The Apocalyptic Imaginary During the Fin de Siècle

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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses four British Gothic authors of varied upbringings and literary styles who published bestselling fiction that not only terrified and tantalized their readers, but broadened the apocalyptic imaginary of the late nineteenth century. These four authors and their texts are H.G. Wells and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), Joseph Conrad and *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Bram Stoker and *Dracula* (1897), and Richard Marsh and *The Beetle* (1897). Whether by cosmic invasion (*The War of the Worlds*), solar entropy (*Heart of Darkness*), viral epidemic (*Dracula*), and/or the destabilization of human and national identity (*Dracula* and *The Beetle*), these authors and texts channelled the cultural anxieties of the fin de siècle, and confronted the complacency and greed of imperial Britain. They also updated or borrowed from old religious myths in order to educate their audiences on "new formations," like germ theory (Stoker), "new imperialism" (Conrad), and Darwinian retrogression (Wells). With regards to methodology, each chapter builds up to an analysis of the main text in question by contemplating the relevant author's religious upbringing, literary and political influences, and artistic pursuits. It also examines the tributary texts that informed the novels, and how they did or (in the case of *The Beetle*) did not achieve mythic status.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has

not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are

acknowledged as References.

INTRODUCTION

Because of phenomena such as the climate crisis and, recently, the COVID-19 global pandemic, readers are turning to apocalyptic fiction more than ever to appease their fears, excite their imaginations, and educate their minds. Novels like Stephen King's *The Stand* (1978) and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) are being purchased in their thousands from online bookstores, and films and programs like *Twenty-Eight Days Later* (2002), *Contagion* (2011), and *The Walking Dead* (2010-2022) are often trending on Netflix and HBO Max. In 2020, Albert Camus' *The Plague* (1947), a novel about a disease epidemic in the Algerian city of Oran, was one of the top-selling books of the year, even selling out on Amazon for a brief period of time.

New cli-fi (climate fiction) novels, like Rumaan Alam's *Leave the World Behind* (2021), a story that centers on six principal characters who are quarantined in a house together, and navigate the apocalypse in different ways, are not only bringing relief to today's socially distanced readers but also providing education on how to live ethically during a pandemic. Reporting on the practical benefits of reading such cli-fi novels, *BBC Culture* writer Hephzibah Anderson notes:

> It might seem masochistic to turn just now to tales of havoc and wrenching loss, yet these cautionary narratives also offer catharsis, a degree of hope, sometimes humour. In times of intense worry and rampant uncertainty, they almost seem to hold out the promise of a how-to manual — how to handle crisis. (Anderson)

After the World Wars and the nuclear threats of the twentieth century, apocalyptic themes permeated a wide range of cultural products within Western society (Sutton).[1] Michael Burken

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[1] For apocalyptic science-fiction novels, see *Children's End* (1953), Alice Sheldon Nebula's "The Screwfly Solution" (1977), and Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide* series (1979-2009). For apocalyptic environmental disaster literature, see Kurt Vonnegut's *The Cat's Cradle* (1963), J.G. Ballard's *The Burning World* (1964), and Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* (1985). For apocalyptic graphic novels about pandemics, see Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra's *Y: The Last Man* (2002-2008) and Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore, and Charlie Adlard's *The Walking Dead* series (2003-2019). For apocalyptic video games, see *Abomination: The Nemesis Project* (1999),

notes that "the apparatus of modern communications — cable television, video recording […] and mass market paperbacks" have "brought apocalyptic themes from the theological and social margins [...] into the main stream of American cultural awareness" (159). In fact, the vocabulary and metaphors from apocalyptic texts have infiltrated everything from broadcast journalism to political legislation, to running events (cf. "Zombie Runs") (de Bruin-Molé and Polak 1). As Megan de Bruin-Molé and Sara Polak detail, "[apocalyptic] outbreak is our shared mode of discourse. Riots in Minneapolis following the murder of George Floyd in 2020 seemed to 'suddenly erupt'; the popular discontent that led to the election of Donald Trump has often been read as 'festering under the surface': when something 'goes viral', it 'spreads quickly'" (2). Indeed, whether it is utilizing end of the world language in describing North Korea's or Russia's nuclear threats, or playing *The Last of Us* (2013) on PS3 for relaxation, today's apocalyptic story consumers are "steering into the skid," as Alison Herman of *The Ringer* describes it (Herman), to engage with or escape from the present global crises.

In the last few years of the nineteenth century, four imperial Gothic authors of vastly different backgrounds and writing styles published bestselling stories that not only utilized apocalyptic language and motifs, and brought sensationalism and evasion to their late Victorian audiences, but also expanded the apocalyptic imaginary of their day. These four authors and their texts are H.G. Wells and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), Joseph Conrad and *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Bram Stoker and *Dracula* (1897), and Richard Marsh and *The Beetle* (1897). Like today's apocalyptic stories, these novels addressed subjects related to global war (*The War of the Worlds*), climate crisis (*Heart of Darkness*), pandemics (*Dracula*), and foreign threats (*Dracula* and *The Beetle*).

The Last of Us (2013), and Tom Clancy's *The Division* (2016). For apocalyptic anime or manga, see *Violence Jack* (1973), *Battle Angel Alita* (1990), and *Attack on Titan* (2009).

Over their longstanding careers in newspaper and bookstands, and their re-imaginings on film and television, three of these four stories — *The War of the Worlds*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Dracula* — transcended the boundaries of Victorian culture to become modern myths. Even within the last three years, there have been BBC miniseries of both *The War of the Worlds* (2019) and *Dracula* (2020), and an animated feature of *Heart of Darkness* (2019). Despite being adapted into a silent film of the "most mediocre type" in 1919 (Anon., "The Beetle" 75), as well as a stage play at Strand Theatre in 1928, *The Beetle* has largely been forgotten by modern audiences, even going out of print between the years 1960 to 2004.

For this thesis, I will explore how these four authors not only provided escapist pleasures and education for their audiences but also broadened the apocalyptic imaginary with their "reverse-imperial nightmares" (Jones, "Introduction" xvii).[2] I will also discuss if the apocalyptic motifs of *The War of the Worlds*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Dracula* contributed to their frequent adaptations and/or mythical status, and why *The Beetle* did not have a comparable cultural impact.

While there are plenty of books and articles on the popularity of imperial Gothic narratives during the fin de siècle, for instance, Brantlinger's *The Rule of Darkness* (1998),

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[2] As opposed to many Victorian realist novels, with their portrayal of "truthful representation," the late-Victorian Gothic romance novel typically invited readers into escapist fantasies, like exotic milieus, fast-moving narratives, and wish-fulfillment fantasies (Stiles, *Popular*, 17-18). Similarly, late-Victorian apocalyptic tales provided readers an escape from the decadent and fluctuating cultural landscape of fin de siècle Britain, or from their own personal day-to-day issues, and provided them with an eschatological or cosmic outlook on life. Commenting on the hopeful vision that audiences can receive from apocalyptic stories, Diletta De Cristofaro notes that "those confronted with the chaos of historical contingency and social change, apocalypticism affords a revelation of the true nature of the temporal flow, a strong sense of purpose through a triumphant vision of the future for the elect and the punishment of the sinners, and a clear worldview that explains one's place in history, allowing the firm differentiation between good and evil" (30). While I do agree with him that apocalyptic tales can provide a "revelation of the true nature of the temporal flow," and can portray "one's place in history," I do not believe that is always a positive thing. For instance, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* lays out a pessimistic view of the future, one where all empires and people groups will eventually become extinguished. Because of the cooling of the sun, nature will eventually overtake all human endeavors, including those of the British Empire and the Congolese people. Because of this, as the novella suggests through Marlow's treatment of the Intended, one should try and hold on to their "great and saving illusion[s]" (297) — whether that is in religious faith or a political ideology — for as long as they can.

Landow's *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows* (2015), and Nissen's *Decadence, Degeneration, and the End* (2016), as well as several texts on the influence of apocalypticism on late-Victorian literature, like Mills' *Approaching Apocalypse* (2007) and Mousoutzanis' *Fin-de-Siècle Fictions, 1890s-1990s* (2014), there does not seem to be any research, specifically, on how these four authors and texts widened the apocalyptic imaginary during the fin de siècle, nor on if apocalyptic motifs have contributed to the ongoing relevancy or mythical status of *The War of the Worlds*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Dracula*.

Before I outline my chapters and explain more about how this research can contribute to Gothic fin-de-siècle studies, I need to describe the late-Victorian cultures and the literary discourses from which these novels were created, as well as define specific terms, for instance: the apocalyptic, the apocalyptic imaginary, millennialism, fin de siècle, imperial gothic, and myth.

The Apocalyptic

Where does the term apocalypse come from? The Book of Revelation introduces itself as the *apokalypsis* or "[t]he revelation of Jesus Christ" (*KJV*, Rev. 1.1). This Koine Greek word stems from the Latin one *revelatio*, which means to uncover or unveil. Its association with a catastrophic end to a city, an empire, or the cosmos, derives from lofty metaphors in the Book of Revelation — like that of the Beast (Rev. 11.7), falling stars (Rev. 6.13), and the destruction of Babylon (Rev. 18) — and not from the term itself (Himmelfarb 1). Other texts in the Bible, like the Books of Daniel and Ezekiel, and even some of Jesus' parables, are classified as *apokalypsis* because they share the form and content of Revelation. They typically include an angel revealing symbolic visions of history to a Biblical hero and guiding him through passages of heaven (1).

Martha Himmelfarb points out that "[t]he interests characteristic of the [apocalyptic] corpus

include not only the Last Judgement and cataclysmic end of the world but also reward and

punishment after death, the heavenly temple, the divine throne room, and astronomical

phenomena and other secrets of nature" (2). These Jewish and Christian *apokalypsis*, thus,

emphasize not only the theme of divine revelation but also the reality of the spiritual realm of

eschatology (5).

Unlike a Biblical apocalypse, which is believed to be orchestrated by a divine being,

secular apocalypses are produced out of a naturalistic worldview and typically feature

cataclysmic destruction, whether by human-made or environmental causes. They often forgo

Biblical themes of divine mercy and future utopias, and emphasize disasters for entertainment

and/or motivational purposes. Roslyn Weaver writes that "[secular] apocalyptic fictions [...]

depict grim futures intended to provoke action now. Writers [...] canvas social and environmental

issues, using dark futures to critique current policies" (14). One can see this in films like *The

Day After Tomorrow* (2004), and documentaries like *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), both

eco-catastrophe stories that urge their audiences to be more environmentally conscious.

Despite its dismissal of supernatural or Christ-centric elements, secular apocalyptic

fictions rely on the Biblical text for their poetic language. Jennie Chapman suggests that there is

a "long-standing reciprocity of Christian and secular forms of the apocalyptic imagination"

(168), and Northrop Frye notes that the "Biblical Apocalypse is our grammar of apocalyptic

imagery" (141). Even the most secular of apocalyptic tales, like Phillip Pullman's *His Dark

Materials* trilogy (1995-2000), parodies apocalyptic religious iconography to provide a familiar

structure for its readers. In the third and final novel of the series — *The Amber Spyglass* (2000)

— the Authority, who is an old, tyrannical angel reminiscent of the Christian God, perishes after

being released from his crystal prison. Because of his demise, ghosts from the "world of the

dead" (372) are freed and allowed to populate the "Republic of Heaven" (518). The "Republic"

is an earthly territory where the living and the dead are not controlled by the Church, and have

full democratic rights.

Pullman, an atheist, describes the series as "*Paradise Lost* for teenagers in three

volumes" (Sharkey). In fact, the title of his first book is taken from Milton's epic, where God

uses "golden compasses" (182) to create the Earth. Pullman states that his trilogy are "books [...]

about killing God" and that he attempted to undermine the basis of Christian belief through them

(Anon. "The Shed"). Nevertheless, as he notes, "I was telling a story which would serve as a

vehicle for exploring things which I had been thinking about over the years." (Spanner). For the

atheist author, it did not matter if his trilogy drew upon secular philosophy or Christian imagery,

what mattered was the story itself, for it is "the story," he notes, that "comes to me and wants to

be told" (Spanner).

In the 1890s, particularly in the West, the term apocalypse established a diversification of

meanings, and was being implemented within a variety of contexts. For instance, one of the

Oxford English Dictionary (*OED*) definitions of apocalypse in the 1890s was a "disaster

resulting in drastic, irreversible damage to human society or the environment" (Anon.

"apocalyptic"). In regards to this particular connotation, the *OED* highlights John Swinton's

"Storm and Stress" speech from *Striking for Life* (1894), in which he discusses how the

"blossoming city of Chicago" and its laborers are being struck by the "havoc of the storm or the

bane of stress" (350-351); how the "competitive strife," "harlotry," "newspaper deviltry," and the

"vampireism" of capitalism is exerting the city to death: "Comrades of Chicago!" He states, "In

these times there are, as in other times there were, prophecies of approaching apocalypse. It is

not worth while to be alarmed; for it will surely come, and our world will rejoice in the new day"

(351). The "new day" Swinton is alluding to here is one of welfare and a decent livelihood for

the hirelings of corporations, like the coal-miners, mill-hands, and street-car drudges, as well as

new rights for child laborers and female competitors (352). If these rights are not met soon, then

"irreversible damage," or as he suggests, an "apocalypse" will be upon them and their

"blossoming city."

In the "Theatrical Gossip" section of the December 24th, 1898, edition of *The Echo*, an

anonymous critic references the "apocalyptic apothegm" of Sir Edward Russell: "With genius

subtly is power" (3). The apothegm was used by Russell to describe the elegant and nuanced

acting of Mr. Charles Wyndham in "The Jest." His use of "apocalyptic," in this case, has nothing

to do with the cataclysmic end of or "irreversible destruction" to the world. On the contrary, it is

a statement about how Russell's maxim brings insight, or revelation, in comprehending artistic

"genius." This use is in line with an *OED* definition of apocalyptic as "the nature of a revelation

or disclosure" (Anon. "apocalyptic").

In the "Books of the Week" section of the November 4th, 1899, edition of *The Echo*, an

anonymous journalist reviews "Some New Sketches of Hindoo Manners" (1899) by C.W. Doyle.

In his or her review, they outline Doyle's account of the "migratory" and "simple primitive folk"

who live in the "jungle that skirts the foot-hills of the Himalayas." The anonymous critic notes

that despite Doyle's "interesting" and "vivid" tales of the "Pathan folk," he does not succeed in

making clear to Britons "the distinctive customs and mental processes of the" Terai people; that

his book is "merely tales by natives over the village fire." Conversely, the reviewer finds Hugh

Clifford's 1898 cultural study, *Studies in Brown Humanity*, to be a more "picturesque" and

"apocalyptic" look at indigenous people groups (Anon., "Books" 1). While the reviewer does not

expand upon what he or she means by "apocalyptic," it appears to be a reference to the primitive and battle-weary milieu of the Malayan natives. For instance, Clifford's text captures their basic "habits and customs," as well as their "tortuous twists of thought" (ix) and "barbarous combats" (x). It is likely the reviewer viewed their "barbaric" ethos as something "apocalyptic," or irreversibly disastrous.

Because of the Biblical origins of apocalyptic thinking, and its many secular variations, definitions of the term will always depend on cultural context and/or authorial intent. For this thesis, my concern is not with the ancient religious understanding of *apokalypsis*, like that of the unveiling of Jesus Christ, or with certain secular variations, like experiencing a life-changing insight or revelation. My focus is on the exploration of apocalyptic disasters in Victorian fin-de-siècle stories during the 1890s. More specifically, my attention is on imperial Gothic narratives that explore a possible or complete annihilation of the Empire through human-made or environmental catastrophes.

The Apocalyptic Imaginary

For Alison McQueen, the apocalyptic should be understood not only as a genre of Biblical literature, but "as an imaginary — a way of making sense of the world": "Apocalypses captivate us with terrifying images of cruelty and justice," she writes, and "[t]hrough the ages, these images have passed down through the collective psyche" (52). The idea of the imaginary, or the "social imaginary" as Charles Taylor frames it, encompasses how people imagine their lives to be: their connection with others, their varied expectations about what relationships are or should be, and the "deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (23). It is not shaped by reasonable or theoretical ways of approaching the world, but by "images,

stories, and legends" (23); the "unstructured" and sometimes "inarticulate" expressions that float around society (25). For my project, this understanding of the apocalyptic or "social" imaginary is crucial, for it gives a partial explanation as to why atheistic or agnostic writers, like Wells and Conrad, included Biblical apocalyptic imagery into their texts. For instance, Wells utilizes familiar Biblical apocalyptic language in *The War of the Worlds* not because he was a proponent of the Christian religion, but because he wanted to employ and then adapt imagery that was deeply-rooted in his audience's psyche. Indeed, by taking the sacred "images, stories, and legends" of his readers, like those of the Bible, and infusing them with contemporary scientific theories, he was able to more easily disseminate new ideas to the public.

The effect of religious texts on the apocalyptic imaginary is just as significant as the apocalyptic imaginary's effect on religious texts (McQueen 54). McQueen writes that, "Apocalyptic texts give voice to an apocalyptic imaginary, while the imaginary's progress through the world changes the meaning those texts have across time and space. They change the revelation" (53). This could be one of the reasons why ancient apocalyptic books, like Daniel and Revelation, and their images of locusts (*KJV*, Rev. 9), a beast (Rev 13.1), and hellfire (Rev. 20.10), continue to be relevant in a post-Darwinian world: they are infused with and reshaped by modern scientific meanings. They are sacred myths, open to creative acts of interpretation and rewriting.

Yet, of themselves, these apocalyptic texts have an "extraordinary semiotic qualit[y]" (McQueen 55). They provide metaphoric portraits of primitivism, divine judgment, and natural disasters. "It is hardly surprising," McQueen states, "that [the book of Revelation] is one of the most illustrated books of the Bible and has had a central place in the history of Western art" (55). Even those who have no Biblical education or belief in a supernatural entity manage to

assimilate Biblical apocalyptic imagery into their subconscious because of its semiotic richness. For instance, Neil Gaiman's graphic novel *Good Omen* (1990), a comedy about an angel and demon who attempt to delay the End Times, is interlaced with references to the Book of Revelation, despite the author being an agnostic. Describing the importance of religion in fiction, and the absence of it in his own life, Gaiman states in an interview: "I think we can say that God exists in the DC Universe. I would not stand up and beat the drum for the existence of God in this universe. I don't know, I think there's probably a 50/50 chance. It doesn't really matter to me." (Whitaker). For Gaiman, and for other agnostic or atheistic writers, like Douglas Adams,[3] a disbelief in this world's God does not necessarily excuse the need for one in fiction. As Pullman alludes to, the most important thing for certain authors is the story that wants to be told.

The Apocalyptic During the Victorian Age

The Victorians had no issue assimilating Biblical apocalyptic imagery into their thinking, for they lived in an age steeped in religious texts. As Timothy Larsen suggests, the Bible "loomed uniquely large in Victorian culture in fascinating and unexplored ways," having a dominant presence in the lives and words of everyone from Florence Nightingale and E.B. Pusey, to T.H. Huxley and Charles Bradlaugh (1). For children, it was the foundational textbook in their schools and the primary resource in shaping their literary skills (1-2). "For much of the nineteenth century," Larsen shares, "children learned to read at Sunday schools or at schools

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[3] Despite being an atheist, Adams periodically employed Biblical imagery and ideas into his texts, like in his first installment of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979). In a playful nod to Jesus Christ's crucifixion and Gospel message, the narrator describes an amusing moment where a young woman believes that she can make the world a "good, happy place," but fails to do so: "[N]early two thousand years after one man had been nailed to a tree for saying how great it would be nice to people for a change, a girl sitting on her own in a small cafe in Richmansworth suddenly realized what it was that had been going wrong all this time [...] Sadly, however, before she could get to a phone to tell anyone about it, a terrible, stupid catastrophe occurred, and the idea was lost for ever" (1-2). Adams also parodies the Tower of Babel from Genesis 11 with the Babel fish, a "small, yellow and leech-like" fish that translate languages for those who stick one in their ear (59).

sponsored by churches or non-denominational religious organizations" (2). Even Christian

skeptic Charles Dickens believed that all Victorians should know the Scriptures inside and out,

teaching his children to base their lives on New Testament teachings (Dickens, *The Life*).

After the Holy Scriptures were demythologized by Darwinian and secular philosophies in

the 1850s and 60s, and by the 1870 passing of the Education Act — which was a framework for

providing free non-religious education for all children — they continued to have a pronounced

role in Victorian academic curriculum and literature (Larsen 2). They were a key inspiration not

only for Victorian novel titles — like Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (1862), Rhoda Broughton's

Cometh Up as a Flower (1867), and Margaret Oliphant's *A House Divided Against Itself* (1886)

— but as well for intertextual jokes and plot points. In *Barchester Towers* (1857), for instance,

Trollope names Reverend Quiverful, a father of fourteen, after a theological position that

encourages Christians to bear many children.

At the turn of the century, Marsh released *A Second Coming* (1900), an episodic narrative

about Jesus's return to Earth and subsequent visit to Victorian England. The story asks questions

like: how would an ancient Middle-Eastern savior be received in modern, industrialized London?

How would the scientifically-minded commoner respond to the healing practices of a God-man?

In routine Marsh fashion, the tale seemingly borrows plot points from other popular Biblically

inspired texts of the day, like W.T. Stead's *If Christ Came to Chicago* (1894), and Maria Corelli's

The Sorrow of Satan (1895). For Victorian readers, knowing religious metaphors and symbols

was, thus, paramount to engaging with contemporary fiction.

Secular Victorian novelists would often insert Biblical apocalyptic imagery into their

works to emphasize their departure from or adaptation of the Judeo-Christian worldview. Kevin

Mills argues:

If the Apocalypse was to be of any use at all, it had to be as an index of the times — not

in the traditional sense of offering prophetic insight into the spiritual significance of

world events, their place in the calendar of progress toward a divinely appointed end, but

in the sense that the modern world could be defined by its distance from, and its rejection

of, the irreality of the apocalyptic imagination. (25)

The poetic language of Biblical apocalyptic imagery was occasionally adopted to stress

the severity of modern concerns. For instance, the imagery of London as a Nether World or

Hades is prevalent in James Thomson's long-form poem "The City of Dreadful Night" (1874), a

nightmare vision about the isolation and spiritual despair of the modern city. In Canto IV of the

poem, the unnamed traveller encounters a nihilistic prophet who relates to him his trying journey

through the barren metropolis. The prophetic figure has a "head uncovered and with streaming

hair" (131), showing a connection to the apocalyptic prophets of the Holy Scriptures (John

Miller 106). Each of the prophet's stanzas commences with "As I came through the desert thus it

was, / As I came through the desert" (132) revealing his isolation from the modern world (John

Miller 106). He chronicles the apocalyptic or mythical beasts that surrounded him in this

inhospitable landscape, like the "enormous things" with "savage cries and clanking wings"

(132); those with "eyes of fire" that came forth from the "deep jaws of death" (132); and the

snakes with "heaped pell-mell / For Devil's roll-call some fete of hell" (132).

The apocalyptic scene of Canto V is also a direct parody of the Book of Revelation.

Reminiscent to Revelation 6:12 (*KJV*), in which the "the sun became black as sackcloth of hair,

and the moon became as blood," the prophet discloses how "The sun arose and crowned a broad

cragcleft; / There stopped and burned out black except a rim, / A bleeding eyeless socket, red and

dim" (Thomson 133). However, unlike Biblical apocalyptic literature, there is no reconciliation

between heaven and earth in "Dreadful Night," no King Jesus returning to heal the broken world. As Miller notes, "Thomson's deliberate echoing of Revelation clearly works towards a rather blunt anti-Christian point. ... The preacher's desert travails hammer home a point made in Canto I when the narrator's psychogeographical meanderings through the city result in the realization of the 'perpetual recurrence' of 'three terms, dead Faith, dead Love, dead Hope'" (107). Instead of wandering through the desert, like Moses, John the Baptist, or Jesus, and encountering God's merciful nature, the prophet of "Dreadful Night" is met with divine silence, "no single star, on earth no track" (Thomson 132) to guide his way.

Jack London, in his 1902 autobiographical text *The People of the Abyss*, recalls his own experience with the "underworld" of London's East End by chronicling his "Descent," as he calls it, into its Dantean hell-scape (London 7): "it will be readily apparent to the reader that I saw much of what was bad [...] The starvation and lack of shelter I encountered constituted a chronic condition of misery which is never wiped out" (5). Like Captain Marlow being accompanied "into the gloomy circle of [the Congolese] inferno" in *Heart of Darkness* (208), London journeys into the barbaric outskirts of imperial London, where he relies on a guide to navigate him through the East End's dark and mysterious "Abyss." After providing him with some direction, a clerk at a travel firm informs him that if he "should [...] be murdered," they are now "in a position to identify [his] corpse" (8).

During the Victorian fin de siècle there was a remarkable outpouring of novels and short stories that depicted apocalyptic threats to imperial London and the surrounding countryside. These tales often portrayed the capital under attack from without by an exotic perpetrator,[4] space

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[4] In the late-Victorian era, "exotic" was typically defined as someone who was "a foreigner" or from a distant country (Anon. "exotic"). It could be used with negative connotations, for instance, to denote someone who was "unfamiliar, uncivilized or uncouth." It could also be used to describe something "attractive, desirable, striking, or glamorous" ("exotic, *adj.* and *n.*"). For my purposes, I am using it to characterize an uncivilized foreigner, someone from a distant country who has invaded the British Empire.

invaders, and pagan goddesses, as well as from within by spies, terrorists, and mobs (Frost 243).

As Mark Frost suggests, "These texts represent an extraordinary eruption of violence during a

period increasingly attuned to the real and potential devastation of disease, social strife,

imperialism, mechanized war, and natural disaster" (245). Indeed, despite the upper classes'

confidence in, as Ailise Bulfin puts it, "unprecedented imperial expansion and accelerating

scientific and technological advance" ("The Natural" 82), there remained for some the anxiety

that the inevitable terminus of the imperial metropolis was near at hand.[5]

Millennialism and Degeneration

In terms of London, part of what instigated this type of fear for its eventual destruction

were suspicions about the end of the Age, or millennial anxieties. Millennialism is a belief in a

divine apocalypse, a universe-shattering event that will disrupt the laws of nature and subject

humanity to an ultimate judgment. The *OED* defines it as "the period of one thousand years

during which [...] Christ will reign in person on earth" (Anon. "apocalyptic"). It is also described

as "a period of peace, happiness, prosperity, and ideal government, esp. a future utopia, typically

ushered in by violent events accompanying the end of the existing world order" (Anon.

"apocalyptic"). For some scholars, like Norman Cohn, the Iranian reformer and prophet

Zarathustra is considered to be the "earliest example of a particular kind of prophet — the kind

commonly called 'millenarian'" (27). According to the *The Zand Ī Wahman Yasn* (the

Commentary of the Wahman Yasn), the one true god, Ahura Mazda, granted Zarathustra the

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[5] Bulfin's *The Invasion Gothic* (2018) and "The Natural Catastrophe in Late Victorian Popular Fiction" (2015) are two works that I reference frequently throughout my thesis. In *Invasion*, she does an excellent job discussing the function and popularity of imperial Gothic fiction during the fin de siècle. In "The Natural," she explores the concept of the apocalyptic imaginary through the catastrophe fiction of Guy Boothby and M.P. Shiel. I develop and diverge from her research by exploring imperial Gothic texts that are not typically recognized as apocalyptic, like Stoker's *Dracula*, Marsh's *The Beetle*, or Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. I also do this by discussing how an imperial Gothic text, like Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, achieved cultural resonance partly because of its "new" (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii) or scientific approach to apocalypticism.

wisdom of all-knowledge by pouring supernatural water into his hands for him to drink. After Zarathustra consumed it, he went into a trance and was given visions for seven days and seven nights. One of these visions was of a tree with four branches: one gold, silver, steel, and iron. These branches represented four future kingdoms, with the last kingdom set to be established by 1000 BC (Cereti 149-153). Although these prophecies were never fulfilled, at least not literally, Zoroastrianism would go on to shape the apocalyptic and millennial language of major Abrahamic religions, like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Hinnells 724).

In *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), Frank Kermode explains how apocalypses function both within societies to bring meaning and structure to existence. By creating temporal constructs of time, like decades, centuries, and millennia, the human imagination responds to a "permanent need to live by the pattern," like random calendar divisions, "rather than by fact" (11). Even apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, with their insistence on sequences, beginnings, and endings inspire audiences to "imagine a significance for themselves" (4).

Kermode believes that millennium predictions have "extraordinary resilience" because apocalyptic allegories are fluid and open to re-evaluation (8). For instance, in terms of the Book of Revelation, humanity continues to apply and reapply meaning to its millennial symbols, like the Dragon or the Beast, or to its metaphorical events, like the thousand year reign of Christ (Rev. 20). Kermode writes, "The great majority of interpretations of Apocalypse assume that the End is pretty near. Consequently the historical allegory is always having to be revised; time discredits it. […] Apocalypse can be disconfirmed without being discredited" (8). Indeed, there have been many failed predictions of societal collapse at the turn of centuries. For instance, the Christian clerics who predicted that Christ would return during 1000 AD (C. Standish and R. Standish 171), the Italian prophet Joachim of Fioreor who estimated that the Second Coming

would commence in 1200 AD (Toulmin et al. 72), and the Fifth Monarchist Henry Archer who

conjectured that the Millennial reign of Christ would begin in 1700 AD (De Krey 49). Every

generation, in some way or another, predicts that the next millennium might be humanity's last.

Nevertheless, even when the End seems at hand, humanity still carries with it notions of a

possible renovation; there is still an "ineradicable desire" to make sense of the universe, and to

be a part of something new in the next Age (Kermode 187). For Kermode, this is the myth of

Transition. Humanity perceives that they are about to escape the apocalypse, and take a "clean

break with the past," but in reality they are just moving into another transitory period (102). This

can be difficult for humans to grasp, however, for there is an incessant need to have calendar

divisions or structured epochs in order to make sense of time.

In the early 1890s, when many late-Victorians were anticipating the start of a new

century, Max Nordau released his apocalyptic bestseller, *Degeneration* (1892). In the text, he

denounces everyone from Impressionist artists, urban-dwellers, New Woman, homophiles, to

millennialists. In the opening chapter of his text, while condemning popular perceptions of the

fin de siècle, he points out the ineptitude of millennialist thinking; how imbecilic it is for one to

"project externally [their] own subjective states" (2) onto a century:

> Only the brain of a child or of a savage could form the clumsy idea that the century is a
>
> kind of living brain, born like a beast or a man, passing through all the stages of
>
> existence, gradually ageing and declining after blooming childhood, joyous youth, and
>
> vigorous maturity, to die with the expiration of the hundredth year, after being afflicted in
>
> its last decade with all the infirmities of mournful senility. (2)

Unlike Kermode who viewed millennial thinking as a common framework among the general

public, Nordau viewed it as a symptom of immaturity and barbarism, a type of rationale that

belonged to degenerate individuals. In fact, he believed that the creatives who wrote about the end of the civilization and/or of a new world order to be "among the insane":

> The idea that tomorrow morning at half past seven o'clock a monstrous, unsuspected event will suddenly take place; that on Thursday next a complete revolution will be accomplished at a single blow, that a revelation, a redemption, the advent of a new age, is imminent — this is frequently observed among the insane; it is a mystic delirium. (544)

In defining degeneration, Nordau adopts the view of B.A. Morel, a physician and the formulator of the concept of degeneration. For both men, it is a "morbid deviation from an original style," a pathology so base and far-reaching "that anyone bearing in [them] the germs" of it become "more and more incapable of fulfilling [their] functions in the world" (qtd. in Nordau 16). For Nordau, part of the function of creatives is to use "definite words of clear import," to have "clear-defined univocal ideas" (544), and to present "traditional views of custom and morality" (5). Unfortunately, for him, this is not the case with degenerates. They are typically overrun by their emotions, communicate in "vague equivocal words" (544), and present "unbridled lewdness" in their art (5).

Like Cesara Lombroso, who claimed that degenerates were "born criminals" (205) and share physical deformities, Nordau argues that debased individuals share psychological deficiencies. These include: megalomania (17), excitability (62), crippling anxiety (242), moral ambiguity (544), melancholia (97), and stimulant obsessions (34). These traits can be witnessed in popular artists and authors like Walt Whitman, Henrik Ibsen, Émile Zola, Richard Wagner, and Oscar Wilde, as well as in French symbolists and impressionist painters. Commenting on the mania of these and other creative degenerates, and the "silly critics" that supported them, he writes that they are all semi-insane for their perception of art or beauty (19).

Despite not being a millennialists himself, Nordau prophesied the continued moral decline and eventual collapse of imperial Britain: "One epoch of history is unmistakably in its decline and another is announcing its approach" (5). He believed that the future offspring of millennialists, and other degenerates, "would not resemble the healthy, normal type of the species," but instead, would "form a new sub-species" that would possess "gaps in development, malformations and infirmities" (16). This "morbid variation" (22) of our species, would in turn, lead to a rise in poverty, crime, alcoholism, moral perversion, and political violence. Instead of anticipating a distant future where all of this would happen, he suspects that this process of de-evolutionary change was happening now. As Jennifer Sattaur points out, he projects "the anxiety away from unimaginable aeons of time, and on to present-day society" (Sattaur 19).

Nordau's theory of apocalyptic degeneracy is an important concept for my thesis. For instance, in chapter two, I discuss how Conrad portrays London to be as "savage" (Conrad, "Heart" 277) and degenerative as the African interior; how the imperial capital has a "brooding gloom" (188) of ruin that hovers over its industrialized center and the River Thames. Also, in chapter three, I explore the apocalyptic threat of Dracula's degenerative disease (vampirism) on the British Empire; how the Crew of Light must become a united front to protect society from infection and further de-evolutionary change. Nevertheless, despite degeneration being a frequent theory and/or operation in my imperial Gothic texts, it will not be the sole focus of my chapters. Instead, I will argue how Wells, Conrad, Stoker, and Wells implement popular concepts of degeneration — as well as many other scientific, political, and social theories — into their texts in order to construct unique apocalyptic narratives.

Before I delve further into the fin de siècle, and discuss how my imperial Gothic authors of the 1890s contributed to the apocalyptic imaginary, I need to discuss the collision of old and new ideas that were happening before the turn of the century.

The Fin de Siècle

Since the end of the nineteenth century, fin de siècle meant a multitude of things to a wide range of thinkers. In 1880s France, it was typically described as being fashionable, relevant, and debaucherous (Laqueur 5). Whereas in France it connoted moral degeneracy, in 1890s England it often stood for everything from morbidity, decline, and decadence, to cultural pessimism. It even became shorthand for aestheticism, and *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake). Matthew Potolsky argues that fin de siècle designates at least four compounds: "a program, a mood, and an intellectual milieu, as well as a period in cultural history" (697). By 1893, it became a generational label for those who dismissed Victorian cultural customs and embraced the new Aesthetics and Sciences, and the political potentialities of the day (Saler 1). Answering the question "What is the fin de siècle?" for his readers, an English writer for the 1893 edition of *The Art Critic* states that:

> All [...] who rush head over heels with news ideas towards the 20th century are hommes et femmes fin de siècle. Who are its leading representatives? Young authors and artists with an indescribable enthusiasm [...] who assert without exception that they are the prophets of something (nobody knows what) glorious to come. (9)

In modern scholarship, there are contradictory reports on what the fin de siècle is, and the positive and negative effects it has had on Western culture. Twentieth-century critic Raymond Williams categorizes the fin de siècle as an "interregnum," suggesting that instead of creating

"anything very new" during this time, Victorians displayed "a working-out, rather, of unfinished lines; a tentative redirection" (*Culture* 165). Lyn Pykett, on the other hand, views it not as an "age of transition" but as something altogether new, "a distinctive and diverse cultural moment" (3).

In regards to the fin-de-siècle timeline, there is also a broad array of opinions: Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken in their collection *Cultural Politics at the fin de siècle* (1995), propose that the fin de siècle was between 1880-1914 (4); the *Cambridge Companion to the fin de siècle* (2007) submits that it was between 1885 to 1901, the year of Queen Victoria's death (Marshall); and Saler in *The Fin-de-Siècle World* (2014) suggests that the period was between 1870–1914 (1-2; Potolsky 698).

While there is no uniform opinion on what or when the fin de siècle was, or a consensus as to its larger significance to society, many scholars have agreed that the late 1890s produced some of the most socially critical and experimental literature of the period, and possibly of the century. Indeed, referencing the final ten years of centuries prior — the French Revolution closing the eighteenth century; and Shakespeare, Spenser, and Bacon concluding the sixteenth — Holbrook Jackson identified a comparable "quickening of life" to the end of the nineteenth century (18). As a critic during and after the Victorian fin de siècle, he notes that "[t]he Eighteen Nineties were so tolerant of novelty in art and ideas that it would seem as though the declining century wished to make amends for several decades of intellectual and artistic monotony" (18). Unlike Nordau, who saw this "epoch of history [...] in its decline" (5), he praised the 1890s "for its sane and healthy expression[s] of vitality," or in other words, its regeneration (19).

An Irish poet and playwright who became a symbol for both the regeneration and decline of the epoch was Oscar Wilde. The Irish poet was tried for gross indecency and pleaded not

guilty to twenty-five counts. Three weeks later, he was condemned and received the maximum sentence allowed for the crime: two years of hard labor. While some saw him as a cultural hero and asked newspapers to "modify [all of their] sweeping denunciation[s] of Mr. Wilde's writings" (Anon., Trial 5), there were others, like the *Daily Telegraph*, who viewed Wilde as an "evil influence on all the better tendencies of art and literature" (Anon., "Editorial" 6), and celebrated his punishment. Joseph Conrad wanted nothing to do with the Irish poet or his lifestyle, for he was, as his friend Norman Douglas states, "the greatest stickler for uprightness I have ever known" (416). Writing on Conrad's "stern principles," and being a man of "straight lines in his private life," Joseph Retinger writes that, "[Conrad] despised weakness of character and the display of immorality. He consequently disliked the works of Oscar Wilde, because he had a profound contempt for his way of living" (103).

Many fin-de-siècle Gothic texts were written at a time "when [...] the minds of Londoners were preoccupied with the trial of Oscar Wilde" (Nandris 378), and with his "unclean" and "poisonous" literature (Anon., Review of *The Picture* 7). Like Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), both Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) were critically condemned for their blasphemous and lewd content. An anonymous reviewer of *The Times* considered *Moreau* to be "the strongest example we have met of the perverse quest after anything in any shape that is freshly sensational" (Review of *Moreau* 17). Across the Atlantic, a critic from the *San Francisco Wave* notes the seemingly depraved nature of both *Dracula* and its author: "When an Englishman, or, for that matter, anyone of Anglo-Saxon blood, goes into degenerate literature of his own sort, he reveals a horrible kind of degeneracy" (Anon., "The Insanity" 5).

While some critics perceived fin-de-siècle Gothic fictions, like *Dracula*, *Moreau*, or even *The Beetle*, as reveling in decay,[6] these novels, ostensibly, disapprove of the degenerative behavior of their villains and have them expelled in their final pages. Judith Halberstam points out, "Rather than condoning the perversity they recorded, Gothic authors, in fact, seemed quite scrupulous in taking a moral stand against the unnatural acts that produce monstrosity" (12). Indeed, despite the promiscuous sexuality of Mina feeding on the Count's chest in *Dracula*, or the "theological grotesque[ness]" of the human–animal hybrids of *Moreau* (Wells, "Preface to Volume II" ix), these stories feature lengthy diatribes or sermons about sustaining a Victorian ethical code. In Stoker's vampiric tale, for instance, the polymath Dutch doctor Abraham Van Helsing champions the Christian ethic and encourages the Crew of Light not to lose heart in the face of the debased Count. Upon Lucy Westenra being relieved of her "Un-dead" and unwomanly nature, he even celebrates her return to purity: "this now Un-Dead be made to rest as true dead, then the soul of the lady we love shall again be free. Instead of working wickedness by night and growing more debased in the assimilating of it by day, she shall take her place with the other Angels" (346). Even Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), a novel initially described as "heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction" (Anon., Review 7), concludes with the hideous self-portrait of the titular character, a symbol, and warning of corrupted Victorian souls.

In their collection *The Fin de Siècle: A Cultural Reader* (2000), Ledger and Luckhurst include thirteen chapters highlighting key contexts and cultural conflicts which help one to understand the age: Degeneration, Outcast London, The Metropolis, The New Woman, Literary Debates, The New Imperialism, Socialism, Anarchism, and Scientific Naturalism, just to name a

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[6] In 1897, an anonymous writer for *The Daily Mail* called *The Beetle* "sordid" and "vulgar" (Anon., "The World" 3).

few (Ledger and Luckhurst). Their anthology establishes the fin de siècle as an era of debate and

contest across disciplines, one that was directed by Darwinian theories of evolution and

regression, as well by cultural and political ideas surrounding anthropology and racial science

(Bristow and McDonagh 7). They state:

> [This] collision between the old and the new that characterized the turn of the century
>
> marks it as [...] a time fraught with anxiety and exhilarating possibility. At the very
>
> moment that Max Nordau famously lamented the encroaching "Dusk of nations," [...]
>
> Britain's cultural [...] landscape was being lit up by a constellation of new formations: the
>
> new woman, the new imperialism [...] the new journalism, all arriving alongside "new"
>
> human sciences like psychology, [...] sexology, and eugenics. (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii)

Indeed, while the fin de siècle was certainly a panic-inducing time for many Britons — with "the

proliferation of 'deviant' sexualities," like Wilde's, as well as "the spread of urban slums, and the

growth of 'criminal' classes," (Arata, *Fictions* 1), it was also marked by achievements in new

technology, science, and politics (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii). Commenting on the interlinking of

these new cultural movements and "domains," Michael Saler asks:

> How could one discuss aesthetic "Decadence", let alone the German critic Max Nordau's
>
> influential 1893 creed *Degeneration*, without also discussing Eugenics, Social
>
> Darwinism, the "New Physics", or the bellicose stance of the European "New
>
> Nationalism"? Or understand the latter without reference to the "New Imperialism," itself
>
> abetted by the "New Journalism" and the threat to the traditional notions of masculinity
>
> by the "New Woman"? (2-3)

As Saler acknowledges in the above passage, this period of regeneration is exemplified in

the popular use of the adjective "New." Jackson elaborates, "Like fin de siècle, [the term "new"]

hailed from France, and, after its original application in the phrase *l'art nouveau* had done considerable service in this country as a prefix to modern picture, dresses and designs, our publicists discovered that other things were equally worthy of the useful adjective" (21). These "new formations" brought about "dreams of regeneration" for many social groups (Ledger and Luckhurst xxiii). For instance, for the anarchist, it brought about the hope of "mutual aid"; for physical researchers, the potential to discover further stages in mental evolution; for eugenicists, the motivation to cure degenerate races (xxiii); and for some, like H.G. Wells, the inspiration to pen "new" types of stories, ones that meshed the old with the new (xiii), and the religious with the scientific.

During the fin de siècle, low art reached a greater prominence in the marketplace; Romantic short stories or mass generic forms like detective fiction, the spy novel, and Wells' science fiction were outselling the three-volume novel. As Ledger and Luckhurst point out, in the 1890s, "romance is propagandistically revived and [...] [t]erms like the 'bestseller' are coined. It is these cheap, mass forms which produce, in a period of amazing intensity, the Time Traveller and the Invisible Man, Sherlock Holmes and Watson, Svengali and his damsel Trilby, Dracula and his many damsels, Jekyll and Hyde" (xiv-xv).

The Imperial Gothic

One of the most successful low art forms of the 1890s was the imperial Gothic novel. Imperial Gothic commonly refers to romance fiction written between 1885 and 1916, more specifically, from the publication of Henry Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) to John Buchan's *Greenmantle* (1916) (Brantlinger, *Rule* 227). Some of the most notable imperial Gothic texts of the 1890s include Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast" (1890), Doyle's "Lot No.

249" (1892) and "The Brown Hand" (1899), and of course, Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1895),

Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899).[7]

The term was first coined by Patrick Brantlinger in his acclaimed cultural and literary text, *Rule*

of Darkness (1988). The genre combines the tropes of early Gothic fiction — like an ominous

milieu, a tyrannical male figure, excessive violence and punishment, and occultism — with those

of British adventure stories. It materialized during the New Imperialism, an era spanning from

1875 to 1914 in which great powers like Great Britain, France, and Italy, and newcomers like

Germany and the United States, competed for territorial control around the world.

Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, Britain's possession of overseas

territories grew and eventually reached its climax during the fin de siècle. Between 1870 and

1900, Britain appropriated more than thirty-nine new regions, including the Transvaal, Egypt,

and the Boer Republics, bringing twelve million square miles of territory and four hundred

million inhabitants under its control. In 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee,

Britain ruled roughly a quarter of the world's surface making it three times the size of the French

Empire and ten times that of the Germans. In her journal, Queen Victoria reflects on the Jubilee

procession in London, and on how much pride, it seemed, Britons had for both her and the

nation: "No one ever I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me, passing through

those six miles of streets" (174). She continues, "The crowds were quite indescribable and their

enthusiasm truly marvelous and deeply touching. The cheering was quite deafening, and every

face seemed to be filled with real joy. I was much moved and gratified" (174). Despite the

pageantry, and Britain "experiencing one of its greatest periods of territorial enlargement"

(Bulfin, "M.P." 155), there were still upper and middle-class anxieties about the future decline of

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[7] For more on the imperial Gothic genre, see Aris Mousoutzanis' *Fin-de-Siècle Fictions, 1890s-1990s: Apocalypse, Technoscience, Empire* (2014), Tabish Khair's *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere* (2009), and Ailise Bulfin's *The Invasion Gothic* (2018).

imperial London. This included fears that those from colonized territories might in turn invade Britain.

Commenting on how this cultural dread manifested in the entertainment industry, Ledger and Luckhurst note that: "Popular culture of the time was fascinated by exotic, imperial terrors — fantasies of reverse invasion by the French or Germans, the stirring of mummies in the British Museum as Egypt and the Sudan were annexed, the evil genius of Fu Manchu and the 'yellow peril' as trade routes in the Far East were contested" (xvi). Imperial Gothic texts would often allow these "exotic, imperial terrors" to violate national, social and biological boundaries, only to have morally upright protagonists defeat them in their final pages. Typically, as Christopher Craft points out, during the novel's prolonged middle, the imperial Gothic tale "affords [...] a degree of play intended to produce a pleasurable, indeed a thrilling anxiety" for its readers, making it seem like the 'savage' Other, supernatural entity, or foreign nation would "invert the 'natural' order" ("Kiss" 107-8).

Like today's consumers who binge on Netflix horror films or cli-fi novels, Victorian audiences sustained their "pleasurable, [...] thrilling anxiety" by reading imperial Gothic stories over and over again. This, as Craft writes, is a "mode of repetition compulsion, an attempt at mastery that always bespeaks the condition of already having been mastered by trauma" (*Another* 72). Indeed, by engaging with the imperial Gothic formula regularly, the Victorian reader forgoes their imagined victory over an exotic terror and, instead, submits to their impulse "that joins reader, monster, [and] writer in a shared fantasia" (72). For instance, in repeated engagements with *Dracula*, the reader willingly submits themselves to the Count's animalistic lusts and shape-shifting form in order that they can — once again — experience the Crew of Light turn him into dust, and prevent the West from a degenerative apocalypse. In *The War of the*

Worlds, too, the audience subjects themselves to the grotesque features of the octopus-like aliens, and the annihilation of parts of Southern England, in order to relive the feeling of the Martians being conquered by the Earth's bacteria.

From the mid-Victorian period until the Great War, the Roman Empire and imperial Britain were closely associated. Describing both the global reach and Christian identity of these two superpowers, Daniel Gorman notes:

> [T]he two exceptional characteristics which [Victorians] believed their Empire shared with that of their Roman predecessors were liberty and peace. [...] [A] favourite analogy of Victorian imperialists [...] was of St. Paul's invocation of Roman citizenship to protect himself from persecution by the authorities after his conversion to Christianity. Like the apostle, the "citizen" of Britain was perforce a free citizen of the world. (13-14)

For many imperial Gothic writers, Britain's superpower status — like Rome's — was destined to be short-lived. Because of the increasing imperial economic and political competition from Germany and the United States; the frequent turmoil and dissension within the British colonies; as well as "the growing domestic uneasiness over the morality of imperialism" (Arata, "The Occidental" 622), there was a sense of angst amongst some Victorians that Britain's imperial decline was next.

In the opening pages of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), following the frame narrator's hymn regarding Britain's maritime glory, Captain Marlow calls the Thames River "one of the dark places of the earth" (190), alluding to its Roman history. He notes that the "utter savagery" that inhabited Roman Britain in 55 B.C. was still present in the nation: "death [still] skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush" (192). Even though the Romans were "no colonists," for "their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more" (193), Marlow

rebukes contemporary Britain for their Roman-like "conquest of the earth" and for "taking

[earth] away from those" (193) who did not look like them, like the savage Other.

For a nation whose declared mission was, in part, to civilize the Other, it is not surprising

then that the exotic terrors of imperial Gothic literature were highly racialized. In *Dracula*, for

instance, the Count is stereotypically Semitic in his "'ook nose and [...] pointed beard" (253);

smells of "ole Jerusalem" (387), and hoards ancient treasures (115). The Beetle is portrayed as

having "saffron yellow" skin, a small "cranium," and bird-like nose (54), a description that is

obtrusively Oriental in connotation. In Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

(1886) and Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), the authors use African stereotypes to

illustrate inferior creatures: Hyde is depicted as an "ape-like" (20) savage who is "black" (50)

and "hairy" (62); and the human-beast hybrids of Moreau's island are conveyed as dark,

colonized beasts (40).

For Brantlinger, there are three common threads within imperial Gothic literature. These

are individual atavism, or "going native" (*Rule* 193); a barbaric invasion of imperial Britain; and

the reduced opportunity for adventure for heroic men (230). In terms of the latter, one of the

marked differences between imperial Gothic literature and British adventure stories is in their

portrayal of heroic men, or of masculinity in general. As Anna Berger describes it, "while the

colonial setting is used as a testing ground for the young and successful hero in adventure tales, it

becomes the site of personal failure in imperial Gothic fiction" (Berger). The heroes of British

adventure fiction — like the shipwrecked merchant of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and

hunter-narrator Allan Quartermain of Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) — perceive it to

be their divine right to govern over foreign territories and to civilize the savage Other. On the

other hand, the male characters of imperial Gothic stories, like Jonathan Haker in *Dracula* or

Colonel Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, are typically the ones invaded and/or go native themselves. Writing a review of *Heart of Darkness*, Hugh Clifford stresses how threatening the foreign Other, or the "elemental man," was to Western masculinity, and how crucial it was for British readers to be warned of this in Conrad's novella: "a sombre study of the Congo [...] the power of the wilderness, of contact with barbarism and elemental man [...] the demoralisation of the white man is conveyed with marvelous force. [...] [N]ever [...] has any writer [...] till now succeeded in bringing the reason, and the ghastly unreason of it all home to sheltered folk" (828).

A popular subcategory of imperial Gothic stories is reverse colonization fiction. Similar to its parent genre, these narratives shift the role of the imperial colonizers to that of the colonized and are typically "obsessed with the spectacle of the primitive and the atavistic" (Arata, "The Occidental" 624). According to Arata, in reverse colonization stories — like Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and Kipling's *The Mark of the Beast* (1890) — "a terrifying reversal [occurs]: the colonizer finds himself in the position of the colonized, the exploiter becomes exploited, the victimizer victimized" (623). "Such fears," he notes, "are linked to a perceived decline — racial, moral, spiritual — which makes the nation vulnerable to attack from more vigorous, 'primitive' peoples" (623).

While reverse colonization narratives typically include white British males adventuring into treacherous remote places, like Captain Marlow into the African Congo (*Heart of Darkness*), Jonathan Harker into Transylvania (*Dracula*), and Paul Lessingham into Cairo, Egypt (*The Beetle*), they also feature protagonists being assailed by uncanny characters and creatures from foreign landscapes, like the citizens of Woking being captured by Martians in *The War of the Worlds*. Despite their overlap in themes, imperial Gothic literature tends to focus more on industrial nations like — Germany or France — invading imperial London (cf. *The Battle of*

Dorking [1871]). Reverse colonization narratives, on the other hand, emphasize primitive populations rising up and overthrowing Western cities. There does not seem to be any strict criterion to this, however. For instance, all four of the key stories of this thesis — *The War of the Worlds*, *Heart of Darkness*, *Dracula*, and *The Beetle* — have been categorised as imperial Gothic fiction, despite their antagonists being from pre-industrialized or alien civilizations.[8]

Conrad was able to take low art, exemplified by imperial Gothic fiction and reverse colonization novels, and elevate it to a higher level (George 63). Within the context of the African Congo, for instance, in both his short story "An Outpost of Progress" (1895) and novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899), he subverts European ideals — like nationalism, the conventional family unit, and masculinity (63). In *Heart of Darkness*, Colonel Kurtz, the "'chief of the inner station'" (220) and an "emissary of [...] science, and progress" (221), is initially portrayed as the prototype for European males, but by the end of the novella, he is isolated and mad, described as "hollow at the core" (270). Conrad dismantles the recurrent motifs of colonial romances, like high-spirited journeys and civilizing the savage Other. As Rosemary Marangoly George observes,

> Conrad's novels complicate the neat schematic of modernist literary territory by blending both high and low art. In doing this he travels beyond his compatriates whose novels record and recreate either the grappling with the difficulties of the familiar, the known world [...] or the grappling with the difficulties of the unfamiliar, alien outposts of empire. (63)

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[8] In *The Gothic* (2004), David Punter and Glennis Byron label *Heart of Darkness* and *Dracula* as imperial Gothic narratives (44). Patrick Bratlinger includes all four novels in his assessment of imperial Gothic narratives in his "Imperial Gothic" chapter in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (2012).

Indeed, he was able to reinforce the horror — "The horror!" (Conrad, "Heart" 287) — of how much imperial London was like the Congolese jungle, how Victorian men were no different from barbaric "brutes" (258): how the "different is the same" and "the same is different" (George 63).

<div align="center">**The Loss of Form and the New Woman**</div>

One of the cultural anxieties that imperial Gothic fiction and reverse colonization narratives both tap into is the loss of English identity. Everything from class warfare and sexual fluidity, to international threats and the inability to control the environment fed into this sense of crisis (Youngs 6). In the literary world, this blurring of identity is symbolized by creatures of indeterminate shape, like the "Arab" (274) in *The Beetle* and the Count in *Dracula*; creatures who used to be human but are now something else, something "Unknown with a capital U!," as Marjorie Lindon states in *The Beetle* (219); creatures of an altering form and selfhood.

Belonging to the wider Victorian Gothic genre, other notable examples of transformative entities are Stevenson's malformed and "ape-like" imp, Mr. Hyde; Wells' brutish Morlocks, who are the degenerative kin of proletarians and subterranean miners; and Wilde's sordid sinner Dorian Gray. Listing a "menagerie" of literary beasts, Young describes late Victorian culture's obsession with human transmutation or the loss of masculine form:

> Apes (white, as well as black), wolves, bats, beetles, [...] alien beings, and countless others [that ...] prowl, fly, [...] and slither along. [...] These are the years of the Beast-People, the Ripper, the "Elephant Man", and others. [...] One can say of them, [...] that 'it is obvious [...] metamorphosis has something to do with the search for identity, or in some cases its antithesis, the refusal to develop.' (4)

Stoker and Marsh were right at the heart of this literary trend, constructing shape-shifting devils to reflect the uncertainty, and possible collapse, of the Victorian male identity and imperial Britain. More notably, Marsh's *The Beetle* is unique in its treatment of the loss of form in relation to the other imperial Gothic tales of the late nineteenth century. It stages the disappearance of identity in a fresh, grotesque manner, and goes further than *Dracula* in its metaphors of destabilization. It does this by bringing together the motif of the personhood in crisis with that of the Egyptian Question, the mesmerism trope, and the British invasion plot.

While *The Beetle* can be interpreted as a manifestation of Britons' anxieties in upsetting geo-political relations in Egypt, as well as Marsh leaning into the popularity of curse-plot narratives, the titular villain's negating properties broaden the novel from an imperial Gothic and reverse colonization narrative to an apocalyptic one. Having been hypnotized in or befuddled by its presence, the male protagonists all encounter the boundary-breaking and role-reversing might of the Beetle: the body of the thief Robert Holt is intruded upon, the articulate politician Paul Lessingham is left babbling words, and both the scientist Sydney Atherton, and the detective Augustus Champnell are stupefied by the "Nameless Thing" (the Beetle) (155). This threat to gender conventions and societal order, as I will discuss further in Chapter Four, jeopardizes the entire foundation of imperial London, and Western civilization, in general.

John Tosh suggests that manliness was "the most clearly articulated indicator of men's gender" during the Victorian Age (2). Indeed, an upright man was characterized by his physical might and bravery, his self-assuredness and orderliness, and his honor within the household. Tosh writes, "The fin de siècle is now [...] commonly seen as a period of crisis in masculinity, when evidence from many different directions seemed to confirm that men were under threat and losing control of themselves and others" (119).

Because the Victorian middle-class family was customarily defined in heteronormative terms, any deviation from this standard — through homosexual acts, cross-dressing, and sodomy — was considered perverse and Other. During this time, there were also irruptions of women into male-dominated spheres, as well as greater female expression protesting against patriarchy. For instance, there was the 1882 Divorce Act that bolstered a wife's legal appeal against her husband; the growing female presence in shopping, academia, and office jobs; and the decline of paternal authority in the family unit, which contributed to the lack of male preparedness during war time (Tosh 117).

The contestation of gender roles, and the anxieties surrounding national degeneration, were reinforced due to the lack of healthy recruits in London during the Boer War (1899-1902) (Ledger and Luckhurst xvi). Individual laziness, social conditions, and heredity were all being blamed for Britain's decline, as well as for the rise of "stronger, healthier beasts" (Potter 37) like Germany, Russia, and the United States. At the turn of the century, a royal commission was commanded to investigate the failings of the British Army in South Africa and concluded that there were unfit soldiers, misgoverned hospitals, and ailing working-class volunteers on the field (36).

In imperial Gothic fictions, reverse colonization narratives, and Roman Empire studies the rhetoric of gender is central. Edward Gibbon, an 18th-century British historian, theorizes in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88), that the Christianization of the Roman Empire not only weakened Roman masculinity but became instrumental in the demise of their socio-political accomplishments and military might. The luxurious lifestyle and selfish instincts of Rome also contributed to men losing sight of their public duty and becoming feminized. Discussing the feminization of the Roman warrior society, he notes that the

"effeminate luxury, which infected the manner of courts and cities, had instilled a secret and destructive poison into the camps of the legions" (II:558). On the other hand, he remarks, the Germanic barbarians who ransacked Rome were masculine in demeanor, describing them as "fierce giants of the north" who "restored a manly spirit of freedom" (1:78). As Halsall argues, unlike French and Italian historians, who typically viewed Gothic tribes as the destroyers of civilization, Gibbon pictured them as migrators who were "sweeping away a tired, effete and decadent Mediterranean civilization and replacing it with a more virile, martial, Nordic one" (35).

Both Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) stage pressures on masculinity in the buildup to the Boer War. In *Dracula*, the male-dominated Crew of Light attempt to prevent the shape-shifting Eastern European Count from de-racializing his victims, and confusing gender roles in imperial London; and in *The Beetle*, as aforementioned, the male protagonist's struggle against the bi-gendered Egyptian entity mesmerizing Londoners into an identity crisis and bringing ruin, or "nothingness" (54), to the metropolis. As Ardel Haefele-Thomas points out, the two horror novels showcase the "frenetic calls for nationalism and strength in the face of crumbling domestic socio-economic structures, collapsing social and cultural boundaries, and an increasingly expensive and decaying empire" (100). The Count and the Beetle, exotic strangers who transgress Britain's heteronormative standards, have the power to both feminize the upright man and corrupt his domestic sphere.

Imperial Gothic and reverse colonization novels also feature the "sexual and social liberation" of the degenerative woman (Mills 192), or "New Woman," like the two-thousand-year-old Ayesha from Haggard's *She*, who is portrayed as a sexually voracious and politically forceful figure. These "New Women," or the "Odd" or "Wild Woman," as they were

also called (Ardis 10), were typified as those who attend university, smoke, ride bicycles, and are overly authoritative and sensual. Gail Finney describes her as a "literary type" who "values self-fulfillment and independence rather than the stereotypically feminine ideal of self-sacrifice; believes in legal and sexual equality; often remains single [...]; and prefers comfortable clothes" (Finney 95-6). In 1894, in her article "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," Sarah Grand announces that the "New Woman" is not only intelligent and deserves male recognition, but is equal to, and in some cases, above men:

> [T]he new woman is a little above [the Bawling Brother,] and he never even thought of looking up to where she has been sitting apart in silent contemplation all these years, thinking and thinking, until at last she solved the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's Sphere, and prescribed the remedy. (271)

A few months later, writer Ouida faulted Grand's essay, describing her "New Woman" as one with "fierce vanity, [...] undigested knowledge [and an] over-weening estimate of her own value" (615). She was not alone in her sentiment, for the press constantly chastised the "New Woman," like one writer from *Punch* who called her an "unlovely abstract personality" and a pest:

> There is a New Woman, and what do you think?
>
> She lives upon nothing but Foolscap and Ink!
>
> But, though Foolscap and Ink form the whole of her diet,
>
> This nagging New Woman can never be quiet! (Anon., "The New Woman" 252)
>
> Both *Dracula* and *The Beetle* feature "New Woman," particularly, seductive female

characters who trigger societal dread and threaten imperial decline. As Hefferman puts it, the "New Woman" was "another version of Eve leading men to a second fall and was charged with destroying civilization" (134). In *The Beetle*, the "Arab['s]" mesmeric powers act as a form of

judgment to Marjorie, who embodies the "New Woman." As a woman of liberal political beliefs, she is considered a "m-mad" and "un-undutiful girl" (168) by her father for her affiliation with Liberal politicians and her Tory values. Earlier in the tale, Detective Champnell characterizes the female sacrifices of the Isis cult as "young, adventurous, and [...] foolhardy" (296), imprudent "New" women who wandered around Cairo without a mature male escort. Similarly, as Spooner points out, Marjorie is a wanderer, for she is unaccompanied by a proper male figure when she is stationed at the Convolvulus house in West Kensington (*Fashioning* 112). She is also headstrong, outspoken, subservient to her father, and allures three men at once.

Despite her young age, and apparent innocence and elegance, *Dracula*'s Lucy Westenra is also a "New Woman" who is flirtatious with three bachelors — Arthur Holmwood, Quincey Morris, and Doctor John Seward. Early on in the novel, while corresponding with Mina about her suitors, she discloses that she received "three proposals in one day" (130). Later, after committing herself to Holmwood, she immediately regrets turning down the other two suitors, declaring, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (134). Because of her careless demeanor, she eventually becomes the prey of Count Dracula, transforming into the "Bloofer Lady" (309), the inverse of a Victorian bride and a predator of children. As "old knights of the Cross" (522), and defenders of imperial England, the Crew of Light must eliminate "Bloofer Lady" to restore order to gender conventions, and to end societal violence.

Influenced by rescue narratives and Romantic poetry, Stoker's heroes routinely saved noblewomen from the clutches of death. It was the sexually curious and imprudent women, like Lucy or the "Bloofer Lady," who succumbed to temptation and an early demise. In "Staking Salvation," Jennifer Swartz-Levine discusses three different types of women in *Dracula* — the

sexually curious Lucy, the seemingly traditional Mina, and the three succubi imprisoned in Dracula's castle — and whether they reflect or diverge from the concept of the "Angel in the House" (346). The "Angel in the House" was a pure, innocent, virtuous, and non-sexualized female (345); the caretaker of the household, subordinate of men, and producer of children.

For Katherine Spencer, Lucy acts as a scapegoat for imperial London, one who "fills the category and the social function of the surrogate victim who is sacrificed to restore a lost order" (209). All scapegoats or sacrificial victims, like slaves, criminals, and deformed, are both a part of their society and on the fringes of it. As René Girard explains, they must be enough of a citizen to act as a sacrificial lamb, and separate enough to be "exposed to violence without a fear of reprisal" (13). In other words, "[t]heir death does not automatically entail an act of vengeance" (13), which is why the Crew of Light are justified in slaying her.

Disease Invasion

Alongside the threat of the savage Other, and the disruption of gender identity, late Victorians feared that part of what could collapse the socio-economic structures and cultural boundaries of Britain were infectious diseases from exotic or Eastern locations. By adapting medical reports and journalistic essays, some imperial Gothic authors published tales of Victorian gentlemen, typically those who were physically robust and in good mental standing, being driven to the point of mania by exotic infections.

Following the Russian influenza of 1889, there were rumors of English patients experiencing insomnia, depression, and nervous tics, like neuralgia and neurasthenia (Honigsbaum 988). There were even reports that the Russian contagion was triggering some to commit suicide or become homicidal (988). Victorian neurologist Julius Althaus reports that it

was common for patients to undergo "dark forebodings of [...] impending disaster" and anxieties that they had committed a crime (664-665).

Discussing the dread of contagion invasions during the late nineteenth century, Darryl Jones suggests that, "Outbreaks and pandemics were understood as phenomena emanating from — distinctly characteristic of — far-flung parts of the empire" (42). Indeed, in 1882, M.R. James's brother, Dr. Herbert James, wrote to him describing a dysentery outbreak transpiring in Egypt. The disease had infected seventy percent of the British soldiers stationed there (H. James). Arthur Conan Doyle, too, recounts his brush with a feverish outbreak in Bloemfontein, a South African town where he was stationed during his medical service for the Boer War (1899-1902). He recounts that the enteric disease was "death in its vilest and filthiest forms [...] and the disease causes constant pollution, and this pollution of the most dangerous kind, with the vilest effluvia" (138).

Laura Otis points out that the "new sciences," like cellular-microbial and medico-scientific theories, contributed a fascinating hermeneutic to Gothic invasion fiction (98). In Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast" (1890), for instance, Fleete, a large "inoffensive man" (70) who has little regard for Indian customs, travels to the subcontinent to inherit land from his uncle. On New Year's Eve, while walking home in a drunken stupor, he puts his cigar out on the statue of Hanuman, the monkey god. With local priests in a panic, a naked face-less leper called the "Silver Man" (71) approaches Fleete and infects his chest with an unknown ailment. For the next few days, Fleete becomes animal-like, claiming he smells blood, demanding to eat meat chops, and driving horses wild with fear.

In Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1895), the Martians, who are depicted as a more evolutionarily advanced species than humans, spy on Earthlings through a microscope, observing

their complacent, "little" lives (9). Despite their superior scientific intellect and brief colonial rule of Britain, they are overtaken by the "humblest things" of the world, the Earth's bacteria (149). As many scholars have argued, the Martians act as an underlying metaphor of, or cautionary tale to imperial Britain. Indeed, despite Britain's "assurance of [...] empire over matter" (9), or of their dominance over nature and uncivilized nations, they are susceptible to foreign invasion, whether that be by germs or colonized people groups.

Apocalyptic Fiction During the Fin de Siècle

In her analysis of 1890s vampire fiction, Alexandra Warwick notes that both imperial Gothic narratives and apocalyptic fictions have a "simultaneous vision of collapse and salvation, the enactment of annihilation and the blueprint for its avoidance" (219). With the imperial Gothic's exploration of "going native," the collapse of social structures, and an "invasion of civilization by the forces of barbarism or demonism" (Brantlinger, *Rule* 230); and apocalyptic literature's frequent motifs of natural or human-made catastrophes, and divine judgment, what arises is an overlap in metaphoric language of destabilization and destruction.

In Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), for instance, one finds an Egyptian figure that can shape-shift, "straddl[ing] several subjectivities at once" (Ardel 150), which gives it the potential to cause apocalyptic destruction of gender roles, class systems, and societal institutions. Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), while exploring sexual taboos, interracial desires, and the breaking of gender identities, is also a commentary on the catastrophic effect of degenerative diseases coming in from the East. In *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Conrad depicts what could happen to upright British and European gentlemen if they are overtaken by the wild jungles of the African interior. In addition to this, it portrays imperial decline as an entropic process; that the undoing of England

will transpire not simply by colonial uprisings or rival global powers but by the second law of

thermodynamics: "And at last, [...] the sun sank low, and from glowing white turned to a dull red

without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of

that gloom brooding over a crowd of men" (189).

While discussing nineteenth-century cultural pessimism, and the potential decline of

European civilization, Robert J.C. Young argues that "[t]here is always something comforting

about the doom and gloom that the threat of deterioration holds, providing a solace of

inevitability as it re-affirms the fall" (94). Indeed, just as Victorian readers flocked to imperial

Gothic texts to sustain their "pleasurable, [...] thrilling anxiety," they did the same with

catastrophic narratives about imperial annihilation. With the increasing dread of wars between

global powers and the creation of instruments of mass catastrophe — like poisonous gasses and

flying machines— the low art of apocalyptic fiction dominated the pulp press alongside imperial

Gothic tales. W. Warren Wagar argues that during the fin de siècle "almost every sort of world's

end story [...] was written, published, and accepted by a wide reading public" (*Terminal* 20).

Contributing to the Victorian era's sense of dissolution were revolutionary theories in the

physical sciences — like astronomy, geology, and meteorology. These theories were drawn upon

by authors adapting the long-established imagery of the Bible into "new" more secularized

comprehensions of national or global annihilation (Bulfin, "The Natural" 83). In a July 1900

article in *Pearson's Magazine*, physical scientist Herbert C. Fyfe asks the question, "How Will

the World End?":

> Astronomy teaches that, just as our solar system had a beginning, so it must have an end,
>
> and that, as at one time life was impossible upon the earth, so there will come a time
>
> when man will no longer be able to exist. Science, cold and calculating, has foretold the

physical end of the world— has prophesied the destruction of the globe and all its

contents. (8)

Before this article's release, many late nineteenth-century "prophets," like Cutliffe Hyne

and Grant Allen, had already been writing short stories about imperial Britain being obliterated,

or the world going extinct by natural catastrophes, whether that be from winter storms, comet

strikes, volcanic eruptions, or solar entropy. As Brantlinger writes, "The mode of proleptic elegy,

typical of extinction discourse, is indeed 'obliquely comforting,' even when its object is not

some dark, supposedly inferior race, but the supposedly superior white race, founder and ruler of

civilizations and empires" (*Dark* 198). For instance, in Hyne's "London Danger" (1896), a cold

snap freezes the hydrants and water carriers of the great city, and an uncontrollable fire breaks

out and incinerates its structures. The narrator describes it as the worst calamity since the fall of

Atlantis. In December 1897, *The Strand* published Allen's short story "The Thames Valley

Catastrophe" (1887), an apocalyptic tale about a volcanic eruption in the London countryside. In

its few but exciting pages, an unnamed narrator must expeditiously bicycle to the metropolis to

save his family and friends from the incoming flood basalts. The narrator reflects: "I saw

purgatory let loose, striving hard to overtake me. I just knew that a sea of fire was filling the

valley from end to end, and that its heat scorched my face as I urged on my bicycle in abject

terror" (678). And in Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), the Time Traveller journeys through

thousands of centuries in his makeshift time machine, witnessing the collapse of London, as well

as the eventual burning out of the galaxy's sun.

Despite being scientifically minded, many of these texts reference Biblical apocalyptic

ideas or phrases throughout their catastrophic narratives. In Griffith's "The Great Crellin Comet"

(1897), with the comet approaching the Earth's atmosphere, chief astronomer Professor Lennox

relays to Britain how he is going to fire explosives off in the comet's nucleus before "the approaching destroyer" eliminates humankind (129): "Therefore, instead of what I might be allowed to call a premature Day of Judgement, we shall simply have a magnificent display of celestial fireworks" (131). In *Olga Romanoff* (1894), a comet is perceived as the "vengeance of God" (373), and alongside the casualties of the global war, it wipes out the majority of humanity, notwithstanding a refugee society in Mount Austral. And in Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), scholars suggest that the Time Traveller's descent into the underground domain is a parody of Hell, where it is not locusts that are released upon the earth, like in Revelation 9:1-3, but demonic Morlocks (Mills 150). Additionally, when the Editor recognizes the Time Traveler's disheveled appearance, he contemplates whether his friend is going through "Nebuchadnezzar phases," a clear reference to the Babylonian king in the apocalyptic Book of Daniel (Wells, *The Time Machine* 18).

While many secular apocalyptic tales of the fin de siècle dramatized natural catastrophes, there was a portion that emphasized human-made ones, like the smog tales. Frost writes, "Only the smog tales attribute human agency to the catastrophes. In other texts, humans are hapless (if often deserving) victims of chance misfortune, rather than the agents of cataclysm that routinely characterizes later post-Apocalyptic works" (245). The inspiration for fog tales came partly from the toxic manufacturing and household practices of contemporary Britain (Corton 1-3). From the mid to the late nineteenth century, pollution was generated at an alarming rate due to the growth of the heavy industry in London. It was further exacerbated by households releasing burnt coal into the atmosphere, which when mixed with water vapor, created a dense smog over the city. Fog, as Darryl Jones notes, was a "polyvalent symbol for social blindness, corruption and inequality" (178). Indeed, it was an apt metaphor for both the socio-economic dysfunction of the

Great City and for the hellacious environment that was being created. In his 1880 pamphlet *London Fogs*, which was a "touchstone for a number of [...] pressure groups which campaigned for a reduction in the consumption of domestic fuel" (Anon., "Russell"), Rollo Russell portrays foggy London as a city that "fumes like a vast [volcanic] crater" and "at the bottom of which its unhappy citizens must creep and live the best they can" (11).

In his 1880 novella "The Doom of the Great City," which is considered by some scholars "to be the first modern tale of urban apocalypse" (Beasley), William DeLisle Hay dramatizes a similarly calamitous scene by having Londoners choke to death on killer smog. The narrator, an octogenarian living in New Zealand in the 1940s, and the sole survivor of this apocalyptic event, describes "the old metropolis of England" as "harboured [by] Vice and Sin" and "foul and rotten to the very core" (Hay 26). Lodging with friends in Dulwich until the fog lifted, the narrator returns to London to find the entire populace terminated by the polluted air: "[London] lay upon her face with extended arms, her luxury dabbled in the mud, her delicately-gloved and jewelled hands vainly grasping at the stones, her painted cheek and yellow hair pressed into the mire of the gutter" (25). Throughout the tale, London is compared to a "Modern Babylon," the infamously wicked city from the Old Testament and Revelation. The deadly fog is considered by some to be the divine retribution for a city "steeped in sin" (23) for they have "offended God" (37).

There were a variety of literary aims in utilizing or adapting apocalyptic imagery in 1890s fin de siècle fiction. Some writers, like Griffith, Allen, and Hay, constructed catastrophic narratives that roused their compatriots to alter their social or imperial conduct or else disaster would ensue. Pointing out the use of the Biblical judgment motif in these apocalyptic works, Ailise Bulfin suggests, "volcanic eruptions and comet strikes [can be seen as] the punishment of

a deity offended by exploitative human behaviour" ("The Natural" 97). Other writers, like Hyne, simply emphasized the defenselessness and shortcomings of Londoners during times of crisis. Frost notes, "The fact that the source of these disasters is environmental is striking, but does not necessarily imply an environmentalist agenda. Indeed, the stories are more often preoccupied with humankind's vulnerabilities than with our environmental impacts" (245). Regardless of the authorial intention, these "new" apocalyptic tales tapped into the cultural anxieties of their day — whether that be the new physical sciences or other "formations" — to educate and entertain their middle and upper-class audiences, as well as warn them, as Paul does to the Corinthians in the Scriptures, that "these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (*KJV*, 1 Cor. 10.11).

Wells, Conrad, Stoker, and Marsh: Modern Myth-Makers

For this thesis, my intent is not to simply choose imperial Gothic and reverse colonization texts from the 1890s that stage the encounter between old and new "formations," and feature apocalyptic motifs. If that were the case, stories like Haggard's *She* (1887) or Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899) would also be considered for their allegorization of imperial Britain's degeneration and national decline. My aim instead is to explore how H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1895), Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) expanded the parameters of the apocalyptic imaginary during Britain's fin de siècle; how they contained, as McQueen states, an "extraordinary semiotic quality" (55), or metaphoric portraits of cataclysmic disasters or imperial crisis that affected the "collective psyche" (52). In Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, for instance, the science fiction author introduces his audience to Britain's alien overthrow, and the degenerative and

regenerative possibilities of our species; in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, British and European colonists come face to face with the Congolese people and their own inner "savage" (272) and confront the reality of solar entropy; in Stoker's *Dracula*, Western gentlemen (including British, American, and Dutch) battle a Slavic atavistic force and medieval superstitions in hopes of protecting English civilization; and in Marsh's *The Beetle*, Britain experiences the wrath of ancient Egypt and the loss of societal forms.

Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Stoker's *Dracula* not only transcended the imperial Gothic genre and reverse colonization narratives, but broke out of the late Victorian age and became modern myths. One of the reasons they endured as myths is that they seized upon common cultural anxieties, like foreign invasions, global pandemics, and degeneration. They are also highly adaptable — crossing over from literature into theatre, television, film, and merchandising. For instance, in terms of film adaptations alone, *The War of the Worlds* has been reimagined a dozen times; *Heart of Darkness*, at least three; and *Dracula*, well within the hundreds.

From the early Modern period to the Georgian era, "mythos" and "mythology" referred to everything from a heathen tale, or an allegory, to mixed-up memories from prehistory (Williams, *Keywords* 176-7). The short form "myth" was popularized during the Victorian era, and took on both a negative definition: "what could not really exist or have happened" (176) or "an untrustworthy or even deliberately deceptive invention"; and a positive one: a "fabulous" tale "which indicated some reality" (177). The positive conception of the term — that myth is "a truer version of reality than history or [...] scientific explanation" (177) — was commonly used within intellectual circles, by comparative theologians and anthropologists, and philologists.

For solar mythologist Friedrich Max Müller, myths were considered to be an effective form of social organization for ancient societies. In his study of the Aryan language — the mother tongue and "living language" of humanity (*Comparative* 25) — he notes that language was incapable of abstraction and that the small Asian tribal family had to awkwardly characterize what they saw: "Where we speak of the sun following the dawn, the ancient poets could only speak and think of the Sun loving and embracing the dawn. What is with us a sunset, was to them the Sun growing old, decaying or dying. Our sunrise was to them the Night giving birth to a brilliant child" (82). Following the mythopoeic era, the Aryans fractured into several nations, and their poetic language had to grow and refine (Feldman and Richardson 481), causing new myths to be formulated from the old ones. Feldman and Richardson, authors of *The Rise of Modern Mythology*, suggest, "new and often wild or ugly stories [myths] were invented to explain the old [Aryan] names, and we thus have myths piled on myths" (481). For Müller, mythology was an "inherent necessity" ("On" 353) and a universally important process for racial, ethnic, and national progression. It was not only an extension of one's inner yearnings, and "the outward form and manifestation of thought" (353), but shaped a culture's sacred reality "applicable to nearly all that the ancient world could admire and adore" (*Comparative* 178).

Chris Baldick points out that modern or new myths should not technically exist, for myths are characterized by their "exclusive anteriority to literate and especially modern culture" (1). Myths are considered forgotten narrative devices, "a product of pre-literate cultures" (1), and should be incapable of participating in the scientifically rational world or being aligned with novels; for on the surface, myths and novels do not complement one another. Myths are traditionally "open to all kinds of adaptation and elaboration," and preserve "a basic stability of

meaning" (2), while modern literary texts are the opposite, they are steady in form and manifold in meaning.

Nevertheless, modern or new myths do exist within the novel, for one only needs to look at the cultural influence of stories like *Don Quixote* (1605), *Faust* (1790), and *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). "Most myths, in literate societies at least," Baldick writes, "prolong their lives not by being retold at great length but by belling alluded to, thereby finding fresh contexts and applications. This process strips down the longer stories from which they may be derived, reducing them to the simplest memorable patterns" (3). Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is an example of a novel that has a complicated framework — one of the storyline deviations, heavy dialogue, and side characters — that can be reduced to a simple and memorable mythical pattern. For Baldick, this pattern can be boiled down to two sentences: "(a) Frankenstein makes a living creature out of bits of corpses. (b) The creature turns against him and runs amok" (3).

In his chapter "The Novel as Modern Myth," John Bender argues that "Older words based on this root, going back to the fifteenth century, like the word mythology and its variants, bear no relation to our sense of myth as some kind of primal, enduring, culturally profound story" (230). Rather, the words built on the root myth refer to "fabulous notes that what becomes mythic in modernity" — whether that be a Gothic novel, comic book, or song lyrics — is an "experience of a certain psychosocial kind, whether individual or collective" (231). For instance, when one is reading *Dracula* or *The War of the Worlds*, the Count and his castle, or the tripods and their heat ray guns, become observable, almost tangible, and real to the reader, "as if the real were fully present" (231).

Ward describes modern myth as "an explanatory story that is not specifically authored, but emerges from a group as an expression of the origins and terms of its collective identity" (9).

Indeed, both myths and novels can turn against their creators, break free from authorial intent, and transmute into whatever a culture or succeeding generation needs them to be. As Baldick notes, "The vitality of myths lies precisely in their capacity for change, their adaptability and openness to new combinations of meaning. That series of adaptations, allusions, accretions, analogues, parodies, and plain misreadings which follows upon Mary Shelley's novel is not just a supplementary component of the myth; it is the myth" (4).

Outline

This thesis will be divided into four chapters, each devoted to an imperial Gothic novelist who broadened the apocalyptic imaginary of his day through a major bestseller. In terms of methodology, each chapter builds up to the discussion of the apocalyptic novel in question by considering the author's biographic information and literary influences and motivations. It also examines the tributary texts that helped inform their apocalyptic novels, and how these novels did or did not assume modern mythic status.

In chapter one, I explore how Wells broadened Britain's apocalyptic imaginary by updating old religious myths with reference to new scientific ones. I delve into his Christian and scientific upbringing, as well as the authors, genres, and experiences that shaped his unique apocalyptic imagination and influenced his writing of *The War of the Worlds*. Lastly, I summarize the widespread success of his novella, and elaborate on how it has remained a dominant and adaptable myth within the Western culture for the last century.

In chapter two, I argue that Conrad's apocalyptic imagination, particularly his interest in the Second Law of Thermodynamics and the Dying Earth subgenre, developed from the time he began corresponding with Wells, and wrote "An Outpost of Progress," to his publishing of *Heart*

of Darkness. Wells made a decisive impact on Conrad's early writing career: from his constructive reviews of Conrad's first novellas; to the jocular but intimate letters the two sent each other from 1895 to the turn of the century; to Conrad's frequent readings of Wells' compendium, which included *The War of the Worlds*. Despite their variance in upbringing, political affiliation, and artistic aims, the two authors shared a fascination with the "new human sciences" (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii), particularly Darwinian and Huxleyan evolution and the Second Law of Thermodynamics. They also opposed certain aspects of "new colonialism" (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii). I suggest that Wells is a major impetus as to why *Heart of Darkness* took the apocalyptic shape that it did. Throughout the chapter, I also reveal how the two diverge in their attitudes towards Britain's and the wider world's future regeneration, with Conrad being the more pessimistic of the two. In closing, I examine *Heart of Darkness*'s mythical status, and how far the apocalyptic dimensions of the novella have been embraced by twentieth and twenty-first century audiences.

For chapter three, I propose that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1898) can be read as a story of how Catholics, Protestants, scientists, and rationalists — representatives of the "old" and the "new" — unite to prevent the West from undergoing a degenerative apocalypse. I contend that Stoker's Protestant upbringing in Catholic Ireland; his family's history with famines, epidemics, and the medical field; and his political and religious affiliations in England, contributed to the scientific and ecumenical nature of the narrative. I also relay how Stoker's early stories — *Under the Sunset* (1872), *The Snake's Pass* (1890), and "The Burial of Rats" (1896) — demonstrate concerns relating to atavism, interfaith societies, and disease invasion, that Stoker later expands upon in *Dracula*. Finally, I address the mythical nature of his vampire tale, and its many adaptations.

For the fourth and final chapter, I argue that Richard Marsh takes the motif of personhood in crisis, a frequent motif in his early short stories, and expands upon it to apocalyptic lengths in *The Beetle* (1897). One of the unique ways he does this is by bringing together the Egyptian Question, the mesmerism trope, and the reverse invasion plot. For instance, in its vengeful pursuit of Paul Lessingham, the "Arab" not only uses mesmerism to elicit gender confusion and strip its victims of their identities, but brings a primordial, or post-apocalyptic, state to the western suburbs of Victorian London. Throughout the chapter, I also focus on how each of the protagonists' encounters with the "Arab" has a nullifying effect on their personhood; as well as how the backdrop to many of these encounters is London's West End and western suburbs. Lastly, I discuss why *The Beetle* did not achieve mythical status like the other major works of this thesis, and how it was "crushed," as one 1920s theatre critic put it (Anon., "'The Beetle,' at"), after its first few adaptations.

CHAPTER ONE

"TRY AGAIN"[9]: H.G. WELLS' *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS*, NEW MYTHS, AND THE

APOCALYPTIC IMAGINARY

Despite his strict Evangelical upbringing, and his occasional visits to Catholic revivalist

meetings (Wells, *Experiment* 5-6), the young H.G. Wells abhorred organized religion and turned

to scientists to make sense of human existence. Upon reading texts like *On the Origin of Species*

(1857) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), he was committed to making that "peevish

son-crucifying Deity" dissolve "away into [the] sky" and to "push aside" Biblical mythology for

good (93). One method he had for dismissing Christianity's falsehoods was writing "new

spiritual myths," as Jennifer Simkins describes them (20), stories that parodied the Scriptures and

educated his readers on the "new formations," like the "new sciences" and "new imperialism," as

well as his other interests like non-Marxist socialism and atheism.

For Wells, it was important to publish new myths in order to provoke social change in his

readers (Dryden 19), and to expose them, as Robert Crossley suggests, "to the philosophical

pretensions and political crimes" (117) of his day. These pretensions and crimes included the

"old-fashioned [...] religious formulae" (Wells, "In the Last" 193) of the Church and the class

inequality and decadence of imperial Britain. Simkins points out that "Wells [was] quite eager to

dismiss Christianity, regarding it as the system that informed the disorderly nineteenth-century

society" (27). He felt the interconnections between religion and imperial Britain — like the

Queen's divinely appointed rule and priestly authority — had always prevented social progress.

Discussing his family ties to the early Victorian church and its archaic system of governance,

Wells writes in his *Autobiography*: "In the lower sky and the real link between my mother and

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[9] Wells, "A Vision" 114.

the god-head, was the Dear Queen, ruling by right divine, and beneath this again, the nobility and gentry, who employed, patronised, directed and commanded the rest of mankind" (30).

In *The War of the Worlds*, the 1898 science fiction novel about a Martian invasion on British soil, Wells uses apocalyptic motifs to shake Britons out of their cultural and evolutionary complacencies, and to start them on their path towards regeneration. He was irritated by the population's smug attitudes and their "assurance of their empire over matter" (9), or Britain's mastery over a passive nature. One way he confronts them in his novel is through the Martians, or what I would like to call apocalyptic agents. Wells believed it would be beneficial for Britain to undergo an attack by apocalyptic agents; to have their future, which was their "most fruitful source of decadence," as the narrator states in the novella, temporarily stripped away from them (158).

More so than his other early works or "myths," *The War of the Worlds* teaches Wells' progressive ideas about evolutionary science. For instance, the unnamed narrator of the novella, who acts as a mouthpiece for Wells, theorizes "that the Martians may be descended from beings not unlike ourselves, by a gradual development of brain and hands" (113). He also comments on non-Marxist socialism or a united humanity: "This invasion from Mars is not without its ultimate benefit for men […] it has done much to promote the conception of the commonweal of mankind" (158); as well as atheism: "What good is religion if it collapses under calamity? […] Did you think God had exempted Weybridge? He is not an insurance agent, man" (64); and the importance of suffering for human advancement. Through his narrator, Wells emboldens his Victorian audience to interrogate their traditional patterns of belief and behavior, and to be more scientific, egalitarian, and courageous in their lives; in other words, to regenerate themselves.

For this chapter, I will explore how Wells — an outspoken atheist and progressive — expanded Britain's apocalyptic imaginary by publishing *The War of the Worlds,* a new apocalyptic myth that he hoped would educate his fin-de-siècle readers on, as Crossley notes, "the philosophical pretensions and political crimes" (117)*,* and incite them towards regeneration and societal unity. He does this by using the Martians as apocalyptic agents and by teaching progressive ideas about evolutionary science. In order to substantiate my argument, I will examine his religious and scientific upbringing, and how he parodied and/or recreated classic myths in both *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *The War of the Worlds*. I will also be discussing how he integrates several styles of fiction — future war, martian, and the Gothic — in order to create a unique apocalyptic vision in *The War of the Worlds*; as well as how the novella illustrates suffering and apocalyptic judgment as a means of initiating positive evolution and societal regeneration. Lastly, I will summarize the widespread success of his apocalyptic tale, and how it has remained an adaptable myth within Western culture for the last one hundred and twenty years.

My approach, that Wells created *The War of the Worlds* as a new apocalyptic myth in order to educate and regenerate his audience, as well as to broaden their apocalyptic imaginary, is a new one in the field of late nineteenth-century Victorian studies. While Simkins' *The Science Fiction Mythmakers* (2016) provides countless examples of how Wells "denigrates traditional Christianity" (1) and reinscribes "traditional myths of a deity guiding humankind" (16) for sociological critique, she does not emphasize the catastrophic components of his early novellas, nor how his apocalyptic myth (*The War of the Worlds*) broadened the imaginary of his readers. Other Wells scholars — like Roger Bowen and Bernard Bergonzi — provide textual analysis on how Wells appropriates classical or religious texts for his Gothic works, as in *The Time Machine*

(1895) and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) — but they do not acknowledge his regenerative aims in doing so. Finally, Patrick Parrinder and Peter Kemp delve into Wells' use of catastrophe novel motifs to shake-up complacent Londoners, like the pious middle and upper classes in *The War of the Worlds*, but say little about the mythical structure of the text.

Religious and Political Affiliations

Before Wells was capable of publishing science fiction, his religious worldview and apocalyptic imagination were being shaped by his Anglican mother, Sarah. Like Gailor, I submit that Wells' call for judgment on imperial Britain stemmed, at least partially, from her Biblical teachings (272). She schooled him daily about God the Father, Jesus the Savior, and Satan, or as he described him, "Old Nick [...] who accounted for so much in the world that was otherwise inexplicable" (Wells, *Experiment* 30). Despite the gracious manner in which she tutored him, he abhorred her Christian doctrines, stating that her "Low Church theology was […] too stiff" and that Christianity, as a whole, held too much power over society (30).

Recounting his early impiety, Wells claims that there was a short period "when I believed in the story and scheme of salvation, so far as I could understand it, just as there was a time when I believed there was a Devil, but there was never a time when I did not heartily detest the whole business" (*Experiment* 42). In *Experiment of Autobiography* (1932), he writes that it was of "primary importance" to his younger self to find out if the Christian God was real, and if He was not, then to "declare the Catholic Church, the core and substance of Christendom […] wrong" (107). At the age of fifteen, after hearing a popular preacher describe "the unending black despair of hell" (106), and remembering a dream he had where God was rotating a "poor broken

sinner [...] slowly over a fire built under the wheel" (42), he was finally convinced that his mother's Faith was a hoax.

In *The Outline of History* (1919-1920), a series chronicling human progress from prehistory to the post-WWI era, Wells notes that Darwin's theory of evolution brought "a real loss of faith" to Britain when it was released in 1859, that the "true gold of religion was [...] thrown away with the worn-out purse that had contained it for so long, and it was not recovered" (503). "The new biological science," he stresses, "was bringing nothing constructive as yet to replace the old moral stand-bys" (503). Although Wells hated the idea of God and tried to dismantle Christianity throughout most of his career, he believed, like his mentor T.H. Huxley, that merely replacing Faith with the "new science" would result in greater individualism and degradation within imperial Britain (Simkins 20).

In his 1897 article, "Morals and Civilization," he confesses that moral ideas were "inseparably interwoven [...] with theological ideas" (227), and that they have kept the nation stabilized. Similarly, in his 1870 article "The School Boards," Huxley admits that while he does support secular education, he is "perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential basis of conduct, was to be kept up […] without the use of the Bible" (201). For both men, the "new sciences" were not an enterprise that could simply disseminate moral ideas to the public (Simkins 22), for they were powerless to create social schemes and lead humanity in altruistic behavior. What the world needed were inspirational and/or cautionary myths, stories that kept the "true gold of religion," like moral values and communal love, while still expressing an awareness of the "new sciences." In "Morals and Civilization," Wells stresses the importance of mythmakers, like writers, preachers, and teachers, in making this happen:

The apparatus of moral suggestion, the people who write, preach, and teach that is, needs only too evidently the discipline of a common ideal. [...] And yet one may dream of an informal, unselfish, unauthorised body of workers, a real and conscious apparatus of education and moral suggestion, held together by a common faith and a common sentiment, and shaping the minds and acts and destinies of men (228).

Wells considered the various literary genres in which he wrote as "goads to social improvement" (Simkins 157), and that his mission as a novelist was to inhabit popular fictional forms in order to disseminate his thinking in an indirect way:

I had very many things to say and that if I could say one of them in such a way as to get my point over to the reader I did not worry much about the finish. The fastidious critic might object, but the general reader to whom I addressed myself cared no more for finish and fundamental veracity about the secondary things of behaviour than I. (*Experiment* 320)

Critics, like Bowen and Bergonzi, characterized Wells' fiction as "mythopoeic" (Bowen 319) suggesting that he secularized classical narratives, and borrowed from fictional romances, in order to inspire his audience. Reflecting on the mythical and literary knowledge of the science fiction writer, Bergonzi states that:

[Y]oung Wells [w]as a symbolic and mythopoeic writer whose work has closer affinities to poetry than to the conventional realistic fiction of his time […] It is true of course that Wells had received a scientific education and that his later attributes were severely positivistic. Yet, as we have seen, he had been absorbing fictional romance from childhood, long before he embarked on his studies at South Kensington. (166)

For his 1896 novella *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Wells drew upon fictional romances to create his disturbing tale about a shipwrecked Englishman who encounters hybrid-animals on the mad scientist's island. As Bowen suggests, it seems likely that Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* (1894) and its "Law of the Jungle" (8) partly inspired Moreau's island "Law" (Wells, *Moreau* 53), and Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) contributed to the monstrous descriptions of the cannibalistic "Beast-Men" (59; Bowen 320). Other potential Gothic or romantic antecedents to the novella include: Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) for characterizations of human duality and Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) for ideas on creating life (320). By adapting elements from these texts, Wells was able "to get [his] point over to the reader" (Experiment 320), that there are perils to playing god and interfering with nature; that societies should be both scientifically-minded and morally-upright.

In *Moreau*, Wells also showcases the inconsistencies of the Holy Scriptures with Darwinian evolution and nineteenth-century biology (Simkins 21). He does this by parodying the Genesis creation myth with images of degeneration and natural selection. According to Norman, "Wells represents Moreau both as a creator-God, before whom the beast folk worship 'bowing on knees and elbows' and as an amoral force 'as remorseless as Nature'" (17). He constructs a perverted paradise where the hybrid-creatures are commanded to "increase and multiply" (Wells, *Moreau* 27), and to follow a Judeo-Christian-like Law:

> "Not to go on all-Fours; that is the Law. Are we not Men?"
>
> "Not to suck up Drink; that is the Law. Are we not Men?"
>
> "Not to eat Flesh or Fish; that is the Law. Are we not Men?"
>
> "Not to claw Bark of Trees; that is the Law. Are we not Men?"
>
> "Not to chase other Men; that is the Law. Are we not Men?" (52)

He also alters the Christian metanarrative — that of creation, the Fall, redemption, and glorification — by presenting a de-evolutionary arc of time, one that extends from the mudfish, through the ape, to human form, and back to the ape again. On Moreau's island, David Hughes argues, "there is compressed in space and time an evolutionary arc rising with the painful manufacture of beasts into people and then falling with their reversion to animality" (52). When the shipwrecked hero (Prendick) encounters the Ape-Man for the first time he "does not feel the same repugnance towards the creature" as he had experienced "with the other Beast-Men" (Wells, *Moreau* 48), instead he experiences a bond with the creature, a common taxonomy with both his simian and homo sapiens makeup: "He was a man [...] as much as a man as Montgomery's attendant — for he could talk" (48).

In his 1891 article "Zoological Retrogression," Wells denies the popular Victorian belief of biological optimism, or what he called "Excelsior biology" (159), that humanity is evolving uninterrupted towards higher grades of being. Instead, he proposed that natural evolution incorporates occasions of digression: "[T]here is [...] no guarantee in scientific knowledge of man's permanence or permanent ascendancy [...] The presumption is that before him lies a long future of profound modification, but whether that will be, [...] upward or downward, no one can forecast" (168). For him, a living species — like shelly warts or flatworms — are proof that creatures vary along divergent lines, and that swift progress sometimes leads to degeneration or extinction (159). In *Moreau*, Prendick characterizes the hybrid-creatures as "animalised victims" (47) and not simply as "humanized victims," or animals (Norman 6). Norman notes that Wells designs them as "formerly rather than potentially human" in order to make "them paradigmatic of anticipated human degeneration" (6). In doing so, Wells educates his Victorian readers on how evolution is not a pro-human operation making things exceedingly better for the species, but a

chaotic permutation, a sliding scale of progression and regression. They were being forewarned that, as Wells states in his article "Zoological Retrogression," "[t]he Coming Beast must [...] be reckoned in any anticipatory calculations regarding the Coming Man." (168). Indeed, it is not unlikely that Mother nature is equipping "humble" and "unsupect[ing]" creatures — like the herring, the frog, or the rabbit — to replace humanity in the future. "The conditions of [our] existence," Wells notes, "fluctuate far more widely than those of any animal" (168). Therefore, it is paramount that humanity continues to strive for progression. This is done, in part, by embracing the "new [...] sciences" ("The Outlines" 503), practicing them in an ethical manner, living in communal love, and continuing to be educated.

The War of the Worlds and the Bible

Wells continues his adaptation of literary romances and classical myths in *The War of the Worlds*. In the former, Wells, who was an avid reader of Defoe, and often compared to the Presbyterian novelist, imparts his characters with the Puritanical language of divine justice and providence (Parrinder, "God's" 20). Patrick Parrinder submits that Wells' use of these theological concepts in *Worlds* is strikingly similar to how Defoe uses them in his adventure fiction (20). For instance, in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the titular protagonist argues that it was God's will that the Spaniards eradicated the Aztec Empire: "But when they see regardless Heaven looks on, They curse our Gods, or think that we have none. Thus Thousands to Religion are brought o'er, And made worse Devils than they were before" (389). This is reminiscent of how the curate — the helpless religious figure of *Worlds* — suspects God of being instrumental in the Martian invasion of England: "The end! The great and terrible day of the Lord! When men shall call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them and hide them — hide them from the face of Him that

sitteth upon the throne!" (64). It is also how the unnamed narrator perceives God to be humbling

the Martians through the Earth's bacteria (149). Parrinder comments that, "In both [Wells and

Defoe] God's will reveals itself through material causes and not simply in the form of miracles"

("God's" 20). For both authors, it was crucial to exercise divine judgment through natural means,

whether that be through warfare or microorganisms, and not supernatural intervention in order to

warn their readers about the doomed fate of a corrupted species.

Despite being an atheist, "God's will," or a Providential fate, played a distinctive role in

Wells' life and early fiction. Describing the inevitability of certain political forces taking power,

like Marxist Socialism, he writes in *Experiment in Autobiography* that, "Providentialism was in

the spirit of the age. Belief in the necessity of progress anyhow, was almost universal. Even

Atheists believed in a sort of Providence" (170). Indeed, reflecting on his brother's miraculous

survival from the alien invasion in *The War of the Worlds*, the atheistic narrator notes: "My

brother, very luckily for him as it chanced, preferred to push on at once to the coast" (95). When

he falls into a gravel pit "in full sight of the Martians," he comments that it was by some

"miracle" that he escaped their vision (60). He also credits Providence for keeping him from

being smothered by a falling "black, domelike" aliencraft in Woking: "Had that death swept

through a full circle, it must inevitably have slain me in my surprise. But it passed and spared

me, and left the night about me suddenly dark and unfamiliar" (26). The idea of good fortune is

also emphasized throughout *Moreau* (1896), with the narrator being retrieved twice while

drifting out in the sea by the "Ipecacuanha" (10), a ship titled "Red Luck" in an earlier draft

(Philmus 67).

Based on Andy Sawyer's footnotes in the Penguin edition of *The War of the Worlds*, there

are over ten separate allusions to the Bible throughout the novella (Sawyer 187-203). For

example, in chapter nine, a British army engineer associates the invaders' octopus-like anatomy with the "fishers of men" from Matthew 4:19: "'Octopuses,' said he, 'that's what I call 'em. Talk about fishers of men — fighters of fish it is this time!'" (38). Despite being an evolutionist and skeptic of Christianity, the unnamed narrator also uses Biblical terms like "the beasts that perish" (9) and "pillars of fire" (51) in order to emphasize the incomprehensible events that he has endured. After he encounters a band of Martians killed by the Earth's bacteria — "And scattered about it, some in their overturned war-machines, some in the now rigid handling-machines" (149) — the narrator imagines them to be like the ancient Assyrians, a warrior society from the Old Testament whom God punishes for occupying Judah: "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses" (*KJV*, II Kings 19:35). Contemplating God's judgment on the warrior Martians, he reflects that, "[f]or a moment I believed that the destruction of Sennacherib had been repeated, that God had repented, that the Angel of Death had slain them in the night" (150).

The traumatic attack of the Martians also compels the narrator to pray to the dark and mysterious God of the Old Testament. In the closing chapters of the novel the narrator asks God to rescue him and his family from the Earth's new inhabitants, despite still struggling with his unbelief: "Since the night of my return from Leatherhead I had not prayed. I had uttered prayers, fetish prayers, had prayed as heathens muttered charms when I was in extremity; but now I pray indeed, pleading steadfastly and sanely, face to face with the darkness of God" (133). After executing the curate, and sensing guilt for his wrongdoing, the narrator imagines himself standing before the divine Judge in an invisible courtroom: "In the silence of the night, with that sense of the nearness of God that sometimes comes into the stillness and the darkness, I stood my

trial, my only trial, for that moment of wrath and fear" (132). Also, when the Martians are

defeated by the "humblest things" (149), the Earth's bacteria, the narrator interprets this to be

God's holy wisdom, and raises his hands and gives thanks to the unknowable Being: "I

remember all I did that day until the time that I stood weeping and praising God upon the summit

of Primrose Hill" (152).

Simon J. James views this as the narrator acknowledging God as England's protector, the

guardian of the Queen's holy land from sinful intruders: "The narrator gives thanks, then, not to

an outcome of the processes of natural selection, but instead to divine invention and intervention,

the Martians being 'slain, after all man's devices had failed, by the humblest things that God, in

his wisdom, has put upon this earth'" (469). However, as Parrinder suggests, many critics have

been skeptical of the narrator's alleged conversion to Faith, not taking his "resorts to theological

language at face value," since "he himself gives the impression of being a little ashamed of

them" ("God's" 19). Draper seemingly agrees with Parrinder stating that the "pious

observations" in the text "have a hollow sound," meaning that since God is indifferent to "human

suffering and to the survival of the Martians," there is no reason for the narrator to believe that

He would be interested in humanity's prosperity as well (51). Taking a slightly different

approach, David Hughes and Harry Geduld argue that the narrator "bridges between [...]

Scriptural and [...] scientific world views" throughout the story, and that his "morality play" is in

reality an empirical and positivist rationalization (13). For instance, when the narrator claims that

the Earth belongs to humanity "against all comers; [...] For neither do men live nor die in vain"

(Wells, *The War* 150), he is merely "attributing earth's escape" from the Martians "to system

immunity" (Hughes and Geduld 13), and not to humanity's divine or Adamic authority over the

globe (cf. Gen. 1:26-28).

In keeping with past Victorian authors — like Gaskell, Thomson, and Eliot — who used poetic Biblical metaphor to stress the severity of modern concerns, it is likely that Wells has his narrator employ Old Testament language, or entertain a religious conversion, in order to emphasize the gravity of the apocalyptic attack, and the grandeur of the Martians' machinery (Kemp 211). Parrinder writes that "time and again, Wells would draw upon the religious imagery of the end of the world in his search for a language powerful enough, and urgent enough, to convey his sense of human destiny" ("Edwardian" 73). Indeed, throughout *The War of the Worlds*, the narrator's religious language accentuates the almost god-like nature of the aliens. For instance, while he is trapped with the curate in a wrecked house, which is adjacent to the Martian base, the narrator is awestruck by the "crab-like creature[s]" and their evolutionary form: "They were, now I saw, the more unearthly creatures it is possible to conceive" (111). Commenting on this worship-like experience of the narrator, Parrinder writes that, "[t]he more closely he watches the Martians, the more we sense his growing reverence and admiration for them, amounting to a potential transfer of loyalties even in the midst of his fear and repugnance" ("God's" 18). Echoing Parrinder's sentiments, Kemp suggests that the Martians act as "parody versions of the Divinity" in the novella, for they "create, [...] a pillar of fire by night that become a pillar of smoke by day" (211). These god-like Martians are so advanced, so Other, that it leads the narrator to view himself as "no longer [a] master, but an animal among animals, under [their] heel" (Wells, *The War* 129). He is forced to realize that his anthropomorphism or humanism is no longer defensible, that there are beings higher, and more technological, than his own.

While the curate believes that the Martian invasion is divine retribution for humanity's sins — "It is just, O God! It is just. On me and mine be the punishment laid. We have sinned, we have fallen short" (123) — the narrator, at first, perceives global catastrophes to be the result of

eco-catastrophes or Darwinian selection, not God's will: "You are scared out of your wits!" He

berates the curate, "Think of what earthquakes and floods, wars and volcanoes have done before

to men! Did you think God had exempted Weybridge? He is not an insurance agent" (64). Later,

however, he aligns more closely with the curate's theological concepts, merging his ideas of

evolutionary chance with God's holy "wisdom": "slain as the red weed was slain; slain, after all

man's devices had failed, by the humblest of things that God, in his wisdom, has put upon this

earth" (149). In the final pages, too, the narrator theorizes that the Martians, and not humanity,

could be destined to colonize the planet: "It may be, on the other hand, that the destruction of the

Martians is only a reprieve. To them, and not to us, perhaps, is the future ordained" (159).

As aforementioned, Wells' Protestant upbringing helped actuate his apocalyptic

imagination. As he states in *First and Last Things* (1908), which was a philosophical or

theological treatise on everything from metaphysics to personal beliefs: "I write in phrases that

the evangelical Christianity of my childhood made familiar to me," which includes the

apocalyptic, "because they are the most expressive phrases I have ever met for the psychological

facts with which I am dealing" (273). Despite his vehement objections to Christian myths, it was

customary in Wells' early fiction to threaten the Earth's survival with Armageddon-like

scenarios. Sherborne notes, that "the events of the [Biblical] apocalypse — the destruction of this

world through a series of miraculous happenings and the establishment of a new, perfect order of

things in which an elite group of believers was exalted — maintained a lifelong hold on him"

(27).

In September 1899, Wells published "A Vision of Judgment," a short story about an

unnamed narrator who is "jerked [...] out of [his] grave" (109) during Judgment Day and placed

in the palm of God's hand with all of humanity, including historical figures like Henry VIII and

Charles Darwin. The narrator watches as God's Recording Angel calls forward two individuals

— a Wicked Man and a Saint — and reads aloud their good deeds and transgressions. Both men

cannot bear hearing their secret sins announced to the public — "'O God! cried the Wicked Man.

'Don't let them know that! I'll repent!'" — and escape by climbing into God's sleeve and "hiding

in the shadow of the robe of God's charity, like brothers" (113). Eventually, every person,

including the narrator, retreats into God's sleeve in order to escape the face of their Holy Judge

and the mocking laughter of angels. Impressed by their newfound fellowship, God forgives all of

humanity and declares to them, "Now that you understand me and each other a little better, […]

try again" (114).

Parrinder points out that "in nearly all of Wells's apocalyptic romances there are

characters who understand catastrophic events as tokens of divine vengeance" ("Edwardian" 64).

For instance, in *The War of the Worlds*, the curate relies heavily on the Book of Revelation to

interpret the Martian attacks and the devastation to his town: "fire, earthquake, death! As if it

were Sodom and Gomorroah!" (63). And the unnamed narrator identifies both the galactic

invaders and his fellow Britons as deserving of God's judgment: "Think of what earthquakes and

floods, wars and volcanoes, have done before to men. Did you think God had exempted

Weybridge?" (64). As Simon J. James writes, "Eschatology in the scientific romances provided a

way for Wells both to exorcise his childhood religious demons through fantasy, and to speak to

his audience about the end of the world in the language that would most effectively compel its

attention" (470). Describing the Biblical apocalyptic ethos of the fin de siècle, Wells writes in

The Future of America (1906) that "[l]ike most people of my generation, I was launched into life

with millennial assumptions. This present sort of thing, I believed, was going on for a time . . .

and then—it might be in my lifetime or a little after it—there would be trumpets and shoutings and celestial phenomena, a battle of Armageddon, and the Judgment" (9).

However, as aforementioned, Wells does not simply utilize apocalyptic motifs in his spiritual myths in order to titillate or terrify the masses, that was secondary; a large part of his aim was to educate his Victorian readers on the catastrophic ends of complacent and/or superstitious behaviour; to assist them in societal regeneration and into a "new brotherhood" before it was too late. As the curate stresses during the Martian attack on disobedient Britain: "It is just. On me and mine be the punishment laid. We have sinned, we have fallen short" (123).

Future War Fiction and Regenerative Suffering

In creating *The War of the Worlds,* one of the genres that Wells borrows from in order to goad his Victorian readers towards social improvement was future war fiction. For Michael R. Page, *The War of the Worlds* is "the culmination of a long sequence of 'future war' stories that were popular in England since [...] Chesney's 'The Battle of Dorking'" (176). Chesney's novella, which focuses on a German-speaking country overtaking the British Empire, was published shortly after the Prussians defeated the French in the Franco-German War (1870-1871). Upon hearing of the French defeat, and the socialist uprisings happening in Paris, Chesney feared that the moral and social collapse of imperial Britain was next, and that it would be the result not of German or Russian troops crossing the Channel, but of the "devils" living at home (Gailor 270). "Dorking" shows not only soldiers as criminals, but officers who are too weak to fulfill their military duties. This idea of an invasion being the result of British "devils" or of "weakness in the 'best' people" is a prominent theme in *The War of the Worlds*. For instance, the narrator eventually discovers the artilleryman to be a lazy, ineffective visionary, one who has a "gulf

between his dreams and his powers" (141). Like other imperial Gothic writers of his time, Wells believed, as Gailor notes, that the Victorians were the "biggest imperialists of the day," and that "they deserve[d] to be punished for their arrogance" (270). Yet, they should also be given opportunities to "try again," as Wells' God declares in "A Vision of Judgment," to keep striving towards higher grades of being.

Prior to the Franco-German War and "The Battle of Dorking," future war stories (or invasion-scare stories) were written as propaganda and satirical pieces in British pamphlets (Clarke 2-3). Most of these stories, however, did not garner attention from casual readers, and not one of them achieved the international acclaim that "Dorking" did (2-3). However, upon *The War of the Worlds'* release in 1897, there were an average of four future war novels published a year (Bulfin, *Gothic* 172). In fact, during the 1890s — the decade in which Wells began his literary career — the genre spiked in sales, which Bulfin attributes to an "increase in imperial activity, the worsening international relations and the expansion of the literary marketplace" (180). Because of the high demand for future war stories the genre expanded to even more popular formats, like short story, serial, novel, and musical (172); they even stirred up dialogue and debate in newspapers, parliamentary papers, and British military proceedings (174). For Wells — an author who aspired to morally educate and "get [his] point over to [his] reader" (*Experiment* 320) — future war stories must have seemed like a promising mode of fiction to inspire and shape the "minds and acts and destinies of men" ("Morals" 228).

While many future war authors simply projected Victorian weapons and international rivals onto a future landscape (Clarke 2-3), Wells took the unique approach of devising his own arsenal and cosmic antagonists in *The War of the Worlds*. Kemp states that "the story takes the invasion-of-England concept, used in a number of late-nineteenth-century novels, and works

striking variations on it. The invaders are not from another country, but another planet: aliens in the extremest sense" (147). Clarke proposes that, "Wells's story transcends the limitations of national politics, international disputes, and contemporary armaments that had engaged the attention of most practitioners in this field" (86). There is a two-stage logic to this: first, by creating a cosmic imperial threat, Wells is able to provide the Martians with a superfluous amount of "protection, speed, and fire-power" which puts imperial Britain in dire straits (86). Second, having a highly-evolved species nearly colonize Britain with high intelligence and advanced technology was a new and effective way of punishing the Victorians for their arrogance, and reminds readers that British imperialism was not invincible.

In "A Dream of Armageddon" (1901) — a sequel of sorts to *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) — Wells continues to illustrate how advanced technology is used to decimate a Babylonian city, like London, into ruins. The story centers on a "man with [a] white face" (269) who has a three-week long series of dreams about a global cataclysmic war. In these nightly episodes, he is a retired political figure who lives with a young mistress on the island of Capri. When a former colleague visits and asks him to return to his former occupation — in hopes that it will prevent a forthcoming Armageddon — the white-faced man chooses love over duty. His romantic commitment, however, leads to an immediate blitz on the Greek island: "And suddenly there was nothing but War and Death!" (287) the white-faced man recalls, with a squadron of military aircraft flying over and firing upon Capri. After escaping into the woods and onto boats, the white-faced man and his mistress take refuge in the ruins of Paestum. "They seemed a sort of sanctuary," he says regarding the temples, "they had lasted so long" (291). Nevertheless, their assassins arrive with their "terrible new weapons" (290) and his mistress is "shot through the heart" (291), and he is pierced with a sword.

It is plausible that Wells' Martians' evolutionary superiority, "terrible new weapons," and invasion tactics, were partly inspired by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, an expert in Last of the Race and catastrophe fictions, and his 1871 evolutionary satire *The Coming Race*. Bulwer-Lytton's short novel was published the same year that Darwin's *The Descent of Man* had arrived, when evolutionary theory was blossoming in Britain, as well as the same day that Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* was published in *Blackwood's Magazine* (Page 125). I.F. Clarke suggests that *The Coming Race* is "the first major application of evolutionary ideas in the history of fiction" (48). Explaining the evolutionary premise of his tale to his friend John Forster, Bulwer-Lytton writes, "the Darwinian proposition that a coming race is destined to supplant our race, that such a race would be very gradually formed, and be indeed a new species developing itself of our old one, and that this process would be invisible to our eyes, and therefore in some region unknown to us" ("Lord" 465).

The short novel tells of an American mining engineer, Tish, who discovers super-evolved Egyptians, the Vril-ya, living in a subterranean society. Besides being nearly the "height of giants," a sight that initially causes Tish to "tremor" and be in "indescribable awe" (24), the Vril-ya developed a "unity in natural energic agencies" (45) throughout their evolutionary progression. They also constructed mechanical automata and wings. Bulwer-Lytton, Allan Conrad Christensen notes, sees technology "as a significant extension of a biological adaptation and practically a matter of biology and genetics itself" (178). Through their natural energy, and technological prowess, the Vril-ya construct a super-weapon that can annihilate the lesser-evolved human race. Tish warns that "if [The Vril-ya] ever emerged from these nether recesses into the light of day, they would, [...] destroy and replace our existent varieties of man"; they are "a race fatal to our own" (195).

Even though Wells continued writing about cataclysmic destruction after *The War of the Worlds* and "Armageddon," for instance, in "The Land Ironclads" (1903) and *The Food of the Gods* (1904), Martha Gellhorn notes that the idea of "War drove [Wells] mad. He found it all so horrible. He was in despair for the world" (431). In *Experiment in Autobiography*, Wells claims that "for many years [of his] adult life" he was "haunted by the fading memories of [...] early war fantasies" (65). He even states in his 1917 war propaganda work, *War and the Future*, that he "avow[ed] [him]self an extreme Pacifist" (11). Nevertheless, like Stoker and Marsh who both indulged in and took a stand against immorality and/or violence in their literature, Wells regularly published stories which featured detailed scenes of catastrophic destruction.

During his childhood, Wells played war games "with toy soldiers and guns" and recorded rules in his "Little Book" on how soldiers should combat each other (Wells, *Experiment* 65). Commenting on his early militaristic hobbies, he writes, "I have met men in responsible positions, L.S. Amery [...]Winston Churchill, George Trevelyan, [and] C.F.G. Masterman, whose imaginations were manifestly built upon a similar framework and who remained puerile in their political outlook because of its persistence" (65). Wells' "bloodthirsty perambulations," as Kemp describes them, became a vital tool for him in constructing the battle scenes of his late nineteenth-century fiction (147). In the 1924 Atlantic edition of *The War of the Worlds*, he reveals that while he was bicycling through Woking — one of the towns that is destroyed in the novel — he would daydream about the local inhabitants being incinerated by a Heat-Ray blast ("Preface to Volume III" ix-x). He explains that he would "sit by the way-side imagining [these] incidents so vividly that [when] he passes through that country" those "events recur to him as though they were actual memories" (x).

In an interview with *Strand Magazine* in 1920, Wells confesses that the origin of *The War of the Worlds* came from his brother Frank ("Interview" 154). One day while the two were walking through Surrey enjoying the scenery and discussing the European discovery of Tasmania, Frank exclaimed: "Suppose some beings from another planet were to drop out of the sky suddenly [...] and begin laying about them here!" (154). Enthralled with the concept, Wells decided that he wanted to write stories that reminded Britons that tragedy had not "gone out of human life forever" (154), that the "possibilities of flying, great guns, [and] of poisonous gas" was still possible (154). He maintained that most Victorians were simply living a heedless existence, that British "history had settled down to a sort of jog-trot comedy" (154). By subjecting Woking and the greater London area to an apocalyptic attack and Heat-Ray blasts, he could remind his contemporaries that world peace or regeneration had not been achieved, and that imperial Britain was still vulnerable to foreign invaders and advanced weaponry (154).

In his 1894 article, "The Province of Pain," Wells argues that experiencing physical and mental agony was a mark of evolutionary development, that both the lower creatures, like mites and flatworms, and the higher ones, like homo sapiens, could be regenerated by discomfort: "There seems to be little or no absolutely needless or unreasonable pain in the world," he writes, "though disconsolate individuals might easily be found who see no good in gout or toothache. But these, indeed, may be blessings in a still impenetrable disguise" (195). Wells viewed suffering as a "true guardian angel," an evolutionary protector that with "harsh tenderness" kept humanity from extinction (195). Unfortunately, the civilized person — like middle and upper-class Victorians — did not feel discomfort as often as they should, and in turn, their "the spur[s] of passion" are felt less acutely as their "less advanced brother[s]" (197). If they exposed

themselves to affliction more often, and allowed the "limited and transitory" experience of it to "pass on" through them, then they would continue on towards perfection (197).

Wells' ability to see physical and mental agony as a means towards regeneration may have been cultivated during his ten-year-long bout with pulmonary tuberculosis, or, consumption. Following a footballing accident in 1887, in which a "bony youngster" (Wells, *Experiment* 192) shoulder-tackled him, the young Wells became gravely ill, often feeling "a vast pain in [his] side" and periodically spitting up blood (192). He reports in his autobiography: "In the house I was violently sick. I went to lie down. Then I was moved to urinate and found myself staring at a chamber-pot full of scarlet blood. That was the most dismaying moment in my life" (192). After being diagnosed with consumption, Wells spent a portion of his young adult years either bedridden or writing from home: "I guess class teaching is over for me for good," he announced to his student Miss Robbins, "and that whether I like it or not, I must write for a living now" (248). With the infection showing no signs of slowing down, the young Wells obsessed over his death, often imagining himself lying in a grave yet conscious of his own body:

> There was also a considerable amount of pure fear in my mind, a sort of claustrophobia, for though I disbelieved intellectually in immortality I found it impossible to imagine myself non-existent. I felt I was going to be stifled, frozen and shut up, but still felt I should know of it. I had a nightmare sense of the approach of this conscious nothingness. (194)

Because of what he imagined as his impending demise, Wells wrote scientific articles and novels at a more quickened pace. "[T]here is time at least for the Great Book still" he writes in his 1897 essay, "How I Died" (182). From 1895 to 1897, he penned four of his most celebrated works: *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), and

The War of the Worlds (1897). Parrinder comments that "like other consumptive writers before and after him, [Wells] was impelled to write [...] not merely because he needed the money but because he thought he had little time" (*Shadows* 24). Writing at a degree of unnerving immediacy, Wells became a more creative and efficient novelist, as well as a generous soul: "I was going into the dark and I was not afraid — with ostentation. I still regard that, [...] as a very magnificent period in my life. [...] I was dying with dignity. I saw the littleness of hate and ambition. I forgave my enemies, and they were subdued and owned it" ("How" 183). By including a barrage of violent scenarios in his novellas — for instance, cannibalism and entropy in *The Time Machine*, vivisection in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, and the loneliness of obscurity in *The Invisible Man* — he attempted to spur his readers on in their own passions, as well as awaken them to the drama of death and extinction that he himself was experiencing.

Biological Warfare

Biological warfare was another motif Wells utilized in *The War of the Worlds* to depict the calamitous possibilities of Darwinian evolution or degeneration. Ferguson suggests that "[t]he most lethal invasion in *The War of the Worlds* is not that of Britain by Mars, but that of the Martians by the bacteria they eliminated far back in their evolutionary past" (134). Despite the Martians' "greater [...] brain[s]" (Wells, *The War* 111) they still neglected to consider that the Earth's lowliest organisms would be their eventual downfall. As the narrator states, the Martians are "slain by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared; [...] slain, after all man's devices had failed, by the humblest things that God, in his wisdom, has put upon this earth" (149). Similarly, imperial Britain, and its "assurance of their empire over matter" (9), are just as likely to be thwarted by an inferior organism, if they do not strip

themselves of their complacency and egoism. Christine Ferguson writes that it is "over-cultivated biology" that extinguishes the Martians, "and implicitly, that of the humans who, as the narrator speculates, will one day evolve into the same form" (134). When an individual or society no longer "hosts" the outside world, whether that be exposing themselves to germ micro-organisms or in being susceptible to exertion and pain, then they are receptive to annihilation (134).

In his 1894 article "The Extinction of Man: Some Speculative Suggestions," Wells contemplates humanity's eventual downfall by theorizing that future diseases could be an undoing for homo sapiens. He argues that part of the "excessive egotism of the human is that the bare idea of its extinction seems incredible to it" (115). Indeed, why is humanity any different from animals like the Cephaslapsis and the Coccosteus who dominated land and sea but ultimately "passed at last into the night"? Why should man be the exception to the rule?" (115). Comparable to how the plagues of the Middle Ages are still "imperfectly understood" by Victorian scientists, Wells believed that a new plague, one that humanity is unintentionally evolving, will mysteriously wipe out the entire population in the near or distant future (118): "Even now, for all we can tell," he suggests, "the coming terror may be crouching, for [...] the fall of humanity may be at hand" (119). For him, humans should take heed of their eventual extinction, for like every other superior animal in history, the hour of ascendancy will be followed by the hour of annihilation (119).

The "sense of dethronement" by the natural environment is a common trope in Wells' early fiction (Parrinder, *Shadows* 49). Any foreign environment can make the lowliest of creatures into masters, and any highly evolved species, like homo sapiens or extraterrestrials, into servants. In his 1894 short story "The Stolen Bacillus," an anarchist steals a bacterial vial

from a bacteriologist in order to unleash cholera into the water-mains of London. With the bacilli

tube in the anarchist's hand, the narrator explains the atrocities that are about to overtake the city:

> And death — mysterious, untraceable death, death swift and terrible, death full of pain
>
> and indignity — would be released upon [London], and go hither and thither seeking his
>
> victims. Here he would take the husband from the wife, here the child from its mother,
>
> here the statesman from his duty, and here the toiler from his trouble. (198)

After breaking the bacilli tube during his escape from the lab, the anarchist decides to drink the

cholera and infect the town himself. "'Vive l'anarchic!' he cries to the bacteriologist, 'I have

drunk it. The cholera is abroad!'" (202). Unfortunately for him, the bacteria was not actually

cholera, but a new strain that turns one's skin blue. Despite the farcical ending, the tale highlights

how overconfident or inept Britons, similar to the Martians, can easily be overtaken by the

lowest of life forms.

From Apocalyptic Suburbia to Future Utopia

Peter Kemp argues that part of what makes *The War of the Worlds* so startling is how it

juxtaposes Armageddon with suburbia (147). Instead of having war zones on another continent

or in outer space, Wells places his invaders inside Victorian bedrooms and kitchens, causing his

readers to envision their safe spaces being "smashed to smithereens" (147). Writing a letter to

Elizabeth Healey in 1896, Wells communicates his plans to exterminate Southern England in an

early draft of the novella: "[B]etween ourselves I'm doing the dearest little serial for Pearson's

new magazine, in which I completely wreck and destroy Woking — killing my neighbours in

painful and eccentric ways — then proceed via Kingston and Richmond to London, which I

sack, selecting South Kensington for feats of peculiar atrocity" (261). Like Christians, Wells saw

aristocratic city dwellers and suburbanites as a hindrance to Britain's future regeneration. As

Simon J. James notes, Wells viewed them all as "both a guarantor and beneficiary of the status

quo" (460).

In *The War of the Worlds*, we get a glimpse of Wells' own views of "ruthless selectivity,"

as Steve McLean calls it, in the form of the artilleryman (110). While he is not a religious man

— for he describes pious citizens as "weak with a lot of complicated thinking" and as subscribers

to a "do-nothing religion" (Wells, *The War* 193) — he saw something providential about the

Martians enslaving middle and upper-class Victorians. Like Wells, it appears he viewed

providence as a "necessity of progress" (Wells, *Experiment* 170), a force that is exercised

through natural means. He believed that the God-fearing Britons who hurried to and from work,

dreaded their neighbors, and attended church gatherings in order to escape from Hell, should be

captured; that it would benefit civilization if they submitted to Martian rule:

> Well, the Martians will just be a godsend to these. Nice roomy cages, fattening food,
>
> careful breeding, no worry. After a week or so chasing about the fields and lands on
>
> empty stomachs, they'll come and be caught cheerful. They'll be quite glad after a bit [...]
>
> These cages will be full of psalms and hymns and piety. (139)

Indeed, without any "dreams" or "lusts" (138) to act upon, these religious and obstinate animals

will be more than happy to be farmed upon.

The artilleryman's "selectivity" was a way to secure the continuation of the species. The

chosen members of society — the lower class — have the capacity to live underground and

regenerate humanity through the "new formations": "We must make great safe places down

deep, and get all the books we can; not novels and poetry swipes, but ideas, science books,"

while "the useless and cumbersome and mischievous [and religious]" (140), like those "damn

little clerks" who reside in suburban homes (138), and those "lackadaisical ladies" who are unfit

to be mothers or teachers (140), are destined to be caged and eaten; they are "made for [the] wild

beasts" (138). In fact, it is their humanitarian right to become "fattening food" (138) for the

"ugly brutes" (24), for it would be "a sort of disloyalty, after all, to live and taint the race. [...]

Moreover, dying's none so dreadful; it's the funking makes it bad" (140). Although the

artilleryman turns out to be, as Batchelor writes, "all talk and no action," and an "idle wind bag"

(29), his militaristic stratagem briefly appeals to the narrator.

In his 1896 essay, "Human Evolution, An Artificial Process," Wells explains how the

artificial man — the plastic part of the homo sapiens that is shaped by traditions, suggestions,

and morality — can live a more balanced, happy existence with a scientific education; that one

could push against the forces of natural selection, or the "Systematic Massacre of the Unfit,"

through a trained reason and sounder science (595). In his words, "in Education lies the possible

salvation of mankind from misery and sin" (595).

Wells theorizes that there is a wide distinction between physiological and societal

evolution: "[t]he evolutionary process [...] operating in the social body is one essentially different

from that which has differentiated species in the past and raised men to his ascendancy among

the animals" (590). He believes that the lengthy interludes between stages of physiology were

insignificant — "it appears to me impossible to believe that man has undergone anything but an

infinitesimal alteration in his intrinsic nature" (592) — and that the vast social metamorphoses

that transpired since the Stone Age have come from acquiring knowledge: for humanity is an

"artificial [...] highly plastic creature of tradition, suggestion, and reasoned thought" (594).

Because the "social body" (590) is so malleable — with it being influenced by ideologies,

religious tales, and myths — it is paramount for civilizations to be taught progressive education

and stories: "Education [...] should be the careful and systematic manufacture of the artificial

factor in man" (594). If one does not continually acquire these proper truths, one will eventually

revert to one's "Paleolithic savage" (594) that resides in one's nature.

In his first non-fiction bestseller *Anticipations* (1901), he comments that "[t]he law that

dominates the future is glaringly plain. A people must develop and consolidate its educated class

or be beaten in war" (554). He continues:

> The nation that produces in the near future the largest proportional development of
>
> educated and intelligent engineers and agriculturalists, of doctors, schoolmasters,
>
> professional soldiers and intellectually active people of all sorts [...] will certainly be the
>
> nation that will be the most powerful in warfare as in peace, will certainly be the
>
> ascendant or dominant nation before the year 2000. (554)

Wells' theory of education as a scheme for salvation, and as leverage in global (or cosmic)

warfare, can be seen in his treatment of the artilleryman in *The War of the Worlds*. After laying

out his military campaign, one in which "lackadaisical ladies" and "mischievous" Britons will be

exterminated by the Martians, the artilleryman states that "able-bodied" and "clear-minded"

citizens will be the ones left to rule and defend London; that their education and "saving [...]

knowledge" is what keeps the pure race thriving: "We must make great safe places down deep,

and get all the books we can; not novels and poetry swipes, but ideas, science books" (140).

Indeed, in the spirit of the artilleryman, Wells aspired for not only his own compendium of late

nineteenth century literature to be "saving knowledge" for future generations, but his scientific

articles, philosophical treatise, and historical works to be so as well. As referenced earlier, his

mission, for himself and others, was to assemble an "informal, unselfish, unauthorised body of

workers" ("Morals" 228) who could offer moral suggestions through educational literature.

During the late Victorian Age, roughly between 1881 and 1891, many suburban populations in England had increased by over one hundred percent, with the London suburbs being ranked among the highest (Low 549-50). At the turn of the century, the four most populated areas in England were the London hinterlands of Camberwell, Islington, Lambeth, and Stepney (Cunningham 422). As Stephen Inwood reports, "nothing struck visitors to Victorian London more forcibly than the enormous extent of its suburbs" (568). Residential areas were arranged with detached, or semi-detached houses (Cunningham 422), which allowed increased privacy and greater decorative options for families. However, because of the rapid expanse of countryside abodes, the "wider environment [...] appeared monotonous, undifferentiated, and conformist" (423). Capturing the uniformity and boredom of the new London landscape, Amy Levy writes in her 1889 novel *Reuben Sachs*: "The Walterton Road is a dreary thoroughfare, which, in respect of unloveliness, if not of length, leaves Harley Street, condemned of the poet, far behind" (82).

Wells was quite critical towards London's spatial planning and hinterland developments. In *Experiment in Autobiography*, he comments on how the "morbid sprawl of population" and "the deluge of suburbanism" engulfed the beautiful landscape of his childhood town of Bromley: "Bromley was being steadily suburbanized [...] The country round Bromley was being fast invaded by the spreading out of London; eruptions of new roads and bricks and mortar covered lush meadows" (127). As a lower middle class boy, living "mostly downstairs and underground" (26) in his parents' crockery and china shop, having the space to climb cliff sides and stargaze was a physical liberation.

Throughout the 1890s, Wells lived in the relatively unspoiled countryside of Surrey, a county in close proximity to the metropolis. From 1891 to 1898 he resided in Wandsworth

(1891-3), Sutton (1893-4), Woking (1895-6), and Worcester Park (1896-8) (Beck 29). As an avid

walker and bicyclist, he took lengthy treks around Ewell, Epsom, and Norbury Park, where he

contemplated the geographical and cultural boundaries of Southwest London (Cunningham 422).

Reflecting on the purity of the natural landscape, he writes in *Experiment*, "[T]he definite estate

of Up Park and the sharply marked out farms, villages and towns of the countryside below,

caught me just in the proper phase to awaken a sense of social relationship and history that might

never have been roused if I had remained in the catastrophic multitudinousness of suburban

development" (93). Yet, despite the enchanting wilderness that surrounded him, he was

concerned that Surrey, like Bromley, would be overtaken by the "morbid sprawl" (90).

     In "The Man of the Year Million" (1893), also known as "Of a Book Unwritten," Wells

also comments on how the absence of workaday exertions had further degenerated Victorians,

how the introduction of "cabs, trains, trams, [had] render[ed] speed unnecessary," and the

proliferation of grocery and butcher shops had softened people's instinct to hunt: "Man now does

by wit and machinery and verbal agreement what he once did by bodily toil; for once he had to

catch his dinner, capture his wife, run away from his enemies, and continually exercise himself,

for love of himself, to perform these duties well. But now all this is changed" ("Of" 382). Wells

argues that upward progression towards perfection isn't promised by evolution, for our "plastic"

(382) existence is constantly being shaped — whether for good or evil — by one's level of

exertion, as well as by the artificial or natural habitats that surround one. One year later, in his

1894 article "The Extinction of Man," he further scolds his contemporaries for their indolent,

lifestyle habits and their "complacent assumption" of a long and prosperous England:

     We think, because things have been easy for mankind as a whole for a generation or so,

         we are going on to perfect comfort and security in the future. We think that we shall

always go to work at ten and leave off at four and have dinner at seven for ever and ever.

But these four suggestions out of a host of others must surely do a little against this

complacency. Even now, for all we can tell, the coming terror may be crouching for its

spring and the fall of humanity be at hand. In the case of every other predominant animal

the world has ever seen, I repeat, the hour of its complete ascendancy [sic] has been the

eve of its entire overthrow. (119)

As he alludes to in "Million," species decay, or an evolutionary "overthrow," is already evident

both in animals, with their loss of "teeth and hair," and in homo sapiens, with their "dwindling

hands and feet," "smaller jaws, and slighter mouths and ears" (382). If Victorians want to

continue on a path of ascendancy, then idyllic landscapes must be preserved, and "bodily toil"

(382) and suffering must be embraced as vehicles for regeneration.

During the fin de siècle, London and the Thames Valley were already "established as a

favourite location" for Southern England catastrophes (Parrinder, "From" 58). London was the

"most powerful [...] city," the world's "first true metropolis," a "complex, vibrant, and

multifaceted" center (Ridenhour ix), and the Thames Valley its bucolic hinterland. When the

Martians began their colonization of Earth, London and the Thames Valley were their first and

only target. Indeed, it is in the Thames Valley wreckage that the narrator contemplates the

subjugation of Britain to the super-evolved Martian, seeing himself and his fellow

country-people as terrified lowly creatures. On the morning after the initial Martian attack, too,

one reads of the news-vendors screaming about the destruction in their beloved countryside,

"Fearful massacres in the Thames Valley!" (73). As Parrinder comments, "The disappearance of

London," which includes the Thames Valley, "signifies or anticipates the end of the world"

(Parrinder, "From" 60).

This influx of catastrophe narratives during the fin de siècle was a result of London's superiority as a global trading hub, and the ongoing transformation of the Thames Valley into suburbs (59). Parrinder shares that, "London and its surroundings represent the extremes of urban bustle and rural tranquility, yet in the catastrophe novel this is frequently reversed, with terrible forces emerging from the countryside to engulf unsuspecting city-dwellers" (59). In human-made catastrophes, like in Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871), the Prussian invaders arrive on the southeast coast of England, and eventually overtake Dorking in the Surrey Hills, which is crucial in their defeat of the London basin. Similarly, in William Le Queux's *The Great War in England in 1897* (1893), Russian and French troops infiltrate the homeland from the south coast, and fight with thousands of British soldiers, militia, and volunteers along the Thames Valley branch of London. Thanks to military allies, like Germany, India, and Australia, and a signed Treaty of Peace, "Britain [...] vanquishe[s] the two powerful nations that had sought by ingenious conspiracy to accomplish her downfall" (325). London and the Thames Valley were also prime locations for late nineteenth-century eco-catastrophes. In Jefferies' *After London* (1885), the great city and the Valley are flooded and become a "great Lake in the centre of the island" (29), and in Allen's "Thames Valley Catastrophe" (1897), the regions are obliterated by volcanic eruption and become a "Glassy Rock Desert" (674). The metropolis' annihilation is considered "the greatest calamity which had befallen a civilised land within the ken of history" (679).

One of the modes that helped Wells in channeling his "antipathy towards the affluent classridden suburbs" and the "threat they posed to the country's much loved countryside" (Beck 31) was Gothic horror. Agnieszka Sołtysik Monnet and Steffen Hantke argue that the Gothic is a complementary mode to invasion or future war fiction ("Ghosts"). Bryan Alexander also remarks

that it has been a lasting tradition in Gothic fiction to employ military discourse when recounting

the macabre or the supernatural (145). Indeed, when the narrator of *The War of the Worlds* is

"spectralising the war zone," as Bulfin describes it (*Gothic* 192), he describes the haunting sights

and sounds of the now "Dead London" (Wells, *The War* 145): "I go to London and see the busy

multitudes in Fleet Street and the Strand, and it comes across my mind that they are but the

ghosts of the past, haunting the streets that I have seen silent and wretched, going to and fro,

phantasms in a dead city, the mockery of life in a galvanised body" (159). Describing the

Londoners who still occupied the eviscerated metropolis, the artilleryman recalls a night when

the "fighting-machines" captured "painted and ragged drunkards" who had been dancing in the

streets: "He came down the road towards them, and picked up nearly a hundred too drunk or

frightened to run away" (142). Horrified by their sudden vanishing from existence, the narrator

responds, "Grotesque gleam of a time no history will ever fully describe!" (142).

     Wells' portrait of ghostly Britons, and the loss of the physical forms, extends to the

institutions of London and its suburbs, as well. For instance, the narrator describes how the

police and railways "were losing coherency, losing shape and efficiency, guttering, softening,

running at last in that swift liquefaction of the social body" (82). In his early fiction, Wells often

imagined London's institutions and architecture being annihilated, and its purified landscape

being rebuilt with garden villas (Walker 487). Alongside religious or ancient myths, he saw these

older forms as an impediment towards regeneration. In regard to traditional and classical

architecture, Nathaniel Robert Walker points out that Wells saw them "as hopelessly tied to the

past, and believed that only a radical new modern architecture could serve 'the gardens of

Utopia'" (495). Unlike his contemporaries, however, who "saw scientifically guided architectural

evolution as a necessary corollary of cultural development, leading to futuristic cottages, villas,

and apartments, usually set in gardens" (495) — Wells wanted to demolish the old temples, the old way of life, and start anew (495-6). Recounting a moment he had with Wells in London, Raymond Williams notes that, "Wells once said, [...] that this towering city was a measure of the obstacle, of how much must be removed if there was to be any change" (*The Country* 5). Wells wasn't being metaphoric in his words, he believed that all archaic or outdated structures should be annihilated in order for Britain to begin fresh. As Nathaniel Walker notes, "For him, as with many of the architects and planners he admired and with whom he communicated and collaborated, this was meant to be a planetary apocalypse and an equally universal redemption" (487).

While "Dead London" was a frequent trope in late Victorian fiction — for instance, William Delisle Hay's "The Doom of the Great City" (1880) and Robert Barr's "The Doom of London" (1892) both depict natural disasters and plagues brutalizing the typically bustling metropolis — Wells takes the fresh approach of merging multiple genres and motifs — like future war fiction, apocalyptic motifs, and the Gothic mode — in order to create a lasting apocalyptic myth. With his passion for the "new formations," like the "new sciences," "new atheism," and "new technologies," and his "antipathy towards the affluent classes," he warns his audience of the damaging effects that suburban sprawls have on the London countryside, as well as how evolutionary progression was not a guarantee for rational or morally upright humanity.

As opposed to Herbert Spencer's evolutionary theory of "survival of the fittest" (444), Wells believed that humanity could reach positive evolution if the "new formations" were used to not only subdue barbaric instincts, but help in constructing a classless, harmonious civilization (Simkins 30-31). In his 1892 article "Ancient Experiments in Co-Operation," he theorizes on how an egalitarian or Socialist society might function within a future utopia: "The village

commune of the future will be an organism; it will rejoice and sorrow like a man. Men will be

limbs — even nowadays in our public organisations men are but members. One ambition will

sway the commune, a perfect fusion of interest there will be, and a perfect sympathy of feeling"

(421). Indeed, like the citizens of ancient Rome or Florence who had an "initiative and emotion

on their own," or how cattles assemble into herds, or wolves congregate into packs, tomorrow's

"commune" will be an organism of a higher order (421).

A year before *The War of the Worlds* was published, Wells confronted "the false

securities and fatuous self-satisfactions of the everyday life" ("An Experiment" 154) in his

apocalyptic short story "The Star" (1897). Set in the early twentieth century, the tale centers on a

celestial body that erupts in the galaxy and is drawn into the Earth's solar system. After

obliterating Neptune, Jupiter, and their respective moons, a revered mathematician theorizes that

it will either pass by or collide with the Earth and cause widespread devastation. As the star

moves closer, some Britons ready themselves for the vast ecological changes, like "Earthquakes,

volcanic outbreaks, cyclones, sea waves, floods, and a steady rise in temperature" (245), by

fleeing to the mountains or crying out to God in churches:

> And everywhere the world was awake [...], and throughout Christendom a sombre
>
> murmur hung in the keen air over the countryside like the belling of bees in the heather,
>
> and this murmurous tumult grew to a clangou in the cities. It was the tolling of the bells
>
> in a million belfry towers and steeples, summoning the people to sleep no more, to sin no
>
> more, but to gather in their churches and pray. (244)

Most Westerners, however, continued on in their common occupations: storekeepers opened and

closed their shops, scholars researched and taught, and doctors and undertakers handled their

trades. As the star reaches the size of the moon, tidal waves begin to pour over islands and cities

and "swept them clear of men" (247) "Indian jungles were aflame," and volcanoes in Eastern

Asia spout forth lava and reflected "blood-red tongues of fire" into the sky (247). Eventually, the

star traveled safely away from the Earth and the terror-stricken citizens returned to their ravaged

cities and fields and "a new brotherhood" formed among them (249). With the moon's orbit

affected, and the Earth undergoing extreme heat, the united survivors relocated to Iceland and

Greenland, and concerned themselves with the preservation of laws, books, and machines (249).

This picture of a unified, sympathetic organism is reminiscent of how the Martians

function within *The War of the Worlds*. For the narrator, the extraterrestrials are a "vision" for

how the human race could develop if they simply unified their ambitions: "Dim and wonderful is

the vision I have conjured up in my mind of life spreading slowly from this little seed-bed of the

solar system throughout the inanimate vastness of sidereal space" (159). The Martians embody a

synchronized commune, one that has physiologically transformed through constant struggle and

degeneration. During the climactic battle sequences, for instance, they remain in telepathic

communication while being assaulted by gunfire on St. George's Hill: "[T]he three took counsel

together and halted, and the scouts who were watching them report that they remained absolutely

stationary for the next half-hour'" (76). They also risk their lives for one another, and grieve

when members of their body perish (Mclean 103-104).

Their evolved, harmonious state serves as a contrast to the class divisions and general

discord of imperial London. As Mclean argues, "*The War of the Worlds* emphasises how the

species homo sapiens becomes increasingly atomised in the course of the Martian conquest"

(97). Describing the "roaring wave of fear" that swept "the greatest city" during the galactic

invasion, the narrator comments, "People were fighting savagely for standing-room in the

carriages even at two o'clock. By three, people were being trampled and crushed [...]; revolvers

were fired, people stabbed, and the policemen [...] were breaking the heads of the people they were called to protect" (82). Instead of banding together like the battle-scarred Martians, the "thirsty, weary" and "savage" Britons — some looking like "wretched creature[s]" (88) themselves — flood the mouth of the roads, elbowing and "plunging" into one another (89). Notwithstanding the two gentlemen who come to the aid of their comrade with the "bare leg, wrapped about with bloody rags," most Londoners resemble a fragmented, degenerated society; one that taps into the automated response of lower beasts (89).

One can see this splintering of the class system within imperial London in several other of Wells' early fin-de-siècle fictions. In *The Time Machine*, for instance, the narrator describes a future London as a utopia with its "great palaces dotted among [...] variegated greenery," and the River Thames lying "like a band of burnished steel" (29). The narrator states, "There were no hedges, no signs of proprietary rights, no evidence of agriculture; the whole earth had become a garden" (29). As the reader slowly discovers, however, this hereafter metropolis is not a utopia, or some Garden of Eden, but a dreadful capitalist society of cannibalism, one in which the underground laborers (the Morlocks) feast upon the surface level bourgeois (the Eloi). For Wells, the Morlocks depicted not only an evolutionary split between England's lower and upper classes — "The Nemesis of the delicate ones was creeping on apace" (56) — but also "how brief the dream of the human intellect" (74) would be if imperial Britain never regenerated and united.

In his 1897 novella, "A Story of the Days to Come," Wells describes an "enormous" (212) and "overwhelming attracti[ve]" (206) twenty-second century London, one of towering commercial buildings and mass apartments, aeroplanes, and "kinematograph" moving pictures (215). The wealthy live in exquisite comfort on the upper floors of "'mammoth' hotels" (208), while the laboring poor are forced to reside in the city's dark, sinking "underways" (218). The

demarcation of the classes is strictly enforced, so much so that a gulf opens up "between the wearers of the blue canvas and the classes above, a difference not simply of circumstances and habits of life, but of habits of thought — even of language" (236). Echoing Mark Hillegas' words about "Dreams of Armageddon" (1901), Wells puts an "an apocalyptic glare [...] over [the] nightmare world" that is the twenty-second century class structure (50).

Martian Fiction and the Gothic Grotesque

Martian fiction was another genre Wells borrowed from and updated for his new apocalyptic myth. While the subject of extraterrestrials was not unique to his literature — for instance, Jules Verne had written about spacemen in his *Voyages Extraordinaires* series (1863-1905) and Percy Greg, Hugh MacColl, and Camille Flammarion had all used Martians in their scientific romances — Wells was one of the first authors to portray them with an anthropological and Gothic lens, and not simply as humanoids on other planets (Crossley 113). In his 1896 *Saturday Review* article, "Intelligence on Mars," he claims: "No phase of anthropomorphism is more naive than the supposition of men on Mars. The place of such a conception in the world of thought is with the anthropomorphic cosmogonies and religions invented by the childish conceit of primitive man" (178).

As a student of Huxley, Wells was convinced of "the inherent brutality of natural selection," as Stiles describes it (*Popular* 119), and in turn, wrote about it in his fiction and articles. In discussing how natural selection and the "evolution of protoplasm" could work on the red planet, he states, "[Martians] would be different from the creatures of earth, in form and function, in structure and in habit, different beyond the most bizarre imaginings of nightmare" ("Intelligence" 177). And a nightmare they were. Combining his Gothic influence with his

Darwinian and/or Huxleyian education, Wells describes his "unearthly creatures" as having a "pair of very large, dark-coloured eyes, and [...] a kind of fleshy beak," with mouths that "were sixteen slender, [with] almost whip-like tentacles, arranged in two bunches of eight each" (*The War* 111). With an "incessant quivering" mouth, "oily brown skin," and an "absence of brow bridges [and a] chin beneath the wedge-like lower lip," the "strange horror" (22) of their appearance incites pedestrians to blurt out, "ugly brutes!" (24). They also possessed "huge round bodies — or, rather, heads — about four feet in diameter, each body having in front of it a face" (111). These "huge round bodies" or "heads," Annie Stiles writes, are said to have been inspired by his research in craniometry — the measuring of a person's skull to determine their intellectual and moral traits — as well as in Lamarckian evolutionary biology, which "presupposed rapid, heritable changes in brain development" (*Popular* 122).

Wells' Martians may also owe an intellectual debt to Jacques Moreau, Francis Galton, and Cesare Lombroso, Lamarckian scientists who theorized that the body yields muscular strength and moral sensibilities during the brain's evolutionary expansion (120). They, along with Wells, believed that hypertrophy of the brain resulted in atrophy of the body (121). Stiles notes, "[Wells] depicted brains becoming steadily larger and more powerful as bodies grow smaller and more useless, emotions increasingly muted, and conscience all but silenced" (119). This is made evident in Wells' use of amoral scientists in *Moreau* (1896) and *The Invisible Man* (1897), as well as with the Selenites in *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), with their "larger brain-cases (heads?) and very much shorter legs" (151).

Wells depicts the Martians as forsaking their reproductive organs due to their rapidly evolving "round [...] heads," with the narrator describing them as sexless and loveless leeches: "One of the most striking elements of the Martians' characterisation that suggests retrogression

is that they are parasites: 'Let it suffice to say, blood obtained from a still living animal, in most cases from a human being, was run directly by means of a little pipette into a recipient canal'" (Wells, *The War* 112). Instead of being live-bearing or egg-laying creatures, the "fungoid"-like (22) creatures have their young through the process of fission, which is a type of asexual reproduction. The narrator states, "A young Martian, [...] was found attached to its parent, partially budded off, just as young lily-bulbs bud off, or like the young animals in the fresh-water polo" (113). For Wells, asexual creatures, like parasites, occupy the lowest point in the Earth's evolutionary scale. In his article "Through A Microscope" (1897), he theorizes that the "simple protozoon," or the one-celled animal, "has none of that fitful fever of falling in love, that distressingly tender state that so bothers your mortal man. They go about their business with an enviable singleness of purpose" (162).

Recognizing Wells' craftiness in denying "sympathy of his readers," and bringing judgment upon the most intimate of settings, Victorian journalist John St. Loe Strachey states in his review of the novella: "[Wells] brings the awful creatures of another sphere to Woking Junction, and places them, with all their abhorred dexterity, in the most homely and familiar surroundings [...] The vividness of the local touches, and the accuracy of the geographical details, enormously enhance the horror of the picture (168). In his preface to *The War of the Worlds*, Bruce Brookes describes the novella, in part because of its description of its "fungoid" and octopus-like Martians, as a "masterpiece of fright," a "prototype, not for the science fiction novel but for the horror novel" (3). He even compares the science fiction author to horror icons like Stephen King and M. Night Shyamalan (4).

In much of his early fin-de-siècle fiction, critics were struck by the grotesqueness of Wells' evolutionary creatures and "Beast Men" (Wells, *Moreau* 74). Following the publication of

The Island of Doctor Moreau, a reporter from *The Saturday Review* writes that, "[Wells,] not content with the horror inevitable in his idea [...] has sought out revolting details with the zeal of a sanitary inspector probing a crowded graveyard" (Anon., "Mr. Wells's 'Dr.'" 369). A reviewer from *The Critic* also commented that, "[a] more gruesomely grotesque and uncanny tale [...] would be hard to imagine" (55). In his scathing article about the loss of the Scientific Philosophy class in the 1890s, Edmund Gosse writes that "Mr. Wells might have risen [...] to the highest consideration of it, but he prefers to tell horrible little stories about monsters" (145).

While Wells' Martians do have grotesque physical features, they also represented something far more terrifying to late nineteenth-century Britons: an evolved sentient without a distinguishable worldview (Markley 193). Markley suggests: "The terror induced by Wells's Martians in 1898 [...] stems from their absolute alienness, their lack of a recognizable psychology, sociology, or politics. These invaders give no indication of desires which humankind can understand and therefore resist: they have no imperial strategies [...] that can be appropriated and turned back against them" (193).

Part of the Martian's "singleness of purpose" was to find a world to colonize, for Mars was now "far gone in its cooling," a dystopia in its "last stage of exhaustion" (Wells, *The War* 10). This type of scientific realism was unconventional in most Martian fiction. For instance, in Percy Greg's *Across the Zodiac* (1880), Robert Cromie's *A Plunge into Space* (1880), Alice Ilgenfritz Jones's and Ella Merchant's *Unveiling a Parallel* (1893), and Kurd Lasswitz's *On Two Planets* (1897), Mars is envisioned as a planet of utopian societies. Markley suggests, these authors wanted to project their "consumerist desires" and their expectations for the future of America and Western Europe onto alien races (192). Their utopias were "founded on […] correct social structures, the best forms of government and most efficient uses of natural resources," and

any global strife "to produce, profit from and allocate scarce resources" is exchanged for "fantasies of antigravity devices, superabundant electricity and effortless agriculture" (192). Wells, on the other hand, wanted to depict Mars and its alien inhabitants as scientifically as possible. He states in an article in *Strand Magazine* in 1920: "The technical interest in a story like *The War of the Worlds* lies in the attempt to keep everything within the bounds of possibility. And the value of the story to me lies in this, that from first to last there is nothing in it that is impossible" ("An Experiment" 154).

  After American astronomer Percival Lowell asserted that the linear markings on the surface of Mars were a system of canals constructed by an advanced civilization, many late nineteenth-century Victorians, including Wells, began speculating as to whether humanity was really, in fact, a uniquely advanced species. Markley comments that:

> Lowell's 1895 study *Mars* (the first of three books promoting his canal theory) thrust the planet and its putative inhabitants into the forefront of debates about ecology, evolution and social organization and reignited long-simmering controversies about humankind's place in the cosmos, notably the "plurality of worlds" hypothesis that imagined intelligent beings as inhabitants of the known planets of the solar system. (185)

His theories also sparked conjectures about the red planet's ecological condition and its possible extinction (185). Because of the environmental crises around the globe — like the drought conditions in India, China, and Brazil (189), and the encroaching deserts in the United States (188) — Victorians imagined that the evolved Martians were "both [...] practitioners [who] sought to exploit Nature for economic benefit and the victims of a darker, entropic reality, desperate survivors on a world in irrevocable ecological decline" (185). The possibility that Mars

— an older and tinier version of Earth — was becoming uninhabitable caused many Victorians to believe that the Earth was nearing a similar fate (188).

The similarities between the two creatures prompted Wells to conceptualize "Mars as a mirror and [...] the Martians as reflections of human beings" (Crossley 117). Instead of using the red planet as a utopian model, and her inhabitants as human facsimiles, Wells portrays the aliens as galactic colonialists (118), and the Britons as Tasmanians:

> [B]efore we judge of them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals [...] but upon its own inferior races [...] 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. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit? (*The War* 10)

Humankind's societal and biological past, as well as their present and future, are reflected in the evolution of the Martians. Frank D. McConnell writes that the Martians, "are ourselves, mutated beyond sympathy, though not beyond recognition [they] represent not the simple danger of the monstrous and the unknown, but rather the danger of what we ourselves might become" (130). Subjecting his compatriots to colonialist practices was a way for Wells to condemn imperial Britain for her abuse of power and xenophobia, and imply that all of humanity, even Britain's middle and upper classes, were susceptible to oppression. As Jones points out, "What we do to the rest of the world, the Martians do to us" ("'The China'" 42).

Wells theorized that humanity, particularly Victorians, were not significant in the universe as they imagined, nor at the top of the evolutionary ladder, but belonged to an intergalactic family of evolving creatures. In his article "Wells and the Leopard Lady," Brian Aldiss argues

that the science-fiction author's treatment of the Martians as a more evolved species reveals his superior understanding of both Darwinian and Huxleyan science:

> Not only was Wells one of the first writers to use evolutionary themes directly in his work, but he was here using them against the grain of his generation's perception of the meaning of evolution. Whereas many interpreted evolution as a biological mechanism which had carried man to the top of the tree and would justify ruthless economic competition, Wells understood Darwin better; indeed, no English writer has shown a surer grasp of the scientific challenges of the modern age. The War of the Worlds demonstrates the continuous process of evolution was as likely to work against mankind as for. (117)

Based upon the nebular hypothesis, a creation theory that indicates an expansive cloud of gas and dust collapsed and created matter, the narrator suggests that the Martians evolved more rapidly than humans, since "their world is far gone in its cooling" (Wells, *The War* 10), and is no longer habitable. Our world, on the other hand, "is crowded with life, but crowded only with what they regard as inferior animals," like "monkeys and lemurs [are] to us" (10). Therefore, in their "incessant struggle for existence," to continue on in their evolutionary trajectory, they must colonize the Earth: "To carry warfare sunward is, indeed, their only escape from the destruction that, generation after generation, creeps upon them" (10).

The Myth of *The War of the Worlds*

Serialized by *Pearson's* and *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1897, and published as a hardcover novel one year later, *The War of the Worlds* was Wells' sixth science fiction novel and ninth book overall. Although it was not an immediate success in U.S. and British markets —

selling only "6,000 [copies] at 6/-" (Wells, "To P." 231) — it went on to become one of his "best and most enduring stor[ies]" (Flynn 5) and a "quintessential romance of interplanetary war" (Wagar, *H.G.* 54).

Upon publication, John St. Loe Strachey, the editor for *The Spectator*, wrote enthusiastically about Wells' work, claiming that "[Wells has] achieved a very notable success in that special field of fiction" and that "as a writer of scientific romances he has never been surpassed" (168). Longtime friend of Wells, and editor of the British science journal *Nature*, R.A. Gregory also found *The War of the Worlds* to be a creative achievement. He writes in his January 1898 review that Wells' abilities to weave scientific theories into a literary fabric were unmatched, and that only an artist with his biological scholarship could have constructed something like the squid-like Martians (339-40). Similarly, in the 1898 *Academy Journal*, one critic applauds Wells' interdisciplinary mind, claiming, "Science possesses a plethora of facts and ideas, yet not once in a generation does a writer arise competent to make use of them for purposes of romance" (Anon., "Mr. Wells's Science" 122). Indeed, *The War of the Worlds* was a rousing page-turner that introduced the "new formations," like scientific theories and cutting-edge technologies, to critics and audiences alike and heightened Wells' reputation as a "singularly original" voice (Strachey 168).

In the early twentieth century, the novel continued its ascension to mythical status as it galvanized readers to contemplate distant worlds and even build their own spacecrafts. In 1919, American engineer Robert H. Goddard proposed in his text, *A Method of Reaching Extreme Altitudes* (1919), that he was going to invent the first liquid-fueled rocket and step rocket. His inventions, which were partially inspired by the tripods in *The War of the Worlds*, led to the Apollo 11 design and subsequent moon landing. Reflecting on Wells' impact on his career,

Goddard states, "Wells's true psychology made the thing very vivid, and possible ways and means of accomplishing the physical marvels set forth kept me busy thinking" ("Material" 9). He continues, "I imagined how wonderful it would be to make some device which had even the possibility of ascending to Mars and how it would look on a small scale, if sent from the meadow at my feet" (10). For Goddard, and other stargazers of the twentieth century, Wells' novel was a vision of how humankind could break through the earth's stratosphere.

Since its release, Wells' novel has been adapted into a radio program that spawned "a wave of mass hysteria" (Anon., "Radio" 1), a musical album, seven feature films, including one by Steven Spielberg, video games, like Jeff Wayne's *The War of the Worlds* (1999) and *Grey Skies: A War of the Worlds Story* (2020), and a BBC mini-series.[10] What has kept the new spiritual myth in print and in the public zeitgeist for over a century, Peter Beck writes, is "Wells's literary skills, soaring imagination, and a vision of a time to come" (7). It is also "highly adaptable," Parrinder notes (*Shadows* 87), frequently being referenced, sequalized, and parodied for the latest generation.

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[10] See Orson Welles' radio program, *The War of the Worlds* (1938); *Jeff Wayne's Musical Album of The War of the Worlds* (1978); Spielberg's film, *The War of the Worlds* (2005); and the BBC mini-series, *The War of the Worlds* (2019).

CHAPTER TWO

"NATURE IS FIRST, MAN SECOND"[11]: JOSEPH CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS*,

SOLAR ENTROPY, AND THE APOCALYPTIC IMAGINARY

From the time of "An Outpost of Progress" (1897) to *Heart of Darkness* (1899) there is a

development in Conrad's use of imperial Gothic themes and apocalyptic imagery. His

apocalyptic imagination may have evolved in the manner it did because of his aspirations to be

close to and impress Wells, and following his "immersion in Wells's oeuvre" (Dryden 21) during

the fin de siècle. Indeed, because of their relationship and mutual interests, both authors explore

the interconnections between the scientific, psychological, and political dangers of the late

Victorian Age within their respective apocalyptic stories (P. McCarthy 40). For instance, with

regards to the political, both examine "the evolutionary theme, with its economic and political

corollaries of laissez-faire capitalism and colonial expansion"; concerning the psychological,

both have a propensity to convey megalomaniacal characters, like Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness*

and Griffin from *The Time Machine* (1895), who imagine that they are a law unto themselves;

and in reference to the scientific, both examine "the pessimistic implications of the Second Law

of Thermodynamics, which postulated a continual running down of the universe as a physical

system" (40-41). Despite their similarities, however, both Wells and Conrad diverged in their

attitudes towards Britain's and the wider world's future regeneration, with Conrad being the

more pessimistic of the two. They also deviated in their literary objectives, or mission, during the

late 1890s: Wells published new myths in order to educate and morally uplift his readers, and

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[11]As will be referenced later in the chapter, Conrad's friend, John Galsworthy, wrote about the author's eco-critical stance towards Western colonialism, and how his stories portrayed nature's dominance over human interests: "In the novels of Balzac and Charles Dickens there is the feeling of environment, of the growth of men from men. In the novels of Turgenev the characters are bathed in light. Nature with her many moods is all around them, but man is first. In the novels of Joseph Conrad, Nature is first, Man second" ("Joseph" 628).

Conrad published impressionistic art for his own self-discovery, and to awaken "capacity for delight and wonder, the sense of mystery surrounding our lives" (Conrad, *The Nigger* 5).[12]

By focusing on Conrad's treatment of the sun, darkness, and the earth in both "Outpost" and *Heart of Darkness*, I will reveal how his apocalyptic imagination expanded from before he interacted with Wells until their years together in Kent. I will also discuss how *Heart of Darkness* has become a modern day myth, despite its apocalyptic dimensions often being forgotten. Before I do this, however, it is essential to discuss the Gothic and imperial language present within "Outpost" as well as Conrad's involvement in and condemnation of Western colonialism, and his early environmental awareness.

While there have been studies of Wells and Conrad's close companionship during the late 1890s — like Linda Dryden's *Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells* (2015), a text that traces the two writers' initial correspondence in 1895 to their eventual estrangement after the First World War, as well as older texts like Frederick R. Karl's *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives* (1979) and Martin Ray's article "Conrad, Wells, and 'The Secret Agent'" (1986) — there has not been specific research on the ways in which Wells inspired Conrad's apocalyptic imagination from "Outpost" to *Heart of Darkness*. Also, while there have discussions of the early reception and mythical nature of Conrad's novella, like Gene Moore's casebook *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness* (2004) and Pamela Demory's article "Apocalypse Now Redux Returns to Heart of Darkness" (2007), there are no published works on how the apocalyptic motifs of *Heart of Darkness* are oftentimes omitted from its adaptations.

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[12] In *A Personal Record* (1912), Conrad talks about himself as the "figure behind the veil" or "the voice behind the draperies" of his fiction (12). He suggests that when one reads his early works, whether that be "Outpost" or *Heart of Darkness*, that they will receive a sense of the "novelist [who] lives in" them (12). For him, it has always been his passion as an artist to "bring into play the extremities of emotions [...] in order to move others deeply" (15). He believed that his stories could exhume the secrets and enigmas of the human psyche, that they could confront the lives of his readers. As he states, "Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the world!" (11).

"An Outpost of Progress"

One year before *Heart of Darkness* was published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, Conrad drew upon his 1890 steaming expeditions through the Congo to pen his first imperial Gothic story, "An Outpost of Progress." Commenting on the similarities between the two works, he notes in his introduction to *Tales of Unrest* (1898), "Outpost" is the lightest part of the loot I carried off from Central Africa, the main portion being of course 'Heart of Darkness'" (ix). In 1906, Conrad was interviewed for *The Grand Magazine*, and called "Outpost" the "best story" he had ever written, the one in which he had "scrupulous unity of tone," and the "solemn resolve" to not drift away from his subject matter ("My" 87).

Despite the personal achievement he felt in writing "Outpost" many contemporary critics were unimpressed with the story. In August 1898, a critic from the *Spectator* commented on Conrad's lack of sympathy towards the two main characters, Kayerts and Carlier, or humanity in general, writing, "The light that Mr. Conrad sheds on the contact of the primitive and civilized man is seldom to the advantage of the latter. Even in his grim sketch of two French colonists on a river settlement in Africa, foredoomed by their incompetency to a miserable end, the writer's compassion is leavened with contempt" (Anon., "Recent" 219). Edward Garnett, a friend of Conrad, and the one he originally planned to dedicate the novella to, found the opening paragraphs to be uninspired (Conrad, "To Edward Garnett" [*Letters*] 52). And even one of "Outpost['s]" most appreciative critics, A.T. Tolley described it as "undeniably inferior" to *Heart of Darkness*, "the sort of thing that could be achieved by treating 'head-on' the theme of going to pieces in the jungle" (319). Instead of ignoring his negative reviews, Conrad initially embraced them, going so far as to praise Garnett for revealing to him his ignorance: "You are right in your criticism of 'Outpost.' The construction is bad [...] I had not the slightest glimmer of my

stupidity. I am now profoundly thankful to find I have enough sense to see the truth of what you say [...] I thought I was achieving artistic simplicity!!!" ("To Edward Garnett" [*Letters*] 52). While he would later regard his story more highly than this, for he remembered the "severity of discipline" ("My" 87) he had while writing it, he still had his doubts that it conveyed what he intended it to.

Part of what he attempted to convey in "Outpost" was the dehumanizing effects British and European colonialism had on white men. As Ian Watt states, "[colonialism] makes them lazy; it reveals their weaknesses; it puffs them up with empty vanity at being white; and it fortifies the intolerable hypocrisy with which Europeans in general conceal their selfish aims" (159). When he was stationed in Kinshasa in the Congo, Conrad wrote to his aunt about the oppression he felt as an imperial seaman: "Truly, while reading your dear letters, I forget Africa, the Congo, the black savages and white slaves (of who I am one) who inhabit it" ("To Marguerite" 19). He also explains to her how everything in Africa was repellent to him, "[the] men and things, but above all men" (18). He was indignant with the falsified "philanthropy" of the European colonizers, writing that, "All the bitterness of those days, all my puzzled wonder as to the meaning of what I saw — all my indignation at masquerading philanthropy — have been with me again, while I wrote ['Outpost']" ("To T. Fisher" [July] 294). In an interview with Garnett, Conrad recalls the antipathy he felt from his fellow shipping agents while he was ill in a hut in the Congolese jungle: "[H]e had been abandoned by all the Belgians." Indeed, no one looked after him except an old African woman who brought him water every day. Conrad reflects on her generosity, and his displeasure with his shipmates, stating, "She saved my life, [...] the white men never came near me" ("Introduction" xiii).

In "Outpost," similar to Conrad's own life, Kayerts and Carlier suffer the effects of being abandoned by white Belgian colonialists in the Congolese jungle. The two are discarded by their superiors, trading material and African lives for ivory, and living off "rice boiled without salt" ("Outpost" 83). Like the Africans who work at the station, they are "unhappy exiles" (Hilson and Timms 109) who long for a future glory:

> Carlier said one evening, waving his hand about, "In a hundred years, there will be perhaps a town here. Quays, and warehouses, and barracks, and—and—billiard-rooms. Civilization, my boy, and virtue—and all. And then, chaps will read that two good fellows, Kayerts and Carlier, were the first civilized men to live in this very spot!"
>
> Kayerts nodded, "Yes, it is a consolation to think of that." ("Outpost" 68)

From the time they are stationed at the Congo outpost, Kayerts and Carlier attempt to begin their civilization, or at least something that would resemble European societal order. They are supplied with a storehouse, two bedrooms, mosquito nets, tables and stools in which to lounge, as well as an African community consisting of a clerk (Makola), his family, and ten of his workers. They are also given local meat and vegetables by an African chief, Gobila, and the women of his village. During their six-month stay, they are instructed to "plant [their own] vegetable garden, build a new storehouse and fences [...] construct a landing-stage" (62), and trade for ivory with other local "savages" (64). However, they soon recognize the uselessness of their trading post, and begin feeling homesick for European civilization, becoming lethargic and unscrupulous in the process. Their sudden indifference fulfills their director's prediction that they are imbeciles who would continue to "form themselves" (62) at their "useless station" (83).

Conrad viewed lethargy and isolationism, which was a byproduct of colonial expansion, as disastrous for one's individual growth. He was a firm believer that self-actualization was

formed from one's unrelenting labor, as well in the shared turmoil of duty, two things Kayerts and Carlier failed to achieve. This personal philosophy is exemplified by Conrad's quasi-autobiographical narrator, Captain Marlow, in a few of his later works. Describing the excruciating toils and self-sacrificial nature of his shipmates in "Youth" (1898), Marlow states: "It was something in them, something inborn and subtle and everlasting. [...] There was a completeness in it, something solid like a principle, and masterful like an instinct — a disclosure of something secret — of that hidden something, that gift of good or evil that makes racial difference, that shapes the fate of nations" (172). He also reflects on the value of labour for self-actualization in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), stating: "I don't like work — no man does — but I like what is in the work, — the chance to find yourself. Your own reality — for yourself, not for others — what no other man can ever know" (226). He continues, "The most you can hope from [life] is some knowledge of yourself" (288). Indeed, without a proper crew or civilization to keep their "independent thought[s]" and "initiative[s]" subdued, and their "routines" from "departure" ("Outpost" 64), Kayerts and Carlier slip into laziness and debasement, and are unable to reach their full potential.

In an 1883 letter to a fellow expatriate, Jozef Spiridion, young Conrad lamented Poland's oppression by the Russians — how "the gate" was being "shut" on his homeland's future — and how Britain was the new "home" where he could evolve as an artist, and discover his own potential, his "own reality": "When speaking, writing, or thinking in English, the word 'home' always means for me the hospitable shores of Great Britain" ("To Jozef … 12" 10). While he certainly identified as British "by choice," as he told his friend David Bone (Bone 160), he nevertheless struggled with his migrant nature and the political ethics of his new nation. In 1885, a year before he was naturalized, Conrad told Spiridion that "England was the only barrier to the

pressure of infernal [social-democratic] doctrines born in continental slums," but because of the recent Liberal victory in the General Election, "all that [was] respectable, venerable, and holy" about Britain had gone "over the edge"; the destiny of her and all nations would now be "darkness" and "gnashing of teeth" ("To Jozef … 15" 11).

In 1890, he spoke of himself as a "Polish nobleman, cased in British tar!" (Letter to Karol 52), in other words, a Central European who worked alongside but did not assimilate well with his fellow seamen. This is confirmed by Paul Langlois, a French charterer who worked with Conrad and his British ship, *The Otago*, in Mauritius in 1888. He states that "Captain Korzeniowski [Conrad] was always dressed like a fop," and that his "relations with [...] the other captains were of purely formal politeness," and that "he was not very popular among his colleagues who called him, 'the Russian count'" (qtd. in Baines 96). In fact, until the last ten years of his life (1914-1924), Conrad never made an effort to belong to a community, nor to become a member of any groups or fraternities: "[H]e stayed in the country," as Najder notes, but "led an almost isolated and atypical life" (ix).

Conrad's occasional displeasure with his adopted country, and inability to fit in, is further conveyed in his critique of new colonialism. Andrea White presents "new colonialism" as the product of Britain and Europe's hunger for "food, raw materials, markets, and investment opportunities" around the globe (182). Because of colonial powers — like France, Germany, and England — claiming and distributing "ever-dwindling space" in the tropics and Africa, the competition between these, and other nations, was rampant and often turned violent and mendacious (182). It is probable that because of his participation in and observance of vicious trade tactics between colonial powers during his naval career (183), as well as how he was raised by his conservative uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski, who was a Pole with an "impulse for patriotic

action against oppression" (182), Conrad became condemnatory towards "new colonialism." White comments:

> ...[I]t was possible for someone in Conrad's unique position to see beyond the burgeoning rhetoric of the empire's civilizing mission that accompanied and legitimated the endeavour and to notice, as he soon did, the disparity between that discourse and the actuality of grabbing "for the sake of what [was to] be got" [...] And as he saw empire more closely and the brutalities that accompanied expansion, his scepticism about the claims of moral improvement of the "civilizing" endeavour deepened. (183-184)

In a February 1897 letter, Conrad sarcastically asks T. Fisher Unwin if he was "pleased with the languid imbecility of [their] present government?" ("To T. Fisher" [Feb.] 338-39). This "present government," Conrad is speaking of, was the conservative administration led by Lord Salisbury, a man who, as Robert Rhodes James puts it, was "ageing prematurely, tired and vague, increasingly detached from the burden of [his] office" (168). From 1885 to 1892, and then again from 1895 to 1902, Salisbury, along with Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, advocated for a "new colonialism," or the continued expansion of Great Britain into Africa and other colonies. He believed it was their business "to make smooth the paths for British commerce, British enterprise, the application of British capital" (Great British 698); to be the people and the economy that ruled the world. Despite being a conservative and believing "that liberty [...] can only be found under the English flag all over the world" ("To Aniela … Senior" 135), Conrad found this present government and their civilizing mission to be both "pure selfishness" and "inefficient" ("To William Blackwood, *Letters* 2, 139" 112), an intrusive operation that revealed English colonizers to be nothing but, as Marlow describes them, "flabby devil[s]" (Conrad, "Heart" 214). Marlow, the "surrogate through whom Conrad works out his own epistemological

problems, psychic turmoil, and moral confusion," as Daniel R. Schwarz notes (54), also shares

similar sentiments in the opening chapter of *Heart of Darkness.* He states, "The conquest of the

earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or

slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much" (193).

"For some readers," Andrea White states, "Conrad's works re-present his time's

dominant congratulatory imperial discourse; for others they subvert it" (179). Indeed, some of

his contemporaries viewed him as a conservative British imperialist, like *The Manchester*

Guardian reviewer who notes, "It must not be supposed that Mr. Conrad makes attacks upon

colonisation, expansion, even upon Imperialism" (Anon., "Mr. Conrad's" 177), while others

viewed him as a subversive liberal, like Garnett, who reads *Heart of Darkness* as a judgment on

British and European forces and their Scramble for Africa: "[the novella is] a page torn from the

life of the Dark Continent — a page which has been hitherto carefully blurred and kept away

from European eyes" (Review 132). While Garnett's viewpoint has been more widely accepted

amongst literary critics, it does not remove the fact that Conrad was an unpredictable artist

whose allegiances were complicated, whose literature was opaque, and whose personal

philosophies appeared contradictory at times.

The Maddening Sun in "Outpost"

Besides the loneliness of their civilizing mission, and the degenerative nature of

European colonialism, Kayerts and Calier go mad because of their constant exposure to African

sunlight: the men they used to be "[recede] into distances made indistinct by the glare of

unclouded sunshine" (81). Upon seeing the grave of a former European station agent, Kayerts

and Carlier speculate about the sun's role in his demise:

"Poor devil!" said Kayerts.

"He died of fever, didn't he?' muttered Carlier, stopping short.

"Why," retorted Kayerts, with indignation, "I've been told that the fellow exposed

himself recklessly to the sun. The climate here, everybody says, is not at all worse than

at home, as long as you keep out of the sun. Do you hear that, Carlier? I am chief here,

and my orders are that you should not expose yourself to the sun!" (63)

Even Makola, their closest African confidant, admonishes the two Europeans to not become

angered in the daylight or they will perish like the previous station agent: "You very red, Mr.

Kayerts. If you are so irritable in the sun, you will get fever and die — like the first chief!" (78).

While Kayerts and Carlier intend to bring "light [...] to the dark places of the earth" — for

instance, expanding European colonialism into the Congo and introducing the "sacredness of the

civilising work" (68) — they instead do "absolutely nothing" and enjoy "the sense of the

idleness for which they were paid" (65). Ironically, the light of the sun, and the intense climate in

which they work and dwell, makes them even more lethargic, revealing the "dark places," or the

dark nature, that was in them all along.

While the sun shines upon the vibrant and irrepressible wilderness around Kayerts and

Carlier, they are, nevertheless, blind to its grandeur because of their madness, "dull" to the

"vigorous life" that surrounds them (62). Because of their condition and their sole obsession with

civilizing the African interior, they do not witness the wild beasts "sunn[ing] themselves side by

side" (67) and the ancient rivers and forests "throbbing with life" (66). They pay no heed to the

natural beauty of the Congo basin, "the eloquent silence of mute greatness" (67) that lies in its

forests; they only see what the European Empire had formed in them to see: "Civilization [...]

and virtue—and all" (68). They are focused exclusively on colonizing the fertile land, like the

empty courtyards, and the six tusks lying "large and valuable in the sunshine" before their storehouse (78). As the narrator notes, "They lived like blind men in a large room, aware only of what came in contact with them (and of that only imperfectly), but unable to see the general aspect of things. The river, the forest, [...] were like a great emptiness" (66).

Episodes of madness among Europeans in jungles were frequent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so much so that the Dutch invented a word that encompassed being "maddened by the tropics": *tropenkollered* (Rogers 29). Portuguese explorers Hermenegildo Capelo and Roberto Ivens wrote about their own experience of it, calling it "African spleen" (2:101). Following their research expedition on the Congo-Zambezi watershed in 1882, they describe their encounter with it, saying, "The huge obstacles and constant privations not merely weaken his body, but at the end of some months' marching they produce a state of irritability, and nervous excitement closely allied to derangement" (2:100-101).

During their trek through the Congo, both Capelo and Ivens develop "African spleen" which causes them to hallucinate about having "two distinct entities" (1:374). On one rather agonizing evening, their "distinct entities," or doubles, are seen lying next to them commenting on their weakened conditions: "'How that fellow on the right is sweating!' or, as the case might be, 'I think our friend on the left is a good deal worse!'" (1:374-75). Eventually, the two explorers break through their feverish delirium, and conjecture on whether they incurred "cerebral anaemia" (1:375), or something like malaria.

In 1898, one year after "Outpost" was published, Patrick Manson, "the Father of Tropical Medicine" (E. Wood 361), released a medical textbook called *Tropical Diseases*. In his preface, he details how the "meteorological circumstances" of the tropics have a degenerative effect on light-skinned folks (xii). He writes:

The European, it may be, on his first entering the tropics, and until his machinery has

adjusted itself to the altered meteorological circumstances, is liable to slight physiological

irregularities, and this more especially if he persists in the dietetic habits appropriate to

his native land. A predisposition to certain diseases, and a tendency to degenerative

changes, may be brought about in this way. (xii)

Conrad knew of the degenerative effects that Manson wrote about, as he attempted to

avoid tropical climates whenever possible (Rogers 38). Upon leaving the Congo in the early

1890s, he wrote a letter to his director pleading with him not to send him to Mexico or the West

Indies because of the intense heat: "I think that, given my prolonged stay in warm countries

(from which I have recently returned) and my probable departure for Africa in less than a month,

it would be prudent for me to benefit from the European climate for as long as possible" ("To

M." 26). Later, when Conrad was stationed at a port in Sierra Leona, he wrote a note to his

cousin Charles exclaiming that what "makes [him] rather uneasy" is that "60 per cent" of the

Company are contracting "fever and dysentery" and dying in the Congo (Letter 126).

In his correspondence with his aunt Marguerite, too, Conrad confesses to suffering from

tropic fever on three occasions while temporarily captaining the Belgian steamer: "As crowning

joy, my health is far from good [...]. In going up the river I suffered from fever four times in two

months, and then at the Falls (which is its home territory), I suffered an attack of dysentery

lasting five days. I feel somewhat weak physically and not a little demoralized" ("To Marguerite"

18). Although he survived these traumatic events, it is likely that he witnessed many Europeans

succumb to disease in the Congo, and that this partly inspired him in his depiction of Kayerts and

Carlier.

Conrad's pessimistic outlook on European and British colonialism, and on nature's governance over modern man's endeavors, only intensifies as he establishes a mentor-mentee relationship with Wells. In the next section, I will explore how Wells' bestsellers, like *The Invisible Man* (1897) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and Huxley's scientific theories, impelled Conrad to think more despondently about imperial London, and of the state of the world in general; how "darkness" and insanity were not isolated to the Congolese jungles, but resided just as prominently in bustling Western cities, like London. I will also discuss how Conrad's portrayal of the sun in "Outpost" — of it being a threat to the "white man's" physical and mental well-being — is developed apocalyptically in *Heart of Darkness* partly because of Wells' scientific influence.

The Relationship of Wells and Conrad

In June 1895, Wells was an anonymous reviewer in *The Saturday Review* for Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly* (1896). Of the three "local color" stories Wells reviewed that month, he writes that "only one of them" — *Almayer's Folly* — "is to be regarded seriously as a work of art" (qtd. in Sherry 53). He states that the novel was "exceedingly well imagined and well written, and it will certainly secure Mr. Conrad a high place among contemporary storytellers" (53). Within the year, he also evaluated Conrad's second book, *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), calling it "the finest piece of fiction that has been published this year" (75). Wells' reviews weren't mere fawning and fanfare, however. He submits to his *Saturday* readers that "Outcast" had the "glaring fault" of being long-winded (73): "It never seems to occur to Mr. Conrad," he complains, "to put forth his effect and leave it there stark and beautiful; he must needs set it and explain it and refer to it, and thumb and maul it to extinction [...] His sentences are not unities,

they are multitudinous tandems, and he still has to learn the great half of his art, the art of leaving things unwritten" (75). Later in a personal letter to Conrad, Wells tells him that he has a loquacious and fledgling writing style, that he had "the making of a splendid novelist except dexterity, and that is attainable by drill" ("To Joseph" 262).

In the May 18th, 1896, edition of the *Saturday Review*, Conrad wrote a thank-you letter to his anonymous reviewer, confessing that he felt a "simple gratitude" to him for considering it "worth his while" to critique both *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* ("To H.G." [18 May] 278). Despite being a "thinskinned creature," Conrad appreciated the directness of his criticisms, notwithstanding "the pain or pleasure" they may have caused him (278):

> I wish to thank You for the guidance of Your reproof and for the encouragement of your commendation. You have repeated aloud and distinctly the muttered warnings of my own conscience. I am proud to think that, writing in the twilight of my ignorance, I have yet seen dimly the very shortcomings which You point out with a hand so fine and yet so friendly. (278-9)

A few days later, Wells finally disclosed to Conrad his true identity in a personal letter, and teased him for his self-effacing response towards his reviews: "I am very glad indeed that my review of your book was to your liking. Though I really don't see why you should think gratitude necessary when a reviewer gives you your just deserts" ("To Joseph" 262). Overjoyed and "puzzled" ("To Edward Garnett" [22 May] 281) that the science fiction author would not only read but evaluate his fiction, Conrad sent a note to Garnett to tell him the rousing news about his mysterious critic: "I wrote to the reviewer. I did!!! And he wrote to me. Can't tell — I will tell you. It is H.G. Wells. May I be cremated alive like a miserable moth if I suspected it!" (281). Three days later, Conrad wrote back to Wells describing to him the "preciousness" of his

analyses, and how "charm[ed]" he was by his recent publications, like *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Wonderful Visit* (1895), and "The Stolen Bacillus" (1895): "Your books lay [...] hold of me with a grasp that can be felt. [...] I surrender to their suggestion, I am delighted by the cleanness of atmosphere by the sharp definition — even of things implied — and I am convinced by the logic of your imagination so unfounded and so brilliant" ("To H.G." [25 May] 282). While on paper it appears that Conrad was altogether starry-eyed upon making Wells' acquaintance, he was still, in fact, disgruntled by the author's sage advice to be more succinct in his "art."

On May 28th, 1896, just three days after Conrad praised the "cleanness of atmosphere" and "sharp definition" of Wells' stories, he wrote to publisher T. Fisher Unwin and complained to him about Wells' criticisms, how they were both of value to him but "fallacious on [their] own showing" ("To T. Fisher" [May] 31). He felt that Wells did not comprehend his literary art, and was misguided in his counsel: "I grant, the achievement is wretched — but not in the way the critic says — at least altogether [...] My style may be atrocious — but it produces its effect — is as unalterable as — say — the size of my feet — and I will never disguise it in boots of Wells' (or anybody else's) making [...] I shall make my own boots or perish" (31-32). Conrad was certainly resolute to "make [his] own boots," but that did not stop Wells from making him shake in them a little.

For Conrad, "wearing his own boots" meant writing in his own personal style, to be his own unique self with his own perspectives and techniques within a crowded literary field. In a letter to publisher William Blackwood in 1902, Conrad defends his early literary and artistic development, and his hopes of finding a "place in the rear of [his] betters," like William Makepeace Thackeray and Sir Walter Scott, by stating:

[T]hese are great names. I don't compare myself with them. I am *modern*, and I would

rather recall Wagner the musician and Rodin the Sculptor who both had to starve a little

in their day — and Whistler the painter who made Ruskin the critic foam at the mouth

with scorn and indignation. They too have arrived. They had to suffer for being "new."

("To William Blackwood" [31 May] 418)

To be a "modern" and "new" artist for Conrad meant utilizing a kind of visual impressionism in

his prose, to write "nothing but action — action observed, felt and interpreted with an absolute

truth to my sensations [...] actions of a human being that will bleed to a prick, and are moving in

a visible world" (418). He wanted his audience to hear, to feel, and to *see* a glimpse of some

forgotten reality, or truth, in his work, to encourage, terrify, and charm them by how he blended

form and substance in his fiction (*The Nigger* 4-9). In the preface of *The Nigger of the*

"Narcissus" (1897), he comments:

All art [...] appeals primarily to the senses and the artistic aim when expressing itself in

written words must also make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach

the secret spring of responsive emotions [...] And it is only through complete, unswerving

devotion the perfect blending of form and substance [...] that an approach can be made to

plasticity, to color; and the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an

evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words; of the old, old words, worn

thin, defaced by ages of careless usage. (6)

Conrad believed his creative task was to speak "to [one's] capacity for delight and wonder, the

sense of mystery surrounding [one's life]" (5), and this involved learning from his "betters," but

also saying something new; saying something that awakened the senses.

Finding where and when to break away from Wells, and where and when to adhere to his criticisms was a complicated matter for Conrad. Linda Dryden notes that, "from the very beginning of their relationship, Conrad nurtures Wells' acquaintance with praise and humility, while privately grumbling about his criticisms" (14). And Martin Ray remarks that "Wells's comments rankled and Conrad was flattered and irritated in equal measure" ("Conrad" 563). In a September 1898 letter to his ailing mentor, Conrad confesses to Wells that his voice was incessantly stuck in his head while writing:

> A few days ago I learned with great concern of the news of your illness. It saddened me the more because for the last two years (since your review of the Outcast in S.R compelled me to think seriously of many things till then unseen) I have lived on terms of close intimacy with you, referring to you many a page of my work, scrutinising many sentences by the light of your criticism. You are responsible for many sheets torn up and also for those that remained untorn and presently meeting your eye have given me the reward of your generous appreciation. ("To H.G." [6 Sept.] 92)

By a stroke of luck, Conrad found a way to "meet the eye" of the man who inspired and intimidated him. On October 11th, 1898, he wrote to Wells announcing that he and his family would be moving close to Wells in Kent in the coming weeks. Sometime between October 21st and November 17th, 1898, the two finally met in person near Conrad's new residence of Pent Farm in Hythe (Dryden 17). From the intimate tone of their letters, it appears that Conrad and Wells — along with Ford Madox Ford, Stephen Crane, and Henry James who lived nearby — spent a significant amount of time together in the southern coastal town. Jessie Conrad, author and wife of Joseph, touches on their social gatherings at Wells' cottage in her book *Joseph Conrad and His Circle* (1935). She writes that, "H.G. Wells often amused me extremely in those

early days. We spent many very happy days in his home, Spade House in Sandgate" (81). Now only a half an hour bicycle ride from each other (Roberts 93), the two were becoming not just literary peers and pen pals but close companions.

Worried about his friend's health in September 1898, Conrad sent a letter to Wells stating that he hoped that his "recovery progresses" so that he could get back to publishing novels that he could "not [get] enough of" ("To H.G." [6 Sept.] 93). He proclaims that Wells had "done [him] good [...] every day for many months past" and that "some day," he facetiously writes, he will get tired of him and cast him out of his life forever; adding, however, that "[he] shall always be [his]" (93). Despite his artistic mission to be separate from his "betters" and to "make his own boots," and the occasional self-doubt Wells produced in him about his impressionistic and long-winded writing style, Conrad venerated Wells' fiction and his friendship, and did not want either to cease.

Three months into his stay at Pent farm, sometime around Christmas Day 1898, Conrad began writing *Heart of Darkness*. A few weeks prior to this, he had written a letter to his aunt Aniela regarding the "astonishing imagination" behind *The War of the Worlds* and *The Invisible Man*: "[Wells] is a very original writer, romancer du fantastique, with a very individualistic judgment in all things" ("To Aniela" [Christmas] 138). In regard to *The Invisible Man*, Ford Madox Ford asserts that the novella "made an extremely marked impression on Conrad" (39). Indeed, upon receiving a requested copy of the novella from Wells in early December 1898, he writes to Wells about the "appalling completeness" of his work; how he was able to "give humanity into the clutches of the Impossible and yet manage to keep it down (or up) to its humanity, to its flesh, blood, sorrow, folly" ("To H.G." [4 Dec.] 126). For a fledgling author

trying to capture the "mystery of [one's life]" within the "action [...] of a visible world" ("To

William" [31 May] 418) Conrad was enthralled by Wells' scientific romances.

One Wellsian innovation that was making a home in — or better yet, invading —

Conrad's imagination that Christmas was his "monstrous tripod[s]" from *The War of the Worlds*

(44). On Conrad's return to Kent during the holiday season, he wrote to Wells telling him that he

intends "to hoot like a sick Martian [for him] outside the [train] station" ("To H.G." [25 Nov.]

123). In *Heart of Darkness*, he also alludes to Wells' famed extraterrestrials, having his

protagonist Marlow theorize about Martians while discussing the mysteries of the Congo:

> I believed it in the same way one of you might believe there are inhabitants on the planet
>
> Mars. I knew once a Scotch sailmaker who was certain, dead sure, there were people in
>
> Mars. If you asked him for some idea how they looked and behaved he would get shy and
>
> mutter something about "walking on all fours." (223)

> While traveling on the dark and "gloom[y]" (180) Thames River, Marlow tells his fellow

passengers about the mystifying alienness of the African jungle and of Colonel Kurtz:

> What was in there? I could see a little ivory coming out from there, and I had heard Mr.
>
> Kurtz was in there. I had heard enough about it too — God knows! Yet somehow it didn't
>
> bring any image with it — no more than if I had been told an angel or a fiend was in
>
> there. I believed it in the same way one of you might believe there are inhabitants on the
>
> planet Mars. (223)

With *War of the Worlds* being published a year before *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad's readers

would have grasped a connection between the alienness of Wells' Martians and that of Conrad's

Africans. Indeed, the phrase "[what] one of you might believe" from *Heart of Darkness* would

have been a clear reference to Wells' imperial Gothic tale, for *The War of the Worlds* begins with

a similar opening statement (P. McCarthy 37): "No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own" (Wells, *The War* 9). As Dryden notes, "By invoking an alien planet and its supposed inhabitants, Conrad, through Marlow, emphasises the very otherness of Africa for his contemporary readers: it was as alien an environment as far off Mars, and Kurtz, squatting at its centre, seems as unknowable as an alien being" (23).

The similarities between the two stories does not end there. Like Wells' extraterrestrials succumbing to the Earth's bacteria, Kurtz's body is also incapable of fighting off tropical diseases in the African interior, as well as the mania incited by his isolated, colonial mission (Dryden 23). Reflecting on the Colonel's degeneration in his alien landscape, Marlow relates:

> But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and by, heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad [...] The brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, bearing us down towards the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress; and Kurtz' life was running swiftly, too, ebbing, ebbing out of his heart in the sea of inexorable time. (Conrad, "Heart" 283)

The "poor chap," as Marlow describes him, went too far in his other-worldly exploration, to the "farthest point of navigation" (194). Despite becoming a god-like entity to those he enslaved, like the Martians were to *The War of the Worlds*'s narrator, Kurtz was over-run by the "humblest things" (Wells, *The War* 149). As Dryden points out, "Just as Africa is, in the old cliche, the 'White Man's Graveyard', so London is the graveyard of the Martians" (23).

Wells' science fiction tropes may have also inspired Ford and Conrad's *The Inheritors* (1901). Leo J. Henkin argues that the eponymous space-aliens from the novel — those hyper-rational and invincible intruders from the fourth dimension who have "no ideals,

prejudices, or remorse" and are "free from any ethical traditions" (11-12) — are reminiscent of

Wells' Martians from *The War of the Worlds* (Henkin 256). Some scholars, like Martin Ray, have

suggested that the anarchist Professor from Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) is even a

reinterpretation of Griffin from *The Invisible Man* (1897) ("Conrad's" 35-41), a book Conrad

described as "masterly," "relentless," and "very true" ("To H.G." [4 Dec.] 259-60). Griffin's

"huge, dark lense[d]" glasses, which make him look more like a "divin' 'elmet than a human

man," reflect a "red animation" on them as he lounges near the hotel fire (Wells, *The Invisible*

96). Similarly, Conrad's Professor's "large round spectacles" cast the appearance of "unwinking

orbs flashing a cold fire" as he and Ossipon dine at a restaurant (*The Secret* 48). Haunted by the

glasses, Ossipon has an anthropomorphic vision of them terrorizing the city: "progressing along

the streets on the top of an omnibus, [with] their self-confident glitter falling here and there on

the walls of houses or lowered upon the heads of the unconscious stream of people on the

pavements" (47). The "principal resemblance between Griffin and the Professor," Ray notes, "is

their perversion of the scientific training which they have both received" ("Conrad's" 38), for

Griffin uses his education in molecular physics to make himself invisible, and therefore,

powerful; and the Professor uses his to create the perfect detonator, which will give him "power

and prestige" (Conrad, *The Secret* 60). In the end, the two megalomaniac scientists have their

destructive plans thwarted by their common neighbors, or the "weak" multitudes (315), as the

Professor describes them.

Within his own fiction, Wells was also not above paying homage to Conrad, or in

providing intertextual references to his work. Perhaps roused by the political dimensions of

Heart of Darkness, he went on to reference Conrad's Gothic novella in the first version of his

dystopian novel, *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899). When Graham, the eponymous sleeper, wakes

up from a two hundred year-long coma, he discovers that he owns the Earth and has been put on

house arrest by a Council of White Robed men. During his incarceration, he explores a room

filled with futuristic cylinders and comes across one named after Conrad's African tale: "He

puzzled out the titles of two adjacent cylinders. 'The Heart of Darkness,' he had never heard of

before nor 'The Madonna of the Future' — no doubt if they were indeed stories, they were by

post-Victorian authors" (92). In a joking nod to his newfound friend, Wells suggests that

Conrad's novel was still being celebrated two millennia into the future.

Conrad's Pessimism

It is plausible that Huxley, like Wells, was a key influence on Conrad's scientific

imagination in the late 1890s (P. McCarthy 41). Stanley Renner and Ian Watt both argue that

Huxley's 1893 lecture "Evolution and Ethics" may have been an important resource for him on

the ethical ramifications of Darwinism (Renner; Watt 155). In his lecture, Huxley suggests that

humanity's fight to preserve its existence was a crucial part of its history, and if it decides to

renounce this history — discounting the pressures of natural selection — it will be "destroyed

from without" ("Preface" viii). He also argues that humanity's moral development is just as vital

— if not more so — and that if it decides to lean too heavily on survival over moral

development, or in his words, "the cosmic process" over "social progress," it will be destroyed

from within ("Evolution" 81): "Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every

step and the substitution for it of another [...]; the end of which is not survival of those who may

happen to be the fittest [...] but of those who are ethically the best" (81). For Huxley, the "cosmic

process," or survival of the fittest, is not enough for humanity to thrive as a species, they must

acknowledge it, yet combat it with the law of "social progress," a code by which both the fittest

and the weakest can flourish together. By using self-restraint instead of self-assertion, civilization will advance; it will reach perfection.

Huxley, an ecological defender by way of his pessimistic evolutionary theories, postulates in "Evolution and Ethics" that the "upward road" of human evolution will eventually reach its "summit," and at that point, "the downward route" —that of human degeneration — will commence (85). For him, the intelligence and will of humanity can never prevent its "great" and terrible "year," however, it can learn to rid itself of as much as savagery and hurt as possible "for a period longer than now covered by history" (85):

> But if we may permit ourselves a larger hope of abatement of the essential evil of the world than was possible to those who, in the infancy of the exact knowledge, faced the problem of existence more than a score of centuries ago, I deem it an essential condition of the realization of that hope that we should cast aside the notion that the escape from pain and sorrow is the proper object of life. (85-6)

Humanity will "ere" or "end," as he quotes from Tennyson's "Ulysses," but there is noble and hopeful work that can be done along the way (86).

Unlike Huxley and Wells, Conrad was not as optimistic about humanity protracting its "great" and terrible "year." While Wells was optimistic about the regeneration of humankind, and in using new apocalyptic myths like *The War of the Worlds* (1897) in order to goad imperial Britain towards this positive evolution, Conrad saw colonial expansion and self-destructive humanity as the ultimate inhibitor to a better, more unified tomorrow. In his correspondence with "hopeless idealist" Cunningham, he writes: "You want from men faith, honour, fidelity to truth in themselves and others. You want them to have all this, to show it every day, to make out of the words their rule of life [...] What makes you dangerous is your unwarranted belief that your

desire may be realized. This is the only difference between us. I do not believe" ("To R.B." [20 Dec.] 56). One could hear him potentially making a similar retort to Wells. In fact, later in life he does. Conrad explains to Hugh Walpole in early 1918, that he and Wells' relationship eventually deteriorated because of their differing views on human regeneration. He states, "The difference between us, Wells, is fundamental. You don't care for humanity but think they are to be improved. I love humanity but know they are not!" (Hart Davis 168).

Conrad's pessimism was partly ingrained into him by his rough Polish upbringing. In 1862, four year old Conrad and his Polish gentry parents — Apollo and Ewa Korzeniowski — were exiled by Russian authorities for his parents' underground political activities. Commenting on the family's "readiness for patriotic self-sacrifice," Owen Knowles notes, "The Korzeniowskis actively espoused soldierly and chivalric virtues, upholding a tradition of patriotic insurrection against the beast of 'Muscovy' in the name of national independence and democratic reforms, and as a result their family lands had been confiscated by authorities" ("Conrad's" 5). In 1865, while exiled in an internment camp in the Russian town of Vologda, his mother died of tuberculosis; four years later his father died of it too, leaving young Conrad to be raised by his conservative, more politically realistic, uncle Tadeusz (6). As Schnauder points out, "Already at the very age [...] [he] knew from his own bitter experience many of the pessimistic themes which would later be so prominent in his writings: loneliness, suffering, and death; beleaguered solidarity; the frequently sacrifices exacted by political action; [and] life under an autocratic regime" (81).

His cynicism was also shaped by his later readings of German pessimists, like Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) (Butte 161), Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906) (Saveson 173-175), and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). Regarding Schopenhauer, specifically, John Galsworthy, a

former shipmate of Conrad's and the author of *Castles in Spain* (1927), testifies in a 1927 letter: "Of philosophy [Conrad] had read a good deal, but on the whole spoke little. Schopenhauer used to give him satisfaction twenty years and more ago" ("Reminiscences" 121). While there are no explicit mentions of Schopenhauer in Conrad's early letters, the philosopher's influence in Western culture was enormous during the fin de siècle, and could have easily shaped — whether directly or indirectly — the ethos of *Heart of Darkness*. For Knowles, the nearer Marlow gets to Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, "the more powerful become the solicitations of a type of radical pessimism associated with the German philosopher-outlaw, [...] Schopenhauer" ("Introduction" xlvi). Indeed, in my estimation, the tale does engage with many of Schopenhauer's concepts, like the close connection between high intelligence and insanity, like in Kurtz. It also explores how the savagery of homo sapiens is subdued by the regimens of high society, and that existence is empty, that it "has no true and genuine value in itself;" that it is merely "kept in motion through the medium of needs and illusions" (Schopenhauer 54-5).

While it is possible that Conrad may have been introduced to, or at least encouraged to read German pessimists by Wells, for as John E. Saveson argues, "Any interest on Conrad's part in [German pessimist] philosophers would have been reinforced by Wells' interest" (12), Wells was unimpressed with Conrad's "complexes," like his posture of self-importance and pessimism: "I found [...] something [...] ridiculous in [his] persona of a romantic adventurous un-mercenary intensely artistic European gentleman carrying an exquisite code of unblemished honour through a universe of baseness," he writes in *Experiment in Autobiography* (396). Wells believed that although he occasionally struggled against the "vice of self-protective assumptions," or of his own "complexes," his advanced education, his "general Socialist" views, and his "private and secret sessions of humiliation," had assisted him in being unpretentious (396).

In the late 1890s or early 1900s, when Conrad met George Bernard Shaw at Wells' estate, Shaw teased Conrad and his literary achievements, stating, "You know, my dear fellow, your books won't do" (396). Instead of recognizing the moment as a playful jab from a fellow novelist, the now white-faced Conrad felt the need to defend his own self-importance or "honour" (396). He swiftly tracked down Wells in the next room, and demanded, "Does that man want to insult me?" (397). Wells assured his mentee that it was just Shaw's "humour," and took him out into his garden to calm down (397).

Heart of Darkness is infused with a lot of Conrad's pessimistic theories about humanity and its future. At first glance, it appears that Conrad is operating within the British adventure tradition, a tradition that celebrated Britain's history as mostly progressive, explorative, and victorious (cf. Haggard, Stevenson, and Kipling) (Schnauder 109). However, despite the English exploration rhetoric interlaced throughout — like Marlow's reference to the glorious "messengers" who sailed out from the Thames and became "bearers of a spark from the sacred fire," he also proclaims to his comrades that London is "one of the dark places of the earth," a city of uncivilized savages that was once conquered by the Romans (Conrad, "Heart" 190). Ludwig Schnauder contends that Conrad does this in order to "lull" the reader into a "false sense of security," to stir them into thinking that this novella will be a "conventional tale of empire and adventure," when in fact, it criticizes Britain's barbaric past and present (109).

It is well documented that Conrad projected some of his own childhood experiences, seafaring adventures, and imperial disillusionments onto Captain Marlow, as well. For example, when Marlow was a young boy he was enchanted with maps, gazing for hours at continents like South America, Africa, and Antarctica, losing himself "in all the glories of exploration" (Conrad, "Heart" 195). When he discovered the "blank spaces" of the map, those undocumented locations

that seemed "particularly inviting" and mysterious, he would put his finger on them and declare, "When I grow up I will go there" (195). Eventually, his wanderlust met spatial reality and he became aware of the horrors of "the blank spaces," more specifically, the decay and degeneracy of Africa, in part, because of European expansionism. He realized that traversing "to the uttermost ends of the Earth" (189), to the "farthest point[s] of navigation" (194) reveals humanity's emptiness, not their potential. Kurtz, for instance, went beyond the limit, "beyond the threshold of an eternal darkness" (296), and "beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations" (282).

Similar to his protagonist Marlow, young Conrad was a star- and map-gazing addict, an exercise, he admits, which distracted him from his academic studies. In the posthumously published *Last Essays* (1926), he writes "the only comment made about it by my private tutor was that I seemed to have been wasting my time in reading books of travel instead of attending to my studies" ("Geography" 13). On one particular day, he put his finger on "the white heart of Africa" (13) and declared publicly that he would visit the Dark Continent. Years later, after traversing the Congo River and becoming deathly ill onboard a riverboat, Conrad reproved his earlier daydreams, stating that "the sin of his childish audacity [...] visited [...] [his] mature head" (*A Personal* 13). Like Marlow, he learned that "the blank spaces" were also the "dark places." Parrinder argues that, "The fact that Marlow describes a similar boyhood dream is, in my view, one of the pieces of evidence compelling us to disregard the customary separation of author and fictive persona and to asset that, in many respects, *Heart of Darkness* is autobiographical and Marlow is Conrad" ("Heart" 86). Indeed, like Wells who fashioned the unnamed narrator of *The War of the Worlds* out of his own image (see Chapter One), so too Conrad uses Marlow as a proxy for some of his own first-hand experiences, as well as his moral dilemmas and existential queries.

On occasions where it seems like Conrad provides a glimmer of religious hope for despondent characters, like with Kurtz's widow, it is done merely to protect them from "the "horror[s]!" (Conrad, "Heart" 287) of reality. For instance, when Marlow meets the Intended at her home in England, he calls her Christian faith a "great and saving illusion that shone with an unearthly glow in the darkness" (297). Instead of revealing to her Kurtz's jungle madness, he deceives her and tells her that his last words were of her name; to tell her the truth of his closing thoughts "would have been too dark — too dark altogether" (299). He retains his fatalistic news for those who can deal with it, like the Director of Companies, the Lawyer, the Accountant, and the narrator. For Marlow, Patrick McCarthy argues, these men "will easily survive the shattering of one of their illusions [...]; but to tell the truth to the Intended would have been to give up on humanity altogether" (58). She was blessed in her religious naivety, and Marlow *intended* that she stayed that way.

Gothic and Apocalyptic Influences

One way in which Conrad works along the lines of Wells, blending realism with "the Impossible" ("To H.G." [4 Dec.] 126), while also projecting his pessimistic viewpoints, is by using similar imperial Gothic and apocalyptic themes in his early fiction. Patrick McCarthy claims that "we can discern [Wells and Conrad's] kinship in the way they handle certain related themes: entropy, atavism, anarchy, disease" (59). On the themes of atavism and anarchy, whether intentionally or not, Conrad follows the example of Wells' *The Invisible Man* (1897) in *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by using a highly-intellectual loner (Kurtz) who is bent on swallowing or subduing the earth with his greed and misdeeds: "Exterminate all the brutes!" Kurtz' pamphlet famously states (258). Also, in describing the colonel's countenance and all-consuming nature,

Marlow notes, "I saw him open his mouth wide — it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him" (272). Paul Kirschner suggests that there is a parallel between Kurtz' "voracious" appetite and Griffin's "enormous mouth" in *The Invisible Man* (1897) (Kirschner 283; Wells, *The Invisible* 99). For instance, when Mrs. Hall — Griffin's landlady — goes into his flat to check on him, she is startled by the "wide open" mouth that appears to have "swallowed the whole lower portion of his face" (99). Like Kurtz in the Congolese jungle, Griffin is a megalomaniac who dreams of subjugating the Earth and its lower species to his will; an animalistic force of "swallow[ing]" all that is around him; an embodiment of imperial Britain or Europe's will-to-conquest.[13]

Several of Wells' other early stories — like "The Remarkable Case of Davidson's Eyes" (1895), "The Flowering of the Strange Orchid" (1895), "The Moth" (1895), "Pollock and the Porroh Man" (1897) and "The Crystal Egg" (1899) — also deal with the common Gothic tropes of megalomania and obsession (Punter 76). For instance, in "The Strange Orchid," a "shy, lonely, rather ineffectual" orchid collector named Winter-Wedderburn seeks some excitement or "nervous energy" (26) for his mundane life, so he purchases a rare orchid species — a "spider shamming" looking plant — from the Andaman Islands (31). After several days in his hothouse, the orchid begins to grow aerial rootlets that look "like little white fingers poking out of the brown" (34) and attack Winter-Wedderburn. In order to resuscitate him, his housekeeper destroys

[13] In *Dracula*, the Count can also be viewed as a high-intellectual loner with a voracious appetite to subdue others. Besides his three vampire brides (116), he lives alone in his dilapidated Transylvania estate, where he educates himself on Eastern European history (37-38) and English real estate and culture (29), amongst other things. He is considered "clever" by Dr. John Seward (289), and "cunning and resourceful" by Professor Van Helsing (312). Complementing his own nobility, as well as his economic prowess over others, the Count tells his houseguest, Jonathan Harker, that he is a "noble" and a "boyar": "the common people know me, and I am master […] I have been so long master that I would be master still — or at least that none other should be master of me" (30). As one witnesses throughout the novel, however, he longs to be more than just a Romanian master, but the lord of all human souls. Van Helsing notes that when the titular villain bites his victims he "seals their souls with his," and "for ever the gates of heaven shut" on them (222). Like Kurtz and Griffith, he is a devil bent on "swallow[ing]" (Wells, *The Invisible* 99) up and exterminating those below him. In other words, making them "Un-dead" like himself (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 346).

the windows of his hothouse, allowing the orchids' "sickly perfume" (43) to dissipate into the cold air. Commenting on the Gothic tone of this curious tale, David Punter notes, "it is often to these ineffectual, displaced men that the horrors of the natural world get the chance to display themselves" (76).

In "The Moth," an entomologist named Hapley is obsessed with ruining the reputation of rival scientist Pawkins, so he "brutal[ly]" reviews his publication on the Death's Head Moth. Before Pawkins provides a rebuttal to Hapley's attacks, the rival scientist perishes from pneumonia, a fate "Hapley could not forgive" him for (xxiii). For the rest of the tale, Hapley is haunted by an illusory moth "that no one can see," a specimen that incites him to: injure himself, go mad, lash out at nurses, and suffer from insomnia: "While he was awake he longed for sleep, and from sleep he awoke screaming" (32). In the end, he believes the specimen is the reincarnation of Pawkins. For someone who was immersed in Wells' oeuvre during the writing of *Heart of Darkness*, and sought his approval in his own writing, it is plausible that these and many other of Wells' Gothic tales helped in shaping Conrad's obsessive and maniacal Kurtz.

Similar to Wells, Conrad updates pagan and Christian myths in order to set himself apart from his contemporaries. As Owen Knowles points out, there are many "echoing myths" that can be traced to *Heart of Darkness* ("Introduction" xliv): *The Bible*, the Faust and Arthurian legends, and Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890) all had a place in shaping the novella's "cosmology, its vision of evil, philosophic assumptions and structured quest" (xliv). Lillian Feder also notes that "Through image and symbol, [Conrad] evokes the well-known voyage of the hero who, in ancient epic, explores the lower world and, in so doing, probes the depths of his own and his nation's conscience" (280).

Two myths that helped in forming *Heart of Darkness*, specifically, were Virgil's *Aeneid* (19 BC) and *Dante's Inferno* (1320). Both myths are heavily alluded to throughout the novella, as well as in Conrad's other late nineteenth-century fiction and letters. Knowles suggests that *Aeneid* is not only a "fruitful aid" in understanding the story arc of *Heart of Darkness*, but an invaluable resource in grasping its literary structure and cosmic worldview, "with the traditional voyages to Hades refashioned" to create his own myth ("Introduction" xliv). In regard to *Inferno*, he comments that Marlow, like Dante, is on a "hellscape," advancing towards the devilish Kurtz and his "inner-most circle" (xliv). Lillian Feder has also written at length on how Conrad employs "the imagery and symbolism of the traditional voyage into Hades" to communicate Marlow's "attainment of self-knowledge" (Feder 280). She writes, "by combining the traditional imagery of the epic descent with realistic details from his own experience in the Congo, he created an image of hell credible to modern man" (281).

Stationed in Singapore with the British merchant navy, Conrad wrote to his Polish friend, Spiridion Kliszczewski, about the "national misfortune" of his home country, and his despondence over Poland regaining their independence. In the letter, Conrad adopts the imagery from *Inferno* in order to emphasize troubled Anglo-Russian relations, and the hopelessness of Poland's independence: "We [Poles] have passed through the gates where 'asciate ogni speranza' ["Abandon all hope, ye who enter"] is written in letters of blood and fire, nothing remains for us but the darkness of oblivion" ("To Jozef … 12" 9). Despite "the darkness and oblivion" that surrounds them, Conrad is resolute to make the "free and hospitable land" of England a "home" where he can find "peace and certain amount of happiness— materially at least" (10).

The other two books of Dante's *Comedy* also appear to be represented throughout *Heart of Darkness*. P.K. Saha suggests that there is a through-line between Conrad's novella and the

second book of *Comedy*, specifically, how Kurtz' eleventh-hour epiphany — "The horror, the horror!" (Conrad, "Heart" 287) — is similar to La Pia's penitence in *Purgatorio*, Canto V (Saha 111): "'Pray, when you have returned to world and have rested from your long journey,' the third spirit followed on the second, 'remember me, who am la Pia'" (Alighieri 220:130). Kelly Anspaugh also claims that the tripartite structure of Marlow's African pilgrimage parallels that of Dante's *Comedy*. For instance, he moved from the Outer Station (*Inferno*), to the Central Station (*Purgatorio*), and finally, to the Inner Station (*Paradiso*) (136).

By having an intertextual relationship between *Heart of Darkness* and pagan and Christian myths, Conrad is able to emphasize the uniquely chaotic hell that proceeds from colonial expansionism. When Marlow witnesses six emaciated laborers at the Outer Station panting for water with "deathlike indifference" (207) he reflects on the insanity of their situation: "[T]hese men could by no stretch of the imagination be called enemies. They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from over the sea" (206). Moments later, in order to escape the despair of his surroundings, he advances into the jungle only to find himself in "the gloomy circle of some Inferno" (an obvious reference to Dante) occupied by more "shadows," or doomed African toilers: "They were dying slowly [...] They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now — nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom" (208). As Mohit Kumar Ray suggests, "Marlow's frequent use of words like 'shade,' 'shadow' and 'darkness,' etc., is a deliberate attempt to make Marlow's journey to the Congo memorable as a journey to hell" (59).

The brutality of their military tactics on the Congolese "criminals" (Conrad, "Heart" 208) also showcases the injustices and ungodly punishments of European colonialists. In chapter one,

on the outskirts of the colossal jungle, Marlow comes across a French artillery vessel unloading

ammunition on an empty coast. "There wasn't even a shed there," he reflects, "and she was

shelling the bush" (204). The "insanity" of these soldiers "swaying [their] thin masts" on the

"empty immensity of earth," was not lost on him, for he viewed the whole episode as

"lugubrious drollery" (204). As Bowers notes, "In Dante's work, Hell is God's creation, part of a

just cosmos, and governed by the rational principle of contrapasso," or counter-penalty.

Conversely, in Conrad's work, "death and torment are meted out" by European colonialists "in

an arbitrary, irrational fashion" ("Conrad's" 93). Indeed, as opposed to *Inferno,* the moral

structure or Christian ideals is completely absent within the novella: both the wicked and the

guiltless are punished equally, and even innocent children are victimized, like the sickened

African "boy" "dying slowly" under the tree (Conrad, "Heart" 208).[14]

Environmental Critique

For both Wells and Conrad, opposition to Western imperialism is intellectually rooted in

their critique of the Cartesian assumption that the civilized self is autonomous and superior to the

material world (Meyers 98). Jeffrey Meyers writes that, "the western metaphysical construction

of the self over and against the 'Other' that characterizes the oppressive stance of the colonizer

towards the colonized has at its root the alienation of that self from the natural world" (98).

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[14] Child suffering is also portrayed in *Dracula*. Twice in the novel the Count is seen bringing children back to his Transylvania castle to feed the three "weird sisters" (116). He also views the protagonists of the novel as his potential "children of the night" (28), or in other words, his demonic offspring. After being bitten by the Count, Lucy, also known as the "Bloofer Lady" (310), plays with and terrorizes London children. Near the end of the novel, while stalking them in a nearby cemetery, she seizes one to her chest in hopes of having him/her feed on her, or she on him/her: "The sweetness was turned to adamantine," Dr. Seward writes, "heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness […] With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast" (200). This scene is reminiscent of an earlier one in which the Count forces Lucy to drink blood "face down" from "his bosom" (261). Both the Count and Lucy are mimicking the maternal act of breast-feeding, but doing so in an abusive, soul-destroying manner. Instead of receiving mother's "milk" (261) in order to grow and live, those who suckle on the Count's or "the Bloofer Lady['s]" body receive contaminated blood and become "Undead" (293).

Regarding imperial Britain, specifically, John McCormick writes that "the Victorian ideal of civilization almost always depended on the conquest of nature by science and technology. Mastery over the environment was seen as essential for progress and for the survival of the human race" (3). This "overarching dualism" (88-104), as Neil Evernden describes it, liberated European and British expansionists and colonizers to perform global atrocities against savages, as well as on the environment, because of their modern biological viewpoint (Meyers 98).

Conrad played his part in exploring the implications of "overarching dualism" throughout the fin de siècle. In his early fiction, he undercuts both British and European assumptions regarding the civilized self's dominance over lower cultures and foreign spaces. In both "An Outpost of Progress" and *Heart of Darkness*, he illustrates how imperialist forces attempt to adopt "the laws of the jungle" by mastering the Africans and pilfering their resources (Hunter 18). Allan Hunter argues that the vision of *Heart of Darkness* "is one in which we see civilised men taking to the jungle what their thinkers have announced as the laws of the jungle — they then re-interpret this amid themselves in the jungle and what emerges is not only far more vicious than anything nature ever produced, but is defended by them as 'natural'" (18). The same can be said for Kayerts and Carlier, who attempt to stockpile ivory, and create their own civilization in the unruly and wild African interior, but go mad in spite of it.

Kurtz is also an exemplar of a white European going mad from adopting "the laws of a jungle," or a social Darwinist mindset. With him being half-English and half-French, as well as being politically minded and proficient in the Arts, the narrator suggests that, "All [of] Europe contributed [in] the making of [him]" (257). Indeed, his will to dominate the Congo ivory slave trade and to make the African "brutes" (258) worship him is the result of his European identity and "overarching dualism." Unlike Kayerts and Carlier, who were considered imbeciles that

would end up "form[ing] themselves" through their own lethargy, Kurtz is the paradigmatic

colonialist: an educated, well-spoken Westerner, "[sending] in as much ivory as all the others put

together" (211), and destined to "be a somebody in the Administration before long" (212). In the

end, just like the unlucky Belgian duo of "Outpost," he becomes deranged from his

circumstances and environment. As Meyers states, "[He] comes to understand that European

civilization and its prevailing construction of human subjectivity over and against the otherness

of the natural world are ecologically and evolutionarily irrelevant" (99). The "laws of the jungle"

did not aid him in dominating the African interior, but instead unearthed his brutish nature.

Even though Conrad was not "bent on writing a proto-environmentalist argument or an

anti-colonialist manifesto" (Winston 80) — for he was still complicit in Britain's colonial

expansionism — he maintained that Western civilizations could not subjugate the earth. In 1908,

Conrad's close friend, John Galsworthy, acknowledges Conrad's eco-critical stance towards

Western colonialism, stating:

> In the novels of Balzac and Charles Dickens there is the feeling of environment, of the
>
> growth of men from men. In the novels of Turgenev the characters are bathed in light.
>
> Nature with her many moods is all around them, but man is first. In the novels of Joseph
>
> Conrad, Nature is first, Man second. ("Joseph" 628)

Throughout *Heart of Darkness*, the word "earth" is used often to emphasize Nature's superiority

over humankind. As Bowers shows, it is a framing device for the novella, appearing on both the

first and last pages, and inserted in some of the most popular lines ("Paradise" 93):

> "And this also [...] has been one of the dark places of the *earth*" (Conrad, "Heart" 190).
>
> "The *earth* seemed unearthly" (236).
>
> "He had kicked himself loose of the *earth*" (282).

The narrator opens the tale by describing the "earth" in a poetic fashion (Bowers, "Paradise" 95), stating that the Thames River and the London sky are "welded together without a joint," and that the Nellie's sails are "drifted up [...] in red clusters of canvas, sharply peaked with gleams of varnished spirits" (Conrad, "Heart" 188). Bowers suggests that the rationale behind the "earth" bookending the novella is so reader's "anthropocentric outlook" on the planet will transform as the story progresses, that it will give "way to a geocentric and Darwinian one that leaves [them] feeling estranged from their own world" ("Paradise" 93-94).

Alluding to the imperial truism, "the empire on which the sun never sets," Conrad highlights the gleaming brilliance of the River Thames at dusk, with the above sky having "a benign immensity of unstained light" and "the mist on the Essex marshes [...] like a gauzy and radiant fabric" (Conrad, "Heart" 189). However, later in the tale, this Edenic poetry of Britain's vast and prosperous territories is juxtaposed with the anarchic imagery of the jungle, with its "entangled mass of trunks, branches, and leaves" (228) and "impenetrable forests" (233). As Bowers shares, Marlow's "home becomes a place of 'exile,' the helpful river becomes a scene of 'death,' and various brutal human desires, 'which ought to have been kept concealed,' are brought to consciousness [...]; so too are latent fears about nature evinced, especially that of losing one's autonomy and absorption into the wild" ("Paradise" 101). Indeed, through the arc of the novella, Conrad demystifies the grandeur of imperial Britain, and makes it feel foreign and Other, a Dark Country in and of itself.

For Conrad, there was a connection between the "brooding gloom" (Conrad, "Heart" 190) of primitive landscapes and "the beginnings" of the planet (243). He saw the forests of Patusan and the Congolese jungle as "primeval earth" (285), an ancient realm unspoiled and untamed by colonial pursuits. Yet, as Kurtz makes known, the "primeval earth" was not

something to seek out or try to master, it was something to dread. Indeed, through Conrad's repeated metaphors of "darkness" and "death," his subtle references to Congolese tribes practicing ritualistic cannibalism ("I saw in their possession was a few lumps of some stuff like half-cooked dough, of a dirty lavender colour, [...] and now and then swallowed a piece of" [244]), and his association of African customs with "brut[ish]" (285) and maniacal behavior, he emphasizes the prehistoric, unruly nature of the jungle, that journeying through it is like returning to the Age of the Dinosaurs or of descending into hell itself.

The term "brooding gloom" is mentioned five times within the first seven paragraphs of *Heart of Darkness* (Watts 33). Despite the frame narrator's attention to the Edenic sunset over the Thames, as well as the comradeship between him and his three friends, he forewarns the reader of the "gloom," the darkness, that is descending over London (Schnauder 107):

> "It was difficult to realize [the seaman's] work was not out there in the luminous estuary, but behind him, within the brooding gloom."

> "[A]bove Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest town on earth." (Conrad, "Heart" 188)

> "And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men." (189)

The grand and sonorous phrasing of "stricken to death by the touch of that gloom," and the invocation of solar death in the statement, "a dull red without rays and without heat," conditions the reader with a sense of doom lingering behind the most beautiful, and serene of settings (Watts 33).

The crepuscular term "gloom" was fashionable during the late nineteenth century (14-15). In *Degeneration*, for instance, Nordau employs "gloom" when describing the rampant decadence and loss of form during the fin de siècle: "Over the earth the shadows creep with deepening gloom, wrapping all objects in a mysterious dimness, in which all certainty is destroyed and any guess seems plausible. Forms lose their outlines, and are dissolved in floating mist. The day is over, the night draws on" (6). His identification of the Victorian Age losing form, and beset by "shadows" and "deepening gloom" is reminiscent of solar entropy, or heat death, which is degeneration on a cosmic scale. Like the dying sun, imperial London and all its colonial pursuits, social systems, and industrial achievements, will inevitably burn out and die. As the frame narrator points out, the "diaphorous mists" or "gloom" above London will become "more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun" (Conrad, "Heart" 189), for the sun reminds the metropolis that "the night draws on."

In 1898, Conrad published his short story "Youth" in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Like *Heart of Darkness*, this quasi-autobiographical tale centers on Marlow — the merchant naval officer destined to explore the "blank spaces" (195) of the world — who describes one of his earliest seafaring adventures to a few inebriated veterans. When he was twenty years old, Marlow was assigned to be second mate onboard *The Judea*, an old battered steamer set to deliver six-hundred tons of coal from London to Bangkok. Along the way, the ship endures multiple setbacks, including a collision with the *Miranda* or *Melissa* steamer, sand ballast shifting into the lee bow, and a tumultuous storm that "wallowed" *The Judea* like an "old candle box" on the North Sea (154). Somewhere near the coast of Western Australia, about half way to their destination, *The Judea*'s cargo also spontaneously combusts, blowing up the ship's deck. After the crew is rescued by a passing steamer, Marlow sits in the rescue boat and watches the

unceasing flames consume *The Judea*. The apocalyptic scene is reminiscent of the narrator of *Heart of Darkness* observing the "brooding gloom" hovering over London and the Thames:

> Between the darkness of earth and heaven she was burning fiercely upon a disc of purple sea shot by the blood-red play of gleams; upon a disc of water glittering and sinister. [...] She burned furiously, mournful and imposing like a funeral pile kindled in the night, surrounded by the sea, watched over by the stars. A magnificent death had come like a grace, like a gift, like a reward to that old ship at the end of her laborious days. (178)

Conrad uses similar phrasing to "mournful" and "brooding gloom" in *Lord Jim* (1900) as well, a novel he had nearly finished before starting *Heart of Darkness*. The adventure tale is about a young and remorseful sailor who discovers the forgotten country of Patusan and becomes a spiritual chief to its indigenous people. Describing the darkness that overlays their forests, Jim reflects, "A brooding gloom lay over this vast and monotonous landscape; the light fell on it as if into an abyss" (250). Noting the juxtaposition of daybreak on the Patusan hilltops with the mysterious antiquity of its tribesmen, he contemplates, "And there I was with him, high in the sunshine on the top of that historic hill of his. He dominated the forest, the secular gloom, the old mankind. He was like a figure set up on a pedestal, to represent in his persistent youth the power, and perhaps the virtues, of races that never grow old, that have emerged from the gloom" (250). Strikingly, this imagery and language is reminiscent to Marlow journey into the ancient Congolese jungle in *Heart of Darkness,* how "[g]oing up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world," how it made it one feel like "one's past" was returning (233).

Ecological and Environmental Disasters

Jeffrey McCarthy argues that *Heart of Darkness* dramatizes Britain's and Europe's isolation from, and superiority over, the environment by way of the Congo ivory trade (620). This is done purposely on the part of Conrad in order to confront his readers with a "new vision of themselves" (620) as exploiters of nature, and to reveal a link between the "moral and ecological limits of imperialism" (621). Because of all the "blasting and toting" taking place on African soil, the continent had become "a vast artificial hole" with 70,000 tons of ivory being extracted each year from 1875 to the turn of the century (621). Victorians adorned their homes with ivory using it to make piano keys, chess pieces, billiard balls, and crucifixes (621). When Conrad was stationed in the Congo in 1890, European traders had already started digging for fossil ivory because the elephant population was near extinct (621).

In the novella, Kurtz becomes the symbol of the Europeans' obsession with ivory, with the prized white tusks "consum[ing] his flesh, and seal[ing] his soul to its own" (255) and making him into an "animated image of death" (272). Even his head was like that of "an ivory ball" (255). According to Mathes, the Colonel is purposely associated with ivory, and more so with death and the wilderness, because it leads "Europeans to understand themselves [...] as part of nature and [...] as nature's masters" (623). Yet, Kurtz is incapable of mastering the Congo conclusively, for mastering nature was an imperial illusion. His "sombre pride" and "ruthless power" to exploit it and subject it to his will, only leads to his "hopeless despair" (Conrad, "Heart" 287), like it will for all Western colonialists.

Conrad's repeated use of the "invisible hand metaphor" — a metaphor that hints at both the market system and natural theology — emphasizes the thematic link between Nature and the late nineteenth-century financial system (Vandertop, "The Earth" 682). The phrase permeates much of Conrad's early work, but is used, mostly, to accentuate the dark and uncontrollable

forces behind the physical universe. In *Almayer's Folly* (1895), the protagonist feels "an invisible hand [...] gripping his throat" (188). In *Lord Jim* (1900), the titular hero stands slowly "as if a steady hand from above had been pulling him out of the chair by his hair" (125).

In *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897) Conrad adopts the metaphor to describe the dark will behind the sea, the "invisible hand" that gives "the ship an angry shake" (70); in *Lord Jim*, too, the Muslim pilgrims aboard the Panta are "held by an invisible hand on the brink of annihilation" (114); and in *Typhoon* (1902), it is "an immense, potent, and invisible hand" that leads the crew of the *SS Nan-Shan* out into the far reaches of South China Sea, and sets their "unconscious faces [...] towards inconceivable goals" (4).

The "invisible hand" theory was made popular by eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher Adam Smith and his text *Wealth of Nations* (1776). His theory suggests that unseen forces move the free market economy; that self-interested individuals cause economic growth through their often unconscious instincts or choices. He writes:

> By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry [a merchant]
> intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as
> its produce may be of greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in
> many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his
> intention. (184)

Smith believed that "the invisible hand" was actually the Providence at work, that God has shaped humanity, or consumers, to act in certain ways that would maximize public interest. So, even if the rich or rapacious attempt to acquire more wealth than is necessary, it will

nevertheless, lead to the "interest of society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species" (274).[15]

Many of Smith's earliest interpreters, like Scottish minister and political economist Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) affirmed the "invisible hand" theory and its theological connections (Crane and Elzinga 88). Writing in 1869, Chalmers comments on how God's "master-hand" is witnessed in the social order and market economy. He states, "The greatest economic good is rendered to the community […] by the spontaneous play and busy competition of many thousand wills, each bent on the persecution of his own selfishness […] which be speak the skill of a master-hand, in the adjustment of its laws, and the working of its profoundly constructed mechanism" (238). Like Smith, he believed that a societal harmony is achieved when each individual seeks out their own financial interest; that laboring for one's own particular good brought about the "cheapening and multiplying to the uttermost all the article of human enjoyment, and establish[ed] a thousand reciprocities of mutual interest in the world" (240). All of this, to him, was evidence of the "comprehensive wisdom of God" (240).

Caitlin Vandertop argues that ecological and economical disasters are intertwined in Conrad's early romances ("The Earth" 682). "His writing," she writes, "is less concerned with nature per se than with the consequences of its economic transformation in the nineteenth century" (681). For example, in "Youth" (1898), six hundred tons of coal combust onboard *The Judea* steamer near the Western Australia coast because of the crews' inexperience and

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[15] In the 1860s, at the University of Glasgow, Smith often gave lectures related to the "invisible hand." For instance, on natural theology, ethics, and the political economy (Kwangsu 315). Even though these and other lectures on natural theology were destroyed after his death (upon his request), one of his students, John Millar, provides a brief description of their content: "The first [lecture] contained Natural Theology; in which he considered the proofs of the being and attributes of God, and those principles of human mind upon which religion is founded" (qtd. in Stewart xvii). John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, a contemporary of Smith, also attended his lectures, and comments on his views on natural theology were optimistic and thought favorably of humanity's reasoning capabilities: "[H]is lectures […] were too flattering to human pride, and induced 'presumptuous striplings to draw an unwarranted conclusion, viz. that the great truths of theology, together with the duties which man owes to God and his neighbors, may be discovered by the light of nature without any special revelation" (Rae 60).

environmental causes, like heavy rain and the "famous October gale" (150) winds, leaving them in peril. In his 1902 novella, *Typhoon* (which he began writing in 1899), Conrad illustrates how the damages caused to the ship by a tropical cyclone motivates Captain McWhirr to commandeer the earnings of one hundred onboard Chinese workers, "which," Vandertop notes, "describes the radical devaluation and redistribution of the savings of [the] group" ("The Earth" 682).

Conrad's early stories capture a broad image of the migration, global capitalism, and commodity exchanges that were soaring during the late nineteenth century. Vandertop notes that his "vision of the world of global trade presents readers with a network of entangled commercial interests and imperatives, shaped by collaborative as well as competitive actors and administrative models, which, in Conrad's words, govern 'the fates of men who come out here with a hundred different projects, for hundreds of different reasons'" ("Architectures" 127-8). In 1901, while finishing his novella *Typhoon*, Conrad implored his literary agent, James B. Pinker, to be more active in promoting his forthcoming text: "I wish, whatever publisher you capture, could be induced to make a certain amount of fuss about the story 'Mr. J Conrad's new tale Typhoon begins in [...] etc etc.' That kind of thing! The public's so used to the guidance of Advertis[e]ment! Why! even I myself feel the spell of such emphasis'" ("To J.B." 319). Richard Ohmann notes that advertisements for products and literary celebrities, like Wells and Conrad, had "already made them familiar to city people, in public spaces like the exhibit hall and the department store. Magazines brought them into the home, into the hands, before the eyes" (224).

Solar Entropy

The origins of the Dying Earth subgenre can be traced to early nineteenth-century literature like Jean-Baptiste Cousin de Grainville's *Le Dernier Homme* (1805) and Lord Byron's

"Darkness" (1816). "Darkness" was published a year after Mount Tambora had erupted on

Sumbawa Island (modern day Indonesia), and caused "The Year Without a Summer," a volcanic

winter in which global temperatures dropped one degree Fahrenheit and crops were failing in the

Northern Hemisphere due to ash settling in the stratosphere. Unaware of what was causing such

bizarre atmospheric changes in Europe, Byron was inspired to write his poem during a murky

summer day in 1815, when "the fowls all went to roost at noon [in Geneva] and candles had to

be lit as at midnight" (Anon., "Anecdotes" 176). Like other authors, scientists, and prophets of

the time, he may have considered the planet to be facing an apocalypse, and the Earth's "bright

sun" to be "extinguish'd" (Byron, "Darkness" 272).

As the century progressed, the Dying Earth subgenre began to merge with science fiction

writing, most notably, in French astronomer Camille Flammarion's apocalyptic epic, *La Fin du*

Monde, or Omega: The Last Days of the World, in 1894. The novel centers on a comet colliding

with the Earth in the twenty-fifth century and the political, psychological, and geographical

transformations that transpire because of it. Near the beginning of the tale, representatives from

various scientific fields — like geology, natural history, and geonomy — partake in a colloquium

in Paris to discuss theories on how the comet will annihilate the planet. A Columbian astronomer

postulates that the End will not be through continents submerging in the sea, or "the drying up of

the earth as a result of the gradual loss of water" (105), but through the eventual entropy of the

sun: "The sun will become a dark red ball, then a black one, and night will be perpetual . . ..It is

to the extinction of the sun that the earth will owe its death, twenty, perhaps forty million years

hence" (110).

One year after Flammarion captivated audiences with his solar entropic musings, Wells

published *The Time Machine* (1895), a novella that partly focuses on the physical decay of the

universe and the political and social ramifications of it. The Time Traveler — a Victorian

scientist "drawn on by the mystery of the earth's fate" (79) — visits London thirty million years

into the future and witnesses the waning of the sun: "A horror of this great darkness came on me

[...] Then like a red-hot bowl in the sky appeared the edge of the sun [...] I felt I was fainting, but

a terrible dread of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight sustained me while I

clambered upon the saddle" (80-1). When he returns to his dinner party in 1890s London, he

relays to those in attendance his apocalyptic adventures. This leaves the narrator, the other

guests, and anyone else who hears his stories, a choice on how to respond to the Earth's eventual

extinction: live as a "foolish [heap] that must inevitably fall back upon and destroy [your]

makers" or "live as though it were not so" (88).

The opening chapter of Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898) also references "secular

cooling" within the solar system (10). The narrator states that with Mars being older than the

Earth, and it being at a further distance from the Sun, "it follows that it is not only more distant

from life's beginning but nearer its end" (10). To this end, the Martians need to migrate to and

pilfer the Earth in order to sustain their endangered existence; unfortunately, this requires

subjugating and exterminating a less-evolved species: humanity. As Patrick McCarthy states,

"entropy at an advanced stage in one part of the solar system produces a plague elsewhere in the

system" (56). As aforementioned, this plague on humanity is short-lived due to the Martians

being vulnerable to the Earth's bacteria, "the humblest things" (Wells, *The War* 149).

Perhaps influenced by Wells' *The Time Machine* and its depiction of solar apocalypse,

with "the sun [growing] larger and duller in the westward sky" (80), "Lord Kelvin's Second Law

of Thermodynamics," and Alexander Winchell's popular article "The Sun Cooling Off" (1891),

Conrad grew to view the sun as not only a threat to his physical and mental being while

journeying through exotic lands, but also as a cause for the earth's eventual annihilation. As Watts notes, "For Conrad, the ultimate *Heart of Darkness* was un *Soleil extient*: an extinguished sun at the centre of eternal night" (12).

In an 1897 letter to Cunningham Graham, Conrad explains that a major menace to the exemplar seamen Singleton in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897) is solar entropy: "Nothing can touch him but the curse of decay — the eternal decree that will extinguish the sun, the stars one by one, and in another instant shall spread a frozen darkness over the whole universe" ("To R.B." [14 Dec. 1897] 423). Singleton, an "elemental force" who has a "perfect accord with his life" (423), a Herculean veteran of the high seas, is, nevertheless, still vulnerable to the eventual exhaustion of the sun's heat. He is not above the deterioration of the universe, despite his reputation with and service to Britain's navy.

As Watts suggests, "Conrad was one of the many writers at that time whose sense of the fin de siècle was made more sombre by a sense of the fin du globe" (14). In January 1898, he touched on the sun's continual heating and eventual cooling in another letter to Graham: "The fate of a humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about. If you take it to heart it becomes an unendurable tragedy. If you believe in improvement you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence" ("To R.B." [14 Jan.] 17). Four months later, Conrad sent Graham another chilling letter reminding him of the fleeting nature of their lives, and of the universe in general: "[N]othing remains [...] Absolutely nothing [...] A moment, a twinkling of an eye and nothing remains — but a clot of mud, of cold mud, of dead mud cast into black space, rolling around an extinguished sun. Nothing. Neither thought, nor sound, nor soul. Nothing" ("To R.B." [15 June] 70).

Responding to a letter from Cunningham, one in which the Scottish politician mentioned his own devotion to socialism, Conrad despondently wrote: "The fate of a humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about. If you take it to heart it becomes an unendurable tragedy. If you believe in improvement you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence" ("To R.B." [14 Jan.] 17). His belief in an eventual extinction affected his enthusiasm for and participation in Europe's technological and political advancement. He anticipated a time, as showcased in *Heart of Darkness*, when machines would be overtaken by the natural environment; when "boiler[s]" permanently "[wallow] in the grass" and their "undersized railway-truck[s]" would be capsized and eroded in the Earth's unruly jungles (205). There was no reason to put one's faith in an ever-advancing or potentially regenerative humanity (like Wells did), for to consider a utopia would result in an unendurable tragedy. Even leaning into the changing of the seasons was to set one's self up for disappointment, as Conrad notes in one of his letters: "There is twilight and soft clouds and daffodils and a great weariness. Spring!" He sarcastically states, "Excellentissime — Spring? We are an[n]ually lured by false hopes. Spring! Che coglioneria! Another illusion for the undoing of mankind" ("To R.B." [15 June] 57).

While both of Conrad's novellas — "The Outpost of Progress" and *Heart of Darkness* — portray the isolation of the colonial experiment, and the mania of journeying through the unruly African interior, it is *Heart of Darkness* that introduces a more pessimistic outlook, further identifying imperial London with "the Dark Continent"; the civilized white man with the African savage. Through "gloomy," pessimistic language and allusions to ancient creation myths, *Heart of Darkness* also reveals the entropy of the imperial project: that no matter the global reach of Western powers, or their accumulation of wealth, decline and destruction are inevitable. Indeed,

Nature will overtake human endeavors, whether that be the colonization of the Congo, or the industrialization of London; no empire can escape the "setting," or cooling of the sun.

Heart of Darkness **as Modern Myth**

Because of Wells' apocalyptic influence on Conrad, whether through his fin-de-siècle literature, like *The Time Machine* or *The War of the Worlds*, or in encouraging him to read scientists like Huxley and Lyell, Conrad developed as an impressionistic artist. He allowed his audience to "see" and "feel" the dangers of imperial greed, Nature's mastery over humanity, and the "horror!" of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Indeed, as Patrick McCarthy writes, "it is doubtful that *Heart of Darkness* would have appeared in anything like the form in which we find it now" if it wasn't for Wells' influence on him (59). However, *Heart of Darkness,* and its apocalyptic connotations, did not strike a chord with a wide audience at the onset; it took a while for it to become a "seminal work in the emergence of modernist literature" (Bloom 17).

During its three-installment release in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1899, *Heart of Darkness* was a literary success among Conrad's peers, but mostly disregarded by critics and readers alike. In 1902, when it was published alongside "Youth" and "The End of the Tether" in *Conrad's Youth: A Narrative, and Two Other Stories*, it garnered "the least attention" of the three stories (Moore, "Introduction" 4). As Moore points out, for over two decades the novella was practically ignored, "signaled by the fact that the first translations (into French and German) did not appear until 1924"; even in Conrad's letters he only references the novella when it relates to practical dealings, like selling a manuscript (4).

By the mid 1930s, however, the novella's "deeper, emotional aspects," as Harold Bloom suggests, and its "unique capacity for straddling the boundaries of literature" started to shine

through (16). From here on out, "Many scholars would come to argue that it was the seminal work in the emergence of modernist literature" (17). In 1948, British critic F.R. Leavis celebrated Conrad as one of the great novelists of the English tradition (the others included Austen, Eliot, and James), and joked that despite the novella's insistence on using abstract terms — like "inconceivable," "inscrutable," and "unspeakable" — it was "art of vivid essential record" (175-7). In the late 1950s, during the rise of psychological criticism in American scholarship, Albert J. Guerard released *Conrad the Novelist* (1958), in which he described *Heart of Darkness* as "Conrad's longest journey into self" (33). From 1975 until today, there has been, what Jonah Raskin described in 1967, as the "the Heart of Darkness 'craze'" (113).

With it being such a "seminal work," *Heart of Darkness* also began crossing media platforms in the 1930s. In 1938, for instance, Orson Welles adapted and starred in *Heart of Darkness* for a CBS radio series called *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*. One year later, he wrote a screenplay of the novella with John Houseman, in which Kurtz, who was to be played by Welles, was "a politically moral" and "psychologically" sympathetic "dictator" (Welles 3); and Marlow, also to be played by Welles, was "a young man [...] with a fiancee who was rather like Virginia" (Houseman 215). The two characters were to symbolize the severed American consciousness during the age of global power (Rippy 90). As Rippy writes, it was to portray "a visual manifestation of [Welles'] concept of a first-person-singular narration, [...] focusing [...] very plainly on the externalization of an interior moral conflict" (90).

Other iterations, or loosely inspired films, that were inspired by the novella include: *Heart of Darkness*, a 1993 TNT version of the book starring Tim Roth as Marlow and John Malkovich as Kurtz; *African Apocalypse*, a 2020 documentary about the hunt for African colonial killer, Captain Paul Voulet; and *Heart of Darkness*, the soon to be released

"feature-length sand animation" which will capture the "brooding atmosphere inherent in the classic story" (Anon., "Heart of Darkness Animation"). The most well-known adaptation of the novella, however, is Francis Ford Coppola's Oscar-winning Vietnam War epic, *Apocalypse Now*. In this 1979 film, Marlow is reimagined as Captain Willard (Martin Sheen), a washed-up US Army assassin assigned to terminate the command of rogue Special Forces officer Colonel Kurtz (Marlon Brando). While the film does stray from the literary narrative in several ways — like Marlow being replaced by Willard — it maintains a few core details, like Kurtz' dying cry being "the horror, the horror" (Coppola), and the primitive jungle being one of dehumanizing darkness and destruction.

With *Heart of Darkness* being, as Parrinder submits, the "most over-interpreted literary text of the last hundred years" ("Heart" 85), it is no surprise that it has taken on various iterations across multiple media platforms. With its apocalyptic elements, more or less, being eclipsed now by the motifs of jungle fever, war trauma, and the assassination mission, the novella has deviated from its more cosmic and pessimistic outlook. Nevertheless, if Wells is right in his conjecture that *Heart of Darkness* will be read and celebrated two millennia in the future (Wells, *When* 93), perhaps, some time before the "sun goes dark," there will be artists and screenwriters shining a light on its solar entropic elements.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION AND SCIENCE WILL "SAVE THE LAND"[16]: BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA*,

MODERN ECUMENICALISM, AND THE APOCALYPTIC IMAGINARY

In the first chapter, I discussed how Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898) combines old

and new myths in order to educate his fin-de-siècle audience on Darwinian and Huxleyan

theories, as well as to regenerate them for evolutionary progression and societal unity. In the

previous chapter, I argued how Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) explores the gloom of

imperial London and the entropy of the universe in order to awaken the senses of his readers, and

to stand out as a modern writer. For this chapter, I will explain how Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

(1897) distinguishes himself from the atheistic or pessimistic viewpoints of these and other

fin-de-siècle authors and their works by embracing both religious and rationalistic ideas. As

Christopher Herbert notes, *Dracula*'s "militant homiletic rhetoric" and "religiously saturated"

story not only differentiates it from other popular vampire texts of the century, like Polidori's *The*

Vampyre (1819) and Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), but establishes it as one of the most religious

novels of the fin-de-siècle (101).

In order to accomplish this, I will explore the development of Stoker's interest in

religious folklore, scientific rationalism, and disease theory by critically analyzing his early

works — like *Under the Sunset* (1872), *The Snake's Pass* (1890) and "The Burial of Rats" (1896)

— alongside *Dracula* (1897). In doing so, I will reveal how *Dracula* can be read as a narrative of

how Britain can prevent a degenerative apocalypse (coming from the East) by way of ecumenical

modernism, or in other words, the coming together of Protestants, Catholics and scientists to

combat ancient superstitions and diseases. I will argue that Stoker's childhood and college

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[16] B. Stoker, "The Invisible" 71.

education, his tutelage in science and disease theory from his mother and his siblings in the

medical field, as well as his political leanings, provided him with a unique perspective on how

imperial Britons could unite to fight off dissident forces and reverse colonization.

While some of Stoker's contemporaries read *Dracula* as a Christian allegory of Saint

George's slaying of the *drakul* (dragon), with attention placed on Van Helsing's wielding of a

cross and his reference to the Crew of Light as "knights" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 522), later

scholars, like Maurice Richardson and C.F. Bentley interpreted the novel as a sexual allegory,

with its presentation of virtuous English heroines being preyed upon by a foreign Other. Writing

at a time when theoretical and psychoanalytic criticisms of the novel emerged, Richardson

contends that it should be read "from a Freudian standpoint" because "from no other does the

story make any sense — it is seen as a kind of incestuous, necrophilous, oral-anal-sadistic all-in

wrestling match" (427). Taking it a step further in 2010, Barry McCrea proposes that *Dracula* is

a homosexual parody of the marriage structure that is utilized in most Victorian literature. He

argues that the novel should be read from the viewpoint of a closeted gay-man (Harker) who

escapes the gender binary in Transylvania, and who acts like a tortured wife to the Count while

imprisoned in his castle ("Heterosexual").

Critics like Roger Luckhurst chiefly observe *Dracula* to be an "uncanny echo-box of its

place and time, a text [that] is less a didactic allegory than a rich, open matrix that is so

overloaded with possibility that it is continually falling into contradiction" ("Introduction" xix).

Indeed, the Count's allegorical prospects have swung from everything from sexual allegories,

drug addiction, corporate and consumeristic excess, the AIDS epidemic, to genocidal racism,

illegal immigration (xxxii), and animal rights.

Like many scholars before me, I approach *Dracula* as a resonant text, one that can be interpreted to mean a multitude of things to an ever-changing audience. "[O]ne of the attractions of [Stoker's] writing is its polyphony," Maunder notes, "and thus its potential to resist fixed readings" (143). In fact, Stoker's complexity, and seemingly contradictory viewpoints, contribute to the resonance and mythical status of his novel.

My intention is to recover the Christian allegorical and apocalyptic dimensions of *Dracula* that have been marginalized by much recent criticism, like Post-Freudian criticism, which tends to focus on the latent ideas of the novel and less on its manifest, religious ones. For instance, I perceive that the Count can be read as a degenerative force, one that threatens Christian identity and mission, Victorian social customs, and evolutionary progress. As Clive Leatherdale states, "[*Dracula*] can [...] be seen as a microcosm of decadent late nineteenth-century England faced with the threat of an evolutionary apocalypse" (191). He is initially considered "the perfect law-abiding citizen" (Leatherdale 186), with his learning of British customs: "the Count stayed with me, chatting and asking questions of every conceivable subject" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 72). It is later shown, however, that he wants to exterminate London and its high societies, becoming, as Dr. Seward writes in his diary, a "father or furtherer of a new order of beings, whose road must lead through Death, not Life" (497).

Like "King Death," the supernatural villain from Stoker's earliest novel *Under the Sunset* (1881), the Count is also the embodiment of disease coming from the "wild places" ("Under" 2659) of Transylvania to plague England, and later the world. He threatens all of humankind with his contaminated blood, primal sexuality, and infernal pedigree. As Jonathan Harker writes, he "might, amongst [London's] teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless" (121). Dracula is both an atavistic

and plague-carrying creature, and it is up to the Crew of Light to find a modern cure to prevent

his "incestuous community" of "genetically deformed sub-species," as Leatherdale describes

them ("Christianity" 848), from overtaking the West.

My approach to *Dracula* as an ecumenical text, one that exhibits how the old and new

come together to prevent Dracula's evolutionary apocalypse, is a relatively new one. Alison

Milbank, whose *God and the Gothic* (2018) is a vital study in comprehending how religious

comradeship is present in *The Snake's Pass* (1890), and how the authority of the Church is

needed to vanquish vampirism in *Dracula*, does not emphasize the apocalyptic elements of the

Count, nor examine Stoker's other pre-*Dracula* texts for their inspiration. Similarly, Christopher

Herbert's article "Vampire Religion" (2002), does fine work in discussing how sacred

instruments, like wafers and holy water, are used by the Crew of Light in fighting off vampirism,

which is a "dark mutation of Christian forms" (111), but does not give much attention to Stoker's

other literature, nor to how *Dracula* broadens the apocalyptic imaginary. Ross G. Forman's

article "A Parasite for Sore Eyes" (2016), which centers on the fear of degeneration through

metaphors of infection in *Dracula*, considers several disease theories that could be associated

with the bloodsucking Count, but abstains from making connections with *Under the Sunset*

(1881); nor does he explain the wide-scale apocalyptic and degenerative effects of parasitic

vampirism. Comparably, Martin Willis, who does link disease theories from *Dracula* and *Under

the Sunset* in his article "'The Invisible Giant,' Dracula, and Disease" (2007), as well as educate

his readers on the degenerative effects of disease on an individual's identity (and on the nation as

a whole), refrains from discussing how both religion and science can combat an invisible or

vampiric plague. Also, all of these texts, as well as the others I cite throughout the chapter, do

not provide a comparative analysis of Stoker, Conrad, and Wells' imperial Gothic texts, and how they widen the Victorian apocalyptic imaginary of the day.

Before I explain further how ecumenical modernism prevents an evolutionary apocalypse in *Dracula*, I need to discuss how this chapter will be structured. Following the introduction, I will briefly describe Stoker's private persona, and how he did not leave much of a paper trail in regards to who he was or what he believed. Thanks to second-hand accounts, and some autobiographical data, I will provide details on his socio-political affiliations during the fin de siècle, and how he was viewed as an "inherently contradictory" figure (Maunder 143), one who held seemingly clashing associations and ideologies. This will further explain why he was inclined to merge the "old" with the "new," the religious with the scientific and technological, within *Dracula*.

Following this, I will track the development of Stoker's apocalyptic imagination by discussing how the Anglo-Irish author combines elements from his previous writings in order to address "new" concerns, like gender relations, disease theory, new colonialism, within his Gothic novel. To accomplish this, I will critically engage with *Under the Sunset* (1881), his children's fairytale and religious allegory, which draws upon ideas from British invasion narratives, Biblical apocalyptic literature, and disease theories. I will look into *The Snake's Pass* (1890), an adventure novel set in Ireland that underlines Stoker's attention to internationalism, and Catholics and Protestants working together. I will also look into his Gothic short story "The Burial of Rats" (1896), which presents rodents as markers of unsanitary environments and carriers of degenerative diseases. I will explain how these texts feed into *Dracula*, how their ideas and tropes are expanded upon and intertwined together in order for Stoker's vampiric, apocalyptic tale to be fully realized.

Throughout the chapter, I will also highlight how *Dracula* explores invasion theory and apocalypse different from that of Wells and Conrad; how religion can be a solution for not only overcoming dissident forces — like Eastern invaders, ancient superstitions, and sexualized young women — but in preventing societal decline. Lastly, I will comment on the mythical nature of the text, how its capacity to be interpreted in a multitude of ways generates its radical cultural responses and broad resonance.

Stoker, A Man of Contradictions

While Stoker was involved with the political and literary world through his mentor and employer Henry Irving, he did not — as far one can tell through from his personal letters, autobiographical notes, and estate library — have a connection with, nor read, Wells and Conrad. Unlike these two Victorian writers who left behind detailed journals, frequent correspondence with friends and family, and autobiographical books or essays, Stoker did not take interest in writing about himself. Even though his biography on Irving, *Personal Reminiscences* (1906), features brief excerpts regarding his childhood, education, and early career, the two-volume set is predominantly on theatre management, his exposure to "representatives of all the learned professions; [...] of all the great industries" (205), and his friendship with Irving, a friendship he described as "profound, as close, [and] as lasting as can be between two men" (21).

Indeed, in 1876, Stoker saw Irving perform *The Dream of Eugene Aram* (1831) on stage at Trinity Dublin College. According to McGrath, he was "so moved" by the performance "that he had to be carried from the room in a fit of hysterics" (43). The two men formed an instant bond, and later, Irving asked Stoker to be his business and front-of-house manager at the Lyceum Theatre in London (43). Excited for the position, Stoker married Florence Balcombe, moved to

England, and worked as his assistant for over twenty-five years. During that time, he became

infatuated with Irving and even became jealous when his boss spent time with other employees

(43).

Privacy, whether in his own life or in Irving's affairs, was something Stoker took quite

seriously. He states in *Personal Reminiscences*:

> Thus I can say all through Irving's management from the time of my joining him in 1878
>
> till the time of my handing over such matters as were in my care to his executors — by
>
> their own desire, after his will had been found, and before his funeral — no one, except
>
> Irving himself, myself, and the chartered accountants (who made audit and whose
>
> profession is one sworn to individual secrecy) knew Irving's affairs. (428)

The confidentiality of Stoker's life has been an obvious struggle for biographers and scholars

alike. In *Dracula: The Novel and the Legend* (1993), Leatherdale remarks, "Close acquaintance

with Bram Stoker is regrettably not possible. His immortal creation lives on but the author

remains elusive. Even with the arrival of a number of biographies, nothing but the basics of

Stoker's life have been revealed. It is known what he did, but not who he was" (56). Roger

Luckhurst also comments that:

> Stoker is a [...] figure of ambiguity, a man of contradictions, a public fixture in London
>
> life yet somehow unknowable, a political Liberal but cultural Conservative, someone
>
> who could write in favour of the censorship of 'emotions [...] arising from sexual
>
> impulses' in literature, and yet produce a text in *Dracula* dripping with all manner of
>
> perversity. ("Introduction" xii)

Barbara Belford, who had sole access to unpublished material on the Anglo-Irish writer, admits

that Stoker "took many secrets with him," whether that be about his private life, or about the

meaning behind his stories (xv). In July 1897, Mrs. Boyd-Carpenter, the wife of the Bishop of

Ripon, wrote a letter to Stoker, celebrating *Dracula* as "an allegory of sin" targeted at "those

whose belle-lettres repel" (Boyd-Carpenter). However, she was concerned that she was "reading

into it more than [he] meant" (Boyd-Carpenter). While Stoker's response to her was never

discovered, he provides a vague answer to a comparable question in the July 1897 edition of the

British Weekly. The interviewer Jane Stoddard reports:

> In a recent leader on "Dracula," published in a provincial newspaper, it is suggested that
>
> high moral lessons might be gathered from the book. I asked Mr. Stoker whether he had
>
> written with a purpose, but on this point he would give no definite answer, "I suppose
>
> that every book of the kind must contain some lesson," he remarked; "but I prefer that
>
> readers should find it out for themselves." ("Mr. Bram" 185)

> With Stoker being both a confidential person and cryptic author, one of contradictions, I

will attempt to do my part with the data that is available to me, in providing accurate

biographical information on him and an analysis of his early texts. As Andrew Maunder

discusses in *Bram Stoker* (2006), his critical study on the author's career and engagement with

gender and nationhood, "[Stoker] remains inherently contradictory. Like a holograph he seems to

shift. He is at once devoted son, Irish outsider, loyal servant, the hearty epitome of English

muscular Christianity, sexual neurotic, scandalous master of horror fiction, and harbinger of the

commercial degradation of fiction" (143).

> In November 1872, during a lecture at Trinity Dublin College's Historical Society, Stoker

revealed his early political leanings by campaigning for internationalism, more specifically, a

concord between nations like Ireland and Britain. Ronald Hyam, author of *Britain's Imperial*

Century, 1815-1914 (1976), describes Stoker's internationalism as "[t]he Liberal solution to the

problem of governing the colonies [and] to grant them responsible self-government while retaining them [...] in a loose union such as a Commonwealth" (250). How Stoker envisioned Ireland and England achieving their own self-government — whether that be through an Irish Parliament in charge of its own domestic affairs but designating imperial matters to Britain's Parliament, or something else completely, is up for debate. In *Personal Reminiscences*, at a time when Prime Minister Gladstone's first two Home Rule bills were introduced and then rejected by Parliament, Stoker describes himself as "a philosophical Home-Ruler" (263). The concept of Home Rule for Ireland, according to Hyam, was an implementation of the internationalism concept (50-51): it was removing the oppression of colonialism, while still being loyal to imperial Britain and the international community.

In *The Snake's Pass*, an adventure tale I will briefly analyze alongside *Dracula* later in this chapter, one reads of the wealthy Englishman Arthur Severn who constructs protective walls and a harbor near Carnacliff, Ireland, and uses new irrigation techniques to excavate minerals from the soil. Comparable industrial ideas can be found in Robert Kane's *The Industrial Resources of Ireland* (1844), a text that influenced Irish nationalists like Thomas Davis, as well as English liberals, to imagine the rich prospects of an Irish Home Rule. It is likely that given Stoker's belief in a philosophical Home Rule, and his many political acquaintances due to his association with Irving, he would have been aware of, possibly even inspired by Kane's work. His nationalistic pride and passion for Irish renewal can also be spotted in his book collection. Among them, he had acquired an autographed copy of W.B. Yeats's *The Countess Kathleen* (1892), William Carleton texts on the peasant life in rural Ireland (Glover 29), and novels by his friends, Sir William and Lady Wilde, Oscar Wilde's parents.

Despite being a Home-Ruler, and routinely judged for his Irish appearance, as by Horace Wyndham who characterized him as "a big, red-bearded, untidy Irishman" (118), Stoker still considered cosmopolitan London to be "the best possible place for a literary man" ("Mr. Bram" 185). Months after visiting his theatre troupe in London in June 1877, and witnessing Irving play Hamlet, Richard III, and Matthias in *The Bells* in Dublin that winter, Stoker was contacted about a job opening at the Lyceum Theater. He excitedly wrote in his diary days later: "London in view" (*Personal Reminiscences* 34). When he finally relocated to England, following in the footsteps of three of his brothers, he was "reared a conservative in a conservative country," and eventually came to know "everybody worth knowing"; often inviting "interesting people," like playwright and humorist W.S. Gilbert over to his Chelsea abode (Wyndham 119).

It seems fitting then that W.S. Gilbert, who famously wrote, "That every boy and every gal, That's born into the world alive, Is either a little Liberal, Or else a little Conservative" (Sullivan 28), was a close contact of the nationally and politically torn Stoker. For as Glover states, the Anglo-Irish author had a dual allegiance throughout his literary career: on the one hand, he was supporter of Ireland's culture and causes (28), and on the other, he craved to be outside the "backwardness," "the philistinism," and "parochial cultural milieu" (27) of his home country, and become a "more formal imperial-metropolitan" (23). When he was twenty-four, and still working as a civil servant in Dublin, he wrote to Walt Whitman and thanked him for writing poetry that transported him "away from the world around [him]" and placing him in the "ideal land" of America, "your own land of progress" (Letter to Walt 184). "Like many advanced Liberals," Glover points out, "Stoker looked to scientific growth as the key to modernization" (13).

For Stoker, part of Ireland's future prosperity depended on technological and industrial advancements, much like England's. In May 1907, he published two essays for *The World's Work*: "The World's Greatest Ship-Building Yard" and "The Great White Fair," the latter which describes the "wonderful things" happening to "start the island upon a new career of industrial progress" (571). Gleefully recounting the Fair itself, he notes that it was "organised and arranged for the display of the direct and indirect results of learning, science and art, and illustrative of that progress which follows in their wake" (574). According to the editorial, this special edition of *World's Work* was to communicate "a message of hope from a new Ireland," whose rejuvenation was to be carried out by cultural and economic renewal, embodied by the Gaelic League, which had "sent a new thrill of life throughout the length and the breadth of the Island" (Anon., "Ireland" 566).

One can see Stoker's affinity for scientific growth in how the multinational Crew of Light attacks the "philistinism" and "backwardness" of the Count. While adaptations of the novel tend to overemphasize the Count's repulsion of religious symbols and artifacts, Carol Senf reminds one that *Dracula* "suggest[s] that modern science and technology are perhaps equally important in the fight against evil" (*Science* 17). In the first few pages of the novel, "full-blown solicitor" (60) Harker expresses his annoyance with Romania's antiquated steam-engines, complaining in a letter to his fiance Mina that his "train was an hour late" (36). Continually proving himself to be on the cutting edge of Western inventions, he takes snapshots of Dracula's Carfax estate with his Kodak camera: "I have taken with my Kodak views of it from various points" (71). He memorizes train schedules so he can travel quicker; and writes in his diary shorthand: "Jonathan Harker's Journal 'Kept in shorthand'" (36). In fact, his shorthand abilities save him from an early demise, for the Count is incapable of decoding his distress symbols to Mina.

The other members of the Crew of Light also share Jonathan's enthusiasm for the latest

technological extensions. Mina transcribes audio recordings in triplicate form, practices

shorthand journaling and memorizes train schedules, like her husband, and carries a "Traveller's'

typewriter" with her during the Crew of Light's expedition to Transylvania, where she "enter[s]

everything," all of the information surrounding the Count's capture, "up to the moment" (566).

As Richard Menke notes:

> The vampire-hunters know how to manage the information they have, how to put it to
>
> use. Finally, as if reenacting Dracula's attack on their documents, they destroy his
>
> material body and place his information in their files. [...] The typewriter — the typist,
>
> the machine — has circulated information and dispatched Dracula's matter. [...] The
>
> future belongs to those who turn dictation and everything else — into information.
>
> (155-6)

The numerous other advancements the Crew of Light use throughout the novel include: Dr.

Seward journaling by recording his thoughts into a phonograph machine, Quincey Morris

supplying the Crew of Light with Winchesters, the first lever-action repeating rifle, during their

hunt for the Count, and the Crew making frequent use of telecommunications, like telephone and

telegraphs, while spying on Dracula's whereabouts: "You must send me the telegram every day;

and if there be cause I shall come again," Dr. Seward writes to Holmwood (B. Stoker, *Dracula*

218). Valdine Clemens aptly points out that, "Even the first opening of a vampire's coffin is

accompanied not by the traditional paraphernalia of stake and cross, but by Van Helsing's fret

saw and turnscrew, which he employs in a remarkably methodical manner, considering the

gruesome nature of the situation" (158). With all of these technological recreations, the Crew of

Light could be described, just as Harker refers to his own writing style, as "nineteenth century up-to-date with a vengeance" (93; Senf, *Science* 18).

Never letting his political or religious affiliations interfere with his literary and theatre career, Stoker became friends with both Irish nationalists and Tories. In terms of the former, he was in frequent connection with Michael Davitt, the Irish republican and Home Rule reformer, and Irish nationalist leader William O'Brien, and even joined London's National Liberal Club. According to Glover, "One of the first to congratulate him on his new appointment was the cosmopolitan Edward Dowden, who pointedly admonished Stoker not to cut himself off from his friends in Ireland" (28). Even though Stoker was an Anglo-Irish Protestant, who worked for the Dublin Civil Service for ten years and was a minor member of the Protestant Ascendancy, he had a drive to bond together Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Protestants for the sake of "renewed nation-building," as Milbank calls it (233).

Stoker's interest in ecumenical modernism, and "renewed nation-building," could have been partly inspired by his friends' Christian universalistic teachings. In 1877, Westminster archdeacon F.W. Farrar, a student of universalist F.D. Maurice, as well as an acquaintance of Stoker's, published a collection of five sermons on the "larger hope" (Pike 124) of restoration called *Eternal Hope*. Farrar, like his teacher, perceived that the New Testament word for "eternal" (Gk: αἰώνιος) refers to God's everlasting nature, and not to a temporal reality. As Thomas Allin phrases it, αἰώνιος is "the quality of the divine life, not the quantity of life (or punishment)" (T. Allin xxvi). Therefore, it is possible that there may be a "future purification" period for non-believers (Farrar 19), and those who obstinately resist God will simply be extinguished instead of eternally tormented (54).

For Maurice, in particular, a "larger hope" meant that all people — Catholics, Protestants, atheists, rationalists, etc. — may not only have a home together in heaven, but should create a unified spiritual society, here and now. He states that no person should be "content with a spiritual society which is not universal, and with a universal society which is not spiritual" (206). Indeed, in an effort of "shared universalism," as Milbank writes, Farrar invited "[Henry] Irving to act scenes from Tennyson's play, *Becket*, in May 1897, in aid of Canterbury's Cathedral's restoration" (232).

Stoker was also friends with Alfred, Lord Tennyson, a Christian universalist in his own right (Parsons 181), and a close companion of Farrar. In the spring of 1890, during a short walk around Tennyson's garden, the two discussed Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850), a poem Stoker called "faithful, tender, [and] understanding," something that speaks of "faith and the need of faith" (*Personal* 141). Even though it was written many years before Maurice's and Farrar's ministerial career, the poem includes Tennyson's desperate cry for a broad church theology, writing: "I stretch lame hands hands of faith, and grope, / And gather dust and chaff, and call / To what I feel is Lord of all, / And faintly trust *the larger hope*" (Tennyson 216; italics mine). At the end of their conversation, the eighty-two-year-old poet tells Stoker something that he "shall never forget": "You know I don't believe in an eternal hell, with an All merciful God. I believe in the All merciful God! It would be better otherwise that men should believe they are only ephemera!" (*Personal* 141).

With this medley of political, artistic, and religious acquaintances, it is no wonder that Stoker made it a habit in his literature of bringing together, as Luckhurst points out, "solitary, disparate men and binds them into a blood-brotherhood" ("Introduction" xix). In *The Snake's Pass* (1890), for instance, a Catholic (Father Ryan), Presbyterians (Joyce and Norah), and an

Anglican (Severn) overcome their religious and class divide to free St. Patrick's isle from the corrupt money-lender, Murdock (Milbank 234-5). In *Dracula*, too, an English lawyer (Harker), aristocrat (Holmwood), and psychologist (Seward), as well as an American cowboy (Morris), and a Dutch doctor and theologian (Van Helsing), join forces to repel the degenerative threat of Count Dracula (as I will show later). While it is not known if Stoker subscribed to the Christian universalism of his friends and acquaintances, it seems plausible that he shared in some form of "wider hope," and that a unified society of Irish Catholics and Anglicans, and even Bible-believers and rationalists, could exist within England.

Under the Sunset

Stoker's background in the Scriptures came from his religious education, and his studying of his childhood Bible (P. Murray 27-8). Skal notes that "The Bible [...] was the central book in the Protestant home (where the Stokers, typical of their class, offered daily prayer), though its vocabulary and diction would present difficulties for children of three and four; Stoker was not presented with a personal copy until the age of ten" (56). At Trinity College, Dublin, which Stoker attended from 1864 to 1870, theological training would have been recommended, and attending chapels and catechetical lectures would have been, in most cases, requisite (McDowell and Webb 129, 283-87). His journals reveal that he was familiar with Archdeacon William Lee, a lecturer at Trinity who was hired to revise the New Testament (Miller and Stoker 281); and his college friend, William Fitzgerald, who partially illustrated *Under the Sunset*, became a clergyman after graduation (Reiter 235). Despite being inundated with religious influences and doctrines, Stoker was regarded by some of his peers as sarcastic towards the Faith, one who left made-up "creeds to his sisters and their nurse" (Miller and Stoker 295). Yet,

despite these claims, he continued meditating on the Holy Writ throughout his early theatre and writing career, and even wrote Biblically-inspired poems (Miller and Stoker 15–16, 30–33, 40–41), like "One Thing Needful" (1885), a poem that he published in *The Youth's Companion* about Luke 10:38-42 (522).

As Geoffrey Reiter points out, "Stoker's works demonstrate both a substantial background knowledge of the Bible and a willingness to cite and appeal to it as authoritative" (236). In his article "The Censorship of Fiction" (1908), Stoker states that Jesus's parables can be a framework for how "moral" fiction ought to be written (484). He writes:

> The highest of all teachers and moralists, Christ Himself, did not disdain it as a method or opportunity of carrying great truth. But He seemed to hold it as His chosen means of seeking to instil truth. What is a parable but a novel in little? [...] When Christ taught in such a way, are we to reprobate the method or even to forgo it? Should we not rather encourage and protect so potent a form of teaching, and guard it against evil use? (484)

Stoker's first published collection of short stories — *Under the Sunset* (1881) — is a series of Christian allegories for children. Even though children were his intended audience, early critical reviews cautioned readers that the dismal "imagery may be too much for young minds, and could banish sleep from the children's pillows" (Anon., Review of *Under* 431). Similarly, Annette Lyster from *Punch* teased the author for his religious snobbery and solemnity in his collection, stating: "It's very pretty to look at as to binding, pictures, and general get-up. Our special child critic says, 'Oh yes, I like it, but it's rather too goody-goody. One of the stories reminds me of David and Goliath,'— ('Tell it not in Gath,' Mr STOKER)— 'and there's not very much to laugh at" (261). A few reviewers saw past its apparent missteps, like one critic from *Notes and Queries*, who called it "wholesome," albeit "allegorical and fanciful" (Anon., "Notes" 399).

The eight tales featured in the collection all take place in the oneiric land of Under the Sunset, a time-honored monarchy reminiscent of Britain's that is only accessible to visitors through their dreams: "This Country is like our own Country in many ways. It has men and women, kings and queens, rich and poor; [...] They do not know that they are different from us; and we do not know that we are different from them." (B. Stoker, "Under" 2). As illustrated in the story's introduction, the country is characterized by its luscious fountains, private gardens, and mid-afternoon naps: "When it is sunset here, it is the middle of the day. The clouds gather and shade the Land from the great heat. Then for a little while everything goes to sleep. This sweet, peaceful hour is called the Rest Time" (3). During Rest Time, the country is guarded by crouching dogs who alert the country-folk and other wildlife of suspicious visitors. If a visitor is found guilty of malicious intent or behavior before the court of law, they are incarcerated and/or excommunicated.

When a visitor leaves the country they do so in the same way they had arrived — in a dreamlike state; if a citizen decides to leave, they must travel through a remote Portal that is guarded by two angels, both named Fid-Def. This Portal is located near the country's "wild places," the darker, poisonous territory outside Under the Sunset where "wild animals and all cruel things have their home," (5) and Giants, Diseases, Plagues, and the spirit of Famine have been rumored to exist. King Death — the spirit of entropy, degeneration, and death in the stories — and his Children are also believed to dwell around the "wild places." The citizens of Under the Sunset are constantly warned to be on their best behavior so that when they do finally meet King Death, "they may not fear to behold his face" (6).

A time comes, though, when the citizens' hearts "grew cold" and "heeded not the lessons which they had been taught" (6). The Fid-Def agree that permitting the Children of Death to

come through the Portal and attack the country's citizens may regenerate them back to an upright character:

> The Children of Death when they enter — as they are about to do — shall do much good
> in the Land, which they wish to harm. For lo! the hearts of the people are corrupt. [...]
> Some grief or sadness must be to them, that so they may see the error of their ways. As
> they spoke, the Angels wept in sorrow for the misdeeds of the people and the pain they
> must endure. (9)

Taking a variety of forms, and riding on clouds, birds, and rodents, the Children of Death infiltrate Under the Sunset, stalking and terrorizing the dwellers of the Land; judging them for their "misdeeds" (9).

Similar to Wells' Anglican mother, Sarah, who taught a religion of judgment, Stoker's Irish Protestant mother, Charlotte, cultivated in her son an early fascination with Biblical concepts like God's wrath on an obstinate humanity. Characterized for her authoritative presence in the household, and for educating her children in the Bible and in Celtic folklore, she "was a practical, no-nonsense woman who nonetheless had a countervailing and lifelong weakness for things irrational, fantastic, and macabre," according to Skal (37). Spending her formative years in Sligo, Ireland, "one of Ireland's richest repositories of Celtic folklore" (37), she and her family agonized through the cholera epidemic of the 1830s and 1840s. In her unpublished manuscript "Experiences of the cholera in Ireland" (1873), she discusses the terror that she felt as the mysterious plague turned her coastal town into a "City of the Dead" (12) in a matter of days:

> But still the rumor of the Great Plague broke on us from time to time, [and] gradually the
> terror grew on us as we heard of it coming nearer and nearer. [...] and (with wild afright)
> we began to hear a whisper pass "It is in Ireland." Then men's senses began failing them

for fear, and deeds were done (in selfish dread) enough to call down God's direct

vengeance upon us. One I vividly remember, a poor traveller was taken ill on the roadside

some miles from the town, and how did those Samaritans tend him? They dug a pit and

with long poles pushed him living into it and covered him up alive. But God's hand is not

to be thus stayed and severely like Sodom did our city pay for such crimes. (12)

At a time in which no one was immune to the effects of famine and disease, Charlotte was living

first-hand her own Gothic plague narrative[17]: families were being quarantined; workhouses were

being converted into "death houses" (Skal 9-10); emaciated farmers were inundating the city

slums; neighbors were experiencing nose bleeds, excessive vomiting, and fatal diarrhea; and

cholera-carts or doctor carriages were rattling down the dirt roads collecting corpses. On one

occasion, when Charlotte's family was departing Sligo at the height of the epidemic, they were

hauled out from their carriage by a mob who attempted to "burn the cholera" out of them (C.

Stoker 11).

By the end of 1832, more than 1,500 citizens of Sligo had died due to cholera (J. Taylor

54). From 1845 to 1849, more than one million Irish had died from smallpox, dysentery, and

other epidemic infections (Geary 27). As in *Under the Sunset*, it was as if the Children of Death

had passed through some Irish "Portal" and were terrorizing dwellers of the Emerald Isle.

Even though Charlotte thanks "God, who had spared [her family] through such dangerous

and trying times and scenes" (18), it is probable she thought He was punishing the community

for their cold hearts and misdeeds. Rev. Terence O'Rorke states in *History of the Parishes of*

Ballysadare and Kilvarnet (1878) that supernatural forces were suspected to be at work in Sligo

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[17] Popular Gothic plague narratives include Charles Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn* (1799), Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), Edgar Allan Poe's "The Mask of the Red Death" (1842), Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899), Jack London's "The Scarlett Plague" (1912), and Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954). Plot points typically include an unidentified disease, characters in quarantine, a scarcity of resources, and selfless caregivers.

during the 1832 outbreak: "One man fancied he had heard unearthly sounds; another that he had seen portentous sights in the heavens; and all agreed in saying that a dark cloud hung over the devoted town" (37). Being a strict woman of faith, and a teacher of the Scriptures, Charlotte would have been familiar with Old and New Testament passages that detail God's judgment and use of plagues. For instance, in Deuteronomy 28:58-61, the Hebrew author chronicles God's punishment on Israel for disobeying His laws: "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, [...] Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance [...] until thou be destroyed" (*KJV*).

Charlotte likely repeated these horror tales of "death houses" and epidemic infections, as well as Scriptures about "extraordinary afflictions," to her impressionable children. With her inflexible instruction for them to read their Bibles, and for them to be skilled in language and literacy, or else to be "reduced to the level of [a] brute creation" ("On" 456), she undoubtedly left an impression on Stoker's Gothic imagination. Daniel Farson reports that "the [Stokers] were in awe of Charlotte if not actually afraid of her. When one of the boys failed to come in first in an examination, she did not conceal her resentment, even though he came second out of a thousand" (Farson 13).

In "The Invisible Giant" (1882), the third story in the *Under the Sunset* collection, the narrative picks up generations after the David and Goliath-like events of "The Rose Prince" (the second story in the collection) transpired. The Land of Under the Sunset was no longer at "perfect peace" (45) for the citizens had forgotten about King Mago's son, Prince Zaphir, and how he had slayed the Giants of No-Man's-Land. In fact, the citizens had forgotten about most things in and outside of their Portal, the Giants included: "they did not fear them because they

did not see them" (46). Without proper leadership, they could not heed "the lessons they had been taught" ("Under" 6), or remember the dangers looming outside their Land; they became lazy and self-involved, which in turn left a percentage of the population in dire condition. As the narrator states:

> People had become more selfish and more greedy, and had tried to grasp all they could for themselves. There were some very rich and there were many poor. Most of the beautiful gardens were laid waste. Houses had grown up close round the palace; and in some of these dwelt many persons who could only afford to pay for part of a house. ("The Invisible" 45)

The Fid-Def were despondent at the state of the Country, constantly "moaning and sobbing," and were unable to guard the Portals from "any evil thing [that] went by them" (46). One day, Zaya, an impoverished orphan girl who lived alone near the palace, beheld a "vast shadowy Form with its arms raised" (51) in the sky beyond the city. She saw that "[i]t was shrouded in a great misty robe that covered it, fading away into air so that she could only see the face and the grim, spectral hands" (51). Believing it to be one of the Giants from No-Man's-Land, she alerted the city-folk of the approaching foe, but they could not see its translucent Form and just assumed she was deranged. Distraught from all their teasing, Zaya ran from her city towards the Form, and cried out to it to have mercy on the impoverished citizens of Under the Sunset: "Oh, do not, do not, great Giant, do them harm. If someone must suffer, let it be me. Take me, I am willing to die, but spare them. Spare them, great Giant and do with me even as thou wilt" (54). The Giant ignored her selfless pleas and slowly moved towards her city. Although he was unable to see the Giant, an older townsman — Knoal — witnessed "the little

maid['s]" (56) entreaties to the mysterious Form, and believed her to be an honest and noble

child, and invited her into his stone building to take refuge.

Inside, she told Knoal about the Giant, that it "was so great that all the sky seemed filled.

How the great arms were outspread, veiled in his robe, till far away the shroud was lost in air.

How the face was as that of a strong man, pitiless, yet without malice; and that the eyes were

blind" (55). As William Hughes points out in *Beyond Dracula* (2000), "the blind eyes and lack

of malice are gestures akin to the conventional portrait of blindfolded Justice," for the Giant is

persecuting his victims based on their evil deeds, and not on their status or appearance (27).

Concerned for the city-folk, the two heroes left Knoal's refuge and warned those in the

marketplace of what Zaya had witnessed. The city-folk jeered at them both, and continued in

their degenerate activities until the heroes broke down in tears. Zaya composed herself and

noticed — "with joyous surprise" (B. Stoker, "The Invisible" 61) — that the Giant had suddenly

vanished.

Instead of the city-folk celebrating that their lives had been spared, they proposed to

"duck" both Knoal and Zaya's heads in a fountain, "as a lesson to liars who would frighten us"

(61). Before they could do so, however, the ringleader of the group "cried out in great pain" and

his "face grew blacker and blacker"; then those in the marketplace began to shriek — "'The

Giant! the Giant! he is indeed amongst'" — and fell down dead (62). As the narrator states,

"[T]heir wailing sounded louder and louder, for the Giant-Plague was amongst and around them,

and there was no escaping, for it was now too late to fly" (63).

For many days there was "pain and grief" (63) in Under the Sunset. Zaya and Knoal did

as much as they could to protect and aid the city-folk, but "the unseen Giant was amongst them,

wandering through the city to and fro, so that none could tell where next he would lay his

ice-cold hand" (63). Some of their compatriots attempted to escape into the "wild places," but the Giant's influence was too extensive, and he found them and turned their "hearts to ice with his breath" (63). Many of the poor whose lives were spared by the Giant eventually passed-away in their cramped, stacked houses: "[I]t was all, oh! so sad, for there was nothing but grief and fear and weeping from morn till night" (64).

Carol Senf theorizes that Stoker's expeditions around St. Patrick's Isle in the 1870s may have contributed to the "impoverished landscapes" ("The Snake's" 66) of "The Invisible Giant" and other tales from *Under the Sunset*, as well as his other early fiction like *The Snake's Pass* (1890) and *Lady Athlyne* (1908): "Because the references [to Ireland] are overt in *The Snake's Pass* and *Lady Athlyne*, they are good preparation for exploring veiled references in Stoker's other novels" (70). While documenting the wide expanse of his country, Stoker would have made note of the deplorable conditions of the Dublin slums. With "little housing [...] built for Dublin's working-class population" (Galavan 8) throughout the Victorian era, and impoverished families living in cramped, unsanitary, and dilapidated houses, he would have witnessed a version of *Under the Sunset*'s urban decay, with its houses "grown up close round the palace" and the "many persons who could only afford to pay for part of a house" (45). Describing the poverty of Stoker's youth in the metropolitan city, Gary Owens notes that:

> [T]here was hardly an area of Dublin where the destitute could not be found: Prunty shows them living literally in the shadows of the finest Georgian homes, in cramped courts behind the better shops, and in the dark cellars of houses on both sides of the Liffey. Unlike their British counterparts, they were not the victims of industrialization but of the absence of industry. (36)

This type of city-wide destitution and lack of industrialization is what Stoker eventually departed from by moving to London in 1878; it is also what he hoped would change through technological and medical advancements, and "renewed nation building," as Milbank describes it (233).

Zaya and Knoal continued caring for their neighbors by feeding them and supplying them with medicine. Those who recovered were thankful to the two heroes, and "henceforth ever after lived holier and more unselfish lives" ("The Invisible" 64). All of this community service, however, left the two in dire straits: the "little maid" became "pale and thin" (67), and the old man's health was waning swiftly. One morning, Knoal woke with freezing skin, and Zaya knew that the Giant-Plague had finally struck her friend. After escorting him to the marketplace fountain to rest, she spotted the "vast shadowy Form" (51) above her in the clouds, and cried out to it: "Spare him! oh! spare him and take me! but spare him! spare him!" (68). Sadly, Knoal couldn't persevere any longer, and in his final words told Zaya that "[W]e must give for the good of others that which is dearer to us than our lives. Bless you, my little one, and be good. Farewell! Farewell!" (71). As his spirit passed away, the Giant retreated from the city and "looked towards [Zaya] as though he were trying to see" (71). He then raised his arms as if to bless her, and spoke, and the wind bore the echo of his words: "Innocence and devotion save the land" (71).

According to William Hughes, the Biblical story that "The Invisible Giant" parallels most is that of the Old Testament Flood (*Beyond* 26). Genesis 6:5-6 states, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, [...] And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; [...] But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (*KJV*).

This type of language and imagery is replicated in Stoker's short story, with the dwellers of the Land de-generating from pure to corrupt, and laying waste to their heavenly country. Like God, the Fid-Def weep for their citizens' "misdeeds" ("The Invisible" 46), and permit evil to enter their Portal for the sake of national regeneration. Instead of God sending a flood to "blot out" most of humankind, the two angels permit a translucent Form to deliver a plague to half of the population. Like Noah, it is up to the selfless Zaya, and her white-bearded companion, to find favor in the eyes of their invisible Judge, and bring peace to Under the Sunset again.

In *The War of the Worlds* (1895), Wells uses his Martian tripods as apocalyptic agents to jostle imperial Britons out of their evolutionary complacencies, to remind them of their subservience to, not mastery of, the natural environment. In the titular story "Under the Sunset" and "The Invisible Giant," the Giants and Plagues of the "wild places," also act as a violent messengers to the citizens of the Land to continue to heed "the lessons that they were taught," to not become "selfish and more greedy," and to try and "grasp all they could for themselves" ("The Invisible" 45).

In both stories, the attacks by the apocalyptic agents produce a positive transformation in their victims. In the final chapter of *The War of the Worlds*, for instance, after the Martians have been vanquished by the "humblest things" (the Earth's bacteria) (149), the narrator reflects on how the invasion "broadened [...] men's views," and would potentially unify humanity:

> [W]hether we expect another invasion or not, our views of the human future must greatly be modified by these events. We have learned now that we cannot regard this planet as being fenced in and a secure abiding place for Man; [...] It may be that in the larger design of the universe this invasion from Mars is not without its ultimate benefit for men; it has robbed us of that serene confidence in the future which is the most fruitful sources

of decadence, [...] and it has done much to promote the conception of the commonweal of mankind." (158)

In "The Invisible Giant," it is both the devastating plagues of the titular antagonist, and the "[i]nnocence and devotion" of Knoal and Zaya, that prompt renewal in the Land, for after many citizens are nurtured back to health through their aid, the citizens leave "holier and more unselfish lives" (64). In a way, the duo act as the "humblest things" in their own tale, for as impoverished and lonely townsfolk, they have no position of power, no credibility amongst their neighbors. Yet, through their sacrificial alms, they are able to convince their "apocalyptic agent" to return to the "wild places," which incites their fellow citizens to "heed their lessons."

Besides parodying Biblical apocalyptic literature, "The Invisible Giant" also comments on an epidemic, like cholera, and how it can be contracted through unclean food and drink (W. Hughes, *Beyond* 25). The first wave of deaths caused by the Giant take place near the marketplace fountain when the city-folk are attempting to "duck" ("The Invisible" 61) Zaya's head. The narrator states that, "before they could leave the market-place, in the centre of which was the fountain, many fell dead and their corpses lay. [...] the Giant-Plague [...] was amongst and around them, and there was no escaping, for it was now too late to fly" (63). Those stricken by the Giant experience coldness in their extremities, like Knoal who grows "cold as ice" when the Giant lies it "chilly hand [...] upon him" (68), stomach aches (61), and a sunken dark countenance (62).

Cholera was portrayed as apocalyptic, whether directly or indirectly, in a few popular novels of the nineteenth century. In Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), for instance, the human race is exterminated by a mysterious plague that is born out of war-torn Turkey. In fact, the plague commences while the British military is crusading for Greek independence in

Istanbul. "The situation," Guerios points out, "matches with exactitude the first encounter of the British with cholera in India in 1818, during the *Third Anglo-Maratha War*" (71). Eventually, the plague moves its "serpent-head" from Asia and Eastern Europe to the West, terminating all of humanity except the last man, Lionel Verney (M. Shelley 175).

Prior to writing the novel, Shelley edited her cousin Thomas Medwin's travelogue and poetry collection, *Sketches on Hindustan* (1820). In *The Angler in Whales* (1834), Medwin describes his encounter with "the cholera morbid" while traveling with fellow British soldiers from the East India Company encampment in Cawnpore: "One march I shall never forget, it has haunted me to-day. I was in the rear-guard, and did not get to new ground until night, and then left eight hundred men, at least, dead and dying on the road. Such a scene of horror was perhaps never witnessed" (346). Medwin's account of the Bengal-born plague likely helped in shaping Shelley's post-apocalyptic novel, particularly, how a major disease in any region of the world can quickly spark a global pandemic.

The novel was written just as the first outbreak (1817-1824) began to subsist in Asia, and was published just before the second one (1826-1837) began. It was common to portray cholera as a plague arising from the Orient. In fact, Britains and Europeans occasionally referred to as the "monster cholera" (Rogers 60) and the "Asiastic cholera" (Macnamara). As Guerios points out, "caricatures would regularly sketch it as a sort of mummified monster displaying attributes alluding all at once to India, China, and the Ottoman Empire" (70). In Japan, it was portrayed as the hybrid monster, *Korori,* who had the head of a tiger, the torso of a wolf, and the genitals of a badger (Nakamura 13). For Japanese citizens, the three animals together provided a visual representation of how fearsome the disease was.

Five years after the second wave of cholera ended, Poe published *The Masque of the Red Death* (1842), a short story that is set in a "country" that is "long devastated" by the titular plague (288). Besides being set in the Medieval era, and being similar to the Black Death in name, the new disease shares many characteristics with that of cholera. For instance, cholera causes its victims to suffer from fever, diarrhea, vomiting, and fatal dehydration. In Poe's short story, the mysterious plague causes its victims to experience "sharp pains, "sudden dizziness," "profuse bleeding at the pores," and "dissolution" (288). Poe was likely inspired to put the apocalyptic-like disease in his Gothic tale because of his encounters with it ten years earlier. In the summer of 1832, 853 residents of Baltimore, Maryland — Poe's hometown — were killed by the disease (Cook 492). Other nearby major cities, like New York, also experienced the swift attack of the plague, with 3,515 of its citizens dying by the end of the summer (492).

While Charlotte educated young Stoker on the horrors of a cholera epidemic, there were other family members who were experts in the medical sciences and on disease theory. His older brother Sir William "Thornley" Stoker, for instance, was a surgeon and the president of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland in the 1890s. He performed some of the first brain operations in the country using Sir David Ferrier's cortical maps (Stiles, "Bram" 198). While Stoker was writing "The Invisible Giant" (1875-1881), his youngest brother George was living with him and his family in London, and working as the official physician to the Lyceum Theatre, where Stoker was a theatre manager. Stoker's grandfather William Stoker, writer of a *Treatise on Fever* (1815), was a physician at the Dublin House of Recovery and the Cork Street Fever Hospital in Dublin (Senf, *Science* 50), one of the most important centers for infectious disease in Victorian Ireland. His uncle Dr. William Stoker was also a physician at the Dublin Fever Hospital, and a well known proponent of bloodletting (W. Stoker 305).

Bloodletting, which was a common treatment in the early nineteenth century, was often used to fight bronchitis, croup, pneumonia, and meningitis. Scholars suggest that Uncle William may have bled Stoker while he was suffering from a related childhood illness (Subotsky 11). Senf notes that this would have "involved bleeding [young Stoker] either by opening the temporal artery or by applying leeches, a supposedly scientific procedure rendered horrifying" (Senf, *Science* 50). In *Personal Reminiscences*, Stoker writes that his "long illness" gave him the "opportunity for many thoughts which were fruitful according to their kind in later years" (31). Indeed, the many years he laid down listening to his mother's cholera accounts, and stories of the "horrifying" procedures from his uncle, must have provided him with ample content in creating the Giants, Diseases, Plagues of "The Invisible Giant." Marie Mulvey-Roberts claims that William's journal articles on "therapeutic phlebotomy" could have even supplied Stoker "with an indirect source" (93) to create that "filthy leech, exhausted in [...] repletion," Count Dracula (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 121).

As a science and pure Mathematics student at Trinity Dublin College (*Personal Reminiscences* 20), Stoker continued in the family tradition of using empirical research and of testing evidence for advancing human knowledge. While he did not have a career in the medical field, or as an astronomer or statistician, Stoker did infuse modern science and mathematics in his early fiction. For example, in his *Under the Sunset* story, "How 7 Went Mad," one reads of a student named Tineboy who is having complications with the number seven in his multiplication tables. He falls asleep one evening and dreams about an alphabet doctor — who "attends to the sicknesses and diseases" (106) of letters — attempting to heal the number seven of madness. The doctor inspires Tineboy to love "poor 7" (113) and to use the number in his multiplication

problems. With the aid of his pet raven, Tineboy collects all of the "mad" sevens in town, and magically increases in physical stature after swallowing and then applying them in class.

In the next section, I will discuss how Stoker relied upon his religious upbringing, scientific education, and technological fascinations to engage with the "new ideas," or the "new formations" of the fin de siècle, as well as in the formation of his vampire myth, *Dracula*. I will also discuss how *Dracula* is more modern, or complicated, than *Under the Sunset* and "The Invisible Giant" in how it treats its apocalyptic epidemic.

Dracula and Disease Theory

Since Elaine Showalter (1990) and Jeffrey L. Spear (1993), it has become commonplace among scholars to read *Dracula* as a novel that "responds to the anxieties of degeneration through metaphor of infection" (Forman 925). Because of the erotic nature of the novel and Victorian England's fear of miscegenation, critics have surmised that *Dracula*'s vampirism symbolizes a host of communicable and ancient diseases, like syphilis (925), tuberculosis, cholera, and rabies. Other scholars, like Ross G. Forman, postulate that Stoker's growing comprehension of parasitic infection — specifically, malaria — serves as a "focalizer" for the novel's potential disease metaphors (925). I contend that Stoker brought these "metaphor[s] of infection" into *Dracula* not simply to respond to the culture's fear of degeneration, but to highlight the Empire and the wider world's susceptibility to a de-evolutionary apocalypse. One of the ways that Stoker explores this is by bringing together "old" and "new" ideas about disease theory into the novel.

In the late 1890s, around the time in which *Dracula* was published, malarial transmission was still an enigma for scientists. The mysterious infection was a leading cause of death in the

Western African tropics, with British and European soldiers falling ill to it during their "Scramble" for land and resources (933). Although its full extent was not known, malaria was marked as a threat to both colonizers and city-dwellers alike, with physician Corrado Tommasi-Crudeli and microbiologist Edwin Klebs reporting that it "induces a progressive decadence of race, which no other endemic is capable of" (Klebs and Crudeli 2). According to Forman, Klebs and Crudeli's statement presents an "overlap" in the "connection between disease [...] individual [...] and imperial decline that [*Dracula*] seeks to arouse" (933-4).

With Robert Coch's research proving the existence of pathogenic viruses, germ theory became the leading hypothesis for malaria transmission for scientists in the late nineteenth century. However, there were still those who presumed it was a disease that was contracted through rotting soil and animal carcasses (miasma theory), or through mosquito bites, "fly disease," or the tsetse fly in tropical Africa (926).[18]

The connection between "fly disease" and the tsetse fly was, more-or-less, proven by scientists in the early 1880s. In the 1896 edition of the *Veterinary Journal and Annals of Comparative Pathology*, it is reported that "the tsetse is now established, and, possibly, ere long, other bloodsuckers will be found to possess similar properties, either as active agents in the biological cycle of disease germs, as in the case of the mosquito, or as media for the conveyance from one human being or from one animal to another, as in the case of the tsetse fly" (412). Similar to vampirism, some of the phases of the "African sleeping sickness," which is caused by the tsetse fly, includes sleeping during the day and resting at night, mania, and refusing to eat food (Forman 934). Interestingly, these symptoms are similar to those of Mina Harker's after she sucks blood from Dracula's chest in her chamber. As Van Helsing writes in his letter to Dr.

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[18] Miasma means "bad air" or the "floating and impalpable morbific effluvia, the product of decay or putrefaction of animal and vegetable substances" (Lawrence 25).

Seward, "Madam Mina still sleep and sleep; and though I did have hunger and appeased it, I could not waken her — even for food" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 587). With Stoker's general interest in scientific theory, and his family's involvement in the medical field, it is more than likely that he would have been aware of "fly disease," malaria, and other medical breakthroughs at the time, and adapted them for his novel.

Parasitic diseases were featured in a number of Victorian Gothic stories in the 1890s, like Conan Doyle's *The Parasite* (1894), Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894), and Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897). The subject allowed authors to channel their cultural fears of degeneration and infection through the tropes of "monstrosity, vampirism, [...] mesmerism, and exotic alterity" (Forman 927), as well as their trepidations of the ever-changing political scene, and the role of women in society (928). Similar to *Dracula*, Mary Elizabeth Braddon's short story "Good Lady Ducayne" (1896) explores the concepts of scientific advancements, immortality, and the impropriety of women, through surreptitious blood transfusions. When the story's protagonist Bella Rolleston questions Dr. Parravicini, the practitioner who is injecting her young blood into a dying patron, about the suspicious scars on her arms he tells her that she is vulnerable to mosquitoes, and that she has "bad skin for healing" (196). As Forman points out, "Although mosquitoes are not the true cause of Bella's malaise, this reference to poison cements the connection in the reader's mind between the withdrawal of blood and the inauguration of social sickness" (929).

Emilie Taylor-Brown suggests that the "parasitic antagonist" of late Victorian novels reveals the escalating "fear of foreign organisms" to the Western World (12). She argues that "Dracula makes a fitting metaphor for the threat of parasitic disease" (12), as well for miasma and malaria, since the Count is presented as one who arrives with "bad air" (Lawrence 25) and foul smells (Taylor-Brown 12). Taking advantage of the ambiguity surrounding malaria's

transmission, Forman theorizes that Dracula's vampirism hints at both theories — both miasma and germ — in order to "heighten the tension around infection and its origins" (926). He believes that, "[B]oth people and geographies are [...] mobile [in the novel], which is why Dracula must transport not only himself but also his land when he moves from Transylvania to Purfleet" (926). Martin Willis, on the other hand, sees *Dracula* as a transitional text from the "old" contagionist and miasmatist theories to that of "new" nascent germ theory, a hypothesis that reached social awareness by the 1890s (Willis 302, 311).

In regards to germ theory, many epidemic scientists of this time agreed that: the infectious particles given off by fermenting liquid were actually present in the liquid, instead of initiated by it; that hereditary diseases were being passed on by microbial organisms and not by environmental effects on the body; and that ancestral diseases were proof of the "existence of microbial life within the natural world" and not environmental pollutants (312). For Willis, then, "germ theory [offered] one clear difference from [the] previous systems of belief; that disease was the product of a living organic being — the microbe of bacteria — whose life, like the life of the vampire, depended on human illness" (312). It would not be beyond Stoker then to combine multiple types of disease theories to inhabit his apocalyptic vampire, for he had an affinity for extracting from many disciplines and genres, and for bringing the "old" and the "new" together.

With the introduction of Van Helsing in Chapter Ten of the novel, and his placement of garlic around Lucy's bedroom, Stoker calls attention to the conflict between nascent germ theory and miasmatism throughout the late Victorian period. Speaking upon Van Helsing's peculiar medical treatments, Dr. Seward writes:

We went into the room, taking the [garlic] flowers with us. The Professor's actions were certainly odd and not to be found in any pharmacopeia that I ever heard of. First, he

fastened up the windows and latched them securely; next, taking a handful of the flowers,

he rubbed them all over the sashes, as though to ensure that every whiff of air that might

get in would be laden with the garlic smell. Then with the wisp he rubbed all over the

jamb of the door, above, below, and at each side, and round the fireplace in the same way.

(243)

With the garlic flowers being a "metonymy for antiseptic," and vampirism being a metaphor for

the microbe, Lucy is shielded from the microbial infection of Dracula's bite (Willis 313). By

coating garlic over "the jam of the door" and "round the fireplace" as well as laying flowers

around her neck, Van Helsing introduces garlic as a repellent (Forman 934-5). For this, according

to Forman, is "suggestive of insect prophylaxis" (934-5), or of a cleansing. Mrs. Westerna, being

a miasmatist, does not understand the Dutch doctor's sanitary treatment, for she complains of

"those horrible strong-smelling flowers" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 248). She removes the garlic from

around her daughter's bedroom and body, and opens the windows so "fresh air" can displace the

odor (248).

Despite nascent germ theory being "new," garlic has been utilized to overcome evil since

the 4th century B.C., with Theophrastus giving it as an offering to Hecate, the goddess of magic

and sorcery (Blinderman 411). It was also used by "rhizomatoi," Greek root gathers, who

slathered themselves in garlic oil in order to protect themselves from hellebore, a poisonous plant

(Davidson 143). Stoker may have been familiar with these ancient medicinal uses of garlic from

his readings of Thomas Joseph Pettigrew's *On Superstitions Connects with the History and*

Practice of Medicine and Surgery (1844) (Forman 934-5), as well as its contemporary treatment

from his medical relatives.

While Stoker briefly introduces nascent germ theory by way of Van Helsing and his treatment of Mina, miasma theory is much more prevalent throughout the novel, being alluded to in medieval settings, like in Transylvania, and during the Crew of Light's mystical episodes. When Harker is imprisoned in the Count's castle, he encounters three female vampires, "those weird sisters" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 116), who appear as "quaint little specks floating in the rays of the moonlight" (112); he also becomes repulsed by Dracula's tomb which exudes "a deathly, sickly odour" (116). Later on in the novel, after Lucy has been bitten by the Count at Whitby Harbor, Harker reports that "a whole myriad of little specks" swarmed Lucy's body while the two prevented "wolf" Dracula from entering her bedroom window (261). There are also accounts of Dracula's tomb at Carfax Abbey projecting a "an earthly smell, as of some dry miasma, which came through the fouler air" (422), and of Lucy's tomb effusing a stench of "death and decay" as opposed to the "fresh and pure" (360) of the night sky.

One night, while avoiding the "gloom-haunted" (94) and "moth-eaten" spaces (92) in Dracula's castle, Harker explores an unlocked room at the top of the staircase and decides to rest and write in his journal. At the room's table, he envisions "ladies" of old, who "had sat and sung and lived sweet lives" (94), and a "fair lady" who wrote to her "ill-spelt" lover from it years prior (93). According to Willis, this is Harker's chivalric or colonial imagination attempting to recreate the Eastern European setting around him, and to "turn his intrusion into a romance narrative in which he plays the hero" (318-9). What Harker fails to recognize, however, is "the long accumulation of dust" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 95), the ancient vile particles that have been confined for centuries in the room, being ingested into his respiratory system. Later, he awakens to the temptations of the three vampire sisters who appear to him as "the tiniest grains of dust" (112). This association, Willis suggests, of vampires and dust "makes certain the link between history

and ancestral disease [...] now excited into action by Harker's violation of Transylvania's past"

(318-19). In line with the miasma theory, he has reawakened or stimulated a dormant sickness in

a putrescent environment and has now unleashed it upon himself, and those he returns to in

England.

When Harker is back in Carfax, standing over Dracula's coffin, he recognizes that "This

was the being [he] was helping transfer to London" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 121), that this walking

emblem of both disease and evolutionary regression was invited by him into his own country:

"[P]erhaps, for centuries to come," he ponders, he may "satiate his lust for blood, and create a

new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless" (121). Comparable to

the Fid-Def whose job it is to protect Under the Sunset from "King Death" and the other

Diseases and Plagues that live in the "wild places," Harker is "sent out" (60) by his employer Mr.

Hawkins to be a defender of imperial England, to expand and protect its global influence. In his

work as an international solicitor, he acts as a "superior colonialist" (Willis 318), as Willis notes,

Westernizing intellectually and morally inferior immigrants, and safeguarding England from

their pre-modern beliefs and customs. Unfortunately, his ignorance of the Count being "clever"

(B. Stoker, *Dracula* 404) makes it possible for the vampiric plague to pass into England and

infect those near and dear to him. As Willis explains:

> [T]he transmission of disease to Britain from abroad, is only achieved with the help of
>
> Jonathan Harker. It is Harker who discovers and purchases British property in Count
>
> Dracula's name, travels to Transylvania to aid the Count in his British business dealings,
>
> and helps the Count master the intonations of the English language and his performance
>
> as the English gentleman." (317)

Even though Stoker never met Conrad, and contemporary critics did not find correlations

between their imperial Gothic novels — *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *Dracula* (1897) — there

are a handful of similarities between the two works. For instance, in terms of themes, both

explore the dread of individual and national degeneration; the trepidation of savage persons

infiltrating English soil; and "the Darwinian ideology of imperialism" (Martin 102). Both texts

also propel their male lead characters, Harker and Marlow, into scenes of terror and evil, as

opposed to having them experience exhilaration at the "encounter with the exotic," which was a

common trope in imperial or adventure fiction (102). Having them confront their respective

mythical and savage figure puts them both at risk of disease and/or de-evolution, and

compromises their masculine identities (102). Martin notes that, "The journey marks for Marlow

and Harker a rite of passage into the male domain of business, but also an awakening to a more

mature, bitter reality that changes them for ever, especially as regards their view of themselves as

men" (104). As alluded to in the introduction, the "bitter reality" of losing one's masculine

identity, not only stresses the permeability of the male psyche and body, but implies the

uncertainty, and possible collapse, of the imperial nation.

Dracula and the Fluctuating Form

Dracula's apocalyptic disease subjects his victims to "retrogressive metamorphosis"

(Leatherdale, *Dracula* 207), as is the case with Mina. At Hyde Park corner, during her first

encounter with the immortal bloodsucker, Mina observes his white pointed teeth and red lips (B.

Stoker, *Dracula* 302). Van Helsing reports that Dracula "can transform himself to wolf" as well

as "he can be as bat" (403). And early on in the novel, when Harker is imprisoned at his castle,

he witnesses the Count's sharp nails, hairy palms, and pointed ears, as well as his lizard-like

movements outside of his bedroom window (117). For Daniel Glover, Dracula and his atavistic breed stand "at the threshold between the human and the subhuman," they continue "to reproduce [themselves] in a seemingly endless series of copies, always resourcefully different from previous incarnations" (137). Indeed, by spreading their degenerative illness that converts their victims into a human-animal hybrid, Dracula and his vampires slowly eliminate homo sapiens from the planet. Eventually, they will inaugurate themselves as the superior, albeit, amorphous species. Alluding to the power of his kind, and his own vampiric supremacy, the Count tells Harker, "I have been so long master that I would be master still — or at least that none other should be master of me" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 67).

Unlike Wells' surgically altered beasts in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), where the confusion lies in where the beast ends and the human begins (Youngs 77), *Dracula*'s human-vampire hybrids are constantly in flux: "It does not rest," Youngs suggests of their form, "at a simple forcing together of polarities with the predictable tensions, but shows through mutation that no position is fixed" (78). He can be bacteria-like or polymorphic in his features, shapeshifting into old dust particles that are like a "devouring monster in embryo" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 573), or as "faint" as mist or vapor that can penetrate and thicken in concealed rooms (468). He can bite into his prey like a "tsetse fly" or an Anopheles mosquito, transmitting his devilish parasites into their bloodstream. He can also come across as a law-abiding citizen, and an Eastern European nobleman. As Dracula states: "Here I am noble; I am boyar; the common people know me" (67). Whether it be an aristocrat, fog, bacteria, dog, or rat, Dracula's vampiric form can be seemingly anything, as well as nothing.

Rats, in particular, are an animal or form that Stoker continually comes back to in his early literature. In "The Burial of the Rats" (1896), Stoker carries on the tradition of early

Victorian writers, like Dickens, who made connections between unhealthy and impoverished people with rodents. For instance, in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), poverty-stricken Nell and her grandfather are characterized as being "as poor as frozen rats" by the antagonist Quilp (465). In *Little Dorrit* (1857), too, Mrs. Gowan's abode is portrayed as having "a suit of three or four rooms with barred windows, which had the appearance of a jail for criminal rats" (409). Charlotte Maria Tucker's *The Ramble of a Rat* (1857) links poor children, specifically, with anthropomorphic, adventure-seeking vermin. As Matthew Crofts and Janine Hatter point out, "Victorian literature was steeped in rhetoric that associated rats and the working class together as the strata of society that needed most improving" (129). In "The Burial of Rats," Stoker continues this motif by linking the decay of old Paris and the viciousness of its inhabitants with the cunning eyes and foul stench of city rats.

In his short story, a young Englishman lives and wanders around Paris after his girlfriend's parents implore him to leave the country for a year. One afternoon, while exploring Montrouge, "the city of dust" ("The Burial" 2355) as he calls it, and conversing with a First Republic soldier and an older Parisian woman, he notices bodily remains lying and disease-infested vermin crawling about his feet: "In one corner was a heap of rags which seemed to move from the number of vermin it contained, [...] Every now and then, glancing at the heaps, I could see the gleaming eyes of some of the rats which infested the place" (2404). While talking with the two locals, the Englishman begins to feel paranoia that many "cunning eyes were" (2413) upon him. He also observes that the older woman has begun studying the jewelry on his hands, specifically, a large signet and a "good diamond," and that an "unholy light" has come into her "withered old face" as she touches them (2422). He takes a beat, and notices a similar look in the eyes of the rats on the floor: "There still lay all the heaps of varied reeking foulness;

there the terrible blood-stained axe leaning against the wall in the right hand corner, and everywhere, despite the gloom, the baleful glitter of the eyes of the rats" (2428). Referencing the interplay of rodent with human glances, Croft and Hatter point out that, "The inhabitants use the rats' associations of living in dirt and squalor, watching from a distance, to their advantage; they hide themselves among the rats, blending into the background; the rats unconsciously assist the inhabitants in their exploits" (133).

Later, the young Englishman suspects that the old woman and the rest of the rag-pickers are plotting to rob and potentially hang him from a hut: "As I looked out of the opening I saw the loop of a rope outlined black against the lurid sky. I was now, indeed, beset!" (2489). While running from them, he observes "several forms" who were "more animals than men" (2541) struggling after him in deadly silence. After a lengthy chase, one that involved making it to the "edge of [the] inferno of dustheaps" (2549), and being swam after by his rat-like nemeses, the Englishman eventually locates a Parisian police officer and passes out in his arms. As Crofts and Hatter note, Stoker's narrative highlights "the masses of desperate creatures" who still live in "extreme want" (133), those who, despite living near affluent Paris, still live in the "dust" and act like foul creatures.

Rats are known to be carriers of disease, and for hundreds of years they have been associated with viruses and plagues, like rabies and the Bubonic Plague. During the late Victorian era, rabies was discovered to be transferred from the bite of bats and wolves, two animals that Stoker's Dracula shape-shifts into. Similar to a vampiric transmission, it is spread through animal's saliva, and causes a "bloody frothing of the mouth," "bared teeth in sufferers," "an aversion to strong odors (like garlic)," "nocturnal habits," and a "heightened sex drive" (Meehan 13). Without proper medical care, the viral disease leads to mania, dementia, or even

death. By having the Count metamorphose into both unclean animals and an English gentleman,

Stoker illustrates how easily an apocalyptic disease, like vampirism, can be present in an

unsuspecting population. Without proper medical care, technological prowess, and religious

unity, as I will argue more fully later, the Western world will inevitably fall to Dracula's

degenerative plague.

Despite being an all-pervading presence (and nuisance) throughout British history, rats

were perceived as an especially foreign, hostile Other during the Victorian Age. Indeed, as Crofts

and Hatter suggest, "in the Victorian popular imagination, rats are an invading force. Like a

plague, they are an external threat moving into menace a civilized Victorian society (134).

Nineteenth-century newspaper articles even adopted military vernacular to emphasize the rat

infestation in urban London (134). In the 1884 article "A Plague of Rats in London," the

anonymous reporter stresses that it was "the fierce nature of the [rat's] warfare [that testified to

their extreme voracity" (1). The 1895 article "Rats, Rats" references rodents and felines as if

they were enlisting in the army, stating, "one license holder who has seen rats playing on the

dining table has pressed no fewer than seven cats into his service" (Anon., "Rats" 1).

For London, the rat became a symbol for the city's underground, its impoverished, its

"rebellious energy" (Bavidge 106); it also embodied, as Paul Cowdell suggests, the hazard of

"immigrant populations for a settled community" (20). In his holding cell, Renfield tells Dr.

Seward of the time when "hundreds, thousands, millions" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 464) of rats

organized around him and depicted the shape of the Count's body: "I could see that there were

thousands of rats with their eyes blazing red — like His, only smaller. [The Count] held up his

hand, and they all stopped, and I thought he seemed to be saying, 'All these lives I will give you,

ay, and many more and greater, through countless ages, if you fall down and worship me!'"

(464). For Ellman, the "hundreds, thousands, millions" of rats suggests the manifold breeding that will take place when invading immigrants, like the Eastern European count, infest England (64).

Many Victorians sometimes collectively imagined Eastern Europeans as vermin-like, or lower animals. Their social customs were considered antiquated, their spirituality irrational, and their sexual appetites voracious (Fejes 996; K. Spencer 213). They were also suspected of possessing a hidden, occult power. Stephen Arata writes that Victorians assumed Eastern Europeans "[operated] beyond or beneath the threshold of the civilized rational, tapping into primal energies and unconscious resources" ("The Occidental" 624). Upon his arrival into Transylvania, Harker notes that "Every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians" (37). Later, he suggests that Dracula's gypsies are "without religion, save superstition" (108). With such an ethnically mixed population Transylvania had a reputation for being "Europe's unconscious" (Wall 20), the land where the uncivilized roamed free. Many Victorians believed that if this primal energy intermingled with high society it would adulterate women, spread violence and superstitious ideas, and threaten Western progress.

In the late nineteenth century, Transylvania was populated by Romanians, Germans, Slovaks, and Magyars (Walker and Wright 50). Nomadic Jews and "gipsies" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 107) were also inhabitants of the Capatharians region, with the latter assisting the upper-class Slovaks in transporting Dracula's soil to England. In his article "The Slovaks and Gypsies of Bram Stoker's Dracula," Tchaprazov notes that many of Stoker's contemporaries would have viewed the Slovaks and the Gypsies as "corrupt, heartless, Oriental[s]" who were devoted to "serving the Count and providing him with much-needed mobility for his ventures outside Transylvania" (528). Harker even describes the Slovaks as "more barbarian than the rest" (B.

Stoker, *Dracula* 38) and as an "old Oriental band of brigands" (39). With the Slovaks offering to transport Dracula's coffins, and the "gipsies" being lawless, mystical nomads, they were the perfect hench-people to assist him in infesting and overthrowing imperial Britain.

In her article "Transylvanian Superstitions" (1885), Emily de Laszowska Gerard proposes that "Transylvania might well be termed the land of superstitions, for nowhere else does this curious crooked plant of delusion flourish as persistently and in such bewildering variety" (130). She continues, "It would almost seem as though the whole species of demons, pixies, witches, and hobgoblins, driven from the rest of Europe by the wand of science, had taken refuge in this mountain rampart (130). Inspired by her depiction of the "bewildering" and devilish land, Stoker decided to relocate Dracula's castle from the mountains of southern Austria, where Le Fanu's vampiric tale *Carmilla* (1872) takes place, to that of Transylvania. It is in this "land beyond scientific understanding," as Elizabeth Miller describes it (81), that Stoker orchestrates his battle of modern ecumenicalism versus the primitive; of Western Christian rationalists against Eastern mystics.

When it comes to the occult and superstitions, Van Helsing's broad-mindedness on the subject was potentially not that far off from Stoker's own. On June 16, 1898, Stoker attended a lecture of Frederic W.H. Meyers, where he had "a delightful breakfast" in his Cambridge house (*Personal Reminiscences* 896). Meyers was one of the founders of the Society of Psychical Research, a non-profit organization that brought together scientists, philosophers, mesmerists, and occultists to conduct parapsychological research. The Society's agenda, as stated in their *Journal*, was "to examine without prejudice or prepossession and in a scientific spirit, those faculties of man, real or supposed, which appear to be inexplicable on any generally recognized hypothesis" (94). While there is no evidence of Stoker becoming a member of the Society, his

association with the paranormal group was, nevertheless, assumed by critics. For instance, in the 1911 *Punch* article, "How to Humanize the Landscape," Sir Oliver Lodge, a Society President from 1901 to 1903, is jokingly said to have paid "homage" to Stoker by conducting an interview on "the Psychical Significance of Vampires" (195).

As Florescu and McNally point out in *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces* (2009), "Stoker's primary interest was the vampire and the occult, and the list of books he consulted on that theme, available in his notes at the Rosenbach Library, is extensive" (486). For instance, superstitious texts such as Sabine Baring-Gould's *The Book of Were-Wolves* (1865) and *Curious Myths of the Middles Ages* (1866) were drawn upon by the author, as well as travelogs and pseudoscientific articles like Emily Gerad de Laszowska's "Transylvanian Superstitions" (Florescu and McNally 486). In fact, most of Stoker's data on Transylvanian vampirism was derived from Gerad's article. Commenting on the evil specters that were rumored to inhabit the Romanian city, she writes, "More decidedly evil, however, is the vampire nosferatu, in whom every Romanian peasant believes as firmly as he does in heaven or hell. The very person killed by a nosferatu becomes likewise a vampire after death, and will suck the blood of other innocent people till the spirit has been exorcised (142). In order to kill the nosferatu, she writes, one must cut off its head and "replace it in the coffin with the mouth filled with garlic, or to extract the heart and burn it, stewing the ashes over the grave" (142).

Although it was published several years before *Dracula*, James Frazer highlights the incessant rivalry between the Van Helsings and vampires of the world in his 1890 comparative myth study, *The Golden Bough* (1890). He writes that the "radical conflict of principle between magic and religion sufficiently explains the relentless hostility with which in history the priest has often pursued the magician" (226). In his two-part study, he details true accounts of pagan

priests who sucked "fresh blood" from their "sacrificed victim[s]" (381), like one priest in India who put "the throat of a decapitated goat" into his mouth, and worshiped the beast once it was possessed by a demon (382).

Although there is no record of Stoker reading *The Golden Bough*, supernaturalism and the occult were "themes around which [both Stoker and Irving's] imagination constantly revolved," as their friend Hall Caine points out (341). One can also see the obvious parallels between the novel and of Indian secret societies or pagan cults. For instance, Dracula commands Renfield to fall down and worship him, as if he was a high priest or deity; also, the language that is used when he assaults Mina in her chamber is reminiscent of a pagan sacrificial ceremony: "With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 468).

Infecting Our Property

While Dracula is unsuccessful in infecting and altering the form of most Westerners, he does manage to seduce and infect two British women: Mina and Lucy. Mina, a young schoolmistress and the fiance and eventual wife of Harker, is Stoker's exemplar of female nobility. She cares for her husband as he recovers from his brain fever; keeps her sexual desires subdued; asks God's forgiveness when she is hypnotized and taken advantage of by the Count ("God pity me! Look down on a poor soul in worse than mortal peril!" [B. Stoker, *Dracula* 476]); and gives birth to a child. In other words, she is pure, civilized beauty, the inverse of the Eastern European Other. According to Abraham Van Helsing, "She is one of God's women,

fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we

can enter, and that its light can be here on earth" (327).

Lucy, on the other hand, is Stoker's cautionary character. She typifies the "New Woman,"

a more reckless and promiscuous female that is considered unfit for Victorian society by many

conservatives (Ledger 101). After she is proposed to by Arthur Holmwood, Quincey Morris, and

Jonathan Seward, she writes to Mina, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as

want her, and save all this trouble?" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 134). Even though she eventually shrugs

this polygamous fantasy off as "heresy" (134), her letter to her Mina reveals her doubts with

gender or sexual norms.

Daniel Pool writes that "the [Victorian] wife [...] upon marriage lost virtually all powers

over any property that she possessed. All her personal property automatically became her

husband's property to do with as he saw fit" (184). In fact, even the wife's body was under her

husband's ownership. Pool notes that, "The law for many years basically guaranteed a man

access to his wife's body whether she desired it or not" (187). With many Eastern European

nations and tribes still living like savages, there was fear among some Victorian men that their

women — their property — would be susceptible to corruption, or sexual urges beyond their

rational control. In short, there was a widespread fear of a process of degeneration in which pure

and domesticated brides would become boorish, perverse creatures.

After being bitten by Dracula, and passing away with his blood in her system, Lucy

resurrects as the "Bloofer Lady" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 310), a voluptuous vampire who feeds on

children and haunts the local graveyard. "When Lucy — I call the thing that was before us Lucy

because it bore her shape — saw us she drew back with an angry snarl, such as a cat gives when

taken unawares; then her eyes ranged over us'" (362). Now liberated from the Victorian world,

and filled with Dracula's ancient and apocalyptic diseases, she dismisses society's gender roles and satisfies her sexual cravings. For instance, instead of nurturing children, she feasts on their bodies; and instead of being pursued by men, she becomes their sexual predator: "Arthur! Oh, my love [...] Kiss me!," she says to her fiance (285).

By altering Lucy into the "Bloofer Lady," Dracula is also marking her flesh and her soul as his own. He is releasing her from her Christian and Victorian constructs, and preventing her soon-to-be husband from having authority over her. In other words, he is stealing "property" from God, England, and Arthur Holmwood.

Defenders of the Faith

In order to defeat Dracula, and the "old centuries" from which he belongs (93), the Crew of Light turn to religion and modern science and technology to protect their female property, and Western society as a whole, from widespread disease and degeneration. The name Fid-Def, as referenced in *Under the Sunset*, is an abbreviation of Henry the VIII's designation "Defender of the Faith," which was formalized after his break with the Church of Rome in 1544 (W. Hughes, *Beyond* 184). Similarly, Van Helsing and the Crew of Light take on the role of "Defender[s] of the Faith," or Crusaders (1095-1291), in their attack against the Count.

Van Helsing, the scientific and religious authority of the novel, makes it known to his compatriots that they are to be "ministers of God's own wish" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 521), and "that the world, and men for whom His Son die, will not be given over to monsters, whose very existence would defame Him. He has allowed us to redeem one soul already and we go out as the old knights of the Cross to redeem more" (522). Instead of warring against Far Eastern Muslims for the sake of the Holy Land, they are in combat with an Eastern European devil (Dracula) for

the sake of imperial England. As Roger Luckhurst argues, "their campaign against the vampire renews the violent defence of Christian Europe against the Infidel" ("Introduction" xxvi).

Before going out to battle to protect their sacred territory, the Crew of Light link hands around a crucifix, and become one in Christ: "The Professor stood up and, after laying his golden crucifix on the table, held out his hand on either side. I [Mina] took his right hand, and Lord Godalming his left; Jonathan held my right with his left and stretched across to Mr. Morris. So as we all took hands our solemn compact was made" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 401). The Dutch doctor envisions their quest as redemptive in nature, like those "old knights of the Cross," for they, as Tichelaar suggests, "are willing to peril even [their] own souls for the safety of one [they] love — for the good of mankind, and for the honour and glory of God" (240). Indeed, envisioning themselves as "knight[s]," those who have "pledged to set the world free" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 523), they will use both holy instruments and modern medicine to protect their female counterparts, and the rest of the Western world from the vampiric Infidel.

In Stoker's 1890 novel *The Snake's Pass*, a romantic thriller set in Ireland, one reads of another interfaith team who go into battle/fight against a tyrant for the sake of their holy land: Anglican Englishman (Severn) and his Irish Catholic and Protestant friends who attempt to liberate the small town of Carnacliff from the oppressive money-lender, Black Murdock (26). Besides being characterized as a law oppressor, "a black-jawed ruffian" (34), and "the Gombeen Man" (26), Murdock's devilishness is marked by his inflexible greed, and disregard for the laws of nature. After being warned of the shifting bogs resting over Joyce's Farmland, he continues digging on his property in hopes of unearthing the French gold that is hiding in its soil. However, his avariciousness leads to his own demise, as the bog pulls him into a pit and sweeps him out into the ocean (239-40).

Alison Milbank suggests that *The Snake's Pass* is a "love story," one "constructed as a

national allegory, in which the Scottish scientist enables the economic flourishing of the locality

by his mineral discoveries, while Protestant and Catholic unite to challenge the power of

Murdock" (234). Indeed, throughout the tale, there are several moments of mutual respect

between the members of different Faith traditions. For instance, in the passage below, Catholic

priest Father Ryan cites Psalm 37 in order to uplift Protestant Phelim Joyce's spirits; in turn,

Joyce addresses Ryan as "Father" (*The Snake's* 42) a title typically given by Catholic

parishioners (Milbank 234):

> "You're an honest man, Phelim, and God knows it, and, mark me, He won't let you nor
>
> yours suffer. I have been young," said the Psalmist, "and now am old; and I have not seen
>
> the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread. Think of that, Phelim!—may it comfort you
>
> and poor Norah. God bless her!" [...]
>
> There was a dead silence in the room. The stern man rose, and coming over took the
>
> priest's hand.
>
> "God bless ye, Father!" he said, "it's the true comforter ye are." (*The Snake's* 42)

Later, when "the bog [is] moving" and catches Anglican Severn "in its toils," Norah, who is

presumably a Presbyterian, answers his cries for help and saves him from the bog's "icy hand" of

"Death" (236-7). Also, as a wedding gift, Severn purchases Joyce's old plot of land and gifts it to

his old Scottish friend, Dick Sutherland. In the tradition of Farrar, Maurice, and Tennyson, the

interfaith team of *The Snake's Pass* practices a "larger hope." They give themselves to one

another without reservation, participating in, as Milbank notes, a "cycle of inter-communion":

where "every gift elicits another, and every loving act is returned" (236).

Expanding upon Milbank's work, I believe that *The Snake's Pass* and its idea of international ecumenicalists overcoming a devilish proprietor can be read as an anticipatory text to *Dracula*. Besides Black Murdock and the Count having shared characteristics, for instance, both gaining scars on their heads from battle (Stoker, *The Snake's* 63; *Dracula* 121), both being described as human-like wolves (*The Snake's* 91; *Dracula* 403), and both acting without mercy to the point of taking "blood out of [one's] body" (*The Snake's* 27), they are also both prevented from occupying more property, whether that be geographic or human, by a unified spiritual society.

For late Victorians, reading about interfaith teams or "old knights of the Cross" protecting allies or property from ancient superstitions was not peculiar. Indeed, there was already a national objective to quell the "primitive taboo[s]" (W. Smith 370) that were ramped up in the British colonies and territories (Herbert 102-3). In *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889), a study that was published a year before *Dracula* was in development, William Smith speaks about the re-emergence of totemic aboriginal societies, and the worship of taboo animals — like swine, mice, and other vermin — in non-Western regions. He notes that these creatures are "charged . . . with a certain supernatural energy," (160), and that they are "conceived as infectious, [and] propagating [...] by physical contact" (161). If one touches or eats them, they will become stricken with a "sacred infection," becoming "unclean" (450) and filled with the same bad energy that the animal possesses.

This "code of uncleanness," as Herbert calls it, this superstitious idea that one can contract a "quasi-physical, indwelling contamination" (104) from a defiled creature, is prevalent throughout Stoker's text. While the Count is away from his Carfax estate, the Crew of Light infiltrate his home and sterilize his wooden caskets with Catholic wafers, rendering it unlivable

for the infectious overlord (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 360). Despite them all being Protestants, Seward

declares that he and the others were open to Van Helsing's eucharistic practices, because of the

"good" and "symbolic" "powers" (521) that would come from it: "We felt individually that in the

presence of such earnest purpose as the Professor's, a purpose which could thus use the to him

most sacred of things, it was impossible to distrust" (361). After being filled with the Count's

"supernatural energy," and acting out on her awakened sexuality, Lucy is also considered

"unclean" (362) and a "foul thing" (366) by her Christian guardians.

These "metaphors of sanitation" not only portray "code of uncleanness," and social

sciences of the day, but Victorian Christian theology as well (Herbert 104). The language of

exchangeable moral "uncleanness" is found within the Evangelical writings of John Calvin

(Herbert 225). In *Christian Institutes* (1536), he deems humanity's sin as a "pollution" (I:680),

which can only be sanitized by the immaculate blood of Jesus Christ: "All the actions of men, if

estimated according to their intrinsic worth, are utterly defiled and polluted." He continues,

"What is accounted integrity, is mere pollution," and "[t]here is no man who is not covered with

infinite pollution" (I:679-80). In Volume II of his theological study, while condemning the belief

that one's virtue can eradicate one's sin, he teaches, "Such is our pollution that it can not be

washed away, except in the fountain of [Christ's] Immaculate blood" (II:27).

For Herbert, Calvin's frequent use of sin as a "pollution" communicates it as a

"quasi-physical condition" (225). This, in turn, fosters "panicky ideologies" (225) amongst the

Faithful, suggesting to them that wicked pollutants can be transmitted not only through ancestral

blood ("The impurity of the parents is so transmitted to the children, that all [...] are polluted as

soon as they exist" [Calvin I:226]), but through touch and taste as well (Herbert 225).

For Herbert, "The crux of the theological argument of Dracula," then "lies in this persistent suggestion that vampirism is not so much an alien invasion after all as it is a dark mutation of Christian forms" (111). Indeed, there is a significant amount of dialogue that alludes to the materiality of Dracula's sinfulness. Prior to the Crew of Light tracing down the Count's wooden boxes and slaying him in his Transylvania lair, Van Helsing proclaims to his fellow "old knights of the Cross": "For it is not the least of its terrors that this evil thing is rooted deep in all good; in soil barren of holy memories it cannot rest" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 405). And, after witnessing the first signs of Mina's vampiric transformation, Seward shares that "there may be a poison that distils itself out of good things" (524).

One way these new "Defenders of the Faith" attempt to prevent Dracula's plague or "sacred infection" from destroying the West is by selective mating and blood transfusions. Blinderman shows that the Count "presents a contest between two evolutionary options: the ameliorative, progressive, Christian congregation, or the Social Darwinian superman in the form of the ultimate parasite degenerate, Count Dracula" (428). When Van Helsing determines who will donate blood to the ailing Lucy, he chooses those who are "intelligent, moneyed, and privileged" (Leatherdale, *Dracula* 208), in other words, those who are Christian European or American. As Leatherdale notes, "Not once does he turn to the parlour-maids," those inferior in status and genes, "to help out by opening their veins" (208). Seward confirms the importance of status and genes in selective mating, jokingly claiming: "If America can go on breeding men like [Quincy Morris], she will be a power in the world indeed" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 304).

After being infected by the Count while overlooking the Whitby harbor, and having his tainted and diseased blood mixed with hers, Lucy Westerna takes on an inferior nature, that of the "Bloofer Lady." Despite her "loveliness [coming] back to her in [her] death" (292), with the

"soft lines" of her skin "matching the angelic beauty of her eyes" (285), her "orbs" eventually fill with "hell-fire," causing her fiancé's affection for her to quickly vanish (362): "The remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight" (362). Even for the rest of the Crew of Light, she was no longer perceived as a pure, upright Victorian woman, but as an "Un-Dead" (346), or an Other.

If blood is a marker of racial identity, then the Count deracinates those he infects. Because of this, the Crew of Light desperately try to disinfect or de-racialize her by infusing her with proper Christian European and English blood (Arata, "The Occidental" 632). In order to restore her back to her form, their blood is administered in a hierarchical order: first, Jonathan Harker, her fiance; second, the aristocrat, Arthur Holmwood, whose blood is "pure" and "young and strong" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 231); third, Dr. John Seward, a bourgeois Englishman; fourth, Van Helsing, a Teutonic foreigner whose old blood was not "so calm" (114) as the others, particularly Holmwood's; and lastly, Morris, whose American fluid is considered inferior but necessary (Arata, "The Occidental" 632). Lucy's five intelligent and prosperous Christian defenders act quickly to try to reverse the annihilation of her femininity and Englishness.

The Crew of Light's swift action, embracing of the "old" and "new" sciences, and their wholehearted devotion to an ecumenical mission, are a few ways *Dracula* expands upon *Under the Sunset* in its treatment of invasion, or an apocalyptic epidemic. In Stoker's children allegory, Knoal and Zaya plead with the Giant to spare the impoverished yet "greedy" citizens of Sunset from judgment and impending death — "Oh, do not, do not, great Giant, do them harm," and to take their own lives, instead, as a sacrifice — "If someone must suffer, let it be me. Take me, I am willing to die, but spare them" (2681). Unfortunately, even though the self-sacrificing duo are able to nurse some of the townspeople back to health through meals and medicine; as well as

inspire them to live "holier and more unselfish lives" (2685); most are struck down by the

Giant's plague.

In Stoker's vampire novel, the Crew of Light do not waste their time pleading with the

Count, their own disease-ridden Giant, to break from his vampiric attacks, for his survival is

contingent on being "fatten[ed by] the blood of the living" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 403). Instead,

they rely on their technological advancements, like the telegram, typewriter, and shorthand

writing, "old" and "new" disease theories, like miasma and germ theory, and pure Christian

blood and religious artifacts, like holy water and wafers, in order to protect themselves from

infection. As Jimmie E. Cain, Jr. writes, "in the works of authors like [...] Stoker, [...] courage,

intelligence, righteousness, and technology defeat whatever perils or enemies confront the

nation" (14). Also, in embracing "scientific growth as the key to modernization," as Glover

notes, and in having spiritual unity despite their dogmatic differences, the Crew of Light prevent

the Count's "backwardness" and "philistinism" from progressing further in the West. In other

words, modern inventions and religious "devotion save the Land."

Dracula as Modern Myth

Scholars have postulated that Dracula was also patterned after several historical

"laygend[s]," including, Vlad Tepes, Elizabeth Bathory, and Sir Henry Irving (Florescu and

McNally 3, 130, 141). Tepes, who was born and raised near Transylvania, was a maniacal

fifteenth-century Romanian ruler whose moniker "Dracula" means "Son of the Dragon" (3).

While Stoker was researching for his novel at the British Library, he read about Tepes and was

inspired by his vicious antics, specifically, how he impaled his own people and washed his hands

in their blood (Van Wyck Good 408). As for Irving, his theatre performance as *Faust's*

Mephistopheles, which Stoker would have witnessed hundreds of times, had characteristics that may have shaped the Count's mystique: "flashing eyes," a "whirling scarlet coat," and a dual-personality that was both "debonair" and demonic (Nadel 135).

Besides *The Golden Bough* (1890) and stories of the Indian secret societies, there are numerous other resources that Stoker may have engaged with during the fin de siècle to inspire his mythical bloodsucker, Dracula. For instance, he may have participated in and or had possible connections to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an occult of un-dead enthusiasts (Leblanc 362). Indeed, Stoker was close friends with John William Brodie-Innes, a leading member of the Order and a scholar on *Dracula*-related subjects, like animal magnetism, ancient religions, and urban crime (Brodie-Innes 173-194). According to an article in the *Sette of Odd Volumes*, a collection of occultist literature that was at one time chaired by Brodie-Innes, Stoker was a prominent guest at the Order's yearly dinner rounds (Leatherdale, *Dracula* 82).

Jack the Ripper, whose murderous activity took place near the Count's East End hideout, and who was occasionally associated with vampiric activity, was also an inspiration for Stoker's Count. One year after *Dracula* was published, Stoker wrote an introduction for the Icelandic translation of the novel: *Make Mykranna, or Power of Darkness* (1898). In an attempt to place his vampire tale within a proper historical context, Stoker comments on Jack the Ripper's ghastly attacks in East End London in the late 1880s. He notes:

> I state again that this mysterious tragedy which is here described is completely true in all its external respects, though naturally I have reached a different conclusion on certain points than those involved in the story. But the events are incontrovertible, and so many people know of them that they cannot be denied. This series of crimes has not yet passed from the memory — a series of crimes

which appear to have originated from the same source, and which at the time

created as much repugnance in people everywhere as the notorious murders of

Jack the Ripper. (B. Stoker, *The New* 5)

Despite Stoker's great-nephew, Daniel Farson, claiming that there "is no hint in [*Dracula*] or any

of his writing of either Ripper's violence or the subsequent panic" (Farson 152), it is obvious

from his great-uncle's introduction in *Make Mykranna* that the Ripper was a partial inspiration

for the infamous Count.

While Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) and Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) popularized vampire

literature throughout the nineteenth century, it is *Dracula* that became the paragon of the genre.

Translated in over 450 languages, it is considered by many to be the greatest horror tale of

modern times. Although the novel was not an immediate hit with readers, critics, nevertheless,

applauded the work upon its release. The June 1897 edition of the *Daily Mail* writes, "In seeking

a parallel to this weird, powerful, and horrorful story, our mind reverts to such tales as *The*

Mysteries of Udolpho, *Frankenstein*, *The Fall of the House of Usher* [...] but *Dracula* is even

more appalling in its gloomy fascination than any one of these" (Anon., "Review of" 3). And the

June 1897 *Pall Mall Gazette* calls *Dracula* "one of the best things in the supernatural line we

have been lucky enough to hit upon" (Anon., "For Midnight" 11).

In 1922, *Dracula* was loosely adapted by producer Albin Grau and writer Henrik Galeen

into a German Expressionist film entitled *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* ("a symphony

of horror"). Denying reports that he plagiarized the Gothic novel, Grau states in *Buhne und Film*

that he got the concept for the film after being stationed in Serbia during World War I, and

hearing local legends about vampires menacing the countryside (Giesen 35). Regardless of

Grau's piracy rebuttal, and him altering character's names and staging the main action in the

fictional city in Wisborg, the plot points of *Nosferatu* are the same as *Dracula*'s: a real estate

agent (Hutter) travels to a Carpathian castle to sell property to an elderly Count (Orlock), who is

also a vampire (nosferatu). After becoming imprisoned in and escaping the Count's castle, the

agent journeys back to his homeland to rescue his fiancé, and other local townsfolk, from being

preyed upon by the eerie coffin-dweller. Because Grau did not obtain copyright permission from

Stoker's widow (Florence Balcombe) the silent horror film was ordered by the courts to be

eliminated (Beresford 142). A few prints of the Expressionistic picture survived the legal battle,

however, and have recently been restored and digitized.

Because of Dracula's literary and Nosferatu's theatrical success there was renewed

scholarly and public interest in the vampire myth throughout the 1920s and 30s (Beresford 141).

Texts like Dudley Wright's *The Book of Vampires* (1924), Montague Summer's *The Vampire: His

Kith and Kin* (1928), and *The Vampire in Europe* (1929) documented first-hand accounts and

urban legends of bloodsuckers throughout various cultures (141). As Matthew Beresford makes

known, "Whereas in the superstitions and myths of the Middle Ages or within folklore it was the

lack of knowledge that fuelled the existence of the vampire, the technological advancement and

mass-market productions of modernity eradicated the unknown and transformed the vampire into

a household product" (140).

Dracula, as a character, has left a permanent bite mark on popular culture, becoming a

modern legend of his own. He has influenced breakfast cereals (*Count Chocula*), a *Sesame Street*

puppet (the Count), book series (*Twilight*, *The Vampire Chronicles*), musicals (*Dracula: the

Musical*), operas (*Dracula, The Opera*), radio programs (*Sherlock Holmes vs. Dracula*), and

comic books (*Marvel's Tomb of Dracula*). He has featured in over two hundred movies, second

only to Sherlock Holmes in number of appearances, and has "usurped the red devil with

pitchfork and pointed tail as the preferred icon of evil" (Belford x). He has become a modern

myth, one that is re-imagined and re-interpreted with every succeeding generation.

CHAPTER FOUR

"UNKNOWN — WITH A CAPITAL U!"[19]: RICHARD MARSH'S *THE BEETLE*, THE

PERSONHOOD IN CRISIS, AND THE APOCALYPTIC IMAGINARY

Despite *Dracula*'s now mythical status, with its frequent re-imaginings and critical

interpretations, Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), an imperial Gothic novel about an ancient

androgynous "Arab" (281) who seeks vengeance on a Member of Parliament in London, was

more popular than Stoker's vampire tale during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth

century. In 1913, Marsh's book was already in its fifteenth printing, while *Dracula* (1897) was in

its tenth (Youngs 84).

The two novels are curiously linked by their themes and structure. For instance, both

feature a reverse colonization threat from the East; blend sexuality with the exotic; and feature

numerous narrators (Youngs 84-5). Regarding the latter, *The Beetle* is told from four distinct

perspectives: the novel's first victim, Robert Holt; the heroine, Marjorie Lindon; an inventor and

childhood confidante of Lindon, Sydney Atherton; and a detective and recurring character in

Marsh's fiction, Augustus Champnell. *Dracula*, comparably, is a collection of textual fragments

produced by the story's main and auxiliary characters: Jonathan and Mina Harker, Lucy

Westenra, and Dr. John Seward. These textual fragments include: phonograph archives, personal

letters, newspaper cuttings, and diary extracts.

In terms of plot, both *Dracula* and *The Beetle* portray modern gentlemen using

technology and science to protect their female counterparts, as well as England as a whole, from

a primitive supernatural entity; and both works feature men and women being sexually assaulted

by their respective creature. Christopher Craft proposes that the two novels follow a narrative

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[19] Marsh, *The Beetle* 219.

pattern that is common amongst many Gothic novels, namely the "tripartite cycle of admission-entertainment-expulsion" (*Another* 72). Essentially, each novel reveals or summons a creature, then explores and is amused by its deformities and perversions, until the end the story, in which the novel defeats and rejects it.

Upon the release of both novels in 1897, many critics were more impressed by the petrifying elements of *The Beetle* than of *Dracula*'s. A critic from *The Academy* writes, "Dracula, by Mr. Bram Stoker, was creepy, but Mr. Marsh goes one, oh! many more than one, better. This surprising and ingenious story succeeds in producing that sensation of horror which should make the flesh of even the least susceptible reader creep" (Anon., "Reviews" [30 Oct.] 99). Similarly, a critic of the *Glasgow Herald* praised Marsh for his superior imagination, claiming, "It is difficult, if not impossible, to lay down this book when once begun. Mr Bram Stoker's effort of the imagination was not easy to beat, but Mr Marsh has, so to speak, out-Heroded Herod" (Anon., "Literature" 9). Because of the striking similarities between the two works, it has been claimed by some literary scholars that the two authors put a wager on who could publish a more profitable Gothic novel (Karschay 124). It has even been further suggested that Marsh plagiarized Stoker, which is unlikely since *The Beetle* was published in June 1897, only two months after *Dracula*'s release (124).

So, how does one account for the many commonalities between these two authors and their novels? Why are the "Arab" and the Count so similar in how they infiltrate imperial England and confuse their victims' sense of personhood? Metaphorically, says Wolfreys, the "Arab" signifies "a powerfully exemplary grotesque embodiment of late-Victorian anxieties" (19); and the same can be said for the Count. It is likely that Marsh and Stoker were drawing upon common cultural anxieties, both functioning within similar genres of their time, like the

imperial Gothic and the invasion narrative. They were also, as I want to suggest, invoking the motif of the apocalyptic.

From his early short stories to *The Beetle*, Marsh takes the motif of Western identity or of "personhood in crisis" and expands upon it to apocalyptic lengths. Against the backdrop of a dark and desolate London West End, the novel's protagonists — Holt, Lessingham, Atherton, and Lindon — are mesmerized by the ancient "Arab," and left shaken by its undefinable nature. Their sense of autonomy, and of selfhood, shrivels into "nothingness" (54) at his gaze, and a "blank horror" (202) overtakes their minds at the mere proclamation of its name. Because imperial Britain is reliant on the progressive thinking, moral aptitude, and gender conformity of its subjects, especially up-and-coming politicians like Lessingham, any sort of threat to these long-held conventions could lead to its ruin. The "Arab," although not successful in its revenge mission, is nevertheless a destabilizing entity. Its mesmeric tricks are more than mind control, and troublingly entail the dissolution of binary oppositions such as male and female, ancient and modern, and low and high classes. Terror arises not because of any specific aspect of the "Arab['s]" otherness, but because it is beyond all known categories or systems; it is an Other beyond all Others. Holt describes the creature as a male simply because "it was impossible such a creature could be feminine" (53). Unable to truly classify the "Arab," Marjorie calls the creature "the Unknown — with a capital U!" (219). As Wolfrey points out in his introduction to *The Beetle*, the creature "is [...] exemplary of a world without a stable center" (25), or in other words, a creature without a stable gender, class, or form.

In this chapter, I will focus on two key areas of the novel to substantiate my account of its apocalyptic dimension. These two areas are: 1) the protagonists' encounters with the "Arab," and its nullifying effects on their sense of selfhood; and 2) the backdrop to these encounters, which is

often London's West End and western suburbs, rendered dark and desolate. Writing about the destruction of the West End, and not the East End (the already mythologized urban jungle) of London allowed Marsh playfully to rework and expand upon the trope of Darkest London.

Before I do this, however, I am going to explore Marsh's Jewish upbringing and criminal past, and how these two factors may have contributed to his emphasis on the personhood in crisis motif found in *The Beetle*. From here, I will present the common cultural anxieties and literary motifs that Marsh engaged with in writing *The Beetle*, for instance, his bringing together of The Egyptian Question, the mesmerism trope, and the invasion plot. As a constant opportunist, one who constantly attempts to "Out-Herod Herod," as the *Glasgow Herald* journalist put it, Marsh responds to what his predecessors or contemporaries were publishing by either replicating their works or developing them in fresh ways. Indeed, as J. Hillis Miller states on the back cover of the Broadview Edition of *The Beetle*, the creature is "a wonderful assemblage of many motifs from popular culture at the fin de siècle" (J. Miller). Marsh was an opportunistic compiler of long-established cultural tropes, drawing upon and repackaging familiar ideas in order to have his stories stand out in the fin-de-siècle literary market. With *The Beetle*, Marsh was able to create a "fin-de-siècle melodrama" (Dollimore) that at once thrilled and terrified his audience and expanded the apocalyptic imaginary that is the topic of this thesis.

After I provide a discussion of how the protagonists encounter the "Arab," and how these interactions threaten their sense of self, I will consider why *The Beetle* never assumed mythical status like *The War of the Worlds* (1897)*, Heart of Darkness* (1899)*, and Dracula* (1897); how the novel's apocalyptic motif of a personhood in crisis was not easily adaptable to other media platforms, like the theatre stage and film screen.

My proposal, that *The Beetle* can be read as an apocalyptic tale, one that expands the parameters of the late Victorian apocalyptic imaginary, is a new one. Marsh scholars and texts, like Ailise Bulfin's *Invasion Gothic* (2019) and her essay "'In that Egyptian den'" (2018), explore the rich literary history of Egyptian Gothic fiction, as well as Marsh's adaptation of the Egyptian curse plot, but do not delve into the apocalyptic strains of *The Beetle*. Minna Vuohelainen, a leading expert on Marsh's early life and oeuvre, touches on the "personhood in crisis" motif in *The Beetle* in her text *Richard Marsh* (2015), and in her journal article, "'You know not what you speak'" (2013), but also does not consider its apocalyptic angle. And while Lesley Allin's "Leaky Bodies" (2015) convincingly argues that *The Beetle* "uses the register of the male body to interrogate imperial authority" (113), she does not consider the "Arab" as an agent of wide-spread destruction.

The Many Marshes

Richard Heldmann was a social outsider. The eldest son of Joseph, a German Jewish immigrant, and Emma, an English manufacturer's daughter, he would later take on the pseudonym Marsh (his mother's maiden name) in order to shield his tumultuous family and personal history (Vuohelainen, *Richard* 7). As a corrupt lace merchant in Emma's father's business, Joseph was known to meddle with his accounting books and misreport figures to his suppliers. In 1857, the year Richard was born, as Margree, Orrells, and Vuohaleainen reveal, "the Heldmann household was in turmoil as Joseph [...] came to figure in significant and xenophobic bankruptcy proceedings against his inlaws, whom he had defrauded to the tune of £16,000 in the course of managing the [family's] London branch" (28). A year later, Joseph applied for and was denied bankruptcy, and was forced to abandon the lace trade and take a position as a

schoolmaster in Hammersmith, West London (Godfrey 133), the location of some of the scenes

in *The Beetle*. In an 1858 article in the *Times*, he is described as a "reckless man," an

"adventurer," and a deceiver (Anon., "In Re" 11), and was the unfortunate target of anti-semitic

slurs. To partly stave off further persecution, and create solidarity with his non-Jewish business

partners, he would eventually convert to Christianity.

While working with his father in the merchant trade, young Richard would have

witnessed Joseph's double-dealing and his ability to construct new identities for personal safety

and financial gain (Bulfin, "Richard" 203). Indeed, as Vuohaleainen notes, "the author grew up

in an international climate increasingly characterised by suspicion and hostility towards

outsiders, foreigners and religious minorities" (*Richard* 7); finding ways to get ahead, similar to

how his father did, would be crucial in order for Richard to be successful.

In the 1870s, stepping away from the silk trade, Richard attempted to put on a new

identity as a musical entertainer. By at least the early 1880s, he traded in the stage for the page,

and was writing for "the jolliest magazine ever published for boys" (Anon., "Extract" 17), *Union

Jack*, under the pseudonym of Heldemann. In June 1883, however, *Union Jack* separated

themselves from the fledgling author because of some journalistic failings (Vuohelainen, *Richard*

7) as well as for pecuniary troubles, like perjury.

Like his father, young Marsh stumbled into a life of swindling and multiple identities.

Over the course of the following year, he opened bank accounts in Guernsey, France, and

England, and passed forged checks under various aliases. The Acton Branch of the London and

South Western Bank had issued him a book of one hundred checks, but due to his insufficient

funds, they were going to close his account unless £1,200 was deposited (Anon., "The Career"

5). Not long after this news, he mailed them thirteen checks, eight of which were in his own

name, and five of which were under his aliases: Captain George Roberts, Captain Henderson (5),

and Doctor Wilson (Anon., "A Swindler" 2), just to name a few. Among the counterfeit checks

used was a £200 check in Guernsey during Midsummer, and one for £900 in Tours, France,

sometime between September and November. According to a Tours watchmaker, Heldemann,

going by Dr. Wilson at the time (2), also stole 900 francs worth of merchandise from his jewelry

shop.

Part of Marsh's need to continue to alter his identity came from his opportunistic spirit

and his desire for "fabulous wealth" ("How I" 574). When he was the "merest child," Marsh

shares, he was paid thirty shillings for a *Robinson Crusoe* adaptation. "It must have been quite a

long yarn," Marsh jokingly recounts, "because it appeared in several installments," and the title

and content were completely altered (573). That thirty shillings was "quite a burden on [his]

mind," for he did not know how to budget his finances, nor did he seek out his family's fiscal

advice, for he dread that they would take his money from him, "or else [dole] it out in installment

of, say, twopence a time" (573). "I was so obsessed by the anxiety to get that thirty shillings," he

notes, "how I did set my heart on having it for my very own!" (573-4). This motivation for

"fabulous wealth" eventually led to the author publishing popular stories within an assortment of

periodicals (573). "I have contributed to most things to which one can contribute," he explains

(573).

Starting in Gothic and crime fiction, and evolving into sensation and romantic stories, he

published seventy-six volumes throughout his twenty-two year-career (1893-1915), and with

sixteen publishers (Vuohelainen, "From" 279). In a November 1915 article for *Strand Magazine*

called "How I 'Broke Into Print,'" Marsh describes his writing process for the reading public: "I

doubt if there was a time when I did not write — beginning, I do believe, with my first pair of

knickerbockers. I used to lie awake at night telling myself stories; the following day I would write them down" (573). He was inspired by texts like Bunyan's *Holy War* (1682), and *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the latter, as noted, he rewrote for his own amusement (573).

In November 1900, an anonymous critic from the *Academy* satirically described Marsh, as well as his contemporaries, Guy Boothby, William Le Queux, and Hume Nisbet, as being part of the "Yarning School" (Anon., "The Yarning" 423). The "Yarning School" were fiction writers who could begin "a story anywhere" and continue it "without art or insight, but with reckless invention" (423); they were responsible for publishing "romances which will beguile a railway journey, or even form the stay-at-home pabulum of millions" (423). The reviewer claims that the fin de siècle were "fat years for [these] yarners" (423), for ever since the 1870 Education Act, a piece of legislation that promoted education for all children ages from five to thirteen, audiences were gravitating towards easy reading at bargain prices (Vuohelainen, "From" 278). Marsh was one of the writers who had this "fine gift" and "genius" for "telling a story" that the masses wanted to read, and coming out with new material quite often. The reviewer states: "There is Mr Richard Marsh: he is prodigious. The tradition current in the receiving department of this office that he publishes a new novel every Tuesday is an exaggeration. We do not believe that, working at top pressure, Mr Marsh writes one novel a month. But [...] he comes near to this figure" (Anon., "The Yarning" 423). Marsh published eight novels that year, not twelve, but the output was nonetheless impressive (Vuohelainen, "From" 279). He was in his stride, as the reviewer confesses, for he could "throw a story with an abandon," while remaining "on terms with his readers," which was "refreshing" (Anon., "The Yarning" 423) for all. Despite never selling enough books to live lavishly, Heldemann's new identity as fiction writer Richard Marsh was

paying off, with many lower and upper middle-class readers anxious for his next spooky or suspenseful tale.

Given that he produced fiction under two pseudonyms, and spent his early life committing forgery and fraud, it is no surprise that a lot of his early fiction revolved around themes of mistaken or dual identity, or the collapse of identity altogether. As Bulfin notes, "it is possible to catch glimpses of the author lurking behind his texts. Fraud plays a crucial role in several of his novels, and forgery of the specific kind Marsh committed underpins the plot" (Bulfin, "Richard" 202) in some of Marsh's more notable novels and short stories.

In Marsh's crime story "Payment for a Life" (1889), an impoverished English writer is struggling to find work in France in the mid-1880s, and is patiently waiting for a publisher's check to come in the mail so that he is not evicted from his flat (circumstances reminiscent of Marsh's own experiences). One day while traversing around town, he rescues an Englishman from drowning, who quickly rewards the narrator with jewels and francs, as a payment for his life. As misfortune would have it, however, the Englishman turns out to be a con-artist, and the riches belong to a wealthy couple who have the narrator arrested for burglary.

In Marsh's short story "The Mask" (1892), an escaped convict, Mary Booker, wears a shape-shifting mask and sucks the blood from her helpless victims. Throughout the tale, one of her pursuers, Jaynes, contemplates the liberty of having such a disguise: "Think of living two distinct and separate lives. [...] Think of doubling the parts and hiding within your own breast the secret of the double; think of leading a triple life; think of leading many lives in one — of being the old man and the young, the husband and the wife, the father and the son" (59). One can imagine a young Marsh, looking to escape his Jewish identity, trotting the globe under numerous aliases, thinking similarly.

Another story that has striking similarities to his own troubled past, was "The Long Arm of Coincidence" (1890), a detective tale about Mr Hastie, a man who has disappeared, "and with him some necessary books and considerable sum in cash as well" (1). Bulfin notes that "Other themes that crop up persistently in Marsh's work are the wearing of cloaks, speaking to concealed identity; breaking in through windows, speaking to breaching boundaries; [...] violent misogyny [...], making it all extremely tempting to speculate upon further autobiographical echoes in his text" (Bulfin, "Richard" 212). Indeed, debt, forgery, and double-dealing are frequent literary devices throughout the author's oeuvre, showing up in everything from his Gothic tales, to his crime fiction, to his comedic short stories (209).

Marsh's fondness for reinventing himself, and his emphasis on personhood in crisis, or the blurring of one's identity is stretched to catastrophic lengths in *The Beetle*. This is symbolized by the Beetle's indeterminate shape and ability to overtake the Westerners' selfhood. In his early crime and comedic stories, the scope of a character's identity crisis is personal only. The characters are characterized as everyday mortals, despite one employing a magical disguise or craving the taste of blood (Cf. "The Mask"). In *The Beetle*, however, one meets an ancient, gender fluid "Arab," or Beetle, that uses magnetism (mesmerism) and superstition to overtake its victims' personhood. While we do not know what led Marsh to construct this shape-shifting devil, for Marsh did not leave much of a paper trail during his career, it is fair to suggest that he is channelling the assumptions and anxieties of his age regarding sexual fluidity, class warfare, and depraved desires. Kelly Hurley calls Marsh's "Arab," "a liminal entity, the fact of whose existence violates multiple structures of meaning, including those that organize sexual and species identity" (131). Indeed, his ability to combine these motifs with the Egyptian Question,

the mesmerism trope, and the invasion plot proved to be not only profitable for this "prodigious"

author, but would "make the flesh" of his middle-class "reader[s] creep" in exciting new ways.

The Egyptian Question

As a "Yarner," and a constant opportunist, Marsh had his ear constantly to the ground

regarding what was popular in newspapers and on bookstands. One of the recurring talking

points in British newspapers, and an inspiration for curse-driven stories and British invasion

fiction during the fin de siècle, was the Egyptian Question.

In 1859, French diplomat Ferdinand de Lesseps led the Franco-Egyptian project to

connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea and reduce the distance between Europe and the

Indian subcontinent. With the division of the isthmus of Suez completed by 1869, Egypt became

a sphere of influence, and as a consequence, disrupted the balance of power throughout the

world. In "Latest-From the Sphinx," a November 1869 article from *The Punch*, the anonymous

writer ponders the now unpredictable future of global politics:

What of this piercing of the sands?

What of this union of the seas?

This grasp of unfamiliar hands,

This blending of strange litanies?

[...]

Answer in vain the Sphinx invites;

A darkling veil the future hides;

We know what seas the work unites,

Who knows what sovereigns it divides? (Anon., "Latest-From" 210)

Fearing French control of the Suez Canal, and solidifying Britain's economic involvement in the project, British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli purchased a number of shares in the Canal Company in 1875 (Bulfin, *Gothic* 65), which developed an "abiding stake in the security and welfare of Egypt" (Ragatz 6). Despite their investment and influence in Egypt, Britain was still susceptible to foreign insurrectionist regimes, like that of Colonel Ahmed Urabi — "an impressive Egyptian colonel [with] a magnetic personality" (Zayid 21) — who led a protonationalist uprising in Egypt in 1881. In order to consolidate Britain's global reach and imperial supremacy, Prime Minister William Gladstone, Disraeli's successor, commanded General Garnet Wolseley to lead British troops into Egypt to battle Urabi's forces and restore the Khedive (Egypt's sovereign) (Bulfin, *Gothic* 66). Within eight weeks from the date of their attack, Britain had unofficially occupied the Ottoman vassal-state (62). Paul Hayes writes that Britain's de facto control of Egypt is "the most important single act in British foreign policy in this period" (158). In fact, within five years of their rule, three-quarters of the shipments passing through the Canal were from British territories (Bulfin, *Gothic* 65).

In his book *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830-1970* (2009), John Darwin asserts that Britain's function in Egypt was to fortify the "'Clapham Junction' of imperial communication" (Darwin 3). Fortifying the "Junction," however, caused substantial problems for Britain with rival nations France and Russia, and required Britain to be involved in Egyptian affairs for quite some time. Because Egypt was a major pawn in international politics, Britain could neither incorporate it into their Empire, nor easily withdraw its military for fear of another uprising. The conflict surrounding Britain going or staying became known as the Egyptian Question.

In 1895, British politicians, like John Morley, were displeased with Britain's involvement in Egypt, stating that "the occupation of Egypt poisoned our foreign policy and lay at the root of all the difficulties which concerned us in the world" (Anon., "Sir" 659). For those in Lord Cromer's administration, all things relating to the Egyptian Question, whether military matters, diplomacy, or politics, seemed to be in chaos (Milner 74). Traveling through Egypt in 1898, *Daily Mail* war correspondent G.W. Steevens aptly notes, "I did see the famous Canal [...] Never, I suppose has any single work of man upset the balance of the world like the Suez Canal; it has made and unmade men, cities, nations" (30).

In his book *Parting the Desert: The Creation of the Suez Canal* (2004), Zachary Karabell suggests that, by the turn of the century:

British officials were so concerned about the possibility of Suez's falling into hostile hands that they justified expansion into Afghanistan, [...] East Africa, [...] Iran and the Middle East. The logic, however tenuous, was that if adversaries such as Russia, Germany, or France controlled any of these regions, they would be able to threaten the Suez Canal, and if they seized the canal, then the entire British Empire could be severed and dismembered (226-7).

Generating these problems for Britain was the extension of their colonial interests, particularly in accessing Eastern and African territories, and in procuring exotic luxury goods. While controlling the Canal ensured dominance over Egyptian affairs, boosted the global market trade, and, as John E. Flint notes, "provided careers, or profits for privileged groups at British taxpayers' cost" (450), it also forced or conscripted labor upon Egyptians, and made other countries — like Germany, France, and Russia — more hostile towards it. In *Die Baghdadbahn*

(1909), for instance, German political writer Paul Rohrbach describes how his country's alliance

with Turkey could upset imperial Britain's dominance in Egypt:

> England can be attacked and mortally wounded by land from Europe in one place —
>
> Egypt. The loss of Egypt would mean not only the end of her dominion over the Suez
>
> Canal and her communications with India and the Far East, but would probably also
>
> entail the loss of her possessions in Central and East Africa. The conquest of Egypt by a
>
> Mohammadan power, like Turkey, would also imperil England's hold over her sixty
>
> million Mohammadan subjects in India [...] The stronger Turkey becomes the greater will
>
> be the danger for England, if in a German-English war, the canal. Turkey should be on
>
> the side of Germany. (qtd. in McClure 19)

Rohrbach's conjecture proved right. By the early 1900s, Germans had successfully built up the

Ottoman Empire, constructed a larger navy, and utilized a railway system, in order to undermine

Britain's control of Egypt. Eventually, this led to Britain needing to make an alliance with their

former rival, France, and forfeiting some of their rights to the Canal.

From the completion of the Suez Canal to Britain's first period of colonial rule of Egypt

from 1882 to 1914, Gothic stories about ancient Egyptians or Arabs seeking retribution on

modern Britons increased in popularity (Bulfin, *Gothic* 63). Besides Marsh's *The Beetle*, these

Egyptian retributive or "curse-driven plots" are prevalent in fin-de-siècle fiction like, Arthur

Conan Doyle's "Lot No. 249" (1892), K. and H. Prichard's "The Story of Baelbrow" (1898), and

Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903). As Bulfin notes, "The typical plot turns upon modern

English trespass into an ancient Egyptian tomb, the misappropriation and removal of a mummy

or its artifacts back to England, and the unleashing of a curse which sees an ancient supernatural

invader exacting revenge in the heart of the imperial metropolis" (64). With Britain's abuse of

power, and Egypt's defiance of Britain's occupation, Egyptian "curse-driven" stories replicated

— on a much more imaginative scale — the political scene of the time (Bulfin, "'In that'" 130).

Marsh began writing *The Beetle* in 1895. That same year, General Herbert Kitchener led

British soldiers into Northern Sudan, a territory ostensibly ruled by Egypt (and by proxy,

Britain), and attacked a Mahdist terrorist group led by Abd Allah al-Ta'ayishi. For Bulfin, *The*

Beetle should be read specifically within the context of Anglo-Egyptian and Sudanese politics,

and not simply within general imperial anxieties ("'In that'" 128). It is likely then that Marsh —

the constant opportunist — was reading about and inspired by these global political events, and

depicted his mysterious scarab as an "unbaptized Muhammaden" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 107),

reminding his middle-class audience of Middle Eastern threats.

Yet, even though the scarab signs its name as Mohamed el Kheir (272), wears "one of

them dirty-coloured bed-cover sort of things [...] wrapped all over his head and round his body,"

(263), and is classified as an "Arab" or "Harab" (299) by those it encounters, it is never clarified

exactly what it is. Marsh goes a step further than his predecessors and contemporaries, like

Stoker and Haggard, in creating a supernatural entity that does not fit into any neat categories.

When it is called an "Arab" or described in xenophobic terms by the protagonists, it is an attempt

to normalize, or categorize, something undefinable. In discussing the Beetle's whereabouts to

Holt, Lessingham, Lindon, and Atherton, detective Augustus Champnell states, "It seems to me

quite clear that the Arab, as we will call the person for the sake of identification, was somewhere

about the premises when you thought he wasn't" (285). And later, after the Beetle is seemingly

vanquished in the train collision, the British sleuth confesses to his readers, "I am quite prepared

to believe that the so-called Beetle, which others saw, but I never, was — or is, for it cannot be

certainly shown that The Thing is not sill existing — a creature born neither of God nor man"

(322). It is notable that a detective who gathers and reports clear empirical data throughout the novel ends it in a state of such uncertainty about the Beetle.

While more will be said about how the "Arab['s]" indefinable existence was radically disruptive to London's classifications or binary systems, I want to turn my attention now to *The Beetle*'s emphasis on mesmerism and the body, and how it relates to the story's theme of a personhood in crisis.

Mesmerism and the Vulnerable Victorian Body

Staging both immediate concerns about a recoil from British policy in Egypt and longer-standing fears of a contagion spreading from the East (also evident in *Dracula*), Egyptian Gothic narratives channeled anxieties regarding the frail British male (T. Allin 114). The invasion of the male body by a grotesque supernatural agent, for instance, was a useful metaphor in examining this vulnerability.

From Jacobean times to the Victorian era, the nation-as-body, or body politic metaphor was widely used in public or literary discourses. King James I (1566–1625) referred to himself often as the "head of the naturall body" and therefore as one with "the power of directing all [its] members" (Jacques 530). Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) used the metaphor to recover the civic integrity that had been lost during the English Civil War: "But forasmuch as we speak here of a *body politic*, instituted for the perpetual benefit and defence of them that make it; [...] I will omit to speak of those that be temporary, and consider those that be for ever" (Hobbes and Tönnies 110; italics mine). Prime Minister Gladstone (1809-1898) even turned to the metaphor in describing how Great Britain was at "the heart" of the Empire in his rousing speech on "England's mission": "Of all the opinions disparaging to England, there is none which can lower

her like that which teaches that the source of strength for this almost *measureless body* lies in its

extremities [or colonies], and not in the *heart* which has so long propelled the blood through all

its regions, and in the brain which has bound and binds them into one" (Gladstone 570; italics

mine). From century to century, the body politic metaphor had been adopted by rulers and

politicians to not only present Britain in corporeal form, but to warn its subjects of future

dismemberment.

Because many late Victorians were imaginatively drawn to ideas of degeneration,

whether individual or collective, the body politic metaphor was employed often in late

nineteenth-century Gothic literature. In Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

(1886), for instance, Hyde's body and mind typify the "tempestuous [...] landscape" and

"subcultural underbelly" of London's East End (Brooks 50); and in Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the

Count's dual status as vampire and Szekely warrior suggests that his attacks are not just on his

victim's anatomy but the larger imperial body as well (Arata, "The Occidental" 630). As Baldick

points out *In Frankenstein's Shadow* (1987):

> When political discord and rebellion appear, this "body" is said to be not just diseased,
>
> but misshapen, abortive, monstrous. Once the state is threatened to the point where it can
>
> no longer be safely identified (according to medieval theory) with "the King's body" —
>
> that is, with an integral and sacred whole — then the humanly recognizable form of the
>
> body politic is lost into a chaos of dismembered and contending organs. (Baldick 14)

In her article "Leaky Bodies — Masculinity, Narrative and Imperial Decay in Richard

Marsh's The Beetle" (2015), Leslie Allin theorizes that *The Beetle* underscores the frailty or

"leakiness of male bodies," in particular, "in order to pull apart traditional narratives of British

manliness and male narratives about empire" (116); that despite the popular view that the British

masculine form was "bounded, solid, and impermeable," it — like the nation that it allegorized — was open to contagion and corruption from without (116-7).

In *The Beetle*, one reads of the physical subjugation and mental traumatization of Robert Holt and Paul Lessingham at the hands of the "Arab," how it infiltrates their psyches, and confuses their perception of identity, gender, and progressive evolution. When Atherton questions Lessingham about the "Woman of the Songs[']" (242), or the Beetle's, abduction of him in Cairo, he immediately crumbles to the ground and blathers like a beast. During the "Arab['s]" infiltration of Holt's "leaky" mind and body in the West End villa, the unemployed clerk speaks of his identity loss: "I looked him in the face, — and immediately became conscious, as I did so, that something was going from me, — the capacity, as it were, to be myself" (56). Commenting on how the emasculated Holt acts as a stand-in for Britain, Bulfin comments that, "The extreme passivity of Holt [...] in the face of hostile Egyptian agency clearly plays on imperial fears inspired by Victorian racial theory that Britain's degenerating domestic manhood would prove incapable of defending insular Britain against potential foreign threats" (Bulfin, "'In that'" 134). Holt's loss of self, and Lessingham's atavistic crumbling are frightening reminders that no British male was safe from violation and degeneration; that whether one was an unemployed vagabond (Holt), or a celebrated politician (Lessingham), one was still susceptible to corruption by an alien power.

In order to overtake its victim's identities and bring ruin to Britain, the "Arab" uses mesmeric or hypnotic tricks. Roger Luckhurst suggests that "hypnotic or mesmeric power is part of the repertory of the fin-de-siècle monster" ("Trance-Gothic" 150); and Bulfin claims that, "malevolent, Gothicised mesmerism can be considered a specific manifestation of the invasion threat, a grave danger to the manly pursuit of empire" (*Gothic* 45). Animal magnetism was

theorized to be an intangible fluid or force that could penetrate human subjects. It was wielded

through ritualistic "passes," or hand tricks, by mesmerists (W. Hughes, *Historical* 138). For

eighteenth-century German physician Franz Anton Mesmer, the theorist and practitioner behind

animal magnetism, inducing a trance involved making "passes," or moving one's hands over a

patient's face or body (Thurschwell 40). These "passes" were "an application of Newtonian

philosophy, using the body's own magnetic forces," which he perceived as an invisible magnetic

fluid (40).

Originally employed as a treatment for hysteria and epilepsy, it was broadened to assist

patients through clairvoyant or clairaudient episodes (W. Hughes, *Historical* 138). After losing

credibility in the early nineteenth century because of male operators exploiting female patients, it

grew in popularity again as an anesthetic method for surgical operations (138). Because of its

mysterious and manipulative powers, Victorian authors saw its potential as a plot device.

Charles Dickens, who had frequently attended mesmeric experimentations (Willis and

Wynne 1), made allusions to the practice in both "The Trial for Murder" (1865)[20] and the

incomplete *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). In the latter story, the malicious operator John

Jasper penetrates musician Rosa Bud's consciousness, commanding her to be his mistress: "He

has made a slave of me with his looks," she notes, "When I play, he never moves his eyes from

my hand. When I sing, he never moves his eyes from my lips. [...] [H]e himself is in the sounds,

whispering that he pursues me as a lover" (53). Texts like Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *A Strange

Story* (1845), George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil" (1859), George McDonald's *The Portent* (1864),

Charles Felix's *The Notting Hill Mystery* (serialized in 1862-63) also spoke of the hypnotizer's

---

[20] One evening, after the narrator encounters a spectre in his private quarters, he rests his hand on his valet's chest. He does this in order that his employee will share in his ghost experience. "I turned round to him," the narrator states, "and said, 'Derrick could you believe that in my cool senses I fancied I saw a…' As I there laid my hand upon his breast, with a sudden start he trembled violently, and said, 'Oh, Lord, yes, sir! A dead man beckoning!'" This scene, Maurizio Ascari suggests, implies that "an invisible fluid" is passing between the two characters, that the narrator is using mesmerist techniques to bring the supernatural into the natural world (70).

psychological, emotional, and sexual dominance over entranced victims (Bhattacharjee 2).
Luckhurst comments that from the "first accounts of Mesmer's treatments it was the risk of
women at the hands of male charlatans that was the key anxiety" ("Trance-Gothic" 156). And
Julian Wolfreys suggests that "mesmerism is readable as an act analogous with sexual
penetration" (13).

The height of mesmerism's popularity in Gothic fiction was during the fin de siècle.
According to William Hughes, "the popularity of the practice increased [...] because of
newspaper and journal accounts of Charcot's work and in part because of the stage melodrama
Trilby (1895) by Paul Potter," which was adapted from Maurier's novel of the same name
(*Historical* 139). *Trilby* depicts an Eastern European Jew, Svengali, employing animal
magnetism to groom the titular heroine to be his music protege and sexual object (139). At the
novel's end, Svengali is struck with a penknife and passes away due to a heart attack. Soon after,
revealing the intimate and unbreakable connection between the mesmerist and his subject, Trilby
loses her singing voice, falls ill, and dies. In a similar manner, *Dracula* (1897), whose titular
villain is often theorized to have Jewish characteristics (Tichelaar 229-234),[21] portrays him using
mesmeric tricks on Lucy and Mina, the latter of which he sexually violates (more on this below).

Marsh's *The House of Mystery* (1898), which was largely inspired by Du Maurier's *Trilby*
(1894) (Vuohelainen, *Richard* 81), also explores mesmerism and music by way of Jewish
criminal Aaron Lazarus, a Svengali-type, who instead of hypnotizing young girls to sing,
attempts to silence them. The narrator describes Lazarus as an "obscene creature possessed of
unholy powers" (Marsh, *The House* 246) one with an "evil eye" (241) who can manipulate the

---

[21] As I mentioned in the thesis introduction, the Count is portrayed as being stereotypically Semitic. For instance, he
is described as having an "ook nose and [...] pointed beard" (B. Stoker, *Dracula* 253), that he smells of "ole
Jerusalem" (387), and that he hoards ancient treasures: "a great heap of gold in one corner — gold of all kinds,
Roman, and British, and Austrian, and Hungarian, and Greek and Turkish money" (115).

nervous systems of morally-compromised female subjects. Like *Trilby*'s Dr. Nikola, he is

perpetually on the move, "To-day he is in London, to-morrow in Paris, the day after in Vienna.

You find him in Milan, St Petersburg, New York, South America — wherever he is at the

moment, that is his home; it is all the same to him" (288). His prime victim is the recluse Maud,

the granddaughter of an eccentric wealthy countess who hides away in the attic of the House of

Staines, attempting to avoid the attention of an unwanted Earl. While hiding away in her "secret

chamber" (320) and exploring her artistic and scientific curiosities, she opens a "a little door" of

her mind for Lazarus to enter (178); becoming his slave in the process. She is his "most perfect

subject" (178) as he describes her, "some lovely automaton" (174) who is like "wax in his

hands" (241).

Real life stories of crime and hypnotism, of young women being entangled with their

male operators, were also common during the time. From 1890-91, the Eyraud-Bompard murder

trial was reported upon frequently in the English press. The case involved a twenty-two-year-old

woman, Bompard, who was indicted for stealing from and murdering a Parisian bailiff with her

middle-aged paramour. She told the judge that "she had acted under a post-hypnotic suggestion

implanted by her [now] former lover" (Harris 197). The paramour contended that it was

Bompard who was to blame, for it was her "youth, beauty, and insatiable appetites" that coerced

him into the crime (200). Nevertheless, the paramour was found guilty and guillotined in 1891,

and Bompard was imprisoned and later released in 1903 (Leighton, 203-4). As Mary Elizabeth

Leighton notes in *Victorian Literary Mesmerism* (2006), "Correspondents and journalists in the

British Medical Journal warned vaguely against the demoralizing effects of hypnotism and the

nebulous dangers that it held for subjects. It was not until the mid-1880s that these dangers were

made explicit: the danger of sexual assault on the one hand, and enforced criminality on the other" (208).

By 1895, two years before *The Beetle* was published, the public was familiar with how mesmerists were typically depicted in literature. They were either "power-thirsty exploiter[s] of female subjects," "money-grubbing faux spiritualist[s]," "vengeance-seeking charlatan[s]," or "innocent-seeming, clandestine schemer[s]" (Leighton 221). Arthur Quiller-Couch, a reviewer in the 1895 edition of *The Speaker*, aptly summarizes the mesmerist trope:

> For artistic reasons too obvious to need pointing out, the hypnotizer in these stories is always the villain of the piece. For the same reasons, the "subject" is always a person worthy of our sympathy, and is usually a woman. [...] The author gives us to understand that by hypnotism this good and beautiful woman is for a while completely in the power of a man who is *ex hypothesi* a beast, and who *ex hypothesi* can make her commit any excesses that his beastliness may suggest. (316)

While there were fin-de-siècle novels like Cushing's *Doctor Caesar Crowl: Mind-Curer* (1887), Rita's *The Doctor's Secret* (1890), Dumas's *Memoirs of a Physician* (1890), and Brandon's *Hypnotized: or, The Doctor's Confession* (1891), which called attention to the use of hypnosis to treat the sick and the dying, it was more common to see the therapeutic technique presented in a coercive, slanderous manner.

Marsh's emphasis on the misuse of power by an Oriental mesmerist in *The Beetle* was, therefore, nothing new. Even his use of a female hypnotist had already been seen in Arthur Conan Doyle's "John Barrington Cowles" (1884) and *The Parasite* (1894). His unique spin on trance-narratives, nevertheless, was in his ability to combine mesmerism with the cultural anxieties surrounding the Egyptian Question, invasion narrative literature, and as I will

demonstrate now, the use of the apocalypse motif. This motif is most notably demonstrated by the negating attributes of the "Arab."

Close Encounters with Nothingness

Not only is the "Arab" a nameless shape-shifting entity, but it also identifies as a "nothing, — a shadow" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 66), an ontological vacuum. The characters who encounter the Beetle all apprehend it as a negating "nothingness" (54), an entity that strips them of their understanding of self, of their unique Western identity. Before it presumably perishes during the train collision, it is suggested that the negating force of the "Arab" might be sufficient to bring about the apocalyptic ruin of the imperial metropolis. This possibility is broached by the way in which the novel evokes the haunting backdrop of a desolate London, specifically West London and the West End suburbs.

For Simon Marsden, Marsh is unwittingly embracing the language of Saint Augustine's privation theory. He writes, "*The Beetle* adopts the vocabulary of privation both in its depictions of the nothingness of the Beetle itself and in its correlate insistence upon its ineffability" (58). In *Enchiridion* (420 AD), Augustine teaches that evil is not a substance but the nullification of goodness; it is an accident in the human soul, a reversal of the god-given order. To use an example, "In animal bodies [...] sickness and wounds are nothing but the privation of health. When a cure is effected, the evils which were present (i.e., the sickness and the wounds) do not retreat and go elsewhere. Rather, they simply do not exist any more" (11). The same goes for evil. Likewise, the Beetle's nothingness compels his victims to lose their rational minds, to fall into a degenerative state, and to experience the confounding of gender binaries and class system.

In the first chapter, upon being hypnotized by the "Arab," Robert Holt contemplates his

non-existence:

> "Is it not good to be dead? To keep dead is better, — it is the best of all! To have made an
>
> end of all things, to cease to strive and to cease to weep, to cease to want and to cease to
>
> have, to cease to annoy and to cease to long, to no more care, — no! — not for anything,
>
> to put from you the curse of life, — forever! — is that not the best? Oh yes! — I tell you!
>
> — do I not know?" (65)

And in reflecting on "the Arab['s]" nullifying presence, and his inability to think clearly about

what transpired, Holt narrates, "How much of it was fact, and how much of it was the product of

imagination I cannot say; but, looking back, it seems to me that it was as if I had been taken out

of the corporeal body to be plunged into the inner chambers of all nameless sin" (84).

The novel's use of privation language, Marsden comments, is evident in its "images of

uncreation" (59): "the concept of privation allows evil to be seen primarily as a distortion of or

subtraction from what the world was created to be" (60). Indeed, the mysterious "Arab" has the

mesmeric tricks to not only cause "blank horror" and linguistic failure, but the power to uncreate

his victims' Western, and/or even Judeao-Christian, identities. For instance, as I will go on to

discuss, Lessingham, who is depicted as London's own Apostle Paul — the "triumph[ant]"

(Marsh, *The Beetle* 127) voice of Britain — is left as a muttering "frenzied animal" (180) after

hearing the name of the Beetle.

In what follows I will examine the economy of language used in four of the characters'

encounters with the Beetle: Robert Holt, Paul Lessingham, Marjorie Lindon, and Sydney

Atherton, and how its mesmeric tricks threatened the foundation of their identities.

Close Encounters with Nothingness: Robert Holt

During the opening chapter of *The Beetle*, "The Surprising Narration of Robert Holt,"
one reads of Holt's abduction and terrified bewilderment as the "mysterious" Beetle stalks and
crawls over his flesh:

> [W]ith a sense of shrinking, horror, nausea, rendering me momentarily more helpless, I
>
> realised that [it] was beginning to ascend my legs, to climb my body. [...] It was as though
>
> it were some gigantic spider, — a spider of the nightmares; a monstrous conception of
>
> some dreadful vision. It pressed lightly against my clothing with what might, for all the
>
> world, have been spider's legs. There was an amazing host of them, — I felt the pressure
>
> of each separate one. They embraced me softly, stickily, as if the creature glued and
>
> unglued them, each time it moved. (51)

Later, taking the form of an ageless humanoid with yellow skin and bird-like features, the
Beetle commands Holt to strip: "Undress!" the Beetle tells Holt as it stares at him with eyes that
had "powers of penetration" (55). Holt, obeying his victimizer, lets his "sodden, shabby clothes
fall anyhow upon the floor" (55) and stands "naked in front of him" (55). The Beetle, "devouring
[him] with glances," and with a "satyr's smile" covets its victim's naked white flesh: "What a
white skin you have — how white! What would I not give for a skin as white as that — ah yes!"
(55). Then, when Holt walks to the cupboard to put on clothes, the Beetle continues to follow
him with its burning stare (55). Eventually, in much more graphic detail, the Beetle straps the
mesmerized Holt to its bed, and violates him in the middle of the day:

> It stooped, then knelt. My only covering was unceremoniously thrown off me, so that I
>
> lay there in my nakedness. Fingers prodded me then and there, as if I had been some
>
> beast ready for the butcher's stall. A face looked into mine, and, in front of me, were

those dreadful eyes. [...] Fingers were pressed into my cheeks, they were thrust into my

mouth, they touched my staring eyes, shut my eyelids, then opened them again,

and—horror of horrors!—the blubber lips were pressed to mine — the soul of something

entered into me in the guise of a kiss. (57)

In a similarly explicit manner in *Dracula*, one reads of the Count preying upon Mina Harker in

her quarters and coercing her into feeding on his chest, like a mother nursing an infant, or "a

child forcing a kitten nose into a saucer of milk" (468):

With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at

full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on

his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down

the man's bare breast which was shown by his torn-open dress. (468)

Although the Count never sucks the blood of Jonathan Harker, it is implied that he wants to

"seduce, penetrate, [and] drain another male" (Craft, *Another* 74). As stated in the previous

chapter, this would have been a salacious image of gender reversal and identity confusion for the

late Victorian readers.

Like Stoker, Marsh utilizes "textual euphemism, elision, or indirection" (Hurley 125) in

describing the Beetle's sexual assaults, allowing the novel to keep a "certain innocence" (125)

while still stimulating or arousing his Victorian readers. This was a common literary technique in

Victorian Gothic writing, one that Stoker employs in *Dracula* during Jonathan Harker's

seduction scenes. Typically, Gothic victims will experience a traumatic situation, one that

shatters their sexual or biological framework, and will then struggle to speak about or define

what they witness (48). This will, in turn, lead to psychological repression which causes the

victim's body to be paralyzed, twitch, or be nauseous (48).[22] One sees this with Holt as he's unable to move for sometime after being violated by the Beetle:

> And throughout that interminable night I remained, my brain awake, my body dead, waiting, watching, for the day. What had happened to me I could not guess. That I probably wore some of the external evidences of death my instinct told me,—I knew I did. Paradoxical though it may sound, I felt as a man might feel who had actually died,—as, in moments of speculation, in the days gone by, I had imagined it as quite possible that he would feel. It is very far from certain that feeling necessarily expires with what we call life. I continually asked myself if I could be dead,—the inquiry pressed itself on me with awful iteration. Does the body die, and the brain—the I, the ego—still live on? God only knows. But, then! the agony of the thought. (57)

During these graphic episodes, one reads of Holt's "uncreation" beginning to take place. He has not only been feminized by the scarab's "pressing," and in the objectification of his "white skin" (55), but has become motionless to the point of non-existence. "I continually asked myself if I could be dead." With his mind alert, but his muscles unresponsive, Holt is encountering what Marsden alluded to as "a distortion of or subtraction from what the world was created to be" (60). He is in a state of reversal, of inversion, of soon to be annihilation; the once middle-class clerk is now becoming a "beast ready for the butcher's stall" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 58).

Victoria Margree suggests that the violations that Holt undergoes in the West End villa are "clearly to be read as a form of sexual violation" and that he is being placed in a "'feminised'

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[22] This "hysterical" technique, as Hurley points out, can also be witnessed in many popular late-Victorian texts. For instance, in Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Mr. Hyde's "pale and dwarfish […] deformity" is regarded as loathsome and fearful by Utterson (15). In Arthur Conan Doyle's "Lot 249" (1892), after coming across the "horrid" mummy, with its "bent joints" and "craned head," Abercrombie Smith's "gorge rise[s]" (218). Lastly, in Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899), Cyril Forrester has an encounter with the the titular villain, which causes him to experience "a great shudder, accompanied by an indescribable feeling of nausea, passed over me" (19) (44-45).

position in relation to another" (67). Because of this, she argues, the passage should be acknowledged as an "extended homoerotic and masochistic fantasy" (67). While I do agree with her that Holt's body is being sexually violated by the Beetle, and its crawling over his skin is a threat to his masculine identity, I would not classify this violation as a "homoerotic fantasy," or a rape scene. In fact, what makes this scene all the more terrifying is that this ageless humanoid is beyond gender lines or biological definition; it is an invasive, amorphous entity — "I could not at once decide if it was a man or a woman. Indeed at first I doubted if it was anything human" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 54) — that strips its victims of their sense of self. It is a cursed form — "[for] nothing fashioned in God's image could wear such a shape as that" (58) — that uses its "blubber lips" or its "startling" but "supernaturally ugly" eyes to radically destabilizing effect (54).

While describing the insect- and bird-like features of the Beetle, Holt comments on its "internal radiance" (53), how its luminous but ancient eyes made him feel empty and void: "Escape them I could not, while, as I endeavoured to meet them, it was as if I shrivelled into nothingness. Never before had I realised what was meant by the power of the eye. They held me enchained, helpless, spell-bound. I felt that they could do with me as they would; and they did" (54). Moments later, he relates the dramatic intensification of the Beetle's iridescent gaze and the eventual overtaking of his identity: "I looked him in the face, — and immediately became conscious, as I did so, that something was going from me, — the capacity, as it were, to be myself. His eyes grew larger and larger, till they seemed to fill all space — till I became lost in their immensity" (56).

Holt's shriveling into nothingness, his loss of self, by way of the Beetle is reminiscent of Kayerts and Carlier's "dumb solitude" in "An Outpost of Progress" (81). Even though they are not being stalked by a sentient creature with penetrating eyes, the two unhappy exiles are, in a

way, mesmerized by the African interior, itself: "The great silence of the surrounding wilderness [seemed] to draw them gently, to look upon them, to envelop them with a solicitude irresistable, familiar, and disgusting" (82). The silence and remoteness of the post, removed them from their familiar society, and undermined their fragile sense of self. Looking into the face of the jungle, like Holt gazing into the expanding eyes of the Beetle, Kayerts and Carlier find "that something from within them was gone, something that had worked for their safety, and had kept the wilderness from interfering with their hearts" (81). Their capacity for "independent thought," "initiative," and sense of "routine" (64), have all been overtaken by the unknowable African interior. As the narrator suggests: [C]ontact with pure unmitigated savagery [...] brings sudden and profound trouble into the heart. [...] to the negation of the habitual, which is safe, there is added the affirmation of the unusual, which is dangerous; a suggestion of things vague, uncontrollable, and repulsive, whose discomposing intrusion excites the imagination and tries the civilized nerves of the foolish and the wise alike" (63). After Kayerts kills the "noxious beast" (89) Carlier, and tries to justify it to himself by contemplating the thousands of men and women who die every day, he stands up, sees his companion's body, and with a cry "like that of a man who, waking from a trance finds himself immured forever in a tomb," bellows out, "'Help! [...] My God!'" (90). For a brief moment, Kayerts breaks from the mesmerism of the African interior, and becomes aware of the nothingness in which he has become.

The bodily "pressing" and the "devouring glances" are not the only methods by which the Beetle mesmerizes and "uncreates" Holt in the Hammersmith abode. The Beetle is also capable of stripping him of his identity through its terse commands. In fact, Holt's first sensory impression of the Beetle is of its voice (Ridenhour 123). After being probed by the small Beetle ("Higher and higher! It had gained my loins. It was moving towards the pit of my stomach"

[Marsh, *The Beetle*, 51]), Holt attempts to escape through the window of the villa, but ultimately

falls face first onto the floor. The mysterious entity lights a match and promptly warns him not to

move a muscle:

> "Keep still!" There was a quality in the voice which I cannot describe. Not only an accent
>
> of command, but a something malicious, a something saturnine. It was a little guttural,
>
> though whether it was a man speaking I could not have positively said; but I had no doubt
>
> it was a foreigner. It was the most disagreeable voice I had ever heard, and it had on me
>
> the most disagreeable effect; for when it said, "Keep still!" I kept still. It was as though
>
> there was nothing else for me to do. (52)

The "something malicious" in the Beetle's voice — note the significant vagueness of

"something" — is almost instantaneously mesmeric (Ridenhour 123). As Ridenhour points out,

"The Beetle is able [...] to strip independence from this representative of the British working

class simply by speaking" (123). Its mesmeric control of Holt makes him conscious of the

situation at hand yet subject to and animated at the Beetle's whim. He relates:

> I was not only incapable of resistance, I was incapable of distinctly formulating the desire
>
> to offer resistance. Some compelling influence moved me hither and hither with
>
> completest disregard of whether I would or would not. [...] My condition was one of dual
>
> personality, — while, physically, I was bound, mentally, to considerable extent, I was
>
> free. But this measure of freedom on my mental side made my plight no better. (69)

The Beetle also commands Holt to "practice the arts of a thief to steal into [Lessingham's]

house," to put on the identity of a criminal, to be its servant. The "emphasis" to be something he

did not want to be, "seemed to eat its way into [his] brain" (66). Coerced into being this

creature's slave, Holt finds that "every second the strands of my manhood, as it seemed, were

slipping faster through the fingers which were strained to clutch them" (66). "Forced into

speech" through mesmerism, but still "endowed [...] with the power to show that" he was a man

(66), Holt cries out to the monstrous figure: "I am not a thief, I am an honest man [...] Have

mercy!" (66).

Before the novel describes the mesmeric tricks of the "Arab," it presents the preliminary

destabilization of his identity as he travels in distress through Marsh's idiosyncratic rendering of

"Darkest London" (Harkness). Holt has fallen from steady employment, to part-time work, to

being a starving tramp searching for a shelter where he can lay his head. Although he is

considered a respectable unemployed clerk, he is denied lodging at the Casual Ward in Fulham,

an institution that many nineteenth-century commentators have deemed "dehumanising in its

prison-like routine" (Vuohelainen, *Richard* 20). He is also humiliated by a "grizzled pauper"

(Marsh, *The Beetle* 44), a man much lower than him in terms of social status. Regarding the

pauper, Holt states:

> Had he been the Chairman of the Board of Guardians himself he could not have
>
> addressed me with greater scorn. "What here again! What's your little game? Think I've
>
> nothing better to do than to wait upon the likes of you?"
>
> "I want to be admitted."
>
> "Then you won't be admitted!" (42)

After having the door shut in his face, and bumbling through the rain and fog of Walham Green,

he reflects on the ruined conditions of the lower middle-class section of Hammersmith:

> I had taken the first turning to the left,—and, at the moment, had been glad to take it. In
>
> the darkness and the rain, the locality which I was entering appeared unfinished. I seemed
>
> to be leaving civilisation behind me. The path was unpaved; the road rough and uneven,

as if it had never been properly made. Houses were few and far between. Those which I

did encounter, seemed, in the imperfect light, amid the general desolation, to be cottages

which were crumbling to decay. (45)

Like Jonathan Harker's business venture into medieval Transylvania in *Dracula*, or Marlow's

descent into the "primeval earth" in *Heart of Darkness* (285), this section of *The Beetle* can be

read as a travel or time-travel narrative into a pre-modern or post-apocalyptic London. Upon his

termination as a bank clerk, Holt — "the everlasting tramp" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 55) —

accidentally crosses a metaphorical threshold from civilized London to an uncannily desolate

one. It is in this "land of desolation" (46) a land of shattered pathways, collapsing buildings, and

a disrespectful lower class, that the humiliated Holt encounters the "nothingness" (54) of the

Beetle.

In Victorian Gothic literature it is no longer just the Roman Catholic countries — or even

the African Congo that symbolizes the barbaric past, but the hillsides and suburbs of Britain too

(Spooner "'Dark'" 32). As Spooner points out regarding Victorian Gothic literature, "Just as the

folklorists assumed that the regions most remote from London would be richest in ancient

tradition, in ghost stories the journey into remote rural areas is equated with travelling into the

past. [...] Regional Britain comes to stand in for the exotic Mediterranean locations favoured in

early Gothic novels." (32). In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), for instance, there is a

connection between the "brooding gloom" (190) of London and its surrounding countryside, and

the primitive landscapes of the "beginnings of the world" (223); a link between the

industrialization and suburbanization of the West and the exotic 'horrors' of the jungle. Likewise,

The Beetle's "land of desolation," which is in the West End suburbs of London, does not provide

Robert Holt with the bread and shelter that he seeks, but is instead a space of negation, of primitivism, of darkness.

London, an imperial metropolis and world city, expanded very rapidly during the long nineteenth century (Vuohelainen, "Introduction" x). From 1801 to 1911, the city had grown from one million inhabitants to over seven million (x). Because of its rapid growth, and the constant shift in the social fabric of the city, there were national debates regarding its poverty, joblessness, and urban deterioration (x). Books about the "uncomfortable, insalubrious, and cramped conditions" (x) of London were written about by everyone from methodist preacher William Booth, to ultra-realist writers like George Gissing and Arthur Morrison, to urban Gothicists like Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Stoker. By way of either spiritual prose or nail-biting entertainment, these and many other authors accentuated London's "Darkness" (Margaret). Luckhurst notes, "The kinds of statistics that shocked social reformers into philanthropic and democratic measures were also those that generated Gothic fictions within the topography of London. […] These discourses converged in the metaphorics of the primitive urban jungle, the penumbra of unknown Darkest London" ("The Contemporary" 539).

Marsh was no different, three of his most successful novels — *The Beetle* (1897), *The Goddess* (1900), and *The Joss* (1901) — all took place "In Darkest London" (Margaret). Like Booth's poverty maps, the "Darkest London" of Marsh's fiction typically has indefinite boundaries, meaning that if a pedestrian, like Holt, takes a wrong turn in the cityscape they could end up in a "strange and inhospitable" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 46) location, like the Beetle's lair. Many critics have theorized that "Darkest London" was the focal point of fin de siècle Gothic, substituting the medieval castle and sprawling forests of early Gothic literature for the violent, labyrinth streets (Vuohelainen, *Richard* 22) of the metropolis.

One of the most notable hubs of London, and a symbol for urban decay, was the East End. The overcrowded and culturally diverse district was considered by some to be separate from the grander London, almost like it was its own separate city. In 1882, Walter Besant commented on the "forgotten great city" of East London in his work *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*: "Probably there is no such spectacle in the whole world as that of this immense, neglected [...] East London. It is even neglected by its own citizens, who have yet perceived their abandoned condition. They are Londoners, it is true, but they have no part or share of London; its wealth, its splendours, its honours exist not for them" (48). Highlighting the alienness of this locale, Blanchard Jerrold states that the "German, the Jew, the Frenchman, the Lascar, the swarthy native of Spitalfields, the leearing thin-handed thief, the bully of the courts [...] with endless swarms of ragged children" filled the "road[s] and pavement" (124) of the detestable East End.

Like the African interior, the East End acted as a mirror, or dopplegänger, for "Darkest London," and imperial Britain as a whole (Ridenhour 47). Booth imagined things similarly, for he called upon England to help him in restoring the East End by extending colonizing or civilizing efforts into London's savage territory (47):

> As there is a darkest Africa is there not also a darkest England? Civilisation, which can breed its own barbarisms, does it not also breed its own pygmies? May we not find a parallels at our own doors, and discover within a stone's throw of our cathedrals and palaces similar horrors to those which Stanley has found existing in the great Equatorial forest? (Booth 11)

Through his literature, like *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), and his evangelistic works, Booth furthered the discourse on Victorian Orientalism, and the East End being a jungle of sin and savagery.

It may be surprising for some, then, that Marsh places the Beetle's lair not in the "forgotten" and "foreign" East End, but in the more respectable suburbs of West London and the West End suburbs. As Minna Vuohelainen points out, Marsh only makes quick reference to the "squalid home of disreputable and criminal characters" of London's East End, like Limehouse and the Docks, but chooses to put his creature's home in some indistinct residential zone (*Richard* 31). Similarly, in his 1901 Gothic novel *The Joss: A Reversion* (1901), Marsh sets Uncle Benjamin's haunted and rat-infested abode in Camden, a middle-class suburb in northwest London.

As someone who "contributed to most things to which one can contribute" (Marsh, "How I" 573) but who also looked to outdo his contemporaries, Marsh differentiated himself slightly from his peers in making West London and the West End suburbs his locus for exploring the personhood in crisis motif and imperial ruin. While there were other authors who portrayed the Urban Gothic in West London, like Basil Halliward of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) who is murdered by the titular character in Gray's attic showroom in Selby Royal (1890), and Stoker who makes it the murder site and home to Count Dracula (Ridenhouse 71), Marsh took this association further by first describing the collapse of West End quarters.

West London was considered the "pleasure district" (McWilliam 1). According to *London and Its Environs* (1881), which was a handbook for travelers, it was "that part of London which spends money, makes laws, and regulates the fashions" (Baedeker 63). It was where aristocrats, lawmakers, and shopkeepers called home; where Buckingham Palace, Regent and Oxford Street,

and the theatre district all reside. Jerrold describes this scene in his 1872 book, *London: A Pilgrimage*: "The high-bred, delicate, rose-tinted beauty of women and children; the courage and comeliness of the amazons; the calm, solid air of their cavaliers; the perfect horses [...] the genial air of quiet strength and grace which is upon all the scene" (87). The West End was also home in 1851 to the Great Exhibition, London's world fair which showcased England's superiority in the Arts and Sciences above other nations (Ridenhour 46). All classes were invited to the Exhibition, Ridenhour notes, "[e]ven the poorest Londoners compared themselves favorably with Chinese acrobatic troups or 'savages' from New Guinea in native dress" who were in attendance (46). How startling it must have been for Marsh's middle-class London audience to read that the Beetle's dilapidated villa was near the site of the Crystal Palace; or for Marsh to portray a suburban wasteland so close to the heart of the imperial metropolis.

In Book III of *The Beetle*, when Marjorie Lindon is introduced to the "land of desolation," she echoes Holt's first impressions, stating that she was met "by something like chaos": roads were unfinished, pavements are uneven, and "rows of unfurnished [building] carcases" were strewn about (217). Surveying the wasteland and its "untidy stacks of bilious-looking bricks," she spies decaying billboards that read "This Desirable Land [is] to be Let for Building Purposes" (217). "It seemed, so far as I could judge," she writes, "to lose itself in space, [...] to be swallowed by the wilderness of 'Desirable Land' which lay beyond" (217).

Stories of the decay of the magnificent cities, like London, can be traced back to the Bible and Classical mythology. In the Ancient Near East, in sixth century B.C., the prophet Ezekiel foretold the annihilation of the city of Tyre, a major Mediterranean seaport on the Phoenician coast: "And I will make thee like the top of a rock: [Tyre] shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD" (*KJV,*

Ezekiel 26.14). In Book Six of *The Iliad,* too, when Hector is preparing for war, he warns

Andromache that the "the day will come when sacred Troy will be destroyed" (Homer 102).

The apocalyptic destruction of London, specifically, had been anticipated by authors and

political figures throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Walpole, Goldsmith,

Barbauld, Lord Macaulay, and Shelley (Skilton). In terms of Shelley, in 1819, in a dedicatory

letter of his poem "Peter Bell the Third," he writes about future destruction of the "damnable,"

crowded London:

> when London shall be a habitation of bitterns, when St. Paul and Westminster Abbey
>
> shall stand shapeless and nameless ruins in the midst of an unpeopled marsh, when the
>
> piers of Waterloo Bridge shall become the nuclei of islets of reeds and osiers, and cast the
>
> jagged shadows of their broken arches on the solitary stream, some Transatlantic
>
> commentator will be weighing in the scales of some new and now unimagined system of
>
> criticism. (237)

For a poet who "associated freedom with the open field" (215) as Steven Goldsmith suggests,

and who, like Wells, despised the claustrophobic "populous" and pollution of the "smoky city"

(P. Shelley 240), London's annihilation appeared necessary for a "new and now / unimaged"

utopia to take its place (237).

Richard Jefferies explores the idea of a post-apocalyptic London returning to a

pre-modern or pre-industrial way of life in his 1885 novel *After London*. From the Thames

Valley to Oxford, London and its surrounding Home Counties had been devastated by an

enormous lake. How it happened, the narrator suggests, is a mystery:

> Some say [...] that the first beginning of the change was because the sea silted up the
>
> entrances of the ancient ports, and stopped the vast commerce which was once carried on.

[...] Others [...] maintain that the supply of food from over the ocean suddenly stopping caused great disorders, and that people crowded on board all the ships to escape starvation, and sailed away, and were no more heard of. It has, too, been said that the earth, from some attractive power exercised by the passage of an enormous dark body through space, became tilted or inclined to its orbit more than before, and that this, [...] altered the flow of the magnetic currents, which, [...] influence the minds of men. (14)

In the first five chapters, Jefferies describes the wild milieu of the London wasteland: creatures like "the forest cat" (7), "wooddog" (8), and "bush-horse" (12) roamed free, and primitive human societies, like "the Bushman" (19) and "foot gipsies" (20) surrounded the lake. Similar to *The Beetle*'s "land of desolation" (46) building projects and footpaths were abandoned or concealed, with young trees converting most of London into an immense forest. The richer and upper classes used their wealth to evacuate the city, while the lower classes, those who "dwelt in distant and outlying places" (Jefferies 15) were left behind.

In the novel, the scientific and technological advancements of the "ancients," those of the preceding generations, had broken down or been buried; items such as diamonds, metallic objects, telephones, and even tall buildings were long forgotten. The suburb dwellers were initially aware of these advancements, but were too "ignorant, rude, and unlettered" to understand "the method of their construction": "'Where are the wonderful structures with which the men of those days lifted to the skies, rising above the clouds?' These marvellous things are to us little more than the fables of the giants and of the old gods that walked upon the earth" (16). As a result, the "cunning artificers" of the modern age died out, and "everything fell quickly into barbarism" (17).

While we do not know if Marsh had read Jefferies, his depiction of a dilapidated West End London is reminiscent of the post-apocalyptic world of *After London*. Like the nature writer, Marsh's Gothic epicenter (West London) is a filthy, decomposing locus of commercialism and industrialization; a desolate "wasteland" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 218) of crumbling artifaces. However, unlike Jefferies, whose London is overrun by an ecological catastrophe, Marsh's metropolis is temporarily destabilized by an invasive and "Unknown" (222) Other; a vengeful, shape-shifting entity that is capable of wiping out London's entire political and social system through its mesmeric tricks and biological fluidity.

Close Encounters with Nothingness: Paul Lessingham

Paul Lessingham is Marjorie Lindon's fiancé and Sydney Atherton's adversary, and later, his unexpected ally. As a member of the House of Commons and an exemplar of civilized superiority, as well as an expert orator, he is referred to as Britain's Paul the Apostle. The influence of Lessingham the Apostle is exhibited during a parliamentary meeting near the beginning of the novel. His rival, Atherton, reports on the scene:

> It was very far from being an "oration" in the American sense; it had little or nothing of the fire and fury of the French Tribune; it was marked neither by the ponderosity nor the sentiment of the eloquent German; yet it was as satisfying as are the efforts of either of the three, producing, without doubt, precisely the effect which the speaker intended. His voice was clear and calm, not exactly musical, yet distinctly pleasant, and it was so managed that each word he uttered was as audible to every person present as if it had been addressed particularly to him. (126)

Atherton describes Lessingham's triumph as a speaker and presents his style of oratory as distinctly British because of its style of delivery. He is distinct from other types of Western orators, like Americans, French, and German, through his acumen and modest delivery. Ridehour comments:

> He is inclusive, intelligent, forward-thinking, and beneficent — in short he is the British empire's own image of itself, and as such he is the face of progressive London. In fact, by nicknaming Lessingham after one of the most recognizable buildings in London's skyline [St. Paul's Church], Marsh unequivocally links the character with the city. [...]
>
> Lessingham then, can be profitably read as the voice of London. (124-5)

However, when relating his encounter with the Beetle in Egypt twenty years earlier, Lessingham's distinctly British discourse vanishes.

Unlike the beginning of many "curse-plot" narratives of the fin de siècle, like Eva M. Henry's "The curse of Vasartas" (1889), Stoker's *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* (1903), and "The secret of Horeb-Ra-Men" (1909), in which English protagonists travel to a famous Egyptian location and steal or unearth an ancient artifact, *The Beetle* commences with Lessingham visiting a cafe in Cairo, Egypt, for a sexual rendezvous. After being drugged by a stage performer, or "the Woman of the Songs" (203) as she is called, Lessingham is held prisoner by the Beetle in a "horrible den" (224) for two months. During this time, he is molested, coerced to watch a white Englishwoman be "stripped to the skin" and "burnt alive" during a ritualistic sacrifice, and witnesses "orgies of nameless horrors" (199).

Relating to Augustus Champnell his traumatizing initiation, the Apostle's mind goes blank and he struggles to describe events:

To dwell in detail on what occurred during my involuntary sojourn in that fearful place is beyond my power. I cannot even venture to attempt it. The attempt, were it made, would be futile, and, to me, painful beyond measure. I seem to have seen all that happened as in a glass darkly,—with about it all an element of unreality. As I have already remarked, the things which revealed themselves, dimly, to my perception, seemed too bizarre, too hideous, to be true. (244)

When contemplating the "Woman of Songs" and the "phantasmagoric array of eerie figures" that "continually passed" before him in the Cairo den (244), he is left dumbfounded and "haunted" (245). His command of the English language is stripped away from him, and his "brain reels and trembles" (244). Even those "horrors" he faintly recalls in the den — like the orgies and religious rites — he can only briefly describe as "nameless," "mysterious," and "unspeakable" (244). "I was in that horrible den for more than two months," he says, "—two unspeakable months" (244).

Later, when Atherton questions him about his history with the Beetle, Lessingham does not even get a word out, but lies prostrate on the floor and babbles like a frightened creature:

"What is the nature of the delusion? Does it take the shape of a—beetle?"

"Atherton!"

Without the slightest warning, he collapsed,—was transformed; I can describe the change which took place in him in no other way. He sank in a heap on the floor; he held up his hands above his head; and he gibbered,—like some frenzied animal. A more uncomfortable spectacle than he presented it would be difficult to find. I have seen it matched in the padded rooms of lunatic asylums, but nowhere else. The sight of him set every nerve of my body on edge. (180)

The Apostle, "the face of progressive London" (124), as Ridenhour describes him, and one who is characterized as having "all his faculties under complete command" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 126), is now recoiled on Atherton's laboratory floor as if he has regressed to a primitive state. The mere mention of the Beetle's name is enough of a trigger to leave Lessingham a "heap on the floor" (180).

As a microcosm of West End London, representing its liberal politics and progressive aims, Lessingham suggests how easily Britain's identity can shrivel into "nothingness" (54) at the command of this ancient, mysterious Other. As Ridenhour succinctly describes, "in the face of the recurring past, the voice of telos becomes hysterically mute; haunted London cannot speak its own modernity, it can only gibber like a 'frenzied animal'" (126). Indeed, arriving from Egypt, the Beetle priest or priestess is capable of inflicting "nameless" and "unspeakable" horrors on imperial London's most distinguished members, leaving their memory banks "hideous" and "darkly" (244) and their intelligent and forward-speaking discourse as animal-talk. From the lowest of subjects (Holt), to the most elevated (Lessingham), no one in London is safe from this self-emptying creature.

"The Woman of the Songs" (203) is characterized as a priestess from the ancient cult of Isis. The Cult of Isis, historically, revolves around the Egyptian deities of Osiris and Isis. Osiris was the primeval king of Egypt and the eldest son of the sky goddess Nut and the earth god Geb, the judge in the Divine Tribunal of the gods. He was characterized as having green skin, a pharaoh's beard, and mummy-wrapped legs (one of the first to be linked with the mummy wrap). He is both the husband and brother to Isis, and the god of fertility, agriculture, and vegetation.

In some Egyptian Texts, Osiris is trampled by his brother Seth, who took the form of a wild bull, wild ass, or crocodile, and then disposed of his body in the Nile River. In another

version of his murder myth, Osiris is dismembered by his brother Typhon (Seth), who had conspired with seventy-two accomplices to assassinate him in order to take his throne. Hearing of her brother-husband's demise, Isis transforms into a bird and flies above Egypt looking for Osiris's remains, eventually locating them in a tamarisk tree. She collects and refashions his limbs using wax and aromatic spices, and then, by way of magic, resurrects him.

Because of his rebirth, Osiris became known as the ancient god of the dead and the god of the resurrection into eternal life. Upon his death, E.A. Wallis Budge shares, "Osiris absorbed the attributes of many of the native gods of the dead who were worshipped in Egypt, and [...] he passed through several phases in which he was respectively a grain-spirit, a tree-spirit, a water-spirit, an animal-spirit, a star-spirit, etc. before he became the god-man, the first of those who rose from the dead" (28). New recruits, even unwilling ones like Paul Lessingham, would have to enact a symbolic death and rebirth in order to become a member of this ancient Egyptian family. In her chapter "Resurrecting the Past" from her book *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic* (2011), Alison Butler discusses the history of Isis and other Egyptian cults and their popularity during the Victorian Age and the period of the Egypt Question. In it, she notes that:

> Mystery religions are rituals of initiation into a cult. They tend to have three main components: an ordeal, revelation of the secrets of the mystery, and an oath to keep this newly acquired knowledge secret. The ordeal frequently includes some sort of symbolic death of the initiate and subsequent rebirth. The symbols used in association with the death aspect could involve the setting for initiation. It could either take place in a dark environment, such as in a cave or in forest, or at night. The ordeal may involve physically harming or humiliating the initiate. (91)

Similar to this description, Lessingham is kept in a dark environment, or a "horrible den"

(Marsh, *The Beetle* 244) in Cairo during his initiation in the cult of the Beetle, and is humiliated

by his witnessing of orgies and human sacrifices, and in having his body violated by "the Woman

of the Songs" (242): "She did with me as she would, and in dumb agony I endured" (244).

Through these graphic revelations, he is subject to the strange power of the Beetle that can

transform a modern Apostle into a babbling beast, thereby potentially allegorizing the fall of the

imperial power of which he is a symbol.

Close Encounters with Nothingness: Marjorie Lyndon

After encountering the mesmerized Holt in the streets of London, Marjorie Lyndon visits

the unemployed clerk at his bedside at a nearby hospital. Despite not having a pulse, Holt

awakens from his trance-like state, and addresses an invisible figure (the Beetle) before him:

"Paul Lessingham! — Beware! — The Beetle!" (165). Lyndon, not knowing how to interpret his

outburst, nevertheless, feels the Beetle's "immediate presence" around her: "No sooner had he

spoken than a sort of blank horror seemed to settle down upon my mind. I actually found myself

trembling at the knees. I felt, all at once, as if I was standing in the immediate presence of

something awful yet unseen" (203). The "blank horror" that she speaks of is an indication of the

negating "nothingness" that the Beetle represents. Though unembodied, the Beetle is capable of

taking her out of her right mind. A nurse, who is unfazed by Holt's exhortation, recognizes

Lyndon's "blank horror" and asks her what is wrong. Lyndon then narrates her agonized

condition: "I felt ill, and worse than ill; but, at the same time, I was quite incapable of describing

what I felt to nurse. For some inscrutable reason I had even lost the control of my tongue,—I

stammered. "I—I—I'm not feeling very well, nurse; I—I—I think I'll be better in bed." The

following day, feeling overwhelmed by her mystifying episode, she classifies the Beetle as "the Unknown — with a capital U!" (176).

Similar to Holt's encounter with the Beetle at the West End villa, and Lessingham's abduction in the Cairo den, Lyndon's faculties are under the influence of this ancient entity, which makes her feel alone and vulnerable despite being surrounded by her caretakers:

> When I got out of the room, it seemed, in some incomprehensible fashion, as if something had left it with me, and that It and I were alone together in the corridor. So overcome was I by the consciousness of its immediate propinquity, that, all at once, I found myself cowering against the wall,—as if I expected something or someone to strike me. (204)

Like the "mysterious" (250) Beetle who employs its third eye to subjugate and violate its white victims, Marjorie Lindon is a sensitive or "hysterical woman," (293) as Champnell describes her, who has the capacity for trance-like visions. She is a progenerate, a woman with an elevated sensory awareness (Luckhurst, "Trance-Gothic" 161): "As with a sort of second sight," she states, "I saw out of the room in which I was, into another, in which Paul was crouching on the floor, covering his face with his hands, and shrieking" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 205). This sort of connection between Marjorie and Paul is what the Society for Psychical Research coined "telepathic phantasm of the living," which is a spectre that is projected to a lover during a moment of trauma (Luckhurst, "Trance-Gothic" 161). As Luckhurst argues, "This attachment between Marjorie and Paul opens the visionary channel: Marjorie's experiences rely on phantasms of the living, apparitions thrown out with psychic energy to the most beloved. The gendering of this type of trance-vision is a result of the common view that women possess 'finer nerves,' that women have 'a great number of nervous reservoirs'" (*The Invention* 209-10).

Like Holt and Lessingham, Marjorie is also a victim of the Beetle's negation of gender

norms. After encountering the "Arab" for the very first time, and returning home with the

mesmerized Holt, Marjorie feels strangely impelled to strip off her "exquisite gown" and to

destroy her fashionable wardrobe:

> I tore off my clothes. I had on a lovely frock which I had worn for the first time that
>
> night; I had had it specially made for the occasion of the Duchess' ball, and—more
>
> especially—in honour of Paul's great speech. [...] Now, in the madness of my terror, all
>
> reflections of that sort were forgotten. My only desire was to away with it. I tore it off
>
> anyhow, letting it fall in rags on the floor at my feet. All else that I had on I flung in the
>
> same way after it; it was a veritable holocaust of dainty garments. (206-7)

She is then compelled by the "Arab" to put on Holt's "rotten, dirty pair of boots," his "filthy,

tattered pair of trousers" and the rest of his "ragged, unwashed" and "frowsy" clothing (285-6).

Later, Champnell, Lessingham, and Atherton discover that Marjorie had placed her garments,

including that of a blue, alpaca dress which was "charming confection" and a "fashion of the

hour" (265) beneath the floorboards of a house on Convolvulus Avenue. Her wardrobe can be

considered an outward symbol of her femininity and social status, and for the "Arab" to coerce

her into soiling and creasing her finest linens, and to put on the "greasy" rags of the unemployed

clerk, was not only unhygienic, but, in a way, a threat to Britain's social order.

As Catherine Spooner notes in *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (2017), "Despite the men's

initial surmise that Marjorie has been murdered, it is rather her clothing that has been done

violence to, the external sings both of her femininity and of her social status, travestied in her

subsequent get-up as a tramp. It is precisely this combined assault on gender stereotypes that so

riles her male admirers" (111). For instance, after hearing about Marjorie's cross-dressing

expedition around town, Atherton proclaims, "Majorie, the most retiring, modest girl on all God's earth walk about in broad daylight, in such a costume, and for no reason at all! my dear Champnell, you are suggesting that she first of all went mad!" (286). She is also described as the "daintiest damsel in the land! [...] rigged out in Holt's old togs!" (287). Judith Walkowitz notes that in the Victorian Age, "Adopting the clothes and/or the life-style, work, mental disposition, or manner of the opposite sex was generally associated with female proletarian behavior, but it gained some devotees among middle-class women bent on freeing themselves from the constraints of their own sex" (62). Through her stripping off of gender and class norms, Marjorie, through the power of the "Arab," acts as a threat to Britain's long held conventions and moral order. She is, "aligned with the hideous Beetle" as Spooner writes, "just as Dorian Gray's perfect image is reflected back to him as his 'loathsome' portrait" (*Fashioning* 115).

Close Encounters with Nothingness: Sydney Artherton

Throughout the novel, the ontological nothingness and namelessness of the Beetle is challenged by the rational and creative agency, and belittling language, of Sydney Atherton. Atherton, a cynical inventor of weapons of mass destruction, mocks the Beetle as "childlike and bland" (102), "a crackpot" (68), "an unbaptised Mohammeden" (68). On one occasion, he even admonishes the creature that London is no "dog-hole in the desert" (66). Because of the creature's ability to uncreate, as Marsden suggests, Atherton attempts to achieve mastery over it through scientific discourse and the act of naming (Marsden 66). However, the Beetle is not reducible in this way, and is without any fixed sense of shape, gender, ethnicity, or mission. Roger Luckhurst describes it as a "liminal man-woman-goddess-beetle-Thing" ("Trance-Gothic" 160). When it is called the "Arab" by Sydney Atherton, it is an attempt to categorize or stabilize

something undefinable. Julian Wolfreys comments that Atherton "uses [Arab] in a general sense to mean Eastern, non-European cultures or, more specifically, discourses constructing representations of those cultures from a Western perspective" (104nl).

The novel also emphasizes the use of modern electricity to try and overcome the "Arab['s]" and its mesmeric tricks. Luckhurst argues that "Marsh uses the trope of the comic colonial encounter, in which primitive superstition is exploited by the Westerner" (*The Invention* 209). He also acknowledges "the link of mesmeric and electrical forces. The hidden Egyptian cult of Isis behind these demoralizations of English will-power works by Mesmerism; the Beetle itself is destroyed in a train crash, having been cornered by criss-crossing telegrams and telephone messages" (209). In fact, Atherton withstands the Beetle's mesmerist tricks through the use of his own sorcery, in the form of modern technology:

> Behind me was an electrical machine, giving an eighteen inch spark. [...] As I spoke the [Beetle] was treated to a little exhibition of electricity. The change in his bearing was amusing. He shook with terror. He slammed down to the ground. "My lord! — my lord! — have mercy, oh my lord!" "Then you be careful, that's all. You may suppose yourself to be something of a magician, but it happens, unfortunately for you, that I can do a bit in that line myself — perhaps I'm a trifle better at the game than you are. (146)

Similarly, after an evening of agony and nightmares regarding the creature, Atherton finds himself confounded by the Beetle's ontological nothingness. Nevertheless, he is hopeful in his own scientific prowess, that he will one day master it, "There was continually before my fevered eyes the strange figure of that Nameless Thing. [...] My feelings were not rendered more agreeable by a strengthening conviction that if I had only retained the normal attitude of a

scientific observer I should, in all probability, have solved the mystery of my oriental friend" (113).

Having been hypnotized in or befuddled by its presence, the four protagonists all encounter the boundary-breaking and role-reversing might of the "Arab." As noted, the intruder (Holt) is invaded upon; the articulate politician (Lessingham) is tyrannized and left in a "frenzied, choking" mess (77); the pure woman (Lindon) is masculinized; and the scientist (Atherton) and detective (Champnell) are both stupefied by "the Namless[ness]" of the "Thing" (155). While the "Arab" can be interpreted as a manifestation of Britain's anxieties surrounding the Egyptian Question and in "upset[ing] the balance of the Suez Canal" (Steevens 30), as well as Marsh leaning into the popularity of curse-plot narratives, the Beetle's negating properties broaden the novel from an imperial Gothic or reverse colonization narrative to an apocalyptic one. Further emphasized by London's West End and its "row of unfurnished carcases" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 218), the "Nameless Thing" finds a home in the "desolation" (46), in the areas "swallowed" up "by "wilderness" and ruin (218). Like this apocalyptic wasteland, the "Arab" makes its victims lose themselves in its space and resolve to "something like chaos" (218). It takes the high-bred and technology advanced creations of the West End, like Lessingham and Lindon, and turns them into bumbling beasts, crumbling at the mere sound of his name. Thankfully, through technological prowess, and the power of naming, the protagonists are able to hold on to their Western identities, and prevent further dilapidation to London's West End, and the potential collapse of the Western world.

Marsh and Mythical Status

Marsh's long-fiction garnered a mix of harsh criticisms and mediocre reviews during his first few publications (1893). *The Saturday Review* stated that *The Devil's Diamond* (1893), a comical story about a diamond that brings curses to all those who possess it, had "no lack of invention in the book" but that the "humour was deficient" (Anon., "New Books" 526) and the *Athenaeum* called it "amusing enough" to "achieve popularity" (Anon., "New Novels," vol. 3412 343). Comparably, *The Mahatma's Pupil* (1893) was characterized as being "not without ingenuity; but [the] reader must not look for [any] wit [in its pages]" (Anon., "New Novels," vol. 3444, 586). *The Duke and the Damsel* (1897) was disparaged for being "vulgar" and "impossible" (Anon., "Reviews" [27 Nov.] 115), and *Mrs Musgrave— and her Husband* (1895) was damned for being a book "better left unwritten" (Anon., "New Novels," vol. 3535, 124), with an *Athenaeum* reviewer going so far as to say that, "it would take more changes that any critic is bound to suggest to make [this novel] anything that can be called nice in any of the historic sense of that valuable word" (Saintsbury 108).

The release of *The Beetle*, previously titled "The Peril of Paul Lessingham: The Story of a Haunted Man" in *Answers* in Autumn 1897, was a turning point for Marsh in terms of sales and popularity (Vuohelainen, "From" 283). The novel garnered him a wider middle-class audience, thanks to its flashy book covers, illustrations by John Williamson, and new provocative title, *The Beetle: A Mystery* (284). It was also his first novel published as a standard one-volume first edition, which raised the novel's price to 6s, instead of 3s or 15, the price of his other works. As Vuohelainen notes, "standard one-volume first editions in this period, would have made the novel too expensive for the average reader of Answers who had acquired the entire serial for 15d. Marsh had never before approached the 6s. audience" (283-4).

The Beetle not only channelled the cultural anxieties of the age, but stimulated new sensations of terror and excitement for Marsh's middle-class audience. Upon release, *The Daily Chronicle* writes that "The pursuit of the kidnapped Marjorie is really exciting," and that the novel "is as horrid as one could wish" (Anon., "Opinions"). *The Saturday Review*, in describing the fresh fears of the novel's grotesque villain, comments that: "a new thing in 'creeps' in the way of an old man with a woman's body, a chinless and hairless face, and a knack of turning, when convenient, into a monstrous beetle" (Anon., "Fiction" 501). Despite its detractors, like *The Daily Mail* who called the work "sordid" and "vulgar" (Anon., "The World" 3), and the *Athenaeum* who found it "much too long" (Anon., "New Novels," vol. 3650, 487), *The Beetle* was a resounding success, satisfying its audience's hunger for the occult, even as at the same time it broadened the apocalyptic imaginary of its readers.

The Beetle established Marsh as a popular English author for the next ten years (Vuohelainen, "From" 287). Part of his success had to do with him publishing thirty-seven volumes of fiction with eleven different publishing houses from 1898 to 1907 (288). As Vuohelainen describes, "Marsh, whose annual output peaked at eight volumes in 1900 and averaged at three, was probably wise to issue his work through various publishers catering for different niche audiences: this technique ensured that Marsh's volumes would reach different audiences, diminishing his risk of flooding the market" (288).

Marsh's supernatural crime novel was highlighted on the *Bookman*'s best seller lists from December 1897 to May 1898, even reaching the number six spot by December 1897 (284). Chronicling its sales throughout the fin de siècle, Vuohelainen reports in her article, "From 'Vulgar' and 'Impossible' to 'Pre-Eminently Readable,'" that:

[t]he first edition was an instant sell-out, with three more impressions following in

October, November and December 1897. Two further impressions came out in April and

September 1898, while April 1900 saw the publication of the seventh edition, October

1901 the eighth and March 1903 the ninth; […] It continued to sell steadily in the

twentieth century, with the fifteenth edition appearing in 1913, the twentieth in 1917, and

the twenty-fourth in 1927. (284)

With *The Beetle*, he was now achieving the success and relative acclaim that he had

hoped for in his earlier age. No longer would he have to skip out on hotel receipts, or pretend to

be the captain of the Indian army, since he was now garnering genuine success through his

imagination and tireless work ethic.

As opposed to the other authors and major works of thesis, Marsh's use of the apocalyptic

motif in *The Beetle* was also more commercial than artistic in nature. Unlike Wells, whose

objective with *The War of the Worlds* was to upgrade old myths into contemporary ones, and to

educate his fin-de-siècle audience, Conrad, whose aim in *Heart of Darkness* was to be "new" and

"modern," an artist who found a "place in the rear of [his] betters", and Stoker, whose partial

intent with *Dracula* was to express how modern ecumenicalism was a form of evolutionary

progression, Marsh's schema in publishing *The Beetle* was to work within a popular form and to

achieve financial security through book sales. It was about appealing to his audiences' appetite,

more so than sharing a unique aesthetic or political vision. As a "Yarner," one who wrote

everything from ghost stories and occult horror to boys adventure stories, from detective to

romance tales, from invasion or imperial Gothic to sensation fiction (Vuohelainen, "'Oh to'" 2),

he was able to accomplish what he set out to do.

As Nick Freeman suggests in "Tall tales and true," his chapter in *Richard Marsh, Popular Fiction and Literary Culture, 1890-1915* (2018), Marsh had "no qualms about purloining material from elsewhere" (34). He was an avid reader of sensational fiction and Renaissance classics, stealing ideas from writers like Collins, Braddon, Ouida, Dickens, and even Shakespeare (35). In *The Devil's Diamonds* (1893), for instance, he utilizes the "cursed gemstone" motif from Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868) as well as obvious plot points from *A Christmas Carol* (1843); in *The Strange Wooing of Mary Bowler* (1895), he copies *Hamlet* in producing a show in order to expose a criminal (35); and the title of his 1906 collection *Under One Flag* is an obvious variation of *Ouida's Under Two Flags* (1867).

Despite Marsh's "fast [and] flashy" approach to publishing, and his ability to recycle narrative ideas from other authors, the mysterious "Arab" and its negating "nothingness" was a motif that set the novel apart from other contemporary works. For instance, because nothing was established or truly defined about the villain and/or villainess, it could symbolize everything from the Egyptian Other, to cultural politics of the fin de siècle, to metamorphic sexuality, to nothing at all (Wolfreys 19). As Wolfreys points out in his introduction to the Broadview edition of the novel, "The [Beetle's] body is grotesque because it is unstable, excessive, ambiguously traced by so many fragments of identity. [...] It 'gives face' to everything that is unstable in late imperial culture" Wolfreys writes (19). However, with the influx of Victorian Gothic novels being adapted into horror films, like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1920), *Nosferatu* (1922), and *The Mummy* (1932), radio dramas, like *The War of the Worlds* (1938) and *Heart of Darkness* (1938), theatre productions, like *Dracula* (1924), and the subsequent pressure to make their respective antagonists more recognizable to viewing audiences, the "mysterious" "Arab" would have to become clearly defined, or marketable, in order to cross media platforms. As Ian Fryer writes in

The British Horror Film (2017), "With the primitive film technology available and the still

undeveloped visual grammar of the medium, it made a lot of sense for pioneer filmmakers to

choose subjects and stories that audiences would already be familiar with" (19).

After the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb in 1907, the Gothic motifs of an ancient

Egyptian curse, mesmerism, and personhood in crises were regularly employed in silent films of

the World War era. From 1915-17, for instance, there were twenty-three pictures that featured

mesmerism, including Maurice Tourneur's celebrated adaptation of du Maurier's *Trilby* (1915),

Thomas Edison's single-realer *The Experiment* (1915) and Robert Leonard's *The Silent*

Command (1915), a tale in which a doctor attempts to hypnotize a female patient into murdering

her father. Gothic tales that emphasized personhood in crisis or madness, like *Jekyll and Hyde*

and *Frankenstein*, were also popular amongst the war torn audiences during the 1910s and 20s.

Commenting on the relevance of these films during the Great War, David Annwyn Jones notes,

"[A]s the trauma of the war increased and maimed combatants returned from the Fronts, the very

fabric and coherence of national states and the sanity of their leaders began to be questioned"

(448).

Two years after his success in bringing Maria Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895) to

the silver screen, Alexander Butler adapted and directed *The Beetle* in 1919. The sixty-minute

silent horror film starred Leal Douglas as the Priestess of Isis (or the Beetle), Hebden Foster as

Paul Lessingham, and Nancy Benyon as Marjorie Lindon. The film met with mixed reviews,

with *The Grand* describing it as a "crude sensational film" (Anon., "The Beetle" 17), and

Newcastle Daily Journal claiming it would be of "great interest" to moviegoers because of its

"weird scenes of life" (Anon., "Westgate" 5). Forgoing the "unstable, excessive" ambiguousness

of the Beetle — which was originally quite unsettling to late Victorian readers — the film

portrays the "Arab" as a woman, or Priestess. The familiarity of its form or gender, along with

plenty of production solecisms, did nothing to heighten the terror or mythical quality of the story.

As one reviewer notes, "the very things that grip in the novel fail to get anything but laughs

when on the screen" (Anon., "The Beetle," *Variety* 75). I can't help but wonder if the film would

have retained the amorphous nature of the creature from the novel — it being an "Unknown!

With a capital U!" — would it have been more disturbing for audiences in the 1920s? By

emphasizing its bi-gendered form, and utilizing the apocalyptic motif of personhood in crisis,

perhaps it could have captivated a wider audience, like it did during the fin de siècle.

    The Beetle's theatre production, which was adapted by J.B. Fagan, Charles Freeman, and

George S. King in the early 1920s, and performed throughout England from 1925 to 1929, also

forgoes the "nothingness" of the character, and casts the "Arab" as a female. While a few critics

perceived it as "far better and certainly saner, than most of the so-called 'mystery' melodramas"

of the day (Anon., "The Beetle" review), most found it to be cringe-worthy and laughable. A

reviewer from the *The Daily Mail* describes the underwhelming terror of the production, stating,

"for the greater part of the performance the tendency was to giggle, not to gasp. There was

nothing hair-raising" (Anon., "Thriller"). *The Daily Chronicle* also expresses their

disappointment with its horror elements, commenting that, "Mystery plays which do not mystify

are always a little tedious, and 'The Beetle,' [...] brought tears of boredom rolling down my

well-powdered cheeks" (Anon., "The Beetle"). Because of its lack of appeal to general

audiences, *The Beetle* was sure to be "be crushed ere long" (Anon., "'The Beetle,' at"), as one

reporter put it. They were certainly right. After the production ended in 1929, Marsh's story was

chiefly ignored by Western audiences, with the film being lost for unknown reasons, the play

never being revitalized, and the novel going out of print from 1960 to 2004.

Despite his drive to achieve literary and financial success, to make enough from book sales to feed his "fast [...] flashy" lifestyle (Aickman 17), Marsh died on a relatively small estate. Aickman reports that even though he "pour[ed] forth words in his tiny handwriting at the highest pressure" (9) he "spent all that his pen earned and appreciably more" (10). In an unpublished article in which he rebukes Grant Allen and George Gissing for thinking that the literary world owed them esteem, Marsh grumbles on the capriciousness of his middle-class audience, stating that "Literature is synonymous with squalor" ("Literary" 3). He was keenly aware of the fleeting nature of literary success, and the grievances of writing as a trade. Even though he never achieved the mythical or longstanding success of Stoker, Wells, and Conrad, and his publications have largely been forgotten by modern audiences, his early works provide a fascinating glimpse into the popular interests and cultural anxieties of fin de siècle England, including the apocalyptic imagination of its day.

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