possibilities.

Time and Other Precise Units of Measurement in Ballard

As noted above, Thomas Richards has clearly shown how *The Crystal World* evokes and critiques the biological conceptions of the morphology movement. In doing so, he has also demonstrated how this critique functions as a metaphorical critique of the Victorian imperialist context as it is capitulated in both the imperial archive of the British museum and in the rhetoric of the Social Darwinist movement. In light of that excellent study, I should like to turn more toward *The Drowned World* and *The Drought* in the sections that follow.

In *The Drowned World,* the formerly habitable landscape has mostly been submerged by rising water levels. The water has risen as the polar ice caps have melted due to a rapid increase in global temperatures. Ballard simply explains this rise as a product of "sudden instability in the sun."[572] He is, as Roger Luckhurst argues, seemingly uninterested in the causes behind climate instability.[573] With the exception of a few pirate hordes and the UN parties that have been deployed to analyse biological specimens and create new territorial maps, the remainder of humankind—a mere five million people—has been forced to retreat to either the Arctic or Antarctic circles where the climate is still manageable. That will not be the case for long, however, as global average temperatures continue to rise inexorably.

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[572] *The Drowned World,* 51.

[573] *The Angle Between Two Walls: The Fiction of J. G. Ballard* (1997).

Doctor Robert Kerans is one of the biologists who has been sent out to analyse samples, map the biology of the new world, and potentially discover a solution that will render former cities and countries habitable once more. We find Kerans and the rest of a UN delegation gathered on a floating testing station in the London area. Like the rest of Europe, London has mostly been submerged by a series of lagoons and channels. Only the upper levels of a few high-rises now protrude from the swamps. All around is a rich new world of vibrant vegetation and reptilian life—iguanas, snakes, and caiman alligators, lounging in the lush mangroves and rainforests, and always threatening to pounce upon the marginalised humans.

From the outset, Kerans acknowledges that biological study has become "a pointless game" in this tropical wilderness.[574] He recognises early on that humans are powerless to stop or even slow the ever-rising temperature. He also acknowledges that the growth of plant life is accelerating due to the increasingly tropical conditions, and that higher levels of radioactivity in the atmosphere are increasing the rates at which biological mutations occur. Further, Kerans is aware that this ecological inversion means that plant life, reptiles, and aquatic amphibian species, are increasingly dominating the drowned world around him. Conversely, fertility rates are declining among humans and mammals—"the genealogical tree of mankind was systematically pruning itself, moving backwards in time."[575] It is essentially a biological upheaval of everything scientists know, and the old categories of biological reasoning and thought are, as Kerans points out,

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[574] *The Drowned World,* 24.

[575] *The Drowned World,* 56.

merely an encumbrance in this radically new environment.[576] Moreover, it is an inversion in which ancient-reptilian life-forms are taking over, and *Homo sapiens* are in retreat.

Despite grasping the futility of his work, however, Kerans initially continues with his attempts to reorder the world around him. For one, he keeps both his person and his work—routine reporting, filing, and biological analysis—in meticulous order, not allowing any of it to slip into the disarray he senses in the new natural world that surrounds the testing station. In his less objective moments he also clings to the hope that his "geomagnetic readings," and the work of the UN in general, will yield some kind of breakthrough. The key preoccupation of Kerans, along with other central figures across Ballard's eco-disaster novels, however, is time. It is primarily by clinging to linear time and its concomitant clock face that the central characters manage to also cling to a sense of order. I want to discuss this preoccupation in the context of biopolitical conceptions, suggesting that it is through time and other precise units of measurement that Ballard allegorises a specific mode of imperialism.

As it is deployed by the central agents in all three of Ballard's eco-disaster novels, time—this most linear unit of measurement—is a key metaphor for life itself. Life apparently moves in a linear fashion, just like the time codes of a clock. In order to retain life, then, linear time itself must be retained. Consider the many explicit connections that are made between time and life in the novels. In *The Crystal World,* for example, Doctor Sanders notes that the distinct measures of time bind humankind together, and that without these measures we cannot function in any conventional way.[577] Early in *The Drought,* Doctor Charles Ransom sees that the river running

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[576] *The Drowned World,* 37.

[577] *The Crystal World,* 94.

through his town had once been part of an "immense fluid clock, the objects immersed in it taking up their positions like the stations of the sun and the planets."[578] The absence of this fluid clock "which cast its bridges between all animate and inanimate objects alike," would ultimately lead to total death, notes Ransom.[579] Further, the waterless, and thus lifeless, landscape brought on by the drought is equated by Ransom to "an archipelago of drained time."[580]

In *The Drowned World,* life is conceived in conjunction with what Doctor Bodkin calls the "coded time-scale" of evolution.[581] This coded time-scale is being reversed despite all efforts to reinstate the linear time of forward progress. Bodkin sees this reversal as essentially a regression back through geophysical time toward a triassic state of consciousness. The lack of time, then, marks regression and death; it also marks the abolition of the great "register of sanity," as Kerans puts it.[582] This idea is figured in material terms in *The Drowned World* as well. One of the more resounding examples is that of Lieutenant Hardman, who is obsessed with retaining a sense of empirical time because without it he will fall into the "jungle dreams" of his unconscious.[583] This situation is more existentially threatening than it perhaps sounds on the surface. Having succumbed completely to these nonlinear "jungle dreams" of the increasingly triassic unconscious, Hardman heads south into the wilderness. He has become a man without time, and thus he walks willingly toward his own certain death.

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[578] *The Drought,* 20.

[579] *The Drought,* 20.

[580] *The Drought,* 21.

[581] *The Drowned World,* 101.

[582] *The Drowned World,* 146.

[583] *The Drowned World,* 81.

Emphasising the point that Hardman is quite literally without time at this stage of the novel is the state of his own heart rate. Before his escape from the testing station, Hardman is subjected by Bodkin to an experiment where his heartbeat is recorded while he is sleeping, and thus while he is in the midst of his "jungle dreams."[584] The recording, as Hardman asserts on listening to the playback, lacks any "concrete image"; instead the beats are scattered, like some sort of "aural Rorschach."[585] This disintegration of a metronomic heartbeat and subsequent transition toward a nonlinear one is directly connected to Hardman's growing insanity—as it is conceived on conventional terms.[586]

Kerans, too, falls more deeply into what he conceives as "deep time".[587] On this point, he begins to feel his own pulse is beating in time with that of the triassic reptiles; and that the serpent haunted river is becoming interlinked with his own bloodstream.[588] In one vivid example of what this regression away from linear time codes does to Kerans, we find him attempting to commit suicide as he explores the submerged Planetarium at Strangman's behest. He detaches the microphone of his underwater "inner space" suit, so as to have no further contact with the humans above. He then tangles the airline in an attempt to suffocate himself. Soon after, Kerans's suit is penetrated by the water and he feels that barriers no longer exist between his own blood-

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[584] *The Drowned World,* 85.

[585] *The Drowned World,* 85.

[586] *The Drowned World,* 80.

[587] *The Drowned World,* 157.

[588] *The Drowned World,* 157.

stream and that of the "amnion" fluid.[589] In this moment he has given up on a linear sense of time, and instead has willingly tried to enter the drowned world.

Time is the most significant metaphor for human life and order in these texts, but there are other linear networks that help to hold these structures in place as well. In *The Drowned World,* for instance, Colonel Riggs asserts the need for "one hundred percent cover, one hundred percent concentration" as the helicopter sweeps the jungle in search of Hardman.[590] This discrete level of attention is, according to Riggs, the only way to save Hardman's life and reclaim order.[591] The orderliness of the testing station and the surrounding apartments is often defined numerically as well. Consider, for instance, the repeated references to the moderate temperature-controlled atmospheres of these spaces, as compared to the extreme heat outside and its concomitantly wild atmosphere.[592] In the absence of maintaining moderate temperature codes, the interior environments become unruly and ultimately uninhabitable for humankind.

Various linear networks for sustaining life are also established through the work of the different scientists and doctors in these texts. I have touched upon Kerans's insistence on taking geomagnetic readings in *The Drowned World* in order to retain his sanity. In *The Drought,* Doctor Ransom insists that he is staying behind in the near deserted city of Hamilton in order to hold together what is left of his medical practice. Like the apartment on his yacht, which is decorated with images and artefacts that serve to create a linear network of his past, the medical practice is

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[589] *The Drowned World,* 228.

[590] *The Drowned World,* 126.

[591] *The Drowned World,* 126.

[592] *The Drowned World,* 115.

also a vehicle for Ransom to retain linearity and therefore sanity.[593] Doctor Catherine Austen, too, continues with her veterinary work at the zoo in *The Drought* even after it has mostly been deserted and emptied of water. In the absence of medically treating the animals and feeding them on a schedule, Austen imagines total chaos. Her systematic approach is what holds both her life and the life of the zoo together, as she sees it.[594]

In *The Crystal World,* both Doctor Sanders and Doctor Max Clair continue to treat patients long into the story. Sanders risks his life to insist that a young woman's tubercular breathing and severe anaemia be treated in a hospital.[595] He also attempts to save Captain Radek from the crystal that ensconces him, believing momentarily that his medical training can revive Radek.[596] As Sanders himself points out, his approach to diagnosis and treatment was cultivated in the Fort Isabelle leper hospital where he was trained to interpret natural biology—studied through looking at human tissue under a microscope—as bound by conventional measurements; by rigorous symbols of time and space.[597] His insistence on continuing to treat patients despite the fact that the world is relentlessly crystallising all around him, and thus steadily rendering his logic of finite measurements redundant, equates to an obsessive attempt to draw upon the discrete logic of precise measurements.

Significantly, the military personnel in Ballard's early novels also depend upon time codes and various other linear networks for survival. I have already mentioned examples of both

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[593] *The Drought,* 96.

[594] *The Drought,* 112-15.

[595] *The Crystal World,* 127.

[596] *The Crystal World,* 138-39.

[597] *The Crystal World,* 68.

Lieutenant Hardman's and Colonel Riggs's dependence on such networks in *The Drowned World,* but this idea of military dependence is worth examining further. Hardman obsessively notes the time from multiple bedside clocks during the onset stages of his psychological transformation.[598] Moreover, he and Bodkin decide to set the alarms of these clocks to ring repeatedly so that Hardman might avoid the timeless unconscious, and be drawn instead back to the empirical world.[599] Before his psychological transformation and escape from the base, Hardman also employs what he describes as a taxonomic system to categorise the flora and fauna around him.[600] Such a systematic approach is apparently the only way he can retain any sense of an orderly life.

Colonel Riggs also insists on adhering to a rigorous schedule in *The Drowned World*—the ward roll is read every morning at nine-thirty exactly, for example.[601] In fact, he repeatedly defers to time codes in retaining a sense of order. Riggs also works tirelessly to map and re-map the ever shifting and expanding quays and harbours around London. In contrast with Kerans, Riggs does not seem to sense the futility of his work at all. Rather, he firmly believes that the solar flares might one day subside, and that after ten years or so the cities may become habitable once again.[602] He thus sees his cartography work as vital to the future resettlement process. Divi-

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[598] *The Drowned World,* 89.

[599] *The Drowned World,* 90.

[600] *The Drowned World,* 80.

[601] *The Drowned World,* 23.

[602] *The Drowned World,* 32.

sions will come in and clear away the jungle from the cities and society will be reinstated; his maps will mean these teams have a plan for this reconstruction.[603]

In *The Crystal World,* Captain Radek—who in addition to being in charge of a battalion is also a doctor in the army medical core—is determined to maintain a strict boundary around the crystallising forest at Mont Royal. As he sees it, his mission is to keep information about the crystal forest contained so that it does not spread to the civilian population, and also to contain the spreading forest itself.[604] He oversees the installation of tightly policed fence lines, and neatly arranged rows of tents. He patrols the affected zone by army helicopter, and like Riggs, Radek maps the ways in which the zone mutates and spreads. Radek also seals off road access to the military base in a further act of ordered containment; he thus aims to retain a sense of "black and white," as he puts it, a sense of precise measurement and division.[605]

One of the most revealing attempts to reinstate and retain precise order in *The Drowned World* is voiced through the character of Strangman, who plays the hybrid role of military coloniser and sadistic pirate. Upon landing in the area of London, Strangman has his crew paint 'TIME ZONE' in thirty-foot high letters on one of the reclaimed buildings.[606] This attempt to reinstate linear time is one of the most explicit examples of this motif across Ballard's eco-disaster novels. Strangman also sends his crew down to dive among the drowned ruins of London in order to collect whatever artefacts they can find. Notably, Strangman is primarily interested in

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[603] *The Drowned World,* 42.

[604] *The Crystal World,* 75.

[605] *The Crystal World,* 77.

[606] *The Drowned World,* 213.

classical pieces such as Egyptian artefacts, renaissance artworks, and precious stones. He catalogues them all in the hull of his ship alongside the oak furniture, antique globes, chesterfield lounges, and chandeliers that he has collected. In his own way, Strangman is attempting to taxonomise historical form here, to recreate the human past through collection and archival of historical artefacts. He partially reiterates the legacy of romanticism in his conviction that human history, particularly the history of heroic mythology, can be captured and brought to life through the reassembly of collected historical items. But the hull of Strangman's ship also microcosmically enacts the role of the Victorian-era British Museum, as Thomas Richards conceives it in *The Imperial Archive*. That is, it supposedly acts as a repository of world knowledge and a recreation of historical time lines.

Strangman also establishes himself as the almost divine patriot of this reunification project. Indeed his crew, led by Big Caesar, see him as a divine figure.[607] He is the impossibly white man (he is an albino, in fact) dressed in an all-white suit who claims that he can recapture this system gone awry, tame it, and bring it back within what Richards describes as a secure symbiosis of total knowledge and order.[608] The rearchivisation of classical items is just the start of this project. It is accompanied by the parade of fine wine and liquor brought by waiters dressed in tuxedos.[609] Strangman, it seems, is a Doctor Moreau-like agent who is capable of recalibrating this wild environment of *The Drowned World* toward a peculiarly Victorian sense of civility and order.

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[607] *The Drowned World,* 254.

[608] *The Imperial Archive,* 13.

[609] *The Drowned World,* 258.

Moreover, Strangman takes colonialist action to reclaim the territory of London for humankind. His team immediately sets about tearing down the lush forests that have overrun the centre of the city. They then set a perimeter wall and utilise powerful pumps to drain the water from a portion of the old city, thus reclaiming it from nature. As I will now show, the boundary wall of *The Drowned World*, which is quite literally watertight, conceivably represents the rigorous network of boundary markers that were set in place by the Japanese imperialist forces in the prison camps around Shanghai. Moreover, so do the strict boundaries established by Radek in *The Crystal World*; and the "double wire" fences put in place by the army and police to control the flow of people on the beachfront in *The Drought*.[610]

Roots of Early Ballardian Precision Motifs

Although I have alluded to how the strict boundaries and precise units of measurement in the eco-disaster novels invoke both the biopolitical British imperial archive and the Japanese imperialism that Ballard experienced during World War Two, this argument requires further elaboration if comprehensive connections between biopolitical imperialism and the novels are to be made. I would like do so now by looking at nineteenth- and twentieth-century morphology and eugenicist contexts which, I argue, connect closely to the precision motifs discussed above.

In *The Principles of Psychology* (1855), Herbert Spencer conducts what he calls a "general analysis of our cognitions" in order to disclose "the basis of certitude common to them all."[611] He is interested in proving a "data of consciousness"; that is, in delivering discrete units

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[610] *The Drought,* 204.

[611] Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology* (1855)*,* 5.

of measurement for how we reason and think in the face of what he sees as a history of pointless metaphysical speculation and baseless opinion about our psychologies.[612] Really, though, what he offers is a psychological map without the corresponding understanding of neuronic functions; or as Ballard himself might put it, "a map in search of a territory."[613] To Spencer's credit, he somewhat admits to the failure of this particular study: "Respecting the execution of the work, I may say that in many sundry ways it falls much short of my wishes. There are places in which the argument is incompletely carried out; places in which, from inadequate explanation, there is apparent incongruity between the statements there made and those made elsewhere."[614] Despite Spencer's reflections on the failure of his study, however, he goes on to conclude that an objective map of psychological functions remains a distinct possibility. Moreover, he remains adamant that his proposed psychological testing apparatus is a valid, albeit incomplete, tool for precisely assessing cognitive function. Spencer's relatively baseless insistence that strict classificatory schemas for brain function could be uncovered was a bleak omen of things to come.

Spencer's ideas about the measurable patterns of evolution and the strict classifications of species were instrumental in shaping what Foucault views as the biopolitical morphology and eugenicist movements of the late nineteenth century.[615] The biological practice of morphology was established in the wake of *On the Origin of Species* (1859) to describe and classify "the types and steps of organisation of biological systems in their statics and dynamics."[616] The sys-

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[612] Ibid*,* 4-8.

[613] "Face to Face: an Interview with J. G. Ballard" (1984).

[614] Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology,* v.

[615] *The History of Sexuality,* 42-43; 146-153.

[616] W. T. C., "Taxonomy in Biology" (1926), 90.

tematic morphologist, as Doctor James Waterson writes, "finds in nature communities or groups of similar individual organisms which he calls species, and he makes it his business to arrange these and to summarise the salient facts about them in the simplest and most intelligible form."[617] This work toward the strict classification of organisms was seemingly riddled with contradictions and challenges, according to the editor of the scientific journal *Nature* in 1926. Nevertheless, he provides encouragement to the morphologist: "The natural system of classification may seem, for some groups of organisms, to defy discovery, but each step towards it holds the promise of added usefulness in possibly remote fields of research."[618]

The agenda of eugenics had similarly strict classificatory schemas in mind. But one could say that eugenics would prove much more aggressive and socially consequential than morphology. Although, as Foucault points out, nineteenth-century morphologists were largely responsible for classifications of homosexuality, for creating a separate species category for male and female homosexuals, and "for other sexually 'perverted' types."[619] The classificatory schemas of morphology thus had significant biopolitical implications. But on the whole, the social and biopolitical implications of morphology paled in comparison with those of eugenics.

The founder of eugenics, Francis Galton, wrote that it is "the science of improving inherited stock, not only by judicious matings, but by all influences which give suitable strains a better chance."[620] He wished to take account of all the inherited factors of intelligence, energy level and

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[617] Quoted in W. T. C., "Taxonomy in Biology," 901-902.

[618] W. T. C., "Taxonomy in Biology," 901-902.

[619] *The History of Sexuality,* 42-43.

[620] Quoted in David J. Galton and Clare J. Galton, "Francis Galton: and Eugenics Today" (1998), 99.

cognition "to give the more suitable races… a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable."[621] Like Spencer, Galton believed strongly that "we should attempt to exert control over organic evolution in the same way as we exert control over the physical world and to direct it into channels of our own choosing."[622] The assumption here is that humankind had already exerted control over "the physical world" by this point in history; that scientists had formed complete taxonomies that could be manipulated. That being the case, according to Galton, humankind should feel validated in seizing control of natural evolutionary processes, particularly those of humankind—we are already masters of nature, so it makes sense that the next step is to control it; to assert '*bio-power',* as Foucault calls it.[623] Galton therefore aimed to replace natural selection with a type of artificial selection based on the rigid classificatory schemas of eugenics.

Critically, eugenics quickly became a creed in both scientific and social circles in Victorian Britain, as David J. Galton and Clare J. Galton (no relation to Francis Galton) point out. Led by Francis Galton, it was a movement to which Darwin's theories on evolution apparently provided a sufficient framework. But Darwin himself expressed serious doubts from the beginning about the appropriation of his theories by the eugenics movement. For one, he was highly skeptical of Galton's ideas on the mechanism of inheritance. Darwin believed in "the blending nature of inheritance," thereby seeing it as a fuzzy sphere full of constant contradictions and crossovers.[624] In a letter to Galton, Darwin writes, "I have always maintained that excepting

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[621] Ibid.

[622] Ibid, 101.

[623] *The History of Sexuality*, 141.

[624] David J. Galton and Clare J. Galton, "Francis Galton: and Eugenics Today," 101.

fools, men did not differ much in intellect, only in zeal and hard work."[625] Galton, by contrast, presented a rigid perspective on the matter of inherited value. He tied his views of "particulate inheritance" to many factors, including the high predictability of eye-colour inheritance.[626]

Galton went on to draw up a tentative scale as to how to estimate a person's general 'worth'. Undoubtedly this scale corresponded to the value-systems of Victorian culture. He subsequently argued that family records should be maintained by the state in order to estimate the average quality of offspring in accordance with the worth scale and other eugenics methodologies. In Galton's actions, one can see how an easy transference of apparent human biological understandings to a culture of Foucaultian biopolitics took place in Victorian Britain. Extensive genealogical work, argues Galton, should be undertaken concerning families who are classified in the eugenics register as: "(a) Gifted (b) Capable (c) Average or (d) Degenerate."[627] This information should be used to, among other things, encourage "early marriages for women of similar classes (a) and (b)."[628] Extra distinction should be awarded for "family merit" if offspring derived from a so called "superior pedigree."[629] To enhance the chances of creating a generally superior pedigree, Galton argued that the rules of celibacy for Fellows at the finest British universities should be abolished, thus allowing purportedly intelligent academics to produce offspring. Conversely, the lower classes on the eugenics register should be discouraged from procreating. Moreover, Galton argued that state institutions should take action prohibiting the "feeble-mind-

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[625] Quoted in Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin* (1992).

[626] David J. Galton and Clare J. Galton, "Francis Galton: and Eugenics Today," 102.

[627] Quoted in David J. Galton and Clare J. Galton, "Francis Galton: and Eugenics Today," 101.

[628] Ibid.

[629] Ibid.

ed, habitual criminals and the insane" from having children.[630] To enhance this policing operation of the apparently biologically defined classes, the state should, according to Galton, finance eugenics research laboratories that could "gain more information on the inherited transmission of complex psychological traits such as intelligence, energy, and perceptual abilities."[631] These laboratories would be established, then, to make the sorting methods of eugenics even more precise.

Darwin had warned Galton early on in the formulation of eugenics that he was potentially dealing in abstractions of the principles of evolutionary theory. But it was not until the program was well underway that he issued a stern and foreboding (albeit still even handed and encouraging) warning:

> Though I see so much difficulty, the object seems a grand one and as you have pointed out the sole goal is feasible, yet I fear the Utopian plan of procedure in improving the human race… the greatest difficulty I think would be in deciding who deserved to be on the [eugenics] register. How few are above mediocrity in health, strength, morals and intellect; and how difficult to judge on these latter heads. As far as I see within the same large superior family, only a few of the children would deserve to be on the register.[632]

The phrase "I fear the Utopian plan of procedure in improving the human race" remains resonant and disturbing to this day.[633] Surely Galton himself could not have foreseen the tragedies that

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[630] Quoted in David J. Galton and Clare J. Galton, "Francis Galton: and Eugenics Today," 102.

[631] Quoted in David J. Galton and Clare J. Galton, "Francis Galton: and Eugenics Today," 100.

[632] Quoted in Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin*.

[633] One should also note that Darwin did align with some of Galton's views late in life. He thus did not totally denounce the eugenics model. These points of connection between Darwin and eugenics are noted in David J. Galton and Clare J. Galton, "Francis Galton and Eugenics Today" (1998). One might also turn directly to Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) where he references Galton's theories in a positive light on numerous occasions.

would be carried out in the name of eugenics during the first half of the twentieth century. As David and Clare Galton point out, for example, "by 1931 sterilisation laws had been enacted in 27 states in the USA. Most of these laws provided for the voluntary or compulsory sterilisation of certain classes of people thought to be insane, feeble-minded or epileptic; some were extended to habitual criminals and moral perverts."[634] Such extreme measures, however, were not widely enforced—except in California, where several thousand people were sterilised between 1931 and 1935.

One salient fact is that some of Galton's key papers on eugenics were translated into German and published in the *Archive für Rassen und Gesellschafts-Biologie* during the early twentieth century. As historian Daniel J. Kevles points out, by the time Hitler came to power the German Society for Racial Hygiene (Rassenhygiene) had added eugenics to its mandate.[635] Hitler himself did not openly justify Nazi policies on the basis of eugenics, but leading Nazi biologists, anthropologists, and geneticists certainly did. The horrendous consequences of eugenics policies under the Nazis have been extensively documented. In light of such studies it is sufficient here to note only two of the most shocking (and well known) statistics: approximately 200,000 supposedly 'degenerate' women were forcibly sterilised, and in excess of 6,000,000 people belonging to 'inferior races' were exterminated in the name of eugenics.

Of course, it has been argued that Hitler's doctrine of Aryan purity, and therefore his mandate toward extermination, is more appropriately pinned to his misreadings of nineteenth-century German philosophers: Schopenhauer, Hegel, and (especially) Nietzsche. But there is lit-

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[634] "Francis Galton: and Eugenics Today," 103.

[635] *In the Name of Eugenics* (1995).

tle doubt that the rigid classificatory schemas of eugenics played a significant role as well, especially considering those who explicitly cited Galton's doctrine were largely responsible for overseeing and carrying out the extermination program. Again, the example of the physician and eugenicist Josef Mengele comes to mind here. Mengele and his cohort of doctors at Auschwitz were directly responsible for determining which prisoners were to be murdered in the most active gas chambers of the Holocaust.

To reiterate, Foucault argues that from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the biopolitical constraints underlying eugenics and morphology became the principles that defined the strategies of states in general.[636] States created immense apparatuses for "producing truth", writes Foucault.[637] Biopolitical controls were "put forward as the index of a society's strength, revealing of both its political energy and its biological vigor."[638] To be sure, "Nazism was doubtless the most cunning and the most naive (and the former because of the latter) combination of the fantasies of blood and the paroxysms of a disciplinary power," writes Foucault.[639] It represented an extreme eugenic ordering of society, "with all that implied in the way of extension and intensification of micro-powers."[640] This eugenic ordering was held in place by unrestricted state control, and by an "oneiric exaltation of a superior blood" that led to unprecedented systematic genocide.[641] Still, in Foucault's view the biopolitical program of Nazism was not an aberration,

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[636] *The History of Sexuality,* 137.

[637] Ibid, 55.

[638] Ibid, 146.

[639] Ibid, 149.

[640] Ibid.

[641] Ibid.

but rather an extreme representation of what was occurring in powerful states across the globe from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

I want to focus in more depth now on how these biopolitical schemas were taken up and implemented through Japanese imperialism from the late nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War. This is particularly relevant because of course J. G. Ballard came into more visceral contact with Japanese imperialism than he did with any other imperialist regime during his youth in Shanghai. In 1868, Japan essentially began its nation-building campaign known as the Meiji Restoration. During this time imperialist authority was reestablished by overthrowing the military leaders who had reduced the powers of the Japanese emperors for several centuries. In the latter stages of the nineteenth century, Japan emerged as Asia's only imperialist power, expanding its control over Taiwan, Korea, south Sakhalin, and parts of northeastern China. Like several Western regimes during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Japanese government began to interpret their imperialist military victories on biopolitical, or Social Darwinist, terms. This made sense because they had fully imbibed Darwin's evolutionary theory under the guidance of American zoologists who were brought to Japan to help foster modernisation. Furthermore, the eugenics movement—one of the cornerstones of biopolitics and Social Darwinism, of course—had become institutionalised in Japan to a degree that was perhaps matched only by Nazi Germany during the early twentieth century. It became fundamentally threaded into the sociopolitical fabric of the newly restored Japan.

Yamanouchi Shigeo, one of the most influential biologists in Japan throughout his lifetime, began publishing works that translated and explained Galton's concepts. Perhaps Yamanouchi's most famous idea was the so called "science of superior birth," which is developed

in *Human Heredity* (1913). To summarise, Yamanouchi argued that acquired characteristics might quantifiably (through cell and germ plasm analysis) be passed from one generation to another. Statistically, argued Yamanouchi, the best characteristics were thus passed down from older parents. Soon after *Human Heredity* was published, university departments and scientific collectives devoted to the science of 'race improvement', or eugenics, were proposed and steadily adopted throughout Japan. The idea of the "science of superior birth" helped to trigger strong interest in maintaining clear bloodlines among the Japanese population. Moreover, as Sumiko Otsubo and James R. Bartholomew argue, this notion of clear or clean bloodlines became central to the Emperor's patriarchal society.[642]

Many eugenicists followed in Yamanouchi's footsteps. Perhaps most notable is Abe Ayao, who formed the Japan Society of Eugenics in 1930. In addition to pursuing scientific studies of the heredity of Japanese peoples, the Society under Abe also aimed to involve itself in formulating social, population and colonisation policies. It sought to become a resource for the empire's public health, social work, and education enterprises as well. It soon changed its name to the Society of Ethnic National Hygiene in order to more closely mirror that of the German Rassenhygiene society; and like their German counterparts, the Japanese eugenicists became instrumental in formulating government policies.

For one, the Society began working closely with the ministry of health and public welfare, and as a result, a National Eugenics Law was passed in the early stages of the Second World War. This law enforced "matrimonial eugenics" and sterilisation policies that were based on the

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[642] Sumiko Otsubo and James R. Bartholomew, "Eugenics in Japan: Some Ironies of Modernity, 1883–1945" (1998), 548.

1933 Nazi sterilisation law.[643] It also asserted tighter controls over birth control and abortion measures. In *Struggle for National Survival* (2008), Juliette Chung further examines how principles of eugenics were applied across the Japanese sociopolitical sphere at this time.[644] For example, Chung uncovers legislative efforts to segregate and control lepers, along with other sufferers of non-hereditary diseases in the Japanese colonies of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945).[645] She also analyses the substantial challenges of maintaining the identity of Japan as a racial body of the pure-blooded '*Yamato minzoku'* while managing a multi-ethnic Japanese empire. In order to manage this eugenic vision of empire, argues Chung, the Japanese envisioned "a three-dimensional conical body in which the top-centre and core-circle would be the emperor and his lineage, the inner circle that *Yamato* race as a unilinear patriarchal nation, and the outer circle pan-Asianism culturally and territorially binding together the Japanese colonies and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."[646] Strict biopolitical divisions and boundaries were thus imagined in the imperialist schema. This was not territorial expansionism by any means necessary, but rather expansionism that maintained strictly policed boundaries of separation.

To reiterate, these Japanese imperialist contexts aligned closely with those of other strictly policed biopolitical regimes of the era. As Foucault writes, "for the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence" across a broad spectrum.[647] As James A. Tyner writes, "An array of segregation policies, immigration legislation, anti-misce-

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[643] Sumiko Otsubo and James R. Bartholomew, "Eugenics in Japan," 551.

[644] Full title is *Struggle for National Survival: Eugenics in Sino-Japanese Contexts, 1896-1945.*

[645] *Struggle for National Survival,* 150-51.

[646] Ibid, 151.

[647] *The History of Sexuality,* 142.

genation laws, sterilisation programs, relocation schemes, and, ultimately, euthanasia and extermination programs emerged as the tangible instruments in the ideological operating rooms of pre-World War II society."[648] The imperialist nation was thus conceived as another organism whereby the pure elements, the clean cells, must be segregated from those lower units, and those lower units must, in time, be eradicated altogether. Without eradicating these supposedly quantifiably lower forms a constant struggle would ensue. As Homer Lea writes in *The Valor of Ignorance* (1909), a nation "made up of various minor peoples of distinct racial characteristics is exposed to the probabilities of war in proportion to the number of nationalities that… possess political franchise and voice in its government."[649] Montaville Flowers likewise asserts that "when two different racial units are bound within one land unit, or when one land unit extends its boundaries over two racial units, the causes of war are laid down."[650] With these ideas deeply engrained, hard and fast boundaries came down across an array of colonial-imperialist territories, not just in Japan or Germany. They were put in place to ensure the eugenically approved division of pure imperialist from the deviant Other.

One of the best representations of eugenic social ordering is found in looking at the imperial microcosms of the Japanese prison camps of the Second World War. I have touched upon it already in the beginning of this chapter, but it is worth reiterating and expanding on the argument that camps, such as the ones in which Ballard was interned as a boy, were biopolitical structures—that is, places where boundaries and borders were policed in similar ways to how the eu-

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[648] "The Geopolitics of Eugenics and the Incarceration of Japanese Americans" (1998), 257.

[649] *The Valor of Ignorance,* 119.

[650] *The Japanese Conquest of American Opinion* (1917), 209.

genicist polices heredity management. Sonya Grypma notes that any leakage of unapproved information from Japanese prison camps in China during World War Two was severely punished. She reports an event where a Chinese labourer attempted to secretly carry a letter of personal correspondence from a Canadian prisoner out of the Pudong prison camp near Shanghai, in 1943. The labourer was tied to a railing within full view of the other prisoners and beaten almost to death as an example to the others.[651] In addition to the tight information seal, Grypma notes the tight boundary markers put in place by the Japanese captors. It was not just the fortified walls or barriers around the camps that were rigorous, or the myriad of tightly controlled checkpoints, but also the living quarters assigned to prisoners. Over 1,000 prisoners were housed in sixteen large rooms at the Pudong camp. These rooms had been portioned off into six by four foot spaces, identified by lines drawn on the floor. There was to be no crossing these lines by prisoners, no bleed between living stations, unless sanctioned by the Japanese guards. Any violations were met with severe punishments such as torture, isolation imprisonment, and even execution in some cases. The lights in these subdivided dormitories were switched off at exactly the same time each night, and afterwards silence was expected by the Japanese guards.[652]

Prior to establishing strict prison camps in China, the Japanese imperialist military went about the invasion and colonisation processes with a similar view toward biological ordering. The Nanjing massacre, which saw many thousands of Chinese brutally murdered by the Japanese invaders (precise estimates of the death toll are still debated), is often thought of as chaotic—discipline broke down and the Japanese troops went wild, looting, raping and / or murdering who-

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[651] Sonya Grypma, *China Interrupted: Japanese Internment and the Reshaping of a Canadian Missionary Community* (2012), 42.

[652] Ibid, 44.

ever crossed their paths. But according to recent revisionist scholars such as Mark Eykholt, the Japanese military actually acted in very orderly ways as they carried out the Nanjing atrocities. They were ruthless yet systematic in the killings, with only minor aberrations here and there: "There are no reports of soldiers abandoning their units, atrocities usually followed organised patterns…The truth is that discipline and order continued amid the murder and mayhem. They had to continue in order to maintain the efficiency necessary to carry out so much killing and destruction."[653] As an example of what we might call orderly or rigorous murder, recently uncovered documents show that the Japanese routinely gathered Nanjing prisoners together, "marched them under guard to specific locations, and then dispatched them in groups of fifty by mounted machine guns."[654] Evidence also shows that virtually no Westerners were injured in the Nanjing massacre and colonisation processes. They were certainly imprisoned—just as the Ballards would later be—but they were not murdered or forced into hard labour or sex slavery, as the Chinese were. The races were thus segregated, strict hierarchies were formed on a biopolitical axis, and order was maintained in this way.

It is no coincidence, I argue, that we primarily find doctors, biologists, military officials, or architects acting as agents of time and other strict units of measurement in Ballard's eco-disaster novels. These were the professions primarily responsible for enforcing the eugenically codified power grids of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century imperialism in Japan and elsewhere. They were the primary agents for enforcing what Foucault calls 'bio-power'. They guided the technologies of power through the architecture of prison camps, the policing and populating

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[653] Mark Eykholt, "Introduction: The Nanjing Massacre in History," in *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (2000), Ed. by Joshua A. Fogel, 12.

[654] Ibid.

of those camps, and the biological conceptions that validate such social organisations. By invoking the professions of the central biopoliticians of the pre-war period, and by invoking their obsessions with time and other precise units of measurement, Ballard is metaphorically speaking to the heart of eugenically and / or biopolitically configured imperialist contexts. Most notably, he speaks to the imperialist context of his own youth in the Japanese prison camps.

The question now is, what does Ballard *do* with these contexts once he metaphorically establishes them? How does the border patrolling doctor, architect or military figure fare in the respective Ballardian worlds under discussion? Are the border walls and clocks, the biological charts and linear architectural prisms, protected or altered? The simple and reductive answer is that boundary markers do not fare at all well in Ballard. The more detailed answer is as follows.

Tearing Down the Walls

As noted, there are concerted efforts made by many of the central figures—particularly the doctors and military officials—to maintain orderly environments in Ballard's eco-disaster novels. Tight boundary walls are erected and patrolled. In *The Drought,* for example, the beach army is dedicated to machine-gunning down anyone who attempts to climb through the fences to steal from the precious water supply.[655] Any violations of Strangman's boundary wall around central London in *The Drowned World* are also punishable by death, as becomes abundantly clear when Bodkin is executed for attempting to explode the wall.[656] Nevertheless, these walls, both physical

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[655] *The Drought,* 203.

[656] *The Drowned World,* 288.

and psychological, do come tumbling down in these texts whether the characters want them to or not. I would now like to discuss the processes of boundary destruction in these novels and what it potentially signifies.

In *The Drowned World,* Kerans precipitously slides toward a new timeless mode of existence despite initial attempts to retain precise units of order and measurement. He soon begins to accept his colleague, Doctor Bodkin's, idea that they are retreating mentally into a triassic consciousness. Bodkin is convinced that as they move back through geophysical time so they re-enter the amnionic corridor, and in so doing, they move progressively back through spinal and archaeopsychic time, recalling in their unconscious minds the landscape of each epoch.[657] This is what he calls the psychology of "Neuronics".[658] With this theory in mind, Kerans begins to see that more important than reestablishing politics or society, or than mapping the harbours and lagoons of the external landscape, is "to chart the ghostly deltas and luminous beaches of the submerged neuronic continents."[659]

There are times when Kerans reverts back to the former paradigm of mechanical order, such as when he attempts to fix the air-conditioning generator, or when he makes occasional botanical notes in his journal. But the dreams of dissolving into the "serpent haunted sea" continue to encroach even further, increasingly supplanting the old psychological modes.[660] He increasingly feels as though his pulse is beating in time with that of the triassic reptiles, and that

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[657] *The Drowned World,* 101.

[658] *The Drowned World,* 101.

[659] *The Drowned World,* 102.

[660] *The Drowned World,* 127.

the rivers are to be combined with his own bloodstream as he moves "down the spinal levels into the drowned seas of the neuronic psyche."[661] Conversely, he begins to feel increasingly suffocated and restricted by the orderly landscape that is held in place by the testing station. One notable example on this point comes when Kerans wakes from this euphoric "jungle dream" into the suffocating "metal box" of his cabin which he perceives as "almost like a coffin."[662]

Eventually, Kerans and Bodkin decide to covertly sink and destroy their laboratory. In doing so they quite literally drown the biophysical maps they had worked so long to formulate. From here, Bodkin and Kerans, along with the character Beatrice Dahl, commit to hiding from the army and staying behind in the increasingly drowned world. The usual human allegiances between these characters soon begin to split apart, and they each retreat alone into the "time jungles, to mark their own points of no return."[663] Kerans and the others are momentarily disturbed from their respective retreat down the spinal levels by the arrival of Strangman who forcefully reinstalls quasi-colonialist order. But eventually Kerans manages to blow the boundary walls set in place by Strangman, essentially re-flooding the streets of London. He then escapes to the south, where the average temperature exceeds 140 degrees Fahrenheit.

There are still traces of the old logic in Kerans's descent. For example, he keeps up with the broken logic of trying to revive Hardman—whom he finds near death in the south lands—even though paradoxically Kerans must know that he is committing suicide by simultaneously continuing the journey south. Further, he keeps his watch running and maintains a record of the

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[661] *The Drowned World,* 158.

[662] *The Drowned World,* 158.

[663] *The Drowned World,* 179.

days by notching them on his belt. He also etches a message into stone just prior to his death, even though he knows no one will ever read it: *"27th day. Have rested and am moving south. All is well. Kerans."*[664] Ultimately, however, he lets go completely and continues south toward his neuronic metamorphosis—"a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn sun."[665]

In *The Drought,* Doctor Charles Ransom feels the river's "countless associations" gradually fall away as it shrinks into a creek.[666] Like Kerans, Ransom feels time and other units of precision are slipping away, and in turn, he too is undergoing a metamorphosis away from time and memory. But Ransom retains his dependence upon order for much longer than Kerans does—for over ten years, in fact. In that regard, Ransom notes his long struggle to "arrest the gradual numbing of sense and identity that is the gradual gradient of the dune limbo."[667] Nevertheless, he inevitably begins to feel himself delving "ever deeper into some inner landscape" as the text progresses.[668] As Ransom progressively accepts a newly inverted inner-logic, he increasingly embraces the apocalyptic desert landscape of the text. It has been so utterly altered as to inspire a new range of impressions. The rivers and seas, for example, have become chalk-white sand dunes where lions roam.[669]

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[664] *The Drowned World,* 377.

[665] *The Drowned World,* 377.

[666] *The Drought,* 20.

[667] *The Drought,* 243.

[668] *The Drought,* 349.

[669] *The Drought,* 410.

After a long struggle, Ransom finds himself essentially letting go of the old order more and more each day—"the expedition up [a waterless] river had been one into his own future, into a world of volitional time where images of the past were reflected free from the demands of memory and nostalgia, free even from the pressure of thirst and hunger."[670] He reaches a point where he can complacently accept any act of violence that might occur—cannibalism, murder, animal slaughter. Further, he can accept and embrace the character of Quilter's oasis which formerly would have been regarded as "an island infested by nightmares."[671] This island is populated by a morbidly obese woman sitting in a drained swimming pool; there are bird carcasses strewn everywhere, and strange, deformed children moving about like animals. Ransom also shifts perspective by the end to regard Miranda Lomax as beautiful precisely because she has let go of the normal rigours of her body; she has let herself spill into the corpulent form of morbid obesity.[672] In the end, as Ransom wanders into the desert, he casts no shadow on the sand, "as if he had at last completed his journey into the inner regions he had carried in his mind for so many years."[673]

A similar progression is conceived in *The Crystal World,* too. Like his counterparts in *The Drought* and *The Drowned World,* Doctor Sanders eventually accepts the inverted logic of his own apocalyptic ecological disaster zone. Subsequently, he ventures willingly into the heart of it and its concomitant new plane of consciousness at the end of the novel: "On the police jetty

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[670] *The Drought,* 395.

[671] *The Drought,* 407.

[672] *The Drought,* 396.

[673] *The Drought,* 422.

Louise Peret stood next to Max Clair. Her eyes hidden by the sunglasses, she watched Sanders without waving as the boat sped on up the deserted river."[674]

Some of Ballard's eco-disaster characters are relentless in their attempts to retain order. Consider, for example, both Strangman and Colonel Riggs's devotion to the boundary wall around old London, and to the reclamation of other formerly inhabited territories in *The Drowned World*. Until the very end of the text, Riggs is convinced that London will someday be habitable once more. In *The Crystal World,* Doctor Max Clair remains committed to seeing patients in Port Matarre throughout the text, and thus symbolically committed to upholding biological order despite the ever-encroaching crystal forest. Clair thus aligns with the government organisations that continue to builds bases and airfields, to ship in scientists and technicians to analyse the crystal compositions. In *The Drought,* the former policeman turned militia military commander, Captain Hendry, continues with his logs and ranking systems pertaining to the tightly controlled beach commune. Meanwhile the architect, Richard Lomax, clings to the architectural boundaries and prisms he helped to create in the city of Hamilton.

But ultimately these efforts to cling to order and precise units of measurement are collectively rendered as delusional by Ballard. In fact, such measures are often connected to notions of insanity. As Vanessa Johnstone tells Ransom in *The Drought,* if you are to stay in Hendry's ordered commune "you'll just be raking the salt off the boilers day after day until you go mad."[675] Conventional order itself has thus become arbitrary madness. The other unflappable advocate of order in that novel, Richard Lomax, becomes increasingly insane, desperate and ridiculous. As

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[674] *The Crystal World,* 210.

[675] *The Drought,* 279.

Lieutenant Hardman clings to order and precision in *The Drowned World,* he too clearly becomes more insane. He physically and mentally wastes away as he attempts to create botanical taxonomies. Crucially, it is the morphological mindset that nurtures his mental illness, sending him progressively insane until he eventually relents to the alternative paradigm of "jungle dreams". It is only then that he finds psychological freedom and, conceivably, peace.

Certainly the character of Strangman in *The Drowned World* is insane also. To be sure, he momentarily reinstalls a 'TIME ZONE' by draining the centre of old London, thereby enabling people to re-walk the streets. But what does this act *really* reveal in the end? As Kerans notes, the streets are hideous and stark in the lagoon-less light; moreover, they are ultimately dead and decaying.[676] By draining the streets, then, Strangman has not put a halt to the ever-increasing temperatures, but rather he has put an ephemeral stake in the ground that the rivers and heat will inevitably overrun. This attempt to reclaim order is as futile and delusional as his attempt to effectively reinstate the British museum (and imperial archive) in the hull of his gambling ship. Really, all Strangman fosters are temporary zones where his band of quasi-colonialist marauders can briefly ransack shopfronts with machetes, or dress up in dinner jackets and tuxedos for the staging of hedonistic galas and banquets. In the end, he and his crew are as Kerans would have one believe: "Strangman's mind and intentions are so narrow and transparent that they have a negligible claim of reality."[677]

What these examples show is that across three eco-disaster novels, Ballard totally annihilates the rigour and precise units of measurement embodied in elements such as the clock-face,

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[676] *The Drowned World,* 268.

[677] *The Drowned World,* 212.

the architectural prism, and the boundary marker. In doing so, he metaphorically obliterates the biopolitical imperialism that is inherently encoded by such apparatuses. Furthermore, he renders those who try to uphold these types of rigorous paradigms insane. This is the degree of Ballard's critique: It amounts to relentless enforcement of the point that biopolitical measures are *totally* untenable.

Ballard experienced strict biopolitical measures under the Japanese, as noted; he also experienced the polycentric and pluralist freedom of life in Shanghai prior to the war. It is to this second context that he is constantly attempting to return in the early novels. This idea is certainly consistent with Ballard's own claims across several interviews about the halcyon days of his youth in Shanghai prior to Japanese occupation—"I adored it. I thought it was an exciting collision of all these cultures, and it's why I've always believed in multi-racial societies and the hottest possible ethnic mix."[678] The Japanese occupation, by contrast, brought unsustainable rigour and chronic horror in accordance with biopolitical ideology. Given the fact that Ballard bore witness to the wasteland that was left in the wake of such a schema, it is perhaps little wonder he utterly obliterates every notion of such governing principles in the eco-disaster texts.

Ballard was also well placed to abolish biopolitical frameworks due to his medical background. On arriving in England from Shanghai in the late 1940s, he attended medical school at Cambridge with the intention of becoming a psychiatrist—it was mostly a case of "physician heal thyself," as he noted in retrospect.[679] After completing the pre-clinical phase, however, Bal-

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[678] Quoted in "Will Self on J. G. Ballard for BBC Radio 4" (2010). See also "J. G. Ballard, The Art of Fiction," in *The Paris Review* (1984); "J. G. Ballard: the Southbank Interview" (2006); and "Writers in Conversation: J. G. Ballard" (1984).

[679] "Writers in Conversation: J.G. Ballard."

lard realised that the urge to become a writer was too great and he dropped out of university. It had not been a waste, though, because the basic understandings of anatomy, physiology, and neuropathology gained through two years of medical school had provided the nascent author with what he describes as "ready systems of metaphors."[680] More than anything else, these are metaphors pertaining to systematic shortfalls and incompletions because, as Ballard notes, his pre-clinical training to become a physician had taught him that aspects such as neurological pathways could ultimately not be disentangled "on some analysts couch."[681]

Nor could anatomy or neuropathology be explained in totality by the physician or biologist, according to Ballard.[682] He frequently referred to the joy of dissecting cadavers during his medical degree.[683] The problem was that these intricate biological systems could not wholly be reassembled, and that their secrets would therefore never reveal themselves fully. Inevitably, then, biological taxonomies led to incomplete systems or tables, as far as Ballard could see. This perspective, I suggest, is carried forward into the eco-disaster texts. As the character of Kerans says in relation to Hardman's naturalist taxonomy logs in *The Drowned World,* "I tactfully pointed out that the classifications were confused."[684] Given that Ballard knew, or at least sensed, from firsthand experience that strict morphological-type schemas led down muddled and incomplete pathways, it surely makes sense that he also regarded impositions of such rigorous models in the social sphere as nonsensical, and ultimately, dangerous.

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[680] Ibid.

[681] Ibid.

[682] "J.G. Ballard: the Southbank Interview" (2006).

[683] Ibid.

[684] *The Drowned World,* 80.

Ballardian Postcolonial Nationalism

More than just a wholesale metaphorical critique and annihilation of biopolitical imperial rigour, however, Ballard's eco-disaster novels also supplant this conventional paradigm with new visions. Some of these visions—triassic consciousness, neuronics, the inverted desert logic of Doctor Ransom—have been alluded to above. But it is important to now point out that they collectively make up a totalising new ideological perspective in Ballard's eco-disaster texts. It is through the combination of total biopolitical antipathy and totalising new ideology that the author presents his own uniquely Ballardian versions of nationalist postcolonialism. As such, he further cements his place on a continuum of anti-imperialist Anglo-American SF.

Critics have long debated the alternate ideologies at play in Ballard's early eco-disaster fiction. Several have moved along similar lines to Roland Wymer, who argues that Ballard's eco-disaster visions can be read as representing the use of the scientific fact of entropy in psychological and existential contexts.[685] They are therefore textual acknowledgements of the second law of thermodynamics, and imaginings of this law coming rapidly to fruition.[686] Both his characters and worlds slide inexorably toward this state of universal chaos, destruction and death, and this slide is represented as "a continuous howl of despair."[687] He is, therefore, essentially bringing the

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[685] "'The Voices of Time' and the Quest for (Non)Identity," in *J. G. Ballard Visions and Revisions* (2012).

[686] The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that energy transfers within a closed system (such as the Universe) are always imperfect, resulting in an inevitable increase in entropy (the measure of disorder within a system) and culminating eventually in the 'heat death of the universe.'

[687] Roland Wymer, "'The Voices of Time' and the Quest for (Non)Identity," 22.

pessimistic vision of Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) into different apocalyptic environments.[688]

Wymer is correct in arguing that Ballard's ideologies in the eco-disaster texts can be read in a different, more optimistic light too. As noted, theorists including David Pringle and Gregory Stephenson have attributed the all-encompassing inner-journeys of Ballard's early novels to the influence of Jungian psychology. Ballard's new ideology is thus read in alignment with the progressive subjugation of all external and internal realities to the demands of the "collective unconscious".[689] Wymer notes that Carl Jung took his idea of a progression from a deluded conscious ego towards a harmonious and essential inner Self from Hindu philosophy, "where the true inner Self (*âtman*) is identical with the Absolute Reality (*Brahman*)."[690] In adopting this philosophy, harmonious relationships between the conscious and unconscious mind are therefore formed between the environment and the central agents in Ballard's texts. Those who resist this relationship go insane, as aforementioned; or else are gradually sublimated by the apocalyptic landscape in other terrible ways.

I suggest that Gregory Stephenson is correct in arguing that central characters in Ballard's eco-disaster texts predominantly fall into a "quest for an ontological Eden."[691] It is a redemptive quest, according to Stephenson, one that leads toward psychic fulfilment and transcendence as

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[688] Ibid.

[689] Patrick Parrinder, "Science Fiction and the Scientific World-View," in *Science Fiction: A Critical Guide* (1979).

[690] "'The Voices of Time' and the Quest for (Non)Identity," 23.

[691] *Out of the Night and Into the Dream* (1991), 148.

characters align with what one might call an ecological consciousness.[692] Consider, for example, Kerans's sense of euphoria as he dives down toward the planetarium: it is like re-entering the womb—a "hot gelatinous foetid" embrace.[693] His sense of melding with nature, with natural rhythms, is one of complete fulfilment. What he sees at this moment of psychic fulfilment, as he feels his bloodstream is combining with the flow of the river, is a light in the form of a zodiac symbol.[694] One could interpret this symbol in connection with Jung's 'mandalas'. After all, in Tantric Hinduism and Buddhism the mandala works as a collection point for astrological or zodiac signs. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1963), Jung writes, "My mandalas were cryptograms concerning the state of the self which were presented to me anew each day. In them I saw the self—that is, my whole being—actively at work…It became increasingly plain to me that the mandala is the centre. It is the exponent of all paths."[695] In seeing the zodiac, or mandala, as he is drowning and / or integrating with ecology, then, Kerans contextualises this moment in Jungian psychic fulfilment.

Roger Luckhurst is wary of the view that Ballard's novels consistently move toward psychic transcendence and fulfilment, stating that such notions homogenise "complex frames of reference (psychoanalysis, analytic psychology, existentialism) into an unrigorous mishmash of mystical religiosity, which is then—and this is the major concern—offered as *the* interpretation which would unlock the entire chain of Ballard's oeuvre."[696] Explicit alignments with Jungian

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[692] Ibid.

[693] *The Drowned World,* 237.

[694] *The Drowned World,* 237.

[695] Quoted in Roland Wymer, "'The Voices of Time' and the Quest for (Non)Identity," 28.

[696] *The Angle Between Two Walls* (1997), 48.

philosophy in the early texts themselves makes it easy to see why the early novels and short stories can be described as stories of "psychic fulfilment." But this idea does not cover the range of complex ciphers in the psychological transformations of characters in these works, according to Luckhurst. W. Warren Wagar also sees Stephenson's argument as essentially cutting off access to other viable readings of Ballard. Instead of other fields of view, argues Wagar, everything is explicable in Jungian archetypal terms.[697] Wagar asks, "But what if [Ballard] is simply a player, who plays with the stuff of myth, with Shakespeare and Coleridge, with Dali and Tanguy, leaping from one archetype to another, not to lure us to transcendence but to demonstrate the unknowability and the multivalence of reality?"[698]

Both Wagar and Luckhurst raise valid concerns about the rigidity of Jungian "psychic fulfilment" readings, particularly Stephenson's, of Ballard's vast oeuvre. I would similarly assert that his works from the mid-1960s onwards develop along much more pluralistic lines. Even in terms of the early eco-disaster novels one must acknowledge the possibility that Ballard is driving at a more pessimistic entropy, as Wymer suggests. Perhaps the overwhelming urge to submit to the apocalyptic landscapes, to merge with them, amounts to a pathological surrender to the death-drive hypothesised by Sigmund Freud (influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer) in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Freud argues that all living things are eager to return to their former inorganic states of being, and that this death-drive produces masochistic and sadistic behaviour. Such a framework can hardly be ignored in relation to *Crash,* but is it relevant to the early texts? The Freudian hypothesis that "the aim of all life is death" has recently received some support

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[697] W. Warren Wagar, "Psychopath, Mystic, or Postmodernist?" (1992).

[698] Ibid, 261.

from biologists who argue that the default mode of all living cells is death.[699] In other words, cells are programmed to commit suicide short of any chemical signals telling them otherwise. Perhaps, then, the entranced characters of Ballard's eco-disaster fiction are simply following a natural death-drive, rather than moving toward psychic fulfilment.

There is scope for both readings, argues Wymer: The inward journeys of Ballard lead us to ask, "were we led all that way for birth or death?"[700] In other words, were we led by Jung's psychic fulfilment or Freud's death-drive; by the optimistic view of entropy or the deeply pessimistic one? Luckhurst similarly argues that one should not look for a single hermeneutic key in reading Ballard: "Could the ciphers which litter Ballard's landscapes merely draw a zero? Could the Jungian mandala, that symbol of wholeness and completeness that Powers builds in concrete in "The Voices of Time"—could its plenitude of suggested meaning actually be empty?"[701]

To be sure, the mandala of an essential inner-self in Ballard's eco-disaster novels could signify "wholeness, completion and plenitude," as well as "absence, emptiness and nothingness."[702] Ballard is thus potentially ambivalent on the point of whether the entropic inner-landscape holds fulfilment or emptiness. The drained swimming pool—one of the most iconically Ballardian images first imagined in "The Voices of Time"—could therefore be both full of redemptive meaning, or it could be empty. But the point here is not to come down on one side or

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[699] Roland Wymer, "'The Voices of Time' and the Quest for (Non)Identity," 25.

[700] Ibid, 28.

[701] *The Angle Between Two Walls,* 70.

[702] Roland Wymer, "'The Voices of Time' and the Quest for (Non)Identity," 29.

another of this debate, but to simply assert that there is *some* form of totalising new consciousness clearly at play in Ballard's eco-disaster texts.

Whether one takes the Jungian or Freudian approach, it is clear, as Wagar points out, that Ballard aims toward a psychological and existential landscape that is emancipated from all prior conventional determinisms.[703] The eco-disaster novels move inexorably toward non-identity and a "unity of being that can only be completed outside the flow of time and hence only attained in death."[704] Eventually, these forces will bring about the "reduction of the universe to a state of undifferentiated, changeless, background radiation."[705] One thus has a countdown, both psychological and environmental, toward what the character of Jackson, in Ballard's short story "The Voices of Time" (1962), calls the "zero point of entropy."[706] Contained within this descending landscape is completeness, fullness, and eternity of being; and, paradoxically, the 'nothing' or 'zero' to which the external landscape is being reduced.[707] There are delusions, but ultimately, there is no stepping outside of this landscape in Ballard's early novels. Instead, there is only progress toward the zero point, "when the circle O of [one's] life, as well as that of the universe itself, is now complete but also completely empty."[708]

Given that Ballard's eco-disaster novels work toward both biopolitical apocalypse and the totalising instigation of what one might call an entropic ecological consciousness, one might ar-

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[703] "Psychopath, Mystic, or Postmodernist?" 261.

[704] Roland Wymer, "'The Voices of Time' and the Quest for (Non)Identity," 31.

[705] Ibid.

[706] J. G. Ballard, "The Voices of Time," 41.

[707] Roland Wymer, "'The Voices of Time' and the Quest for (Non)Identity," 31.

[708] Ibid, 32.

gue that they metaphorically align with the nationalist postcolonial movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Like early Ballard, these movements often envisioned the total (apocalyptic) overthrow of biopolitical imperialism, and the subsequent enactment of new totalising visions. Let us consider post-World War Two China, for example. As the Communist Party of China (CCP) seized control of power in the aftermath of the war, extraterritorial rights to Chinese territory were ended, thereby signifying early steps toward total sovereignty and the complete dissolution of Western imperialist influence across the nation. As Rana Mitter writes, with the CCP there was a "concentration on the radicalisation of policy, including major reforms on taxation and the establishment of a largely self-sufficient economic model."[709] This new formula was based on the influence of the Soviet Union of Lenin and Stalin, and also on the emergence of an Indigenous revolution based on the principles of the peasantry (or proletariat). It was radical in its anti-imperialism. More than just ending extraterritorial rights, the communist reforms aimed to completely dissolve Western influence and close the door to the West which is, to a large extent, precisely what happened after Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China, in 1949. China carried the scars of war against Japan, along with the colonial legacy left behind by the British. They were eager to sweep away these legacies and their lingering spectres of influence; and to establish a radically new and antithetical regime.

Similar examples of sweeping reform were imagined and enacted elsewhere in the post-war period, too. In "Nationalism in Postcolonial States" (2006), Joshua B. Forrest analyses the totalising postcolonial nationalism that was enacted in Rwanda when Hutu nationalists asserted

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[709] "Nationalism, decolonisation, geopolitics and the Asian post-war," in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War* (2015), 612.

territorial claims that led to horrific genocides.[710] Marxist activist, Bhagat Singh, wanted nothing short of "a new social order" to emerge from the nationalist independence movement that took shape in India following World War Two.[711] Further, he wanted to "ring the death knell" of capitalism and Western imperialism, and install a sweeping new Marxist regime in its place.[712] As these examples make clear, the nationalist model is not characterised by hybridity. Instead it is sweeping and homogenising. On this point, national development in post-independence India, argues Ania Loomba, conceivably had no space for imperialism, nor did it have space for tribal cultures or beliefs.[713] Instead, it was an elitist space governed by a single ideology.

Postcolonial nationalism was often framed as a liberation struggle based upon the writings of Amílcar Cabral and Frantz Fanon, each of whom had brought the so called 'Third World' into view during the mid-twentieth century. This type of nationalism was, writes Gerald Gaylard, incubated in the "pressure cooker of the independence struggle and liberationist rhetoric, historical materialism, psychedelic libertarianism, postmodern and other radical critiques of modernity."[714] It sought immediate respite from colonial oppression, often violently so. Furthermore, it sought respite from empiricist rationality, belief in rational progress, and the uber-science typically associated with biopolitical imperialism. Ultimately, these movements aimed to

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[710] "Nationalism in Postcolonial States," in *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation in Postcolonial and Postcommunist States,* Ed. by Lowell W. Barrington (2006), 36.

[711] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998), 41.

[712] Ibid.

[713] Ibid, 31.

[714] "Postcolonial Science Fiction: The Desert Planet," in Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal (Eds.), *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World, Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film*, 5.

install their own alternate cultures that typically "emphasised the pure, organic, rooted singularity."[715] The literature that resulted from these movements, writes Gaylard, is "often aggressive, assertive, binaristic, and apocalyptic."[716] It is also tied to fiercely independent and alternate philosophical paradigms.

Gaylard asks us to consider Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965) as an example. Herbert's novel is highly skeptical of the notion of progress, and as one of the protagonists states, "The concept of progress acts as a protective mechanism to shield us from the terrors of the future."[717] There is also a binaristic adversarial tension between the imperialist hegemony and the planet itself in these texts. In addition to extreme ecologies, *Dune* posits a human culture of coexistence, scarcity and thrift as an "apocalyptic end-point" against which to contrast the excesses of imperialism.[718] Herbert's model for the alterior culture of *Dune* was found in the Arabic and Islamic worlds. This is most visible in his use of the word "Fedaykin" which echoes the Palestinian "Feda'yin", meaning Guerrilla fighters;[719] though other examples abound.

Perhaps more importantly, nationalist postcolonialism has been adopted by Indigenous writers as well. Roslyn Weaver argues that apocalyptic landscapes have often appeared in Indigenous speculative fiction, and that they often function "as a critical voice for minorities to

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[715] Gerald Gaylard, "Postcolonial Science Fiction: The Desert Planet," 5.

[716] Ibid, 7.

[717] *Dune,* 271.

[718] Gerald Gaylard, "Postcolonial Science Fiction: The Desert Planet," 6.

[719] Ibid, 7.

speak against dominant powers and prophesy their overthrow."[720] For example, Sam Watson's *The Kadaitcha Sung* (1990) and Alexis Wright's *Plains of Promise* (1997), "conflate past, present and future" in order to "reject traditional white constructions of "history" and propose new approaches to time."[721] Lydia Wevers further argues that Indigenous speculative fiction can challenge a white audience specifically, because it is white readers who are generally met with new and different knowledge in reading this type of fiction:

> [White] readers have to participate, to cede agency, accept conditions, landscapes and actions that challenge not just power relations but also their apprehension of what history is and how it is understood, that challenge also their epistemologies, taxonomies and contingencies. Part of the attraction of indigenous texts… may be the revisioning they force, and the hope they offer of imagining the world locally, specifically, but also radically redrawn.[722]

Of course, Indigenous nationalist postcolonialism is vital in this milieu because it is actually undertaken by the Other. Examples such as Herbert's *Dune,* by contrast, run the risk of what Edward Said calls 'Orientalism'. Nationalist postcolonialism by the white writer, argues Said, often takes on the role of the Orientalist, utilising Eastern philosophy from the Western perspective. Such writers suggest that the Western agent is the messianic figure that can use the alternate philosophy to free the Other, rather than granting the Other agency to free themselves and their people. In *Orientalism* (1978)*,* Said looks specifically at T. E. Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922) (cited as a key influence by Frank Herbert): "It's "*Lawrence's* disappointment

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[720] "Smudged, Distorted and Hidden: Apocalypse as Protest in Indigenous Speculative Fiction," in Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal (Eds.), *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World, Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film,* 81.

[721] Roslyn Weaver, "Smudged, Distorted and Hidden," 82.

[722] Lydia Wevers, "Globalising Indigenes: Postcolonial Fiction from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific" (2006), 127.

that counts… Indeed what Lawrence presents to the reader is an unmediated expert power—the power to be, for a brief time, the Orient. All the events putatively ascribed to the historical Arab Revolt are reduced finally to Lawrence's experiences on its behalf."[723] For Said, Lawrence's uncritical metonymic substitution of himself for Indigenous oppressed peoples ironically replicates imperialism, despite Lawrence's championing of the cause of freedom. The author thus speaks for the subaltern in this example of nationalist postcolonialism. It is a dangerous, and often, all too presumptuous undertaking that carries with it a history of suppression, as Said and others such as Gayatri Spivak have made quite clear.[724]

While Ballard was a white British writer, he was not engaged in this type of appropriation of Otherness on anthropological terms because, of course, the Otherness that overthrows and supplants imperialism in his eco-disaster fictions is not human. Instead, it is an ecological and, one could say, even spiritual Otherness that is expressed in these novels. But Ballard's eco-disaster texts still do conceivably form a close parallel with the types of postcolonial writing discussed by Wevers, Weaver, and Gaylard. Because Ballard, too, enforces an entirely new paradigm, a new postcolonial nationalism—albeit perhaps non-traditional and / or metaphorical nationalism—by annihilating and supplanting the prior biopolitical imperialist regime.

Given that we have now situated Ballard's early eco-disaster novels as comprehensive metaphorical representations of anti-biopolitical imperialism, as vehicles for new all-encompassing entropic ecological consciousnesses, and as therefore potentially aligned with nationalist postcolo-

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[723] Edward Said, *Orientalism,* 242-43.

[724] In addition to *Orientalism,* one might look to Gayatri Spivak, "Can The Subaltern Speak?" (1988) in this context.

nialism, it is reasonable to conclude that these novels are important inclusions on a historical continuum of anti-imperialist Anglo-American SF. Moreover, given Ballard was one of the most, if not the most, imaginative and prescient British writers of the late twentieth century, it is not only important that we read his work in imperialist contexts, it is vital that we do so.

Ballard's early eco-disaster texts provide some of the most compelling, unique, and imaginative responses to biopolitical imperialism in the history of SF, thereby deepening and diversifying one's impressions of the social and psychological effects and outcomes of such regimes. This fiction exemplifies the extent, or depth, to which twentieth-century SF can be effective in imaginatively and incisively critiquing biopolitical imperialism, and in enabling one to see it as a crude and deeply flawed (and even insane) misappropriation of biological principles. In the final chapter of this thesis, I will examine the next phase in Ballard's career where his fiction underwent a transition into more ambivalent, and yet, no less incisive analysis and critique of what I call American techno-spectacle imperialism. I will also make the transition from analysis of Ballard to an overview of post-war and late twentieth century American SF in general. I will do so in order to briefly show the effects of American techno-spectacle imperialism across a range of other culturally significant Anglo-American SF texts; and in the process, perhaps contribute to opening pathways toward further scholarship in this field.

CHAPTER FOUR: American Techno-Spectacle Imperialism Across Mid-Period Ballard and Post-World War Two American Science Fiction

In *Crash* (1973), J. G. Ballard sets out to examine how human psychopathologies can be dramatically transformed by extreme confrontations with modern technology. The character of Robert Vaughan (played by Elias Koteas), in David Cronenberg's film version of *Crash* (1996), summarises the nature of his own documentary project in this way. But I suggest that it fairly accurately capitulates the intention of the original novel as well. This premise is reiterated across *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1969) and *Hello America* (1980), thus placing these three works on a thematic continuum. The questions I want to address in this final chapter are, what is the modern technology that supposedly guides the transformative process in these novels? What is the social context of this technology? And finally, how does it guide and re-shape the psychopathologies of the central characters across these texts? Ultimately, I aim to show that it is the combination of post-World War Two American technology and 'spectacle' that colonises the psychologies of central characters in these mid-period Ballard novels; and that, in turn, American techno-spectacle imperialism, as defined by Edward Said and Jean Baudrillard, is a central social context of this particular period of Ballard's fiction. Notably, as I will show, Ballard moves away from biopolitical contexts, choosing instead to scrutinise the imperialist regime that increasingly held sway in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Of course, the technology of *Crash* is figured most prominently in the form of the automobile. But do all of the automobiles in the novel exert similar effects, or is there something that separates one car from another? Consider the (eponymously named) protagonist James Ballard's

escapades with prostitutes in various hired vehicles following his release from hospital in the opening stages of the text. He receives sexual gratification as his flesh essentially conjoins with both the prostitutes and the technology of various vehicles—all different makes and models produced across a range of countries. But it is in the Detroit-made convertible that James is able to feel most gratified. Why? On the one hand, it is the powerful engine and power-steering of the vehicle—its "mastodonic" technological contours—that ignite James sexually.[725] He almost finds this technology to be too powerful and overwhelming at first, and is only able to fully embrace the American technology of, say, Vaughan's American-made Lincoln convertible as his psychological transformation is well underway toward the middle and end of the novel. But there are other factors driving James's appreciation of the American car above the other vehicles, too.

To James, the Detroit-made convertible is the "unknown star of so many second-rate television serials."[726] In driving it, he is able to feel like he is part of the "imaginary event" of a film shoot for which the car had recently been used.[727] He fantasises about being killed amid "this huge accumulation of fictions, finding my body marked with the imprint of a hundred television crime serials, the signatures of forgotten dramas which, years after being shelved in a network shake-up, would leave their last credit-lines in my skin."[728] It is not just the American technology at work in the automobile's manifolds, then, but also the celebrity, or spectacle, status of

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[725] *Crash,* 60.

[726] *Crash,* 61.

[727] *Crash,* 59.

[728] *Crash,* 59.

the car. The intersection and combination of these factors—American spectacle and technology—are ultimately what make the automobile so appealing to James.

We find Vaughan's American-made Lincoln convertible taking up a similar yet even more significant role in *Crash*. The Lincoln is presented as a manifestation of technological heaven—it "holds its machine elements like altarpieces."[729] Moreover, it is the central reference point for Ballard in presenting the automobile as "a *tour de force* of technology and kinaesthetic systems"; and as representative of "the ultimate and brutal resolutions of this new technological landscape."[730] But more than just providing the novel's technological epicentre, the Lincoln is given special significance in the text because it is the exact replica of the car in which President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, in November 1963.

In its combination of supreme technology and spectacle status, the Lincoln takes on heightened, almost spiritual proportions for the novel's central characters. In this regard, James notes that the outside world fades away when he is inside the Lincoln; it is instead a world "lit only by the lights of the instrument panel" as the car becomes its own "blue grotto."[731] James views his wife and Vaughan in the backseat of the Lincoln at this point "like two semi-metallic human beings of the distant future making love in a chromium bower."[732] Following intercourse, Vaughan draws the shape of a zodiac sign with his semen on the leather backseat. One might interpret the figuration of a Jungian mandala in this act. I have discussed the significance of the

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[729] *Crash,* 200.

[730] *Crash,* 179-180.

[731] *Crash,* 161.

[732] *Crash,* 162

mandala in the previous chapter, but to reiterate: Jung writes that the mandala's presence may "signify nothing less than a specific centre of the personality not to be identified with the ego."[733] Perhaps in drawing the zodiac sign in the Lincoln, then, Vaughan is indicating that the centre of his own personality lies here, in this particular automobile which ultimately symbolises an American techno-spectacle convergence and apotheosis.

Both the Lincoln and the Detroit-made convertible bespeak the profound influence of American technology and spectacle cultures in *Crash.* There are many further examples which I will draw on later in this chapter. For now, though, I would like to conduct an initial overview of the presence of the American techno-spectacle in another Ballard novel, *Hello America.* In the introduction to this text, Ballard writes, "Cadillacs, Coca Cola and cocaine, presidents and psychopaths, Norman Rockwell and the mafia…the dream of America endlessly unravels its codes, like the helix of some ideological DNA…The simulacrum might well reveal something of the secret agenda that lies beneath the enticing surface of the American dream."[734] This quote essentially outlines the author's intentions going into the text itself: to expose the endlessly unraveling codes of popular culture and American technology, to show how they affect us, and to perhaps even invoke the secret agenda behind this techno-spectacle culture. The Lincoln automobile and the film actress—the spectacular and technological American elements that largely stand behind *Crash's* psychopathologies—effectively function as the guiding principles behind the collective psychology of *Hello America* as well. Only in this case these factors are repackaged and dispersed across a kaleidoscope of American pop-cultural symbols and technological artefacts.

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[733] *Psychology and Alchemy* (1968), paragraph 126.

[734] *Hello America,* iv.

Hello America is set in a post-apocalyptic United States during the mid-twenty-first century. A scientific delegation arrives in New York City aboard a European steamship at the outset of the text. Almost immediately, American iconography and technology begin to pervade the minds of several of the lead protagonists. The character of Wayne, for example, had long dreamed of reclaiming his American-ness (he has ancestral roots in the United States); dreams that were fed through an immersion in American history and pop-cultural iconography. But it is only upon reaching the mainland that Wayne's American dreams truly begin to colonise his consciousness, consequently driving the narrative forward (or in this case, westward across the North American continent). As he sets out across the continent with his cohort, Wayne begins to see the world in terms of a Western cinematic landscape. He is one of the cowboys, like Wyatt Earp; while he summarily describes the bands of impoverished nomadic locals who traverse the desolate landscape as "Indians."[735] In a parallel move, the character of Anne Summers begins to obsessively apply make-up and adopt the poses of a Hollywood screen actress as the journey progresses. When Wayne's group finally communicates with the so called Indians, we discover that they are named after iconic American brands including Heinz, Xerox and GM.[736] Brand and / or corporate culture has thus pervaded the Native American persona to the most intimate degree. Further, these tribes of nomads all formulate their collective identities around iconic American stereotypes—the 'Gangster' tribe, the 'Bureaucrats', or the 'Gamblers'.

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[735] *Hello America,* 116, 121.

[736] *Hello America,* 121.

The first phase of Wayne's journey across America culminates in a western-style Mexican standoff in a "theme park frontier street" of a ruined mid-western town.[737] Soon after, he sees what appears to be a dreamscape of monolithic figures from American folk lore—John Wayne, Gary Cooper, Alan Ladd, and Henry Fonda—striding across the terrain before him.[738] Wayne describes these monolithic figures as American Gods. It is an especially useful example in that it also highlights the American technologies at play in the novel. These figures are not apparitions, but instead are laser holographic projections sent out by President Charles Manson from his headquarters in the Howard Hughes suite of Las Vegas's Desert Inn. Significantly, it is not just the American pop-cultural icon that is worshipped as a God by Wayne and others including Manson, Anne Summers and Dr. Fleming in *Hello America,* but also the technology behind these immense figures. Wayne is awed by the holographic technology when Manson explains it later in the text, just as he is awed by the speed and power of the Buick Roadmaster, the Chrysler Imperial, and the Ford Galaxy, (all American cars, of course), which he and the others ride in during their journey to see Manson in Vegas.[739] Further, Wayne is dumbfounded by the cybernetic experience of seeing an animatronic Frank Sinatra entertaining an animatronic audience in the vast auditorium of an otherwise abandoned Las Vegas casino.[740]

It is Manson, though, who, just like Vaughan in *Crash,* embodies the most potent example of a consciousness that has been colonised by American techno-spectacle. His name is of

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[737] *Hello America,* 186.

[738] *Hello America,* 191.

[739] *Hello America,* 198.

[740] *Hello America,* 230-31.

course the most obvious example of how he has imbibed spectacle culture. But he has also taken on the role of President in this ruined territory, thus imbibing what is arguably at the very heart of the American spectacle. From the Hughes suite, President Manson surveils the surrounding areas, and other parts of the country, via tiers of television screens. In noting the degree of his obsession with surveillance, Ballard writes, "President Manson's eyes flicked on tiers of screens as if the real existence resided in the ionised flow of flickering images rather than in his own restless musculature."[741] His other obsession is weapons technology. He blasts the landscape from his flying gunships, and triggers the nuclear destruction of one formerly great American city after another. As Ballard writes, Manson ultimately represents the "ghosts of Charles Manson and IBM (meeting) in Caesar's Palace, playing with cruise missiles in place of gold chips."[742] In other words, he is indivisible from the American techno-spectacle.

Critical Confusion

It should now be apparent that American techno-spectacle culture is particularly pervasive in both *Crash* and *Hello America*, largely shaping the psychologies and / or psychopathologies of these texts. But what does this American pervasion signify? Does it mark a social commentary, and if so, is it rooted in a specific historical context?

Several critics have asserted that Ballard is indeed conducting metaphorical or allegorical social commentary in the mid-period texts. Critically, however, there is rarely a specific sociopolitical agenda in mind. Rob Latham, for example, suggests that Ballard's dissection of spectacle

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[741] *Hello America,* 249.

[742] *Hello America,* 339.

culture and "technocracy" amounts to a dissection of post-war Western culture in general.[743] He finds little that is specifically American or Americanised about these works; instead, America functions not as an exclusive entity but as a symbol of the West in general. Roger Luckhurst does comment on Ballard's engagement with techno-spectacle American contexts specifically. He argues, for example, that Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970) explores "hollowed out, mediatized subjects" who "ecstatically embrace their deathly / machinic state of being."[744] In doing so, writes Luckhurst, the novel forms a parallel with Andy Warhol's mechanical reproductions and modulations in the form of Pop Art portraits of the likes of Marilyn Monroe or Jackie Kennedy.[745] He further discusses how the character of Travis in *The Atrocity Exhibition* has essentially been colonised by the infamous Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination, hollowed out and transformed into a kind of 'mediatised' psychopath by it.[746] But crucially, Luckhurst does not mention how this psychological colonisation ties to concepts at the heart of post-war American imperialism. Instead, he links the 'mediatisation' of Ballard's subjects to historically decentralised late capitalist and postmodern frameworks.

Similarly, Jen Hui Bon Hoa has argued recently that the mechanistic "pornographic geometries" of *Crash* and *The Atrocity Exhibition* indicate immersion in technologically mediated contemporary reality. This immersion is, according to Bon Hoa, a mode of political subver-

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[743] "Biotic Invasions: Ecological Imperialism in New Wave Science Fiction" (2007).

[744] "Ballard/*Atrocity*/Conner/*Exhibition*/Assemblage*"* in *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions* (2012), 36.

[745] Ibid, 36-37.

[746] Ibid, 38-43.

sion that emerges from "an established history of avant-garde politics."[747] There is a political critique in Ballard's "dead-pan regurgitation" of mass culture, according to Bon Hoa; it is found in *The Atrocity Exhibition*'s reflection of how the sensual experience is being devastatingly reshaped in the mould of efficiently industrialised capitalist productions and spectacle culture.[748] Travis's sexual appetites in the novel, for example, mirror an economy based on the "consumption of sheer commodification as a process," and as a result he is psychopathic.[749] But distinct historical associations remain unclear in Bon Hoa's argument. Instead, Ballard's referents are again put down to a more historically free-floating, late capitalist culture.

In fact, the argument that subjectivity is completely sublimated by late capitalist and / or postmodern culture in Ballard is well-worn critical terrain. Most (in)famously, Jean Baudrillard argued in an early review that the characters of *Crash* are initiated into an uninterrupted interface with the simulacra of the late-twentieth-century postmodern world.[750] Bradley Butterfield, Emma Whiting, N. Katherine Hayles, and Nicholas Ruddick—though all diverging with Baudrillard significantly on certain points of argument—have made similar arguments, aligning *Crash* and *The Atrocity Exhibition* in particular with the experience of late-twentieth-century sociality and subjectivity wherein the corporeal, technological, physical and social overlap; meaning that or-

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[747] "Pornographic Geometries: The Spectacle as Pathology and as Therapy in *The Atrocity Exhibition,"* in *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions* (2012), 72.

[748] Ibid.

[749] Ibid, 75.

[750] "Ballard's *Crash"* (1976).

ganic bodies, machines and sociality are undifferentiated within a late capitalist frame.[751] Vivian Sobchack has also argued that *Crash* represents the literal "dead end" that the "techno-body" of postmodern culture is driving us toward.[752] In looking across the Ballardian critical field, in fact, one would be hard-pressed to find a scholar who does *not* argue that this is what Ballard is doing in terms of social commentary in these novels.

I suggest that this type of critique, whilst often insightful and revealing, creates an unnecessarily vague and broad historical scope for viewing and interpreting Ballard's social commentary in *The Atrocity Exhibition, Crash,* and *Hello America*. In light of the specifically American themes touched on above, I think there is scope to instead read these novels in more concrete historical contexts. More to the point, I suggest that Ballard's American critiques may be read specifically as critiques of post-war American techno-spectacle imperialism. To prevent this chapter from becoming unwieldy, I will predominantly focus on *Crash* and *Hello America* in establishing the American techno-spectacle imperialist contexts of mid-period Ballard. *Crash* is the seminal mid-period Ballard novel and thus deserves to be discussed at length. It also recapitulates and distills many of the same themes, trajectories and ideas as *The Atrocity Exhibition* in terms of techno-spectacle contexts, so discussing both at length would risk redundancy. *Hello America* has not been discussed much at all by Ballard scholars. In some respects I agree with Gregory Benford, who argues that it is a relatively minor Ballard novel, especially when com-

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[751] Bradley Butterfield, "Ethical Value and Negative Aesthetics: Reconsidering the Baudrillard-Ballard Connection" (1999); N. Katherine Hayles, "The Borders of Madness" (1991); Emma Whiting "Disaffection and Abjection in J. G. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash,*" in *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions* (2012); and Nicholas Ruddick, "Ballard/"Crash"/Baudrillard" (1992).

[752] Vivian Sobchack, "Baudrillard's Obscenity" (1991).

pared with the stylistic potency and cutting-edge thematic quality of a novel like *Crash*.[753] Nevertheless, *Hello America* is a vital text in terms of making the case for Ballard's engagement with American techno-spectacle imperialist themes, and thus needs to be dissected at some length here.

I would further argue that critical oversight in Ballard's case is symptomatic of a broader issue within the study of post-war Anglo-American SF. Too often and too easily have the sociopolitical analyses of Anglo-American SF been consigned to postmodern or late capitalist contexts, when in fact the central social context is rooted in American imperialism as defined most notably by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), and by Jean Baudrillard in *America* (1986). With this point in mind, I will use the latter part of this chapter to conduct a brief survey of post-war American SF, to more accurately place some key works of this period in their rightful American imperialist contexts. As noted, this survey can only be brief. This is due in large part to the restricted scope of this chapter. But it is also more productive to spend the major part of this final chapter on firmly establishing Ballard's mid-period role in the imperialist frame, rather than on moving across the surface of a wide variety of texts without providing a comprehensive reading and stable historical contextualisation of any of them, as many survey papers and chapters tend to do.[754] Nevertheless, my hope in conducting a brief survey is that it will in some small way contribute to opening pathways toward further in-depth studies of key works of Anglo-American SF in terms of how they relate to American imperialist contexts.

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[753] "The New York Times Book Review, 93, 22" (1988).

[754] See, for example, Gary Westfahl, "The Mightiest Machine: The Development of American Science Fiction from the 1920s to the 1960s" (2015); Darren Harris-Fain, "Dangerous Visions: New Wave and Post-New Wave Science Fiction" (2015); and Priscilla Wald, "Science, Technology, and the Environment" (2015).

Studying this fiction in this particular context is vital, if one is to avoid vaguely defined and historically uprooted contexts. Furthermore, as I have reiterated on several occasions throughout this thesis, elucidating the imperialist concerns and insights of Anglo-American SF is necessary in terms of bridging gaps of understanding, empathy, and collaboration across cultural lines.

Ballard on American Imperialist Contexts

Ballard himself provides some grounding as to the American techno-spectacle themes of his fiction. As he watched B-29 Bombers, Mustangs and Lightnings bomb the Lunghua airfields on the outskirts of Shanghai at a young age, the future author was awed by American technology: "The sight of these advanced American aircraft gave me a new focus of adolescent veneration. As the Mustangs streaked overhead, less than a hundred feet from the ground, it was clear that they belonged to a new technological order."[755] These immense aircraft seemed to have sprung directly from the advertising pages of *Life* and *Collier's* magazines, or from the American comic books Ballard consumed rapaciously as a child. The airplanes embodied the same consumer ethos as the streamlined Cadillacs and Lincoln Zephyrs, the American-made refrigerators and radios. "In a way," writes Ballard, "the Mustangs and Lightnings were themselves advertisements, 400-mile-an-hour commercials that advertised the American dream and American power."[756] Quite clearly, then, American technological power and spectacle had a profound effect on Ballard as a child. One could even make the case that these factors had begun to colonise his own mind as

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[755] *Miracles of Life: Shanghai to Shepparton, an Autobiography* (2008), 153.

[756] *Miracles of Life,* 154.

they did the minds of his characters in later novels like *Crash*. It was a techno-spectacle immersion that would only deepen over time.

Ballard became very interested in Hollywood films and American and / or Americanised Pop Art on returning to England after the war. Warhol had a significant influence over Ballard's early prose, but Richard Hamilton's 1956 collage, *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?,* had the most notable effect. As Ballard writes in his autobiography, *Miracles of Life* (2008)*,* he was deeply impressed by the way in which Hamilton responded to American "advertising, road signs, films and popular magazines, to the design of packaging and consumer goods" in his work; and by the way in which Hamilton visually captured how this culture had permeated everyday life in both America and Western Europe.[757] Around this time, Ballard also seized upon the contemporaneous late-1950s SF that dealt with "the dangers of advertising, television and the American media landscape…psychiatry and politics conducted as branches of advertising."[758] In both SF and Pop Art, Ballard recognised the trajectory of the 1950s-60s Western world. He would interiorise the new societal themes that were taking shape, as he writes in *Miracles of Life*; and he would begin to look for "the pathology that underlay the consumer society, the TV landscape and the nuclear arms race" in his own fiction.[759]

As he prepared to write *The Atrocity Exhibition,* in 1964-5, Ballard felt that "Kennedy's assassination presided over everything."[760] It was not just the shock of the death itself that per-

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[757] *Miracles of Life,* 274.

[758] *Miracles of Life,* 245.

[759] *Miracles of Life,* 247.

[760] *Miracles of Life,* 298.

meated Western culture so deeply, but the sensationalism of it by the new medium of television and a ravenous new American media landscape: "The endless photographs of the Dealey Plaza shooting, the Zapruder film of the president dying in his wife's arms in his open-topped limousine, created a kind of gruesome overload where real sympathy began to leak away and only sensation was left, as Andy Warhol quickly realised."[761] The convergence of the Kennedy assassination, the televised war in Vietnam, pop music, advertising, Hollywood and the political arena, had, according to Ballard, created a world where advanced technology and American (or Americanised) spectacle was literally overwhelming collective Western psychologies.[762] Ballard's close friend, Doctor Chris Evans, for example, was obsessed with America: He "zoomed around in his Ford Galaxy convertible, American sneakers, jeans, and a denim shirt;" and he hung California license plates over his desk at work.[763] The Americanised Evans, notes Ballard, would be the inspiration for the character of Vaughan in *Crash.*[764]

In general, *Crash* would take the effects of the American techno-spectacle culture that had so profoundly influenced Ballard further than even *The Atrocity Exhibition.* I have referred already to some of the profound effects of this culture on *Crash,* but it is important to analyse these themes and motifs a little further in order to show just how deep this cultural imprint runs in this seminal text; to show how it comprehensively colonises the psychologies of the novel's central characters.

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[761] *Miracles of Life,* 299.

[762] *Miracles of Life,* 337.

[763] *Miracles of Life,* 305-306.

[764] *Miracles of Life,* 306.

At the outset of *Crash,* we find the (Chris Evans-inspired) character of Vaughan obsessively photographing automobile accident scenes. From these photographs he recreates the postures of death with prostitutes as they have sex in automobiles. He is deeply invested in this type of recreation, in becoming one with the image and the technology of the car. As James, the novel's narrator, observes, Vaughan dramatises and stages himself constantly, as though always "waiting for invisible television cameras to frame him."[765] In James's mind, Vaughan soon becomes linked and interwoven with the automobile and the image, as he intends. On this point, James notes that Vaughan's photographic album and television series scheme provide more of a landscape of Vaughan's mind than of anything else.[766] The Lincoln and Vaughan ultimately become one, just as he becomes one with the image of Elizabeth Taylor. His convergence with the automobile is evident in the way the Lincoln and Vaughan are used interchangeably toward the end of the text:

> Knowing now that Vaughan would not stop for me, I pressed myself against the concrete wall of the layby. The Lincoln swerved after me, its right-hand front fender striking the rear wheel housing of the abandoned car in which I had sat… Vaughan's bloodied hands whirled at the steering wheel. The Lincoln re-mounted the kerb on the far side of the access road…
>
> As the Lincoln crushed the palisade Vaughan had looked back, his hard eyes calculating if he could make a second pass at me.[767]

Moreover, consider the Lincoln's rapid disintegration following Vaughan's death; it is as though the vehicle cannot survive without its co-dependent driver.[768]

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[765] *Crash,* 88.

[766] *Crash,* 100.

[767] *Crash,* 206-207.

[768] *Crash,* 220.

As noted, a similar level of intertwinement is evident in Vaughan's total investment in the image of the film actress. He becomes inseparable from his desire to fuse with the image of Taylor; or as James notes, all Vaughan thinks about in the days leading up to his suicide is the spectacle of his marriage in death and gore between Elizabeth Taylor, the automobile and himself.[769] In fact, Vaughan imagines that the ultimate form of transcendence would be achieved through this convergence. Like the Lincoln, Vaughan views the film actress as a deity, interpreting the unique contours of her body as possessing the power to re-shape and heighten the significance of any scene.[770]

Like President Charles Manson in *Hello America,* or Travis in *The Atrocity Exhibition,* Vaughan is really the epicentre of the novel's techno-spectacle consciousness, the high priest of this mindset, the cult leader in its name. Or as James points out, Vaughan essentially controls each of the novel's central players, "giving each of us what we most wanted and most feared."[771] But the pervasiveness of American techno-spectacle culture is also evident beyond the character of Vaughan. James, for example, feels that he is becoming "a kind of emotional cassette, taking his place with all those scenes of pain and violence that illuminated the margins of our lives—television newsreels of wars and student riots, natural disasters and police brutality which we vaguely watched on the colour TV set in our bedroom as we masturbated each other."[772] Gratification is increasingly interlinked with the media spectacle for James, and he is not alone in this

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[769] *Crash,* 9.

[770] *Crash,* 109.

[771] *Crash,* 90.

[772] *Crash,* 37.

respect. Renata also needs immersion in magazine images of death, famine and war to feel alive; as does Catherine whose mind "has been fed for years on a diet of aircraft disasters and war newsreels, of violence transmitted in darkened cinemas."[773]

James ultimately comes to see the automobile crash in terms of stylised violence and rescue, as though it were perceived through the lens of a cine-camera. The stylised action that plays out before him becomes the new force of sexual energy. As James and Helen have sex in an automobile, he begins to perceive her naked body as being overlaid by "the ventures of a benevolent technology—the moulded binnacle of the instrument dials, the jutting carapace of the steering column shroud, the extravagant pistol grip of the handbrake."[774] Like Vaughan, James also begins to stage his sexual partners to match images taken from car accidents. He also increasingly aligns with Vaughan's obsessions over Elizabeth Taylor. For example, James visualises the fatal crash of a minor television star in slow motion so as to heighten and more deeply sexualise the event. It is worth quoting at length from James's description of this event because doing so highlights the fact that he, along with the other major characters in the text, ultimately conceives of the junction between celebrity and the automobile as representing all "dreams and fantasies"[775]:

> I visualised the accident filmed in slow motion… Her mutilation and death became a coronation of her image at the hands of a colliding technology, a celebration of her individual limbs and facial planes, gestures and skin tones. Each of the spectators at the accident site would carry away an image of the violent transformation of this woman, of the complex wounds that fused together her own sexuality and the hard technology of the automobile. Each of them would join his own

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[773] *Crash,* 46.

[774] *Crash,* 80.

[775] *Crash,* 134.

> imagination, the tender membranes of his mucous surfaces, his groves of erectile tissue, to the wounds of this minor actress through the medium of his own motor car, touching them as he drove in a medley of stylised postures.

The techno-spectacle has become so dominant here that all human agency is lost. Instead the human being functions as simply a medium for stylised postures, image based sexuality, and total technological immersion. In other words, the character of James has become utterly colonised by technological and spectacular elements. Meanwhile, the spaces outside the automobile and the camera lens become increasingly dull and irritating.[776]

As I now want to make clear, this immersion in the techno-spectacle arena does not just draw from Ballard's own personal history of fascination with this culture, or from a generalisable culture of late capitalism or postmodernity. Instead, it draws from identifiable contexts of American techno-spectacle imperialism.

American Techno-Spectacle Imperialism: Definitions and Contexts

Jean Baudrillard's *America* (1986) needs to be discussed here, and not just because Ballard noted at one point that Baudrillard is "the most important French thinker of the past twenty years";[777] nor because he stated that *America* specifically is "an absolutely brilliant piece of writing, probably the most sharply clever piece of writing since Swift…an intellectual Aladdin's cave."[778] Rather, it is because Baudrillard's conception of the American identity in *America* aligns so closely with the psychologies of the characters in *Crash* and *Hello America*. And more importantly, Baudrillard helps us to understand how the American techno-spectacle psyche connects to

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[776] *Crash,* 82.

[777] J. G. Ballard, "A Response to the Invitation to Respond" (1973), 326.

[778] "A Response to the Invitation to Respond," 329.

imperialist contexts in the post-war epoch. *America,* then, enables us to more firmly locate Ballard's characters in American imperialist contexts.

In his unique travelogue, Baudrillard aligns American culture and identity with the simulacrum. In flamboyant and characteristic style, he summarises the premise of the entire American psyche as follows:

> Ravishing hyperrealism
> Ecstatic Asceticism
> Multi-Process tracking shot
> Interactive multi-dimensionality
> Mind-blowing
>
> *Western Digitals*
> *Body building incorporated*
> *Mileage unlimited*
> *Channel Zero*[779]

Baudrillard's poetry of advertising, consumerism, and hyperrealist capitalism is designed to indicate that America and Americans have no identity outside the simulacrum. Instead, the simulacrum *is,* in effect, the American mindset: "no staging of bodies (in America), no performance can be without its control screen. We integrate with machine and screen, becoming another part of the circuit."[780] The whole of life and identity in America is, according to Baudrillard, imbricated with a drive-in movie, a cereal advertisement, and a movie star's image. In fact, the screen idols are immanent in the unfolding of life as a series of images: "They are a system of luxury prefabrication, brilliant syntheses of the stereotypes of life and love. They embody one single passion only: the passion for images, and the immanence of desire in the image. They are not

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[779] *America,* 31.

[780] *America,* 36-37.

something to dream about; they are the dream."[781] The screen star and its refraction are the fundamental determinants of the American mindset, of the American's dreams and everyday processes alike.

Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) essentially prefigures and clarifies Baudrillard's point here, albeit without the distinctly American frame. In fact, one might stretch back even further to György Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1961) which conceivably prefigures both Debord's and Baudrillard's ideas on the integration of culture and the simulacrum to some extent. Lukács essentially shows that the effects of capitalism are fragmentation and reification. In his view, every human being becomes a commodity or object, they imbricate with the commodity or object in turn, and the image or whole of the community disappears entirely as a result. But Lukács also envisioned overcoming this phenomenon of community separation and isolation in the capitalist machine by imagining that through strength of mental will "one lonely mind could join another by imagining the common bond between them," thereby breaking the enforced rigidity of the capitalist system.[782] By the late-1960s, however, the idea of dissolving the capitalist system either psychologically or socially had seriously begun to wane due in large part to the relentless proliferation of spectacle society as communicated through ever-more sophisticated technologies.

As Debord sees it, by the late-1960s the "society of the spectacle" affirms the "predominance of appearances and asserts that all human life, which is to say all social life, is mere ap-

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[781] *America,* 59.

[782] Quoted in Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), 270.

pearance."[783] The world is thus no longer directly perceptible, but "perceptible only via different specialised mediations;"[784] and the individual's gestures are therefore no longer his own, but instead those of someone else—most notably the celebrity, or "star," as Debord calls this figure—who represents them to him.[785] Ultimately, "the spectacle erases the dividing line between self and world, in that the self, under siege by the presence / absence of the world, is eventually overwhelmed;"[786] it moreover "erases the dividing line between true and false, repressing all directly lived truth beneath the *real presence* of the falsehood maintained by the organisation of appearances."[787]

Even the American desert, which Baudrillard considers to be the most profound geological environment on earth, has been incorporated into the cinema, devoured by the society of the spectacle and divested of all its primitive and metaphysical origins, thereby becoming cinematic in scope: "The depth of time is revealed through the (cinematic) depth of field."[788] We see even the desert through the lens, according to Baudrillard, and this concept powerfully illustrates the notion that the image alone counts in the American space and headspace. One conceivably finds Ballard's characters nestled neatly within this frame—film actress and stylisation-obsessed figures such as Vaughan; or Wayne in *Hello America,* who is so utterly yoked with the image of the American presidency that he can quite literally neither see nor heed any reality outside of it. In

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[783] *The Society of the Spectacle,* 13.

[784] Ibid, 14.

[785] Ibid, 17.

[786] Ibid, 23.

[787] Ibid, 153.

[788] Jean Baudrillard, *America,* 74.

fact, one cannot divorce either Vaughan or the protagonists of *Hello America* from the imagistic spectacle, instead they take up their place on the fully "integrated circuit" of the American mind-set, as Baudrillard calls it.[789] Ballard's characters thus follow the path of Baudrillard's Americans by immersing as deeply and irrevocably in the "pure baroque logic of Disneyland."[790]

Crucially, this spectacular American configuration is not without imperialist dimensions, according to Baudrillard. As he writes, "I cannot help but feel it has about it something of the dawning of the universe. Perhaps because the entire world continues to dream of New York, even as New York dominates and exploits it."[791] The colonising power of American fictive culture, of the American dream as manifest in the bustling movie-set streets of New York, is alluded to here and built on throughout *America*. From the 1950s onwards, notes Baudrillard, American spectacle, or simulacrum, culture increasingly dominated global consciousness, despite the lingering petty-bourgeois sensibilities of Europeans. He does not deny that European cities such as Paris still revolve around the nineteenth-century petty-bourgeois dream derived from the French Revolution; and he remains ambivalent as to whether or not American-ness can truly cross the Atlantic and effectively colonise Old Europe.[792] But he nevertheless sees American psychology as making significant imperialist inroads globally. He uses global perception of the Vietnam War (1964-1975) as a key example of this point.

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[789] *America,* 111.

[790] *America,* 110.

[791] *America,* 24.

[792] *America,* 78, 85-86.

In reality, writes Baudrillard, the Vietnamese won the war on the ground; however, the Americans won it in "the electronic mental space."[793] To this day (or at least up until the date of the publication of *America,* in 1986) the world remains confused as to the outcome of that war. That is because, writes Baudrillard, although Vietnam won ideological, political and strategic victories, the Americans "made *Apocalypse Now* and that has gone around the world."[794] The central point being of course that through techno-spectacle in the form of dramatic cinema and television, and through global dependence on that techno-spectacle, the United States was able to shape global perception of the war in Vietnam. It was, moreover, able to project its role as both victorious and righteous in the conflict, largely covering-over defeat and the many American atrocities that were committed. This is a powerful example of psychological colonisation by American techno-spectacle, according to Baudrillard, in that it illustrates the fact that the Americans fight with two essential weapons in modern imperialism: "air power and information. That is, with the physical bombardment of the enemy and the electronic bombardment of the rest of the world."[795]

This combination of technological sophistication and spectacular artificiality is paramount to post-war imperialist power, according to Baudrillard. He uses the post-war American

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[793] *America,* 51.

[794] *America,* 51. I take the point here, though perhaps Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) is not the best example in this case. Arguably, it is a damning portrait of American involvement in Vietnam; and it certainly does not convey the idea that America was victorious in the conflict. Of course, it should also be noted that *Apocalypse Now* is an adaptation of Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), which arguably serves to further the argument that the film should be viewed as anti-imperialistic, and thus as perhaps working against Baudrillard's point about American imperial propaganda.

[795] *America,* 51.

proxy-state of Japan as an example, writing that it has taken up the role of "satellite territory of the United States—managing to transform the power of territoriality and feudalism into that of deterritoriality and weightlessness."[796] These "artificial" satellites, made in the mould of American satellites, set the course of the future, "gradually encroaching on all territories with their deterritorialising agendas."[797] America's ideologues are therefore not wrong in "their idyllic conviction that they are the centre of the world, the supreme power, the absolute model for everyone," writes Baudrillard.[798] It has become true not just through arms, technology, or unprecedented access to natural resources, but primarily through the power of idyllic self-representation and projection: movie screens, movie stars, television shows that depict "justice, plenty, rule of law, wealth, freedom."[799] America believes in itself on these terms, and the world, by the 1970s-80s, was coming to believe it too. Whatever the case, writes Baudrillard, "and whatever one thinks of the arrogance of the dollar or the multinationals, it is the culture which, the world over, fascinates those very people who suffer most at its hands, and does so through the deep, insane conviction that it has made all their dreams come true."[800]

Baudrillard emphasises the idea that American techno-spectacle culture acts imperialistically by turning his attention to Europe: "It is the American way of life, which we (Europeans) think naive or culturally worthless, which will provide us with a complete graphic representation of the end of our values—which has vainly been prophesied in our own countries—on the grand

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[796] *America,* 82.

[797] *America,* 82.

[798] *America,* 83.

[799] *America,* 83.

[800] *America,* 83.

scale that the geographical and mental dimensions of utopia can give to it."[801] Whatever pretensions Europeans may harbour, it is "the American orgy of advertising and spectacle" that Europeans inevitably long for in Baudrillard's view.[802]

As of the mid-1980s, argues Baudrillard, America has perhaps lost some ground from the point of view of competition, hegemony, and classical imperialism, but it has nevertheless gained ground in a modern sense of imperialism: "Take the unintelligible rise of the dollar, for example, which bears no relation to any economic supremacy, or the fabulous apotheosis of New York, or even—and why not?—the world-wide success of *Dallas*. America has retained power, but it is now power as a special effect."[803] The idea of special effect, which of course interlinks with notions of spectacle and technology, is vital here. Ronald Reagan is a primary example of imperialist special effects at work, according to Baudrillard: "the Reagan mirage is modern American imperialism."[804] In Reagan, a system of values that was formerly effective turns into something ideal and imaginary. This advertising effect, this constant promotional hyping ceremony, has extended a sort of mythical American power throughout the world.[805] It is a power that Ballard obviously tries to address and fragment in a chapter of *The Atrocity Exhibition* titled "Why I Want To Fuck Ronald Reagan."

Whether in reality America has entered a state of 'Hysteresis'—the process where something continues to develop by inertia; or whereby an effect persists even when its cause has dis-

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[801] *America,* 107.

[802] *America,* 105.

[803] *America,* 117.

[804] *America,* 118.

[805] *America,* 127.

appeared—Baudrillard leaves open to debate. Nevertheless, the overall point is that the world, in following America's lead, has increasingly entered a state of American hyperreality by the 1980s. America has moved to a state where it is largely "uncontested and uncontestable" on the global stage because the rest of the world has fallen into its hyperreal, special-effects-driven vacuum.[806] "It has now become a model (business, market, free enterprise, performance)—and a universal one—even reaching as far as China. The international style is now American."[807] Be it an effect of technological credibility, or an advertising effect, "either way, the potential adversary has lost its defences."[808] This idea of being beyond contestation has characterised Reagan above all others, writes Baudrillard: "Little by little, everything facing him, everything opposing him has faded away, without it being possible to credit him with any personal political genius."[809]

Baudrillard's view alone provides an angle for reading the psychologies of Ballard's mid-period texts, *The Atrocity Exhibition, Crash* and *Hello America,* in both American and American imperialist contexts. But I would also like to turn to the more historically substantiated view of Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), to more firmly establish the gist of my argument.

Said interprets the descriptions of techno-spectacle imperialism by thinkers like Debord and Baudrillard as possessing a dispiriting inevitability, "a kind of galloping, engulfing, impersonal, and deterministic quality."[810] Yet, writes Said, "the cultural implications of such phrases

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[806] *America,* 127.

[807] *America,* 127.

[808] *America,* 129.

[809] *America,* 127.

[810] *Culture and Imperialism,* 283.

are nevertheless discernible" in the imperialism of the post-war United States.[811] On the one hand, Said sees a decrease in American economic dominance during the 1970s and 1980s, due in large part to competition posed by the ascendancy of Pacific Rim states and the confusions of a multipolar world. Despite these threats, however, an immensely powerful United States has, according to Said, cultivated a post-war empire of arguably unprecedented scale through advanced new techno-spectacle channels.

Along one axis, America held onto its imperialist power in the post-war period through technology. More specifically, it did so via the threat of atomic-grade firepower, and through the unrivalled ubiquity and sophistication of supreme communications and surveillance technologies. These factors allowed the United States to govern remotely to an extent that was unprecedented in the history of imperialism. It could feasibly oversee sublimated territories— colonies, in effect—with satellites, ballistic missiles and nuclear warheads. The United States also held imperialist sway along a second axis, writes Said: through "the quantum leap in the reach of cultural authority, thanks in large measure to the unprecedented growth in the apparatus for the diffusion and control of information."[812] What he is referring to here is both the proliferation and increasing influence of an American media spectacle.

According to Said, the influential media spectacle almost unwaveringly favoured and bolstered American imperialist action in the post-war epoch. Instead of elucidating both sides of the debate—Iraqi and American—prior to the Gulf War (1990-91), for example, the American media reductively turned Saddam Hussein into "the butcher of Baghdad, the madman (as de-

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[811] Ibid.

[812] *Culture and Imperialism,* 291.

scribed by Senator Alan Simpson) who was to be brought low."[813] Perhaps the most disheartening factor in the American media spectacle around the Gulf conflict, writes Said, was the trafficking in "expert" Middle East lore, and the supposedly well-informed debate about Arabs.[814] These arguments put forward notions that "All roads lead to the bazaar; Arabs only understand force; brutality and violence are part of Arab civilisation; Islam is an intolerant, segregationist, 'medieval', fanatic, cruel, anti-woman religion."[815] The context, framework, and setting of any discussion in the United States was "frozen" by these essentially imperialistic ideas that were circulated through the media.[816]

Of course, the entire premise of the Gulf War was colonial. Desert Storm was an imperialist war against the Iraqi people, an effort to destroy them as part of an effort to gain the country's resources. Yet, writes Said, "this anachronistic and singularly bloody aspect was largely kept from the American television audience, as a way of maintaining its image as a painless Nintendo exercise, and the image of Americans as virtuous, clean warriors."[817] Further, he writes:

> Americans watched the war on television with a relatively unquestioned certainty that they were seeing the reality, whereas what they actually saw was the most covered and the least reported war in history. The images and the prints were controlled by the government, and the major American media copied one another, and were in turn copied or shown (like CNN) all over the world.[818]

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[813] Ibid, 292.

[814] Ibid, 296.

[815] Ibid, 295.

[816] Ibid, 301.

[817] *Culture and Imperialism,* 302.

[818] Ibid.

In essence, the American insurgency in Iraq draws close parallels with insurgencies carried out under prior colonial-imperialist regimes. It was just *framed* differently and more effectively than colonial exploits had been in the past. In fact, writes Said, the Gulf intervention was preceded by a string of interventions (Panama, Grenada, Libya), "all of them widely discussed, most of them approved, or at least undeterred, as belonging to 'us' by right."[819]

So effective has the imperialising spectacle been that many American policymakers and pundits deny the idea that an American empire ever existed, or that America has ever acted imperialistically. As Richard W. Van Alstyne points out in *The Rising American Empire* (1960): "It is almost heresy to describe the nation as an empire."[820] The SF writer and critic Gary Westfahl has wholeheartedly adopted the delusion: "One observes no universal surrender to the superiority of American culture in the post-War period"; "Only a few aspects of American culture were embraced throughout the world—such as rock n' roll, science fiction, and blue jeans."[821] For such commentators, the idea of "world responsibility," which has been largely manufactured by an imperialistic media, is the rationale for what is conceived of as a benevolent American global governance.[822] The power of American spectacle imperialism is pushed beyond question in this history of commentary that is absolved from both guilt, and perhaps more importantly, from a sense of reality.

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[819] Ibid, 286.

[820] *The Rising American Empire,* 6.

[821] "The Mightiest Machine: The Development of American Science Fiction from the 1920s to the 1960s," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Science Fiction* (2015), 17.

[822] *Culture and Imperialism,* 297.

American techno-spectacle imperialism, like any good imperialism, also travels abroad to infect others. Whereas a century ago, European imperialism was associated with the direct presence of a white man—indeed his direct and domineering physical presence—the American empire now has an international media presence in addition to the sublimating spectre imposed through weapons and other policing technologies. This media or spectacle presence "insinuates itself, frequently at a level below conscious awareness, over a fantastically wide range."[823] French politician and cultural theorist Jack Lang's idea of 'cultural imperialism' comes into play meaningfully when viewing the global imbrication of territories into American values as conveyed through television programs, American news broadcasts, and branding exercises.[824]

The UNESCO commissioned report, *Many Voices, One World* (1980)—chaired by Sean McBride—enhances Said's idea that American spectacle has pervaded life globally. In *The Geopolitics of Information* (1980), Anthony Smith writes of the report that it quantifiably underscores the notion that

> the threat to independence in the late twentieth century from the new electronics (the McBride report calls in the New World Information Order) could be greater than was colonialism itself…The new media have the power to penetrate more deeply into a "receiving" culture than any previous manifestations of Western technology. The results could be intense havoc, an intensification of the social contradictions within developing societies today.[825]

One result, notes Said, has been the sustained global attack on both Arabs and Islam in the post-war era in conjunction with the American imperialist agenda: "Appalling racist caricatures of Arabs and muslims suggest that they are all either terrorists or Sheikhs, and that the region is a

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[823] Ibid, 291.

[824] Ibid.

[825] *The Geopolitics of Information: How Western Culture Dominates the World,* 176.

large arid slum, fit only for profit or war."[826] This profoundly negative and reductive Arab spectacle has been perpetuated across the globe in, among many other things, countless movies and a steady of flow of trivial instant books by journalists. Ultimately, writes Said, the American imperialist machine has made it so that the only acceptable Arab is one "purified almost completely of their bothersome national selfhood," and made instead into a brown "folksy talk-show guest."[827]

No ones has denied, argues Said, that the United States holds the greatest power in the new techno-spectacle configuration of the post-war era. That is because in addition to supreme technologies:

> …a handful of American trans-national corporations control the manufacture, distribution, and above all selection of news relied on by most of the world (even Saddam Hussein seems to have relied on CNN for his news), or because the effectively unopposed expansion of various forms of cultural control that emanate from the United States has created a new mechanism of incorporation and dependence by which to subordinate and compel not only a domestic American constituency but also weaker and smaller cultures.[828]

The ideas put forward here are not just held by Said but are reinforced by the UNESCO report, as noted above; and also by the findings of Herbert Schiller and Armand Mattelart about the ownership of the means of producing and circulating images, news, and representations.[829] In the end, these findings make clear that the vast majority of the information and technology industries

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[826] *Culture and Imperialism,* 301.

[827] Ibid, 295.

[828] *Culture and Imperialism,* 292.

[829] Herbert I. Schiller, *The Mind Managers* (1973), and *Mass Communications and American Empire* (1969); and Armand Mattelart, *Transnationals and the Third World: The Struggle for Culture* (1983).

in the post-war era, at least up until the birth of the internet, tied back to the imperialist interests of the United States.

Vaughan, Travis, Manson: these are the signs and symbols of an American techno-spectacle culture in full swing. They are idyllic visions in that they have undergone the purest indoctrination process in the American techno-spectacle imperialist ideology as framed by Said and Baudrillard. They, along with the other central characters in *The Atrocity Exhibition, Crash,* and *Hello America,* allegorise the imperialist culture discussed above in intricate, explosive and comprehensive detail. The question now is, how does this techno-spectacle imperialism stand up in these depictions? Are *Crash* and *Hello America* works of anti-imperialism like the early Ballard novels discussed in the previous chapter? Or are these imperialistic works that advocate the techno-spectacle cultures described by Said and Baudrillard?

I now want to argue that Ballard's imperialist critique in the mid-period was ambivalent, in that it finds both transcendence and depraved annihilation in American techno-spectacle imperialism. Moreover, I want to argue that his ambivalence—his opening of pathways that lead toward diverse readings—suggests an alignment with the nuanced and polyvalent liberation struggles undertaken in post-nationalist postcolonialism works by the likes of Said and Frantz Fanon. In adopting this more nuanced style of critique in the mid-period, Ballard succeeds in offering his work up as exquisitely vital and progressive imperialist critique.

Ambivalent American Imperialist Critique in Mid-Period Ballard

Let us now consider notions of regeneration and transcendence as they appear *through* techno-spectacle acceptance and integration in *Crash.* Gabrielle, for example, is "celebrated" by James for the "abstract vents let into her body by sections of her own automobile."[830] In other words, her automobile crash—her collision with technology—has not disfigured her into a pitiable form, but rather has elevated her body to some new plain of existence. James dreams of other marriages between human form and technology on similarly celebratory terms, too: "I visualised my wife injured in a high-impact collision, her mouth and face destroyed, and a new and exciting orifice opened in her perineum by the splintering steering column, neither vagina nor rectum, an orifice we could dress with all our deepest affections."[831] This idea that one's "deepest affections" are released through the violent and transformative outcomes of a car crash forcefully underscores the point that acceptance of, and integration into, new techno-spectacle configurations is conceived as a positive, even regenerative, factor in *Crash*.

One could also point to James's interpretation of Vaughan and Catherine's love scene in the backseat of the Lincoln as a transcendent meeting of flesh and technology;[832] or to the fact that James's technology-mutilated body effectively regenerates his intimate relationship with his wife;[833] or to the interpretation of Gabrielle's horrific accident as being "like a baptism in the American South";[834] or to the many examples of orgasms which occur due to either perceived or real human-technological convergence; or to James's symbolic attempt at the end of the novel to

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[830] *Crash,* 179.

[831] *Crash,* 180.

[832] *Crash,* 158-64.

[833] *Crash,* 51.

[834] *Crash,* 98.

draw zodiac signs with his semen on the instrument panels and binnacles of crashed automobiles.[835] As noted, the presence of the zodiac sign conceivably invokes what is for Ballard the recurrent theme of the Jungian mandala. The fact that the mandala marks the collision and convergence of man and technology in this instance and elsewhere in the text (recall Vaughan's drawing of zodiac signs on the seats of the Lincoln, for example) indicates that it may well be read as a transcendent convergence.

Critics including Jen Hui Bon Hoa, Emma Whiting and Gregory Stephenson have read both *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash* as texts that offer potential transcendence through technophilic commodification culture.[836] Bon Hoa, for example, questions whether Ballard's characters really do go along with the pessimistic Baudrillardian conception of a compulsive cycle of insatiable consumption; or whether Ballard is instead concerned with tapping into the psychopathological potentialities generated by total exposure to the spectacle. Perhaps Ballard is alluding to the potential psychological utility of this culture rather than simply wallowing in it, notes Bon Hoa.[837] Whiting argues that rather than abject literature, which simply emphasises the desensitisation of living in the modern world, Ballard's *Crash* gives birth to new and potentially regenerative psychopathologies.[838] The automobile accident—this ultimate metaphor of techno-

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[835] *Crash,* 224.

[836] Gregory Stephenson, *Out of the Night and Into the Dream* (1991); Emma Whiting, "Disaffection and Abjection in *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash*" (2012); and Jen Hui Bon Hoa, "Pornographic Geometries: The Spectacle as Pathology and as Therapy in *The Atrocity Exhibition"* (2012).

[837] "Pornographic Geometries," 79.

[838] "Disaffection and Abjection in *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash,*" 95.

logical and commodification culture—therefore conceivably releases the exciting new "codes waiting within" all of us.[839]

In *Hello America,* too, Manson quite clearly finds transcendence through the American techno-spectacle. He feels totally satiated, even "glutted," following the nuclear destruction of an American city which he watches on the surveillance monitors.[840] The nuclear blast is conceivably the ultimate result for Manson—he is at one, at peace, with the explosion. Again, the techno-spectacle is seemingly celebrated by Ballard here for its capacity to lead the way toward Jungian transcendence. On this point, Manson is made serene by the realisation that techno-spectacle immersion is moving him toward "zero" and thus a new transcendent plane of consciousness.[841] Of course, the circular numeral representing zero symbolises the Jungian mandala which is commonly figured as representing "wholeness and plenitude."[842]

Looking beyond Manson, one finds techno-spectacle reverence all throughout *Hello America.* New York—from Radio City Music Hall, to the Empire State building, to the stoops and tenement facades emblematic of so many Hollywood movies—is perceived as literally flecked in gold dust. This metaphor of a 'golden' consumerist spectacle resonates throughout the text. In fact, the proverbial 'golden' child of one family Wayne meets in the American wilderness is named 'Heinz'. Moreover, branded artefacts, like Disney figurines or Pepsi bottles, have sup-

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[839] *Crash,* 186.

[840] *Hello America,* 249.

[841] *Hello America,* 301-302.

[842] Roger Luckhurst, "The Many Deaths of Science Fiction: A Polemic" (1994), 43.

planted religious idols for the listless nomadic tribes who cross the barren American landscape. Old movie stars and stage icons have become towering God-like figures of worship as well.

But is Ballard really advocating or celebrating American imperialist culture in these novels? Is he really suggesting, either because he thinks it will lead to subversion of ego-consciousness and transcendence therein, or because the Baudrillardian 'uninterrupted interface' with postmodern culture is inevitable, that one should willingly enter and embrace the fiction or simulacrum of American culture? In Baudrillard's *America,* a sense of transcendence and liberation is envisaged in the American who embodies advertising; his integration with immense technologies and images has transformed him into a "glorious" modern form.[843] Is Ballard working along the same lines, finding a postmodern re-birth within this all-encompassing spectre? Or is there an alternative way of reading these texts?

In the introduction to an early French edition of the text, Ballard himself notes that *Crash* was meant as "a cautionary tale, a warning against that brutal, erotic and overlit realm that beckons more and more persuasively to us from the margins of the technological landscape."[844] He later retracted this idea in an interview, stating "I went wrong in…that introduction…in the final paragraph, which I have always regretted"; adding that *Crash* is less a cautionary tale than it is "a psychopathic hymn which has a point."[845] The latter statement here seems to claim back some ground for those who would assert that the novel is a hymn for human collision with technology and spectacle. Regardless of Ballard's contradictory statements, however, there is certainly a path

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[843] *America,* 51, 104-105.

[844] "Introduction to the French edition of *Crash"* (1974), 9.

[845] "Conversations: J. G. Ballard," in Will Self, *Junk Mail* (1995), 348.

to interpreting both *Crash* and *Hello America* as cautioning readers against the overlit techno-spectacle landscape.

Consider the respective conditions of some central characters in these novels. In *Crash,* both Gabrielle and James have been deformed and debilitated to varying degrees by their car accidents, by their steps toward techno-spectacle integration. Gabrielle has trouble walking and she cannot drive in any other vehicle besides one that has been fitted to her needs. Her life—and the life of James at least in the immediate aftermath of his accident—must be terribly uncomfortable and painful in many respects. It is only because these characters have been psychologically traumatised and deranged that they are able to see their collisions in any other way; that is, as having released new potentialities. As Ballard himself notes, "the *man* Ballard doesn't find [the car crash] a turn-on at all. If I see someone deeply mutilated or scarred, I don't feel aroused in any way."[846] Instead, it is only the traumatised and deranged figures of the text itself who can see the crash in such a way. This mindset is therefore a product of insanity, rather than authorial advocacy of the techno-spectacle model.

One finds several other indicators that the behaviour and psychopathologies of the central characters of *Crash* are rendered as insane and destructive. Consider Vaughan's repeated slashing with a pencil at the image of the film actress, for example.[847] This moment of psychotic interaction with the image of celebrity indicates a broader derangement on Vaughan's part. In the days leading up to his suicide by car crash, he is depicted as fatalistic and depressed; and on the last occasion James sees him, Vaughan has "the look of an unsuccessful fanatic, doggedly holding

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[846] Quoted in Nicholas Ruddick, "Ballard/"Crash"/Baudrillard" (1992), 355.

[847] *Crash,* 190.

together his spent obsessions."[848] Consider also the depiction of Vaughan as a disheveled figure who allows flies to cover his face and enter his mouth toward the end of the novel—"the flies [crawl] in thick clumps across his blood-smeared chest, festering on his pallid stomach."[849] As pointed out above, Vaughan has effectively transitioned into a state of oneness with the Lincoln by this point, a oneness with imperialist techno-spectacle culture, and yet, here we see that he is simultaneously cast by Ballard as a hollowed out grotesque.

Furthermore, the techno-spectacle world is seen for the first time by James as corrosive and bleak at this point in the text, too: "The cars moving in a desultory way along the road above me had shed their cargoes of light, and clattered down the highway like the dented instruments of a fugitive orchestra"; and further, "Above me, the cars on the motorway moved like motorised wrecks, painted worn and blunted. Their drivers sat stiffly behind their wheels, overtaking the airline coaches filled with mannequins dressed in meaningless clothing."[850] Gone is the allure of both the paradigmatic representation of technology in the automobile, and that of spectacle culture as represented in the car and the branded clothing. Left behind is a barrage of flies, a wrecking yard, and the weeds growing up through the cracks of a putrid underpass.

In *Hello America,* the imperialist culture of technology and spectacle is rendered as destructive, depraved and deranged, even more explicitly by Ballard. At one point, he calls the propeller blades of Manson's gunships "the prayer wheels of a sinister machine religion."[851] Fur-

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[848] *Crash,* 193.

[849] *Crash,* 204.

[850] *Crash,* 205.

[851] *Hello America,* 386.

thermore, Manson himself is quite clearly depicted as psychopathic and destructive toward the end of the novel. For one, Ballard describes him as having escaped from an Asylum in Spandau, Berlin, before having fled to the United States where he took on the name of that country's most notorious maniac, and subsequently assumed the role of President. Moreover, he is prone to random acts of extreme violence, such as when he senselessly destroys the animal and plant life around the Hollywood Hills with the maxim guns of his hovering gunships;[852] or when he uses the roulette wheel at the Caesar's Palace casino to decide which major city to destroy next with his arsenal of nuclear warheads.[853] His destruction of these cities is carried out because he nonsensically views all life-forms as diseased cells that must be destroyed in order to inoculate himself. Instead of being a regenerative figure, then, the techno-spectacle emblem of Manson is ultimately a corrosive and insane one who moves the world closer to annihilation.

Wayne, too, is ultimately portrayed as delusional and destructive in *Hello America.* So acculturated in the ideology of American techno-spectacle culture is Wayne, that he fails to see Manson's actions as insane throughout the text; choosing instead to believe in the unwavering integrity of the American Presidency.[854] He therefore goes along with Manson's outrageous plan to destroy major American cities with nuclear weapons, insisting that the President must of course be right in his motivations—despite the fact that the reader can clearly perceive the trajectory toward deepening insanity and entropy in Manson by this point.[855] Through Wayne's irra-

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[852] *Hello America,* 278.

[853] *Hello America,* 384.

[854] *Hello America,* 354.

[855] *Hello America,* 357.

tional pursuit of the American dream in the closing pages of the text, Ballard configures American techno-spectacle imperialism as a destructive holographic vision. This corrosive and illusory landscape is metaphorically depicted in the gold dust that flecks everything in New York City, too. It is not gold as it first appears, but rather it is an illusion of prosperity. Far from being gold, in fact, it is a harsh bronze dust heated by a relentless sun; a hundred-year-old layer of rust, in other words.[856]

It is tempting to put forward the idea that a decisive imperialist critique underpins these novels; to assert that Ballard *surely* does ultimately envisage a nightmarish quality in the marriage of flesh and the techno-spectacle in *Crash.* Further, surely he does depict Vaughan and Manson as insane and corrosive figures, and therefore, the American imperialist spectre that they embody as insane, corrosive, and apocalyptic. But despite the tendency to make such assertions, one must concede that Ballard does not affirm them. Instead, as Roger Luckhurst points out, he expresses an undecidable political valence in a novel like *Crash*, always teetering on "the knife-edge of complicity and critique."[857] The question I want to ask is, what does this critical ambivalence tell us?

William Burroughs wrote of *The Atrocity Exhibition*: "This is what Bob Rauschenberg is doing in art—literally *blowing up* the image. Since people are made of image, this is literally an explosive book."[858] What Burroughs is getting at here is that Ballard, like Robert Rauschenberg, was working toward a fragmentary collage of spectacular images, albeit in textual form, that

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[856] *Hello America,* 71.

[857] Roger Luckhurst, *The Angle Between Two Walls: The Fiction of J. G. Ballard,* 105.

[858] "Preface to *The Atrocity Exhibition*" (1970).

when interwoven would form a disruptive, even explosive pastiche. The idea of disruption is critical here, in that, it illustrates how Ballard's novels work to critique American imperialism. Luckhurst calls the disruption of Ballard's mid-period work a dismantling of "the redundant machinery of dominant novel forms, junking the moral framework and tiresome formal necessity of accumulated mimetic detail required by social Realism."[859] More than dismantling literary forms, though, Ballard was interested in dismantling and disrupting what was, in the 1960s and 1970s, a relatively stable and prosperous American techno-spectacle imperialist culture. By prosperous and stable I mean that this culture was essentially flourishing and spreading its homogenising imperialist tentacles without facing a truly formidable challenge to its ascendency, as explained by Said and Baudrillard. Ballard was not interested in disrupting this context by taking one or another moralising perspectives, but by exploding the culture into a pastiche of disrupted effects, just as Warhol's Pop Art, Bruce Conner's counter-cultural film experiments, and the visual collages of Eduardo Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton were attempting to do.

Fragmenting the image was in and of itself subversive because it led the way to the explosion of linear thought, linear social commentary, un-individuated social groups and communities. I suggest that Ballard effectively climbs up inside the simulacrum, so to speak, in *The Atrocity Exhibition, Crash* and *Hello America,* in order to individuate the otherwise homogenising processes of imperialism. In doing so, he explosively moves beyond the 'death of affect' prophesied by Baudrillard in relation to an all-encompassing techno-spectacle culture, offering instead a nuanced ambivalence.[860] Some characters find a kind of psychotic transcendence in insane tech-

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[859] "Ballard/*Atrocity*/Conner/*Exhibition*/Assemblage" (2012), 35.

[860] "Ballard's *Crash*" (1976).

no-spectacle immersion, such as Vaughan or Manson; but at the same time they find degradation, deindividualisation, and psychological entropy. The central point is that they are ambivalent within a supposedly unambivalent frame.

Transhistorical Postcolonial Critique

One might usefully connect Ballard's ambivalent imperialist critiques to the frameworks of abjection, as Emma Whiting has done.[861] But instead of focusing on abjection, and / or connections between Ballard and the Lacanian real,[862] I would like instead to connect Ballard's ambivalent techno-spectacle imperialist critiques to the more historically grounded framework of transhistorical postcolonialism. In doing so, one is able to more firmly ground the social commentary of Ballard's mid-period fiction in a historical context, and furthermore, to read it in connection with some of the most productive and incisive imperialist critiques and anti-imperialist contexts of the post-war period.

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[861] Emma Whiting's "Disaffection and Abjection in J. G. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash,*" 91. Julia Kristeva describes the abject as that which is neither subject nor object but lies instead beyond the boundaries of the social order; in the "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite." It is a restorative and renewing factor in literary terms in that it tests the boundaries of the subject but ultimately, through the act of expelling the abject, re-asserts and strengthens those individual boundaries: " "subject" and "object" push each other away, confront each other, collapse and start again—inseparable, contaminated, condemned, at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject." For Further discussion see Julia Kristeva, "Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection" (1982).

[862] Whiting defines the Lacanian real as a "radical alterity beyond social reality or the symbolic order that consists of the horrifying undifferentiation from which each individual originated but which must be left behind for the speaking subject to be established" (91). Also see Jacques Lacan's *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960,* trans. D. Porter, ed. J. A. Miller (1992), 216.

It is important to restate the point that I am only intending to read Ballard's mid-period in *connection* with transhistorical postcolonialism and not as a transhistorical postcolonial perspective *per se.* No doubt, Ballard's fiction does not address aspects of colonisation and decolonisation as directly as authors like Frantz Fanon and C. L. R. James have done. Nevertheless, it is useful to connect Ballard's fiction to this theoretical frame because it serves to deepen our conception of *Crash* and *Hello America* as incisive anti-imperialist literature.

To reiterate a point made in the last chapter, Edward Said argues that the dynamics of nationalist postcolonialism were fulfilled by the idea of the *new* state: new nationalist armies, flags, legislatures, schemes of national education, and dominant political parties.[863] The new state was supported by passionate and single-minded nationalist discourse such as Jalal Ali Ahmad's *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West* (1961-62). Ironically (and no doubt sadly), these schemas widely resulted in nationalist elites taking up the places once occupied by British or French colonists. In other words, despotic autocrats such as Libyan Prime Minister Muammar Gaddafi emerged in the wake of colonialism; and if it was not an autocrat like Gaddafi, then it was cultures of oligarchical statism and military (or one-party) rule. The National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, for example, enforced an Arab-Islamic education system as the *only* system after the last French colonists departed, in 1962. Not coincidentally, this system of education and administration had been precisely what the French had forbade during the long period of colonisation. But the drastic nationalist reversal in Algeria did not produce new, non-imperialist results. Instead,

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[863] *Culture and Imperialism,* 264.

> within three decades this alignment of state and party authority with a restored identity caused not only the monopolization of most practices by one party and the almost complete erosion of democratic life, but, on the right wing, the challenging appearance of an Islamic opposition, favoring militantly Muslim Algerian identity based on Koranic (*shari-ah*) principles.[864]

The FLN, then, essentially replicated the previous mandates of colonialism under new pretexts, perhaps even elaborating upon the brutal and suppressive cultures of earlier regimes. This mimicry of imperialism under the guise of nationalism became a widespread phenomenon across the newly decolonised territories of the post-war era.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon foresaw this turn of events in a chapter entitled "The pitfalls of nationalist consciousness." He writes that the violence of the colonial regime and counter-violence of the native culture will "balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity."[865] Unless nationalist consciousness at its moment of success was somehow changed into a more nuanced social consciousness the future would hold not liberation but an extension of imperialism.[866] Toward this new social consciousness, Fanon posited what Said calls the "insurrectionary native" who is essentially exhausted of the "logic that reduces him, the geography that segregates him, the ontology that dehumanises him, the epistemology that strips him down to an unregenerate essence."[867] Instead, he will struggle for a new synthesis represented in the end by a war for individual liberation rather than nationhood, for which an entirely new post-nationalist theoretical culture will be required.

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[864] Ibid, 267.

[865] *The Wretched of the Earth,* 88.

[866] *Culture and Imperialism,* 267.

[867] Ibid, 269.

The Wretched of the Earth is a hybrid work—Said describes it as "part essay, part imaginative story, part philosophical analysis, part psychological case history, part nationalist allegory, part visionary transcendence of history."[868] This hybridity of styles really goes a long way toward underscoring Fanon's central thesis. To simplify it, he represents nationalism and colonialism in their Manichean contest,[869] from there he imagines or enacts the birth of a nationalist independence movement, and finally transfigures that movement into what is effectively a transpersonal, transnational, and transhistorical force. The visionary quality of this project, writes Said, is the remarkable subtlety with which Fanon "forcibly *deforms* imperialist culture and its nationalist antagonist in the process of looking toward liberation."[870] I interpret a connection to *Crash* in particular in this broad description alone: Is Ballard not also inhabiting and / or representing imperialist identity, only to deform it and subsequently look beyond it toward a more nuanced and personal type of liberation?

In terms of a new movement in the wake of failed imperialism and its replica in nationalism, Fanon presents the idea of a liberationist party that essentially resorts to a new system built on fluid, mobile relationships. Under Fanon, liberation is a consciousness of self, a process of hybridity and individuation instead of a movement towards a new homogenising collective; it is "not the closing of a door to communication" but a never-ending process of "discovery and encouragement" leading to true self-liberation.[871] I think Said is correct in stating that "having

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[868] Ibid*,* 270.

[869] A contest between good and evil.

[870] *Culture and Imperialism,* 269.

[871] *The Wretched of the Earth,* 247.

committed himself to combat both imperialism and orthodox nationalism by a counter-narrative of great deconstructive power, Fanon could not make the complexity and anti-identitarian force of that counter-narrative explicit."[872] Said aims to make the "poetic and visionary" counter-narrative ideas of Fanon a little more explicit, while also continually asserting the power of ambiguity and its disruptive and / or deconstructive quality.

Said writes that the point of liberation struggles is "to sharply disrupt, then abruptly veer away from the unity forged between imperialism and culture":[873]

> First, by a new integrative or contrapuntal orientation in history that sees Western and non-Western experiences as belonging together because they are connected by imperialism. Second, by an imaginative, even utopian vision which reconciles emancipatory (as opposed to confining) theory and performance. Third, by an investment neither in new authorities, doctrines, and encoded orthodoxies, nor in established institutions and causes, but in a particular sort of nomadic, migratory, and anti-narrative energy.[874]

First, Said advocates an intersection between the history of the Other and colonial-imperialist histories, because ultimately all of them are animated by and actualised in an "impossible union" under the overarching schema of imperialism. One must therefore write from a point of saturation within the overarching frame of imperialism in order to take "maximum account" of history.[875] Within the imperially dominated frame, the transhistorical postcolonialist moves toward Said's second conception here: "Neither an abstract, packaged theory, nor a disheartening collection of narratable facts";[876] nor "some repeatable doctrine, reusable theory, or memorable

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[872] *Culture and Imperialism,* 276.

[873] *Culture and Imperialism,* 277.

[874] Ibid*,* 279.

[875] Ibid.

[876] Ibid, 281.

story, much less the bureaucracy of a future state."[877] Instead, a story of "domination freed by poetry, for a vision bearing on, if not delivering, true liberation."[878] Said's example of a text that blends imperialism and nationalism together only to transcend them toward a particular sort of nomadic, migratory, and anti-narrative energy, is C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938).

Now, on the surface Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition, Crash* and *Hello America* have little connection to James's text, which treats the Santo Domingo slave uprising as a process unfolding within the same history as that of the French Revolution. But if we look a little deeper, do we not find Ballard's texts, like James's, immersing in the overarching frame of the imperialist experience? From this point of immersion, do we not then find Ballard's texts resisting "the already charted and controlled narrative lanes, and skirt[ing] the systems of theory, doctrine, and orthodoxy," just as James's text attempts to do?[879] Moreover, do we not also find Ballard ultimately disrupting and destabilising the overarching imperialist model from the inside, while resisting the blithe universalism of imperialists and / or nationalists in the process? I argue that this type of immersive disruption is precisely what Ballard is undertaking in amorally, ambivalently, and yet, poetically, destroying the automobile, the image, and the human subject of those apparatuses in one big pile up. The entropic and simultaneously euphoric states of his imperialist artefacts—from the crushed car, to the nuclear fallout, to Vaughan's crushed soul—further embed this idea that he is indeed working toward an unstable and disfigured imperialism.

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[877] Ibid.

[878] *Culture and Imperialism,* 279.

[879] Ibid, 281.

Certainly, I see the Ballard novels under discussion taking up a similar position as the transhistorical postcolonial text, albeit more obliquely than the work of Fanon or James. Like other transhistorical postcolonial theorists, it is not enough for Ballard to simply do away with imperialism and replace it with an entirely new governing agenda. As outlined in the last chapter, he took up this role in the early fiction which existed in unison with many nationalist struggles. But perhaps like Said, Fanon, and other postcolonial theorists including Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, Ballard learned from the failed experiments of nationalism that this sweeping approach was insufficient. Instead, the liberation struggle, as Said argues, had to be a *process* of nuanced and individuating discussions from within imperialism, rather than taking the form of violent and dogmatic independence movements from without.

American Imperialist Spectre Across American Science Fiction

Ballard explodes and excavates distinct aspects of American culture in *Crash* in ways that were original, even revelatory. In doing so, he helps us to see this culture as psychologically imperialistic, as potentially leading the way toward new forms of psychological transcendence, and conversely, as ultimately corrosive and destructive to the human soul. Several other Anglo-American SF texts during the 'American Century'[880] have also undertaken projects of American imperialist critique, albeit not always with the nuance or poignancy of Ballard's work. Nevertheless, I would argue that texts such as Philip K. Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) and Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) are pivotal in the project aimed toward instilling a deeper societal understanding of the mechanics behind the post-war American techno-spectacle empire. Like

[880] In the February 1941 issue of *Life* magazine, editor Henry Luce declared the twentieth century the 'American Century'.

Ballard's novels, these texts have the capacity to complement the significant work done by Said, Baudrillard and others in theoretically establishing the American imperialist framework around pillars of technological and spectacle culture. As is the case with Ballard's mid-period work, however, there has been a lack of critical analysis of how the frameworks of American imperialism are unpacked and critiqued in post-war American SF.

The recent edition of *The Cambridge Companion To American Science Fiction* (2015) offers no substantive discourse on the effects of American imperialism *per se* on American SF. Instead imperialism is mostly framed by the global communications networks of late capitalism—thus by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's conception of late twentieth-century imperialism in *Empire* (2000). There is literally no mention of Said or Baudrillard's American imperialist frames in the *Cambridge Companion*; and, furthermore, there is very little mention of the colonising capacity of American techno-spectacle culture at all. John Rieder aptly points to the spectre of the American atomic bomb as holding immense imperialist power in the post-war era, but the idea that advanced American weaponry and technology marks a key aspect of an extended period of post-war American imperialism is not developed at length.[881] Instead, American imperialist designs quickly became subsumed and incorporated into the overarching schemas of late capitalism, according to Rieder.

I suggest that a failure to place several key novels in American imperialist contexts indirectly aids in allowing American imperialism to stand largely unchecked by its insightful SF literary adversaries. Furthermore, it also implicitly conveys the idea that American imperialism is

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[881] "American Frontier," in *The Cambridge Companion To American Science Fiction* (2015), 172.

or was nominal—a minor segue that fed into the overarching framework of a technocratic globalised empire. Before concluding this thesis, I would like to briefly read some American SF texts in American imperialist contexts, thereby expanding upon a central idea of this dissertation which holds that historically distinct and potentially significant imperialist criticism has been undertaken by Anglo-American SF writers.

On the matter of confusion of imperialist frames, David M. Higgins writes that popular SF of the 1990s was "dominated by awakening-from-simulacrum stories—exemplified by films like *The Matrix* (1999), *Dark City* (1998) and *The Truman Show* (1998)."[882] Problematically, Higgins is referring to two different 'simulacra', or techno-spectacle, contexts here without distinguishing between them. On the one hand, *The Matrix* and *Dark City* present dystopian futures held in check by a global network of techno-spectacle controls. In other words, they posit a decentralised late capitalist network imperialism similar to that which has been dissected by Hardt and Negri; Higgins calls it "the post-Fordist technosocial organization of everyday life."[883] The classic literary example of such an empire is realised in William Gibson's groundbreaking novel, *Neuromancer* (1984). Crucially, there is no exclusively American imperialist context at work in these types of texts—the empire and its imperialist agents have spread out due in large part to the instantaneity and ubiquity of the internet which draws all late capitalist economies (of the first world at least) onto the same battlefield.

Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* does not deal with the same decentralised imperialist principles as Higgins's other two examples. Instead, the techno-spectacle aesthetics of its simu-

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[882] David M. Higgins, "American Science Fiction after 9/11," in *The Cambridge Companion* (2015), 44.

[883] Ibid, 47.

lacrum are confined to American tropes such as the image of the television celebrity, the American media spectacle gaze, and American consumerist culture. It is the post-war American model of Said's *Culture and Imperialism* and Baudrillard's *America* that colonises in this text. It is therefore this imperialist model that is being commented on by the filmmakers, not the late capitalist one of a film like *The Matrix* or what is essentially that film's source text, *Neuromancer.* To lump these texts—*The Matrix, Dark City,* and *The Truman Show*—into the same category is to dilute the specifics of the artistic critique made by Weir in this case, and therefore to dilute its potential social efficacy.

We must be more specific in treating these texts. In establishing the sociopolitical and / or imperialist context of the late Harlan Ellison's "A Boy and His Dog" (1969), for example, it is insufficient to state that it targets "humanity's bellicose impulses and social conformity"; or that its post-apocalyptic context is one of "anarchy and sterility."[884] Instead, it is better to foreground the fact that Ellison's story essentially mirrors Japanese descriptions of the first military use of the atomic weapon.[885] In mirroring that particular fallout narrative, Ellison brings an extremely bleak and destructive side of American imperialist power into focus; or as Rieder puts it, Ellison sees the American atomic frontier "as a wasteland that unfolds the essential savagery of what passes for civilization in the American present."[886]

Looking back even further, one can see that the radical 1950s writer Alfred Bester conducted a similar denunciation of American atomic power in *The Stars My Destination* (1957).

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[884] Darren Harris-Fein, "Dangerous Visions: New Wave and Post-New Wave Science Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion* (2015), 35.

[885] John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (1946), 60-61.

[886] John Rieder, "American Frontier," 172.

Bester determines that the terrifying super-weapon—he calls it "PyrE," but we can deduce a strong connection to the atomic bomb—should be distributed across a wide range of ordinary people around the world rather than being placed in the hands of an imperialist elite whom one might associate with the American government. For Bester, like Ellison, leaving atomic power in the hands of the imperialist (American) elite is tantamount to disaster.

A similarly bleak view of American atomic imperialism is expressed in Philip K. Dick's *The World Jones Made* (1956). Dick projects a post-nuclear holocaust world created by a demagogic parallel to the fascistic American communist hunter of the 1950s, Joseph McCarthy. In doing so, Dick points to the potentially apocalyptic circumstances that could arise from the Earth-destroying atomic technologies that rest in the hands of America's political elite. Dick undertakes a similar albeit more ambivalent project in *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1965), where the post-nuclear holocaust world of America is presented as one of both renewal and suffering. Both Darko Suvin and Fredric Jameson have argued that the nuclear war of the book obliterates many of the negative aspects of modern corporate capitalism, and in turn, presents the potential for social renewal.[887] But the destructive effects of American atomic imperialism, released in full force by Dr. Bruno Bluthgeld—the "Dr. Bloodmoney" of the title—are on full display as well. In terms of subtext, it is obvious that vast swathes of people have been annihilated due to American atomic tests gone awry. Furthermore, representatives of the Other, such as Mr. Austurias, are executed without trial and on the basis of nothing more than unfounded suspicion during the post-holocaust period. While there is potential for renewal away from capitalist strictures in this post-holocaust world,

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[887] Darko Suvin, "P.K. Dick's Opus: Artifice as Refuge and World View" (1975), 83; and Fredric Jameson, "After Armageddon: Character Systems in *Dr. Bloodmoney*" (1975), 42.

these examples make it clear that Dick also intended to point out the deadly chaos inherent in the application of American atomic imperialist force.

Dr. Bloodmoney was originally published as *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After the Bomb,* which of course echoes (or perhaps anticipates) the title of Stanley Kubrick's film, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). It is worth noting that the writing of the book was essentially complete before the film went into production. There is no evidence that Kubrick or his co-writers were aware of Dick's novel or its title, but even still, Kubrick's film, like Dick's novel, is a commentary on American-centric atomic technology and imperialism. Like Dick's novel, too, *Dr. Strangelove* is more ambivalent than either Bester's or Ellison's novels, in that, it both suggests that the apocalyptic capacity held by the United States is corrosive and terrifying, and that it is also magnificent, hilarious and awe-inspiring from a certain perspective—to wit, that of Peter Sellers' eponymous Strangelove. The film may thus be considered either a powerful contribution to public debates about nuclear disarmament in the United States during the 1960s, or a psychotic avocation of mutually assured nuclear destruction—a "psychotic hymn," as Ballard calls *Crash* in one interview. In the end, as Peter Kramer writes, "there was no agreement about what exactly this contribution might be."[888]

Kubrick's critique has also been widely considered a comic satire about the potential consequences of the "continuously escalating nuclear arms race between the United States and the USSR with the Cold War political assumptions of the early 1960s."[889] It therefore seems directed

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[888] Peter Kramer, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (2014), 98.

[889] William G. Simon, "Dr. Strangelove or: the Apparatus of Nuclear Warfare," in *Dr. Strangelove: Or: The Apparatus of Nuclear Warfare* (2003), 216.

at the two major technological empires coming from both East and West. Despite its conceivably multifaceted critique, however, there is little doubt that many of the key critical attacks of *Dr. Strangelove* are levelled at America's technology-based imperialism; and more specifically, at the American nuclear arsenal and its human controllers.

Dr. Strangelove attacks American imperialist technology itself, showing the devastating destruction of the landscape reaped underneath the B-52 Bombers as they deliver their devastating atomic payloads. But the film also scathingly caricatures the American military and political power brokers of the 1960s Cold War escalation period who were behind the use of this nuclear technology. The ironic disparity between the modern technology of the nuclear apparatus and the anachronistic behaviours of the American figures who operate it (from a RAND corporation think tank) frequently structures the film's satire.[890] This discrepancy indicates that the ultimate tool of American technological imperialism is in the hands of inept players, and is therefore extremely dangerous and unpredictable. William G. Simon takes this point further, writing, "the satire foregrounds a central theme: the gap between, on the hand, deadly modern weaponry and its potentially calamitous consequences and on the other, the outmoded behavior patters and technocratic double-speak rationalizations of human (mostly American) characters who are out of contact with the reality of their situations."[891]

Just as it is insufficient to characterise Ellison's novel as broadly anti-social conformism and anti-atomic technology, it is also insufficient to simply describe Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Ko-

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[890] William G. Simon, "Dr. Strangelove or: the Apparatus of Nuclear Warfare," 216.

[891] Ibid, 217.

rnbluth's SF classic *The Space Merchants* (1953) as depicting a future of "unconstrained corporate power, ubiquitous advertising, and promotional campaigns in which anything goes;"[892] or to describe it simply as one novel in a series of anti-capitalist satires, as M. Keith Booker has done.[893] In fact, it is surprising how often the novel has been described as denigrating this sort of culture from a generalised or globalised standpoint, and in turn, how often the specifically American themes and contexts have been lost.[894] That is especially true considering the key context of this novel is New York City, and more specifically, the advertising world of Madison Avenue where Pohl himself had worked as a copywriter before becoming a full time SF author.

There is nothing oblique about the locus of power in *The Space Merchants*. The novel is replete with references to how the aforementioned corporate, advertising and consumerist cultures tie not to a global context but to an inherently New York, and therefore, American one. For example, the Fowler Schocken advertising agency—one of the biggest in New York—is a key framing device for the narrative. Further, note how the morning newscast centres on the "President's speech," thus indicating the wider American framing of this media-driven culture.[895] The acerbic satire is thus more specifically directed at the negative consequences of the increasing power of American consumer capitalism, and the increasing dominance of American media and advertising in instilling uniformity in the thoughts and desires of people globally. *The Space*

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[892] Mark Bould, "The Futures Market: American Utopias," in *The Cambridge Companion* (2015), 90.

[893] *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War* (2001), 38.

[894] Kinglsey Amis, *New Maps of Hell* (1960); John Brennan's "The Mechanical Chicken: Psyche and Society in "The Space Merchants"" (1984); and Robert E. Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin's *Science Fiction: History-Science-Vision* (1977).

[895] Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants,* 7.

Merchants, then, may and should be read as essentially pre-figuring the historical and theoretical concerns over American techno-spectacle imperialism.

Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man* (1953) also warrants further investigation under the framework of American techno-spectacle imperialism. Bester's novel does not just have "an anti-capitalist edge," but rather a basis in anti-American imperialism.[896] On this point, note that American 'free enterprise' is directed in the novel from behind the scenes by ironic figures such as the immensely wealthy criminal capitalist Ben Reich, thus highlighting that the American model is not in fact free but is instead bent toward an imperialist elite. Moreover, the widely accepted projection of 'free enterprise', as compared with its paradoxical reality in the text, underscores the fundamentally misleading basis of advertising and American spectacle culture. The fact that it is widely accepted in the novel despite being corrupt indicates Bester's further exploration of how American spectacle culture contributes to the utter demolition of individuality, and the concomitant formation of what Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky call "manufactured consent."[897]

In Philip K. Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), protagonist Barney Mayerson asks "And how far am I from New York?"; he does so because, as Dick writes, "That was the main point."[898] New York is the central locus of the text, the ground zero from where every late capitalist effect spawns. To be sure, the United Nations appears to be the global superpower in the novel. But in reality it is P. P. Layouts—a consumer products manufacturer based in

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[896] Carl Freedman, "Subversion in the Time of the Cleavers" (2002), 113.

[897] *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988).

[898] *Palmer Eldritch*, 8.

New York—that has a monopoly over both the market and the collective consciousness of people on Earth and throughout the solar system. The corporation maintains power through an intricate network of manipulative devices such as the satellites that circle each of the colonised planets in the solar system, their disc jockeys broadcasting an endless stream of product propaganda to the respective populations. Even more pervasive are the 'Perky Pat' home design layouts and the narcotic called 'Can-D'. Working in unison, these products serve to hold colonised peoples within an intricate web of control.

As the narcotic Can-D, the synthetic Perky Pat home layouts, and the constant satellite advertising propaganda indicate, the central techno-spectacle effects of *Palmer Eldritch* comply with American frames. Further, note that towns have been named after iconic American celebrities like Marilyn Monroe;[899] and lavish estates have been named after iconic cartoon characters, such as 'Winnie-the-Pooh Acres'.[900] Brand names such as Coca-Cola loom large in the minds of characters as well.[901] American-centric consumerism has been moved to centre-stage in other ways by Dick, too. Consider, for instance, that the New York-based "Pre-Fash precog," Barney Mayerson, is a central figure in the broad social context of the novel. Why? Because of his pre-cognitive ability to effectively predict fashion trends of the future. Meyerson's superior status further symbolises the superiority of American-centric consumerism in the novel.

The American techno-spectacle paradigm of *Palmer Eldritch* has conceivably led to dire outcomes. As aforementioned, colonists have been psychologically colonised by consumer cul-

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[899] *Palmer Eldritch,* 16.

[900] *Palmer Eldritch,* 43.

[901] *Palmer Eldritch*, 23.

ture—there is basically nothing else to live for besides Can-D and the Perky Pat layouts, according to Sam Regan's Mars colony.[902] It is a galaxy-wide population of consumerist drones, as Leo Bulero muses in the early stages of the novel.[903] In addition, one could argue that dramatic climate change on Earth has been brought on by manufacturing and other industrial enterprises operating in service of imperialist expansionism. Environmental degradation continues beyond Earth, too. As John Rieder writes, Dick depicts the American frontier on the colony planets and moons as "the dumping ground of capitalist society's overflow, directed by its motives, determined by its pressures, and infected by its systematic injustice."[904]

One might also turn their attention to other Dick novels including *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) and *Ubik* (1969) in this context. Just as he does in *Palmer Eldritch*, Dick captures the "tawdry crumbling landscape of monopoly capitalism," in each of these texts.[905] Again, central themes include, as Mark Bould points out, "suburban alienation, disempowering corporate culture, the false promise of the commodity," all of which lead toward an overall transformation into a universal simulacral culture of multinational capitalism.[906] To be sure, a novel like *Androids* releases a more universally spread network of late capitalist imperialism than the American model alone can account for. Indeed, we feel the mishmash of globalisation culture at full effect in this novel and in its cinematic counterpart, *Blade Runner* (1982; dir. Ridley Scott). National borders seem to have broken down here, and Los Angeles is purposefully depicted by

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[902] *Palmer Eldritch,* 73.

[903] *Palmer Eldritch*, 48.

[904] John Rieder, "American Frontier," 171.

[905] Mark Bould, "The Futures Market," 91.

[906] Ibid.

both Dick and Scott to look and feel as much like L.A. as it does Tokyo or Beijing. Nevertheless, are the roots of this rampant techno-spectacle and consumerist culture not American? Is the all-powerful Tyrell Corporation not an American-based company? Is the basis of this intensely colonising and imperialist landscape not therefore ultimately American in nature? Certainly analysing these texts within the American imperialist frame may be useful in more accurately elucidating the originating sociopolitical frameworks of Dick's respective critiques, rather than simply consigning his ideas to late capitalist or postmodern contexts.

Looking further afield, one might point to Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965) as an example of an SF text that further illustrates the psychological colonising potential of American techno-spectacle culture. I suggest that Pynchon's latest novel, *Bleeding Edge* (2013), performs a similar function as well. As is the case with the major players in *Lot 49,* the central characters of *Bleeding Edge* are driven to psychic dissonance and psychological sublimation by their paranoid fixations on various points of the American techno-spectacle machine. Of course this novel may well be read as fitting within the framework of late capitalist empire—after all, vast amounts of both money and data swim around a global network in the text. But for Pynchon, there is still an inherently American structure underpinning hegemonic culture.

In *Bleeding Edge,* the all-pervasive internet startup Hashslingrz, along with the fiber brokerage firm Darklinear Solutions—both operated under the watchful eye of mega-entrepreneur Gabriel Ice—are American-based companies. Ice, too, is a megalomaniacal American businessman who controls a global technological empire. The novel's neoliberal policing arm, embodied in the character of Nicholas Windust, is the Central Intelligence Agency. The absorbing consumerist culture at work in the text is still centred in American markets, promulgated by the

American media first and foremost. The author and critic Jonathan Lethem writes that in Pynchon's view, "modernity's systems of liberation and enlightenment… perpetually collapse into capitalism's Black Iron Prison of enclosure, monopoly and surveillance."[907] Instead of a prison of capitalism in general, what the above examples (and many more) from *Bleeding Edge* indicate is that one could certainly argue that systems of liberation collapse more specifically into an inherently American capitalist and imperialist system of control in the novel. Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge* thus raises the notion that American hegemony continues into the twenty first century. In doing so, it issues a compelling challenge to the generally accepted notion that the post-9/11 eleven era conforms to the decentralised model of network imperialism. Are we really beyond American hegemony, asks Pynchon? Or do its networks still hold us in place over and above multinational capitalist ones?

Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) has widely been read as a postmodern critique. DeLillo's characters, writes Leonard Wilcox, are "floating 'ecstatically' in a delirium of networks, hyperreal surfaces, and fetishised consumer objects."[908] But this postmodern and / or late capitalist framework put forward by Wilcox and others overlooks a certain specificity inherent to the networks of *White Noise.* The techno-spectacle networks of control in DeLillo's text are American, not decentralised forces of a "proteinic" postmodern information society without locus.[909] Consider the television as it is deployed in *White Noise*, for example. It is a device that opens the

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[907] "New York Times Review of *Bleeding Edge*" (2013).

[908] "Baudrillard, DeLillo's "White Noise," and the End of Heroic Narrative" (1991), 348.

[909] Leonard Wilcox, "Baudrillard, DeLillo's "White Noise," and the End of Heroic Narrative," 349.

way towards "immersion in American magic and dread."[910] It is not a broad sweeping, multinational simulacrum that is developed and deployed through the lens of the television in *White Noise*. Rather, as is the case in Baudrillard's *America,* the popular culture device of the television is defined by and immersed in American environments, just like its consumers. In fact, the entire popular culture department at the College-on-the-Hill, where central protagonist Jack Gladney is the head Professor of the Hitler studies sub-department, is actually *called* the 'American Environments Department'.

Note the idea of Adolf Hitler as it is employed in the text as well. Hitler studies is a major theme in the novel—one is drawn by DeLillo to regard the almost religious spectacle wrought by Hitler and the Third Reich on several occasions throughout the text. This would seem to draw attention to an alternative to the American spectacle; to the formation of a divergent propaganda arm that brings the text's networks of control onto a multinational platform. But how does one receive Hitler studies through the novel? We do so through Gladney's—the foremost Hitler scholar in North America—interpretation. But Gladney does not speak German, and despite his struggles to learn it, he can do little better than count to ten in German by the end of the novel. He is therefore unable to engage with the footage of Nazi rallies, or with Hitler's speeches and writings, in their original forms. Instead, he views Hitler through an American lens whereby everything is translated into the terms of the American pop-cultural frame. Despite what seems to be an engagement with an alternate nationality and field of study, then, Gladney ultimately cannot step outside of the American aura. Nor can any of the other major characters in the novel because American spectacle, which they all consume through the television, has become the "pri-

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[910] Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, 19.

mal force" in the American home.[911] On this point, most of the Gladney family bonding time in *White Noise* is spent consuming sitcoms and disaster footage as shown on television.

Outside the home, the characters of *White Noise* are constantly bombarded with the branding and consumerist culture of American environments too. Another epicentre of worship and spirituality in *White Noise* is the American supermarket, where over lit aisles of products form buzzing networks that apparently nourish the soul—as the character of Murray Siskind notes, "The American supermarket recharges us spiritually."[912] It is not the rudderless postmodern commodity that psychologically colonises in *White Noise*, then, but rather the American and / or Americanised commodity that is housed within the awe inspiring realm of the American supermarket or shopping mall.

This American commodity frame, like that of the American television, should not be overlooked in discussing the networks of *White Noise*. To do so is to overlook the pointed social and cultural critique of DeLillo's novel; it is to miss the ways in which the author aims specifically at post-war American techno-spectacle culture and its imperialising effects, rather than at a decentred late capitalist model. Deferring to the latter framework to discuss DeLillo's novel is essentially to draw it within the same social framework as a novel such as William Gibson's *Neuromancer,* or K.W. Jeter's *Noir* (1998). But unlike Gibson or Jeter, DeLillo's novel is clearly not rooted in what Istvan Csicsery-Ronay calls "the constantly mutating channels of global flows"—those instantaneous computerised transfers that signify technological momentum so powerful that its demolishes "the dams and break-waters of the nation-states" to create globalisa-

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[911] *White Noise,* 51.

[912] *White Noise,* 37.

tion, late capitalism, and technological empire.[913] America is a piece in a vast puzzle in both *Noir* and *Neuromancer.* But that is not the case in *White Noise* where America and its techno-spectacle imperialist networks form the locus of power. By way of a final example on this point, consider Willie Mink, the character more deeply held in these networks of control than anyone else in *White Noise*—"his eyes flickering on the screen. Waves, rays, coherent beams."[914] Mink is explicit about the Americanness of the white noise language that envelops him. It is an "American TV" language that taught him to speak; and it is "American sex" that the television has taught him to long for at a primal level.[915]

This brief survey has in no way been exhaustive in terms of analysing American SF in American techno-spectacle imperialist contexts. What it has done, however, is to point to some concrete connections between vital works of American SF (and American literature in general) and the contexts of American imperialism. Doing so essentially demonstrates that Ballard's incisive work in critiquing a particularly American brand of empire does not exist in a vacuum, but rather that there has been an abiding tradition of engagement with this type of imperialism. It has been largely overlooked to date, but it is hoped that this in-depth study of Ballard's mid-period fiction, along with the brief survey of other work, might encourage further scholarship that works to engage the intersections between SF and American imperialism specifically.

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[913] Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr, "Science Fiction and Empire" (2003), 239-240.

[914] *White Noise,* 294.

[915] *White Noise,* 293.

As the cultural theory and history analysed in this chapter makes clear, this incarnation of imperialism has been particularly corrosive in the post-war period, driving home damaging stereotypes of the Other, and sublimating vast swathes of people under diverse systems of techno-spectacle control. Further literature *and* criticism is required in order to ensure that this imperialism is not simply and easily subsumed by the late capitalist spectre, but that it is instead exposed across its vast array of manifestations, critiqued, and ultimately, dismantled.

EPILOGUE: The Constitution of Empire

As we have seen, there are four imperialist strands or pathways that figure prominently in SF since Mary Shelley, from mercantile and Social Darwinist paradigms to biopolitical and techno-spectacle frameworks. In the new century, the key theoretical text in terms of late capitalist empire is, of course, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (2000). This work draws parallels with Zygmunt Bauman's conception of "liquid modernity" in its vision of the configuration of late capitalism as fluid, instantaneous, and global;[916] but where Hardt and Negri (H & N) differ is in their view that this modern situation is constitutive of 'Empire'. It is important, then—and even necessary—to consider this new development in the critical-imperialist landscape in the light of the advances that have been made by postcolonial SF.

Unlike Edward Said, who sees the United States as having pivoted from Victorian-style imperialism to a new, remotely governed techno-spectacle configuration in the post-war era, H & N see the US as having retreated into the "constituent spirit" of the Constitution in the late twentieth century.[917] This "spirit," they argue, is embodied in protest movements—civil rights and Black Power movements, the student movements, and eventually the second-wave feminist movement.[918] For a time, according to H & N, America had looked poised to take up the mantle of Victorian-type imperialism. But the devastating experience of defeat in Vietnam saw the country retreat into its more benevolent constitutional values. In the name of such ideals, America has also taken up the role of international "peace police" rather than imperialist enforcer; "the US

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[916] *Liquid Modernity* (1999).

[917] *Empire,* 179.

[918] *Empire,* 179.

military answer the call in the name of peace and order."[919] The United States is thus, according to H & N, charged with (and reluctantly accepts) the role of presiding over, but *not governing*, the "imperial sovereignty" of the global network. America, then, in light of its imperial but not imperialist constitution, presides over "the transformation of the global frontier into an open space of imperial sovereignty."[920]

Indeed, in this reopening of imperial space—as left by a United States that has essentially been scarred by the Vietnam experience—comes a new Empire. According to H & N, it is made up of what they call "imperial sovereignty."[921] What that means is a globalisation of capitalist production and its world market, "which has delivered a fundamentally new situation and a significant historical shift," to say the least.[922] More specifically, it has delivered a single "supranational figure of political power" to the fore.[923] This supranational schema is without a central locus of power, roaming free according to global market trends; or as H & N write, it is not confined to a particular nation or metropole, but rather "in this smooth space of Empire, there is no *place* of power—it is both everywhere and nowhere. Empire is an *ou-topia,* or really a *non-place*."[924]

H & N implicitly recognise Said's position, writing that "other theorists are reluctant to recognise a major shift in global power relations because they see that the dominant capitalist

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[919] *Empire,* 181.

[920] *Empire,* 182.

[921] *Empire,* 8.

[922] *Empire,* 9.

[923] *Empire,* 8.

[924] *Empire,* 190.

nation-states have continued to exercise imperialist domination over other nations and regions of the globe."[925] From their perspective, however, this idea is outmoded, particularly in the post-Cold War 1990s, which oversaw the birth in earnest of a new social order that "brings a unitary force and makes everything postcolonial and post-imperialist."[926] H & N call this new situation "government without governance."[927] There are no social hierarchies in place, but rather the Empire is open to equal access for all.

Paradoxically, however, H & N also see this 'everywhere' space of global Empire as being administered by certain key players, thus problematising the idea that modern Empire is a truly "unitary force" instead of an imperialist one that aims to colonise, coerce, and control. First, it is administered by huge transnational corporations that construct "the fundamental connective fabric" of the global Empire.[928] H & N argue that nothing escapes economics, nor the capitalist systems that are responsible for ensuring global economic flows. As such, Empire is largely framed and guided by these systems: "the great industrial and financial powers thus produce subjectivities"[929]—and shape the sovereign Empire.

In addition to massive transnational corporations, H & N argue that the global Empire is largely shaped and administered by communications networks that are projected by the ever-proliferating internet and its concomitant media spectacle. They write that such a communications

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[925] *Empire,* 9.

[926] *Empire,* 9.

[927] *Empire,* 14.

[928] *Empire,* 31.

[929] *Empire,* 32.

network "has an organic relationship to the emergence of the new world order."[930] Moreover, these networks conceivably organise "the movement and trajectory of global markets."[931] Legitimation of the new imperial machine is thus "born at least in part of the modern communications industries."[932] Again, these industries are conceived as decentralised and deregulated: "There is no single locus of control that dictates the spectacle."[933] Instead, the system rests "on nothing outside of itself," and is always in a state of being "re-proposed ceaselessly by developing its own languages of self-validation."[934] But regardless of its decentralised nature, the global communications network, in H & N's view, largely controls society and guides its narrative. But while they acknowledge this concept, they do not acknowledge that the late capitalist 'Empire' is working imperialistically upon us as a result of both media and corporate proliferation and pervasiveness.

H & N's notion of a utopian, late capitalist Empire (not imperialism, as not tied to a specific nation) has been widely reiterated in recent years. Technology luminaries such as Bill Gates, for example, have expressed the idea that all kinds of people can move about between territories and social hierarchies with almost "frictionless" ease in the age of the global network.[935] In step with Gates, a widespread late capitalist evangelism has emerged in Silicon Valley and elsewhere—a view that the network breeds convergence into a universal, corporate "hive

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[930] *Empire,* 32.

[931] *Empire,* 32.

[932] *Empire,* 32.

[933] *Empire,* 323.

[934] *Empire,* 33.

[935] *The Road Ahead* (1996).

mind".[936] But is this relatively new situation really so devoid of imperialism? Is it really just an 'open access' schema that neither favours a hegemonic culture, nor acts imperialistically upon society?

Of the many alternative, post-*Empire* views, one of the most instructive is that proffered by Steven Shaviro in *Connected; or What It Means to Live in the Network Society* (2003). He posits a similar configuration to H & N's *Empire* in some respects—a 'network society' controlled and administered by the instantaneous global flow of capital and communications. Instead of viewing it as a natural, open, and utopian process—"a self-regulating eco-system"—of late capitalist exchange, however, Shaviro sees it as essentially "red in tooth and claw."[937] What he means is that the global network represents a "soft fascism" in its reconciliation of "the conflicting imperatives of aggressive predation on one hand, and unquestioning obedience and conformity on the other."[938] In other words, it acts imperialistically—colonising and dominating its subjects through new means of control, and in turn, drawing them into a new network of conformity. The colonisation and subsequent control strategies of the network have evolved from those of prior imperialisms, according to Shaviro. One could say that they have become much more intimate, intricate, and crucially, willingly adopted by subjects (for the most part).

Critically, it is via analysis of SF that Shaviro brings to light the potentially imperialistic nature of the network and / or late capitalist empire. Further, it is by way of the study of SF that Shaviro is able to reflect on the modern situation under imperialist terms, rather than under those

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[936] Steven Shaviro, *Connected; or What It Means to Live in the Network Society* (2003), 4.

[937] *Connected*, 4.

[938] *Connected,* 5.

terms of a less suspicious and more optimistic conception of a utopian 'Empire'. For Shaviro, then, it is SF that helps to elucidate the particular imperialist qualities of the current situation, as well as helping in the process of extrapolating upon where such themes and contexts could be leading society. He notes at length that K. W. Jeter's novel *Noir* (1998), for example, acutely challenges the deeply pervasive network imperialist frame. For Jeter, the central issue is the all-encompassing nature of the network, and what kind of world this leads toward. Escape is all but impossible for *Noir's* characters, writes Shaviro: "No matter what position you seek to occupy, that position will be located somewhere on the network's grid. No matter what words you utter, those words will have been anticipated somewhere in the chains of discourse."[939]

Rather than widespread rebellion, however, pervasiveness and integration lead to network addiction—disconnected characters will "pay any price just to feel back to normal again";[940] and of course by "back to normal," Jeter means 'connected'. For Jeter, the logic of network imperialism tends toward William Burroughs's "basic formula" of addiction, or what he calls "the algebra of need."[941] That is, the network (and the Empire it represents) becomes something one absolutely *must* connect to. The user therefore becomes an addict who, as Burroughs writes, will "do anything to satisfy total need."[942] The algebra of need, and the total dependence that it implies, is, for Jeter, a crucial component of the power relations that undergird all of network society.

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[939] *Connected,* 5.

[940] K. W. Jeter, *Noir,* 460.

[941] *The Naked Lunch* (1959), xi.

[942] Ibid.

Jeter's *Noir* offers no signs of hope, satisfaction or pleasure within networked space. Instead, network pervasion continues to increase, and with it, addiction only proliferates and deepens. In *Noir,* this colonisation of the subject—longed for on both sides of the exchange (consumer and corporation)—leads to a point where even the individual's intellectual property stands only to benefit multinational corporations like 'DynaZauber'. So subordinate and addicted have subjects become that they hand over control to their higher brain functions without question. This is colonisation to an arguably unprecedented degree in terms of colonial-imperialist history, and yet, it is accepted, even at times pleaded for, by the subjects of Jeter's novel because they embody the algebra of need. For Shaviro, this idea of total and voluntary subjection to the network—along with other imperialist notions from *Noir,* as noted above—raises some important questions about this type of imperialism: does the network really sublimate society to such a totalised extent? And do we as a society really submit ourselves to the chains of this imperialism because we are so addicted to the network? If so, why are we addicted? What methods does the network employ to spark such widespread addiction?

Other (relatively) recent works, such as Warren Ellis's comic book series *Transmetropolitan* (1997-2002; co-created and illustrated by Darrick Robertson), Ken Macleod's "Fall Revolution" series of novels (1995-2001),[943] and Bruce Sterling's *Distraction* (1998) raise further specific questions about network imperialism, thereby helping us to challenge modern imperialist structures in acute and diverse ways. Like *Noir,* Ellis's *Transmetropolitan* is overrun with network addicts, media, transnational corporations, surveillance networks and nanotechnologies.

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[943] *The Star Fraction* (1995); *The Stone Canal* (1996); *The Cassini Division* (1998); *The Sky Road* (1999); *The Fall Revolution* (2001).

Notions of privacy invasion and psychological colonisation have been taken to an even greater extreme in this world as the nightly dreams of central characters— "the most anti-social activity [one] can ever engage in"—are invaded by advertising.[944] It raises the question, can this new imperialism really burrow so deeply into one's consciousness as to be bombarding us even when we are *unconscious*?

Adding to the field of Anglo-American SF novels that help us to question and challenge modern imperialist configurations in new and incisive ways is Don DeLillo's *Zero K* (2016)—a fictional work that exploits certain SF themes, without embedding itself in the genre. Like Sterling's *Distraction,* DeLillo's novel is also ambivalent about living under a network Empire. DeLillo imagines both a technological utopia, and a sense of devastating numbness—a sense that all of the traits that make us human are being suppressed, pulled apart, and ultimately lost in the process of network convergence.

Recent years have also seen the publication of Thomas Pynchon's quasi-SF *Bleeding Edge* (2013) which, as noted in the last chapter, makes more sense in the context of American techno-spectacle imperialism than it does in that of global and / or network imperialism. In Pynchon's novel, power is channelled through the figure of Gabriel Ice: a Dotcom billionaire who runs a seemingly omnipresent technology company. Ice is, in effect, *Bleeding Edge's* version of the all-seeing, all-encompassing network empire. Crucially, he is also unmistakably American, as is the central locus of his operation, and thus, the main node of power in *Bleeding Edge.* Pynchon, then, raises the idea that perhaps American hegemony has continued into the twenty first century; and perhaps, therefore, we are still living under the American techno-spectacle gaze

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[944] Steven Shaviro, *Connected*, 25.

rather than that of a globalised network. Do American-based technology powerhouses such as Google, Facebook, and Apple (the world's first trillion-dollar company), not at least to some extent affirm the validity of Pynchon's position?

This raises an intriguing question for SF scholarship: Are we still living under American imperialism, or have we transitioned into a state of network imperialism? Further, is the network, so readily touted by theorists in recent years, a schema that, as Slavoj Žižek writes, in actuality "fluctuate[s] between formal emptiness and impossible radicalisation"?[945] Does it therefore only *seem* to dominate instead of actually dominating? H & N discuss "the motor that sets the new empire in motion."[946] This motor is a global technological network that delivers late capitalism. But do they successfully reveal the make-up of the motor itself—its origins, its power nuclei, its distribution networks? Or is their investigation too theoretical and not material enough, as Žižek suggests? Do they, moreover, take for granted the idea that the technologies of the network Empire are equally accessible to everyone, everywhere; and crucially, that no particular organisation or nation holds more sway in the distribution of those networks than any other?

Unlike H & N, Edward Said saw the United States at the head of cultural and capitalist production, guiding its proliferation and direction in the post-Cold War era, and using it in turn to enforce its global control. It goes without saying, at least since the height of the Cold War, that the United States has exemplified a supreme use of technology both militarily and in the market place, and that its 'spectacle' production has permeated farther and wider than any other on Earth. H & N's model of modern Empire as a truly globalised apparatus that includes countries

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[945] "Have Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri Rewritten the Communist Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century?" (2001), 192.

[946] *Empire,* 27.

like the United States and, say, West African nations on an equal footing, thus seems perhaps more idealistic and less realistic than Said's, even today. Investigations of American techno-spectacle imperialism in novels such as Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge,* and of network imperialism in DeLillo's *Zero K,* certainly encourage such debates about the loci of power in contemporary imperialism. In other words, recent Anglo-American SF (and quasi-SF) provides pathways and platforms from which we can question and challenge the current state of imperialism and the validity of imperialist theory.

As this brief survey of shows, this sub-genre has been a prime vehicle for calling into question contemporary imperialist configurations. It is also—as a work such as Steven Shaviro's *Connected* demonstrates—a catalyst for triggering questions and critical discussion as to how these imperialist structures operate, what methods they employ, and how they effect us today and potentially into the future. Recent SF therefore takes its place amid a longer history of Anglo-American SF that has contested and taken apart historically and culturally distinct imperialisms. As I have shown, the seminal Victorian SF of H. G. Wells, for example, critiques the particular ideology and quasi-science that underpinned the Social Darwinist imperialism of his era. From another angle, the early fiction of J. G. Ballard demonstrates that rather than being simply guided by 'classic' ideologies, imperialism has, during the lead up to the Second World War, worked according to the strict measurements and harsh rigour of biopolitical theory. Moreover, in his mid-period fiction, Ballard's SF also goes to show a further imperialist mutation away from the contexts of biopolitics to those of American techno-spectacle imperialism. In the process, he elucidates another specific type of imperialism that many would deny ever existed; and more than just clarifying this type of imperialism, Ballard—along with an author such as Wells—tests imperial-

ist contexts in new and insightful ways, thereby raising progressive questions and ideas that enable us to view and treat imperialism more diversely and comprehensively.

The notion that Anglo-American SF has brought to light marginalised or suppressed imperialist contexts is not just reiterated in recent fiction that contravenes utopian 'Empire' and instead considers network imperialism. Consider, once again, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* This is a text that, as noted, came to life in a 'grey zone' of imperialism—that is, prior to the 'classic' Victorian contexts of the late nineteenth century. But rather than succumbing to the 'greyness', or recapitulating the idea that early-nineteenth-century Europe was anti-imperialistic, Mary Shelley shines a light on a specific, and under-acknowledged, imperialist context—she uncovers the romantic, mythologically motivated, exclusive and seclusive, deeply racist, and ultimately delusional, contexts of mercantile imperialism. In doing so, *Frankenstein* helps us to recognise not only a historically and culturally distinct type of imperialism, but also a long overlooked imperialist context. Far from just bringing this context to light, however, Mary Shelley also questions and critiques it in culturally specific ways that allow us to better recognise the methods and devastating effects of this type of imperialism. *Frankenstein,* then, is another pivotal example of SF that enables us to better and more accurately understand the history of imperialism.

Additionally, Anglo-American SF such as that of Mary Shelley, Wells, and Ballard not only calls into question particular facets of imperialist contexts, thereby enabling us to view imperialism as multidimensional, inherently destructive, and in a constant state of mutation and transformation. These works also envision alternate socio-political paradigms that are generally ethical and egalitarian (albeit sometimes misguided and unconsciously racist, as in the case of Wells). Through their combinations of imperialist critique and ethical alternatives, these Anglo-

American SF works enter postcolonial contexts in their own unique ways, and in the process, show that imperialist critique and destabilisation is happening across cultural lines. It is important to recognise that imperialism is being attacked from both inside and outside the strands of the Western tradition of SF because it is only through such a collaborative and multi-dimensional approach—one coming from all sides, so to speak—that imperialism can be effectively critiqued and held accountable.

I have aimed to show not just that Anglo-American SF has a long and much overlooked history of incisive and acute imperialist critique; nor simply that this neglected critique has been carried out by some of the sub-genre's most prominent and insightful writers. More importantly, I have worked to demonstrate that through the study of Anglo-American SF we can go a long way toward uncovering the multidimensional and constantly shifting nature of both imperialism and the theory that underpins it. The study of SF, then, enables us to look deep inside multiple types of imperialism, to question its structures in various incisive ways, and to offer future alternatives to those structures. Moreover, the study of SF allows us to see these structures being extrapolated from—stretched and pushed to their extremes—which in turn, reveals further questions and ideas on the subject of where imperialism *could* be leading us. Such challenges are vital because, as I have noted throughout this thesis, imperialism has long been and remains socially pervasive and destructive. It is hoped that this investigation will encourage further research into the culturally and historically distinct mechanics of imperialism by way of the study of Anglo-American SF. To be sure, this pathway to imperialist research can continue to open up unique and insightful perspectives on imperialism and its underlying ideologies.

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