

IMPERIALISM AND THE SUBLIME IN THE SCIENCE FICTIONAL WORKS OF
JULES VERNE, H. G. WELLS, AND KAREL ČAPEK

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the works of three seminal science fiction writers to enquire into the aesthetic-ideological code that articulated the varied ideologies of imperialism, allowing it to elide its atrocities and project itself as a grand civilizing mission. Drawing upon theories of the sublime and studies of imperialism, I argue that the historical confluence of Enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism was appropriated by imperialist ideology to phantasmically construct the project of empire, in aesthetic terms, as the sublime triumph of world-historical progress. Chapter One discusses the central terms of the study – science fiction, imperialism, and the sublime – before it argues that the aesthetics of awe and wonder generally recognized as a generic feature of science fiction has its historical roots in the ideology of imperialist sublime. Chapter Two shows that in the science fictional narratives of Jules Verne, nature as the sublime Other is constructed as a theater for the Euro-American imperial male to assert himself as the sublime subject of scientific knowledge and technological power. Chapter Three argues that the scientific romances and utopias of H. G. Wells represent the imperialist subject ambivalently, as the humbled self stripped of its pretenses of civilization and as the triumphant agent of world-historical progress. Chapter Four studies the critique of capitalist expansionist fantasy in Karel Čapek’s science fiction narratives, which expose the inherently destructive nature of capitalism by letting its utopian, expansionist fantasy run its course and turn into a nightmarish double.

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Introduction

This dissertation enquires into the collective fantasy that animates the imperialist project. Modern European imperialism faced formidable odds of administrative, military, and often financial costs; as it also suffered the guilt resulting from the discrepancy between its autobiography as disseminator of civilization and the barbarity of its practice. Therefore, it is worthwhile to ask what affective-ideological force enabled imperialism to maintain and reproduce itself and what ruses it used to transmute its historical guilt into the self-assumed “obligation” to civilize. This study assumes that there must be a collective fantasy that powered the imperialist-colonialist machine and invested its project with the aura of a great mission. Defining imperialism as the historical articulation of Enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism, this dissertation examines imperialist fantasy in science fictional texts of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Karel Čapek, and argues that imperialism is driven by the fantasy of sublime power. The study shows that from the mid nineteenth century onwards the rapturous aesthetics of awe and wonder that was earlier associated with God, nature, and literary texts, begins to characterize imperial Europe’s self-perception based on the scientific explanations of geological and human history as well as on technological triumphs and capitalist expansions, resulting in the ideological fabrication of the European subject as the sublime Self and the colonial Other as its self-constitutive part and past.

Science fiction offers one of the best literary-cultural resources to explore the collective fantasy of imperialism. As scholars have argued, science fiction saw its emergence and popularity as a genre in capitalist-imperialist nations of Europe and the United States (Csicsery-Ronay, “Science Fiction and Empire” 231; Rieder, *Colonialism* 2-3). Indeed, with their “extrapolative” and “analogical” relation to the real historical world (Suvin 27-30) and their

pedagogical narrative instantiations of the teachings of critical theory (Freedman 30), science fictional texts from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth are privileged texts to study the cruelties and fantasies of modern European imperialism. Critically acclaimed as “fathers” of science fiction, Verne, Wells, and Čapek wrote their works across the historical time that saw the brief rise and fall of the Second Empire of France (French imperialism continuing from much earlier through the invasion of Algeria in 1830 to the “scramble for Africa” from 1880s onwards), the height of British Empire and its decline, and the rise of the Nazis to power. Together, the three writers make an ideal combination for the present study: of the three constituents of imperialism—Enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism—Verne, Wells, and Čapek each foreground a different constituent while also showing its relation to the other two. With the obsessive mapping of nature by adventurous male heroes and the never-ending details of scientific reason as well as the measurement-tools of science, Verne’s *voyages extraordinaires* show imperialist “planetary consciousness” and Enlightenment’s instrumental reason which enabled that consciousness. Similarly, with his abiding concern with the conflicting demands of ethics and evolution, Wells translates the socio-economic conflicts of his time into biological Darwinist terms; his narratives not only show the colonial ideology of self-constitutive othering but also expose the anxieties of an empire facing its legitimacy crisis. On the other hand, Čapek’s narratives show the utopian dreams of capitalism turn into dystopian nightmares, when technology wedded to the blind expansionist drive of capital wreaks havoc as the latter’s logic unfolds.

The present study continues the critical dialogue that has started between science fiction scholarship and postcolonial studies (defined as a reading-position rather than as a period category). Scholars have stressed the structural relation between technology-assisted empire

buildings of real history and the fictional empires of science fiction (Csicsery-Ronay, “Science Fiction and Empire”), on the elaborate ideological mechanisms of imperialist/colonialist othering and self-constitution (Kerslake), and the critique as well as the reproduction of the ideological tropes of colonial discourse (Rieder). Such studies have established the complicity of science fiction with the ideologies of imperialism; however, they have also shown how the element of “cognitive estrangement” (making the familiar world unfamiliar so as to perceive the former better) enables the genre to “expose” the ideologies that imperialism “imposes.” These studies have paved the ground for the present inquiry: what is the aesthetic code that articulates the varied and often contradictory ideologies of imperialism? This study proposes that imperialism transmutes its historic barbarity into the discourse of sublimity.

Scholars have often thought the sublime as a constituent feature of science fiction. This generic property, however, is an aesthetic index of the objective social content science fiction narrativizes—namely, the modern subject’s sense of wonder at the “progress” of history or the transformation of social space out of the bounds of imagination’s comprehension (Luckhurst 5; Thurber 214-15). More sustained studies of science fiction and the sublime have typically focused on the virtual sublime of cyberspace or on the sublime as transcendence into the secular God of capital (Heuser; Voller). This dissertation suggests that the sublime does not characterize the reified postmodern social space only, but also names the poetry of “progress” that feeds the imperialist fantasy and its self-narrative. The project draws on the studies that have read imperialist ideology with the concept of the sublime, in the context of American poetry (Wilson) and colonialist adventure narratives (Libby). It adds to this scholarship by bringing the inquiry to the genre of science fiction, and to the writers whose works not only span a crucial period of

modern empire building but also foreground the work of Enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism in the building of empires.

Verne, Wells, and Čapek offer insights into the collective fantasy of imperialism by reproducing and often critiquing the fantasies that developed around sciences, technology, and capitalism in the nineteenth century and after. Verne celebrates both the “scientific revolution” of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as the technological triumphs and “historical sciences” of the nineteenth (geology, paleontology, archeology, evolutionary biology, and anthropology) by producing scientist-engineer characters as sublime adventurers in space and time. In *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, for example, Verne sends a German scientist and his nephew on an adventurous journey toward the center of the earth. All the challenges the travelers face on their way to Mt. Snaefells and into the earth down a crater there only add value to the glory of the scientist-heroes, who overcome those challenges and turn the seemingly insurmountable terrain into an addition to the imperial archive of knowledge. The scientific-adventurous sublime resulting from successfully braving the seemingly impossible spatial journey is evenly matched in the novel by the construction of sublimity on the temporal line. As the uncle and his nephew descend into the interior of the earth, they pass through the different eras of geological history—Primitive, Transitional, Secondary, Tertiary, and Quaternary (with their subdivisions), as they had been named by the eighteenth and nineteenth-century scientists (Laudan 94-101, 138-61). Through staging such a journey across geological deep time, Verne produces for his European characters and readers a sublime self-identity, heir to the millennia-old history of the earth as well as its most contemporary and most civilized representative. That Verne’s construction of scientific-adventurous sublimity occurs in the theater of European imperialism is suggested in the novel not only by the colonial conditions of their journey—going

to and enlisting the support of the authorities in Copenhagen, Denmark (the imperial center) and Reykjavik, Iceland (then a Danish colony)—but also by making the Icelandic hunter and the guide, Hans, a representative of the primitive times, an ideologically resonant foil to his European masters.

Verne's narratives reproduce the imperialist fantasy of the sublime also by turning technological spectacles into images of European progress and superiority over the colonized. In works like *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, Verne shows technological triumphs of western modernity assert their power to penetrate extraterrestrial space and depths of the oceans, and thereby produces a sublime self-identity for the bearers of technology. Again, the ideological production of the sublime European Self depends crucially on the gaze of the non-European Other, who sees and hears the spectacles, and feels awe and wonder at them, all the more because he does not understand them. In *From the Earth to the Moon*, the ideological significance of “the Niagara of molten metal” produced during the casting of the cannon would remain incomplete without the imagined presence of the American Indians who see in it only the gigantic force of nature (their ignorance being structurally necessary to foreground the sublimity of the Euro-American technological power). In *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, the awe and wonder felt by the “savages” of Gueboroar Island and the Sri Lankan pearl fisherman are used by Verne to glorify the submarine *Nautilus* as a sublime machine and its civilized inhabitants as God-like beings (suggesting the unfathomable distance between the savage/barbaric beholder and European technology-wielder).

Wells uses the nineteenth- and twentieth-century advances in science, technology, and capitalism to imagine sublime visions of the planetary empire. In works like *A Modern Utopia*, *Men like Gods*, and *The Shape of Things to Come*, he shows the technocratic ruling class exploit

scientific and technological progress in order to bring about boundless material plenty and efficiently-managed social “harmony.” Wells imbues his utopias with the aesthetic of the sublime—not only by the vast, planetary scale of their conception, but also by their archival plenty (knowledge so complete that no problems remain unanswered), by the poeticization of technology (Michelangelos working with steel, producing works of “Titanic engineering”), and by the loftiness of the star-gazing utopian minds. Completing the project of Europeanizing the world, Wells’s planetary empire does away with the inter-imperialist rivalries but only by extending the imperial logic to the global scale. In the Wellsian utopia, the formerly colonized as well as the “inefficient” among the colonizers must adopt the test of efficiency if they are to stand any chance of survival. In other words, European history reaches its sublime telos in Wells’s utopias and future histories by turning the rest of the world into its image. Wells’s works were by no means exhortations for British imperialism—he was fervently against nationalist imperialism—but even in imagining an alternative vision of world history, Wells reproduces some of its fantasies: its faith in the superiority of European civilization, “grounded” in the developments in sciences, technology, and capitalism.

As somebody who was on the receiving end of imperialism (Czechoslovakia was ruled by the Habsburg Empire until 1818), Čapek critiques imperialism and its sublime fantasy unambiguously and uncompromisingly. In works like *R. U. R*, *Krakatit*, *Factory of the Absolute*, and *War with the Newts*, Čapek uses the fantastic to humorously present the collective fantasies about technology and capitalism, and to satirize those fantasies by exposing their contradictions, both structural and historical. Fantasies of boundless energy, limitless productivity, radical transformation of socio-material conditions, and unlimited expansion of the transforming agency—Čapek satirizes all as absurdly irrational, using a narrative/dramatic plot that takes

those fantasies literally and lets them run their logical courses. When the fantasies inevitably lead to the real or threatened (total) disruption of societies and end of civilizations, the historical objects of Čapek's critique become clear: capitalism, with its dreams of the ideal working class, inexhaustible energy, and limitless expansionism, etc.; and imperialism, with its penchant for turning technology into war machines, its inter-state rivalries, and its territorial expansionism. Thus, however sublime the fantasies of unlimited energy, productivity, and economic and territorial expansion, in Čapek's historically savvy narratives their code-name is imperialism.

The representation of the collective fantasy of the imperialist sublime, however, is not limited to science fictional works. In fact, if the genre is able to point to it, it is because the fantasy was collectively shared and ideologically acted out in the nineteenth-century institutions of the museum, world fairs, and travel and adventure. Just as by kneeling, praying, and confessing in the church Christians act out their belief in God, or by submitting to the rule of the Law or by joining protests against the violation of the Law people rehearse their belief in Justice—the examples are Athusser's (696)—visiting museums and “great exhibitions,” and reading travel and adventure narratives, became for the imperial citizens practices that produced and reinforced their identity as the sublime subjects of history, superior to other peoples and invested with the right to conquer and/or civilize them. As Tony Bennett argues in *Pasts Beyond Memory*, museums became popular in the nineteenth century as an institution where the imperial public could be educated into the long history of the earth and its life forms, which the sciences of geology, paleontology, archeology, etc., had newly established. As the imperial visitors walked by the displays representing the millennia-long history and progress, they became heirs to an unimaginable temporal vastness (much longer than the thousands-year long biblical time) and also the most contemporary and the most civilized subject of that sublimely vast history.

Similarly, as Paul Greenhalgh's *Ephemeral Vistas* shows, world fairs—also called “great exhibitions” in Britain and “*expositions universelles*” in France—became popular in the nineteenth century as sites to display the triumphs of western technology and capital alongside the artifacts and “ethnic” people from the colonies. When visitors made rounds of the “great exhibitions,” they became in their fantasy owners of the colonial territories and peoples (represented as artifacts and ethnological samples) and also (thanks to their progress in science and technology) prided themselves as superior to those they “possessed”. When, for example, visitors to the Paris exhibition of 1867, and to ones after it, saw simulations of African culture with Africans acting out the assigned roles (Greenhalgh 85-86), they not only knew themselves as vastly superior to the non-European Other but also enjoyed in the Other their own primitive past. Thus, at a historical time when technology had begun to compete with and even replace nature as the vaunted “object” of the sublime (Thurber), world fairs staged and reinforced that sublimity by displaying progress in the imperial-colonial theater. Travel and adventure narratives in turn played crucial roles to produce European self-consciousness as distinct and superior to other peoples and cultures. From the sixteenth century onwards, maritime and inland explorations of the world had given Europeans a “planetary consciousness,” turning the other territories and peoples into objects that can be mapped and turned into imperial knowledge (Pratt). By the nineteenth century “deeds of empire” had become inseparable from the ideological “dreams of adventure,” as colonies were turned into the sites of barbaric forces to be subdued by the agents of imperial power (Green, *Dreams of Adventure*; Libby). If narratives of “planetary consciousness” gave European self-identity the spatial sublime, narratives of adventure armed it with the sublimity of heroic will—both by means of and at the expense of the colonial Other.

Celebratory and triumphant attitudes to science and technology, capitalism, and imperialism-colonialism were by no means universally shared in the imperial societies of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The imperial public saw the sustained economic boom from the 1840s onwards give way to recession after the early 1870s, which was followed by intense inter-imperialist rivalries, on the one hand, and working class movements, on the other. Doubts about progress were likewise aggravated by the end-of-the-century mood of decadence (Bergonzi 3-8), anxieties about degeneration rivaled the ideology of progressive evolutionism (Greenslade 32-46), and uncertainties about the future took a new dimension as assumptions of continuity were negated by shocking scientific speculations about the entropic death of the solar system (Parrinder 39). In the twentieth century, the problems brought about by the very “success” of capitalism joined those that persisted with imperialism and inter-imperialist rivalries. The dehumanization of labor worsened with the introduction of Taylorism and Fordism while the promise of technology gave way to the horrors of the First World War, where technology was put in the service of death (Adas 365-80). Except those who were staunch believers in science and technology and technocratic rationality (and dubbed the failure of western civilization as the failure of politicians), the Great Recession and the escalation of another world war meant a deep crisis of faith in progress.¹

Accordingly, science fictional works of the nineteenth and early twentieth century register the anxieties and ambivalences of the times as much as they reveal their confidence and euphoria. Even though Verne does not question his historical time as radically as Wells and Čapek do, he often protests against the abuse of technology by state powers and by power-hungry individuals. Wells, especially the early Wells of 1890s, radically questions the claims of European civilization, whether that claim is based on (an erroneous but popular understanding

of) the theories of evolution, on the power of superior technology, or on “just” political systems (worth exporting to the colonies). As somebody who wrote his first major text in the early 1920s after the First World War, Čapek focuses his critique on the consequences of harnessing technology to capitalist and imperialist expansionisms as well as on the dehumanization of labor in a rationally administered society.

Science fiction writers resort to the aesthetics of the sublime not only when they represent the sense of triumph that accompanied European faith in progress but also when they express the overwhelming uncertainties and anxieties associated with the fears of decline. However, when they do the latter, the sublime they evoke is significantly different from the sublime theorized from Longinus to Burke and Kant, so much so that it demands a different categorization of the sublime. In the conventional sublime, the various theories of which have been masterfully analyzed and synthesized in Thomas Weiskel’s *The Romantic Sublime*, the sublime is characterized by an immensely overwhelming experience that momentarily threatens to flood the perceiving subject but only to offer a hyper-aggrandized self, either through direct identification with the power of the Other or through absorption (internalization) and overcoming of that power. Whereas the conventional sublime is thus characterized by the loss-gain structure, in the other kind of sublime, theorized by David Morris and Vijay Mishra separately as “gothic sublimity” or the “gothic sublime,” the loss of the self is irrevocable, the overwhelming force of the Other is too horrifying to become an object of identification, and the perceiving subject loses faith in his or her ability to hold together (represent) the perceived world.

Since Verne never radically questions the ideology of progress—perhaps he cannot, given the pedagogic/ideological nature of the “extraordinary voyages” series—he never uses the radical possibilities of the non-recuperative, gothic sublime, or the “negative sublime,” a term

used in this dissertation to differentiate it from the conventional, “positive” sublime. Wells, however, uses the negative sublime to make the imperialist ego undergo deeply unsettling experiences, which challenge his faith in civilization and progress. In *The Island of Dr Moreau*, for example, Mr. Prendick, a British gentleman of some scientific education, finds himself in an island populated by “Beast People,” animals vivisected into human-looking beings by the novel’s Frankensteinian scientist. Forced to stay long in the place outside the domain of imperial law and order, Prendick gradually sees in the Beast People the same hopes and fears that human beings in general have and (when he finally arrives home) recognizes in his fellow Londoners the same savagery that the Beast People keep reverting to. The gothic atmosphere of the island’s forest, which teems with “monstrosities” that defy all categorization, throws Prendick out of his complacencies, causing in him an insuperable epistemological confusion and an irrevocable recognition of the savagery within his civilized self. Similarly, in *The War of the Worlds* Wells creates the Martians as representatives of a highly advanced form of the civilization that imperial Europe was proud of; however, by making the highly progressed version of the (imperial) self invade itself (the Martians invade England), Wells forces the imperialist subject undergo the horror it habitually inflicts upon its others. In other words, the negative, gothic sublimity of the Martian form and their destructive technology forces the imperial (British) self proud of its civilization to confront the actual barbarity of its practice. In Čapek’s science fictional works, the capitalist subject is allowed to see his fantasies of unlimited production and expansion come true; however, the fruition of fantasy in Čapek’s world is also the unleashing of horrors, which exposes the grim reality behind the fantasy. As the triumphant, sublime powers of techno-capital turn nightmarish, the capitalist-imperialist subject of Čapek’s world has to face the violence and exploitation that was hitherto hidden under the film of fantasy. In *R. U. R.*, for example, the

directors of the Rossum Universal Robots Corporation have to confront the consequences of their fantasy of unlimited production; while one of them is counting the profits they have made (in billions) even until the last moment, the multitudinous robots they have produced kill all human beings, including the directors. In *War with the Newts*, the Newts, who had been instrumental in fulfilling the capitalist fantasy of unlimited expansion, also become the agents that act out and expose the horrors of that expansion and its imperialist tendency. As continents and islands (including the ones created by the exploitation of the Newts' labor power) are destroyed and submerged in water by the Newts, the negatively sublime scale of destruction forces the capitalist-imperialist subject (and subscribers of the techno-capitalist fantasy) to suffer a radical unhinging of self and become destitute of its faith in progress.

If Verne, Wells, and Čapek offer dense representations of the problems of their times—whether as affirmation or critique—it is partly because of the biographical and publication contexts of their writings. I have pointed out above how the historical contexts of their times provide conditions for the three writers' representations of imperialism and its three constituents: Enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism. Within these broad historical contexts, however, there also existed relatively more specific biographical and publication contexts, which further stress why science fictional works of Verne, Wells, and Čapek are ideal for examining the fantasy that drove modern European imperialism. Attending to the biographical and publication contexts also allows us to see the grounds of difference in the three writers' representation of imperialism.

A fateful encounter with the publisher Jules Hetzel catapulted Verne into fame and brought about the birth of a genre. Verne had been working hard to establish himself as a playwright in Parisian theaters, meanwhile toying with his idea of *Roman de la Science* (Evans

18-19). When he went to Hetzel with a descriptive account of the European travelers in Africa, Hetzel advised Verne to rewrite it as fiction (Butcher, *Jules Verne* 147). *Five Weeks in a Balloon* was the first fruit of their enterprise. Genres like adventure and travel writing, popular in the nineteenth century and popular from earlier times, fed into it; Verne added to these the popular nineteenth-century science of geography and the emergent technology of balloon flight. Consistent with the ideology that underwrote European travel accounts, *Five Weeks* was also a perfect fit for Hetzel's aims in the magazine *Magasin d'Education et de Récréation*, in which the novel was serialized. Hetzel published the *Magasin* primarily for young adult readership but also for their parents, with the aim to orient them toward scientific and technological education, increasingly important in the age of industrial revolution and the period of rapid capitalist development (Evans 13-14). The huge success of *Five Weeks* would result in the establishment of a new genre, as Verne prolifically wrote up to three novels a year, and in total sixty two novels. First serialized in the *Magasin* (and occasionally in other periodicals) and subsequently published in book versions, with different editions of them, Verne's "extraordinary voyages" became a major nineteenth-century literary phenomenon.

The primary intended audience for Verne's "extraordinary voyages" were the French youth (Evans 12-14), but Verne's French readers were surely interpellated not only as French nationals but as subjects of European modernity. The latter is evident from the range of Verne's narratives—the characters of various European and American national origins, the pan-European nature of the sources "cited" in the texts, etc. The ideological interpellation into European modernity could not but occur in the global context/theater of modern European imperialism that began from the discovery of the New World in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and intensified during Verne's writing career from the 1860s to the turn of the century. All three

major elements of Verne's narratives—adventure, travel narrative, and science and technology—were mired in the history and ideologies of European imperialism.² In deploying these genres and discourses, Verne could not but reproduce the imperialist ideologies they served, given, especially, the ideological-pedagogical task of the “extraordinary voyages.” Moreover, as a Saint-Simonian enthusiast for whom scientists were “the real, promethean heroes of modern times” (Chesneaux, *Political and Social* 70) and as a global traveler, physically to England and the United States and mentally to the rest of the world (via travelogues), Verne was the ideal writer to enthrall the readers with the ideologies of his time and culture.

Wells was praised by T. S. Eliot as an eminent public intellectual of his generation, even though he called Wells's pulpit an unheeded one (319, 322). When Wells began writing his scientific romances and journalistic pieces, it was the time of magazine modernism, a new wave in the spread of print culture, of newspapers and periodicals (Mackenzie 102-03).³ Wells took different public roles: he was a popular writer, a journalist, briefly a government official, a propagandist, and he met with powerful politicians of his time, including among others three American Presidents—the two Roosevelts and President Hoover—and two architects of Soviet Russia—Lenin and Stalin (Partington 2; Wells, *Autobiography* 664-91). Wells was also respected by eminent contemporary writers like Henry James and Joseph Conrad, though some of them would be ultimately disappointed with Wells's refusal to take literature primarily as art (Mackenzie 141-44, 276-79). Wells's works were widely reviewed in the periodicals of his time, and many of his works were published simultaneously or soon after in the United States and translated into other languages. George Orwell wrote in 1945 about Wells's influence, “I doubt whether anyone who was writing books between 1900 and 1920, at any rate in the English language, influenced the young so much” (“Wells, Hitler and the World State” 97). Even after

1920, Wells continued to be “an icon,” writes John Clute: “He spoke to the world. He was a world speaker” (xiii).

Wells’s primary intended audience were educated Britons, who like Mr. Prendick in his *The Island of Moreau* were informed about the nineteenth-century scientific outlook and were ambivalently complacent and anxious about their place in history and “civilization.” Using his scientific education under T. H. Huxley at the Normal School of Science, Wells translated the questions of race and class into the narrative language of species and evolutionism (Suvin 209-16), shocking his imperial audience out of their complacency and expressing their fears of decay and degeneration. A person of working class background who had not yet secured his position as a successful and established writer, Wells of the last decade of the nineteenth century was a social outsider who relished exploding the comforting myths of imperialist ideology. In the new century, when his middle class position was more secure whereas Britain’s supremacy in the world became increasingly questionable with the rise of Germany and the United States as rival powers, Wells imagined for Euro-America a heroic role in world history, which he believed neither Britain nor any other single European nation or the United States was capable of taking. As Wells moved from his scientific romances of the 1890s to the utopias and future histories as well as realist novels and non-fictional works of the next century, he was to see the possibility of the new world order wasted by the First World War and the Great Depression, by jingoistic nationalisms and increased inter-imperialist rivalries, and finally by the Second World War. Undeterred by all of these, Wells continued to champion his vision of the World State, which would complete the process of Europeanizing the world that was halted by inter-imperialist rivalries. Against all historical crises and what he called fooleries, Wells saw an antidote only in education that would create “the competent receiver,” the critical mass of enlightened people

who would shoulder the task of heralding the new society. Dissatisfied with the ineffectual League of Nations formed after the First World War, Wells advanced a series of proposals first for regional alliance and then for a functional world government. Then, disillusioned by the Second World War and by the failure of the world to listen to his proposals, Wells ended with *Mind at the End of its Tether*, acknowledging thereby Eliot's point about him as an unheeded public intellectual. Whether as a radical iconoclast who challenged the imperial myths of late nineteenth-century Britain or as a savvy myth-maker of Euro-American global imperialism dubbed as the World State, Wells powerfully articulated the problems of the modern world, which faced and still faces the unique challenges brought about by the forces that propelled peoples and cultures of the world into increased "togetherness."

Karel Čapek's concern with imperialism and colonialism may not look as obvious as those of Verne and Wells, who were citizens of imperial nations. However, Čapek's biography and the history of Czechoslovakia suggest that, as a Czech national, Čapek could not remain unaffected by European imperialism. Czechoslovakia had already been interpellated into the larger European history when it gained independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. As the "new" nation was forged out of the Czech and Slovak ethnicities, it left, among others, the large-property-holding "Czech"-Germans disgruntled because they were forced into the position of political minority--this disgruntled group would later give Hitler a pretext to intervene and invade Czechoslovakia (Steiner 4-5). As a "nationalist" who closely watched whither the First World War would shift (since the chances of the nation's independence lay in the victory of the Allies) and who feared Hitler's encroachment into Czechoslovakia (while the French and British were busy "appeasing" Hitler), it is not surprising that Čapek should develop an internationalist outlook and address in his works inter-imperial conflicts.

An internationalist in political outlook, Čapek was culturally a cosmopolitan. During his student days in Prague, Čapek visited Berlin and Paris and immersed himself in French, German, English, and American literature and philosophy (Bradbrook 6-7). Later he visited Italy, England, Spain and Holland and wrote travelogues, which were serialized in the Czech newspaper he worked with (Bradbrook 187-99). As the chairperson of the Prague branch of the international PEN, Čapek met with international literati, such as Paul Valéry, Thomas Mann, Theodore Dreiser, H. G. Wells, and Rabindranath Tagore (Bradbrook 13-15). Čapek scholars have pointed out the powerful influence Wells's science fictions had on Čapek's, as they have also stressed (rather unduly) the pervasive influence of American pragmatism on Čapek's works in general (Bradbrook 7; Klíma 41-47; Matuška 35-36, 133). A nationalist with much at stake in the larger European history and a cosmopolitan who saw Europe crashing on its road of "progress," Čapek was, therefore, intimately aware of and reflected in his science fictional works on the historical conjuncture of capitalism, colonialism, and western modernity.

Because Čapek's works were first published in serialized form in Czech newspapers, it can be assumed that his primary audience was the Czech people, recently independent and catching up with the "progress" of western modernity. However, the fact that his works were almost immediately translated into other languages and were enthusiastically received in Europe and the United States shows not only that the problems Čapek addressed in his works were of global significance but also that Čapek most probably had an international audience in mind when he explored the questions posed by the "success" of technology and capitalism. For example, after it was first published in 1920, Čapek's play *R. U. R.* or *Rossum's Universal Robots* was translated into Slovene (1921) and Hungarian (1922), then into German and English (1923), and gradually into thirty languages. In the New York Theater Season of 1922, the play

was performed over two hundred times (Bradbrook 49). At a public debate held at London's St Martin's Theater in June 1923, *R. U. R.* prompted the English novelist G. K. Chesterton to muse on the "headlong yet casual' rise of capitalism," while the witty George Bernard Shaw quipped: "If it has to be, I would like to be a Robot two hours a day in order to be Bernard Shaw for the rest of the day" (qtd. in Bradbrook 50). To the post-First World War Euro-America, Čapek's grotesque vision of mechanized "humans," monstrously growing capitalism, and inter-national (imperial) wars, spoke recent history and warned of a nightmarish future. In 1936, Čapek would again surprise the world with his dark vision of the ousting of human civilization. Written against the background of Hitler's imperialist designs in the region, the Czech writer's *War with the Newts* captured Europe's history of colonialism, capitalism, and inter-imperial conflicts.

This dissertation develops its argument about the sublime fantasy of imperialism and the reproduction and/or critique of that fantasy in Verne's, Wells's, and Čapek's works in four chapters—the first elaborates the theoretical framework for the study, and the remaining three study the science fictional works of the three writers. Chapter One begins by discussing the institutionalization of science fiction as a genre, the difficult question of defining the genre, and the most fruitful approach to studying it. Then, it makes a case for defining imperialism as a historical articulation of the forces of Enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism. After that, the chapter presents a brief history of the theories of the sublime, discussing the ambivalence of this aesthetic between its triumphant, (quasi)transcendent, positive mode and the non-transcendent, negative mode of self-loss and self-humbling, and presents an argument for articulating the historical link between imperialism and the positive and negative modes of the sublime. In the concluding part, the chapter discusses how some representative science fictional works,

primarily of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, reproduce and critique the ideology of the imperialist sublime.

Chapter Two reads some representative science fictional works of Jules Verne—particularly *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, *From the Earth to the Moon*, and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*—and argues that when Verne accomplishes the ideological task handed to him by his publisher, the task of celebrating the imperialist ideology of progress, he does it by rendering imperial adventurous heroics with the rapturous aesthetics of awe and wonder. The chapter shows that both progress and the imperial man as the subject of progress are aestheticized by Verne as sublime phenomena, whether by invoking the immemorial vistas of geological-paleontological deep time or by displaying the awe-inspiring spectacles of technology, or by showcasing the process of producing the archival excess of imperial knowledge. The chapter further argues that the spectacle of progress and the glorification of western man in Verne's narratives structurally depend on the construction of the colonial Other, who is incapable of understanding and often futilely resistant to the insignia of progress but nonetheless gazes at it with awe and wonder.

Chapter Three studies the scientific romances, utopias, and future histories of H. G. Wells so as to explore how Wells both reproduces and critiques the imperialist ideology and its fantasy of the sublime. Dividing Wells's oeuvre into two parts, as virtually all Wells scholars do, the chapter argues that while the scientific romances of early Wells show imperialist ideology in crisis, Wells's later works champion a proto-imperialist project, which differs from historical imperialism in some important ways but, nonetheless, reproduces many of its dominant features. Through close readings of *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr Moreau*, *The War of the Worlds*, and *The First Men in the Moon*, the chapter shows how in his scientific romances Wells uses the

aesthetic of the negative, gothic sublime to humble the imperialist ego, making it confront its barbarity under the pretense of civilization. In contrast to the works of early Wells, the chapter maintains, Wells's utopias and future histories—*A Modern Utopia*, *Men like Gods*, *The Shape of the Things to Come*, etc.—valorize the triumphs of science and technology and the claims of western civilization with the aesthetic of the triumphant, self-aggrandizing sublime, imagining and/ or predicting the project of Europeanizing the world completed in the formation of the world state.

Chapter Four studies the science fictional works of Karel Čapek —mainly *R. U. R.* *Factory of the Absolute*, and *The War with the Newts*—and argues that Čapek uses the resources of the fantastic to humorously represent the expansionist-imperialist drive of techno-capitalism as well as to thoroughly critique the latter's inherent destructiveness—its tendency to cause withering of the sensuous, mass unemployment, and inter-imperialist wars. The chapter shows how in Čapek's science fictional works a discovery or invention of Enlightenment's "pure" and/or instrumental reason "embodies" a sublime idea or, alternatively, releases a sublime force and magnitude, which then enables the capitalist-imperialist sublime fantasy of surplus accumulation and territorial-commercial expansion on the global scale. However, Čapek's narratives are so structured, the chapter further shows, that the very fruition of the expansionist fantasy exposes its apocalyptically destructive nature, as crises of overproduction and inter-imperial wars transform the erstwhile sublime utopia into its monstrous double, the nightmare of world-destruction, and the negative, humbling sublime of the dangers of "progress."

Chapter One

Science Fiction, Imperialism, and the Sublime

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework for the present study. It begins by discussing the institutionalization of science fiction as a genre, the difficult question of defining the genre, and the most fruitful approach to studying it. Then, the chapter makes a case for defining imperialism as a historical articulation of the forces of enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism. After that, it presents a brief history of the theories of the sublime, discussing the ambivalence of this aesthetic between its triumphant, (quasi)transcendent, and positive mode and the non-transcendent, negative mode of self-loss and self-humbling, and presents an argument for articulating the historical link between imperialism and the positive and negative modes of the sublime. In the concluding part, this chapter discusses how some representative science fictional works, primarily of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, reproduce and critique the ideology of the imperialist sublime.

1) Science Fiction

None of the writers discussed in this dissertation thought that they were writing science fiction. The stories that Jules Verne wrote for his publisher's young-reader magazine—*Magasin d'éducation et de récréation*—used popular travel and adventure narrative forms to represent male heroes of scientific and technological knowledge exploring “known and unknown worlds” on, below, and above the surface of the earth. In his scientific romances and utopias, H. G. Wells updated the fantastic, romance narrative forms and the genre of utopia with scientific and technological details so as to explore both the euphoria and anxieties about “progress” in a scientific-technological age. The plays and novels of Karel Čapek that warned of the dangers of techno-capitalist transformation of society exploited the genre of the fantastic, combining it with

romance and satire as well as with journalistic writing. None of the works of the three writers were originally published or marketed as science fiction.

The term science fiction was popularized by the American entrepreneur Hugo Gernsback, who used it to replace his earlier coinage “scientifiction,” to name the stories he published first in the magazine *Amazing Stories*—the first issue dated April 1926—and later in a cohort of magazines, such as *Science Wonder Stories*, *Air Wonder Stories*, *Science Wonder Quarterly*, and *Scientific Detective Monthly* (Ashley 62-63). Though stories that would later be called science fiction were plentifully published in the mushrooming magazine market in the UK and the US from 1890 onwards, Gernsback’s *Amazing Stories* was the first to specialize in the genre. The example and (albeit uneven) success of Gernsback’s enterprise led to the publication of other science fiction magazines, prominent among which was *Astounding Stories*, the first issue of which appeared in December 1929 (Ashley 63). After John Campbell assumed the editorship of the magazine in 1937, the *Astounding* ushered in the “Golden Age” of American science fiction becoming the publishing venue for science fiction stalwarts like Robert. A. Heinlein, A. E. van Vogt, Isaac Asimov, and Theodore Sturgeon (Ashley 66). As both Gernsback and Campbell invited discussion on SF from writers and fans and printed them as letters or guest editorials, a veritable tradition of popular SF criticism followed (Csicsery-Ronay, “Science Fiction/Criticism” 45). Science fiction continued to flourish in the US and soon became part of a larger culture with the proliferation of “film, TV, animation, poetry, music, role-playing and electronic game, comic and graphic novel forms of the genre” (Luckhurst10).

Although academic studies of science fiction were occasionally published earlier, the genre seems to have generated recognizable academic interest by the late 1950s. As early as 1960, Kingsley Amis, in his *New Maps of Hell*, exhorted “trend-hound” academics to read

science fiction more seriously, and promised that they would be surprised “how many of [their] cherished insights are common ground in science fiction” (63). A year earlier a symposium exclusively devoted to science fiction had been organized in the MLA annual convention, where Thomas Clareson and Edward Lauterbach had launched an academic newsletter that led to the publication of *Extrapolation*, the first scholarly journal on science fiction. More book-length studies besides Amis’s were published during the next decade, and at the MLA symposium on SF in 1968, Darko Suvin and Samuel R. Delany read two highly influential papers—both published in the 10.2 (1969) issue of *Extrapolation*—which set the terms of the academic discussion of SF for a long time to come (Luckhurst 6). Suvin’s paper “Science Fiction: The New Mythology” proposed the theory of science fiction as a literature of cognitive estrangement and traced a respectable genealogy for the genre that went back to Lucian’s *True History* and included Thomas More’s *Utopia*. Delany’s “About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy Five Words” offered a mode of reading science fiction that attended to the peculiar syntactic-semantic constructions of science fictional sentences. The seventies saw a spate of academic studies of science fiction, highly influential among which was Brian Aldiss’s *Billion Year Spree* claimed by the author to be the “first history of the genre” which aimed to “bring a clearer grasp of ‘how it really was’” (2). Meanwhile, two other academic journals on SF began publication: *Science Fiction Studies* and *Foundation*. The seventies and eighties also saw publication of several bibliographies of science fiction and science fiction criticism. While the fight to gain full academic recognition for the genre continues to this day, by 1970s teaching science fiction in classrooms and publishing articles and books on SF had become a widespread practice in the US academy.¹

Definitions and contests over definitions constitute an inevitable part of a genre's history and its shifting identity, and science fiction is no exception. Definitions of and/or approaches to science fiction can be differentiated along the varying degrees of emphases they place on content/themes or on forms/generic affiliations or on historicization of the genre attending to the dynamic interaction of themes/motifs and forms/genres of SF with the social and material conditions behind production and consumption of SF texts. In the first issue of *Amazing Stories*, Gernsback defined science fiction as "a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision" (qtd. in Westfahl 38). For Gernsback, as Gary Westfahl explains, charming romance or "thrilling adventure" was meant to ensure entertainment value for SF stories, while factual scientific details and logical and convincing technological inventions/predictions made the genre educative to the young and instrumental to the cause of progress (39-44, 53-54).

Several academic definitions of science fiction also emphasize science and technology as major constitutive and differentiating elements of the genre. The emphasis is made either in terms of contents/themes or narrative/rhetorical strategies held to be peculiar to SF, and more often than not, the insistence on the primacy of science and technology in the definition of the genre is motivated by the desire to separate SF from the historically rival and informing or "corrupting" genre of fantasy. In his *New Maps of Hell*, Amis defines science fiction as "that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesized on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in origin" (18). Even though he allows a great leeway to the use of science and technology in SF, Amis insists that "a respect for fact or presumptive fact" (scientific ethos) differentiates the genre from fantasy (22). According to Robert Philmus, "From the point of view of rhetorical strategy, science fiction differs from

other kinds of fantasy by virtue of the more or less scientific basis, real or imaginary, theoretical or technological, on which the writer predicates a fantastic state of affairs” (*Into the Unknown* 2). Thus, while Philmus admits the “fantastic” into the genre, he insists that the fantastic in SF is predicated on a “scientific basis.” Similarly, even while he adds the caveat that his definition is “normative rather than descriptive,” Paul Alkon defines science fiction “as the narrative use of science to create myths allowing novel points of view to the imagination” (*Science Fiction* 7).

Other definitions of science fiction more openly embrace fantasy in the identity of the genre even as they stress science and technology as its constitutive elements. In his complementary “content-oriented” definition of the genre, Philmus proposes that science fiction “transmute[s] an abstract idea into concrete myth. . . . For science fiction generates its mythic fantasies by taking literally, and dramatizing, the metaphors expressive of those ideas that define, at least in part, the beliefs and nature of the social order” (21). Similarly, while Robert Scholes and Eric Rabkin see the emergence of the genre grounded in the radically new conception of the future, involving anticipations of “new knowledge, new discoveries, new adventures, new mutations,” they also argue that science fiction is affiliated with fantasy, both of which flourished simultaneously as alternatives to the movement of mainstream fiction from myth toward increasing realism. For them the fantasy element in science fiction is rooted in the very nature of SF’s subject matter, the marvels of science and technology which from nineteenth century onwards struck popular imagination as fantastic (5). In “The Other Side of Realism” Thomas Clareson sees science fiction as part of the larger literary movement of fantasy (Clareson includes the Gothic and French Symbolist poetry as historical exemplars) growing alongside the parallel movement of realism-naturalism and argues that both movements were responses to the new conception of the mechanistic universe brought about by the ascendancy of the scientific

worldview from the eighteenth century onwards. As a genre that coalesced into its distinct identity only in the late nineteenth century by incorporating traditions of the imaginary voyage and the utopia, Clareson explains, science fiction asserted its difference in that “whereas realism-naturalism reacted to the nihilism incipient in the newly-emphasized concept of a mechanistic universe, science fiction reacted to the headlines, to the more obvious accomplishments of the age” (9). In *Billion Year Spree*, Brian Aldiss regards the effects of scientific technological developments as subject matter of science fiction but calls fantasy the distinctive aesthetic mode of the genre, which he defines as “the search for a definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in Gothic or post-Gothic mould” (emphasis deleted 8). If an “assumed realism” differentiates SF from fantasy “in a narrower sense, as *opposed* to fantasy,” Aldiss also stresses, “In its wider sense, fantasy clearly embraces all science fiction” (original emphasis 9).

In emphasizing the use of science in science fiction as narrative/rhetorical strategies, Philmus’s and Alkon’s definitions of the genre also attend to its formal aspects. So do Clareson’s and Aldiss’s definitions in valorizing the aesthetic of fantasy/Gothic in science fiction. A more exactly formalist definition, and more influential one, is Darko Suvin’s, according to which science fiction is “a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s environment” (emphasis deleted 7-8). For Suvin, the imaginative world of SF is estranged from the historical world of the author as in fantasy, but the distorted world of SF also critically reflects back on the historical world and, like realism, has cognitive function/value for the reader. However, SF is neither fantasy nor realism because, whether it extrapolates from the historical tendencies or, even better, presents an analogical

world, SF's fictional "novums" are unique in that they facilitate cognition of the historical world through estrangement ((3-10). Recognizing the narrowness of Suvin's definition of the genre that delegitimizes as "compost heap" more than 90 % of works sold as SF but simultaneously insisting that it is both "fundamentally sound" and "indispensable," Carl Freedman in *Critical Theory and Science fiction* offers a revision, which amounts to changing Suvin's "cognition" to "cognitive effect" and Suvin's defining element of the genre, "cognitive estrangement," to a "generic tendency." Freedman cautions against subjecting a text to "an epistemological judgment external to itself" and suggests that as long as "the attitude *of the text itself* to the kind of estrangements being performed" is rational, the text passes the test of "cognitive effect" (original emphasis 18). Similarly, genre for Freedman is not a classificatory category but a tendency, which means that the science fictional tendency may be present in a text that also has other generic tendencies; a text is properly science fiction if "cognitive estrangement is the dominant generic tendency within the overdetermined textual whole" (20). Samuel Delany, who formulated a mode of reading SF no less influential than Suvin's, defines SF on stylistic grounds. Science fictional sentences such as "The red sun is high, the blue low" and "The door dilated," Delany argues, are distinctive from their counterparts in genres such as reportage, naturalistic fiction, and fantasy primarily because of the "distinct level of subjunctivity" (43). While reportage is predicated to "this happened," naturalistic fiction this "could have happened," and fantasy this "could not have happened"; SF's level of subjunctivity is that of these "have not happened yet," which includes other subjunctive subcategories (which are also subcategories of SF): events that "might happen" ("technological and sociological predictive tales"); "events that will not happen" ("science fantasy stories"); "events that have not happened yet" ("cautionary dystopias"); "that have not happened in the past" ("the parallel world story") (44). The specific value of SF for

Delany resides in “the particular intensity and range of images” the genre’s level of subjunctivity makes possible (48).

No consensus exists among critics and scholars of SF regarding the genre’s definition and genealogy. Gernsback exemplified his definition of SF as “the Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story” (qtd. in Westfahl 70) but also published stories that some scholars, Suvin and Aldiss among others, have regarded as a disgrace to the genre. Amis’s definition is more hospitable to popular SF but he still dismisses the American SF space opera as lamentable. Clareson draws up a comprehensive generic history that includes imaginary voyages, utopias, and lost-race fantasies. Suvin traces a highly respectable genealogy of the genre that includes Lucian’s *True History*, More’s *Utopia*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, and stories and novels by Verne, Wells, and Čapek, and contemptuously dismisses most of popular SF as a “compost heap.” Aldiss suggests that to think the genre began with the fantastical voyages of the ancient times or with the 1926 pulp magazine in the US is “equally misleading”; for him, “science fiction was born in the heart and crucible of the English Romantic movement” with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (*Billion Year* 3). Scholars have also privileged different generic parentage and claimed different ur-texts of SF. Suvin regards More’s *Utopia* as the urtext; Aldiss favors the Gothic and claims Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*; Mark Rose valorizes the romance and proposes Wells’s *The Time Machine*. George Slusser proposes considering different periods of emergence for different national histories of SF and forwards alternatively “paradigm-shifts” and “gradualist” models of generic emergence (27-41). The dissatisfaction with the denigration of Gernsback and the popular SF tradition he helped establish makes Gary Westfahl argue that SF properly begins with Gernsback and Gernsback is the first critic and theoretician of the genre (37).

The scandalous situation of SF's lack of true identity has made Paul Kincaid propose a wholly new approach to the genre. In "On the Origins of Genre," Kincaid claims, "there is not one definition of science fiction but many, there is not one urtext but many" (412). Drawing upon Wittgenstein's theory of the identity of words as a matter of "family resemblances," Kincaid suggests that there is not a single characteristic running through all texts identified as SF but that rather the genealogical history of SF should be thought of as a "web of resemblances," such that SF is "a number of things—a future setting, a marvelous device, an ideal society, an alien creature, a twist in time, an interstellar journey, a satirical perspective, a particular approach to the matter of story, whatever we may be looking for when we look for science fiction . . ." (416-17).

However, there are also more comprehensively historicizing approaches to the genre that stop short of defining it and propose considering the messy intermixing of genres in terms of the historical conditions of the production and reception of genres and texts. Even though Mark Rose ultimately cannot resist identifying a "paradigm" proper to SF and privileging romance as the genre closest to SF, he offers a flexible, historicizing approach to the study of the genre. Rose proposes that science fiction should be thought "as a tradition, a developing complex of themes, attitudes, and formal strategies that, taken together, constitute a general set of expectations"; like other genres, science fiction's "origins are wedded to complex cultural, historical, and literary circumstances," including nineteenth-century doubts about religious faith, the rhetoric of progress, technological and scientific developments and the latter's suffusion in society and culture (4, 7). Roger Luckhurst overly privileges technology in calling SF "a popular literature that concerns the impact of Mechanism . . . on cultural life and human subjectivity" and goes to the other extreme from Suvin when he limits SF to a "popular literature," but despite these

limitations his approach to the “cultural history” of SF is comprehensive because it studies science fiction texts “as part of a constantly shifting *network* that ties together science, technology, social history and cultural expression with different emphases at different times” (3, 6). A genre that cannot be limited to “a particular literary typology or formalist definition,” science fiction, according to Luckhurst “emerged as a hybrid form in the nineteenth century and has remained one, interweaving with strands of Gothic, Realist, fantasy and utopian writing” (6,11). While precursors of SF and SF scholarship existed before, Luckhurst contends, SF emerged as a recognizable genre only from 1880, when the conditions for the genre’s emergence pervaded Western societies: massive extension of literacy, arrival of cheap magazine formats that encouraged formal innovations, opening of scientific and technological institutions that trained engineers, teachers, and scientific workers, and, finally, a culture transformed by scientific and technological innovations (16).

Similarly, following Kincaid’s suggestion that the generic identity of SF should be thought as family resemblances but stressing the historical conditions and processes behind the continuous and contentious tracing of those resemblances ignored by Kincaid, John Rieder presents an approach to the emergence of SF as “the coalescence of a set of generic expectations into a recognizable condition of production and reception that enables both writers and readers to approach individual works as examples of a literary kind that in the 1920s and after came to be named science fiction” (15). Because a genre exists always in relation to “a system of genres,” Rieder argues, the coalescence of SF’s generic conventions involves shifts “in the entire system of genres, so that science fiction’s web of resemblances becomes meaningful—emerges—as a distinct, conventional set of expectations different from those in its proximity” (18). However, since the distinctiveness of SF’s generic expectations is a matter of “a web of resemblances,” the

“genre itself is an intertextual phenomenon” while “no individual text is generically pure” (18). Such generic shifts and the emergence of SF from 1870s to the two world wars occurred, Rieder points out, amid the historical conditions of world penetration of capitalism and imperialist/colonialist frenzy as well as pervasive use of advanced technology for production which on the one hand furthered the growth of a middle class of scientific education and on the other yielded increased productivity through labor-intensive use of workers. The craze for increased productivity was consonant with the ideology of progress and accounted for the craze of technological marvels, while labor-intensive production provided the leisure time necessary for the consumption of mass literature like science fiction (27-28).

Given the nature of the object of its study—reproduction as well as critique of imperialist ideologies in science fictional narratives—this dissertation takes a historicizing approach to SF as a genre and an object of critical study. According to this approach, as John Rieder argues, both Gernsback’s commercially motivated and Suvin’s academically interested definitions of the genre and constructions of genealogies are equally valid and form parts of the historic-cultural process of the shaping of SF’s generic identity (17-18). As “a web of resemblances,” the genealogical history of SF includes narrative forms such as imaginary voyages, utopias/dystopias, adventure narratives, lost-race fantasies, etc. Following the historicizing approach, this dissertation also studies the works of the three authors by situating them in the socio-economic-cultural histories that inform their narratives and that the narratives critically reflect upon. The approach is best exemplified by Rieder’s *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*, which articulates the generic conventions and motifs of SF with social, economic, and cultural histories through tracing the work of ideologies that connect SF and its conditions of production. Moreover, this is an approach that is attentive to the relative autonomy

of SF narratives, which do not merely reproduce the dominant ideologies of their times but also often take critical positions with respect to them. As Rieder points out, generic expectations in a science fictional work “are not merely repetitions of the generic ideology but also an antithetical form of expressing it. . . . Using conventional material always involves taking a position towards it, so that interpretation needs to shuttle between collective ideology and the more or less complex repetition and resistance of it enacted in the individual text” (21).

2) Imperialism

Modern European imperialism is often said to begin properly in the 1880s with the famous “scramble for Africa” when major European powers carved out colonial territories among themselves. In his *Imperialism: A Study*, J. A. Hobson contrasts the prior colonial acquisitions of the British Empire with those from the 1870s and 80s and argues that while the former were more like an extension of nationalism (building societies by the British like those in the home country), the latter was mostly imperialist (with no significant settlement of the British in the colonies) and profited the investors and financiers rather than the people at large. Hobson distinguishes modern imperialism from former empires (Roman and continental European ones which were to him internationalist and more egalitarian) in being fiercely competitive (among several rival powers) and characterized by the predominance of finance capital (8-11). In *Geometry of Imperialism*, Giovanni Arrighi distinguishes imperialism proper which emerged from the 1880s with leading imperialist nations Britain, France, and Germany, from the “informal empire” based on global connections established by “unregulated” free trade, which characterized the economic policy of the United States from the end of the nineteenth century and that of Britain until 1870s (66-74). Likewise, according to Bernard Porter, the British Empire pursued the policy of free trade (Arrighi’s informal empire) as long as its natural supremacy as

the first industrialized nation gave it an advantage in international trade but its policies “metamorphosed into a full-blooded imperialism” when the rival European economic powers began to challenge that advantage from the 1880s onwards as the British pursued their interests in the colonies more aggressively (42-45).

However, as Eric Hobsbawm points out in *Industry and Empire*, what was markedly different about the late nineteenth century was increased competition for colonial territories among newly industrialized nations, not imperialism itself. Imperialist rivalry between France and Britain had continued from the sixteenth century until successive British victories over France seriously curtailed French imperialist ambitions. From the 1840s to 1873 newly industrializing European nations and the United States enjoyed a steady economic growth because imperialist Britain led the world economic system not only by exporting new technologies to industrializing nations but also by securing raw materials from colonized or semi-colonized countries and by forcibly “opening up” China and Japan to the capitalist world market (116-17). Marc Ferro’s comprehensive *Colonization: A Global History* shows that support of state power was the constant factor even during the phases of European expansions (from the sixteenth century) that have been usually called only colonialist, not imperialist (16). Similarly, Anthony Padgen in *Lords of All the World* argues that despite conventional differentiation between the two phases of European empires—the first in the Americas, the second in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific—and the usual ascription of the terms “empire” and “imperialism” to the global European empires of the nineteenth century, the “First European empires” cannot so easily be distinguished from these later developments: “The language of empire, and many of its fundamental anthropological assumptions, persisted from the sixteenth into the nineteenth century, and in many cases into the twentieth” (5-6).

Thus, while it is true that policy debates on imperialism acquired unprecedented volume in the late nineteenth century and inter-imperialist rivalry became more pronounced during that time, modern European imperialism as a historical phenomenon had been long in the making. What historians distinguish as informal empire and imperialism (or internationalism of free trade versus imperialism) may be a valid analytic distinction regarding conscious policy shifts of imperialist nation-states, but from the standpoint of those who were colonized and forcibly subjected to the economic circuits of western capital such a distinction mattered very little (Young 18-19). Moreover, imperialism was a more comprehensive phenomenon than economic theories of imperialism envision. The fact that the colonies could readily be exploited when the time came to invest the surplus of unrealizable capital suggests a longer history of knowledge/power. If indeed, as Hobson argues, imperialism was an “irrational” business policy and benefitted only investors and financiers at the expense of the population at large, then the latter needed to be convinced that it was a cause for the greater good, which Hobson recognizes when he says that financiers manufactured suitable public opinion through the control of the press (59-60). As has been established by the scholarship on colonial discourse analysis in the wake of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, culture played a huge role in fabricating ideologies that were necessary to make imperialism sufficiently popular for public support. Ideologies of race and progress were the most dominant ones, and what was a contingent difference between civilizations (European and others) was mapped onto a universalist History where Western development became the standard by which other peoples and cultures were judged and found wanting.

Therefore, imperialism in this study is understood as a wider and historically longer phenomenon, beginning from the “discovery” of America but growing more powerful and more

comprehensive as the capitalist market reached global proportions in the nineteenth century. Moreover, imperialism in this study is taken as a cultural phenomenon as much as an economic one, spreading western modernity to the rest of the world through violent subjugations that often involved extermination of undesirable and resisting peoples/societies, constructing contingent western values as universal norms and delegitimizing other cultures and peoples as savage and barbaric. The question is not whether imperialism existed before the late nineteenth century—it surely did—but what historical shifts occurred in imperialist ideologies from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. Hence, this study defines imperialism as a historical articulation of the forces of enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism, each of which intensified and acted mutually more strongly from the mid-nineteenth century, bringing about a worlding of the planet by Western European capital, knowledges and values, which has proved irreversible as it continues to this day. In other words, enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism are defining aspects of modern European imperialism because their combined force enabled empire's global reach and ideologically justified the domination of other peoples and cultures.

Enlightenment is understood here in the sense Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno used it in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—not so much as a limited movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but as the historical legacy of instrumental use of knowledge to subjugate both nature and human beings to its dictatorial rule. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, enlightenment aims to bring about “the disenchantment of the world” by dispelling myths and fantasy with knowledge and, by valorizing knowledge as power, means to “establish man as the master of nature” (1). Enlightenment's instrumental rationality becomes historically dominant, Horkheimer and Adorno argue, as technology becomes the essence of knowledge, readily serviceable to “the purposes of the bourgeois economy both in factories and on the

battlefield”; as “the concept” and “the cause” of metaphysics are replaced by “the formula” and by “rules and probability”; as “calculability and utility” become the measure of all values while equivalence and exchangeability of things is established as the prevalent norm; and as “[t]he multiplicity of forms is reduced to position and arrangement” according to the principles of “unity” and “system” which become the new ideals (2-6). The ground breaking works of Michel Foucault, whose premises are not wholly at odds with those of Horkheimer and Adorno, have also brought to light the instrumental use of knowledge/power in and through the European institutions of the church, the prison, the clinic, etc.² The significance of enlightenment’s valorization of knowledge/power in the work of imperialism and colonialism becomes greatly resonant if one recalls that Horkheimer and Adorno’s vantage point as well as the *raison d’être* of their critique was the Second World War, itself the result of inter-imperialist rivalries which the Treaty of Versailles was too weak and unjust to resolve. The nexus of enlightenment’s instrumental rationality with the history of European imperialism is further corroborated by Aimé Césaire’s provocative suggestion in *Discourse on Colonialism* that Hitler and the concentration camp of the Second World War were the unleashing in Europe of the barbarism that European imperialism had inflicted on the colonies (14). The same nexus is also emphasized by Gayatri Spivak’s suggestion in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” that Foucault’s brilliant readings of the micropolitics of European institutions were only one side of the double handed machine of imperialism the other side of which was its comprehensive “epistemic violence” in the colonies (281).³ Numerous other studies have also made clear that the instrumental rationality of knowledge as power that enlightenment upholds played a crucial part in modern European imperialism.

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment, as Larry Wolff and Marco Cipolloni point out in their “Preface” to *Anthropology of Enlightenment*, added to the lexicons of European languages the word “civilization” and laid the foundation for nineteenth-century anthropology by establishing cultural perspectivism as discursive practice vis-à-vis Europe’s Other peoples (xi-xii). Even though the Enlightenment *philosophes* used real or imagined travels to other cultures to question the cultural presumptions of European societies, “cultural relativism” practiced by the likes of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and the philosophes of Scottish Enlightenment established the binary Us vs. Them, which presented Europeans as superior to the savages and barbarians who were deemed to represent earlier stages of civilization, used in the singular, universalist sense (Wolff 4-14). As Larry Wolff puts it, “The whole chronological history of mankind, in its different stages, became a problem of perspective as Rousseau and the Scottish philosophes looked back across the epochs to the vanishing point at the origin of human society, where savage men and women faded into the chronological horizon, dissolving into the state of nature” (31-32). As the “discovery” of the New World in the close of the fifteenth century and the next was “rediscovered” discursively in the eighteenth, accounts of travelers—“the face-to-face encounter with Otherness” narrated and described by “[s]ixteenth-century Franciscans, seventeenth-century Jesuits, and the early anthropologists of the eighteenth century”—the Enlightenment established “the first useful framework of Western modernity, a global bridge across cultures” (Cipolloni 307).

Similarly, Mary Louis Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* argues that the Enlightenment produced a new form of “planetary consciousness” for European citizenry as the navigational expeditions of the earlier centuries (which also produced planetary consciousness) led from the eighteenth century onwards to explorations into the interiors of

Other territories, and as “natural history,” in the wake of Linnaeus’s immensely influential *The System of Nature*, produced universal schema that mapped plants, animals, and humans of all over the world from a Eurocentric perspective (29-30). By “mak[ing] a picture of the planet appropriated and redeployed from a unified, European perspective,” scientific discourses of Enlightenment produced for Europeans a planetary identity that defined them in relation to the rest of the world, at once superior and entitled to appropriation of the planet’s resources (31, 36). From the scientific or science-influenced travel narratives of the latter half of the eighteenth to the poeticized scientific travel narratives of Humboldt in the nineteenth, Enlightenment and its legacy participated in producing imperial “anti-conquest” discourses, which overtly distinguished themselves from imperialist/colonialist designs but were nonetheless deeply embedded in them (53, 127).

According to Edward Said, when the Other of Europe was thus expanded geographically, historically studied, selectively identified with, and classified in terms of racialist universal categories, literary/popular and scholarly works about the Orient produced “a body of ideas, beliefs, clichés, or learning about the East” (120, 205). By the nineteenth century such a discourse brought about a “distillation of essential ideas about the Orient—its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness,” which later writings on the Orient continued to add to as they also relied upon it as indisputable cultural vocabulary (205). European writings about the Other, Said maintains, were tied to “the enabling socio-economic and political institutions” and were instrumental “for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,” as they fabricated the hegemonic “idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures” (3-7).

The knowledge-power nexus of imperialism and its ideology was strongly operative in the popular imperial institution of the museum. In the late nineteenth century, according to Tony Bennett, the “historical sciences” of archaeology, geology, paleontology, natural history, and anthropology, as well as the institution of the museum, played crucial roles in constructing the European man as the culmination of vastly extended history at the earliest stages of which were placed the non-European peoples as savage and barbaric. By “reading rock formations, fossilised remains, ruins, tools, technologies and ornaments as the remnants of long past epochs” the nineteenth century historical sciences opened up before the European mind “[I]mitless vistas of pasts going back beyond human existence, let alone memory” (1). Into the limitless past they opened, the sciences plotted the identity of European man in relation to the non-European peoples, as they often complemented each other. As Bennett points out, what archaeology excavated from European soils as insignia of prehistory were read in conjunction with anthropological studies of Other peoples in other places, such that contemporary non-European peoples were represented as the prehistory of the European present (40). In the “play of depths and surfaces” orchestrated by the “Post-Darwinian synthesis of historical sciences,” European identity was given a layered archeological depth and non-European peoples were reduced to a mere fold of that depth, incorporating the Other thus as part of One’s prehistory (63). The “evolutionary museum” of the late nineteenth century, Bennett argues, enacted the newly extended historical time as it privileged temporality over order, which had been the organizing principle of the Enlightenment museum. The museum in the late nineteenth century functioned as a collective “memory machine” and was instrumental in the liberal-governmental task of “implanting the objectives of government into dynamics of selfhood” (2, 27). To the citizens of spatially expanded empire, the museum presented a temporal spectacle that extended their

identity into the “pasts beyond memory” and established their superiority over the colonial subjects in the historical present.

Indeed, the institution of the museum only reproduced the socially pervasive and much broader spatio-temporal economy of imperial knowledge-power, a mode of ideologically fabricating a global cultural history that Anne McClintock has explained with the twin concepts of *panoptical time* and *anachronistic space* (36). In the wake of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, Social Darwinism carried the older Linnaean taxonomic project of ordering/classifying nature into the domain of cultural history. Panoptical time—“the image of global history consumed—at a glance, in a single spectacle from the point of privileged invisibility” (37)—plotted the multifarious cultures of contemporary non-European peoples into “a single, European [teleological] Ur-narrative” that placed “the European as the apogee of progress” (37). Parallel to it, anachronistic space represented non-European peoples as well as the marginalized in the “home country”—women and the working class—as “prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity” (40). Consequently, in imperial narratives a spatial journey into the colonies became a time travel into the prehistory of humanity while the journey back to Europe (re)enacted the evolutionary progress to “the apogee of Enlightenment in the European metropolis” (40). From the mapping of geography and nature to the mapping of peoples and cultures, the instrumental reason of Enlightenment was an essential part of the imperialist economy of power.⁴

Besides producing ideologically motivated knowledges about Self and Other, Enlightenment’s instrumental reason also produced, on the one hand, technologies that motored the two industrial revolutions, and, on the other, superior weapons with which European imperialism was able to colonize a large part of the world. In *The Tools of Empire: Technology*

and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century, Daniel Headrick argues that the spread of modern European imperialism and technological breakthroughs were closely related: imperialism provided the “motive,” technology the “tools”; technologies enabled imperialist ventures while imperialist demand spurred technological breakthroughs (9-12). Nineteenth century European imperialism became able to explore, conquer, and consolidate the territories it colonized, Headrick argues, because technologies such as gun boats and prophylactic quinine; rapid-firing rifles and machine guns; and steam ships, submarine telegraph cables, and colonial railroads were invented and mobilized in a timely manner for the imperialist cause. From early to mid nineteenth century gunboats enabled the exploration of the interiors of India and China, and the prophylactic quinine provided the antidote to malaria, making possible penetration into interiors of Africa that had become the grave of several early explorers. Similarly, in the late nineteenth century European imperialism won several swift victories over resistant peoples because, with their rapid-firing rifles and machine guns, imperialist armies fought most unequal battles against indigenous opponents equipped with less advanced weapons. What the killing machines had won for Europe were then consolidated by the building of efficient steamships, construction of the Suez Canal, the underwater cable wire, and the building of colonial railroads.

Technologies not only assisted imperialism as “tools”; they also helped propagate an ideology of the superiority of the European over the colonial Other, as Michael Adas shows in *Machines as the Measure of Men*. If Christianity was claimed as the basis of European man’s superiority over non-European peoples in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by the nineteenth century even missionaries would invoke Europe’s scientific-technological superiority to claim the superiority of Christian nations over others (31, 206). Eighteenth-century *philosophes* had already extolled the ancient glory of Indian and Chinese civilizations to find

fault with the stagnancy and degeneracy of contemporary India and China and to claim European superiority based on scientific knowledge and “mechanical arts” (79-108). In the nineteenth century, increases in scientific knowledge and technological breakthroughs combined with industrial revolution to provide the basis for the diffuse but powerful ideology of imperialism’s civilizing mission (203-5). The (Baconian) Enlightenment project to master nature with scientific knowledge had only accelerated in the nineteenth century when influential writers like August Comte and Julien Virey in France and Thomas Carlyle, Benjamin Kidd, and Herbert Spencer in England touted scientific-technological capacity to exploit nature for human ends as “irrefutable proof of the fundamentally progressive nature of human history” as well as “a key measure of [a society’s] advance toward civilized status” (213-16). Consequently, exploiting natural resources of the colonies, which the colonized were blamed to be wasting due to their indolence, was championed as the need, right, and duty of Europeans endowed with energy and capacity for “develop[ing] the resources of the globe” (220). Conversely, “railroads, steamships, and machines in general” were championed by European imperialists as “key agents . . . to revive ‘decadent’ civilizations in Asia and uplift the ‘savage’ peoples of Africa” (224).

If enlightenment proved instrumental in the knowledge-power nexus of imperialism, capitalism provided imperialism both the impetus and the means for the subjugation of colonies. Economic theories of imperialism have amply stressed the centrality of capitalism in its modern European career. In *Industry and Empire*, Eric Hobsbawm argues that while preconditions for the Industrial Revolution were already present in mid-eighteenth century Britain, the “spark” that “ignited” the revolution was the “stupendous” growth in foreign/export trade Britain enjoyed thanks to “a government willing to wage war and colonize for the benefit of British manufacturers” (18, 26-27, 31). As industrialization spread to other countries in Europe and to

the United States, the rapidly expanding flow of commerce between industrializing and industrialized countries and the rest of the world “rested on three things: in Europe, the rise of a market for overseas products for everyday use . . . and overseas the creation of economic systems for producing such goods (such as, for instance, slave-operated plantations) and the conquest of colonies designed to serve the economic advantage of their European owners” (30). Similarly, if the second phase of (Euro-U.S.) industrialization saw a rapid and sustained growth from the 1840s to 1873, it was because Britain and the newly industrializing nations collectively profited from

the twin process of industrialization in the ‘advanced’ countries and economic opening-up of the undeveloped areas, which transformed the world in these mid-Victorian decades, turning Germany and the USA into major industrial economies soon to be comparable to the British, opening areas like the North American prairies, the South America pampas, the South Russian steppes to export agriculture, breaking down with flotillas of warships the resistance of China and Japan to foreign trade, laying the foundations of tropical and subtropical economies based on the export of mines and agrarian products. (93)

On the one hand, British “capital goods” industries based on coal, iron, and steel found markets in industrializing countries and the accumulated capital found profitable investment abroad; on the other, colonized or semi-colonized territories were exploited as sources of raw materials as well as “consumer goods.” After the “Great Depression” from 1873, an increasingly fractious Euro-U.S. capitalism sought to save itself by more aggressive and competitive imperialist/colonialist ventures into Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In his *Imperialism: A Study*, J. A. Hobson argues that late-nineteenth-century European imperialism was a

consequence of investment and finance capital flying to the colonies for greater profit and needing state protection in its turn, and a strategy to provide a safe outlet to the domestic problems of the unemployed (46-55). In the scramble for Africa and Asia which “virtually recast the policy of all European nations . . . producing for popular consumption doctrines of national destiny and imperial missions of civilization,” varied forces of “patriotism, adventure, military enterprise, political ambition, and philanthropy” were appropriated for the profit of investors who could gain higher interest from their overseas investments (compared to manufacturing and trade) and of financiers who profited from speculating on those investments (12, 51-60). Similarly, in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* V. I. Lenin calls late nineteenth century European imperialism “the monopoly stage of capitalism,” making entry into the historical scene when (a) the competitive free-trade capitalism before 1870s gave way to the formation of monopolies, (b) increasing volumes of finance capital were exported to colonies for higher returns, and (c) the whole world was territorially divided among the greatest capitalist powers and controlled by international capitalist monopolies (88-89).

The role capitalism played in the history of imperialism is also foregrounded in the studies that show a structural relation between the economic growth of the imperial nations of Europe and the United States and the underdevelopment in the colonies. Dependency theorists, such as Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Samir Amin argue that capitalism found colonies (peripheral economies) richer than they are today and systemically underdeveloped them to develop the core economies. In *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, Frank argues that the development of capitalism as a world system from the sixteenth century onwards depended on an exploitative relation between the metropolitan center and peripheral satellite states, such that the surplus “expropriated” from satellite states was

“appropriated” to develop the economy of metropolitan states (3, 6-7). Like Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein also takes the capitalist world system as a basic frame of politico-economic analysis but explains the exploitative relation of “unequal exchange” through a triadic model of “core,” “semi-periphery,” and “periphery.” In *The Capitalist World-Economy*, Wallerstein argues that throughout the history of capitalist world-economy, core states that specialize in more advanced sectors of global economy form stronger states and with the help of the latter not only eliminate “non-market constraints” of world trade but also “create new constraints” for more profitable trade. In contrast, less advanced regions of capitalist world-economy have weaker states and are muscled into “unequal exchange” with those areas that enjoy stronger states (17-19). Like Wallerstein, Samir Amin argues that from its mercantile beginnings to the high imperialist phase capitalism benefitted core areas of the world economy at the expense of the peripheries that are subjected to unequal exchange and underdevelopment. In *Imperialism and Unequal Development*, Amin points out that from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth (mercantile phase of capitalism) the American and African peripheries were exploited for the “primitive accumulation” necessary for Industrial Revolution (103). In the nineteenth century, “the American, Asiatic, and Arab-Ottoman peripheries contributed to the acceleration of industrialization in the center by absorbing its manufactured goods (in exchange for agricultural products) and raising the profit rate” (103-4). The monopoly, imperialist capitalism from the last decades of the nineteenth century was characterized by immense flows of capital into the peripheries and increased unequal international division of labor (107). While the “social formation” at the center was reduced to the capitalist mode of production, at the periphery the noncapitalist forms of production continued with capitalist forms: in the capitalist relations of production workers in the periphery were paid less than at the center for identical productivity;

wages at the center were increased at the expense of the low wages in the periphery (110); surplus generated from noncapitalist modes was appropriated, bringing it under the “formal domination of capital” (108).

If the museum was the vaunted nineteenth century institution to display the triumphs of “historical sciences” and to interpellate the imperial public as the crown of (Eurocentric) world civilization, the “great exhibitions” and “*expositions universelles*” of Britain and France (and later others) from mid-nineteenth century onwards became public spectacles of the accomplishments of technology, capitalism, and colonial exploits. In *Ephemeral Vistas*, Paul Greenhalgh points out that while “displays of industrial and craft produce” had been organized in European countries and the United States from the end of the eighteenth century, the London Great Exhibition of 1851 became the first international event of its kind and marked the increased competitiveness among industrialized nations as well as Britain’s confidence in out-selling others (3-12). Divided into the categories of Manufactures, Machinery, Raw Materials, and Fine Arts, the Exhibition’s displays were a “lavishly orchestrated jamboree” of artifacts brought from all over the world. Their keynote, however, was “the awesome power of technologies,” which was amply exhibited in “the prefabricated building housing the exhibition, the steam engines, the manufactured products, the colossal objects transported to the site by machinery, the imperial produce won with commercial and military technology” (13). The Crystal Palace, which housed the exhibition and “cover[ed] almost nineteen acres,” was itself the greatest technological feat, a “symbol” that “earned comment and emulation around the world” (12). When the immense success of the British exhibition was followed by that of the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1855, the two set the model for other world exhibitions in Europe and United States, and, by the next century, all over the world (2, 13-15). Along with their increased

recurrence, the exhibitions gave rise to a “cohesive discourse” about their great benefits, most prominently “Peace amongst nations, Education (especially of the masses), Trade, and Progress” (17). While peace remained a hypocritical rallying cry or, at best, a fringe exercise of religious leaders, education “to improve the taste of the middle classes, to inform manufactures about mechanical improvements and to morally educate the working classes” became a major obsession of exhibition organizers and was lauded as justification for the lavish expenditure they needed (19). Indeed, under the influence of Saint-Simonian enthusiasts, the French developed the model of *expositions* “as a museum of global explanation,” the idea of the exhibit as an encyclopedic space, such that the exhibition also served the ideological/educative function of the museum (20). The “History of Labor” section of the 1867 Exposition, for example, displayed “[w]orks produced in different countries, from the most remote ages to the close of the eighteenth century”; “The History of Human Habitation” section of the 1889 Exhibition featured “a street of thirty-nine houses . . . each representing a culture and a stage in world housing from prehistoric times to the present” (20). Trade and the ideology of progress were more central in the rhetoric about great exhibitions. As Greenhalgh puts it succinctly, “Trade had created Western power; the exhibitions were no more than an expression of that power” (22). In the exhibition discourse, trade was made to be more than “relatively simple exchange of goods for profit”; it was given “metaphysical dimensions” and a “mystical side,” and was lauded as a benevolent force that could “unite peoples, solve the ills of the world and generate happiness” (22). With the displays of the triumphs of trade and technology, exhibitions represented glorification of the future, as the world was “seen as being in some kind of advancing flux, with a stable—and inevitable—future of plenty on the horizon” (23). The chief instrument of progress

was the machine, the fetish of the exhibitions, “consistently presented as the Messiah which would lead the human race to Promised Land” (24).

After discussing the roles enlightenment and capitalism played in the career of modern European imperialism, it is difficult to discuss separately the place of colonialism as the third constituent of imperialism. So central and structurally necessary was colonialism to both enlightenment and capitalism that many of the salient features of colonialism integral to the imperialist project have already been explained. We have seen, for example, how neither the cultural perspectivism of Enlightenment philosophes nor the Us vs. Them binary they established for later redeployment would be possible without the real or imagined voyages to the colonies. Similarly, when Linnaean typology of human races as well as post-Darwinian racist ideology of evolution and progress became popular in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they did so against the historical background of European expansionism and were mobilized to provide “justification” for alternatively exterminating and “civilizing” non-Europeans, both of which involved either settlements in or occupations of non-European lands. Likewise, colonies were vitally necessary to stage the spectacles of western technology, whether as “tools” for the violent project of empire or as ideological signs of the superiority of the west. On other hand, as the economic theories of capitalism discussed above make clear, colonialism was a necessary practice for European capitalism both during the stage of primitive accumulation from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century and during industrialization of Europe and the United States in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Similarly, when the collective economic growth of Euro-U.S. led to increased competition among newly industrialized countries and Britain, colonialist ventures in the last three decades of the nineteenth century became even more aggressive as necessary measures to invest surplus capital and secure resources for monopolies.

In addition, a study of colonialism brings out most clearly how exceedingly violent the imperialist project was, both physically, displacing and eradicating the colonized, and psychologically, denigrating the value of their culture and their self-identity. As Ania Loomba points out, colonialism imposed a “traumatic relationship” on the colonized, and settling communities on colonized spaces, whether large or small, “necessarily meant un-forming or re-forming the communities that existed there already” (8). Such ‘un-forming’ and ‘re-forming,’ which Robert Young, borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari, calls “decoding” and “recoding,” involved political, economic, and cultural structures of colonized societies (24). In his impassioned denunciation of European colonialism, Aimé Césaire points to the comprehensive violence of colonialism: rather than having a civilizing intent, colonialism meant “societies drained of their essence, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out” (original emphasis 21). Colonialism displaced indigenous forms of communities with alien administrative machinery that ruled the colonized through the buffer of a mediating class of feudal lords or empire-educated middle class among the indigenous people (Thiong’o 16-22). As Franz Fanon explains in *The Wretched of the Earth*, colonialism alienated indigenous people from their cultures by vilifying them as primitive and barbaric, and used it as a tool to subject them to an alien culture and thereby to rule them with greater expediency (210-11). To use Gayatri Spivak’s phrase, colonialism perpetrated “epistemic violence” on colonized societies by “educating” (sections of) the colonized in the language of empire and by gaining control over the representation of the cultures and knowledge systems of the colonized (“Can the Subaltern Speak?” 281-82). Similarly, colonialism imposed an alien mode of economy, capitalism, which industrialized the indigenous societies only very selectively and articulated it with indigenous

non-capitalist modes of economy because doing so was more expedient for greater accumulation of surplus. Colonialism administered the disruption of indigenous economies so as to subject the latter to unequal exchange with metropolitan economies.

It has been customary to distinguish colonialism from imperialism, often to the extent of saying that colonialism is not necessarily a part of imperialism, or even that colonialism is opposed to imperialism. Hobson argues that European colonial settlements before the late nineteenth century were extensions of nationalism into other, non-European territories, and hence are different from imperialism, which despite nationalist pretence, means violent control by a few over many culturally different people (6-11). Robert Young contends that European colonial settlements in America, Asia, and Africa before the nineteenth century did not occur as part of a coherent state policy but rather as “a haphazard product of commercial interests and group settlements” (23). But as Young himself points out, by the eighteenth century many of the wars between European countries were fought in colonial territories “with the purpose of acquiring the riches of each other’s colonies” (23). Moreover, the “systematic trading blocs” formed through the importation of raw materials and food stuffs from colonies and the export of British manufactures into them needed state “supervision” (23). Even during the nineteenth century, the informal empire of Britain maintained an imperialist world system from which industrializing countries of Europe and the United States benefitted collectively at the expense of the colonized, who were exploited for raw materials and food stuffs. Furthermore, from early migrations motivated by the need/desire to flee from religious persecution to the later exportation of undesirable or unprofitable sections of imperial population, colonialism was used as a means to export the domestic problems of the imperial center. A related distinction scholars often make is between settler colonialism and exploitative colonialism, European settlements in large

numbers in the colonized territories and subjection of the colonized through a smaller number of imperial military personnel and administrators. However, even settler colonialism involved displacement and, often, extermination of indigenous people, and the settlements were linked to an imperialist world-system that put the settler colonials in the intermediate category of the exploiter as well as exploited. Thus, a more productive and historically accurate way of thinking colonialism would be considering it as part of the imperialist project, continuing from the sixteenth century and not only from the late nineteenth century. Loomba suggests such a model when she proposes a spatial model of relationship between colonialism and imperialism: Imperialism occurs as a state policy at the metropolitan center and moves out to colonial territories, while colonialism is a practice that is done in the colonies and connects it to the metropolitan center for the latter's benefit (11-12).

3) The Sublime

From Longinus's theory of the first century A. D. to various postmodern versions, the sublime has been conceived as a figure of excess, a transcendent or quasi-transcendent experience, an overwhelming Other that deeply unsettles the experiencing human subject. The source of this extraordinary experience has been variously located in the terrifying or monumental scenes of nature, in the urban landscape erected by mind-numbing possibilities of technology, in the power of the Almighty God or of the human mind that holds the phenomenal world yet transcends it, in the insuperable "monstrous" Other seen outwardly in "monstrous" savages and barbarians or inwardly deep in one's unconscious, in the apocalyptically destructive power of nuclear bombs, and in the phallic, astronomical marvels of spaceships shooting to the stars. The sublime has also been understood ambivalently as an experience of self-ennoblement or of self-shattering or momentary self-loss, albeit as a preamble for hyper-self-aggrandizement.

In what follows, this section first discusses some salient theorizations of the sublime from Longinus to the present, then argues that the aesthetic of the sublime takes an imperialist turn from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, transcending its narrowly artistic use and expressing the euphoria as well as anxieties about the colossal changes brought about by sciences, technology, and capitalism.

Longinus defines sublimity as “a kind of eminence or excellence of discourse,” which leaves the reader/audience “elevated and exalted” by causing in them a “combination of wonder and astonishment” (138-39). According to him, a poet or orator could produce a sublime discourse if he combined “the power to conceive great thoughts” with the ability to evoke “strong and inspired emotion,” and exploited the resources of language such as “figures of thought and figures of speech, “noble diction,” and “dignified and elevated word arrangement” (140). The affective power of sublimity is “superior to the merely persuasive and pleasant” because as it fills us “with joy and pride, we come to believe we have created what we have only heard” (139).

After Nicolas Boileau’s 1674 French translation, Longinus’s reflections on the sublime became a key text in eighteenth century European criticism and inspired other attempts at theorizing the sublime, the most influential of which were Edmund Burke’s and Immanuel Kant’s. Burke’s empiricist aesthetics differentiates the sublime from the beautiful on the basis of the human body’s propensity toward pain vs. pleasure and the instincts of self-preservation vs. those of societal affiliations/affections. For Burke anything that “excite[s] the ideas of pain, and danger . . . whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime” (39). While beauty turns on pleasure and the societal instincts, the sublime excites pain and the instinct for self-preservation. Terror or its

analogous forms, when they are not physically too pressing to threaten the subject with real destruction, become “productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling,” which is most characteristically “astonishment”—“that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror”—but can also be “admiration,” “reverence” and “respect” (39-40, 57). Burke presents a long list of characteristics of objective phenomena, which by their sheer presence can effect the subjective response of delightful terror/pain of the sublime: obscurity, power, privation—vacuity, darkness, solitude, silence, vastness, infinity, succession and uniformity, magnitude in building, difficulty, light and color. As Terry Eagleton argues, Burke’s aesthetics relies on a social theory: beauty is the feminine principle of social reproduction (based on the passions of imitation and sympathy), the sublime is the masculine principle of ambition and forward progress (53-57). Concerning why experiences of pain and terror become delightful in the sublime experience, Burke argues that continuous pleasure and comfort turns a mind and a society toward lassitude and degeneration; the shock of pain provided in the sublime experiences works as an exercise of the finer faculties just as ambition works as an antidote to social lethargy. For Burke, the power embodied in the social institution of “kings and commanders” is productive of sublime experience just as God’s power seeming to annihilate the devotee is exemplarily sublime (67-68).

Burke’s treatise on the sublime greatly influenced that of Kant, who translated Burke’s empiricist aesthetics into an idealist-rationalist one. Like Burke, Kant associates beauty with form (something graspable by the imagination simultaneously) and pleasure, and the sublime with the formless and the combination of pain and pleasure (Kant does not insist on the difference between pleasure and delight). Kant translates Burke’s stunning varieties of the sublime into two categories: the mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime. The

mathematically sublime is induced by objects of exceeding magnitude—for example, “shapeless mountain masses piled on one another in wild disarray” or “nebulous stars” in the Milky Way—objects which are so vast that the faculty of imagination is unable to unite its apprehensions of the object in a simultaneous vision (107-14). This experience of the failure of imagination is accompanied by a sudden check of the vital powers which gives the subject the feeling of pain. However, the failure of imagination (a relatively lower faculty in the Kantian schema of human faculties) triggers the assertion of the higher faculty of reason; reason’s power of conceiving is so profound and absolute that no magnitude in the external world can ever be a match to it. With this intimation (albeit negative) of the higher power of reason the momentary stoppage of the vital energies are released into an euphoric pleasure, thereby transmuting the crisis of the subject (overwhelmed by the magnitude of the object) into a performance of transcendence (114-17).

The dynamically sublime is induced by the exceeding power of nature—exhibited in things such as “bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky and moving about accompanied by lightning and thunderclaps, volcanoes with all their destructive power . . .”—which threatens to annihilate the subject totally (120). However, if the seemingly insuperable might of nature is experienced/observed from relative safety (so that as Burke pointed out, the idea of danger is present not the reality), the simulated annihilation of the subject in the as-if mode is followed by the transcendent indomitableness of the subject (119-21). The same dynamic of momentary check and subsequent flow of vital powers and the experience of pain followed by pleasure (the empiricist aspect of Kant’s incorporative schema) occur with the dynamically sublime also.

In spite of the diversity in their conceptualizations of the sublime, what Longinus, Burke, and Kant seem to agree upon is the peculiar compensatory economy of the sublime: the subject

becomes overwhelmed by the sublime experience and loses its everyday self only to regain it in a recharged, aggrandized form. In his structuralist and psychoanalytic reading of (the theories of) the sublime, Thomas Weiskel in *The Romantic Sublime* attends to the complexity and ambivalence of the experience of the sublime. Aiming for “a structure beneath the vast epiphenomena of the sublime,” including the rhetorical and the natural sublime (in texts and in nature), Weiskel identifies “three phases or economic states” constituting the sublime moment (11, 23). The “habitual” and “harmonious” relation between mind with object existing in “the state of normal perception or comprehension” is radically ruptured when first either mind or object, “then both” are “suddenly in excess” and the “disconcerting disproportion” produces “the affective correlative” of surprise or astonishment in the mind. The rupture is then followed by the restoration of “a fresh relation” between mind and the object “such that the very indeterminacy which erupted in phase two is taken as symbolizing the mind’s relation to a transcendent order” (23-24). Drawing upon Roman Jakobson’s explication of aphasia in terms of similarity disorder and contiguity disorder, Weiskel presents “a semiotic of the sublime” and identifies two modes of the sublime moment, the metaphorical and the metonymical. In the metaphorical sublime, the reader undergoes “the feeling . . . of *on and on*, of being lost” as an excess of signifiers momentarily breaks the “flow” of signification, which is resumed only after the missing signified is substituted with a metaphor (by the reader). What the first-order of signification fails to name as the signified—Weiskel explains, invoking Barthes—is provided by a second-order connotative system, which “subsumes the first-order system and cannot be derived from it.” In other words, the very absence of the signified “assumes the status of a signifier” and *connotes* a signified, such that “an ideological component necessarily enters the sublime moment.” By contrast, in the metonymical sublime, an excess of the signified over signifiers disrupts the

signification process, reducing it to “a state of absolute metaphor”; as readers, we are “caught up in a word (or any signifying segment) which seems to ‘contain’ so much that there is nothing we cannot ‘read into’ it.” The disrupted process of signification can resume in the metonymical sublime only when the excess of the signified or its all-consuming presence (or its metaphorical plenitude) is displaced along the syntagmatic chain of signifiers (25-30).

Weiskel also offers a psychological interpretation of the two modes of the sublime, showing the economy of loss and gain common to both. In the metaphorical sublime the excess of the signifiers over the signified or the object over the mind compels the mind (the ego) to undergo the experience of being completely overwhelmed or annihilated, which Weiskel likens to the threat of castration brought by the superego operative in Kantian reason or Burkean terror. In the reactive phase of resolution, the experience of terror/fear caused by the annihilating force is overcome by introjection of and subsequent identification with that force, which produces the effect of delight by virtue of ego’s identification with superego (105-06). In the metonymical sublime, by contrast, the excess of the signified over the signifier or of the mind over the object produces a moment of plenitude, which is momentary and so is likely to be lost. The “anxiety of deprivation” associated with the finitude of the experiencing subject as well as its experience sets off a play of memory and desire, whereby what has been experienced in the past (memory) and what is desired to be continued into the future (desire) is projected as an ideal ego or an objective “identity,” which is the sum-total of particular experiences and the particular experiencing subjects (137-52).⁵

In Weiskel’s elaboration, thus, recuperation of loss into gain occurs in both kinds of the sublime. Whether by introjecting and identifying with the annihilating force of the Other or constructing an ideal self out of several momentary/perishable selves, the subject loses the ego or

the finite self to gain the transcendent or quasi-transcendent being. But there is another way of conceptualizing the sublime wherein the shattering of the subject is irrevocable and no transcendence-in-recompense is possible. Such a conceptualization of the sublime—which is called the negative sublime in this study to contrast it from the triumphant, transcendent sublime, or the positive sublime—is presented by David B. Morris and Vijay Mishra apropos what they call “gothic sublimity” or “gothic sublime.” According to Morris, the Gothic sublimity occupies an important place between the “affective and pictorial” eighteenth-century sublime and the “hermeneutic and visionary” sublime of nineteenth-century Romanticism. The Gothic novel “poeticized” the prosaic genre of the (Richardsonian) novel by bringing into it an aesthetic (of the sublime)—and with it, “emotional intensities and narrative freedoms”—that had been hitherto limited to poetry and romance (301). The Gothic novel, moreover, revised the eighteenth-century sublime by transforming “figurative elements of the sublime style into principles of narrative structure,” such that “exaggeration” and “repetition”—the hallmarks of the sublime poetic style—became in the gothic novel narrative devices that included characterization and plot (302). Unlike the sublime aesthetics of the eighteenth-century and Romantic poetry, “the Gothic novel pursues a version of the sublime utterly without transcendence. It is a vertiginous and plunging—not a soaring—sublime, which takes us deep within rather than far beyond the human sphere” (306). Dismissing Burke’s account of the sublime for relying on “a narrow, mechanical account of bodily processes” and “ignor[ing] the tangled psychological and cultural dimensions of terror”; Morris draws upon Freud’s theory of repression, especially the concept of the uncanny, to argue that rather than “the Burkean catalogue of wild, exotic, and overpowering dangers,” or “something external, alien, or unknown,” the source of terror in the Gothic sublime is “something strangely familiar which

defeats our efforts to separate ourselves from it . . . [and compels us to face] a part of ourselves which we have denied and disowned, but which we can never entirely expunge or escape” (301, 307). Thus in Morris’s psychoanalytic exposition of the Gothic sublime, the threat of inundation of the ego by an insuperable inner force (unconscious) is not merely a staging for the consolidation of or transcendence into an aggrandized ego via its meeting with the superego. The unhooking of the subject in the Gothic sublime is irrevocable, and its source is internal, a disavowed part of the subject/self.

Like Morris, Vijay Mishra also presents a theory of the Gothic sublime which “challenges the received wisdom of the sublime” as the subject’s transcendence into a higher and grander (super) ego. The “sub” in the Gothic sublime, for Mishra, means not “up to” as in the Longinian or Kantian sublime but rather “*below* . . . the limit of one’s perception” (39). If the Kantian sublime is “a state of mind contemplating its own supersensible being” (33), the Gothic sublime—“for which the primacy of reason cannot be taken for granted”—names an experience in which the subject confronts absolute negativity (of death), which defies transcendence as well as representation (33, 36). Rather than “the triumph of reason” supposed in the Kantian sublime, the Gothic sublime is characterized by “the momentary lapse on the part of reason as it gives imagination total freedom,” and there is “no hope of self-transcendence available, as the subject simply dissolves into the pleasure principle, and, finally, death” (38). The Gothic sublime is “the voice from the crypt that questions the power of reason . . . and destabilizes the centrality of the ego in Kant’s formulation” (38). Drawing upon Freud’s theory of the mind on the one hand and the theory of the sublime as impossibility of representation and totalization in Lyotard, de Man, and Žižek, Mishra argues that the so-called (Burkean) objects of Gothic horror—“[t]he phantasmagoria of the Gothic sublime”—are the projection of (inner) psychic terror, of a subject

that has confronted the “abyss of heterogeneity” within itself, an abyss which is both psychological and linguistic because neither the subject nor the experience can be totalized (unlike in the Romantic sublime) (23, 38-39).

There are, however, still other studies of the sublime that have emphasized the aesthetic of the sublime as ideologically articulating and furthering the imperialism of the nineteenth century and after. In *Freedom's Empire* Laura Doyle shows how the seventeenth-century racist discourse of Anglo-Saxon identity as sublimely free people turned racist in imperialist-colonialist contexts of the later centuries.⁶ “More than any other literary mode,” Doyle argues, “in both Britain and the United States, the sublime came to be celebrated as liberty’s most rare and precious flowering—the highest expression of a free race” (79). The sublimity of Anglo-Saxon identity was constructed via the “violent encounter” with the Other (nature, other races), which became object(s) of “mastering introjections” by the imperial sublime self (79). In “Sublime Barbarians,” Doyle points out that Kant’s early work *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1763) not only genders European nations and races by differentially apportioning to them the aesthetics of the masculine sublime and feminine beautiful but also makes “global-imperial race distinctions” when Kant distinguishes the “Oriental” and the “savage races” from Europeans by rendering the former indifferent or vulgar in matters of aesthetics (333-34). Doyle argues that Kant’s emphasis on “intellectual excellences” and “sensitivity of soul” as constitutive of aesthetic experience parallels a shift in the Romantic aesthetic ideology, from the conception of the sublime as barbaric, Gothic identity, celebrated in the early Romanticism during the latter half of the eighteenth century, into the later Romantic, Wordsworthian sublime as introjection of and mastery over the barbaric other (333-34). In the context of the global colonial/imperial theater of the nineteenth century, such recoding of the

sublime gave it a narrative form of mastery which “form[s] the inscape of an emergent imperial self in willed confrontation with a vast world beyond its immediate perception yet over which it claims dominion. This self is a narrated self, a self in extension and transformation, a self born of violent colonization and then converted into colonizer” (337).

In his Ph. D. dissertation, “The Aesthetics of Adventure: Sublime Confrontation and the Making of Empire,” Andrew Libby shows how the aesthetics of the sublime infuses “the furious nineteenth century enthusiasm for empire and Pax Britannica” (3). Alongside the dominant “objectivist,” anti-aestheticist rhetoric of Victorian realism, Libby argues, there flourished the genre of adventure narratives that resorted to the sublime to “glorify the [British] protagonists’ fantastic dreams of territorial acquisition, wealth, and power” (3). Libby explains that in Victorian adventure narratives the seemingly threatening confrontation with savage landscapes and peoples gets transformed into the narrative of imperialist heroism which subjugates/contains the threatening savagery and instates itself as the sublime subject of empire. The heroes of adventure narratives “tame unexplored landscapes and wild natives and reconfigure the sublime from an index of native savagery to a mark of heroic achievement in the name of civilization and progress” (3). In non-fiction travel narratives such as David Livingstone’s *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, Henry Morton Stanley’s *How I Found Livingstone*, and Sir Richard Burton’s *Lake Regions of Central Africa* as well as in adventure fiction such as R. M. Ballantyne’s *Coral Island* and G. A. Henty’s *The Young Colonists*, British male heroes make hazardous journeys into “unexplored” territories, confront “aged witch-doctors, savage cannibals, ferocious native warriors, wild animals, dark heathen temples, and gloomy jungles,” all of which textually function as “staged encounters” where the threat of “terror and suffering”

is transmuted into an “elevated sense of grandeur and power” of imperial heroes who tame savages/savagery (6-7).

The sublime was not only the ideology of the British empire; it was equally the ideology of the American “will to national grandeur” (Wilson 14). In *American Sublime*, Rob Wilson identifies the typical loss-gain structure of the sublime persisting in American culture from the Puritan era to the postmodern, nuclear age. As “a communal construct of self and national empowerment,” Wilson argues, the American sublime turned its “landscape of immensity and wildness,” its technology-transformed urban spaces, and its space programs and even nuclear power into icons of national power and glory, inviting the American subject “to experience the self as dread-and-wonder maker” of history (5-10). From the Puritan sublime and the natural sublime to the postmodern, technological, and nuclear sublimes, Wilson argues, “the will to grandeur of Euramerican self” transformed the overwhelming experiences of self-loss into opportunities to “accrue fresh sublimity” (11). The Puritan sublime coded the alienating force of the Indian wilderness into the “awe-stricken sublimity” and subsequently turned “the material landscape into a locus of spiritualized awe and self-empowerment” (72). The “erotic glue” of “Whitmanic” effusions amalgamated “the massiveness and alienating power of prairies or a Broadway scene” into a democratic, romantic sublime, conjuring up a united nation out of its multitudinous fragments (142). Against the background of commodified society, the modernist “anti-sublime” sought grandeur in the “spirit” of the poet and the formal edifice of poetry, and, as it replaced the natural sublime with “a *rhetorical sublime* of voice,” was nonetheless “[c]aught up in an ideology of capital and global power” (original emphasis 176-79). When the “props” of the sublime shifted from “natural mountains to urban megastructures” the postmodern sublime celebrated “the globally beneficent forces of American power” or the “vast source of American

infinite reified into power, ‘capital’,” even as the very forces of capital and technology threatened to nullify the beholding subject (197-201). Parallel to it, the space programs of NASA on the one hand and the nuclear complex at Los Alamos on the other offered the “technologically dwarfed” American subject a grand object of “wonder/terror” to identify with: the moon became “a new frontier of American Manifest Destiny to challenge the vastness of outer space”; the atomic bomb presented “a spectacle of cosmic energy attract[ive] . . . in its magnitude and release of the latent infinitude in nature” (246-52). Even though his focus on nation as his frame of analysis seems to make Wilson downplay American imperialism, his reading of the American sublime as ideological narrativizing of the forces of capital, technology, and the will to dominate/appropriate nature into America as “global power” point to the imperialist underpinning of the American sublime, as do his reminders about the “historical guilt” of the American “will to displace Native or contiguous cultures” as well as the use of “the terror and awe of technocratic domination” and “*intimidation*” of nuclear power to threaten other nations with American power (original emphasis 5-14, 244).

Indeed, if we think of imperialism as an historical articulation between forces of capitalism, colonialism, and the instrumental rationality of enlightenment, then it becomes eminently arguable that from the mid-nineteenth century onwards there developed a widely shared sense among Europeans that they were riding an epochal moment of history, a sense the aesthetic code of which can aptly be called the sublime. Often times it is supposed that the aesthetic of the sublime ended with the Romantics once the logic of capitalism pervaded society and the literary mode of the ascendant middle class, realism, became mainstream. Wilson, for example, notes that the sublime had already been become “a moribund aesthetic in England” when it was revived in the United States with the likes of Emerson and Whitman (5). Likewise,

Libby points out that the dominant literary practice of Victorian realism was anti-sublime (2). This reading of the history of the sublime, correct as it is within its limits, ignores two things. First, realism was not the only literary mode practiced in the nineteenth century; what Thomas Claeson calls “the other side of realism” ran parallel to realism. While realism, as Claeson points out, responded to the rising scientism negatively showing humanity subjected to mechanistic laws, anti-realism in science fiction responded to the fantastic aspects of the emergent technological age (3-9). What has been discussed above as the gothic sublime (theorized by David Morris and Vijay Mishra) also continued into the nineteenth century, especially in science fictional texts. Indeed, Patrick Brantlinger, along with Brian Aldiss, argues that science fiction is gothic in origin (30-31). Second, such a reading of the history of the sublime errs in conceiving the aesthetic in narrowly literary terms. While in the dominant literary mode of realism the sublime may have died out, as a wider European cultural self-understanding, the sublime went mainstream, even though, because of the conventional practice of limiting aesthetic terms to literature and arts, the word sublime was not frequently used to name that cultural self-understanding. Libby’s citation of John Ruskin to suggest that aesthetics, and with it the sublime, disappeared under the reign of capitalism in fact only indicates that aesthetics (of the sublime) had become a social-cultural category: “But your railroad mounds, vaster than the walls of Babylon; your railroad stations, vaster than the temple of Ephesus, and innumerable; your chimneys how much more mighty and costly than cathedral spires! your harbor piers; your warehouses; your exchanges!—all these are built to your great Goddess of ‘Getting-on’” (qtd. in Libby 2; “Traffic” 81). Ruskin was being satirical, of course—he was speaking to businessmen at the Exchange of Bradford—but the vastness and might of the monuments of “progress” he mentions are clearly indicative of the sublime, the sublime as a popular-cultural aesthetic.

Indeed, if nature and old forms of architecture no longer remained the dominant passions of the capitalist age, then machinery and machine-produced edifices (showcased in the “great exhibitions,” for example) were imbued with the aesthetic of the sublime, and were used to differentiate Europeans from the non-European colonized peoples.

That the profit-driven system of capitalism is driven by the fantasy of the sublime has been brilliantly elaborated by Terry Eagleton in *Ideology of the Aesthetic*. As the sensuous denied in the capitalist society is projected onto the phantasmic realm of money and commodity, Eagleton argues, the “unstoppable metonymic chain” of the sublime capital offers the capitalist a virtual plane of identification and vicarious satisfaction (212). Thanks to the universality of exchange, the capitalist sublime “resides in the restless, overweening movement of capitalism itself, its relentless dissolution of forms and commingling of identities, its confounding of all specific qualities into one indeterminate, purely quantitative process” (212). The collective fantasy of the capitalist sublime is borne out by historical studies of capitalism also. As the economic boom of the second phase of industrial revolution led to the massive accumulation of capital, Eric Hobsbawm points out, the mid-nineteenth century investor class was so excited about the progress the railways symbolized that they turned techno-romantics and invested in railway construction in Britain and elsewhere far in excess of its profitability (91). The massive changes that the second phase of industrial revolution was bringing in European societies gave Europeans, not only the industrialists, a sense that they were riding an unprecedented, monumental epoch of history. Whether they were for it or against it, Raymond Williams writes in *The Long Revolution*, the intellectuals of mid-nineteenth century England were aware that they were in the midst of massive changes and commonly shared “the excitement of this extraordinary release of man's powers” (71). Carlyle, critical as he was of the condition of the working class

and the loss of older social structures, conceived the new technological age in sublime terms: “We can remove mountains, and make seas our smooth highway; nothing can resist us. We war with rude Nature; and by our resistless engines, come off always victorious, and loaded with spoils” (317). Carlyle’s imaging of the machine with the sublime aesthetic was repeated by Lord Lytton, who lauded mechanical transformation of natural resources into sources of mechanical power, calling it the “Poetry of Nature herself”; for him the machines that exploited nature’s resources and the humans who engineered those machines were the proof of the “sublime faculties which separated man from brute creatures” (qtd. in Adas 214). Similarly, even as they wanted to see capitalism superseded by communism, in *Manifesto of the Communist Party* Marx and Engels went euphoric about the scale of changes the capitalist or bourgeois revolution brought into the world. The exceeding dynamism and colossal magnitude they attribute to capitalism—“All that is solid melts into the air . . .” (476); “it creates a world after its own image” (477)—invoke the aesthetic of the sublime. Moreover, that the sublime sense of what capitalism represented was not limited to Britain, the first country to industrialize its production, but was a widely shared Euro-American understanding, is evident from the immense popularity of the great exhibitions in Europe and America. According to Greenhalgh, the idea of an international exhibition of crafts and manufactures was first thought by the French, who were anxious that they were being left behind by Britain, and after the British success, was adopted by other imperial countries (10-15). The sublime force of capitalism (and the globally beneficent power of “free trade”) fed into the ideology of progress that was mobilized for colonialist/imperialist justification.

It may appear counterintuitive that Enlightenment instrumental rationality would have anything aesthetic about it, let alone the aesthetic of sublime. But whether it is the political-social

philosophies or the natural sciences or the marvels of technology, the legacy of Enlightenment spurred a sublime sense of European self-identity about its place in history. D. G. Charlton writes that following the decline of Christianity in nineteenth century Europe, there arose many “secular religions,” grand, epoch-transforming, monumental projects built around “cults” of science, social philosophies, historicism and the ideology of progress (2-7). Although Charlton’s focus is France, the Euro-American scale of such sublime projects is clear through his discussion of the intellectual traffic between France, Britain, and Germany, and of the United States as the site of utopian projects dreamt up in Europe. The “historical sciences” of geology, archaeology, anthropology etc., as we have discussed above with Tony Bennett and Anne McClintock, suddenly opened up a millennia of “pasts beyond memory”—far longer than the Biblical time span of four thousand years, and made European subjects inheritors of an identity of layered archeological depth whereas the historically contemporary non-European peoples were shelved into the distant past as historical remnants of European past. This whole new conception of the long *duree* of time/history and perception of racial relations which McClintock aptly names panoptical time and anachronistic space is coded with the aesthetic of the sublime due to its sheer spatio-temporal magnitude: thanks to their historical sciences Europeans became subjects of the entire globe and its entire history. So, when Europeans and Americans flocked into the proliferating museums, they acted out, in the sense Louis Althusser explains the works of ideology,⁷ their sublime identity as the culmination of historical process and masters of present history.

The sublime fantasy underlying the enlightenment project is also visible in the spectacles of technology and the popular enthusiasm the latter engendered. As Leo Marx argues in *The Machine in the Garden*, by the mid-nineteenth century technology had come to represent the

collective euphoria of people about the mechanical age. According to “the rhetoric of the technological sublime,” recent triumphs in technology such as the steamboat and the railways were collectively invested as symbols of man’s limitless control over nature, the explosive progress of human history, and the awe-inspiring power of the human mind, especially the mind of the inventor-poet (194-203). As David E. Nye shows in *American Technological Sublime*, the rhetoric of awe and wonder about technology functioned in the United States as the ideological glue that cemented a collective American identity out of the nation’s diverse and warring interest groups (“Introduction” xiii-xiv). Examples cited above of the enthusiastic responses to the sublimity of the capitalist age—those of Carlyle, Lord Lytton, and Marx and Engels—also exhibit the overwhelming excitement about technology in the nineteenth century. In addition, as Greenhalgh’s study of the “great exhibitions” makes clear, enthusiasm for technology was a widespread phenomenon in the second half of the nineteenth century, with exhibitions giving the imperial citizenry a sublime self-identity as they saw the monuments of *their* technological triumphs compared to the primitiveness of other cultures, which were displayed as proofs of imperial possession and progress.

Again, colonialism was the setting against which the sublime fantasies about capitalism, technology and social/natural sciences flourished. The identity of Europeans as the most contemporary subject of millennia old (pre)history would not make sense without the narrative that plotted the colonized as savages and primitives. Similarly, when the virtues of European capitalism and free-trade were construed as a sublime universal boon, it was to “entitle” Euro-Americans to displace indigenous economic forms and force “unequal exchange” upon them. Likewise, the archival excess of imperial knowledge-production is unthinkable without the colonies and the semi-colonies, turned into objects of obsessive imperial geographic and

ethnographic mappings. Moreover, the sublime spectacle of European technology was used in the colonial theater to stun the colonized into subjugation as well as to assert the power of European technological mastery over the colonized. For example, in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the overwhelming threat of African wilderness and its natives, indistinguishable from that wilderness, is dispelled by the magical terror of the steam whistle that silences the natives. Similarly, in Rudyard Kipling's "The Bridge-Builders," the sublime River Ganges is brought under the power of British engineering, thereby embodying the empire as the sublime force of overpowering.

The sublime in this study is thus used as a widely shared cultural-ideological imperialist self-understanding, an understanding about imperial Europe's role in history as bearer of the most advanced civilization, as the wielder of spectacular technologies, and as the master of the world spatially extended on the planetary scale and temporally stretching back to the distant "pasts beyond memory." Scientific-technological advances, capitalist transformation of the world into a global economy, and colonialist adventures of civilizing ambitions—all, as borne out by the discussion above, coalesced from around the mid-nineteenth century producing a fantastic "idea" of the imperial European subject as the sublime subject of world history, an idea which, as Marlow's invocation of it in *Heart of Darkness* exemplifies,⁸ was sustained against overwhelming evidence to the contrary because the sublimity of the imperialist idea was willed by a collective fantasy. This study, however, also attends to the ambivalence of the sublime articulating the contradictions of imperialist ideology and the crises of imperialist self-identity, and uses the terms "positive sublime" and "negative sublime" to differentiate the triumphant, transcendent sublime of imperialist self-aggrandizement from the "gothic" sublimity of imperialist self-humbling and self-splintering before the uncontainable other, whether projected

onto the racialized colonial peoples or confronted beneath the armor of the imperial self. Mindful as this study is of the radically democratizing possibilities of some post-structuralist theories of the sublime—such as those of Lyotard, Shapiro, and Yaeger⁹—it does not deploy the sublime in the radically democratizing sense because the object of study for this dissertation is imperialist discourse, which, even when it falters and turns its gaze upon itself in the spirit of self-critique is not able to wholly adopt the position of the Other, let alone embrace radically fragmented and mobile self-structuring.

4) Science Fiction, Imperialism, and the Sublime

Science fiction scholars have noted the centrality of the history of European imperialism in the emergence of the genre. In “Science Fiction and Empire,” Istvan Csicsery-Ronay calls science fiction “an expression of the political-cultural transformation that originated in European imperialism and was inspired by the ideal of a single technological empire” (231). Similarly, in *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*, John Rieder points to the consensus among most SF scholars regarding the symbiotic relation of imperialism and science fiction: texts often considered to constitute the pre-history of SF, such as Thomas More’s *Utopia*, Cyrano de Bergerac’s *Comical History*, and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, are woven of the stuff of European encounters with the non-European world and peoples (1-2). Furthermore, according to a majority of SF scholars, the last three decades of nineteenth century, the period of intense imperialist competition in Europe, is also the period of the genre’s emergence (2-3). When a sizable reading audience for science fiction—“a pre-dominantly middle-class audience with a strong disposition towards technical occupations”—appeared in the last decades of the nineteenth century, thanks largely to the demand for labor with some scientific know-how during the second phase of industrial revolution; the stories of “civilization and savagery” and

“modernity and its past” that they read were displacements of “the corrosive effects of capitalist social relations on the traditional cultures of colonized populations and territories,” informed/saturated as they were with “ideological fantasies” of the racial superiority of the White Man and his burden to civilize the non-European peoples rendered prehistoric remnants (26-32). In her more textualist rather than historicizing study, *Science Fiction and Empire*, Patricia Kerslake considers “empire and its abuses” constituting “one of the most important and most revealing foundations of SF” (1). By “look[ing] at and beyond the constructs of history,” Kerslake finds in science fiction’s thought experiments critical reflections of “the imperialism of our past” as well as “the potential neo-empires of our future” (3). Thus, as Rieder puts it, the question is not “whether” but “precisely how and to what extent” science fiction narratives engage with the history of colonialism and imperialism (*Colonialism* 3). Moreover, if science fiction emerges in the nineteenth century, as Freedman argues, coevally with the historical novel, both involving the “dialectic of historical identity and historical difference,” then it follows that science fiction must engage deeply with imperialism because the latter was the most dominant force in “the same historical matrix” (50).

Science fiction scholars have also noted the primacy of the aesthetic of the sublime in the genre’s emergence as well as its abiding appeal. Claiming the genre to be “cast in Gothic or post-Gothic mould,” Brian Aldiss argues that “terror, mystery, and that delightful horror which Burke connected with the sublime” form a defining part of science fiction’s generic identity from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* to contemporary narratives (3-20). When SF writers choose “brooding landscapes, isolated castles, dismal towns, and mysterious alien figures” as settings of their fictional world, they bring to their fictions “the principle of horrid revelation” or the sublime, as the Gothic writers did (19). According to Bart Thurber, from the Victorians onwards the

European literary-cultural imagination began to perceive science and technology in sublime terms, and the technological sublime played a formative role in the development of science fiction (214-15). Similarly, following from his basic premise of science fiction as “a literature of technologically saturated societies,” Roger Luckhurst argues that SF’s “antithetic approaches to technology” range from the utopian, positive sublime of technological triumph to the Gothic, negative sublime of terrors of technology. Science fiction becomes “a genre of sublime, superhuman, faster-than-light feats” when technology is taken to be “an unproblematic positive force, serving as the principal (or only) determining agent for progress”; alternatively, science fiction can resemble “horror or Gothic writing” when it renders the effects of technology “profoundly traumatic” and represents humanity “pierced or wounded by invasive technologies that subvert, enslave, or ultimately destroy” (3-5).¹⁰

While the history of imperialism and the aesthetics of the sublime have, thus, been identified as significant constituents of science fiction as a genre, the related claim for sublimity in science fiction as the aesthetic code for imperialist ideologies is yet to be made. If the history and ideologies of imperialism provide SF raw materials to weave into narrative forms and if the sublime fantasy of the grandiose constitutes the aesthetic code for imperialist ideologies of progress and prowess, then it is reasonable to suppose that science fictional narratives reproduce the sublime fantasy of imperialism, whether such reproduction occurs in the mode of relatively uncritical reflection or in that of satirical critique. Fantasmic constructions of imperialist self-identity are, however, equally ridden with anxieties and ambivalence: ethnological narratives of the other, ideologies of scientific and technological progress, capitalistic transformation of societies, etc., produce not only triumphant narratives of European self-identity but also, frequently, alarms and fears about the changes they effect. Such positive and negative

evaluations of the imperialist project result in two kinds of sublime in science fictional narratives: a triumphant self-celebratory positive sublime and an anxious, fearful, self-annihilating sublime. The contrary evaluations of imperialism in SF narratives inevitably follow from contrary understandings of the historical forces of the enlightenment project, capitalism, and colonialism, while these understandings are themselves conditioned by historical moments (such as economic boom or recession, wars, etc.), national or regional differences (European anxiety regarding the two world wars vs. American optimism during the same time), and individual and group perceptions (of those who decried mechanism, such as Carlyle and Ruskin, and those who celebrated it). In what follows, this section reviews some science fictional representations of imperialism, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) to Karel Čapek's *War with the Newts* (1936), focusing on their celebratory as well as critical attitudes to each of the three constituent forces of modern European imperialism: the Enlightenment project, capitalism, and colonialism. The discussion will also emphasize how SF writers' representations of enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism as well as their aesthetic choices of the positive or the negative sublime are conditioned by the three aforementioned factors: historical moments, national or regional differences, and individual and group perceptions.

Let us begin with science fictional representations of the Enlightenment project. Ever since the Enlightenment philosophes' interest in the peoples and cultures of non-European peoples, imperialist/colonialist narratives of the other vacillated between setting up the other as a foil to construct an aggrandized European identity and, intentionally or unintentionally, letting the perspective of the other question the certainties of the imperial self. While eighteenth-century accounts of other cultures ultimately led to claims about European superiority, there were also moments when other cultures and peoples were regarded as superior, whether dubiously as

noble savages or as great ancient civilizations albeit stagnant or declining (Adas 79-108; Wolff 9-16) . The eighteenth-century perception of the multiplicity of cultures was transformed in the nineteenth century into the universalist rhetoric of civilization, which spatio-temporally mapped world's cultures and peoples along savage, barbaric, civilized teleology, enshrining Europeans at the apex of history that stretched back to "pasts beyond memory." However, nostalgia for what the march of western modernity had delegitimized often produced fantasies of being other-than-the-European-self, while there were also moments when writers imagined the monstrous Other that challenged Victorian morphology, "disrupting the very order of things and even threatening to bring about the end of Empire" (Richards 49). The discursive economy of imperialist ideology contrarily places non-European people as the other utterly different from the European self and yet as part of the European self-narrative exemplifying its prehistoric savage ancestor. Science fictional narratives show that such ambivalent discursive economy often breaks down when the othered self is revealed to be the very part of European self-identity that is disavowed and projected onto the other.

As a consequence of colonialism's "disturbance of ethnocentrism" (Rieder, *Colonialism* 2), science fiction narratives range from representing the non-European other (at times displaced as extraterrestrial) as a foil for erecting a positively sublime identity for European self, to seeing in the other an insuperable, overwhelming force/magnitude the negative sublimity of which dwarfs European (male) ego and its will to dominate/map the other. The "extraordinary voyages" of Jules Verne provide illustrative examples of the first kind. At a time when science replaced religion as a dominant worldview and inculcation of the public into scientific ways became imperative, Verne looks back to the "scientific revolution" of the past, technological inventions of the present, and the technological triumphs anticipated in the future and churns out travel-

cum-adventure narratives that feature scientist-engineer male heroes accomplishing sublime triumphs, on, inside, and above the surface of the earth. While European male heroes are valorized as bearers of the positive sublimity of European science and technology, non-European peoples are frequently represented as savages and barbarians. Sometimes the latter function as docile helping hands, assisting the imperial adventurers on their scientific and technological missions but unable to comprehend the sublime significance of those adventures. In *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, the Icelandic man who guides the uncle and his nephew into the entrails of earth is interested in timely payment of money only, not in the romance of their scientific adventure; in *The Mighty Orinoco*, the natives of America faithfully assist European geographers and botanists but are unappreciative of the thrills of botany and geography; in *The Mysterious Island*, the black servant of the hero-engineer docilely serves his master but does not understand the latter's scientific know-how. At other times Verne represents non-Europeans as not only ignorant and incapable of understanding the magic of western science and technology but positively hostile to the project of western modernity. In *Five Weeks in a Balloon* African Arabs and blacks either revere the hero-geographer and his companions or attack them viciously as defilers of their sacred space; in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* aborigines/natives gawk at and naively attack Nemo's mighty Nautilus; in *The Invasion of the Sea*, a wandering tribe of Africans wages war on the agents of western civilization to oppose the (commercially driven) project of constructing a canal to link the African Sahara with the Mediterranean. The non-European racial other in Verne's "extraordinary voyages" thus functions as necessary foil to foreground the scientifico-technological sublimity of European male heroes. Even the sublimely revolutionary Captain Nemo, who sides with the cause of the colonized in *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, is reminded, in *The Mysterious Island*, by the American engineer-hero

that his anti-imperialist ventures are futile attempts against the inevitable march of Western modernity and progress.

On the other hand, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* can be read as an example of the alternative possibility of representing the non-European other as an overwhelmingly non-conquerable "monster," a negatively sublime other that threatens the foundations of European self-identity. Writing more than four decades before Verne's "extraordinary voyages" began publication and sharing the Romantic anxieties about the effects of technology, Shelley uses the monster figure to question the presumptions of enlightenment, both its faith in the power of science and technology and its claim to superior civilization. As a product of Victor Frankenstein's assiduous scientific labor, the "monster" is intended by its creator as a positively sublime triumph of modern science and its liberation from the pseudo-science of alchemy, but once loose in the world the creature becomes the symbol for the other that cannot be assimilated into the social structure that has no place for it. When he overhears Safie, the daughter of a Christian Arab mother and Turkish Muslim father, being inculcated into Christian-European identity through Volney's *Ruins of Empires*—which teaches among other things about "the slothful Asiatics" and "the stupendous genius and mental activity of the Grecians"—the monster, like Safie, weeps "over the hapless fate of [America's] original inhabitants" (108-09). However, unlike Safie whom her Christian White lover, Felix rescues from the bondage of Islamic femininity imposed by her stereotypically deceitful and ungrateful father, the monster cannot be incorporated into the narrative of European self-aggrandizement and remains, as Gayatri Spivak puts it, "the radically other [who] cannot be selfed" (*A Critique* 138). Set against the natural sublime of the Alps and the Arctic, Frankenstein's "unnatural" monster functions as the

monstrous, gothic sublime that denies European self-narrative the opportunity of overcoming the other as a means of enacting self-heroism.

Sometimes, as is the case with H. G. Wells, the same writer may alternatively present the Enlightenment project as a positively sublime march of global progress and as an internally contradictory and hollow ideology humbled before the negative sublimity of the terror it unleashes from within itself and/or faces in the other. Written during the last decade of the nineteenth century when imperialism was at its peak but the hollowness of imperialist ideology was increasingly more evident (Brantlinger 236), Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* resorts to Swiftian satire to expose the savagery underneath the pretence of European civilization. What its protagonist, Dr. Moreau, intends as a positively sublime project of scientific triumph (of vivisection) breeds strange monsters, hybrid beasts of spliced species-forms, which cannot be mapped into any biological classificatory schema. Moreau begins his project to create the most rational creature but ends up confronting the flimsiness of civilization, while the novella's narrator, Mr Prendick, is unhinged from his epistemological givens and wonders at the lurking barbarity of his imperial brethren in London. Meant to be triumphs of science, Moreau's creatures become the mirror that shows the barbarity within civilized selves. In contrast, published in the first decade of the next century, when Wells, dissatisfied with the tremendous social waste of competitive imperialisms, began espousing the Euro-American project of global hegemony, *A Modern Utopia* upholds a positively sublime picture of technologically transformed global society rationally administered by the enlightened professional ruling elite, the Samurai. What is evidently maximization of enlightenment's instrumental rationality in the management of global population and appropriation of non-European cultures as supplements to European modernity is lauded in Wells's utopian fantasy as the positively sublime march of

progress supposedly beneficial to all, except the recalcitrant resisters who are happily let to perish.

The European imperialist sense of superiority over other cultures was based to a great extent on technological progress. However, rapid transformation of European societies by technologies and technology's instrumental rationality gave rise as much to apocalyptic fears as to millennial triumphs. If collective euphoria about technological triumphs such as the railways and steamships produced European self-perception in positively sublime terms, there were also those, people like Carlyle and Ruskin, who had grave misgivings about the increasing mechanization and instrumentalization of social life. As his 1829 essay "Signs of the Times" reveals, however much Carlyle was thrilled with the sublime triumphs of technological power, he equally bemoaned, with a perception that anticipates that of Horkheimer and Adorno, how mechanization had pervaded all social-cultural aspects of industrializing Britain. Influenced by Carlyle in no small measure, Ruskin did not see any aesthetic triumphs in architectural constructions such as the Crystal Palace and derided the industrial/commercial architectures of the late nineteenth century (81). With unprecedented destruction during the First World War, technology became inextricably linked to mass deaths, and while there remained some inveterate champions of technology who saw wars as results of political insanity, there were also many others who looked back to the past with longing and withdrew into art and morality as sanctuaries from the ravages of technological progress (Green, *Science* 4). In science fictional texts, such ambivalence about technology is translated into a differential aesthetic of the sublime, such that technology and instrumental rationality are sometimes valorized as positively sublime projects of continuous social progress as well as the only means out of the confusion of political

mismanagement (Clareson 18-21) and at other times as traumatic and negatively sublime forces of death and destruction, turning civilization into savagery.

An interesting case of the ambivalent representation of technology is provided by Jules Verne's science fictional narratives. Quite fittingly for an age that saw technology herald and revolutionize industrial production and regarded possession of superior technology as the sign of advanced civilization, Verne represents in positively sublime terms scientific adventures/adventurers of the recent past or anticipatory technological triumphs. In *Around the World in Eighty Days* Verne celebrates the power of western locomotive technologies, such as steamships and railways, to dramatically increase the speed of traveling around the world. In the shape of the obsessively time-bound protagonist Philius Fogg, time itself becomes the novel's sublime hero, allegorizing simultaneously the work-time rhythm of capitalism and the spatial-victory-through-victory-over-time of imperialism. In *The Begum's Millions*, a colonial bounty finances the constructions of rival French and German utopian enclaves in the United States. Even though the German town is ruled by an evil scientist (expressing on Verne's part the French frustration over the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to the Germans), both towns are represented as sublime spectacles of technological power in building model communities (as they also reproduce the prevalent fantasy about the United States as a site of utopian projects). By contrast, in texts like *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, *The Clipper of the Clouds*, and *The Master of the World*, Verne anticipates (albeit narrativized as already-happened) the technological triumphs of an electric submarine, a heavier-than-air plane, and a fantastically convertible machine that can be used as an airplane, a car, or a boat—all sublime in their awesome speed and power over the elements.

However, the same scientific-technological triumphs are not infrequently represented negatively by Verne, ironically exposing the hubris and quirkiness of scientists, or, more importantly, nationalist/imperialist competition after the acquisition of superior technology. Whether it is the American Gun Club capitalizing their post-Civil War idleness into the sublime venture to the moon, or the eccentric Robur, ready to strike down the airplanes of his competitors, scientists/inventors in Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon*, *The Clipper of the Clouds*, and *The Master of the World* become objects of satire, as do states that sponsor or compete for new technologies. When powerful technologies are developed beyond the auspices of state power, as happens with Robur's flying machines and Nemo's submarine, scientists/inventors are rendered terrorists and hunted after by states that regard new technologies as threats to their hegemony. While positively sublime technological euphoria is unmistakable in such narratives of Verne (despite their warnings about the abuse of technology by state powers), Verne also made an unambiguously critical representation of technological society in *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, which was rejected by his publisher Jules Hetzel and got published only in 1994. In that novel the same Verne who had affirmatively depicted the adventures of geographical exploration of Africa in *Five Weeks in a Balloon* imagined a twentieth-century Paris under the sway of massive state power, technological mediation, and subjection of individuals to instrumental rationality.

In Britain, during the same historical span (1860s to 1890s), the ambivalent attitude to technology produced techno-euphoric texts like Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871) and anti-technological fictions such as Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) and William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1893). Wielding the power of Vril, a fantastic name for an inexhaustible energy underlying matter, the subterranean Vril-ya of Bulwer-Lytton's *The*

Coming Race live in a society of super advanced technology the power of which is lauded in positively sublime terms. While it criticizes contemporary societies of Europe and America as the foolishly competitive and warring “historical age” of Vril-ya’s past, *The Coming Race* keeps intact the scientifico-technological fantasy of inexhaustible energy and the social-Darwinist imperialist rhetoric of the inevitability of the extermination of societies considered less civilized. In contrast, technology is feared in *Erewhon* as an evolving power that could supplant humans while *News from Nowhere* builds a utopia by way of moving against the contemporary historical trend toward technological progress. Similarly, in Wells’s *The Time Machine*, the power of technology to produce luxury is feared as the cause of social stasis and eventual degeneration, while appropriation of technology by the imperialist war machine is made the object of satire in *The War of the Worlds*, which imagines imperial Britain as a victim of Martian invasion.

After the First World War left Europe devastated and technological mediation of society grew to unprecedented dimensions, science fictional texts, especially in Europe, tended to produce nightmarish tales of humanity either utterly destroyed by technology or subjected to the instrumental rationality administered by the state. Though Wells reversed his earlier position and instead championed, even into the late 1930s, both technology and instrumental management of society as forces of positively sublime global progress, writers like E. M. Forster, Karel Čapek, Yevgeny Zamyatin, and Aldous Huxley painted a much more negative picture of the consequences of machine-dependence. In “The Machine Stops,” for example, Forster imagines a society that has so long and so thoroughly been dependent on technology that when their technology fails or “the machine stops,” they have no resources left with which to avert the apocalypse. Similarly, with the fantastic plot of robotic takeover of the world in *R. U. R.*, Čapek dramatizes the nightmarish possibilities of technology—overproduction, unemployment, abuse

of technology in war—that are elided in the triumphant rhetoric of progress. Likewise, in his scathing critique of totalitarianism, *We*, Zamyatin narrates how technology and technological rationality can be “used” to engineer a society that crushes the individual (life, desire, instincts) for the sake of a fake collectivity. Finally, more comical than *We* in its tone, Huxley’s *Brave New World* also imagines a technologically administered society, where people of different classes/castes are artificially produced and their perpetual happiness is maintained by continual ingestion of pills.

By contrast, in the United States, which was still economically expanding in the late nineteenth century thanks to the continental scale of its domestic market, and which was a beneficiary of European destruction in the First World War, one finds not so much fears about technology and negatively sublime representations of it (as in early Wells, Čapek, and Zamyatin) but rather positively sublime triumphs of scientific-technological power and its capacity to affirmatively transform society. As Howard P. Segal’s study of American technological utopias from 1883 to 1933 shows, technological utopianism was an abiding element of American culture, which believed in “the inevitability of progress and in progress as technological progress” (1). Consequently, from Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* to the American Golden Age science fiction, the power of science and technology are predominantly represented in positively sublime terms. Bellamy imagined a Boston of the year 2000 utterly transformed from the late-nineteenth century version. With reduced working hours for unpleasant menial work, instant delivery of goods, mid-forties retirement age, and communal kitchens, the nationalized economy of the future Boston is a positively sublime utopia that has resolved its social conflicts through technology and rational management. American Golden Age science fictions, such as those by Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, and Lester del Rey valorized the

scientist-engineer as the sublime hero and savior of society. Heinlein's "Universe," for example, imagines a society in degeneration, unaware of its existence in a space ship hurtling through space with its scientists turned to mythmakers, until the story's boy-hero plays a leading role in the exploration of the ship, the discovery of the sublimely starry universe, and plans to guide the course of the ship. In enacting a drama of degeneration and rebirth of scientific knowledge and inquiry as well as of transition from narrow spatial confinement to the vast reach of the universe, Heinlein's story symbolically transfers the astronomical sublimity of the starry universe into the sublime adventure of scientific curiosity and technological triumph. In "Nightfall," Isaac Asimov constructs an apparently negatively sublime only to reinforce the positive sublimity of scientific progress. During the first nightfall after two thousand and fifty years on the planet Lagas, usually lighted by multiple suns, the people of the planet confront darkness for the first time, go insane with horror, and incinerate everything. But this apparently negative moment is used to establish the scientist as the sublime hero, who is able to predict the phenomenon and ensure the storage of the knowledge for posterity, putting an end to the planet's ancient cycle of regeneration and collapse. Such also is the case with Lester del Rey's "Nerves," which sets up a negatively sublime scene of imminent nuclear death only to establish the scientific ingenuity of its protagonist who is able to avert the crisis just in time. For a country that was swiftly rising as the next global hegemonic power, thanks to the combination of the soft empire of free-trade and "strategic acquisitions" of imperialist style, American science fictional mythmakers displaced the frontier to extraterrestrial space and championed the engineer-hero as the leading sublime force of American destiny.

Like the enlightenment project, the other constituent of imperialism, capitalism, is featured in science fictional texts with antithetical and ambivalent attitudes of celebration and/or

critique. Technological progress is historically so inextricably linked to worldwide capitalist development that euphoria and anxieties about capitalism are indissociable from those of technology. As Euro-American economy from the mid-nineteenth century on kept expanding and brought increasingly larger section of the world under its yoke, perceptions of this growth alternated between optimism and euphoria about “bourgeois revolution,” on the one hand, and horrors about the rising numbers of the exploited proletariat, general alienation of labor under capitalist production, and the ensuing class struggle, on the other. When systemic problems of capitalism led to inter-imperialist rivalry in the final decades of the nineteenth century that exploded into the world wars of the next century, the gruesome nature of capitalism-imperialism became undeniable. In science fictional texts of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the next, the world-transforming power of capitalism and the horrors of its exploitation and alienation translated into antithetically sublime representations of its global consequences.

Except in the case of the suppressed *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, Verne’s romanticizing of science and technology was largely unmoored from its nexus to capitalism; as critics have noted, there is no class conflict in Vernian scenes of technological productivity and his machines do not produce any surplus value (Chesneaux 42; Evans 68). Wells vacillated between representing capitalist exploitation of labor in negatively sublime terms as evolutionary degeneration into cannibalism and lauding capitalism, politically reformed by the ruling class of the professional elite, as a positively sublime agent of global progress. In *The Time Machine*, Wells represents the working class occupying the subterranean gothic world of darkness and devouring the descendants of civilized European elite. In utopian works like *A Modern Utopia*, political reorganization of the world by the able Samurai yields rational management of global

society such that class conflict disappears and endless material and spiritual progress is guaranteed. In a similar vein, in the American scene, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* resolves capitalism's exploitation of labor and alienation by socializing the economy, emphasizing "cooperation and community as well as on technological advance" (Segal 3). In the wake of Bellamy's success, technological utopianism flourished in the United States as diverse writers pictured utopias characterized by "efficiency" and "harmony," replacing "[t]he dirt, noise, and chaos that accompanied industrialization" (Segal 23)

The First World War, however, dealt a blow to such utopian fantasies to a great extent. While Wells insisted on his project of reforming global capitalism through political reorganization, writers like Zamyatin, Huxley, and Čapek wrote nightmarish narratives of capitalist wars, instrumentalization of social and personal relations, and zombification of people by drugs and entertainment. In *We* Zamyatin takes a techno-capitalist centralized global power, positively sublime in its technological achievement and extraterrestrial ambitions but actually claustrophobic and violently and systematically regulatory of the human bodily desires and desire for individuality and freedom. The pathetic struggle of the protagonist/narrator against the dawning awareness of the terror of the rationally administered society he naively believes in as a perfectly interpellated subject accentuates the contrast between the fantasy of techno-capitalist sublime and the negatively sublime reality of subjection to instrumental reason. In *Brave New World*, Huxley takes up the "successful" capitalism exemplified by the United States (Fordism) and turns it into a globalized capitalist empire affecting positive sublimity of material plenty and chemically induced happiness, but, to the reader as well as the dissenting characters in the novel, the positively sublime empire becomes the negatively sublime metropolis of loss of human autonomy. In Čapek's *R. U. R.* the construction of the ideal labor machine of capitalist fantasy

unleashes unmanageable problems of unemployment, (ab)use of the robots in wars, and robotic/labor class revolt against capitalist oppressors. By making the positively sublime triumph of techno-capitalism produce negatively sublime consequences of insuperable terror, Čapek expresses in a single master stroke capitalist society's anxieties about exploitation of the working class, subjection of labor to the mechanical rhythm of capitalist production (instrumental rationality of Taylorism) and the fear that machines may take over from humans. In *War with the Newts* the capitalist-imperialist expansionist fantasy/will is represented by Čapek in positively sublime terms, but the horrors of its consequences are pictured in grotesque terms in the form of the Newts who transform themselves from the oppressed to the oppressor and outdo the imperialist Euro-America in waging wars and causing massive planetary destruction. Again, the putatively positive sublimity of capitalist expansionist will is exposed as masking the insurmountable negative sublime horrors of the arms race and the holocaust.

Like enlightenment and capitalism, the third constituent of imperialism, colonialism, is represented both antithetically and ambivalently in science fictional narratives. The sublime ideology of imperialism was enacted not only in the theaters of the home country, such as museums and great exhibitions, but also in the colonies that became the site for the adventures of imperial heroes as well as for the glorification of science, technology, and capitalism. While resistance of "mute wilderness" and insubordinate savages and degenerates could be used as settings to dramatize the overcoming of that resistance by imperialist will, colonial resistance also often produced anxieties that the savage and degenerate other was too vast and indomitable to be brought under the imperialist heel. If the aforementioned "The Bridge Builders" by Kipling illustrates the former, the latter is instantiated in the representation of the Marabar caves in Forster's *A Passage to India*—"an uncanny image of the inefficiency of colonial description,"

signifying the inscrutable mystery of India (Suleri 31)—or in Conrad's representation of the African wilderness in *Heart of Darkness*, an evil Other eating away the soul of a civilized European. In science fictional texts from the 1860s to the 1940s, too, scenes of colonial exploits ambivalently reproduce imperialist self-aggrandizement in positively sublime terms and imperialist failure to dominate in negatively sublime terms.

In Verne's *Voyages extraordinaires* the colonial scene alternatively becomes a site of geographical (and anthropological) mapping necessary prior to colonization, an uninhabited wilderness territorialized by Euro-American civilization, a locale of inter-imperialist conflict, stretches of land and water upon which European locomotive technology asserts its power, and a reterritorialization of geospace through capitalist investment as well as technological triumph. In *Five Weeks in a Balloon* an English geographer, Dr. Ferguson, retraces and fictionally completes previous imperial expeditions into the wilderness of yet-to-be-colonized Africa before he lands securely on the French colony of Senegal. In *The Mysterious Island* a supposedly uninhabited island in the Pacific is territorialized and turned into a site of European civilization, thanks to the leadership of the civil-war-era American engineer. In *The Steam House* a steam-powered locomotive in the shape of an elephant combines the exotic with the power of western technology, which is proved invincible to native attacks. In *Around the World in Eighty Days* the English man, Philius Fogg's journey using varied locomotive means—railway and steamer primarily—reproduces the worlding of the planet by western technology, while an Indian woman is stereotypically saved from sati (self-immolation) by the civilized White man. In *The Invasion of the Sea* scientific know-how and technology combined with Western investment capital aggressively pursue, against a resistant indigenous tribe, the fantastic imperialist project of connecting the Sahara to the Mediterranean by opening a canal and thereby facilitating better

imperial trade. While not all these narratives employ the sublime rhetorically in terms of seemingly interminable (mathematically sublime) descriptions of scientific activity and technology (the way it happens with other Vernian narratives), they do present imperialist displays of the powers of civilization, technology and capitalism in the colonies.

In H. Rider Haggard's and Arthur Conan Doyle's adventure narratives the colonial scene is represented in negatively sublime terms as overwhelming wilderness where imperial heroes of science and adventure exhibit their positively sublime triumphs. Doyle's *The Lost World* fictionalizes a land in Latin America as a narrative museum of prehistoric life-forms addressed to the viewership of imperialist subjects, and pits the negative, gothic sublimity of nature against the positive sublimity of the scientific mind and method that studies/maps it. In *She* Haggard also sends imperial adventurers into colonial Africa, but his heroes do not quite get the victory they are after (they face the woman othered in the home country). Imperialist failure is also enacted in Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *First Men in the Moon*. The demonized colonial others represented in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* turn out to mirror the anarchy and barbarity within the imperialist self, while in *The First Men in the Moon* what is seen as an inferior civilization awaiting colonial subjugation turns out to be more advanced than imperial Europe, satirically reflecting the pervasiveness of instrumental reason in European capitalist society. Čapek's *War with the Newts* shows colonial traffic (exchange of native resources for western technology), racism and slave trade in ignoble terms undermining the positively sublime fantasy of capitalist expansion represented by the capitalist G. H. Bondy's "poetic" visions. In American SF, the intergalactic empires display imperialism in positively sublime terms but there are also narratives such as Eric Frank Russell's ". . . And Then There were None" that mock colonialist/imperialist claims of superior civilization.

In conclusion, when Verne, Wells, and Čapek represent imperialism in their works, they reproduce the contradictions and ambivalences they shared with other writers of their times regarding the historical careers of enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism as these forces articulated into the imperialist project. Once he committed himself to the “extraordinary voyages” project, it became imperative for Verne to reproduce the dominant ideology of progress; however, despite the limits imposed by his publisher and by the success of the project itself, Verne often protests against the abuse of technology for military and imperialist ends and tacitly critiques capitalism by making capitalist exploitation conspicuously absent in his works. Consequently, amid triumphant celebrations of the sublime powers of science and technology as well as the scientist-engineer heroes, there also emerge in Verne’s narratives satirical undoing of those triumphs, albeit especially when the latter represent national powers other than France—Germany, Britain, and the United States. Similarly, in his works before the end of the nineteenth century, Wells vociferously critiques some major tenets of the imperialist discourse—the claim to superior civilization, the “justification” of exploitation as the necessity of evolutionary struggle, and technology as an unambiguous sign of progress—suffusing his works with the negative, gothic sublime that shows the imperialist subject haunted and humbled by the force it claims to have mastered and differentiates itself from, namely the force of barbarity ready to rupture the veneer of civilization. By contrast, even as imperialist violence and capitalist waste continued to infuriate him, in his science fictional works of the next century Wells glorifies the imperialist ethos in positively sublime terms, presenting his vision of Euro-American imperialism, the world state, as beneficial for the rest of the world also. Finally, while he is never ambivalent about his critique of European imperialism, Čapek exploits the genre of the fantastic to represent the contradictions of capitalism and technology as well as their structural and

historical relation to imperialism. In his science fictional works, capitalist expansion and technological productivity are at first hailed with sublime euphoria, when only the *promise* of these forces are seen by their advocates; however, as the logic of what was fantasized as the absolute boon gradually unfolds, the same forces turn nightmarish, bringing about the horrors of mass unemployment, the denial of the sensuous, inter-imperialist wars, and the collapse of social systems.

Chapter Two

Museums, World Fairs, Travel and Tourism: Imperialism and the Sublime in Verne's "Extraordinary Voyages"

Thanks to the resurgence of scholarly interest in Verne since the 1950s in France and more recently in the U. S., Verne's writings have received a stunning range of interpretations. As Verne's "extraordinary voyages" have been "subjected to proliferating analytical methodologies, structuralist, psychoanalytic, Jungian, Marxist," there have emerged various versions of Verne, not only the prophet of progress but also "the political radical, the sexual deviant, the mystic, the adventurous explorer of forms and symbols" (Martin 11-12). Among these various Vernes, perhaps the most prominent, and certainly the most consistent with the ideological project of the series envisaged by the publisher Jules Hetzel, is the Verne who is the raconteur of the nineteenth-century belief in progress, the storyteller of the bourgeois ideology of "the conquest of nature by industry" (Macherey 184). According to Arthur Evans, the ideology of progress in Verne's narratives takes three forms: scientific, social, and moral. Progress is represented in the "extraordinary voyages" as journeys toward "totalizing humanity's acquisition of (scientific) knowledge . . . totalizing its eventual dissemination and constructive use . . . (and) totalizing ethical identification with it" (39). Although Verne's intentions as a writer can by no means be limited to it, the ideology of progress in its multiple facets was definitely central to the series that was marketed for its pedagogical purpose to orient the young adult readers of the Second Empire into a scientific-technological ethos.

The ideology of progress, on the other hand, was also central to nineteenth-century European imperialism. That Verne's narratives reproduce relations between "progress" and imperialism has not escaped the scrutiny of Verne scholars. Even though Evans does not fully

explain the interrelation between progress and imperialism in Verne's narratives, he astutely observes the structural role exotic, colonial peoples and places play in Verne's narratives of progress. Regarding the "constant thematic presence" of cannibals in the "extraordinary voyages," Evans mentions that its "pedagogical function" is to "dramatically underscor[e] 'how far' modern civilization has progressed" (43-44). In their different readings, Jean Chesneaux and Andrew Martin more pointedly emphasize the vital role imperialism and colonialism play in Verne's celebration and critique of progress. After noting the limits of Verne's anti-colonialist sentiments (anti-British and anti-Spanish, but never anti-French), Chesneaux argues that for Verne colonialism was "one of the aspects of progress," the latter being a cause that overrode the rights and lives of colonized people (123). Furthermore, according to the Saint-Simonian conception of colonization—"the exploitation of natural resources"—which Verne subscribed to, the exploitative relation between the colonizer and colonized was the secondary issue, subordinate to the primary mission "to take possession of nature, to exploit new territories in the interests of economic and technical progress" (125-26). In Martin's reading, imperialism is even more central to Verne's project in the series: "The fictions of Verne constitute a sequence of meditations on the ramifications of imperialism and its metaphorical counterparts" (16-17). Even as Martin's emphasis falls on the "metaphorical," he maintains that Verne "records and reflects on the ceaseless process of annexation, colonization, and insurrection" (19).

My reading of Verne in this chapter also privileges imperialism as the central interpretive lens to read Verne's project in the "extraordinary voyages." The spectacle of progress and the glorification of western man in Verne's narratives structurally depend on the construction of the colonial Other, who is incapable of understanding and often futilely resistant to the insignia of progress but nonetheless gazes at it with awe and wonder. Whether it is the geological-

paleontological history rehearsed in *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, the conquest of the North Pole by successfully navigating to it in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, the thunderous shooting of a projectile to the moon in *From the Earth to the Moon*, or the technological wonder of the futuristic submarine in *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, Verne celebrates western man's progress in science and technology by unfailingly inserting the gaze of the colonial/native Other: the Eskimos, the Seminoles, the Papuans, etc. Just as the "Other" peoples, represented as savages and barbarians, establish European man as the agent of civilization and progress, the Other territories in Verne's fictional world are turned into theaters to stage the power of the Western man's science and technology, which controls, maps, and supposedly earns the right to appropriate the (to be) colonized spaces.

I also argue that Verne's glorification of "progress" and of the western man as its bearer has aesthetics of its own. Instead of reading the strains of Enlightenment and Romanticism in Verne separately as Evans does, I propose to read Verne as the Romanticist of the Enlightenment project.¹ Through close readings of some of Verne's seminal works, I show that both progress and the imperial man as the subject of progress are aestheticized by Verne as sublime phenomena, whether by invoking the immemorial vistas of geological-paleontological deep time or by displaying the awe-inspiring spectacles of technology, or by showcasing the process of producing the archival excess of imperial knowledge. At a time when the natural sublime of the Romantics was being challenged by the sublimity of science and technology, Verne imbues his narrativization of the Enlightenment project—to master nature by human will and industry and to displace the mythological view of nature by that of science—with the aesthetics of terror and wonder that Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant theorized as the sublime. As if responding to the call made by the likes of Wordsworth and Shelley in England, calls for the poet who would

infuse science and technology with the breath of poetry, Verne makes his scientist-engineer heroes (and the intended readers who would identify with them) sublime adventurers, their identities endowed with unimaginably long vistas of geological time, the incomparable feats of technology, and the immeasurable capacities of the imperial archive.

Verne's celebration of progress and his aestheticization of it in sublime terms are both structurally inseparable from the history and ideologies of imperialism. This chapter will also show that in rewriting the nineteenth-century ideology of progress with the aesthetic of the sublime Verne is relying on and reproducing some popular imperial-colonial institutions of his time, the institutions of the museum, world fairs, and travel and tourism. As I have discussed in Chapter One, the institution of the museum in the nineteenth century played an instrumental role in translating developments in the "sciences" like geology, paleontology, evolutionary biology and anthropology into ideological images of European Self and Colonial Other. The vast stretches of geological deep time and evolutionary time were arrogated to the European selfhood, giving it a layered archaeological depth, whereas non-European peoples, dubbed savages and barbarians, were shelved into the past, both distinctive from the European Self and constitutive of it as a mere "fold" (Bennett 63). In other words, walking through the temporal order displayed in the museum became for European visitors a rehearsing of a differential, self-glorifying identity. The museum and its spatio-temporal organization of the world's peoples and cultures frequently surface in Verne's narratives. The "extraordinary voyages" are filled with encounters with savages—both "good" and "bad" ones, as Chesneaux points out in *The Political and Social Ideas of Jules Verne* (112)—and the representation of the latter as remnant-in-the-present-of-the-past, ignorant and uninterested in the temporality of history, plays a vital role in the construction of the image of the European man as conscious of the sublimely vast temporality of history and

pre-history, as history's most contemporary and most progressed subject as well as the repository of its past. For example, Lidenbrock and his nephew in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* are conscious of the geological and evolutionary time whereas the Icelandic hunter who guides them functions as the primitive man, constituting the European man's contemporaneity and progress. Similarly, the shooting of the projectile in *From the Earth to the Moon* is presented as the culmination of a long history, apparently including the sublime history of the formation of the solar system and the earth, whereas the Native Americans who *might have* witnessed the spectacle of the casting of the gun, the Columbiad, are imagined as the savages who are children of nature and know nothing beyond it. Likewise in *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, the technological marvel, the submarine called the Nautilus, becomes a tool to travel past the sites that mark the vastly long geological history as well as the mythical-cultural history of Atlantis, whereas the "savages" encountered at different places become living specimens of the past represented in the geological monuments.

Alongside the museum, world fairs (also called the "great exhibitions" in Britain and "*expositions universelles*" in France) served the purpose of producing the contrasting images of imperial Europe and its colonial Other. In Chapter One I have discussed that beginning in 1851 in London and 1855 in Paris, world fairs became public spectacles of Western accomplishments in technology, capitalism, and colonial exploits. As artifacts from different parts of the world were displayed alongside the "awesome power of technologies," the exhibitions functioned as sites that spatially constructed technological progress of the imperial home countries with the putatively less progressed stages of colonial cultures. A writer who had been excited by the exhibits at the French *Exposition Universelle* of 1867² (Butcher, Jules Verne 187), Verne reproduces the ideological structure of world fairs so prominently that his works can be read as

narrative elaborations of the pedagogy of the popular nineteenth-century institution. In *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, for example, Verne repetitively stages the awe-inspiring technological marvel, the Nautilus, by placing it in the midst of the savages who gaze at it with mute, uncomprehending fear and wonder. Similar is the treatment Verne gives to the technological triumph (at least it is staged so in the novel) of the Baltimore Gun Club, the Columbiad, in *From the Earth to the Moon*. The sublime might of the Columbiad and shooting of the projectile is stressed in the novel by representing the “savages” as its mute, uncomprehending, wonder-filled spectators. Verne’s glorification of the steam engine in *The Steam House* assumes a similar ideological-cultural contrast. The British machine-elephant run by steam engine is made to compete with and defeat the native Indian elephants of nature, thus suggesting that the secret of British power lay in its technological wonders. Verne’s reproduction of the logic of world fairs is also evident in *The Mysterious Island*. The stages of civilization rehearsed in the novel structurally bear close resemblance to the spatio-temporal arrangement of the “History of Labor” section in the Paris Exhibition of 1867, which displayed “[w]orks produced in different countries, from the most remote ages to the close of the eighteenth century” (Greenhalgh 20). Verne’s island also stages the history of civilization from the primitive times (the making of the fire) to the most progressed (the discovery of the Nautilus at the end of the novel), going beyond the eighteenth century but following the same ideology of progress.

The third nineteenth-century institution that plays a vital role in Verne’s narratives is that of travel and tourism. As we have discussed in Chapter One, real or imagined travels had been used by Enlightenment philosophes to establish a “cultural perspective” that gave rise to the Us vs. Them binary, pitting civilized Europeans against the savage and barbarian Others (Wolff 4-14). As navigational expeditions were supplemented from the eighteenth century onwards by

inland explorations into the Americas, Asia, and Africa, European travels and the narratives born out of them produced a planetary identity for Europeans, which was based on the presumed superiority over non-European Others (Pratt 15-24). Traveling to other places and cultures was to Europeans a means of producing knowledge, both “scientific” (such as geographical) and cultural, and rewriting themselves as superior to those who were turned into objects of knowledge. European travels to the Americas, Australia, Asia, and Africa are not only frequently mentioned in Verne’s narratives; they also often constitute the stuff out of which entire Vernian narratives are produced. For example, *Five Weeks in a Balloon* draws heavily on the contemporary accounts of European travels to Africa, and *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* rewrites the accounts of Arctic navigators of the nineteenth century. Travel is also a major device through which plots unfold in Verne’s narratives, as is the case in exemplary fashion in novels like *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, *The Children of Captain Grant*, and *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Acts of travel and the related genres of travel and adventure narratives ideologically function in Verne’s works in mainly two ways. First, Verne’s heroes often travel to formidable spaces and overcome the obstacles of nature by the power of science and technology. Such plots often produce the adventurous sublime, offering Verne’s intended readers the scientist-as-adventurer hero as the primary locus of identification. As the travelers explore the interior of the earth, navigate through the Arctic, or shoot themselves in a projectile to the moon, the sublimity accrued through their heroic acts (enabled by science and technology) constructs the Euro-American self-image in grandiose terms. Travel in Verne’s narratives is also a means to rehearse the extent of knowledge already amassed as well as to show the process of knowledge production. As scientific facts are catalogued incessantly and heroes are shown in the act of producing knowledge, Vernian narratives become instantiations of the encyclopedic drive,

themselves joining the imperial archive. The effect of such aggrandized knowledge production is the rhetorical excess, the archival sublime, which presents European identity as repository of totalizing knowledge and the cultural Others as objects of that knowledge.

Perhaps paralleling the predominant temporality of the institutions of the museum and world fairs respectively, the project of progress takes two basic narrative forms in Verne's "extraordinary voyages": backward-gazing and forward-looking. In many narratives, Verne's main characters retrace the steps of previous travelers, rehearse the knowledge they have already acquired, and if possible, add to that knowledge by trying to complete the work of predecessors. In these works, Verne's scientist heroes use very simple tools of science, such as a chronometer, a thermometer, and a compass. Consistent with the pedagogic purpose of the series, their main task is not only to recount the scientific knowledge (geographical, geological, astronomical, etc.) hitherto acquired, and in doing so (and here lies the ideological crux of the pedagogy) also to offer the intended (young French) readers of the Second Empire the self-image of scientist-as-adventurer and the legitimate appropriator of world's resources (earning the right to an object by knowing about it). In forward-looking narratives, on the other hand, the ideological purpose is the same—reproduction of the heroic self-image as scientist-adventurer and legitimization of appropriation—but both adventure and appropriation are based on technological exploits, which are presented as futuristic, radical advance over the scientific and technological progress attained so far.

In what follows, I closely read first *Journey the Center of the Earth* and *Adventures of Captain Hatteras* as examples of the backward-gazing Verne, then *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas* as instantiations of the forward-looking Verne. After that I briefly discuss some of the works that show Verne as celebrator of the nineteenth-

century technologies, such as the steam engine, the railroad, and the telegraph cable, and propose reading *The Mysterious Island* as an example of the “complete” Verne—the backward-gazing, the forward-looking, and the narrator of the contemporary. At the end I engage with arguments about the occasional anti-progress and anti-imperialist sentiments in Verne’s narratives.

I

Among the popular nineteenth-century institutions that inform Verne’s writings, those of the museum and travel/tourism feature prominently in the backward-gazing narratives. Just as imperialist discourse mapped knowledge about Other peoples and cultures into the expanded time-scale provided by the nineteenth-century “historical sciences,” Verne’s narratives also configure exotic, Other scenes of nature and people as primitive, savage terrains and forces, alternatively endearing and exciting and hostile and resistant, but always structurally or self-constitutively different, functioning as resources to be used and/or enemies to be triumphed over. Whether it is the formidable Arctic or the unexplored interior of the Earth, the Other locations in Verne’s fictional world become invitations to the imperial will to glory, opportunities to stage the heroic triumphs of male scientist-heroes against the odds of nature. Equally “exciting” and radically Other characters like the Icelandic hunter in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and the Eskimos (both reviled and admired) in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* are crucial to constructing European self-identity as bearers of progress and civilization, whether that presence is that of a guide, curious specimen of humanity, or hostile savage force. As Vernian heroes travel across and return from exotic, formidable places and peoples—surviving the ordeal and amassing knowledge in the process—the implied readers vicariously enjoy the adventures of travel, becoming armchair tourists of the global reach of imperial will.

In *Journey to the Center of the Earth* Verne sends a European scientist and his apprentice nephew down into the entrails of the earth on an adventure trip across the live museum of earth's prehistory and its life forms. The solving of the riddle that triggers the trip, the overwhelming sense of being under the weight of the oceans and continents, the stunning mineralogical formations and live specimens of plants and animals of prehistoric era, the braving of storms and the final unnerving ride on a volcano up to the surface of the earth—all produce for the novel's heroes and the intended reader the sublime adventure of scientific exploration, an adventure that ideologically constructs modern European men as heirs to the sublimely vast epochs of earth's history and, by virtue of being its intelligent and scientific readers, as that history's most contemporary and most advanced subject. In contrast, set up as a foil to the European adventurers of "layered archeological depth" is the Icelandic guide and the eider hunter Hans (represented as the primitive man, the subject without historical depth), and, by implication, the non-European colonial Other in contrast to whom the intended readers of *Journey to the Center of the Earth* would rehearse their imperial self-identity.

Many of Verne's novels in the *Voyages extraordinaires* series begin with a puzzle the decoding of which sets the plot in motion. Typically solved by Vernian heroes through inferring logically and reasoning methodically, such puzzles often function in Verne's narratives as ideological rehearsals of imperial European identity, that of the reasoning subject in contrast to non-Europeans, who are frequently represented as sensuous, intuitive, and irrational. In *Journey to the Center of the Earth* the sublimity of the adventure of scientific exploration is suggested by staging the solving of the riddle as a momentous and intellectually herculean enterprise. Seated on his uncle's chair, his pipe lit, Axel thus describes his struggle with the problem: "my brain started overheating, my eyes blinking at the sheet. The 132 letters seemed to dance around me,

like those silver drops which float above your head when there is a sudden rush of blood to it” (18, 19). Then when the solution flashes upon him, Axel interjects, “What amazement, what terror entered my soul!” (20). In the next scene, while his uncle is still making “a terrible struggle with the impossible,” Axel puts the unlikelihood of Lidenbrock hitting upon the solution in mathematically sublime terms: “But I also knew that a mere 20 letters can form 2,432,902,008,176,640,000 combinations. In fact there were 132 letters in the sentence; and these 132 letters produced a total number of sentences that had at least 133 digits, one that is virtually impossible to enumerate and goes completely beyond the bounds of imagination” (21-22).

Despite the apparent impossibility, the riddle is solved, and the scientist and his nephew embark on their adventurous journey. True to the western tradition of glorifying adventure as the mark of social class distinction (Nerlich 4-7), *Journey to the Center of the Earth* shows its protagonists facing impossible obstacles and returning as triumphant heroes. In an age that had begun to have anxieties about commercial tourism (Buzard 6), Lidenbrock and Axel are presented as authentic travelers who dare to go into uncharted territories and accrue symbolic capital through uncommon experiences. Displacing the usual settings of the colonial travel-adventure narratives—Africa, the Americas, Australia, and Asia—into the interior of the earth,³ Verne’s novel does what colonial adventure-travel narratives do: transform the impossible difficulties and apparent horror (negative elements) into positive triumphs over them and into accrual of imperial/colonial heroism.⁴ Narrated from the point of view of an apprentice, who is yet to graduate into full imperial, masculine adulthood, *Journey to the Center of the Earth* magnifies both the obstacles faced and the triumphs scored against them. The transformation of unrepresentable horror (negative sublime) into sublime euphoria (positive sublime) is made

possible by scientific reasoning, instruments of science and technological tools, and, above all, a scientific mind that can rise above bodily needs and fears.

The terror/horror the journey produces in Axel is repeatedly emphasized in the novel; it is presented as a gothic, negatively sublime Other that threatens to nullify the adventuring hero. For example, after Lidenbrock tells him to prepare for the journey, Axel is haunted by nightmares of utter self-loss: “I spent [the night] dreaming of chasms. I was the creature of delirium. I felt myself seized by the vigorous hand of the professor, dragged along, engulfed, bogged down. I was falling to the bottom of unfathomable pits with the increasing speed of bodies abandoned in space. My life was just one endless fall” (38). Similarly, after they reach Iceland and trek to Mount Snaefells, Axel describes the volcanic geography of the place in gothic terms:

The main eruptive movements are in fact concentrated in the interior of the island. There the horizontal strata of super-imposed rocks called *trapps* in the Scandinavian languages, the trachytic strips, the eruptions of basalt, of tuff, of all the volcanic aggregates, the streams of lava and of molten porphyry, have produced a country of supernatural horror. I hardly realized at this stage what a sight awaited us on the Snaefells peninsula, where the damage wrought by an impulsive Nature forms a fearsome chaos. (63)

Likewise, Axel is overcome by “a terrifying idea” that that the dead volcano, dormant since 1229 might suddenly erupt and they will “get lost in the underground galleries of the volcano” (73), and he again spends the night “in the clutches of a nightmare”: “I was in the middle of a volcano in the depths of the Earth, I felt as if I was being thrown into interplanetary space in the form of eruptive rock” (75). Moreover, once they are inside the earth, Axel’s imagination is repeatedly overwhelmed by the idea of walking under the weight of rocks, continents, and oceans. Finally,

the terror Axel feels in the interiority of the earth reaches its crescendo when on the Lidenbrock Sea they are hit by a storm that renders them powerless and subjects them to indescribable horror. All of these seemingly near-death encounters in the novel make the geography and the journey veritable scenes of the Burkean sublime.

While such scenes of horror sometimes represent nature as the indomitable and unconquerable Other, Axel's story after he knows of his uncle's decision to undertake the journey is the story of oscillation between horror/terror about the journey and a triumphant sense of overcoming of that horror into a sublime transcendence. The transformation of terror into sublimity serves in the novel as a metaphor for imperial manhood, both for Axel and for Verne's intended young readers. When Axel is undergoing terrors about the intra-terrestrial journey, he is goaded into undertaking it by his fiancée, Gräuben. Equating science with heroism and masculinity, she promises Axel that the successful accomplishment of the journey will make a man out of him and will enable him to win her as the hero's prize: "Dear Axel, it's such a fine thing to devote oneself to science! How famous Herr Lidenbrock will become, and his companion too. When you come back, Axel, you will be a man, his equal, free to speak, free to act, free at last to . . . [marry me]" (36). Moreover, the wavering hero is given training into braving the dizzying sublimity of adventure by his uncle, who makes him climb the church spire in Copenhagen repeatedly for five consecutive days. It is this training into the experiencing of the abyss that prepares Axel for the moment when he reaches the top of the Mount Snaefells and surveys the scene below him:

You would have thought that one of Helbesmer's relief-maps were spread beneath my feet. I saw deep valleys crisscrossing in every direction, chasms opening up like wells, lakes turned into ponds, rivers become brooks. On my right were

endless glaciers and repeated peaks, some of them plumed with light smoke. The undulations of these infinite mountains, whose layers of snow made them appear foaming, reminded me of the surface of a rough sea. If I turned towards the west, the ocean spread out its magnificent expanse like a continuation of the white horses of the summits. (81)

The supernatural horror of a bizarre landscape is thus transformed into the transcendence of the positive sublime: “I plunged into that high-blown ecstasy produced by lofty peaks, without feeling dizzy this time, as I was finally getting used to these sublime contemplations” (81). Axel’s perpetual feelings of terror are momentarily gone as he experiences the “high-blown ecstasy” of the geographer’s sublime; so do Verne’s young intended readers, as they identify with Axel’s sublime transcendence.

In *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, Axel and the intended reader of the novel are initiated into adventurous manhood also by the example of Professor Lidenbrock, who represents the recurrent Vernian type of scientist as adventurer, possessing indomitable spirit and courage. Lidenbrock defies thirst and even death to unflinchingly pursue his goal. On one occasion, when Axel points to the imminent possibility of death because their supply of water is finished; his uncle retorts, “And no courage left either?” (103). When Axel implores his uncle that they return back to the surface of the earth rather than court sure death by continuing their journey, the adamant Lidenbrock permits Axel to return but remains unmoved in his determination: “I will carry it to the bitter end, or else not come back at all” (106). On another occasion, when his plan to reach the other side of the Lidenbrock Sea is frustrated by the storm, Lidenbrock remains defiant and arrogates himself a sublime heroic dignity: “Fate plays me such tricks! The elements are conspiring against me. Air, fire, and water are combining to stop me getting through. Well,

they are going to see what my will power can do. I shall not yield, I shall not retreat a tenth of an inch. We shall see who wins: man or nature!”(175). Fittingly, in consonance with Verne’s project to represent the scientist as a heroic adventurer, Axel compares Lidenbrock’s reaction to the heroic stature of a Greek hero: “Standing on a rock, irritated, threatening, Otto Lidenbrock, like wild Ajax, seemed to be hurling defiance at the gods” (175). To us, reading the novel after about a century and a half when a completely different image of the scientist is the norm, Lidenbrock’s defiance may appear comical rather than tragic, but it is intended as tragic in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (the comic element is there to make the scientist a more palatable character) and may have passed off as heroic/tragic with contemporary readers, who were familiar with the then popular image of the scientist as adventurous traveler in the dangerous (colonial) regions.

Indeed, the adventure glorified in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* is the adventure of men of science; it is the scientific mind, attitude, or subjectivity which enables the heroes to overcome physical obstacles and elevates them above corporeal fears. Just as the horrors of nature and the seemingly insurmountable obstacles it poses challenge the imperial drive for the glory of adventure (or add to the glorification of adventure by a symbolic transfer of value), the same horrors and obstacles, as well as more benign but intellectually and imaginatively overwhelming riches of nature, challenge the scientific mind to map it, organize it, and turn it into the archive of knowledge. As the uncle and his nephew trek to Mt Snaefells and descend into the interior of the earth, the unruly, uncharted, and unsettling force of nature as the Other is managed into the “order” of scientific knowledge, such that the archival order of science, like the Borgesian map equaling the territory it maps, assumes sublime proportions.⁵ Moreover, ascendance into the scientific subjectivity also enables the transcendence from the physical

realities of terror. For example, even as he is perpetually given to overwhelming emotions of terror, Axel experiences a momentary transcendence when, “As a nephew of Lidenbrock’s, and despite my worries, I examined with interest the mineralogical curiosities displayed in this vast natural history collection. At the same time my mind ran through the whole geological history of Iceland” (76). On another occasion, horrified to look into and then descend a chasm that takes them into the interiority of the earth, Axel observes, “I don’t know if the most fanatical geologist would have tried to study the nature of the rocks surrounding him during such a descent” (88). If Axel himself “was not really bothered whether they were Pliocene, Miocene, Eocene . . . or Primitive,” his uncle, the intrepid scientist, was making “observations or else [taking] notes” (88). Like Axel’s rehearsal of “the whole geological history of Iceland,” the naming of the geological periods and Lidenbrock’s oblivion to physical dangers stress the point that, ideologically, historical men of a specific time and place have become the repository of earth’s history and hence transcendent.

While *Journey to the Center of the Earth* represents nature and the adventurers’ descent into the earth in mythological terms, it also narratively enacts the demythologizing of nature, which Horkheimer and Adorno have identified as the driving energy of European Enlightenment. Scholars have rightly noted the mythological elements in Verne’s novels, including *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (Meakin 95; Unwin 28-30); however, the novel also demythologizes nature, or at least juxtaposes the mythological view of nature and the rational, Enlightenment explanation of nature’s mysteries. Instead of reading the novel as non-science fiction, as Butcher does, we could argue that the point of the juxtaposition is the narratorial/rhetorical overcoming of the mythical worldview by the rational worldview of science. As has been pointed out in the previous paragraph, Axel, who calls Iceland a country of supernatural horror, also finds there the

writing of geological history, allowing him “to observe the successive phenomena governing its formation” and creating occasion for narrating such a history: “Such were the successive phenomena that had constructed Iceland” (76-77). Similarly, on the one hand, the journey into the interior of the earth is alluded to as a descent into Dante’s Inferno while the Hans Bach, the stream that follows them, is called the nymph and their faithful guide. On the other hand, the same inferno is managed into a familiar world by incessant naming, cataloguing, and measuring. Likewise, when they reach the primitive space of the shores of Lidenbrock Sea, where the uncle and the nephew encounter antediluvian flora and fauna, Axel calls themselves the shadowless characters in Hoffman’s tale; however, the same space of supernatural, gothic horror is also the space of the writing of science, where various species, long lost and matters of paleontological science, are recognized and scientific discourses of the nineteenth century are affirmed, thereby turning the narrative into a pedagogical lesson on the sciences for the benefit of the novel’s intended reader. Given that Axel is the narrator of the novel and given that the oscillations between the two worldviews, or rather repeated replacement of one by the other, occur in Axel’s mind, the latter can be called the theater where Verne stages the transformation of the mythological worldview into the scientific, ratiocinative discourse, the project of Enlightenment. And because Axel’s consciousness is the locus of identification for the intended reader, Axel narratively serves as the ideological vehicle for the pedagogical project of the novel, which is again the project of Enlightenment.

The project of demythologizing nature in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* is accompanied by turning the natural, gothic sublimity into the sublimity of scientific discourse, which comprises a major ideological rhetoric of the novel. Right from the beginning when the possibility of journeying into the earth is discussed, the topic of and controversies about theories

of intraterrestrial heat is broached and repeated frequently in the novel. A major, potential disbelief in the reader about the possibility of such fantastic travel is anticipated and co-opted in the novel by repeated mention of and discussion between the uncle and nephew about it. In addition, one of the major motifs of the novel, the identification of minerals seen during the journey, adds to the rhetoric of scientific discourse by the repetitive naming and cataloguing of the minerals found during the journey. Similarly, moments of crisis in the narrative are turned into opportunities of scientific discourse or pedagogical illustrations of science. For example, when Axel is lost in one of the labyrinthine passages, his narrow escape from death becomes an occasion for a discourse on the science of sound. Likewise, even when they are at the mercy of the volcano that pushes them up and finally ejects them out from the earth, the situation is used as an occasion for a geological lecture from Lidenbrock.

Timothy Unwin identifies the act of reading as a major element in Verne's narratives, which represent nature as a vast cryptogram to be decoded by scientific men (77-78). Following such rhetoric of decoding, nature in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* becomes a vast repository of objects of science, working on which science produces archives of knowledge, such that both nature as object of scientific study and scientific discourse as the result of such study assume sublime proportions. For example, the coal deposit the uncle and the nephew find inside the earth is not only vast in magnitude; it is a surface on which the discourse of science, the earth's prehistory is written. Similarly, the shores of the Lidenbrock Sea are strewn with the remains of species of the prehistory of Earth's life forms; they are sublime not only in the physical expanse of those remains (sepulchral sublime) but also in the magnitude of scientific knowledge they engender and are repository of. Nature on the shores of the Lidenbrock Sea, in other words, becomes a vast living museum, a dream laboratory, where the specimens of rare past life forms

are present for the exulting gaze of the scientist: “A thousand Cuviers would not have been enough to reconstruct the skeletons of all the once-living creatures which now rested in that magnificent bone-graveyard” (178). Arthur Evans has aptly pointed out the totalizing, museumizing drive of Verne’s scientific discourse (39-41). In *Journey to the Center of the Earth* the visits to museums in Copenhagen and Reykjavik and recalling of the museum by Axel reach a culmination on the shores of the Lidenbrock Sea, where on two occasions (before they cross the Sea and after they “return” to it), a museum like-nowhere-else, a museum beyond comparison is found and trodden by the uncle and the nephew, and with them, by the intended reader. Not only that, the Lidenbrock Sea itself becomes a live museum where sea animals, giant monsters, already extinct or degenerated into miniature forms on the oceans on the earth’s surface, are seen, named, and classified. In addition, cartography is an important science and trope in turning natural sublimity into the scientific one in *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. Not only is the duo’s journey into the earth begun and carried out with a study and help of maps, the journey itself becomes a means to produce a third, as the uncle takes notes to make a good map of their journey to publish it later when they return to the world. Thus, with the sciences of geology, paleontology, and cartography deployed to map and order nature, the novel produces a rhetorical excess of scientific discourse that is no less sublime than what it maps.

If adventure and science become the means through which sublime subjectivity is performed for the protagonists of *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, yet another such means is provided by the rhetorical/narrative construction of the spatial journey into the earth as temporal journey across the earth’s vast geological prehistory. As Tony Bennett argues in *Pasts Beyond Memory*, the nineteenth century sciences such as geology, archaeology, paleontology, and anthropology had opened to the European imagination an extended vision of Earth’s prehistory

that went back hundreds of millennia, ideologically configuring the European subject as the subject of archaeological depth (1-5). Contrasted to the mere 4000 years of biblical history, the millennia of Earth's history can be seen as a temporal/historical sublime, and ideological narratives of European civilization as the most advanced and most contemporary can be read as providing Europeans a temporal/historical sublimity. If European man was dethroned from his vaunted position as God's image, the historical subjectivity compensated for the loss by providing the sublimity of the geological "deep time." In *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, the "journey into the abyss of evolutionary time," as Rose puts it (57), is structured as a journey into geological prehistory but in reverse order. As the uncle and the nephew keep descending down the earth, they begin from the remotest time in Earth's geological history and gradually move toward the most recent past of that history, from the Primitive through Transition, Secondary, and Tertiary to Quarternary Eras. Representing the earth as a vast natural history museum and deploying the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century division of Earth's history into Eras and subdivisions into Periods, *Journey to the Center of the Earth* rehearses the long duree of geological deep time and ideologically reconstructs the travelers as sublime subjects of that history.

The theme of geological/paleontological history is pronounced quite early in the narrative. When the travelers get inside the earth through the crater in Mount Snaefells and descend down what seems to Axel like a horrifying chasm, the observation of rocks surrounding them brings from Axel a flurry of terms used to name the different geological periods: "I was not really bothered whether they were Pliocene, Miocene, Eocene, Cretaceous, Jurassic, Triassic, Permian, Carboniferous, Devonian, Silurian, or Primitive" (88). Immediately after Axel lists these various periods of rock (and fossil) formations, the uncle tells him: "We are in the middle

of the Primordial ground, the ground where the chemical reaction of the metals burning on contact with air and water occurred” (88). But because they take a wrong path at the bifurcation of the tunnel, rather than continuing on the primitive terrain, they move up and find evidence of the Transition Era. After “the walls of the tunnel changed appearance,” Axel notes, “We were in the middle of the Transition Era, in full Silurian Period” (97). Axel points to “these schists, these limestones, these sandstones” as evidence of sedimentations from water formed during “the Second Era of the Earth”, and tells his uncle, “Here we are at the period when the first plants and animals appeared!” (97-98). He finds further “incontrovertible proof” regarding the geological era when his feet step on “a dust composed of fragments of plants and shells” and his eyes see “the outlines of seaweeds and club-mosses” on the walls (98). Then, looking at the mineralogical dazzle produced by the light of the electric lamp falling on the walls, Axel confides to the reader, “You might have thought you were in a trench excavation in Devon, the county which gave its name to this sort of terrain” (99). Further on, when he sees “the outlines of primitive animals” on the walls (instead of only plants), Axel asserts, “Since the day before, creation had made clear signs of progress,” clearly indicating that the temporal order in which the geological/paleontological strata are encountered is along the line of evolutionary progress. Accordingly, after the signs of Devonian Period come those of the carboniferous one. As they come to a coal-deposit, the “100 feet wide by 150 feet high” pit, Axel observes, “On these dark walls was written the whole history of the coal period, and a geologist could easily read its successive stages” (101). Axel’s pedagogical lecture about the period—for example, “During this age of the world which preceded the Secondary Era, the earth became covered in immense vegetation due to the tropical heat combined with a permanent humidity” (101)—not only adds to the density of scientific discourse in the novel, as discussed above, but also draws the reader

into the geological “deep time” that ideologically refurbishes a sublime (pre)historical identity for the travelers as well as the intended reader.

The detour through the Transition Era ends when they reach an impassable wall. When they return back to the bifurcation point and descend the other tunnel, Lidenbrock exclaims triumphantly, “These are the Primitive terrains! We are on the right route . . .” (107). Axel lectures the reader about the slow cooling of the earth “during the first days of the world” when “the decrease in volume produced disruptions, breakages, shrinkages, and cracks in the crust” (108). As they continue their descent Axel says, “the succession of strata making up the Primitive terrain appeared more and more clearly” (108). Axel points to concrete evidence of the stages of the Earth’s history, providing the reader a guided tour through the museum of geological history. He points to “schists, gneisses, and mica schists” as the three geological strata constituting “the base of mineral crust” (108). Observation of “a rather frightening shaft”—“a narrow slit cut into the mass of the rock”—brings from Axel the museum-guide’s discourse: “It had clearly been produced during the contraction of the earth’s very structure, at the period when it was cooling down” (116). After the tour through the Primitive Era ends, the Transition Era, which has been shown in considerable detail already, is found again and given fuller representation. When they see the shore of the Lidenbrock Sea covered with “those small shells that housed the first beings in creation” (137) and containing “a forest of mushrooms” and other “common shrubs of the Earth, [but] of phenomenal size” (141), Lidenbrock is excited beyond measure and cries, “Astonishing, magnificent, splendid! . . . Here we have the complete flora of the Secondary Period of the world, the Transition Era. Here we have those humble plants which became trees in the first centuries of the Earth” (142). Delighted to find not only “a hothouse” but “a menagerie too,” Lidenbrock points to “the bones of prehistoric animals” scattered on the

ground: “the lower jaw-bone of a mastodon,” “the molars of a dinotherium,” and “a thigh-bone which can only have belonged to the biggest of these animals, the megatherium” (142).

Similarly, when they journey across the Lidenbrock Sea, they catch a fish which “belongs to a family which has been extinct for centuries, and of which only fossil traces remain, in the Devonian strata” (151). Further ahead in the journey, when the pick they have dropped to measure the depth of the sea comes with marks of teeth biting it, Axel wonders, “Is some monster of a lost species tossing under the deep strata of the waters . . .?” and then he says, “I have been trying to remember the particular instincts of these antediluvian animals from the Secondary Period, which following on from the molluscs, the crustaceans, and the fish, emerged before the mammals appeared on the globe” (156). Soon the travelers (and the reader) witness the spectacle of the fight between two reptiles, the ichthyosaurus, also “called the saurian whale” and the pleisiosaurus, specimen of the Secondary Period “no human eye has seen . . . alive” (159, 156).

When the travelers reach the other shore of the Lidenbrock Sea and explore the region, they find evidence first of the Tertiary Era and soon—when “suddenly the ground changed appearance” and exhibited signs that it had been “upset, turned upside down by violent upheaval of the lower strata” (177-78)—the Quarternary Era. When Axel sees “enormous shells with a diameter of more than 15 feet” he comments, “They belonged to those gigantic glyptodonts of the Pliocene period, of which the modern tortoise is but a minute reduction” (177). As they walk over “the broken granite mixed with flint, quartz, and alluvial deposits,” a paleontological and evolutionary haven opens before them: “a field—more than a field, a plain of bones, appeared before our eyes. It looked like an immense cemetery, where the generations of 2,000 years mingled with their eternal dust” (178). As Axel puts it, “Within that area, or perhaps three square

miles, was accumulated the whole history of animal life, writ too small in the recent ground of the inhabited world” (178). As they continue ahead “with impetuous curiosity,” their feet “crush[ing] the remains of these prehistoric animals,” they come across “a priceless assortment of Leptotheria, Mericotheria, Lophiodia, Anoplotheres, Megatheres, Mastodons, Propithecæ, Pterodactyls—of every monster from before the Flood” (178). Soon they reach the climax of the geological/paleontological and evolutionary/anthropological journey, when they see first “a human head” (178) and then “an authentic specimen of Quaternary man” (180), which brings from Axel a recounting of the controversy among the nineteenth-century scientists regarding how far back in the Earth’s history human beings existed and from Lidenbrock a passionate speech (to his students in Germany) that the evidence of the quaternary man was proven beyond doubt. While Axel’s recounting ends with a triumphant note on the profoundly long history of humanity on the Earth—“Thus, in a single move, man had leaped many centuries up the ladder of time . . . his existence dated back a hundred thousand years” (180)—Lidenbrock’s speech, which also recounts that history, appeals to the authenticity of evidence: “But to doubt in the present case would be to insult science! The corpse is there! You can inspect it, touch it. It is not a mere skeleton, it is an entire body, preserved for exclusively anthropological purposes!” (182). The ideological significance of this fictional discovery is made clear when Lidenbrock calls the specimen “incontestably Caucasian” and exults, ““It is of the white race, it is of our own race!”” (183). Soon the uncle and nephew encounter live specimens of species whose bones they have just witnessed: “gigantic animals, a whole herd of mastodons, no longer fossil, but fully alive, and resembling the ones whose remains were discovered in the bogs of Ohio in 1801” (185-86). Then, they see a living human being of more than twelve feet height “leaning against the trunk of an enormous kauri tree” and “shepherding that uncountable drove of mastodons!” (186). The

geological history of the earth is noted again (this time in the correct order) at the end when the travelers ascend back to the surface of the earth thanks to the lava eruption caused by the dynamite used to explode a rock blocking their way. When Lidenbrock observes the mineralogical evidence on the wall surrounding them, he announces that they are moving up through the “Primitive Period” and then through the “Transition Period” (203). Thus the “pasts beyond memory” that the institution of the museum in the nineteenth century was instrumental in popularizing for lay audiences is enacted in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* in narrative form.

Intersecting the geological history, between the Primitive and the Secondary on the one hand and the Tertiary and the Quarternary on the other, there is another climactic moment in the narrative, Axel’s paleontological dream, which reverses the temporal order of the “real” journey/discovery, beginning as it does with the most recent stage of Earth’s history or evolution of life forms and moving back to the “first days of the Earth” and even earlier before the creation of the earth. While the travelers are journeying across the Lidenbrock Sea, the catching of live “fossil fish” (that have become extinct on the surface of the earth) makes Axel wonder, “Why should not some of the birds reconstructed by the immortal Cuvier be flapping their wings in the heavy strata of the atmosphere?” (152). Although he sees nothing of the sort in the sky, Axel notes, “my imagination carries me away into the fantastic hypotheses of palaeontology,” and he dreams “a waking dream” (152): “I fancy I can see on the surface of the water those enormous Chersites, those tortoises from before the flood, as big as floating islands. Along those darkened shores are passing the great mammals of the first days . . .” (152). From this most recent stage of the geological/paleontological history, Axel in his dream moves backwards in time: “The whole fossil world relives in my imagination. I am going back to the biblical ages of the Creation, long before man was born, when incomplete Earth was not yet ready for him (152-53). Then Axel

moves further back in time before “the appearance of the animate beings” and sees through his mind’s eye “[t]he mammals disappear, then the birds, then the reptiles of the Secondary Period . . .” (153). Axel’s imagination thus becomes the theater in which he watches (as does the intended reader) the rewinding of the film of evolutionary/paleontological prehistory, an imaginative recreation that produces for Axel (and for the intended reader) his sublime identity as the most contemporary subject of the profoundly vast time of earth’s history and the evolution of life forms on it. The power of the dream to create a sublime self is evident when Axel says, “The whole of the world’s life is summed up in myself, and mine is the only heart that beats in this depopulated world!” (153). Axel’s dream then continues even further backwards in time when “[t]here are no longer seasons; no longer climates” and soon “[t]he plants disappear; the gigantic rocks lose their purity; the liquid state is about to replace the solid under the action of greater heat . . .” (153). Simulating the God-like eye, with an incomprehensively expanded vision of time, Axel moves still more backwards before the time of the earth’s creation as he imagines “being carried off into planetary space! My body is being subtilized, subliming in turn and commingling like an imponderable atom with these immense clouds, which inscribe their fiery orbit on infinite space!” (153). The discursive economy of exchange between “imponderable atom” and “infinite space” is astutely observed by William Butcher when he observes,

Faced with the apparently infinite and immutable horizon of space time, the Vernian hero compensates for his own infinitesimal dimensions by participating in accelerated versions of other eras. The mapping between space and time . . . enables the virtually non-personifiable to be personalised, the tragically finite to be integrated with the superbly infinite, and the self to encompass the cosmos. Transcendence is occasionally possible after all” (74).

The loss-gain structure of the sublime experience thus allows Axel to simultaneously escape the historicity of his subjectivity and to reclaim himself as the most triumphant and ennobled subject of history.

As Tony Bennett argues, the fabrication of a vast temporal identity for European men was necessarily linked to the denial of such identity to non-European people or the colonial Other. The construction of sublime temporal identity for Lidenbrock and his nephew in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* has its counterpart in the denial of such identity to Hans, who faithfully serves the uncle and the nephew throughout the journey but is never privy to their scientific interests and is thereby denied similar temporal sublimity. While as European men of science, Lidenbrock's and Axel's identities acquire "layered archeological depth," the colonial Other Hans is confined to the primitive past, and is attributed qualities like resignation, fatalism, docility, and lack of curiosity, which reproduce the stereotyped ideological representation of the (primitive or degenerated) colonial Other.

When Lidenbrock and Axel are first introduced to Hans Bjelke, their tour-guide to Mount Snaefells and later into the earth, Hans is described as a self-contained and self-sufficient being, a species of his own: "You felt that he didn't require anything from anyone, that he worked as it suited him, that his philosophy of life couldn't be astonished or disturbed by anything in the world" (55). Axel's description of Hans as utterly indifferent to his surroundings and as stoically nonchalant appears to invoke the image of the Noble Savage, a child of nature, who completely blends with the landscape and has no distinctive individualized self and choices of his own: "Whether he went there or somewhere else, whether he plunged into the innards of his island or travelled over its surface, made no difference to him" (73). While nature for Lidenbrock and his nephew is an object of scientific study and a rival force to be conquered, for Hans it is his very

element. For example, immediately after his mind has surveyed “the whole geological history of Iceland,” (76) Axel observes, “Hans carried calmly on, as if moving over unbroken ground. Sometimes he passed behind huge boulders and we lost sight of him for a moment . . .” (78). Noteworthy here are the primitive pristineness suggested by the unbroken ground and the overtones of the man of nature blending indistinguishably with the landscape. Similarly, after they have descended the crater of Mt Snaefells, Lidenbrock—initially dumbfounded which of the three tunnels to follow—experiences “an insane happiness” to find Arne Saknussemm written on the boulder near a tunnel, and shouts to Axel in triumph. While Axel “runs down” (evidently with great curiosity) to join his uncle, we are told, “Hans and the Icelanders stayed exactly where they were” (83). Moreover, throughout their journey while the uncle and the nephew discourse about scientific stuff, Hans remains silent, a silence that is repeatedly noted by Axel and, hence, becomes textually significant. The qualities of indifference and resignation in Hans pointed out earlier are repeated throughout *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. For example, when Axel has just been saved from death by the last drops of water his uncle gives him, Axel implores his uncle to return back, but the uncle insists that he would brave the journey alone while Axel and Hans could go back. If Axel describes his uncle “struggling with a somber energy against the impossible,” Hans, who is standing nearby, is said to have “followed this scene with his usual indifference” without being “especially interested in this question where his life was at stake” (106). Elsewhere, after Axel has finished discoursing on the likelihood of increase in the density of air and the improbability of continuing the journey, Axel notes of Hans: “I envied the perfect indifference of Hans who, without seeking causes and effects to such an extent, carried blindly on wherever fate took him” (122). That Hans is not concerned with “causes and effects”

reinforces the ideological description of him as the child of nature who lacks “scientific” curiosity.

It is true that Hans is also described as resourceful and intelligent, but his is the intelligence not of an educated and civilized person but of a child of nature: an intuitive intelligence and dexterity with limbs. For example, when Hans discovers a source of water behind “the side walls of the granite face,” Axel comments, “Guided by an instinct peculiar to mountain men, to water-diviners, he had ‘felt’ the presence of a stream through the rock, but had not seen the precious liquid” (111-12). Whereas the uncle and the nephew are at a loss how to avail themselves of the water so close and yet so inaccessible, Hans finds “the precise point where the noise from the stream was loudest” and devises a means to procure water: “I saw him lift up the pickaxe to attack the very rock” (112). Axel notes that it is a means, “however simple, would not have entered our minds” because as civilized people they do not have Hans’s intuitive sense (112). Not only could they have not conceived the idea, Axel adds, they would have been unable to execute it: “Our hands would have been so impatient that the rock would have flown into pieces under our hurried blows. The guide, in contrast, was calm and moderate, slowly chipping away at the rock with a long series of little blows, creating an opening six inches wide” (112-13). The function of Hans in the novel is thus to provide primitive knowledge where the scientific knowledge of the uncle and his nephew is of no help. To consider one more example, when Axel is seriously wounded hurtling down the tunnel he was lost in, his wounds are rubbed and healed by Hans “with some sort of ointment known only to Icelanders” (135).

The most revealing moment in the ideology of the novel’s textual rhetoric occurs when, journeying across the Lidenbrock Sea, the travelers are hit by a violent storm. While Lidenbrock is “cast down” by the swift leap of the raft and is “holding on to the end of a rope with all his

might,” Hans remains unperturbed as if he is the very part of the force of nature that causes the storm. In Axel’s words, “Hans does not move a muscle. His long hair, pushed down over his motionless face by the tempest, gives him a strange appearance, for the end of each hair is illuminated by a tiny, feather-like radiation. His frightening mask is that of an antediluvian man, living at the time of the ichthyosauruses and megatheres” (166). The characterization of Hans as “an antediluvian man” occurs at a significant point in the narrative. Like Axel’s paleontological dream (that reproduces for him and his intended readers the sublime identity of geological deep time), it occurs between the explorations of the two shores of the Lidenbrock Sea (when the uncle and nephew have just seen the flora and fauna of the Secondary Period and they are going to see those of the Tertiary and Quarternary Periods). By shuttling the Icelandic guide, who is physically present by the side of the uncle and his nephew, into the very past the travelers have discovered and are about to discover in their journey, Verne reproduces the European imperial ideology of civilization vs. barbarity that Anne McClintock has aptly captured with the twin concepts of “panoptical time” and “anachronistic space” (36). The physical, spatial journey from Germany and Denmark (imperial centers) to Iceland and into the Earth becomes the journey backwards in time, as consorting with a historical contemporary becomes re-entering one’s own primitive past. That *Journey to the Center of the Earth* reproduces such imperial ideology is made further evident by the way Axel coalesces historical and cultural differences into one self-reproductive Otherness when he wonders (as they are ascending at the mercy of a volcanic eruption), “What was Hans dreaming about, this man from the extreme West, but ruled by the fatalistic resignation of the East?” (202).

Readers of *Journey to the Center of the Earth* have noted the ambiguity of the text about the ideologies it reproduces. Mark Rose points out that while the solving of the puzzle of the

compass needle marks the materialistic faith in science (which is claimed at other places as well, he says), the “romance structure” of the novel undermines it because the major object of the quest—the center of the earth—is not reached (66-67). Andrew Martin, writing about *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and Verne’s novels in general, notes the imperialist drive in them, which, he says, is contradicted by the opposing fact. According to him, like the North Pole in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* and the moon in *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Round the Moon*, the center in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* “remain[s] inaccessible and resist[s] annexations frustrating the would-be imperialist” (57). Indeed, *Journey to the Center of the Earth* presents other textual evidence of a similar kind, evidence that contests the heroic, imperial image of science and the scientists. For example, the ideology of the disinterestedness of science is mocked in the novel by noting Lidenbrock’s insistence that the project of intraterrestrial discovery be kept secret lest others get the idea of it and outpace them in their quest of fame. In addition, even as Lidenbrock sets up nature as an Other to be conquered, there are moments in the novel—the storm on the Lidenbrock Sea and the volcanic eruption that expels them out of the earth—when the travelers are utterly at the mercy of the forces of nature. According to Axel, after they blast a rock obstructing their passage downwards, “From that moment on, our reason, our judgement, our ingenuity were to have no influence at all on events: we were to become mere playthings of the Earth” (195). Then, as they are being pushed up by the volcanic eruption, Axel bursts, “We are to be expelled, thrown out, rejected, regurgitated, spat out into the air, in a whirlwind of flame, along with huge amounts of rock and showers of ash and scoria!” (205).

Despite all these, however, the novel prioritizes the motifs of adventure, the power of science, and the ideological message of the geological deep time. Axel’s fears, after all, are of a

novice, who, like those of young intended readers, is interpellated into Lidenbrock-like fortitude. For example, even amid the violent volcanic eruption, Lidenbrock's indomitable will remains unwavering: "And while his heart still beats, while his flesh still moves, I cannot accept that a being endowed with will-power can give in to despair" (201). Lidenbrock's heroic will is similarly stressed when, observing his uncle taking notes of the mineralogical (strata) of the surrounding walls, Axel notes, "but a scholar remains a scholar, at least when he manages to retain his self-control—and Professor Lidenbrock certainly possessed this last quality to an extraordinary degree" (202). Similarly, the moment of incapacity—the storm on the Lidenbrock Sea—is turned into glorification of electricity, a vaunted subject for Verne and a promising new source of energy in the mid nineteenth century. Moreover, if the travelers do not reach the center of the earth literally, they do reach the center/origin of the ideological journey through geological deep time. As has been argued above, in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* moments of incapacity and loss are turned into glorious deeds of adventure and science, carried out by men of imperial provenance. And if Verne exhibits Romanticism against the spirit of Enlightenment, he also presents a lot that upholds the Romanticism of science—as if the poet of science Wordsworth and Shelly dreamt of from across the channel were embodied in the Professor and his nephew of Hamburg, Germany.

If Verne's project of celebrating the autobiography of European civilization is met in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* by narrativizing the geological and evolutionary discourses of the nineteenth century, in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* Verne attempts the same task by celebrating European maritime navigations to the Arctic, representing them as scientific enterprises as well as accomplishments of European heroic will and energy. At a time when Euro-American interest in the Arctic was at its peak—thanks mainly to the status of "national

enterprise” it acquired in Britain as the British navy sent expedition after expedition to the region (Loomis 99-102)—Verne’s tale of adventure retraces and glorifies previous Arctic navigations as it recounts the sublime project of a Briton of indomitable spirit, John Hatteras, to win glory for his nation by being the first to reach the North Pole. Armed with a scientist in the team—the exemplary case of which in mid-nineteenth century was Darwin on the *Beagle*—the travelers aboard Hatteras’s brig, the *Forward*, brave the challenges of the Arctic ice, witness sublime spectacles of nature, visit landmarks of previous navigations, survive their ordeal with heroic will and scientific ingenuity, and amass scientific—geographical, hydrographical, and cartographical—knowledge. Even as Verne reproduces the fascination for the Arctic (natural) sublime dominant in Europe and America at the time (Loomis 103-06), the pedagogical and ideological project of *Voyages extraordinaires* continues in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* as it transforms natural sublimity into the sublimity of adventure and science, or science as heroic adventure, undertaken by Euro-American men for the glorification of European civilization. Verne’s narration of the journey invites the intended reader to experience adventure in a mode that combines the authenticity expected of genuine travel with the ease and economy of a guided tour.

By mid-nineteenth century, Chauncey Loomis writes, the Arctic in European imagination had become a mysterious, sublime region, which due to “its imagined emptiness as well as its vastness and coldness” evoked feelings of “beauty, terror, fascination, and challenge” (110). Even though the accounts of navigators like Edward Parry, George Back, John Ross, and John Franklin were “usually reasonable and understated” and gave “rational and scientific descriptions,” the picture they presented of the Arctic was stunning beyond measure: blindingly dazzling light for part of the year, “the strange luminous darkness of winter”; the “weird visual

effects” created by “the parhelia (‘mock suns’), the aurora borealis, and the ‘loomings’ created by refraction”; the cries of birds amid the roaring of glaciers; the “ghostly and protean” ice floes, and the immense, awesome icebergs (102). As Butcher writes in his Introduction to *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, Verne draws heavily from the Arctic navigators’ accounts to recreate the Arctic environment that is magnificent both in its beauty and ferocity and produces in its spectators the contradictory experience of humility and ennoblement characteristic of the sublime (xv-xvi).

After Hatteras’s brig leaves Liverpool, the first intimation of the Polar regions comes when nearing Greenland the voyagers see an ice blink, “this strip of dazzling white com[ing] from a vast field of ice situated about thirty miles beyond the range of vision, being produced by a reflection” (33). As the brig continues north, the travelers witness the dynamism and might of the Arctic ice as well as its time defying immobility and colossal magnitude. Past the coast of Greenland, for example, the voyagers see “a 150-foot iceberg, stranded at this spot since time immemorial” and observed in the same state by previous navigators—“Snow,” James Ross, and “the French lieutenant Bellot” (36). Similarly, later in the narrative when the polar sailing season approaches but the passage is entirely blocked by ice, the travelers find themselves surrounded by “endless ice-fields, motionless for another eight months” (129). Not less frequently, the travelers witness the ferocious dynamism of nature in the Arctic, when, for example, icebergs spring up from everywhere making it impossible to steer the brig “in a succession of moving shoals of irresistible destructive power” (48), or when the brig is caught in a storm that rocks it “like a child’s toy” in the “enormous waves, containing floating ice of all shapes, torn from the surrounding fields” (105), or when, after the brig moves to a storm-free zone, “a large number of mountains” of icebergs detach from the coasts and are seen “drifting

north, coming together and colliding everywhere” (106). If by witnessing the time-defying immobility of the Arctic ice, the travelers share its sublime temporal transcendence; by surviving the wrath of the Arctic waves and witnessing magnificent spectacles of hordes of mobile icebergs, they share the dynamic sublimity of the Arctic.

Conjoined with the contrastive stasis and dynamism of the Arctic sublime that the voyagers enjoy are on the one hand the Arctic’s sepulchral desolation which acquires supernatural overtones and on the other hand its immense vitality which brings about colossal transformations within short stretches of time. Views from the tops of icebergs (which are frequently climbed for greater compass of vision) often give the travelers a brush with the omnipresence of ruin and death. On one occasion, in the “long oblique rays” of the sun that gives “light without heat,” the voyagers confront a vast expanse of “[g]enuine chaos”: “this desolate jumble, like a gigantic town with its obelisks overturned, its spires overturned, its palaces overturned in a trice” (60). At another time, in the light of the moon and the stars, the Arctic travelers observe “immense plains bristling with mounds and strange shapes,” a sight that is likened to “a vast cemetery, treeless, sad, silent, eternal, in which twenty generations of the whole world could have easily lain down for eternal slumber” (160). Contrasting such death-like images of the Arctic, there are scenes in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* when a sudden drop or rise in temperature brings about the working of nature in epic scale. For example, on the first signs of Spring after months of wintering, the travelers are delighted to see the Arctic birds returning in flocks and little harmless animals as well as their larger enemies coming out again, while the cracking of ice “send[s] up spurts of salt water here and there” and “thousands of waterfalls” flow at the thaw of the ice (268-69). However, merely after a fortnight when the temperature drops forty degrees, Hatteras and his friends witness “a real change before their

eyes”: “Everything was frozen; birds, quadrupeds, and amphibians disappeared as by magic; the seal holes closed up, the cracks vanished, the ice became hard as granite again, and the waterfalls froze in their flow, becoming long crystal pendicles” (269). On another occasion, on their trek to the Polar Sea—after yet another Arctic storm has subsided and the cracking of ice is heard amid “the more imposing noise of avalanches”—the travelers become “stupefied watchers” to see “the land metamorphosed”: “a mountain became a plain due to a sudden thaw; when water from the sky got into cracks between great blocks and froze in the cold of a single night, its irresistible expansion could break any obstacle . . . and this phenomenon happened with frightening instantaneity” (299-300). In *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, the Arctic thus becomes the site where nature exhibits tremendous vitality as well as sepulchral desolation, while the Arctic travelers become the privileged spectators and sharers of nature’s awesome force and magnitude.

The Arctic represented in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* is also the site of astronomical wonders, zoological plenty, and seemingly ungovernable geographical chaos. It is a region where the sun never sets for part of the year and the “persistence of daylight” causes “astonishment” as well as “tiredness” (54). It is also a region where against the backdrop of pale moonlight, one can observe stars “raining down . . . [in] thousands, like rockets at the climax of a fireworks display” as if it were “a carnival the heavens were putting on for the land at these desolate latitudes” (143). It is, furthermore, the region where the “dazzling” and “incomparable sight” of Aurora Borealis can be observed: “Little by little the bright area rose in the sky as it followed the magnetic meridian, until it was covered with blackish bands; flashes of luminous matter darted out, then got longer, diminishing or increasing in brightness . . .” (145). The Arctic is also the region where the sounds of fleeing or returning flocks of birds fill the sparsely populated environment, producing in the observer a visceral auditory wonder. Once the travelers

move beyond the previously navigated regions (which gives Verne's imagination a free rein), the Arctic also becomes the site of zoological haven. When, for example, the travelers reach the much anticipated Polar Sea, they are greeted by "a deafening continuous noise" of "gigantic numbers" of birds representing every species of "the great aquatic family" as well as by the "aerial monsters . . . whose nomenclature has never appeared in the *Index Ornithologicus* of London" (310). Then, on the surface of the sea, they see "other citizens of the animal kingdom, no less astonishing"—particularly "jellyfish up to thirty feet across"—and, in the transparent waters "thousands of fish of every species . . . like phantasmagorical ghosts" as well as "the narwhale, as fantastic as the unicorn" and "members of the seal and walrus family—sea dogs, sea-horses, fur-seals, sea-lions, and sea-elephants" (310-11). Appropriately enough, the teeming zoological excess of the Polar Sea makes the narrator exclaim in sublime wonder: "What beauty, what variety, what power in nature! How strange and prodigious everything seemed at the heart of these circumpolar regions!" (311). Finally, the geography and the hydrography of the region that displays such astonishing sights and sounds are no less sublime for the unruly disorder that makes navigation into the region so formidable. For example, when they are at the "crossroads" of Arctic navigation "where four great routes meet"; Clawbonny, the scientist in the team, looks at the map and exclaims, "What a fascinating region! . . . How fragmented everything is, mutilated, torn up, in pieces, without order, without logic!" (82). Verne's representation of the Arctic is indeed so powerful in its "assault" on the reader's senses that one could say of his aesthetic what Loomis says of the Arctic represented in the nineteenth-century navigators' accounts: "Edmund Burke, had he written his analysis of the sensational causes of the sublime a century later than he did, might well have used the Arctic in his discussions of light and dark,

sound and silence, obscurity, solitude, vastness, and magnificence as sources of the sublime astonishment and terror” (102-3).

Writing at the cusp of Romanticism and realism and at a time when the European Romantic fascination for the mountains was joined by similar fascination for the Arctic, it is fitting that Verne should recreate the Arctic as a site of terror and wonder, of natural sublimity par excellence. However, as Loomis adds, precisely by virtue of its terrible otherness, the Arctic in European imagination became the stage for enacting the “cosmic romance” of Western man’s “capacity to conquer Nature at its most mysterious and intimidating” (106, 110). In *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, Verne too turns the Arctic into a setting for staging the epic drama of Western man’s triumph over nature by virtue of his heroic will and energy as well as his scientific knowledge and ingenuity. Consequently, the natural sublimity invoked in the novel is also worked into the sublimity of imperial adventure as well as of scientific discourse, or the sublimity of adventure as scientific enterprise. The glorification of adventure, which has historically been pervasive in the Western tradition as ideological justification of the power and appropriation of dominant social groups (Nerlich 4-7), is represented in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* in the audacious project of reaching the North Pole for the glory of the nation and of human civilization, the latter understood in the universalist sense dominant in Europe from the Enlightenment (Wolff 10). Every obstacle of the unpredictable and unruly Arctic ice that Hatteras’s brig, the *Forward*, faces finally accrues to the adventurous sublimity of the travelers, lifting them from the mundane into the transcendent, sublime company of illustrious Arctic navigators deeply etched in European cultural memory.

The glories of famed Euro-American navigators of which *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* is a fictional reworking are mentioned early in the narrative when the *Forward* leaves

Liverpool amid suspense about its purpose. Channeling the questions of “an immense crowd of spectators,” the narrator wonders whether the *Forward* was “[a] ship designed to look for the *Erebus* and *Terror* and Sir John Franklin,” whether it wanted to “attempt the famous Northwest Passage,” or whether it was “going to push towards the South Pole,” and by way of answering them in the negative, mentions Captain McClintock’s return from the Arctic with “incontrovertible proof” of the loss of the Franklin expedition, Captain McClure’s finding of the Northwest Passage in 1853, and Captain James Ross’s navigational achievement in the southern polar region (9-10). Like the illustrious predecessors whose heroic exploits are marked in the names of capes, bays, and points they discovered, Hatteras’s *Forward* moves boldly through seemingly impenetrable Arctic passes. Sometimes the brig runs the risk of “colliding with floating masses of freshwater ice,” while icebergs appear too close due to refraction of light (43). At other times, it forges ahead “into a tall pass that was that was so narrow on both sides that the end of its yards grazed the wall, as hard as rock” (49). On another occasion, the crew engage in a “supernatural battle” with massive ice floes “climbing up the sides of the ship [while] smaller ones, thrown up to the tops, f[a]ll down like sharp arrows, breaking the shrouds, cutting the rigging” (131). The travelers under the leadership of the heroic Captain Hatteras survive all such apparently impossible obstacles, and many more—hunger and cold, when the mutinous crew burn Hatteras’s brig and escape with the food supplies; the dreadful months of wintering, despite the warmth and food they find in the stranded American ship, the *Porpoise*—until they reach the North Pole, name the territory the Queen’s Island, and return to Britain to receive great applause and honor from the Royal Geographic Society as well as the British citizenry. Thanks to the recursive intertextuality between historical texts (accounts of actual navigators) and the fictional history of Hatteras’s journey, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* celebrates and immortalizes

real, historical navigators on the one hand and, via constant references to historical navigators, lends Hatteras, who fictionally completes their endeavors, the sublimity of glorious adventure. For example, in the book he writes about the expedition, Clawbonny immortalizes Hatteras (insane though the latter is struck by “polar madness”) “as the equal of the great travellers, the successor of those daring men who indefatigably sacrificed themselves for the advancement of science” (348). By means of glorifying both Hatteras’s adventures and the adventures of the navigators recounted in the novel, Verne’s *Adventures of Captain Hatteras* offers its intended readers identification with and interpellation into the sublime, imperial heroic identity.

Although it was Britain (and United States after the loss of the Franklin expedition) that invested most in the mid-nineteenth-century craze for Arctic navigations, the popularity of the Arctic was a European phenomenon (thanks partly to translations of navigators’ accounts) and the voyages to the Arctic were constructed as marks of European will and energy (Loomis 103-6). For example, after John Franklin had left England for the famous search for the Northwest Passage, an article published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* dubbed the expedition not only a British but a larger European phenomenon: “To the European alone is allotted the master quality of energy; and by that gift he drives the world before him” (qtd. in Loomis 106). In representing the Arctic (natural) sublime as the Other to be conquered and turned into the adventurous sublime, Verne’s *Adventures of Captain Hatteras* also reconstructs Arctic adventure as the mark of European will and energy, which not only helps the travelers to surmount the formidable obstacles of the Arctic but also entitles them to assert their claim over the territories that are named after the adventurers and their nations. Hatteras’s “sublime” idea—as the American captain, Altamont, rescued from imminent death by Hatteras’s team calls it (290)⁶—to reach the North Pole becomes a reality because the British captain and the doctor, Clawbonny, as

well as Altamont, possess indefatigable energy and indomitable will. While they are wintering at the Pole of Cold, those of the crew that are planning mutiny succumb to cold and do not move away from the stove, but Hatteras, “so armour plated in his fixed idea as to escape all external sensation,” leaves the ship “for hours on end” and returns “without any signs of cold on his face” (144). Clawbonny the doctor, amazed at Hatteras’s constitution, says, “he astonishes me! He carries a fiery furnace within him. He’s one of the most powerful natures I’ve ever studied” (145). Similarly, when the travelers are caught in a violent storm in the Polar Sea and the threat of sinking appears too close, neither Hatteras and nor his faithful companions “raised a single objection”: “They were caught up in the madness of danger. The thirst of the unknown overwhelmed them” (318). Likewise, the scientist in the team, Clawbonny, whose presence in the team is crucial to make the voyage a scientific project, is repeatedly described as one who always seeks the most unpleasant thing to do, and braves it. On one occasion, for example, when the temperature drops to twenty degrees below centigrade, Clawbonny resists the temptation to enjoy “reread[ing] the Arctic Voyages” in his well-heated cabin and decides upon “going on deck and helping the men with the maneuvers” (48). That *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* equates energy and will with the sublimity of adventure is made further evident in the scene, where Hatteras, “the hero of the impossible” (338) impelled by his “sublime obstinacy” (339) defies the threat of hot lava flowing all around him and continues to climb Mount Hatteras (as the volcanic mountain at the Pole is named): “Hatteras was shaking the standard [“his flag which was lit up with incandescent reflections”] with one hand. With the other, he was pointing at the Pole of the celestial globe, directly above him” (339). Prior to this, the narrator uses the conventional metaphor of the mountain to suggest the sublimity of Hatteras’s boldness: “As

Hatteras rose higher above the ocean, his excitement grew; he no longer lived in the realm of men; he was becoming greater than the mountain itself” (337).

The importance of will and energy (as well as knowledge) in the definition of adventure and in the glorification of the latter, is also made clear in a dispute between Hatteras and Altamont that occurs before their rapprochement. When Hatteras calls the American “Dr Kane’s discovery” of the eastward expansion of the polar basin a matter of “luck,” the incensed Altamont exclaims, “Luck! You dare to say that Kane’s great discovery was not due to his energy and knowledge?” (275). In turn, when Altamont denounces McClure’s success in finding the Northwest Passage as a consequence of “luck alone,” the furious Hatteras retorts, “no! It was his courage, his obstinacy at spending four winters in the midst of the ice” (276). Thus it is not only knowledge acquired through a geographical discovery but even more the courage and energy as well as scientific and technological knowledge required for it that adds to (or becomes necessary for) the glorification of the imperial self as the sublime adventurer in the Arctic.

The equation between heroic will/energy and European imperialist self-identity claimed in the *Blackwood’s* article is reproduced in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* by situating Hatteras’s achievement in relation to the accomplishments of the imperial adventurers in Africa and Australia as well as in the Arctic. We have already noted above how in the book he writes about the expedition, Clawbonny glorifies Hatteras “as the equal of the great travellers, the successor of those daring men who indefatigably sacrificed themselves for the advancement of science” (348). Prior to that, while they are celebrating their successful reaching of the North Pole, Clawbonny congratulates Hatteras for his preeminent place in the company of imperial explorers: “So this is the most important geographical event of our time! Who could have imagined that this discovery would come before those of the centers of Africa and Australia!

Truly, Hatteras, you are above the Sturts, the Livingstones, the Burtons, and the Barths!” (325). In texts like *Five Weeks in a Balloon* and *The Children of Captain Grant* (Part II), Verne describes Africa and Australia as sites of formidable dangers and celebrates the imperial-colonial adventurers in the regions. In *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, Africa and Australia become mere foils for the greater risk and hence greater adventure of the Arctic exploration, particularly the reaching of the North Pole. Chiming with Clawbonny’s encomium of Hatteras’s achievement, Altamont remarks: “because of the difficulties involved, the North Pole should have been the last point on earth discovered. As soon as the government absolutely wanted to know the centre of Africa, it could easily have done so, by sacrificing enough men and money; but here success was never certain, and there could have been totally impossible obstacles” (325). Altamont thus sees the annexation of the North Pole (for the island is named after the British queen) as the logical culmination of European maritime and inland explorations, the celebrated archetype of which is perhaps Christopher Columbus’s “discovery” of America in 1492. In *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, Verne tacitly compares Hatteras’s discovery of the North Pole with Columbus’s discovery of America and explains the motivation behind Hatteras’s project as his desire to give Britain, the dominant imperial-colonial power of the nineteenth century, the glory of “the great discoveries” the country had missed in earlier centuries (72). When the travelers are close to reaching the North Pole but no land has been sighted yet, the narrator says, “Nothing appeared on the distinctly drawn horizon. Not even a blade of that terrestrial grass on the billows that made Christopher Columbus’s heart beat on the way to finding America” (313). Much earlier, when the motivation behind Hatteras’s project is being described, we are told that “Hatteras felt despair at seeing his countrymen excluded from that glorious phalanx of navigators who made the great discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries” (72). Seeing that “the lands and seas of the north America” were the “corner of the globe where [the British] seemed to have concentrated their efforts”—we are further told—Hatteras had made two unsuccessful attempts at reaching the Pole and yet had the courage to brave the third one (73). In *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, reaching the North Pole and naming the island and the mountain on it after the British queen and after the British explorer, Hatteras, are means for the glorification of Britain as the dominant imperial power; they are also glorification of the imperial will and energy upon which imperial-territorial rights are ideologically claimed.

As much as Verne exalts the imperial adventurism of the British at the North Pole, he also recognizes the rising power of the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, and, with the addition of the heroic French “lieutenant Bellot,” makes his narrative of polar navigation a tale of Euro-American triumph. The celebration of Bellot’s heroism makes one mini narrative, recounted by Master Johnson, who was quartermaster on the ship “which took part in the 1853 expedition in search of Franklin” (15). In Johnson’s recounting, Bellot comes out as the “brave officer” [who] had fallen victim to his own devotion” (119): after taking part in the search of Franklin on the *Prince Albert* in 1850, Bellot joined the *Phoenix* with the same purpose and, in his desire that “the dispatches from the Admiralty to Sir Edward Belcher” be not delayed, left on a sledge with some crew and perished on the way, swept off by the wind into the crevasse of an ice floe that broke up suddenly. The American presence in the narrative introduces the theme of nationalist rivalry between Britain and the United States. Hatteras is annoyed, for example, that the domination of the British in the Arctic navigations has been questioned by the presence of the American Dr Kane, whose brig the *Advance*, gone in search of the Franklin expedition, “went further than the eighty-second degree of latitude north, nearer the Pole than anyone had gone

before” (74). When Altamont, the captain of the stranded American ship, the *Porpoise*, is found in near-death state and is revived, Hatteras is suspicious of the American’s ambitions and engages in angry disputes with him about the respective glory of British and American navigators. The American captain, too, claims rights of prior presence, naming the territory they winter on “New America.” In representing British-American rivalry, Verne alludes both to the animosity born of the American war of independence and to the increasing power and ambition of mid-nineteenth-century United States. When Altamont proposes to name a cape the Washington Cape, Hatteras exclaims, “You should have chosen a less disagreeable name for a British ear” (228). Earlier, Clawbonny, worried about the animosity between the British and American captains, says to Johnson that Altamont, too could be seeking the Northwest Passage: “The Americans are bold and audacious; what a British wants to do, an American might also try” (214). But the reconciliation between the American and the British—engineered as it was largely by the publisher Hetzel—as well as the representation of Clawbonny as a man transcending national rivalry reconstitutes the novel as a narrative of Euro-American achievement, a triumph of Western civilization. With Clawbonny’s claim that nationalist rivalries are trifle and petty before the dignity of “man” (290), the achievements celebrated in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* appear to become achievements of humanity as such. However, as we will see in the next section, the humanity and civilization celebrated in the novel is one in which Europe is at the front and Europe’s various cultural others are barbaric hordes to be defeated.

When Clawbonny insists that the adventurers rise above the pettiness of national rivalry and claim the Pole for humanity, it is an insistence made from the position of a man of science, and presents science as an impartial force propelling the progress of civilization, understood in the universalist sense. However, sciences in the nineteenth century were hardly detached from

European imperial projects; as has been elaborated in chapter one, they played crucial roles in facilitating the course of European empires, both materially and ideologically. Like the sciences of geology, paleontology, and evolutionary biology invoked in *Journey to the Center of the Earth*; geography, the science invoked most in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, was deeply involved in imperial and colonial ventures (Smith and Godlewska 4-8). In the latter novel the project of imperial geography and the project of the Enlightenment take various narrative/rhetorical forms, such as recoding natural sublimity into the sublimity of science that explains it; turning the Arctic, the veritable site of natural sublimity, into the laboratory for scientific wonders; representing the seemingly unconquerable Arctic as a densely mapped space and configuring the region as a challenging Other that invites imperial cartographical excess, yielding archival plenty; and, reconstructing the Arctic as the site of Euro-American colonization, which can be erected and defended against enemies, thanks to the powers of science and scientific ingenuity. On the one hand, by means of symbolic exchange, the formidable sublimity of the Arctic is transferred onto the sublimity of science that enables its explanation and its colonization; on the other hand, from the glory of European civilization, in which science plays a vital part, are excluded those, the colonial others, whose demonization is essential to constructing the identity of European civilization.

Making the scientist, Clawbonny, the privileged observer of the wonders of nature is one of the ways *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* recodes the natural sublime of the Arctic into the scientific sublime. While Hatteras is obsessed with reaching the North Pole and the crew are busy meeting the challenges of Arctic navigation, Clawbonny finds time to observe, appreciate, take notes, and discourse about raining stars, doubling of the sun, the aurora borealis, ferocious storms, as well as sudden changes in Arctic weather and its marvelous effects. For example,

when Hatteras's ship is caught in a violent Arctic storm, we are told: "The doctor could not miss out on such an occasion to get drenched to the bone; he remained on deck, full of exhilarating admiration that a scientist can extract from such a spectacle" (105). Similarly, when the "magnificent . . . phenomenon" of the doubling of the sun is observed, the narrator presents the appreciation of it through the eyes of the scientist: "from observation the doctor discovered its exact dimensions; the external arc was visible over only thirty degrees on each side of the horizontal diameter . . ." (93). Likewise, when the difficulties of wintering at the Pole of Cold occupy the minds of all (except Hatteras), we are told: first, "An hour away from the *Forward*, something else astonished the doctor. Shooting stars were raining down" (143); then, "Almost every night the doctor could observe a magnificent Aurora (borealis)," before a glowing description of the phenomenon is presented (145). By making Clawbonny the scientist the appreciative observer of spectacles of nature, Verne subtly recodes sublime natural phenomena as scientific phenomena.

Similar recoding is achieved in the novel when observance of natural phenomena is followed by discoursing upon them scientifically. On one occasion, for example, when the imminent danger of the brig colliding with "an enormous floating block" of ice is averted amid the "terrible noise" of the ice splitting and "a veritable waterspout raised by an enormous wave"; Clawbonny explains the miracle scientifically, turning the spectacle into a scientific event:

It is quite simple, my friend, and it happens often; when these floating masses split up during thaws, they sail separately and in perfect equilibrium, but little by little they move south, where the water is slightly warmer; their bases, loosened by hitting other pieces, begin to melt and be undermined; so there comes a time when their centres of gravity are displaced and then these masses turn over. (49)

On another occasion, the travelers witness the bizarre phenomenon of “a snow that was entirely red”; the reflection of the sunlight upon it “giv[ing] the surrounding objects, the rocks, the men, and the animals, an inflamed colour,” and, when the snow melts, producing the impression of “rivers of blood . . . flowing under the travelers’ feet” (300-1). This sublime wonder of nature is presented by the narrator as a “phenomenon . . . which for a long time stimulated the patient research of scientists in Europe” before the redness of the snow is explained—thanks to “the chemical analyses done upon it by Wollaston, de Condille, and Bauer”—as the effect of “the presence of organic corpuscles [in the snow] . . . belong[ing] to a species of microscopic mushrooms, of the genus *Uredo*, which Bauer called *Uredo Novalis*” (300).

The recoding of the natural sublime into the scientific sublime in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* is also accomplished by presenting the wonders of nature as illustrations of scientific principles of light, sound, density, etc. For example, the travelers’ first brush with the polar ice—sighting of an ice blink—is presented as originating “from a vast field of ice situated about thirty miles beyond the range of vision, being produced by reflection” (33). Numerous instances of “optical illusions”—mistaking a fox for a bear, a dog for a monstrous giant, distant ice formations appearing to threaten the ship with imminent collision—are presented as ever-recurring cases of “refraction in these waters” (43). The barks of a dog in the solitary expanse of Arctic ice, heard from the distance of a mile, occasions notes on the speed of light and sound: “This range of sound at low temperatures is an astonishing feature; it is equalled only by the clearness of the stars in the northern sky; especially in the dry cold of the boreal nights, light and sound travel considerable distances” (141). Similarly, a long trek over the vast plains of Arctic ice brings forth from the scientist Clawbonny a discourse on the sublime resistance of ice: “ice two inches thick can support a man; three and a half inches, a horse with its rider; five inches an

eight-pounder; eight inches, a full artillery carriage with its team of horses; and finally at ten inches an army—a numberless crowd! Where we are walking now you could build the Liverpool Customs House or the Houses of Parliament in London” (199).

In *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, both ways of recoding the wonders of nature into the sublime scientific phenomena—giving scientific explanations, and using natural wonders as illustrations of scientific principles—are put to the ideological task of demythifying the image of the Arctic as a site of supernatural horrors, thereby reproducing the Enlightenment project of dispelling the magical view of nature. On one occasion, for example, the ship is caught amid “more and more icebergs passing like phantoms in the fog” when, through “a gap in the fog” torn open by storm, “a remarkable peak” called Devil’s Thumb, “erect like a ghost,” seems to suddenly approach the ship—“grown fantastically” as it does so—“ready to come crashing down” (65). When this “frightening sight” is explained by Clawbonny as the case of “an optical illusion,” the affective response of the crew “switch[es] from fear to admiration” (66). Here the Arctic as the space of the supernatural is invoked only to be dispelled by science that knows it to be an illusion. Likewise, when Hatteras’s dog, Duke—abandoned by some crew members—makes its way back toward the brig, the travelers see that “A strange animal, with alarming movements, and a smoking tongue lolling from enormous mouth, was leaping a cable away from the ship.” Then, as “the monster fr[ee]ze[s] with fear the most intrepid,” the sailors give way to exclamations, such as “Beast of Gévaudan!” and “the Lion of the Apocalypse!” (66). Like before, the mythological/supernatural is invoked so as to be dispelled by scientific explanation—refraction—which becomes clear when “The firing of the guns, sending a shock through the atmospheric strata, produced a sudden and unexpected effect” (the sighting of the dog as dog) (67). On yet another occasion, the ship is in danger of being crushed by a “tall ice floe . . .

heading towards [it] as fast as an avalanche” and numerous other ice floes “jumping over each other, turning each other over, like enormous grains of sand swept before a formidable storm” (130); and, seeing this “rather frightening sight,” Clawbonny exclaims, “It’s like an enormous herd of antediluvian animals, the ones that are meant to have lived at the Pole! They are speeding up! They’re racing to see who can get there first” (130). The transfiguration of ice floes into “antediluvian animals” here simultaneously invokes the supernatural/mythological and the paleontological and evolutionary sciences. Similar is the case when above, upon, and in the open polar sea, the “supernatural” sight of “aerial monsters” and aquatic prodigies “like phantasmagorical ghosts” brings up the mention of “the *Index Ornithologicus* of London” and the ease and power of the scientist and his science even amid the fantastic: “the doctor could admire these countless animals as easily as he would have done the crustaceans and fish in the crystal basins of the Zoological Gardens” (311). Finally, the volcano at the Pole is first presented as supernatural or monstrous—“repeatedly trembling, like a giant’s breathing,” the lava flowing down like “inflamed serpents twist[ing] their way past the smoking rocks” (327)—but, significantly, it is Clawbonny the scientist who is the implicit, privileged observer of the scene, which reminds him of “a similar occurrence in 1812 on the island of Barbados” (321). Then, when the travelers make a closer observation of the terrain, the monstrosity is replaced by scientific geological discourse. The narrator notes the newness of the volcano, the formation of the island due to “the accumulation of the successive volcanic ejections,” and thus explains the lack of vegetation there: “The carbonic acid vomited by the crater had not yet had time to join up with hydrogen from the water or ammonia from the clouds, to form organized matter under the effect of the light” (335).

Hence, as in *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* too, Verne mythologizes or supernaturalizes nature so as to subsequently demythologize it by scientific discourse. Such contrary representation of nature signifies Verne's fascination with both nature and science, with Romanticism and Realism; however, it is the Enlightenment project of demythifying nature and claiming the mastery of science over it that is repeatedly foregrounded in Verne's narratives, both in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*. In other words, science and nature may be adapted to each other in Verne's narratives, as Macherey argues (185), but the science-nature harmony struck by Verne is a consequence of reconstructing nature as scientific phenomena—the Enlightenment project of demythologizing nature establishing itself as always-already accomplished.

Treating the formidable and seemingly unconquerable Arctic as the laboratory for scientific observations and experiments is yet another way *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* stages Verne's ideological project of enumerating science's mastery of nature. Again, the sublimity of Arctic nature is symbolically transferred onto science, which accumulates a rhetorical excess that vies with the image of the Arctic sublime. Clawbonny begins his journey of Arctic adventure fully equipped with a "mobile laboratory"⁷—"His books, his herbaria, his pigeon-holes, his precision instruments, his physics apparatus, his collection of thermometers, barometers, hygrometers, pluviometers, telescopes, compasses, sextants, charts, and maps, the flasks, powders, and bottles of his complete medical chest—all this was classified with an organization that would have shamed the British Museum" (21-22)—and when this library-laboratory is burnt by the mutinous crew, Clawbonny finds another fully furnished one aboard the stranded American ship, the *Porpoise*. As Clawbonny announces to his fellow travelers—when they are well set to enjoy "the pleasures of wintering" on "New America"—the Arctic

region is “a vast laboratory, where you could do interesting experiments on low temperatures” (240). Clawbonny’s Arctic experiments include planting seeds in New America when the spring arrives, making a bullet with the frozen mercury in the thermometer, making a lens by cutting fresh-water ice and making a fire with the help of the ice lens, making a beacon with the help of a lantern, a Bunsen battery, and insulated wires aboard the *Porpoise*, and finding the exact magnetic pole and witnessing the needle of the compass go perpendicular. Some of these experiments—the making of the mercury bullet and finding of the exact magnetic pole—are performed as rehearsals and/or perfections of experiments conducted by previous navigators in similar circumstances. The making of the bullet is a reproduction of experiments done by “Captain Ross,” who, as Clawbonny recounts, “pierced a plank an inch thick using a gun loaded with a bullet of frozen mercury” (208). The experiment with the compass’s needle, likewise, is presented as a reproduction and perfection of an experiment done by “James Ross, the nephew of Sir John [Ross]”, a perfection that gives Clawbonny “the huge satisfaction of seeing his inclination at ninety degrees” (96).

The presentation of Clawbonny’s experiments as reproductions and perfections of prior navigators’ experiments is part of a larger rhetoric in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*: by presenting Hatteras’s journey to the North Pole as retracing and perfecting of previous journeys, the project of mastering and colonizing the Arctic nature by science is turned into an accomplishment not only of the voyage of Hatteras and his companions but also of all those Euro-American navigators whose navigational triumphs are marked by the landmarks they named after themselves and by the documents (preserved in cairns) that proclaim their penetration and appropriation of Arctic territories. The vast, solitary, and formidable Arctic thereby becomes an immensely crowded space, crowded by imperial adventurers, or even better,

by imperial scientific adventurers. Discovered, named, mapped, scientifically explained and turned into a laboratory, the Arctic is rhetorically transformed from a seemingly unconquerable Romantic Other into a space excessively colonized by imperial geographers and cartographers. That the novel dubs the voyage of imperial adventure as scientific enterprise is evident not only by Clawbonny's presence in Hatteras's ship but also by Clawbonny's already-quoted eulogy for Hatteras as "the equal of the great travellers, the successor of these daring men who indefatigably sacrificed themselves for the advancement of science" (348). The same is suggested when Verne "cites" the epitaph for Sir John Franklin and his crew, erected at the request of Lady Franklin: the inscription on the tablet of black marble contains a dedication to those who "perished for the cause of science and the glory of the nation" (112). Thus, on the one hand, the novel offers its intended readers the sense of participating in a collective enterprise, which is crucial to the publisher Hetzel's conception of the pedagogical value of the "extraordinary voyages." On the other hand, by representing the collective scientific enterprise as imperial adventure, the novel also interpellates its imperial readers as men of science, superior to the colonial others.

The preeminently imperial science of cartography makes a major part of the narrative of *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*. The journey to the North Pole, obviously, would be unimaginable without a map of the region; the travelers often consult it to confirm their positions by tallying geographical features or landmarks with the names they have been given in the maps drawn by previous explorers. The thrill and passion for imperial map-making is made clear in Verne's description of Clawbonny's feelings when, having crossed the "known lands," the travelers trek toward an undiscovered territory (later named "New America"):

So, not far away was a new land, and the doctor burned with the desire to add it to the maps of the northern hemisphere. It is difficult to imagine the pleasure of

surveying unknown coasts, and tracing their outlines with a sharp pencil . . . he was jubilantly anticipating the thought of the names to baptize the seas with, the straits, the bays—every last sinuosity of these new lands. Certainly in the glories of nomenclature, he would not forget his companions, or his friends, or Her gracious Majesty, or the Royal Family; nor would he forget himself, and so he dreamed of a “Clawbonny Point’ with legitimate satisfaction. (215)

When Clawbonny proposes to “give names to this hospitable land, where we have found safety and rest,” he points, on the one hand, to historical precedent—“this is the custom followed by every navigator in the world” (225)—and, on the other, to the service to the imperial archive—“When we return, we need to bring back not only the hydrographical configuration of the coasts, but also the names of capes, bays, points, and promontories identifying them” (225). This dual recognition of the work of the predecessors and the contribution to that archive reflects the very rhetoric of the novel—retracing and perfecting of previous voyages—which is also the rhetoric by which the imperial conquest and appropriation of the Arctic is staged in the novel.

Adventure and science thus inter-animate Verne’s representation of the Arctic sublime as the imperial sublime of conquest and appropriation of the Other. The inter-animation of the adventurous and the scientific as well as the ideological justification of conquest and appropriation in the names of science and adventure in the novel is articulated most strongly by Verne’s reworking of the Robinsonade, a rewriting that was dear to Verne and is worked upon masterfully in *The Mysterious Island*. The Robinsonade narrative begins in the second part of *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* when Hatteras’s ship is burnt by the mutinous crew, and the remaining travelers are “abandoned without resources, without a ship, more than two thousand five hundred miles from their homeland!” (181). Once they trek to their next place of wintering,

“New America,” and the difficulties of surviving till the next sailing season become paramount, the travelers’ exceedingly perilous situation and hence the glory of their adventure is emphasized by contrasting their odds against the ease of pacific Island Robinsonades:

And yet, how different the situation was from men shipwrecked on the Pacific islands, those Robinsons whose attractive stories invariably made readers wish they were there! There, a prodigal earth, an opulent nature offered a thousand varied resources; in those fine lands all you needed for material happiness were a little imagination and work; nature anticipated man’s desires; hunting and fishing satisfied all his needs; trees grew for him, caves opened up to shelter him, brooks flowed to quench his thirst; magnificent shade protected him from the heat of the sun, and in the gentle winters of the Pacific, terrible cold never came to threaten him; a seed, casually thrown on this fertile ground, produced abundance a few months later. It was complete happiness outside society. . . . But here, on this coast of New America, how different it all was! (242-43)

The theme of adventure—and its role in colonial appropriation—is carried out by representing the travelers’ hunting for survival (before they reach “New America” and use the resources of the American ship) and for pleasure (when they desire fresh animal meat, beyond the food supplies of the *Porpoise*). The theme of adventure is further continued as the travelers, now turned into “settlers,” defend themselves against snow, ravages of the Arctic weather, and the threat of polar bears—tasks in which they deploy the scientific knowledge of Clawbonny and technological resources of the American ship. Thanks to the all-in-one scientist, Clawbonny—who can act as an engineer as much as a geologist and a geographer—they erect an elaborate snow house for themselves and more snow houses for food store, powder store, and even a “Dog

Palace.” That such an elaborate and ingenious act of engineering is ideological reproduction of European civilization in the Arctic desert becomes clear when we are told that the sumptuous feast Clawbonny gives to celebrate the completion of constructions is motivated by Clawbonny’s desire “to bring the habits and pleasures of European life to this land” (224). The reproduction of European civilization is enacted also by the construction of a beacon, using the electric battery, insulated wires, and a lantern from the American ship, and by a display of military strength through the use of explosives to kill the bears that attack the settlers. Added to this is the further possibility of introducing the pleasures of the theater and the newspaper, which is not practical for the travelers because of their small number but is nonetheless recounted as a successful venture made by Commander Parry while wintering on Melville Island. If the reproduction of European civilization in an Other territory cannot reach the extent of full colonization of it—because of the nature of the terrain, the relative brevity of the travelers’ stay there, etc.—the possibility of such colonization is nonetheless plentifully pointed out. In a typical colonial exercise, the travelers “take a long excursion . . . to reconnoitre the eastern lands” (282), whereupon Clawbonny the scientist turns into an ardent colonialist and says, “I don’t believe in uninhabitable lands” (284). Immediately after this, he claims that “it is man who makes country habitable, by his presence, his habits, his industry, and even . . . his breath” (284). Clawbonny then finds an example to illustrate his point when the travelers come upon a ground that “displayed a veritable desire to be fertilized”: “Look, couldn’t a few enterprising settlers settle this valley, if they had to? With hard work and perseverance, they would transform it; not to a temperate countryside . . . but at least a presentable patch of land” (284). In similar fashion, when they reach the open Polar Sea, the commercial viability of the seas (as well as the value of the knowledge Hatteras’s expedition would bring to the civilized world) is noted by the narrator: “if

ever whalers can reach the polar basin, from the seas of the north of America or the north of Asia, they are sure to quickly complete their cargo, for this part of the ocean seems to be a universal breeding ground—the general reserve for whales, seals, and all marine animals” (312).

The glorification of European civilization that can assert its presence and reproduce itself even in the formidable Arctic region remains incomplete without constructing the savage Other, which European civilization can recognize and embrace for its useful knowledge but which must be othered as an enemy—in the novel’s case, the Eskimos. For example, when Hattreas is disappointed not to find the coal deposit in the Beechey Island put there by the British Navy (for the need and convenience of Arctic navigators), the narrator thus describes the scene without the sought-after coal: “ruin, pillage, upheaval, and destitution had intervened where civilized hands had provided immense resources for exhausted navigators” (114). Though there are no visible signs identifying the imputed culprit—the “savage” agency—the narrator “reasons” nonetheless: “Clearly, the Eskimos’ contacts with European ships had eventually made them realize the values of such objects which they are completely deprived of . . . they had often come to this place of plenty, taking and destroying each time, with the logical idea of not leaving any trace of what had been there” (114). Similarly, when Clawbonny proposes that they first build a proper house for their shelter and safety, he suggests that they “imitate the agents of the Hudson Bay Company . . . [who] build forts to protect themselves from animals and Indians”—an example that is doubly resonant because the land would soon be named “New America” (218, 227). The compulsive necessity of othering (for self-representation) is made most evident when the Eskimos are invoked even where they are unlikely to be present and when subtle substitutes are sought because they are not there. For example, after the construction of their winter habitation is over, the narrator thus assesses the strength of the sellers’ dwelling: “In truth, the fortified

enclosure would have held a long time against an Eskimo tribe, if such enemies could be found at this latitude” (222). Even though “there was no trace of human being on this coast,” the novel “must” act out the efficacy of European colonial enclosure, the Fort Providence, in holding out against the absent enemies, who are functionally substituted by (intelligent) bears. Consequently, an elaborate battle scene is performed: a group of hungry polar bears encircle the dwelling, digging “a second parallel trench so to speak” and “even ma[king] an advance,”; they attack the settlers, who make to the enclosure firing their guns and “barricad[e] the passage” (258); the bears start “piling up pieces of ice” around the dwelling so as to suffocate their prey (259)—and, eventually, European scientific knowledge and ingenuity triumphs over the native intelligence of the Arctic bears, who are killed by the explosion of gunpowder, cleverly devised by Clawbonny the scientist.

It is true that the scientist, Clawbonny sometimes appears to rise above the Self-Other dichotomy, such as when he tries to experience the Eskimo dwelling by getting inside its hole, or when he tries to imbibe seal oil the way Eskimos do. However, even as Clawbonny tells his companions to learn from the Eskimos, his efforts to assimilate Eskimo knowledge and experience their lifestyle are examples of a European scientist, the civilized man, consuming the Other as exotic experience and using their practical knowledge. It is also significant that Clawbonny, after all, cannot imbibe the seal oil, and his inability to get into an Eskimo “hole” prompts the narrator to make hateful remarks about the Eskimo dwelling: “It was a lucky escape, for nothing is more disgusting than this jumble of dead and living things, seal meat and Eskimo flesh, rotten fish and filthy clothes, that furnishes a Greenland home” (56). Therefore, when Clawbonny exhorts Hatteras and Altamont to rise above national rivalry and claim the dignity of being “man,” the universality of humanity proclaimed by him is in accord with the

practice of Enlightenment philosophes and the nineteenth-century imperial discourse: the Other is part of the same humanity, but he is the primitive or barbarian or decadent human, whereas the European is the most advanced, most contemporary subject of history.

Indeed, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* illustrates another aspect of the imperial politics of Othering: it is not only the conventional/stereotypical Other (such as Eskimos) who is othered; but ethnically and culturally self-identical people can also be othered if they are not well-functioning, desirable, imperial bodies. The latter is narratively acted out by Verne's reworking of "the specter of cannibalism" (Loomis 110), which in European self-perception undermined the otherwise glorious career of polar navigations. When a report about the Franklin expedition claimed that the crew had resorted to cannibalism, Charles Dickens denounced the claim, calling the Eskimo informants "a gross handful of uncivilized people, with a domesticity of blood and blubber," who could not be trusted to report about the "brave and enterprising" British explorers (qtd. in Loomis 108). Though the report was published in Britain in the *Times* of 23 October, 1854, the Franklin expedition was a Euro-American sensation, and the horrible news "swept across the civilized world" (Loomis 107). Verne, who was a regular reader of *Le Tour du monde*, *Bulletin de la Société de géographie*, and *Nouvelles annals des voyages*—as Butcher points out in his Introduction to the novel (xv)—must have got the news, and because the Franklin expedition is one of the most dearly narrated episodes in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, Verne must have wondered what to do about the inglorious news. Verne "manages" the specter of cannibalism by making a sharp distinction between the energetic, courageous, and loyal (duty-bound) crew members and those who do not have inner strength to hold up against the adversities of the Arctic voyage. The commander of the ship, Shandon, and most of the other crew members are represented as those who sorely missed liquor (prohibited on board the

Forward by Hatteras), and who, when opportunity arises, give way to a wild orgy, and abandon their captain in mid-journey, destroying his ship and escaping with the resources. Fittingly, the courageous and loyal succeed in their journey and make to the home country amid high acclaim; the morally weak villains, on the other hand, perish on their way back, resorting to cannibalism, as Clawbonny finds out when he sees the remains of the mutinous crew's dead bodies.

Construction of such dichotomy between the morally strong and the weak in the novel is perhaps a function of what Ann Laura Stoler, following Michel Foucault, calls imperial biopolitics, which insists upon and polices the proper imperial Self and excludes the undesirable "internal enemies" among the imperial citizenry as the Other (96). Hence, the bourgeois project of conquering nature by industry (the project of capitalism, and, thereby, that of imperialism, too) requires, as Arthur Evans also points out (without using the term biopolitics), people who are able to discipline themselves as well as others by restraining their impulses (54-55); those who fail that requirement can be dismissed as Other, just as the Eskimos are.

The glorification of imperial adventure, science, and science as adventure in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* is notable also for the rhetorical mode in which it is presented: the intertextual, and ideologically mutually-reinforcing, relation between the historical and fictional navigations of the Arctic make the novel a veritable text of imperial tourism, one that presents the pleasures culturally associated with the adventures of "travel" with the economy of guided tours.⁸ Serving the travel-tourism rhetoric of the novel, every setback the protagonist, Hatteras, faces on his mission to reach the North Pole becomes a gain for the novel and its narrators. Even though Hatteras's ship leaves early so as to take fuller advantage of the sailing season, the highly inclement weather of the Arctic turns out to be worse than his predecessors faced and obstructs Hatteras from moving continuously to the north, forcing him to navigate

back and forth across the many passages in the hope of finding one passage that will let him go north. As a result, the travelers (and the readers of the novel) get to see and/or visit all the landmarks that bear the names of previous navigators, often witnessing concrete evidence of the navigators' presence there. For example, relatively early in the narrative when Cape Farewell is sighted, Clawbonny notes the significance of the landmark in the history of Arctic navigations, "here is the famous cape, with such an appropriate name! Many have sailed past it like us, never to see it again! . . . You passed here , Frosbisher, Knight, Beiley, Vaughan, Scroggs, Barents, Hudson, Blossville, Franklin, Crozier, and Bellot, never to return home again . . ." (36). As "[t]he strange history of these lands appea[r] to the doctor's imagination . . . [and] [t]he names of these brave mariners crow[d] into his memory," the intended reader is interpellated into the glorious cultural memory of European heroic self-identity, imaginatively visiting these landmarks and sharing the glory of their adventures. Especially in the first part of the novel—which narrates the "known lands" (and waters), the reader is repeatedly hailed by the voice of a tour guide who points to an island or a strait or a passageway and recounts its value in terms of Euro-American navigational history. For example, when the ship moves past the Disko Island, it is introduced as the place from where "on 12 July 1845, Sir John Franklin wrote to the Admiralty for the last time" and where Captain McClintock landed "on 27 August 1859, bringing home the certain proofs of the loss of the Franklin expedition" (54). Similarly, when Devil's Thumb is sighted, the narrator observes, "on the same spot, the *Prince Albert* in 1851 and the *Advance* with Kane in 1853 were obstinately held by the ice for several weeks" (64). Sometimes an Arctic landmark becomes exceptionally notable for the immensely large number of navigators who have frequented that place. One such place is Beechey Island, where Hatteras hopes to find (but is disappointed) the coal store deposited at the command of the British Navy for the benefit of

Arctic navigators. When the travelers reach the island, it is introduced thus: “Almost all the ships venturing into these seas put in at this island. Franklin wintered there for the first time, before forcing his way into Wellington Channel. There Cresswell, McClure’s assistant, having covered 470 miles over the ice, re-embarked on the *Phoenix* and went back to Britain . . . McClintock replenished his supplies there on 11 August 1855 and repaired the huts and stores” (110-11).

Often, an Arctic landmark is glorified by pointing to the remains of the past expeditions, catering to touristic voyeurism and producing in the reader a sense of awe at the authenticity of experience. For example, when the travelers reach Port Leopold and are forced to halt there due to “an impenetrable ice field,” they step ashore to find “[t]he house and searchlight constructed by James Ross . . . still in a reasonable state,” and identify “[t]he graves containing six sailors from the *Enterprise* and *Investigator* . . . from the slight bulges in the ground” (86). After inserting the cue for proper emotional response from the reader—“It is hard to imagine the feelings flooding one’s heart on seeing the remains of houses, tents, huts, and stores, that nature conserves so carefully in the cold regions” (86)—the narrator recounts Clawbonny’s performance as the tour guide to the Arctic adventure: “Here is the engine abandoned on this spot and the stove set up on the flat piece of land by *Prince Albert*’s crew to warm themselves in 1851; things have remained in the same state, and you’d think that Kennedy, its captain left this hospitable port only yesterday. Here is the launch which sheltered him and his men for a few days . . .” (87). As Clawbonny “search[es] for the remains of previous wintering with an antique dealer’s enthusiasm,” so is the reader invited to join the adventure-tourism and rehearse vicariously for himself the self-identity of the sublime adventurer over the Arctic ice (87). On another occasion, on the Beechey Island, the travelers observe “a monument [raised] to the memory of “Franklin and his companions,” and read the “painfully touching” inscription written

on it: “To the memory of Franklin, Crozier, Fitzjames, and all their gallant and variant brother officers and faithful companions who suffered, perished for the cause of science and the glory of the nation. . . .” (112-113). The “authenticity” of touristic spectacle is further enhanced by other means: using dramatic deictics—“just there,” says Clawbonny, “pointing at a spot on the sea,” while he recounts how John Franklin’s two ships were “held by the ice . . . [and] dragged to a spot north-west of Point Victory” (99); recounting a story by the character who actually witnessed the scene, as when Sergeant Bellot’s death is narrated by Johnson, who was with Bellot at the time Bellot died; by making an Arctic creature the bearer of the Arctic navigational lore, as when “an old fox from James Ross’s time” is found, after more than twelve years, still carrying on its copper collar the ships’ names *Enterprise* and *Investigator*, engraved by James Ross in 1845 with the hope that, the fox or similar others would be found by the men of Franklin expedition (142-43). Thus, as if the narrative and its author were unconsciously aware that imperial heroics look Lilliputian compared to the immensity and majesty of the Arctic, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* compulsively stages the rhetorical excess of the imperial self-presence in the Arctic, ideologically constructing the latter as excessively “written” over by imperial sciences and as vulnerable to the colonizing power of Euro-America.

II

Journey to the Center of the Earth and *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* are examples of Vernian texts that look back to the past—the relatively recent historical past of Euro-American adventures across the world, as well as the long distant past imagined by the nineteenth-century sciences—so as to fabricate an ideological image of European man as a sublime, imperial adventurer and as a man of science, both the subject of long history and as history’s most contemporary agent. Such texts are dominated by the discourses of nineteenth-

century sciences such as mineralogy, geology, geography, paleontology, and anthropology; while technology, important though it is, is relatively less emphasized. The ideology underwriting these novels takes the form of drawing up a genealogy of sorts, retracing the past so as to emphasize how the modern European subject has progressed from the past that it nonetheless retains as its history. There are other Vernian texts, however, in which the ideological emphasis is more on the future, and to the extent that the past is featured, it is to serve the forward-looking rhetoric of progress. In such texts, more emphasis is placed upon technology; and though scientific discourses continue to play vital roles, they are featured as forces feeding into and producing sublime objects of technology. Two prominent examples of the latter kind are *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*.

From the Earth to the Moon is one of the several Vernian novels that take the United States after the Civil War as the utopian site of mighty engineering and sublime technological feats. The novel narrates the scientific-technological adventure of the Baltimore Gun Club, which channels its pent-up war-time energy into the gigantic enterprise of shooting a manned projectile to the moon. The elaborate construction of the giant cannon, the Columbiad, as well as the projectile; the sheer audacity of the unprecedented attempt; and the ebullient enthusiasm the enterprise generates in the public—all of these make the space adventure a sublime endeavor, which is presented in the novel at once as an American, a European, and a global triumph. As the seemingly infinite space is penetrated by a phallic object of technology, the ideology of the mastery of nature by man is enacted again, and the capitalist bourgeois project to reduce or nullify barriers to travel and communication is hyperbolically eulogized. Though Verne amply satirizes American war-mongering and its annexation drive, he also romanticizes technology by unmooring it from the realities of war and dubbing the space project a “disinterested enterprise.”

Presented as the model of future space travel, the American space adventure is suffused with an unqualified rhetoric of progress—a progress which envelops the whole world but which must exclude its Other (the Indians) so as to recognize itself as progress.

The space adventure of the Baltimore Gun Club is presented from the beginning as a sublimely daring and momentous enterprise, a “great experiment worthy of the nineteenth century,” as the President of the Club, Barbicane says in his speech announcing the project (10). Going to the moon, Barbicane asserts, is an endeavor as momentous as the “discovery” of America by Columbus, for he says, “Perhaps it has been reserved to us to be the Columbuses of the unknown world” (10). The space effort, as the French savant, and one of the trio voyaging out to the moon, Michel Ardan says, is liberation from the confinement of the earth and a harbinger of journey to other planets and stars (105).

The space adventure in *From the Earth to the Moon* is first and foremost a technological enterprise, which is glorified by setting up the vastness of interplanetary space as the seemingly unconquerable Other. The sublimity of the Gun Club’s technological feat is foregrounded in the novel by means of the astronomical sublimity which the space-travel technology penetrates and over which technology establishes its domain and asserts its power. The first, and most memorable, recreation of astronomical sublimity occurs in the chapter “The Romance of the Moon,” where Verne recounts the story of the creation of the universe, and the solar system, imagining a viewpoint that encompasses infinity: “When all matter was still in chaos, an observer blessed with infinite vision and standing at the unknown center around which the universe gravitates, would have seen all space filling with myriads of atoms” (24). Through the narrator’s God-like eyes, the reader is invited to observe the formation of “nebulous masses sprinkled throughout the depths of the skies,” rotating and condensing, and giving birth to “a

principal star, center of the nebulous mass” and to “countless stars” that rotate around the center (24). Then, zooming in on “one of the most modest and least brilliant of the eighteen million stars” in the Milky Way, the God-like eyes and the reader observe the sun in gaseous state, turning on its axis and, due to its centrifugal force being greater than the centripetal, giving birth to planets and their satellites (24-25). The astronomical sublime appears again in the eloquent speech Michel Ardan gives to convince his American audience about the feasibility of his plan to go to the moon in the projectile shot by the Gun Club. Addressing the concern that the speed of the projectile would be too excessive for the safety of a human traveler, Ardan blithely asserts, “That’s not so,” and points out the relative insignificance of the speed of the projectile compared to the speed of planetary motions: “Here then are the speeds of the several planets. . . . Know then that Neptune travels at 5,000 leagues an hour; Uranus, 7,000 . . . certain comets, 1,4000,000 leagues an hour at their perihelion! As for us, veritable loafers, people taking it easy, our speed will never exceed 9,900 leagues an hour, and it will always be decreasing!” (104-5). Together with the speed of the planets, Ardan also invokes their distance, and triumphantly asserts that compared to Neptune’s distance of “1,147,000,000 leagues from the sun,” the Earth’s 86,410 leagues from the moon are a mere trifle, which “an express train” would make in three hundred days (105). The speed and distance of planets invoked here set the stage for the daring of the space adventure and the power of technology to make such an adventure possible. As Mark Rose points out, the void of interplanetary space and the universe as an indifferent Other have presented to the secular Western imagination both the anxiety of alienation and the thrill of overcoming it (“Filling the Void” 122). In *From the Earth to the Moon*, the interplanetary void is traversed (and symbolically overcome) by phallic objects of technology, the Columbiad and its

projectile, which are rendered sublime both for penetrating the vast interplanetary space and for the science and technology that goes into their making.

Technological sublimity in *From the Earth to the Moon* is most powerfully suggested in the descriptive account of the construction of the cannon and the firing of the projectile by means of it. Designed to have “infinite strength” and dimensions that would “astonish people,” the cannon makes a sublime spectacle when it is cast (44). Each of the 1200 furnaces is fed with 114,000 pounds of iron bars, the chimneys are “belching torrents of flame,” the ground is “shaking with dull tremors,” and “68,000 tons of coal [are] sending a thick curtain of smoke across the face of the sun” (86). Then, when the “signal for releasing the liquid metal” is given by the firing of cannon,

Twelve hundred tapholes were opened simultaneously, one thousand two hundred fiery serpents unfolded their incandescent spectacle. The ground trembled as these cascades of molten metal, sending whirls of smoke toward the sky, volatilized the moisture in the core-mold and sent it through vent-holes in the stone revetment in the form of dense vapors. The artificial clouds spiraled toward the zenith, reaching a height of 3,000 feet. (86-87)

Such construction of exceeding magnitude and force, the narrator continues, simulates the similarly sublime phenomena of nature, but its sublimity is all the more awe-inspiring because it is a technological feat accomplished by “man”: “It was man alone who had created these reddish vapors, these gigantic flames worthy of a volcano, these loud tremors like the shock of an earthquake, these reverberations rivaling the sound of hurricanes. It was his hand that had flung—into an abyss he had created—a whole Niagara of molten metal” (87). Arthur Evans aptly calls this scene of the casting of the cannon an example in Vernian texts of “a myth-ification of

the Promethean grandeur of the human conquest of the cosmos” (65). Another such scene in *From the Earth to the Moon* occurs when the cannon thus made is employed to fire the projectile toward the moon. When an electric current is released “into the depths of the Columbiad” carrying “400,000 pounds of gun cotton” in it, the narrator says, “The instantaneous result was a terrifying, incredible, unearthly detonation that could be compared to nothing already known, not to the roar of thunder, not to the eruption of a volcano” (142, 152). A technological spectacle surpassing the might of nature, the firing of the Columbiad causes “a veritable earthquake,” and brings about an “artificial hurricane, a hundred times swifter than any natural tempest” (153). It is not only the spectators who are “all flattened like corn by a storm,” not only the huts, cabins, and trees in the vicinity of twenty miles’ radius; but also ships in the Atlantic “three hundred miles from the American coast” that are hit by a storm of “unheard of violence,” “several vessels . . . out of Liverpool” that get “caught in this frightful turbulence,” and “natives in Gorée and Sierra Lone” on the African coast that hear “a dull boom” about “half an hour after the launching of the projectile” (153-54). By thus presenting the technological feat of the Baltimore Gun Club as a sublime event, Verne eulogizes Western man’s victory over nature/cosmos on an epic scale.

The epic sublimity of the Gun Club’s technological enterprise is also amply foregrounded by the representation of the exceedingly ebullient reception of the American and global public. That the space effort has become the epic poetry of the new, technological age, is hinted in the novel when the fight between Texas and Florida to house the space project is compared to the rival claims for Homer’s birth place: “Maybe seven Greek cities disputed the honor of having been Homer’s birthplace, but now two entire states were threatening to come to blows over a gun site” (62). Right from the moment when Barbicane holds the general meeting of the Gun Club, public enthusiasm about the project takes on manic proportions. The speech intended for the Gun

Club members draws “ordinary citizens who were pushing against the gates, trying to get closer” (8), and when Barbicane concludes the speech after announcing the space venture, “all the mixed nationalities that make up the population of Maryland, were shouting in their native languages, and the vivas, the hurras, the bravos merged into an indescribable élan” (14). Not only “mixed nationalities” but “all classes of the population” also are so enthused about the project that they “felt stirred to the very depths of their being” (15). Moreover, once the news of Barbicane’s speech is “telegraphed to all the states of the union at a speed of 248,447 miles per second” and “[t]he following day, 1,500 dailies, weeklies, twice-monthlies, and monthlies began to study the project,” the Gun Club’s space (ad)venture truly becomes a “national enterprise” and “12,000,000 hearts, bursting with pride, beat as one” (15-16).

In *American Technological Sublime*, David E. Nye writes that the immensely heterogeneous and conflicting interest groups in the United States were given a common object of identification in technological spectacles so as to rehearse their national identity and unity (“Introduction” xiii-xiv). Verne’s representation of American enthusiasm about the space project points to the same ideological force of the technological sublime: a nation recently emerged from the Civil War with animosity between the north and the south not yet over—as the Barbicane-Nicholl rivalry represents—finds a common object to glorify itself and performatively enact a sublime national identity. As the national enterprise soon becomes a global enterprise—with money for the project flowing in from all over the world—and the site of the (ad)venture becomes a veritable touristic space, public enthusiasm continues to exceed all bounds and assumes sublime proportions. For example, when Michel Ardan makes a public speech on his plan to go to the moon, he draws a crowd so colossal that “[i]t would have been easier to try to dam up Niagara Falls” than to limit it to manageable numbers (103). Similarly, when the day to

fire the Columbiad arrives, the site of the project becomes crowded with the visitors representing “[a]ll the peoples of the Earth,” their number reaching “fabulous proportions”; and when the cannon is about to be fired, “five million spectators” watch expectantly in “awesome silence,” their “[h]earts stopped breathing” and their “anxious eye[s] fixed on the gaping mouth of the Columbiad” (151). By such mutually reinforcing hyperbolic representation, on the one hand, of the construction of the Columbiad and its firing of the projectile and, on the other, of the overflowing enthusiasm of the people about the project, Verne represents technology as a sublime venture, as the poetry of the mechanical age, of the age of progress.

Technological sublimity as the poetry of the mechanical age is represented in *From the Earth to the Moon* also as an enactment of the nineteenth century idea of progress. Space-time compression in the idea of western modernity and its myth of progress are suggested in the novel not only by the extra-terrestrial journey and the speed with which it is carried out but also by the rapidity with which the news about it spreads in the United States and all over the world. Unlike in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, where the ideology of progress is narrated by means of the backward movement of retracing historical/geological deep time or an adventurous spatial journey into a primitive setting; in *From the Earth to the Moon* progress becomes a matter of making use of the latest and most up-to-date science and technology, to launch an enterprise that is radically advanced in comparison to anything else accomplished before and is futuristic in that it serves as the model for more advancement in future. In the “Afterword” to the novel edited by him, Walter J. Miller points to the forward-looking, futuristic Verne by calling him a “science prophet,” whose anticipations of space travel would come true when the space project became a reality (161). Without taking recourse to such extra-textual verity of prophecy by historical hindsight, we can find copious

evidence in the novel that, however fantastic his representation of it, Verne intends the space enterprise of the Baltimore Gun Club as an emblem of the forward-march of western modernity, a paean to technology as an agent of progress. Early in the novel, when Barbicane presents the space program as “some great experiment worthy of the nineteenth century,” he emphasizes it as a radical advance upon as well as bold use of the knowledge accumulated about the moon: “we know all that the mathematical sciences, astronomy, geology, optics can tell us about the moon. But no one has ever established direct communication with her” (10-11). If “imaginary voyages” to the moon—those fantasized in Jean Baudoin’s *Journey to the Moon by Domingo Gonsales, Spanish Adventurer* or in Cyrano de Bergerac’s *The Comic History of the States and Empires of the Moon*, and in Fontenelle’s *Plurality of Worlds*—were audacious ventures; the progress of science, Barbicane asserts, is even more sublimely audacious and outpaces them: “But the march of science surpasses even masterpieces!” (12).⁹

Barbicane’s glorification of the Gun Club’s space adventure as a radical progress over mere imaginative voyages is ideologically continuous with the Enlightenment project of dispelling the mythological view of nature. The latter project is reproduced in *From the Earth to the Moon* most explicitly in the chapter titled “The Romance of the Moon,” which describes cross-cultural anthropomorphic views held about the moon by the ancients, and contrasts the latter with gradually accumulating scientific facts about it. Gone are the naïve reverence (“debt of gratitude”) of the “Mohammedans” who “based the length of their month on the moon’s revolution,” and gone are the “special cults devoted to this chaste goddess”—cults of the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, and the Greeks; all these mythological views are replaced by the objective knowledge of science that culminates in the putative full mastery of its secrets: “Finally, thanks to new methods and improved instruments, astronomers could scan the moon

without intermission, leaving not a single point of its face unexplored” (28-29). To the extent that new problems about the moon are posed by progress in scientific knowledge, the Gun Club’s space adventure would “solve the geological myster[ies]” and “complete [the project of knowing about the moon] from every point of view: cosmographic, geological, political, and spiritual” (30).

The representation of the Gun Club’s space project in the novel becomes suffused by the rhetoric of progress as it is posited as better-and-bigger-than-anything-done-before and as a project that capitalizes on the latest developments in science and technology. The space enterprise is built on “the advice of professional astronomers” at the Observatory in Cambridge, Massachusetts, who give detailed and scientifically elaborate answers to the questions posed by the Gun Club, questions about the feasibility of the project, distance between the earth and the moon, and the ideal time and direction for the firing of the projectile (19-20). The Observatory advises the Gun Club to fire their projectile with the initial velocity of 12,000 yards per second, from a location somewhere within the latitude of zero degree to twenty-eight degree, and “ninety-seven hours, thirteen minutes, and twenty seconds before the moon arrives at the point” where it is both “at its perigee” and “passes through its zenith” (20-21). That the space project is based on scientific knowledge and research is also suggested in the novel through the staging of the “mechanical problems” that the Gun Club members must and do resolve. As they tackle “the three major questions of cannon, projectile, and powder” (35) in three consecutive meetings, they solve the problem of the excessive weight of the projectile by making it hollow inside, and, more importantly, making it not out of cast iron, but of aluminum, which, Barbicane points out, “in 1854 a famous French chemist, Henry Saint-Claire Deville, succeeded in producing . . . in a compact mass” (42). Then the problem of giving the projectile of 20,000 pounds the initial

velocity of 12,000 yards per second is considered by taking into account the “[t]hree independent forces act[ing] upon it: the resistance of the air, the pull of Earth’s gravity, and the propellant force that is applied to it” (43). Then the problem of the powder—how to achieve the colossal propulsive force needed in the relatively limited space of the cannon—is resolved by the decision to use not “course-grained powder,” but gun-cotton, which is explained by Barbicane as the fruit of the labors of three scientists: “a French chemist Braconnot, [who] discovered it” in 1832, “another French man, Pelouze, [who] studied its properties” in 1835, and “Schönbein, a Chemistry Professor at Basel, [who] saw its military value” (52).

The rhetoric of progress in *From the Earth to the Moon* takes better-than-ever-done-before form when, for example, the Gun Club members survey the “speeds obtained so far” regarding the discharge of cannonballs, before finalizing on the cannon with “twenty fold” capacity (37). Brought up in discussion are “Dahlgren’s hundred-pounders, which had a range of 2,500 fathoms, [and] gave their projectiles a muzzle velocity of 500 yards per second”; then, “the Rodman’s Columbiad [which] shot a projectile weighing half a ton a distance of six miles, with a muzzle velocity of 800 yards per second” (37). As a preparatory step for the glorification of their unprecedented venture, Barbicane cites some glorious medieval precedents, first of “Mohammed II . . . [whose] men discharged stone cannonballs that weighed 1,900 pounds,” and then, of the crusaders at Malta, whose “canon of the Fortress Saint Elmo launched projectiles weighing 2,500 pounds” (40). The enterprise of the Gun Club, the president assures, will combine the medievals’ advantage of weight and the moderns’ of speed, outpacing the moderns with 12,000 yards per second velocity, and “mak[ing] cannonballs ten times heavier than those of Mohammed II and the knights of Malta” (40).

Finally, the rhetoric of progress in the novel is advanced also by lauding the Gun Club's projectile as the inter-planetary space vehicle of the future. If the space enterprise is glorified early on by Barbicane as a "great experiment worthy of the nineteenth century"—thereby emphasizing progress over the past—the claim for it as futuristic space vehicle is made by the entry of the French romancer, the Romanticist of technology, Michel Ardan, who mesmerizes his American audience by proclaiming not only the feasibility of a manned flight to the moon but also its inevitability as a futuristic locomotive, predicating both to the rhetoric of progress: "This voyage must be made sooner or later, and as for the means of locomotion, that simply follows the law of progress. Man started to travel on all fours, then one fine day, on two feet, then in a cart, then in a wagon, then in a stage-coach, then in a railroad car, and now! The projectile is the vehicle of the future . . ." (104). A self-proclaimed "sublime ignoramus," yet well-versed in scientific knowledge, Ardan tells his audience that humanity cannot be "condemned to vegetate on this globe" (105). Rather, "We are going to the moon, we shall go the planets, we shall travel to the stars just as today we go from Liverpool to New York, easily, rapidly, surely, and the oceans of space will be crossed like the seas of the moon! [sic] Distance is only a relative term, and ultimately it will be reduced to zero" (105). The nineteenth-century bourgeois capitalist drive to nullify space by speeding time (and nullifying the barriers to the flow of capital and commerce) finds in *From the Earth to the Moon* a distorted, romanticized, fantastic vision of technology, as the herald of progress, the Enlightenment project of gaining mastery over nature and overcoming the limits nature imposes on the human will to appropriate it.

The capitalist dream of nullifying the limits of space and time is the dream of the colonialist, too. As Andrew Martin notes, "Ardan's hymn to the idea of condensing distance and domesticating interplanetary space . . . provides an extraterrestrial counterpart to the European

absorption of geopolitical space” (21). Indeed, *From the Earth to the Moon* represents the Gun Club’s space adventure as at once colonialist enterprise and civilizing mission, thereby reproducing the nineteenth-century ideology of colonialism as dissemination of civilization. The novel begins with Barbicane’s annexation-fantasy: “Perhaps it has been reserved for us to be Columbuses of that unknown world. . . . I will lead you to conquer that world, its name will be added to those of the thirty-six other states that already belong to the Union!” (10). It ends with Barbicane’s companion, J. T. Matson who, adamant that communication with the trio who ventured to the moon will be established, speaks thus about those “ingenious men”: “Those three have taken with them, out into space, all the resources of art, of science, and of industry” (160). As Martin further points out—after noting that in his non-fictional *Great Explorers of the Nineteenth Century* Verne praised Napoleon’s Egypt expedition as a “great and beautiful work”—the Gun Club’s lunar mission is not only “a hyperbolic expression of colonialist enthusiasms” but also “a parody of Napoleon’s *mission civilisatrice*” (20). Even more significant, however, is the way the representation of fantasy as civilizing mission unfolds in the narrative of *From the Earth to the Moon*: on the one hand, the enterprise is dubbed simultaneously as an American, a European, and a global venture; on the other hand, the narrative of such venture constructs an excluded colonial Other, the uncomprehending and awed gaze of which becomes a compulsive necessity for the sublime glorification of imperialism’s civilizing enterprise.

The European image-making of America, from as early as its “discovery” in 1492, saw the north continent as “a new Europe in the making,” a site to recreate Europe minus its historical and cultural failures (Ruland 7). By the nineteenth century, North America in the European imagination became a land of utopian dreams, “the very Nowhere dreamt of in

European philosophy” (27). In his numerous works set partially or fully in the United States or featuring American protagonists—such as *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *Begum’s Millions*, *The Mysterious Island*, *Clipper of the Clouds*—Verne also sees the post-Civil War United States as a model of progress, technological breakthroughs, and utopian experiments. As Jean Chesneaux writes in “Jules Verne’s Image of the United States,” Verne saw the post-bellum United States “as the frontier linking the ‘known and unknown worlds’,” a country which “in the throes of rapid demographic, technical, and economic change, with few real ties to the past, had already become a major futuristic theme” (111-12).

As an exemplary text of this “futuristic theme,” Verne’s *From the Earth to the Moon* represents the United States as a site where the boldest dreams of technological progress can be made real and also celebrates the Yankee character as industrious, technologically innovative, and robustly optimistic. As a prelude to the moment when the sublime space project is announced by Barbicane, the special quality of the American character is stressed by the narrator, as if the grandiose project were a logical outcome of a national trait: “The Yankees, the world’s greatest mechanics, are engineers the way Italians are musicians and Germans are metaphysicians—by birth” (1). Similarly, explaining the unquestioning and overwhelming enthusiasm with which Barbicane’s fantastic project is received by the American public, the narrator asserts, “Nothing stops an American,” before continuing, “The French often say that the word ‘impossible’ is not in their language. But clearly there’s been a mix up in dictionaries. For it’s in America that everything is easy, everything is simple, and as for mechanical difficulties, they die there before birth” (14). Likewise, when the “vehicle-projectile” to be shot to the moon arrives at Stony Hill, Florida, the site of the launch, the narrator describes it as “a metallurgical product that was a great credit to the industrial genius of the Americans” (129). If Verne thus

reproduces European fantasies about the nineteenth-century United States as a model of utopian progress, he also swiftly disavows an irritant to that fantasy—the recent Civil War and the unresolved tension within the Union—by rhetorically staging a rapprochement between two arch rivals, Barbicane and Nicholl, both scientists, one from the North, another from the South, one “a great caster of projectiles,” another “a great forger of armor [plate]” (55). The rapprochement between these Civil-War-era rivals is engineered by the European Michel Ardan, and the conflict between the two—which registers historical reality in the narrative—is resolved when both agree to go to the moon with Ardan, thereby rhetorically bringing about the *United States*.

If European imagination of “America” is indeed that of Europe in the making, then it is not surprising that Verne introduces a European, Michel Ardan, into the narrative to form the trio who set out for the sublime voyage to the moon. Just as Barbicane-Nicholl’s rapprochement presents a *United States* that has putatively left the Civil War behind, the entry of Ardan, said to be modeled on Verne’s friend, Nadar the balloonist and pioneer in aerial photography (Butcher, *Jules Verne* 163), gives the narrative of progress a Euro-American identity. That the entry of Ardan the European is necessary for the ideological import of the novel is evident in J. T. Matson’s assertion at the end of the novel that the trio “have taken with them, out into space, all the resources of art, of science, and of industry” (160). If the novel represents the civilizing mission of nineteenth-century European imperialism and colonialism, as Andrew Martin suggests, then Europe as a colonizing force and as the putative repository of civilization must articulate its way into the ideologically charged narrative of *From the Earth to the Moon*. The rhetorical emphasis on not only America but Euro-America also surfaces in the novel in various references to European scientists, whose inventions constitute the scientific knowledge necessary for the American technological feat, the Columbiad and its projectile. Notable among such

references are the “French chemist, Henry Sainte-Claire Deville, [who] succeeded in producing aluminum in a compact mass” (42), an invention crucial in realizing the Gun Club’s plan to send a projectile of giant size to the moon; the French and German scientists whose discovery and military development of gun cotton helps the Gun Club to reduce the length of the canon (52); the French Léon Foucault, who “had made it easier and faster to polish the objective [of a lens] by replacing the metal mirror with one made of silvered glass,” an invention that vitally helps the Gun Club to devise a telescope that gives them “magnification of 48,000 powers” (138).

For the full articulation of its ideological project, however, it is not enough for the novel to establish the Euro-American identity as the sublime space adventurer and the agent of historical progress. If the rhetoric of progress and civilizing mission were instrumental parts of nineteenth-century imperialist discourse, the novel must also proclaim the universal or global scope of the space enterprise. This is rhetorically achieved in the novel in two ways: by making all parts of the world, including those colonized in the nineteenth century, recognize the value of and support the American enterprise; and, by making the project a “globally” financed one. For example, to meet the expenses of the “American experiment,” when Barbicane “decide[s] to make it a global enterprise, and to ask for financial cooperation of all peoples,” subscriptions for the project are “taken by financial firms on other continents” (67). While the cities and commercial firms listed by Verne limit “other continents” to Europe and South America, the support for and recognition of the value of the American space enterprise is claimed to be “truly” global. Of the “impact” of President Barbicane’s announcement regarding space experiment as “a global enterprise,” the narrator says, “it crossed the Atlantic and the Pacific, invading simultaneously Asia and Europe, Africa, and Oceania. The observatories of America established communications with the observatories of other lands. Those at Paris, St. Petersburg, Capetown,

Berlin, Altona, Stockholm, Warsaw, Hamburg, Buda, Bologna, Malta, Lisbon, Benares, Madras, and Peking sent their compliments to the Gun Club” (66). When the space adventure of Euro-American pedigree attracts monetary contributions from all over the world, the ideological meaning is that the Euro-American rhetoric of progress has become universal and its universal value has been recognized by the colonized parts of the world also.

However universal the ambition of the Euro-American rhetoric of progress —the space enterprise is called by the narrator “a purely disinterested operation in the most literal sense of the word” (66)—it must by necessity create an Other, the gaze of which is constitutive of the self-identity of progress. Such an Other surfaces in the novel in the figure of the Native Americans, who are made not only to witness their lands become sites of Euro-American technological spectacle but also to miscomprehend and become awed by that spectacle as the scene of nature’s apocalyptic power. Native Americans are first introduced in the novel when Barbicane, setting out to explore the site most appropriate for the launch, is warned about Seminoles, the “[s]avages who roam the prairies” (73). They are mentioned again when Barbicane finds the ideal spot for the launch; when he observes “At last . . . we’ve come to pine country,” he is reminded, “And Indian country, too” (76). On this occasion, the narrator registers the dissent of the Indians only to emphasize the impotence of that dissent: “Indeed, some Seminoles had just appeared on the horizon. They charged back and forth on their swift horses, brandishing long spears, firing muskets into the air. But they contented themselves with a mere show of hostility, and Barbicane and his troop were not alarmed” (76). On another occasion, after a eulogistic description of the magnificent spectacle of the casting of the canon, the narrator observes, “A savage, wandering on the other side of the horizon, would have thought some new crater was being formed in the heart of Florida, but there was neither eruption, nor tornado, nor

tempest, nor clash of elements, none of those terrible catastrophes nature is capable of producing” (87). This imagined uncomprehending perspective of the Other inserted into the narrative of sublime technological triumph rhetorically serves to foreground the distance western modernity and progress has traveled from the time and world of the “savages”—historically coeval but ideologically shelved into the past. Finally, the assertion in the novel that the boom of the shooting of the projectile was heard on the coast of Africa resonates with both meanings. On the one hand, the spectacle of progress has gone global; on the other, the uncomprehending gaze of the Other (they don’t know what the boom signifies) becomes constitutive of Euro-American self-narrative as the narrative of progress and civilization.

The distance between the savages and the civilized agents of progress is also narratively instantiated when Barbicane and Nicholl challenge each other to a duel but avoid killing each other. When “this particular type of American duel” is described in the novel, the narrator observes, “Each of [the adversaries] is trying to emulate those wonderful traits so natural to the prairies Indians: their swift intelligence, their cunning ingenuity, their ability to track and even scent the enemy” (118). However, when Michel Ardan and J. T. Matson run into the woods to avoid the calamity, they do not find any trace of either Barbicane or Nicholl, until they see Nicholl, not “a bloodthirsty man absorbed in his vengeance” but saving a little bird “struggling and crying out pitifully” from being eaten by a “venomous spider” in whose web the bird was caught (120). Soon afterwards, they find that Barbicane, “pencil in hand, was scribbling formulas and sketching geometric figures in a note book, while his rifle lay uncocked on the ground” (122). This scene of forgetful escape from savagery is ideologically very meaningful. Barbicane and Nicholl escape the risk of falling into the savagery reminiscent of the Indians—their animal intelligence and cunning—by their ethical and intellectual passion, supposedly so innate and

powerful that it overrides the instinct for self preservation. If the narrative of *From the Earth to the Moon* needed an ideological “justification” for the act of appropriation of the Indian lands (staged in an earlier chapter), this scene provides that: the land that belonged to the bestial members of the species, the novel implies, is “rightfully” claimed by intellectually and ethically endowed, civilized men.

Finally, there remains to discuss that intriguing aspect of Verne the writer that recurs in his narratives, seemingly undermining the ideological project the whole narrative otherwise upholds. Just as Lidenbrock and his nephew do not reach the very center of the earth and Hattteras fails to plant the flag of Britain at the precise point of the North Pole, the Euro-American spacemen in *From the Earth to the Moon* do not land on their destination but merely orbit around it. This could very well signal, as Andrew Martin claims, Verne’s ambivalence about colonialism: writing a proto-colonialist venture and yet “frustrating the would-be imperialist” by not letting moon become another state in the Union (24, 57). Indeed, the novel presents other instances of Verne’s critique of colonialism. After describing the American public’s clamorous enthusiasm for Barbicane’s project, the narrator calls the idea of sending a projectile to the moon “a rather brutal way of opening negotiations, even with a satellite, but one much in favor among civilized nations” (15). Likewise, Verne satirizes American war-mongering—for example, the narrator calls the Gun Club “a gathering of exterminating angels” and adds, “the sole preoccupation of this learned society was the destruction of humanity for philanthropic reasons and the perfection of weapons as instruments of civilization” (3). The sublime public enthusiasm for the Gun Club’s project is also at times comically ridiculed. “There are certain things one does not laugh at in the New World,” says the narrator about the feasibility of the space project, before he recounts the incident of a touring English theater company having

to replace the staging of *Much Ado about Nothing* by that of *As You Like It* because the American public saw in the earlier “a snide allusion to Barbicane’s project” (18). However, such countervailing moments in the narrative of *From the Earth to the Moon* do not quite undermine the text’s overall ideological project. If American war-mongering is satirized and the unquestioning enthusiasm among the public is ridiculed, the space project itself is poetically eulogized, and the Enlightenment project or the ideological representation of Western modernity as a progressive force is never questioned in the novel. In fact, what Walter James Miller calls the transmutation of American war-mongering into “a civilian enterprise” (162) is the work of a certain fantasy that would disavow the historical condition for technology—war and industry—so that technology can be romanticized as sublime object and be suffused with the rhetoric of progress. If by not letting the trio land on the moon, Verne seems to question the colonizing drive, the civilized vs. savage discourse undergirding the novel’s representation of the Indians reproduces a key tenet of historical colonialism. Moreover, that the landing on the moon does not actually occur could also be a consequence of Verne’s commitment to realism. Just as the overly fantastic nature of the moon project is counterbalanced by predicating it to the fantastic zeal of Americans, the moot question of the (in)habitability of the moon—as it becomes a topic of unresolved debate between Ardan and Nicholl earlier in the text—is kept open by avoiding the landing, which would force Verne to take a stand regarding the environment of the moon, going beyond what contemporary science knew about it. Thus Verne’s critique of colonialism in *From the Earth to the Moon* is at best an index of the conscience of a liberal who is appalled by the excesses of colonialism but does not question the ideology that underwrites those excesses.

If *From the Earth to the Moon* narrates the imperial adventure story of a colossal technological enterprise grounded on and glorifying a nation-state power, *Twenty Thousand*

Leagues under the Seas features an anti-imperial hero, who has broken his ties to humanity and, defying/eluding the state powers of the world, roams the depths of the oceans freely and majestically in his inimitable submarine vessel, the *Nautilus*. However radically different his choice of the protagonist, Verne manages to narrativize the same ideologically-charged themes that animate the novels studied above. Told from the point of view of a scientist who joins an expedition to kill a fantastic sea-monster, the novel reproduces the Enlightenment project of demythifying nature as it replaces an erroneous mythical view by the scientific account of a great technological feat. Also similar to the canon-projectile in *From the Earth to the Moon*, the submarine in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* is presented as a futuristic technology devised by a scientific genius in the narrative present but not reproducible by humanity at least until a century after. As in other novels, in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* the natural sublime is coded into the sublimity of technology that penetrates nature, and of science that maps it and turns it into knowledge. Similar is the reproduction of the civilization vs. savagery binary of colonialist discourse: the *Nautilus* and its inhabitants represent European civilization in microcosm whereas the barbaric/savage Other, who attempt to attack the submarine present the uncomprehending gaze structurally necessary for the consolidation of civilized self-image. Moreover, the narrative of the journey of a rebel fleeing the inhabited world turns out to become a text in global tourism, thanks to the frequent “sightings” from a distance, as the protagonist himself with his enormous library and museum, his inordinate wealth and unrivalled power, as well as his flag, represents in a nutshell what he flees from.

Even though *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, as the title also suggests, is expressly about the adventures of a technological triumph, the initial framing of the narrative enables a staging of the Enlightenment project to demythify nature. The narrative begins with

reports of sightings by seafarers of an enormous sea creature “infinitely larger and quicker than a whale” (5). Because of its unparalleled size and speed, its ability to move to different oceans in relatively short time, its capacity to damage huge ships, the unknown creature acquires a mythological status as it gets called a “supernatural apparition,” a “fantastic animal,” and “the monster” (6-10). The mythical beast becomes a popular topic in the cafes, newspapers, and theaters of “all the big cities” on both sides of the Atlantic, and, since “a ‘submarine’ vessel of immense locomotive power” seems to be an impossible proposition, “people’s imaginations . . . culminate in the most absurd dreams of fantastic ichthyology” (7, 12). In such a context of bafflement and outrage, when the United States sends the frigate *Abraham Lincoln* to find and kill the beast, it is overtly motivated by “industrial and commercial interests” (15); however, when Dr. Aronnax of the Natural History Museum of Paris is invited aboard the frigate, the expedition becomes scientific as well. When the thing the expedition is dispatched to terminate is finally seen, it is still misperceived as a sea-monster—“the supernatural animal” with its “fantastic irradiation” and “deafening sound” (33-35)—until the frigate is destroyed by the beast/enemy and, fortunately finding themselves on the back of it, the three survivors—Aronnax, his servant Conseil, and the harpooner Ned Land—know that the mythological beast is in fact a sublime, technological triumph. The next six chapters, which are evenly matched in numbers with the previous ones that refer to the vessel as a monster, then give out the facts about the sublime machine, explaining scientifically how the unimaginable object of technology operates. Fantasy is replaced by science and mythos by ratios, as Nemo, the “captain, the constructor, and the engineer” of the submarine satisfies Aronnax’s desire to learn about “the *Nautilus*, the propulsive force it holds, the mechanism allowing it to be steered, [and] the powerful agent which gives life to it” (87, 75). The various operative mechanisms of the submarine explained by

Nemo include “a pressure-gauge” that indicates the depth of the vessel, “thermometric sounding devices registering the temperature at various depths,” a “dial” indicating the speed of the vessel, a “dinghy” that can be detached from the submarine in the depths of ocean and can communicate to the vessel “by an electric wire,” water tanks that can be filled or emptied out allowing the *Nautilus* to float on the surface of the ocean or go into its depths, “a special system of levers and gears which transmit their motion to the propeller shaft,” and, above all, the source of energy “which is powerful, responsive, easy to use . . . [and] the soul of my machines . . . [which is] electricity” (76-83). Aronnax also learns that the mysterious light emanating from what was believed to be a sea-monster in fact has its source in “a powerful electric reflector whose beams can illuminate the sea for half a mile” (86), and that, if the *Nautilus* was confused for a sea animal “in spite of the best telescopes,” it was because “its metal plates overlapped slightly, like the scales which cover the bodies of great land reptiles” (89).

It is true that the most crucial scientific-technological questions are not answered by Nemo (and cannot be answered by Verne given the state of science at the time of the novel’s writing). When Aronnax points out that “until now the dynamic capacity of electricity has remained very limited,” all that Nemo does to explain his scientific advance is refer to “an unknown system of levers” (as Aronnax puts it) or simply assert, “my electricity is not the common sort” (77, 80). One cannot, however, turn such lack of scientific verity in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* into an argument that the novel’s claim to science (or scientific discourse) is false. To do so, as William Butcher does when he argues that Verne is not a science fiction writer,¹⁰ is to mistake the nature of fiction. A scientific discourse used in a work of fiction is by definition a fictional use. What matters is not the verity or falsehood of science used in fictions, but rather the rhetorical effect of being scientific and its ideological import—a distinction

maintained even by Carl Freedman, whose reworking of Darko Suvin's restrictive definition of science fiction is no less restrictive (18-20). Thus by setting up the sublime object of technology first as a mythological/supernatural being and then dispelling that myth with scientific discourse, *Twenty Thousand Leagues* enacts what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno argue as Enlightenment's central project: to dispel the magical view of reality and institute in its place the reign of ratios.

The same narrative framing that allows *Twenty Thousand Leagues* to stage Enlightenment's demythification of nature also enacts the substitution of the natural sublime by the technological sublime, both ideological projects being coterminous with Enlightenment's project of man's mastery of nature. When Nemo's *Nautilus* is misperceived as a marine animal, the description of the "fantastic animal" and its aquatic medium of habitation evoke the aesthetic of the natural sublime. Describing the impact of his article published in the *New York Herald*, Aronnax observes that his thesis that the mysterious thing seen in the oceans was a giant sea animal "left full scope for the imagination" (14). Aronnax explains the appeal of his thesis resorting to a theory of the human mind, "The human mind enjoys grandiose conceptions of supernatural beings," and points out that "the sea is their best vehicle" (14). With its capacity to accommodate far greater species than those on the land, the sea is represented here in the Romantic image of nature as the site of the supernatural. If the sea is a powerful medium to evoke the sublime in the human imagination, the giant creature of the sea, as the *Nautilus* misperceived by the people aboard the frigate *Abraham Lincoln*, produces sublime wonder all the more. When the frigate is chased by the "monster," Aronnax the narrator observes, "astonishment rather than fear kept us silent as if transfixed," before he adds, "All of a sudden, from the dark limits of the horizon, the monster accelerated and rushed towards the *Abraham*

Lincoln at a frightening speed, then stopped abruptly only twenty feet away from the frigate's wales and extinguished its light—not by plunging beneath the surface, since the brilliance did not disappear gradually—but suddenly, as if the source of the brilliant discharge had instantly dried up!” (34). The unheard-of speed, the inexplicable light, the “deafening hissing sound,” and the “formidable beating of the monster’s tail” produce in the spectator “an indefinable astonishment” (34), as Aronnax says, describing the impact of the sublime scene on the captain of the frigate.

Thanks to the framing of the narrative, however, this scene of natural sublimity is revalued and recoded as the technological sublime when, in the next chapter, Ned Land exclaims “this beast is made of steel plate!” while Aronnax’s mind undergoes “a sea-change,” realizing that the thing is in fact “a man made phenomenon” (45). Aronnax’s following remarks represent the *Nautilus* not only as a technological wonder but also as an example of the appropriation of God’s creative power by the human mind, and thus a triumph of the Enlightenment project: “I would not have been nearly so astonished to discover the most fabulous and mythological of creatures. That what is extraordinary could have come from the Creator, is easy to believe. But to discover all of a sudden a mysterious human construction of the impossible, to find it before your eyes, was enough to unhinge your mind” (45). Designed and constructed by “Captain Nemo—certainly an engineer of the first order” (81) “the dynamic power of [its] machines almost infinite,” (85) and capable of cruising at the speed of fifty knots (81); the *Nautilus* is “a masterpiece of modern technology” (92), a veritable technological wonder that “invade[s]” Aronnax’s mind with “stupefaction” (72).

As I have argued in Chapter One, the latter half of the nineteenth century saw a shift in the aesthetic of the sublime, such that even as the fascination for the natural sublime persisted in

some ways, the scientific-technological and capitalist sublime competed with and often supplanted the natural sublime. *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, like other novels in the *Voyages extraordinaires* series is mostly not a narrative of capitalism (even though there are strong resonances of the Robinsonade in the novel, which will be discussed later); however, the scientific-technological sublime as a competitor to the natural sublime is a recurrent motif in the novel and functions as its major rhetorical/ideological drive. Sometimes the Romantic conception of nature and natural sublimity characterizes the novel's depiction of the sea; for example, Nemo, like Aronnax earlier, describes the sea in glowing poetic terms: "The sea is the environment for a prodigious, supernatural existence; it is nothing but movement and love; it is living infinity, as one of your poets has said" (68). At other times, though, the natural sublimity is always-already a scientific sublimity, as the vastness and dynamism of the sea is represented in scientific discourse. An eminent example of this is Nemo's metaphoric description of nature as a vast and dynamic organism; he describes the sea as having "its angers and its moments of tenderness," points to the sea "waking up in the sun's caresses!" and asserts that the sea "has a pulse, and arteries and it has spasms" (119). But this naturalistic/animistic description of the ocean as a beating giant is followed immediately by a scientific one:

[T]he ocean has an actual circulation, and to set it moving, all the Creator of all things had to do was to increase the caloric, salt, and animalculae in it. The caloric produces different densities, which then create currents and counter-currents. Evaporation is negligible in the polar regions but very rapid in the tropical zones, and so produces a permanent interchange between the tropical and polar waters. I have also been able to detect currents from top to bottom and back again, which form the ocean's real respiration. I have observed molecules of salt water heating

up on the surface, descending towards the depths, reaching their maximum density at two degrees below zero, then cooling further and so becoming lighter and starting to move back up again. (119-20)

Natural sublimity and scientific-technological sublimity in the novel are so closely intertwined—the former often setting the stage for the glorification of the latter—that when Nemo promises the initially apprehensive Aronnax a year-long series of adventures, the promise is at once of natural and scientific-technological sublimity:

So let me tell you that you will not regret the time spent on board my vessel. You are going to travel through a wonderland. Astonishment and stupefaction will probably be your normal state of mind. . . . I am going to embark on a new underwater tour of the world . . . Starting today, you will enter a new element, you will see what no man has seen before . . . and our planet, through my efforts, will deliver up its last secrets. (65)

Noteworthy here is that the promise of “[a]stonishment and stupefaction” not only involves “the sights continually offered to your eyes” but also rests crucially on the scientific-technological wonder, the *Nautilus*, which will force nature to “deliver up its last secrets.” Significantly, the scientific-technological sublimity promised here is also the promise of the fulfillment of the project of Enlightenment to master nature.

The turning of the natural into the scientific-technological sublime in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* occurs in two ways. First, the planet’s last secrets hidden away in the depths of the oceans (natural sublime) are divulged thanks to technology—primarily the *Nautilus*, but also Nemo’s improvised “Frogmen’s suits” for underwater walk, “Ruhmkorff apparatus” for underwater light, and the rifle that shoots electricity-charged glass capsules with the release of

compressed air. Second, and rhetorically more predominant, is a process where scenes of natural sublimity trigger a challenge to map it, order it, and turn it into a scientific discourse, producing as a result a rhetorical excess of scientific discourse, the excess being the index of the scientific-technological sublime. The process is similar to what Thomas Weiskel calls the “metaphorical sublime”: compulsively reiterative and proliferating signifiers give the sense of a missing signified, which is provided by the reader in the form of a metaphorical substitution (28-29).

The exemplary case in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* of the latter mode of rhetorical exchange between natural and scientific sublimity is the stupendous scene of the interiority of the ocean witnessed by Aronnax and his companions when the crystal panels of the *Nautilus* are opened, revealing “over one radius mile” an electricity-lit scene of nature’s plenty. “On each side I had a window on the unexplored abysses,” marvels Aronnax, “And what a sight! What pen could ever describe it? Who could ever depict the effects of the light on those transparent mantles, the gradualness of its progressive fading away into the upper and lower regions of the ocean!” (93). The crystal panels become “the window of some enormous aquarium,” while “[i]n a state of wonder” the voyagers enjoy seeing “a whole army of aquatic creatures . . . [d]uring their games and their leaps” (93-97).¹¹ What is most interesting and rhetorically significant is that, as if in a compulsive reflex, this sublime scene of nature’s plenty triggers a long scientific discourse on the classification of fish, first into the bony and the cartilaginous, then the “six orders” of the former—“the acanthopterygians,” “the abdominals,” “the subbrachials,” “the apodals,” “the lophobranchiates,” “the plectognaths”—and the three of the latter—“the cyclostomes,” “the Selachii,” and “the sturionians,” and finally, the “types” or “families” of each (94-96). In this particular case, the effect of scientific discourse is more comical than sublime because it is being enumerated by Conseil, Aronnax’s servant, who can classify all species but, if

presented before him, can hardly recognize any. Even so, it is noteworthy that Conseil's comic imitation of scientific discourse is framed from both ends by the authoritative voice of Aronnax who introduces fish as "the fourth and last class of the primary division of vertebrates" and concludes with the remark that what they had seen through the panels was "a whole collection from the seas of Japan and China" (94, 97). Thus framed, the scientific discourse generated in response to the overwhelming spectacle of nature attempts to gain mastery over it, and, in that sense, is identical to the structure of the sublime, in which the subject unhinged by a sublime experience appropriates the force and magnitude of the latter into an aggrandizement of the observer's self.

The scene described above is a paradigmatic case of several such scenes that follow in the novel. Just as the fantastic misperception of the *Nautilus* as a mythical/supernatural being sets off the plot of demythifying it and reinstitutes it as the sublime object of technology; sublime spectacles of nature become challenges to the scientist to recode them into scientific discourse, to turn them into knowledge, to produce a rhetorical excess of scientific discourse that appropriates the sublimity of nature into the sublimity of science or scientific discourse. The journey of the Vernian hero, writes Arthur Evans, is a "progressive motion toward the total codification of Nature" (43). Such codification, as Evans points out, is certainly a positivist drive, the project of Enlightenment (39-41). However, his fantasy of total codification of Nature is also the fantasy of an archival sublime; in codifying nature's sublimity, scientific discourse arrogates archival sublimity for itself.

Seen through the crystal panels of the *Nautilus* as well as from its "platform," seen in the specimens collected by the nets periodically used to procure food for the ship's crew, and seen also during the several under-water excursions; the numerous species inhabiting the oceans

become objects of an obsessive process of identification, naming, and categorization, as Aronnax and his servant-cum-apprentice, Conseil take notes, hoping that the latter will be added to the archive of scientific knowledge once they reach the civilized world again. The descriptions of species are too long and too frequent to attempt representative reproduction here, but even one example, taken from the first part of the novel when the *Nautilus* is moving through the Indian Ocean, can give a flavor of the rhetorical excess produced by seemingly interminable description:

I will cite principally ostracions, peculiar to the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the tropical regions off the coasts of America. These fish, like tortoises, armadillos, sea urchins, and crustaceans, are protected by an armour which is neither chalk nor stone but actual bone. Its armour is solid and is either triangular or quadrangular. Amongst the triangular ones, I noted some 5 centimetres long, with a health-giving flesh of an exquisite flavor, and brown tails and yellow fins . . . I will also cite the quadrangular ostracions with four large tubercles mounted on their backs; specked ostracions with four white points on their lower bodies, which can be domesticated like birds; trigonals fitted with spurs formed by the extension of their bony hides . . . and dromedaries with large conical humps and flesh that is hard and leathery.

I again pick out from the daily notes kept by Master Conseil two fish of the genus tetrodon peculiar to these seas: seven-inch Elecridae of the brightest colours and bantail puffers with red backs and white breasts and with three highly distinctive length-wise rows of filaments. Next, from other genera: tail-less oviforms looking like black-brown eggs covered in white stripes; porcupine-fish,

veritable sea porcupines armed with stings and able to swell up to form a ball
bristling with darts

In the 89th genus of fish classified by Lacepede, belonging to the second sub-class of osseous fish characterized by a gill cover and a bronchial membrane, I noticed the scorpion fish, whose head has stings on it and which has only one dorsal fin; depending on their sub-genus, these creatures are either covered with small scales or devoid of them. The second genus provided us with” (181-82)

Such relentless cataloguing in the novel obviously serves the pedagogical purpose of the “extraordinary voyages” series. However, as has been pointed out earlier, the obsessive cataloguing is also a function of the sublimity of underwater nature that overwhelms the beholder, who in turn attempts to shore up control over the phenomena by repetitively naming them. As the *Nautilus* with its awesome speed moves from ocean to ocean, Aronnax compulsively (or dutifully?) enumerates the stupendous variety of flora and fauna, not only when he “observe[s] several species that [he] had not had the opportunity to study until then” (181), but also (and more revealing of the obsessive nature of naming and classifying) when the species “were not much different from those we had observed up till now” (263) and when the *Nautilus* is moving with such “unsurpassed speed” that Aronnax “could barely identify the quickly passing” creatures of the sea (374).

As is the case with *From the Earth to the Moon*, the glorification of science and technology in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* is underwritten by the civilized vs. savage binary. On the one hand, Verne represents the *Nautilus* as a futuristic machine at least a century ahead of its time as well as an enabling tool for a scientific enterprise, the year-long marine journey. On the

other hand, the representation of the *Nautilus* with its inhabitants as a microcosm of western civilization is contrasted inevitably, as it were, with native “savages,” who gaze at the sublime embodiment of western technology with feelings of wonder and horror and/or make unsuccessful shows of hostility toward it. That the *Nautilus* is a microcosm of western civilization, particularly its scientific-technological modernity, is evident not merely by virtue of it being a technological triumph but also due to the capacious library and the museum it houses. Nemo’s library—as the “truly astonished” Aronnax puts it— “is a library that would do honour to more than one palace in the New or Old Worlds” (69), and (as Nemo tells Aronnax) contains “twelve thousand” volumes (70). Similarly, “an enormous, magnificently lit salon” aboard the *Nautilus*, Aronnax adds, was a veritable museum “within whose walls an intelligent and prodigal hand had assembled every treasure of nature and art” (71). The museum contains “[a]bout thirty identically framed paintings by masters,” which are all Western, “a few outstanding marble figures and bronze statues,” and “natural rarities . . . principally plants, shells, and objects produced by the ocean” (73).

That the year-long journey is a scientific enterprise and the *Nautilus* its privileged tool is emphasized in the novel in different ways. Aronnax mentions, for example, Nemo’s “interesting experiments on the temperature of the ocean at different depths”; whereas such experiments carried out so far by other scientists gave “dubious or worse results,” Aronnax says, “Captain Nemo was going to measure the temperatures of the sea depths using his own observation, and his thermometer, in direct contact with the various parts of the liquid, gave him the temperatures immediately and reliably” (163). On another occasion, the *Nautilus* enables “an [unprecedented] experiment with soundings”; whereas previous attempts had been unable to fathom the bottom of the Sargasso Sea even at the depth of 15,140 meters, the *Nautilus* braves the depth of 16,000

meters until they reach “the last areas of the globe where life is no longer possible” (277-79). Again, thanks to the *Nautilus*, Nemo is able to show Aronnax “the curious sight of submarine [volcanic] eruption” and give him an underwater geological tour: “In the midst of the Pacific, it is the infusoria that form the land masses, but here it is eruptive phenomena” (234). The scientific nature of the journey and the value of the *Nautilus* as an incomparable tool of science is also emphasized by Aronnax, who despite his captivity, is so enthralled by opportunities of scientific study that he “would like to finish seeing what no man has yet seen, even if I have to pay for this insatiable need to know with my life!” (179). Aronnax also thanks Nemo and his vessel for “furthering my underwater studies each day, and [assisting him to] rewrit[e] my book about the submarine depths” (226), and before the end of the journey, finds himself “in a position to write a real book of the sea” (339).

Alongside being presented as scientific tool enabling hitherto impossible scientific studies, the *Nautilus* is also represented as not only an advance over existing technology but also a futuristic machine much ahead its time. Writing in the mid-nineteenth century, Verne rightly anticipates the pervasive use of electricity in the future: When Nemo is explaining the mechanism of the *Nautilus*, Aronnax admires Nemo for “discover[ing] the real dynamic power of electricity that people will undoubtedly discover one day,” and adds that electricity “will one day replace wind, water, and steam” (79). On another occasion, when the *Nautilus* is moving across the Red Sea, a conversation about the Sea’s “atrocious reputation [regarding navigational hazards] in ancient times” leads Nemo to call his machine a radical progress over the machines of even the moderns: “but in this respect, the moderns are little further advanced than the ancients. Many centuries were needed to discover the mechanical power of steam! Who knows if a second *Nautilus* will appear in the next 100 years!” (212). Then, to this claim about the

Nautilus as futuristic machine, Aronnax readily agrees, “your ship is a century ahead of its time, or perhaps several” (212). Thus, if the library/museum in the *Nautilus* functions as a repository of the knowledge and arts of the western tradition and the underwater journey becomes a scientific enterprise that adds to the western archive of knowledge, the *Nautilus* as a technological power marks a radical advance over both the past and the present, serving as an image of progress in the future.

In colonialist discourse, the representation of technological wonders of western modernity has a necessary counterpart, the representation of the barbaric or the savage Other who are deemed inferior precisely because they lack advanced technology and are unable to comprehend it. As has been argued in Chapter One, particularly with the help of Michael Adas’s *Machines as the Measure of Men*, in the nineteenth century access to technology was the major criterion according to which diverse societies were plotted along the savage, barbarian and civilized trajectory. It is not surprising that writing novels aimed for imperial readership Verne would reproduce colonialist ideologies, notwithstanding his occasional criticisms and ambiguities regarding European imperialism. Andrew Martin points to the discursive/ideological affiliation of Verne’s texts when he notes the compulsiveness with which they reproduce and heighten the civilized vs. savage binary (49-51). There are at least two spectacular scenes in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* that attempt to crystallize the civilized vs. savage binary, but the novel prepares the reader for those scenes from early on when Aronnax, Conseil, and Ned are pulled by “eight strong fellows with expressionless faces . . . into their formidable machine,” the *Nautilus* (47). Locked inside a dark room, the furious Ned Land exclaims, “Even the New Caledonians are more hospitable than these people. All we need now is for them to be cannibals” (48). It becomes a matter of paramount importance to the imprisoned to determine whether the

crew aboard the vessel are cannibals or civilized beings. Even though Aronnax cannot place Nemo in any national identity; taking recourse to a popular nineteenth century pseudo-science, he professes to “read [Nemo’s] physiognomy like an open book” and after concluding that Nemo is “the most admirable specimen I had ever met,” assures his fellow travelers, “We are decidedly dealing with civilized beings” as he also reiterates later “we have not fallen into the hands of cannibals” (49-57). Aronnax has to revise his confidence in Nemo in subsequent chapters, but the fact that Verne felt the need to rehearse a completely fortuitous drama of savagery vs. civilization (the survivors already know that the vessel they are in is a triumph of modern technology that certainly could not be run by “cannibals”) points to the ideological investment of the novel in the discourses of nineteenth century imperialism.

The savage vs. civilized motif surfaces again in an encounter with the Papuan natives that makes one of the novel’s most graphic scenes of the colonialist ideological drama, one that stages the gaze of the Other as a rhetorical device for the glorification of imperial self. When the *Nautilus* is in the Torres Strait and “the coast of New Guinea” is “sighted,” Aronnax “informs” the reader: “Torres Strait is considered dangerous because of the reefs with which it abounds, but also because of the savage inhabitants of the coasts” (136). Predictably “the savage inhabitants” materialize soon when, returning from their hunt on the Gueboroar Island, Aronnax and his companions are attacked by “about twenty natives armed with bows and arrows” (151). The prisoners-become-hunters barely reach their boat and begin sailing to the *Nautilus* when they see “a hundred savages, shouting and gesticulating . . . waist deep into the water” (152). The natives gather in increasing numbers by “a large number of fires on the beach” (153); most of them are “generally naked,” while “a few women, clothed from the haunches to the knees with real grass

skirts, held up by belts made of plants” (154). They even reach the *Nautilus* in dug-out canoes and climb onto the platform “trampling about on [it] uttering deafening cries” (159).

This spectacular scene of civilization vs. savagery also glorifies the technological triumph of western modernity by exploiting the gaze of the native Papuans, which alternates between fear, incomprehension, and futile hostility. The Papuans’ first response to the *Nautilus* is described by Aronnax as that of fear: “The Papuans were undoubtedly frightened by the mere view of the monster lying grounded in the bay” (153). When the Papuans come near the *Nautilus* in their dugout canoes (and perceive that the *Nautilus* is no monster), the natives’ new-found boldness is stressed by Aronnax to be a result of their lack of comprehension about the true power of the *Nautilus*, while the ignorance inherent in their mode of assessing the power of technology is also emphasized: “Our guns lacking detonations [for they use an air rifle that uses electricity-charged bullets] could only make a moderate impression on these indigenous people who only respect noisy devices” (157).¹² Then the indomitable power of the *Nautilus* is foregrounded by emphasizing the futility of native display of hostility. As Nemo calmly assures Aronnax, “even if all the natives of New Guinea were assembled on the beach, the *Nautilus* would have nothing to fear from their attack” (152-53). Likewise, while the Papuans are “trampling about on the platform uttering deafening cries,” Aronnax is amazed by the “usual inertia” of the crew: “They were no more worried by the presence of these cannibals than the soldiers inside a strong fort would have been by ants running over their fortifications” (159).

There are two other scenes in the novel where the colonial uncomprehending gaze of the “savage” Other is used to glorify the sublime western technology. The first occurs before the scene near the Gueboroar Island when the *Nautilus* approaches the Vanikoro islands on the Pacific, and, as usual, Aronnax stresses the response of fear and wonder the submarine causes in

the natives: “Under the verdant shade of the mangroves, I spotted a few savages who showed extreme surprise at our approach” (129). The other scene occurs at the time of underwater excursion near Sri Lanka, where Nemo, risking his own life, saves the life of an “Indian” pearl fisherman. When the excursionists return to the surface of water and restore the Sri Lankan to consciousness, Aronnax wonders, “How surprised he must have been to find four great copper heads over him!” (205). Verne here takes care to ensure that the ignorant native sees his saviors as supernatural beings, who inside their metal helmets do not look like fellow humans. Similarly, when Nemo, his head still inside the helmet and his body inside the Frogmen’s suit, places the gift of “a string of pearls” in the hand of the fisherman; Aronnax notes, “This magnificent generosity from the man of the seas was accepted by the poor Sinhalese with trembling hands. His startled eyes showed that he did not know to what superhuman being he owed his fortune and his life” (205). Thus, by means of a double-edged rhetorical ploy, the novel on the one hand reiterates the colonialist ideology of the ignorance and savagery of the colonial natives and on the other glorifies western technology by making it an object of the colonized natives’ fear and/or wonder.

Furthermore, Verne’s staging of the civilized vs. the savage binary and glorification of western technology through the gaze of the savage Other are plotted along the ideologically resonant geological deep time. Nemo’s underwater journey as a scientific enterprise and the value of the *Nautilus* as a scientific tool are presented as advanced forms and completions of voyages of discovery by imperial-colonial adventurers. Often mentioned in the context of or immediately preceding the stagings of civilization vs. savagery, the thematics of geological deep time and the prehistory of civilization place the colonized “savage” into the past, the way, as Tony Bennett argues, the nineteenth century “historical sciences” did in constructing the imperial

self-identity in terms of layered archaeological depth and the savage colonial Other as the prehistory of the civilized European Self. The first mention of geological time in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* appears innocuously, merely marking the pedagogic function of “extraordinary voyages”: “During former geological eras, the period of fire was followed by the period of water. At first there was nothing but ocean. . . . The solid conquered 37,000,657 square miles from the liquid, that is 12,916,000,000 hectares” (88-89). Verne is here describing the geological history of the formation of oceans and continents, but the next time geological history is invoked in the novel—when the *Nautilus* is in the vicinity of Gambier Islands—it is inserted in the middle of the colonial scene and is closely entwined with the representation of the savage Other. After noting that the Gambier Islands are territory “on which France has imposed its protectorate,” Aronnax focuses on the Reao, “one of the most curious [islands] of the group,” presenting it as most suitable “to study the system of madrepores which built up the islands in this ocean” (125). As he observes, “these curious walls” constructed by madrepores, “the microscopic workers”; Aronnax explains to Conseil that the walls were built with the slowness of “a height of an inch per century,” taking in total “[a] hundred and ninety two thousand years . . . thus uncommonly lengthening the biblical days” (126). Echoing Axel’s paleontological dream in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (but rehearsing a shorter stretch of time), Aronnax invokes what Bennett calls “the pasts beyond memory” as he imaginatively reconstructs the long geological/paleontological history of the island:

Its madreporic rocks had clearly been fertilized by storms and whirlwinds. One day a seed, carried by a hurricane from neighbouring lands, fell on the limestone strata, covered with the decomposed remains of fish and marine plants forming the vegetable humus. A coconut, pushed by the waves, arrived on the new coast.

The seed took root. The tree grew bigger and blocked the water vapour. A stream was born. Vegetation began to grow. A few animalculae, worms, and insects came ashore on tree-trunks brought in by the wind from other islands. Turtles came to lay their eggs. Birds nested in the young trees. In this way animal life developed and, drawn by the greenness and fertility, man appeared. Thus these islands were formed, the enormous work of microscopic animals. (127)

It is in such discursive/ideological context and following descriptions of the sightings of colonial lands—“the Society Island, with gracious Tahiti, the queen of the Pacific,” “the archipelago of Tonga,” “the Fijian archipelago,” and “the archipelago of Vanatu” (127-28), which are introduced as sites discovered by imperial explorers—that colonial natives, “a few savages,” presumably the most “natural” inhabitants of primordial lands, are encountered by the men on board the *Nautilus* (129). Similarly, another scene of the civilized vs. the savage mentioned above, the Gueboroar Island on the New Guinea, is also introduced as a primordial land: “The ground was almost entirely madreporic but some of the beds of the dried- up streams, strewn with pieces of granite, showed that the island had been formed in the primordial era” (141). Even though the equation between savagery and geological past is not literally asserted—the way it is done in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* when Hans is likened to “an antediluvian man, living at the time of the ichthyosauruses and megatheres” (166)—the narrative logic of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, the close and repetitive sequencing of geological past and imputations of savagery, echo unambiguously the ideological construction of the colonial Other as contemporary remnant of the distant geological and evolutionary past.

In contrast, when it is the prehistory of European civilization that is invoked in the novel, that prehistory is constructed in sublime terms, as grandiose monuments of civilization surviving,

albeit as ruins, amid the savage expanse of nature. Such contrastive reconstruction of the past in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* is done in exemplary fashion in the famous scene of the submerged, mythical Atlantis, “that ancient Meropis of Theopompus, the Atlantis of Plato, the continent denied by Origen, Porphyry, Iamblichus . . . but accepted by Posidonius, Pliny, Ammianus . . .” (260). Invited by Nemo on yet another underwater excursion, Aronnax follows his captor as well as hero as they walk up a submerged mountain from “a depth of 300 metres on the floor of the Atlantic” (255). Pursuing a reddish gleam in the distance (which turns out to come from a live volcanic eruption) which soon “inflamm[s] the whole horizon” (256), during the long uphill climb Aronnax’s eyes first graze over “the savage sights all around,” his imagination overwhelmed by a veritable scene of underwater natural sublime: “What a sight! How can I depict it! How can I paint the image of the woods and rocks in the liquid milieu, their dark and savage overhangs, their surfaces coloured by the red tones of this light increased by the refractive capacity of water? We clambered over boulders which collapsed in great blocks, avalanching with heavy groans. To the right and left gaped dark tunnels whose ends could not be seen” (257-58). However, as they continue their climb, what Aronnax sees from the “first plateau” and then from the summit are sublime scenes of quite another kind: “They were vast accumulations, massed piles of stones where one could make out the vague forms of castles and temples, covered with a world of flowering zoophytes and over which, instead of ivy, seaweed and algae formed a thick vegetable cloak” (259). And again,

Right there in front of my eyes—ruined, broken, collapsed—appeared a city destroyed, its roofs fallen, its temples flattened, its arches broken, its columns lying on the ground, but with the solid proportions of a type of Tuscan architecture still discernible. Further on lay a few remains of a gigantic aqueduct;

here, the silted bulge of an acropolis, with the floating forms of a Parthenon; there a few traces of a quayside, as if some antique port had once sheltered the merchant vessels and war triremes on the shores of a long-lost ocean; further still, the long lines of broken-down walls and broad deserted streets. (260)

These are the scenes that bear “the mark of men’s hand and not that of the creator,” scenes of a glorious ancient civilization, rhetorically deployed in the novel as a sublime prehistory of European civilization. Hence, when Aronnax is delighted that “my hands were touching ruins hundreds of thousands of years old, contemporary of the early geological periods!” (261); the ideological significance of the delight is very different from that of the delight he finds visiting the primordial lands of Gueboroar Island or the Gambier Islands.

In *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, the “savage” lands are not only associated with geological deep time but are also represented as sites inscribed by the adventures of colonial-imperial explorers. The significance of the latter in the novel’s reproduction of the civilized vs. savage binary becomes evident when we note that Nemo’s *Nautilus* and the underwater journey as scientific enterprise are linked with the imperial voyages of discovery, representing Nemo, the *Nautilus* and its journey as advanced and more complete forms of imperial voyage(r)s of discovery. The chapter (“Vanikoro”) in which Verne invokes geological deep time and introduces the colonial native gaze of wonder and fear at the *Nautilus* is also the chapter in which the islands in the Pacific are described as sites that are “written” over, rhetorically brought into being, by the European cultural memory of its imperial voyagers and explorers. The island Reao, for example, is introduced as one that was “discovered in 1822 by Captain Belinshausen of the *Mirny*” (125); the archipelago of Tonga is described as “the final resting-place for the crews of the *Argo*, the *Port-au-prince*, and the Duke of Portland” (127); Samoa as the place “where

Langle, the friend of La Pérouse, was killed” (127); the Fijian archipelago as the site “where the savages massacred Captain Bureau from Nantes, commanding the *Aimable Joséphine*, and sailors of the Union” and discovered by “Tasman . . . in 1643”(127-28); the Vaileka Bay as the place “where terrible adventures befell Captain Dillon, the first man to throw light on the mystery of La Pérouse’s shipwreck” (128); the archipelago of Vanuatu as the site “which Quiros discovered in 1606, Bougainville explored in 1768, and to which Cook gave its present name in 1773” (128); and the island of Vanikoro as the one “to which Dumont d’Urville gave the name of Île de la Recherche” (129). As this scene of imperial adventure shifts to the similar one of New Guinea, particularly the Gueboroar Island and the Papuans, the narrative/ideological exercise in European cultural memory is continued when Nemo delights Aronnax by praising highly one of the French explorers mentioned earlier: “D’Urville was one of your great sailors, he was one of your most intelligent navigators! He was France’s Captain Cook” (158). That Nemo holds colonial-imperial explorers like D’Urville and Captain Cook as exceptions to his general hatred of humankind is evident here; what is even more significant regarding the novel’s cultural politics is that Nemo considers his *Nautilus* and his explorations as continuations of and improvements upon the likes of D’Urville and Cook: “What your D’Urville did on the surface of the seas . . . I have done in the interior of the oceans, but more easily, more completely than he could” (158). Given such clarity regarding what side of the civilization vs. savagery divide Nemo is on (or Verne puts Nemo and the *Nautilus* on), it is not surprising that the *Nautilus* as advancement upon the vessels of previous voyagers is dramatically brought to the fore when the Papuans attempting to enter the submarine are greeted with electric shock and thrown off backwards “uttering awful cries and making exaggerated leaps” (160). When we recall that some of the earlier mentions of imperial explorers included death at the hands of the natives, the

ideological significance of glorifying the invincible power of the *Nautilus* becomes even more apparent. While earlier ships and navigators perished in the hands of natives or of nature; after defying the “savage” enemies, the *Nautilus*’s “screw started beating the waters with majestic slowness,” since thanks to its deployment of electricity the submarine had created a barrier “that none could cross with impunity” (161). Thus civilization vs. savagery, geological deep time and narrative of progress, as well as the sublime spectacle of western technology, are fused ideologically by Verne in a narrative that features a protagonist who appears to be anti-imperialist.

Verne’s characterization of Captain Nemo indeed marks the limits of a liberal imagination working within the discursive field of modern European imperialism. In some ways Nemo strongly resists the civilization-savagery binary and even stands outside the historicity that was central to the spatio-temporal plotting of cultures and peoples along the linear universalist narrative of progress. During his first encounter with Aronnax, for example, Nemo places himself outside of civilization and its laws: “I am not what you call a civilized being! I have broken with society for reasons which I alone have the right to appreciate. So I do not obey its rules, and I ask you never to invoke them in my presence again!” (63). Similarly, in calling the underwater world a domain unchained from the manacles of unjust laws of civilization, Nemo, the maker of the sublime technology, the *Nautilus*, puts himself on the former side in the nature-culture opposition underwriting the imperialist discourse of civilization vs. savagery. Explaining his abiding love for the sea, Nemo says to Aronnax: “The sea does not belong to despots. On its surface immoral rights can still be claimed, men can fight each other, devour each other, and carry out all the earth’s atrocities. But thirty feet below the surface their power ceases, their influence fades, their authority disappears. . . . Independence is possible only here! Here I

recognize no master! Here I am free!” (68-69). Not only does Nemo elude the nature-culture opposition, the designer of the most advanced technology places himself outside time and history as such: “The world finished for me on the day my *Nautilus* dived beneath the water for the first time. That day I bought my last books, my last magazines, my last newspapers, and I would like to believe that humanity has thought or written nothing since then” (70). The artists whose paintings and statues Nemo has collected in his salon are to him outside time—“In my eyes, your modern artists are not to be distinguished from the ancients: they could be two or three thousand years old and I mix them all up in my mind. The great masters are ageless” (72)—just as all modern composers are “contemporaries of Orpheus, for chronological differences are erased in the memory of departed musicians” (72-73). As a person who announces, “I am dead, sir,” Nemo indeed seems outside the temporality undergirding the ideological narrative of civilization vs. savagery. Not only that, Nemo sees savagery in the so-called civilized and appears to be on the side of the oppressed, the colonized, those called savages by people who often exterminate them. When Aronnax tells Nemo that some savages followed them on their return from the Gueboroar Island, Nemo retorts, “Where are there not savages, and in any case, are those that you call savages any worse than the others?” before he adds, “For my part, sir, I have encountered them everywhere” (152). Moreover, when Aronnax warns Nemo that the Papuan savages could climb to the platform of the *Nautilus*, Nemo replies, “These Papuans are poor wretches after all, and I do not want my visit to the Gueboroar Island to cost the life of a single one of these unfortunates!” (158). That Nemo’s sympathies lie with the oppressed and that he identifies himself with them in some ways becomes further evident later in the narrative when, to Aronnax, amazed at Nemo’s “devotion to a fellow creature,” the Sri Lankan pearl fisher, Nemo

confides, “That Indian, doctor, is the inhabitant of an oppressed country. I am his compatriot, and shall remain so to my very last breath!” (206).

In many other ways, however, Nemo and his underwater activities reproduce the logic of the imperial civilization he flees from and announces himself dead to. The majority of Verne’s scientist heroes, Arthur Evans points out, have attitudes, tastes, and prejudices that are “epistemological variants of the bourgeois-will-to-accumulate” (43). In Nemo’s case the accumulative drive exists not only in terms of “epistemological variants” (his vast library and museum, his scientific experiments and observations) but also literally. For example, in amassing his collections aboard the *Nautilus*, as Aronnax judges, “Nemo must have spent millions” (75). Nemo in turn confirms Aronnax’s estimates of the former’s inordinate wealth when he boasts “without undue difficulty I could pay off the ten billion francs of France’s debts!” (88). Furthermore, Nemo claims knowledge of and access to numerous shipwrecks with excessive amounts of wealth buried with them (252). Aronnax is allowed to see a proof of this at Vigo Bay, where an eighteenth-century convoy loaded with Latin America’s galleons and headed for imperial Spain lay wrecked on the ocean floor—the gold, silver, and jewelry all awaiting Nemo’s men to bring them aboard the *Nautilus*: “It was for him and for him alone, that America had given up its precious metals” (252). Moreover, Nemo owns underwater forests—“the forests I own need neither light nor heat from the sun . . . I am the only person to know them. They grow for me alone” (102)—and “the immense ocean plains: “There I have a vast property which I alone farm and which is always replanted by the Creator of all things” (67). Hence, when William Butcher, in his editorial notes to the novel, calls the fictional Gueboroar Island “this archetypal Robinson Crusoe and Swiss Family Robinson-inspired desert island” (412), he leaves out that not only the island but the entirety of the oceans in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* are turned

into sites for the Robinsonade. A patriarch and his crew, who have left human society behind, find in the “desert,” “uninhabited” oceans all the supplies they need to maintain their existence. As Nemo says, the sea is “this prodigious, inexhaustible wet-nurse,” from which the Robinsons derive their supplies of food, materials for clothes, and amenities such as cigars, and harvest vast amounts of pearls, as they also procure coal for their submarine from the inexhaustible supplies (68, 71, 200, 267). With unrivalled dominion over the vast realms of the oceans, Nemo is indeed an emperor of sorts. Aronnax suggests as much when he calls an underwater forest “one of the most beautiful in Captain Nemo’s immense realms” and then justifies Nemo’s rights over it as the rights of a colonialist: “What braver pioneer could come, axe in hand, to cut down the dark undergrowth?” (111).

A more significant and unmistakable sign of Nemo’s imperial-territorial will comes in the novel when after passing through seemingly insurmountable obstacles, the *Nautilus* reaches the South Pole, enabling Nemo to exploit “the honour of being the first to set foot on this land” (302). When Aronnax sees Nemo in “ecstasy” and notes that “with arms crossed, eyes gleaming, motionless and silent, [Nemo] seemed to take possession of the southern regions” (302); it is not his warped imagination that projects on Nemo an imperial-territorial desire. A few pages later, when the fortunate appearance of the mid-day sun enables the calculation of exact co-ordinates and it is ascertained that they are precisely at the South Pole, Nemo recounts a long list of voyagers and explorers of the southern polar regions and sees his accomplishment as a culmination of that glorious history: “Well, on this 21st day of March 1868, I, Captain Nemo, have reached the South Pole and the 90th degree, and I take possession of this part of the globe, now comprising one-sixth of all the discovered continents” (312). Then, when Aronnax asks, “In whose name?” Nemo replies, “In my own” and “unfurl[s] a black flag, carrying a golden N on its

bunting” before he gives the sun a majestic adieu: “Farewell, sun! . . . Disappear, O bright orb. Take your sleep underneath this open sea, and let a night of six months cover my new realm in its shadows!” (312). Hence, if Nemo left the civilized world in anger and protest, it seems that it is not because he detests its logic but because he could find no place for himself and his people in terms of the same logic.

Nemo’s reproduction of the values of the civilization he has shunned is, indeed, of such extent that even his sympathy for the oppressed show asymmetries that reveal his Eurocentric prejudices. A colonial Sri Lankan, the Other of European Self, receives from Nemo a personal gift that would benefit only himself and his family (if he has one). On the other hand, when the *Nautilus* is in “the vicinity of Greek islands,” a trunk-load of gold bars is dispatched from the submarine, to assist the independence movement of Crete, which “had just rebelled against the Turkish despotism” when Aronnax embarked on the *Abraham Lincoln* (230-33, 253). Moreover, Nemo’s self-pronounced break from history appears to be limited to an interlude of a few years only. If his vast library and museum, and even the *Nautilus* represent reproductions of and advancement upon European historical progress; the further knowledge that Nemo has amassed during his years away from civilization, he wishes to return to that civilization and thereby add to the imperial archive. While the *Nautilus* is crossing the Gulf Stream, Nemo shows Aronnax a manuscript “written in several languages” and expresses hope that one day it will reach humanity he has been fleeing from: “It contains a summary of my studies on the sea, and God willing, it will not perish with me. This manuscript, signed with my name and containing the story of my life, will be enclosed in a small floating container” (353). Fredric Jameson’s insight into the difficulty of imagining a utopia radically different from existing societies seems pertinent to understand the limits of Verne’s imagination in *Twenty Thousand Leagues*. Just as utopias (as

Jameson writes) are doomed to reproduce the logic of the society against which the ideal society is imagined (288-89),¹³ Verne's quasi-utopia in the novel—for the *Nautilus*, with its hero and its crew roaming the oceans, free from all the political tyrannies on the surface of the earth, is an attempt at utopia—reproduces the norms and values of the society it purports to be a critique of. A hero who appears anti-imperialist betrays in many ways the same imperial will to knowledge and power as well as the same imperial-colonial prejudices.

The compulsive reproduction of the same in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* makes the novel undermine its own thematic premises. A narrative that puts at its center the uncharted depths of the seas and a rebellious hero who has broken with the world ends up over-writing the seas with inscriptions of European cultural memory as well as framing the seas with already known landmarks that are repeatedly “sighted” or “spotted” from a distance. William Butcher observes in *Verne's Journey to the Center of the Self* that open, uncharted spaces in Vernian narratives produce in their protagonists both a thrill of limitless possibilities and anxiety about the subject's loss, which is overcome by imposing lines or paths over the blank spaces (8, 28). What Butcher forgets to point out is that the narrative/rhetorical writings over the blank spaces have imperial-colonial cultural politics that reproduce the civilization vs. savagery binary as they also turn Vernian novels into veritable texts of global tourism. The rhetoric of tourism in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* takes two major forms: underwater tourism offering the reader a close look into the otherwise inaccessible sites museumizing European navigational and technological history; above-water tourism marking the sighted-from-distance places, as locales exhibiting the exoticism of the cultural-civilizational Other and as territories appropriated and transformed by European imperialism. Prominent as well as repetitive examples of under-water tourism in the novel consist of various shipwrecks, both recent and old. For example, after the *Nautilus* has

cruised “four thousand leagues under the Pacific,” an arresting scene of a recent shipwreck, that of the *Florida*, Sunderland, is observed by Aronnax and his companions—thanks to Nemo’s valiant machine “maneuvering around the submerged ship” (125). They see the ship’s “cut shrouds still hanging from their plates,” “[t]he stumps of three masts,” “the deck where a few bodies still lay, made fast by the ropes,” a young woman “holding a child with both arms,” etc. (124). That “this sad carcass lost beneath the waves” is represented in touristic discourse becomes most evident in the remarks Aronnax makes after his voyeuristic description of the wreckage: “What a scene! We stood silent, our hearts beating hard, at the sight of this shipwreck captured in mid-act, photographed as it were at its ultimate moment!” (124). Shipwrecks are mentioned in the novel again when the *Nautilus* is heading through “the second Mediterranean basin,” where “the mass of waters offered [Aronnax’s] eyes many moving and terrible scenes of ships,” which had either “perished in collisions” or “by hitting a granite reef” (242-43).

However, more memorable ones as reproductions of European historic-cultural memory, are the shipwrecks near America, with “their community of immigrants” and “the glorious wreck” of the ship called the *Vengeur* (358, 365). Before the *Nautilus* reaches “the southern tip of the Bank of Newfoundland,” Aronnax sees numerous ships, both recent and old ones, destroyed “on the dangerous spots of Cape Race, St Paul Island, the Strait of Belle Isle, and the St Lawrence estuary” (358). Seeing “the floor of the sea represent[ing] a battle scene,” Aronnax wonders, “And in just the last few years, how many victims have been added to those funeral annals by the Royal Mail, Inman and Montreal lines! How many ships: the *Solway*, the *Isis*, the *Parramatta*, the *Hungarian*, the *Canadian*, the *Anglo-Saxon*, the *Humboldt*, and the *United States*, all wrecked; the *Arctic* and the *Lyonnais*, sunk in a collision; and the *President*, the *Pacific*, and the *City of Glasgow*, all vanished, cause unknown” (358). After this catalogue of Euro-American

shipwrecks comes the glorious *Vengeur*, which is seen after the *Nautilus* passes “between the extreme points of England and Sicily Isles” and “describe[s] a series of circles” to locate the wreck. A wreck that “certainly dated from a long time before,” with its hull “encrusted by limestone from the water;” the French ship is given a passionate eulogy by Nemo, who recounts its illustrious history, concluding with its heroic end: “Seventy-four years ago to the day, on this same spot . . . this ship lost two of its three masts in a heroic battle; it had taken on water and a third of its crew were out of action. It preferred to scuttle itself with its 356 crew rather than surrender. Nailing its flag to the poop, it disappeared under the waves with the cry ‘Long live the Republic!’” (364).

Besides reproductions of historico-cultural memory, *Twenty Thousand Leagues* also occasionally indulges in commemorations of western technological triumphs. If the Suez Canal under construction is sighted from the distance and the man behind the project, M. de Lesseps, receives an encomium from Nemo (215), in terms of underwater tourism it is the sighting as well as the narrative of the laying of the trans-Atlantic cable that receives elaborate treatment from Verne. When the *Nautilus* is “500 miles from Heart’s Content and at a depth of 2,800 metres,” Aronnax sees the cable, momentarily misperceived by Conseil as “a gigantic sea serpent,” and describes “the various details of the laying of the cable”: the first attempt in 1857-58, which failed “after transmitting about 400 telegrams”; the second attempt in 1863, which also proved unsuccessful, as the cable broke “638 miles from the coast of Ireland,” the third and another abortive attempt in which an audacious American, “Cyrus Field . . . risk[ed] his entire fortune,” and the final and successful attempt in 1866 which used “conductive wires . . . insulated in an envelope of gutta-percha . . .” (361). Offering the reader a pilgrimage to the glorious technological triumph, the *Nautilus* reaches the depth of 3,836 meters, to “the precise spot where

the first break happened that halted the enterprise” (361), then approaches “the spot where the 1863 accident happened,” and finally follows the well-functioning cable “to its lowest point at 4,431 metres” (362). The reader is also offered the otherwise inaccessible close look at the appearance of the cable, “covered with the remains of shells and bristling with foraminifers . . . [and] encrusted in a stony coat” (362).

Similar to underwater tourism, examples of above-water tourism, too, glorify European historic-cultural memory, but in ways that make the imperial ideology of civilization vs. savagery more pronounced. During the period the *Nautilus* “cover[s] twenty thousand leagues in less than ten months,” it passes close by many sites that are represented as places marked for the exoticism of the savage or barbarous Other and/or for the heroism and scientific enterprise of imperial explorers who “discovered” them, named them, and brought them into existence, as it were. We have already seen above how several Pacific islands are represented as lands of savages discovered and explored by European voyagers. Some additional examples include “the archipelago of Hawaii, where Captain Cook met his death on 14 February 1779,” “the Tuamotu Archipelago . . . Bougainville’s former Dangerous Archipelago,” the Kiltan Island in the Indian Ocean, “a land of madreporic origin discovered by Vasco da Gama in 1499” (122, 125, 206). Many of the lands compulsively “sighted” by Aronnax are also described as European colonial possessions, some of them still savage, others transformed into replicas of European civilization. The *Nautilus* passes by “these charming islands under the protections of the French flag,” “the Gambian Islands, on which France has imposed its protectorate,” and “the Guyanas, a French possession” (122-23, 125, 334). The *Nautilus* also passes by the “[c]ivilized lands” of the Indian Subcontinent where “there are roads, railways, and British, French and Indian towns” (183), then “floats] within the sight of Aden,” its promontory “form[ing] an unassailable Gibraltar, whose

fortifications the British have rebuilt since seizing them in 1839” (208). Some of the same sites and some different ones are also noted for their colonial exotic Otherness. We have already discussed above the representation of the exotic Papuans—men with naked bodies and women wearing skirts made of plants. Additional examples of exoticism appear in the novel when the *Nautilus* passes by “Muscat, the largest town in Oman,” and Aronnax observes “its strange appearance, with its pale-coloured houses and forts . . . the round domes of its mosques, the elegant points of its minarets . . .” (208). Likewise, when the *Nautilus* is in the Timor Sea, Aronnax notes how “governed by rajahs,” the superstitious people of Timor Island regard crocodiles as “the object of veneration” and offer to the “adulated” brutes “young maidens as fodder” (162). Similarly, Aronnax catches “only a glimpse of the little island of Roti, part of the same group, whose women have firmly established reputation for beauty on the Malaysian markets” (162). It is thus a function of the compulsive reproduction of colonialist discourse in *Twenty Thousand Leagues* that a narrative about a hero who has shunned human society ends up giving the reader a global tour of places marked by savagery, barbarity, and exoticism on the one hand and the putatively benevolent presence of European imperialism and colonialism on the other.

III

Journey to the Center of the Earth and *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* on the one hand and *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas* (especially its *Nautilus*) on the other represent two seemingly contrary sides of Verne’s oeuvre: the backward-gazing Verne, who writes narratives that retrace journeys already attempted by others, that expound scientific knowledge of the recent or distant past, and that display technologies that have nothing radical about them or may even be outmoded; and the forward-looking Verne, who

weaves futuristic stories in which scientist-engineer protagonists make advances upon existing scientific knowledge and create spectacular technologies that are claimed to be centuries ahead of their times. Several other texts by Verne can be placed into the backward-gazing and forward-looking categories. *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, *Hector Servadac*, *The Giant Raft*, and *The Mighty Orinoco* make some prominent examples of the former category, while *Clipper of the Clouds*, *The Carpathian Castle*, and *The Master of the World* exemplify the latter category. *Five Weeks in a Balloon* narrates the adventures of Dr Fergusson who journeys over central Africa in a balloon to complete the work of European travelers to the region by “joining the dots” marking their accomplishments. In *Hector Servadac*, a comet hits the earth and carries with itself a section of colonial Africa around its orbit lasting two earthly years. Besides staging scenes of colonial drama—the rivalry between French and British imperialism—the novel is notable for the sublime sightings of heavenly bodies that are explained by the scientist on board the comet by means of summing up or rehearsing existing and past knowledge of astronomical science. In *The Giant Raft*, especially the first part titled *Eight Hundred Leagues over the Amazon*, the narration of a journey of a family over the Amazon provides the occasion to describe with gusto the indigenous Native American technology of a raft, called the Jangada (which is turned into a giant construction by the novel’s Spanish hero), and to describe the Amazon forest, via a citation of Alexander von Humboldt, as representation of the childhood of humanity.¹⁴ In *The Mighty Orinoco*, the story of a daughter’s search for her father (a Colonel turned into a priest) runs parallel to stories of three geographers on an expedition to ascertain the mouth of the river Orinoco and of a botanist and his friend on the Linnaeusque mission to collect indigenous plant species. The journey that brings success to all travelers involves again retracing journeys of previous travelers, including Humboldt.

In contrast to these backward-gazing narratives, Verne's *Clipper of the Clouds* pits the futuristic "heavier-than-air" flying machine designed by Robur the Conqueror against the "lighter-than-air" machine built by the Weldon Institute in United States, and—after two American machines are destroyed by Robur's superior technology—ends with Robur's indignant message that the world is not yet ready for his futuristic machine and in consequence progress must halt for some time. In *The Carpathian Castle*, villagers in the Carpathian Mountains of Transylvania observe some mysterious phenomena occurring at the castle which are subsequently explained as futuristic audio-visual technologies (including the holographic image of a prima donna) invented by the Baron who occupies the castle. In *The Master of the World*, Robur the Conqueror of *Clipper of the Clouds* returns with a convertible machine that can fly, run, and sail (both on and under water), all with incomparable speed; when competing national powers bid for buying his technology, the defiant Robur chooses to perish in a storm rather than sell his futurist technology to aggrandize national powers.

There is, however, another Verne, besides the backward-gazing and the forward-looking, the Verne that celebrates the nineteenth century technologies such as the steam engine, the railways, and the telegraph, as well the utopian projects enabled by these technologies. Prominent examples of this category are *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *The Steam House*, *The Begum's Millions*, and *The Invasion of the Sea*. In *Around the World in Eighty Days*, the Englishman Philius Fogg wins the bet of 20,000 pounds by journeying around the world in eighty days, thanks to the steam ships and railroads built and run all over the world by Euro-American powers. In *The Steam House*, a retired colonel and his companions journey across India on a steam-engine-run giant elephant with carriages containing sumptuous lodgings. Built for the rajah of Bhutan, who died before the order was completed, the more pliable version of the

railways, the steam house periodically receives eloquent praise and poetic description from the characters as well as the narrator. In *The Begum's Millions*, the bounty left by a rich Indian widow is split between a French and a German, who build their rival versions of utopian cities in the lands of the United States: one an idyllic community of high-sanitary standards, France-Ville; the other, a Steel City that prides in its ever more powerful destructive weapons. In *The Invasion of the Sea*, Verne glorifies the huge capitalist venture to dig a canal joining the Mediterranean with Sub-Saharan Africa, so as to facilitate imperial commerce hitherto obstructed by difficult terrain and insubordinate natives.

Such extensive temporal reach of Vernian narratives renders irrelevant the question whether Verne is a prophet of progress and a raconteur of futuristic technologies or a writer who looks back to the past, weaving stories in which protagonists retrace journeys attempted by previous explorers and use simple tools such as the chronometer, the thermometer, the barometer, etc.¹⁵ What needs to be emphasized, rather, is that there is no contradiction at all between the forward-looking and backward-gazing Verne, that the past and the future in Verne's texts are temporal moments in the same narrative of progress, and that, if there is a temporal moment Verne valorizes most it is his historical present, as the culmination of progress from the past and the locus of utopian and futuristic projects.

The politics of aesthetics of the complete Verne becomes apparent when we note that the ideology of temporality in Verne's narratives gathers full significance by the spatial distribution of time. As has been discussed in Chapter One, the spatio-temporal politics of colonialist representation—of the Self and the Other—regards historically contemporary non-European peoples and cultures as properly belonging to the primitive times. To repeat McClintock's argument, the "panoptical time" of the imperialist gaze constitutes a comprehensive, all-

encompassing view of the history of civilization from a Eurocentric perspective, while in the illogic of “anachronistic space” cultures and peoples spatially distant are temporally distant as well. Or, to recall Tony Bennett’s argument, the comprehensive view of history produced by nineteenth century “historical sciences” shelves the non-European peoples and cultures into the distant savage and barbaric pasts, at once othered from the European civilized self-identity and included in that identity as a mere fold within the “archaeological depth” of the layered imperial subject. In the discussion above of Verne’s four novels, we have already seen how the spatio-temporal cultural politics of Verne distributes Europeans and their cultural Others across the spectrum of the civilized and the savage. Just as the nineteenth-century institutions of the museum, the world fairs, and travel and tourism were based on and reproduced the spatio-temporal politics of cultural representation, in drawing upon these institutions as the aesthetic logic of his narratives, the complete Verne, too, reproduces imperialist representations of the Self and the Other.

In the entire Vernian oeuvre, if there is one text that most fully represents the complete Verne, the Verne that includes the past, the present, and the future in one universal narrative of civilization from Eurocentric perspective, that text is *The Mysterious Island*. Written as the story of “a contemporary Robinson, a Robinson in touch with the progress of science today”—as the publisher Hetzel claimed (xlvii)—the novel articulates both the backward-gazing and the forward-looking Verne, the Verne of the museum and the world fairs. The different times or periods of the history of universal civilization are made co-present in the narrative time of the novel, as they are represented by an uninhabited island where castaways land with virtually nothing of the paraphernalia of civilization (recall the throw everything down scene); by the engineer hero of the Divided States employed in the railway constructions as well as the young

naturalist, who jointly represent the 19th century historical present of science and technology; and by Captain Nemo and his futuristic technological marvel, the *Nautilus*. What is narratively and ideologically staged in *The Mysterious Island* is simultaneously the story of colonization and the history of civilization, or rather the story of colonization as the history of civilization. As a story of colonization, the novel narrates simultaneously, first the fantasized annexation of a new state to the Union, historically resonant with the territorially expansive drive of the United States; secondly, the right to colonize a territory putatively earned by using it productively, again consistent with the colonial justification for appropriation of other people's lands; and thirdly, the domestication of an alien territory by naming and mapping it, a practice again also adopted by historical colonialism. As a story of civilization, *The Mysterious Island* enacts different stages in the progressive history of the transformation of the natural environment by human industry endowed with scientific and technological know-how. That the omniscient narrator of the novel acts as a museum-showman exhibiting the ideological history of progress becomes clear once we notice the narrative devices expediently used at right moments. First, the castaways separated from their engineer leader rehearse the most rudimentary stage of civilization. Then enters Cyrus Smith the engineer, who, with his scientific and technological knowledge, ushers in a more progressed stage. When it is apparent that the castaways-turned-into-colonists are doing well, a chest filled with relatively modern tools fortuitously appears allowing the narrator/showman to present an even more advanced stage of civilization. The progress in the narrative time coincides with the historical time when the ship the *Speedy* is destroyed by a torpedo, the latest war technology, we are told, used in the civil war the colonists had left behind. Finally enters the futuristic stage when the colonists are invited by Nemo aboard the sublime object of technology, the *Nautilus*. That Nemo is invisibly present from the very beginning of the castaways' island

adventure only signifies that the story of civilization recounted in *The Mysterious Island* is done from the teleological point of futuristic technological triumph. It seems as if at a time when the nation is at war with itself, the desert island serves the colonists as a theater to stage the story of colonization as the history of progress and thereby phantasmically legitimize the founding of the nation undergoing legitimacy crisis.

The Mysterious Island also presents the play of natural and scientifico-technological sublime I have been arguing about in this chapter. The description of the geography of the island as “the half-opened jaw of some formidable shark,” “the caudal appendage of a gigantic alligator,” etc., the frequent storms the castaways have to live through, as well as the final scene of volcanic eruption, are suggestive of the natural sublime. That the colonists create a cozy world of their own may strike us, quite rightly, as exemplification of the aesthetic of beauty and order rather than of scientific and technological sublimity; but to consider it so is also to ignore that the entire novel is the staging of a sublime idea, the idea of civilization, a civilization where the scientist-engineer hero of imperial/colonial provenance is the most contemporary and hence most advanced subject of history. The sublimity of this idea is textually present in *The Mysterious Island* not only in the sublime *Nautilus* but also in the rhetorical excess of scientific discourse, less voluminous than in the novels studied at length above but present nonetheless very conspicuously.

We have seen above how within texts that reproduce the dominant nineteenth century ideologies of progress and imperialist constructs of the Other, there are also moments in Verne’s narratives that register anti-progress and anti-imperialist sentiments. Such sentiments are even more pronounced in Verne’s works after 1870s, and particularly after 1880s. This has led Verne scholars to divide Verne into the early, later, and sometimes a transitional Verne (Butcher,

Verne's Journey 4-5; Evans, *Jules Verne Rediscovered* 79-81). According to such divisions, the early Verne, before *The Begum's Millions* (1879), or before *Clipper of the Clouds* (1886), is the Verne who is mostly an ideologue of progress, whereas the Verne from late 1870s and 1880s is the more embittered Verne who questions the ideology of progress and shows pessimism about the future. But, those very scholars point out, even before 1870s and 80s Verne's narratives show occasional anti-progress and anti-imperialist sentiments. To recall examples already mentioned, when Lidenbrock and his nephew find a vast repository of coal in the interior of the earth, Axel exults that nature's bounty lay there without being threatened by commercialist rapacity, registering thus Verne's uneasiness with ruthless exploitation of nature's resources. Similarly, the Baltimore Gun Club's violent means of establishing contact with the moon is ironically called the favored means among civilized nations. The posthumous publication of *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, which was rejected by Verne's publisher Hetzel in 1863, has further complicated the distinction between the early and later Verne.

Paris in the Twentieth Century is a bizarrely different text from a writer who had just written *Five Weeks in a Balloon* and enjoyed enormous success with it. Whereas *Five Weeks* narrates the triumph of scientist as adventurer, who "joins the dots" left by previous travelers to Africa, *Paris* imagines a dystopian urban space that is technologically highly advanced but stifles human freedom. In a social world of electrically driven locomotives, giant and monopolized industries, including its centralized commercial enterprise of education, and a national theater that recycles vulgarly simplified classics of the past; the novel shows some characters with "outmoded" nineteenth century values condemned to perish because the pervasive instrumental rationality of the society has no room for these remnants of the past. It is not surprising that a certain deliberate forgetfulness of historical reality would be the condition for continuing writing

for the writer of *Paris in the Twentieth Century*. As it has been noted above, Verne's narratives of progress are marked by a curious absence of capitalist exploitation of labor. *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, for example, shows a self-sufficient economic unit in which the captain and his crew are friends, not exploiter and the exploited. When history forces its way into his narrative, however, Verne divides the utopian and dystopian prospects of technology and social engineering between rival national characters and destinies. In *The Begum's Millions*, written after France lost Alsace-Lorraine to Germany in the War of 1870-71, two rival, one utopian another dystopian, urban spaces are built in the United States by a French and a German scientist respectively. While Verne recognizes in the novel the destructive potential of the Western story of progress, he also localizes it as a national phenomenon, thereby saving the ideology of progress for Western modernity. In *Clipper of the Clouds* and *The Master of the World*, Verne narrates the adventures of the scientist-engineer hero, Robur the Conqueror, who, like Nemo in *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, defies national powers and refuses to sell his technology despite several solicitations for doing so. Written at a time when inter-imperialist rivalry was at its peak, these novels of Verne register his distrust of nationalist powers and their propensity to use technology for the aggrandizement of war machinery. Notwithstanding this, the novels continue to celebrate the heavier-than-air flying machine and its convertible (a plane, a car, and a boat, all in one) as sublime triumphs in futuristic machinery, as the *Nautilus* is in *Twenty Thousand Leagues*. Thus, even in these novels, Verne continues to subscribe to the ideology of progress, as he continues to romanticize technology. The difference is that Verne unmoors from historical reality both technology and the ideology of progress technology serves, thereby making *Clipper of the Clouds* and *The Master of the World* similar to *Twenty Thousand Leagues* in their covert reproduction of the ideology of progress.

Just as Verne's texts show occasional anti-progress sentiments, they show infrequent anti-imperialist sentiments as well. We have discussed above how the seemingly anti-imperialist sentiments in *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues* are rendered ineffectual by the imperialist ideologies which they repetitively reproduce. Some later texts from Verne also make brief anti-imperialist critiques (perhaps more powerfully developed than in the ones discussed above), but they too prove occasional, feeble voices, overruled by Verne's apparently compulsive commitment to the imperialist project. In *The Steam House*, for example, Verne makes a considerably sympathetic representation of Nana Saheb, one of the champions of the Indian Sepoy Revolt of 1857, but, quite predictably, Verne's ultimate sympathy lies with the British colonialists (who prove victorious over Nana's subversive designs) as his faith remains in the superior British technology. On the one hand, Verne shows the undeniable technological power of the British by staging scenes in which the technological elephant running on steam engine defeats the organic elephants of an Indian rajah and, later, hordes of elephants that pursue their unnatural rival. On the other hand, the cause of Nana is staged as morally indefensible by representing his anti-British designs dependent on a treacherous native who docilely serves his British master only to betray him and by showing Nana's atrocious behavior in imprisoning and rendering insane the wife of the British colonel, Munro. In *The Children of Captain Grant*, a text written much earlier, Verne affirmatively presents the Scottish revolt against English imperialism, and even predicts that like the United States, other colonized countries including India, would get independence inevitably. It is notable, however, that Verne's criticism of imperialism here is limited to that of the British; when an opportunity to make a similar critique of French imperialism comes in *The Invasion of the Sea*, written at the time of high inter-

imperialist rivalry, Verne refrains from indicting French imperialism. While the Tuaregs, the nomadic tribes of Africa, are represented with considerable sympathy, they are ultimately dubbed as remnants of the past, as people on the wrong side of history, hoodlums procuring their means of livelihood by the unlawful means of looting convoys of imperial merchandise, and as regressive resisters to the sublime, imperial and capitalist cause of digging a canal to join the Sub-Saharan Africa with the Mediterranean. The most damning (and perhaps most revealing) comment from Verne on the victims of European colonialism comes in *The Giant Raft*. After anticipating “the progress which commerce will one day make in this immense and wealthy area,” Latin America, the narrator points to the flipside of progress—“No progress can be accomplished without detriment to the indigenous races” (61). Then, following observations about the near decimation of the Indians in their own lands, the narrator acquiesces to the fact and similar cases elsewhere by predicating them to the immutable logic of progress: “Such is the law of progress. The Indians will disappear. Before the Anglo-Saxon race Australians and Tasmanians have vanished. Before the conquerors of the Far West the North American Indians have been wiped out. One day perhaps the Arabs will be annihilated by the colonization of the French” (62).

Thus Verne’s critiques of the ideologies of progress and imperialism are sporadic and, even as they point out the excesses and dangers of both, never radically question what they lukewarmly criticize. As Verne scholars have shown, the ambivalence of Verne, especially his position on the ideology of progress, can partially be attributed to the strictures of his publisher, Jules Hetzel, who had rejected *Paris in the Twentieth Century* as too pessimistic. That explanation, however, is not applicable to Verne’s position on imperialism. It is untenable to suppose that the comments Verne makes on the Indians and the Arabs in *The Giant Raft* were

made at the behest of Hetzel. A more convincing way to comprehend Verne's vacillations about imperialism would be to attend to what Ranajit Guha writes about the supposedly anti-colonialist observations made by some British bureaucrats writing about Indian insurgent movements. In "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," Guha points out that the criticisms of the British bureaucrats were limited to exceptional cases of atrocities by the local British rule and never questioned the project of empire as such (67-68). When he critiques ideologies of progress and imperialism, Verne, too, hits the limits of a liberal imperialist imagination, its conscience shocked by imperial atrocities and ravages of progress, but not sufficiently to indict the projects of progress and imperialism as such.

Chapter Three

The Wellsian Turn: From the Negative Sublime to the Positive Sublime

Most Wells scholars concur on two points about his oeuvre. They agree that Wells's life-long problematic was the dilemma between ethics and evolution, which he inherited from his teacher and advocate of Darwinism, T. H. Huxley. At a time when theories of evolution became frameworks for understanding social processes, Wells, like Huxley, sought ways to counter the dictates of evolution—the blind and amoral struggle for survival and the elimination of unsuccessful species and societies—by the ethical force of civilization and, unlike Huxley, often emphasized the irresolvable contradiction between the two (Hillegas 18-21; Huntington 8-17; Partington 2-3; Suvin 223-25). Secondly, Wells scholars commonly divide Wells's literary and journalistic career into two parts: the early Wells of scientific romances and provocative journalistic writings who explored the uncomfortable implications of evolution for the future of humanity, and the later Wells of utopias, future histories, realist novels, and non-fictional writings that propagandized the idea of the world state as a panacea for the troubles of human history. Bernard Bergonzi, for example, writes that the early Wells explored contemporary issues of race, class, evolution, and civilization through ironic use of myths, which kept the complexities of those issues alive; the later Wells, by contrast, abandoned complexities and mythopoeic thinking to announce didactic programs (18-22). Similarly, according to John Huntington, the “anti-utopian” scientific romances of the early Wells kept the contradictions of the ethics vs. evolution dilemma alive and treated them in the ironic mode, whereas the works of later Wells sought utopian solutions and abandoned irony for certitude (xii-xiv, 139-43). To Darko Suvin, the scientific romances of early Wells made “an aesthetic form of hesitations . . . [and their] values are kept finally held at an arm's length,” while his later works “abandoned

such fragile but rich ambiguity in favor of short-range extrapolations” (217-18). Likewise, for Patrick Parrinder, the tone of the secular prophet, Wells, shifted from the “resigned pessimism” of his early scientific romances to the “hectoring optimism” of his later works (25).

My reading of Wells subscribes to both of the points above but breaks new ground in two ways. More than any studies on Wells hitherto, it explores how the historical contexts of imperialism and colonialism surface in Wells’s works, and how Wells thematizes and/or discourses upon them. Rather than a fringe matter in Wells’s oeuvre, surfacing in a few texts like *The Island of Dr Moreau* and *The War of the Worlds*, I contend, imperialism and colonialism or the project of empire are pervasive in most of Wells’s scientific romances, utopias/future histories, and discursive writings. I show that while the scientific romances of early Wells show imperialist ideology in crisis, Wells’s later works champion a proto-imperialist project, which is different from historical imperialism in some important ways and is even critical of it but which nonetheless reproduces many of its dominant features. Secondly, my study shows the presence of the aesthetic of the sublime in Wells’s works, which has been ignored by Wells scholars. I argue that parallel to the ideological shift from the early to the later Wells, there occurs a corresponding shift in the Wellsian aesthetics, the shift from the “negative sublime” to the “positive sublime” in the sense the terms were defined in Chapter One. In the scientific romances of early Wells, I maintain, the sublime functions as an overwhelming force or magnitude of the Other, which humbles the imperialist ego making it face a non-transcendable impasse. In contrast, the triumphs of science and technology and faith in western civilization, which are professed only to be denounced in the scientific romances, become valorized in Wells’s later works as means and ends of imperial self-aggrandizement.

In what follows, I broach my study of Wells by reading two key texts of T. H. Huxley, tracing in Huxley's assessment of "man's place in nature" his faith in the pre-eminence of the modern European in world history and the aesthetics of the sublime with which that faith is presented. Then, after briefly reiterating the argument (developed in Chapter One) about the aesthetic of the sublime suffusing the ideology of imperialism, I closely read four major works of the early Wells—*The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr Moreau*, *The War of the Worlds*, and *The First Men in the Moon*—also bringing into discussion, when appropriate, some provocative journalistic writings of Wells from the 1890s. By teasing out Wells's narrative reworking of historical and discursive materials, I explore why and how the early Wells employs the aesthetic of the negative sublime to present a stringent critique of modern European imperialism. After briefly pointing out lingering traces of an imperialist ethos in the early Wells's otherwise savage satires on the imperial hubris, I focus on the discursive writings, future histories, and utopias of the later Wells—*Anticipations*, *Mankind in the Making*, "The Discovery of the Future," as well as *A Modern Utopia*, *Men Like Gods*, and *The Shape of Things to Come*. In addition to arguing that the later Wells takes a proto-imperialist stand, I explain how the shift toward the positive sublime in the works of the later Wells is a consequence of a corresponding shift in Wells's authorial aims, from "merely" satirizing imperialist ideologies to also offering solutions to contemporary historical problems.

In 1893 T. H. Huxley delivered his famous lecture "Evolution and Ethics" at Oxford University. In that lecture, Huxley spoke of the "cosmopoetic energy" of nature, which operates through "man" but so blindly and savagely that for civilization to subsist it must be opposed by the force of ethics. In the "Prolegomena" appended to the book version of 1894, Huxley similarly contrasts the "cosmic process" or "the state of nature"—"an eternal order, bringing

forth ceaseless change through endless time and endless space”—with the “ethical process” or “the state of art,” which he explains through the analogies of a garden and a colony (59-75). According to Huxley, human beings appear to be mere trifles before the vast cosmic process; however, whereas the “cosmic process”/“the state of nature” compels humans to adapt to the given conditions (which produces the survival of the “fittest,” not necessarily of the “best”), by the “ethical process”/“the state of art,” human beings (can) create conditions facilitating the survival of the “best.”

For Huxley, it is the capacity to control nature by “art” that distinguishes “Man” from the lower species and that makes him, as he says in *Man’s Place in Nature*, “that great Alps and Andes of the living world” (132). Huxley’s eloquence there is worth quoting at length:

[I]n comparing civilized man with the animal world, one is as the Alpine traveller, who sees the mountains soaring into the sky and can hardly discern where the deep shadowed crags and roseate peaks end, where the clouds of heaven begin. Surely the awestruck voyager may be excused if, at first, he refuses to believe the geologist, who tells him that these glorious masses are, after all, the hardened mud of primeval seas, or the cooled slag of subterranean furnaces—of one substance with the dullest clay, but raised by inward forces to that place of proud and seemingly inaccessible glory. (131)

Huxley is here extolling man’s “long progress through the Past . . . [and] his attainment of noble future” (131). Despite being naturalistic, Huxley’s metaphors—the “primeval seas” and “subterranean furnaces” on the one hand and “the mountains soaring into the sky” on the other—allude to the dynamic of the “cosmic process” *and* the “ethical process.” The distinction of

“Man” from the lower species, for Huxley, is not so much a result of the cosmic, evolutionary process but a function of “the marvellous endowment of intelligible and rational speech” (132).

Huxley’s metaphors are also richly suggestive of the structure of the sublime, the sublime as an agonistic economy of loss and gain, of dispossession and empowerment, of being overwhelmed by the exceeding force and magnitude of the Other and internalizing and mastering the Other to institute the subject as the sublime self. For Huxley, “the state of nature” or the “cosmic process” represents the overwhelming Other, which must be controlled and mastered by “the state of art” or the “ethical process” so that through that process is created the identity of the modern, European man as the sublime subject of history. As Huxley assures his readers, the scientific view of “man” “adds all the force of the intellectual sublimity, to the mere aesthetic intuition of the uninstructed beholder” (132). Due to the power of “rational speech,” Huxley continues, “Man . . . has slowly accumulated and organized the experience which is almost wholly lost with the cessation of every individual life in other animals; so that *now he stands raised upon it as on a mountain top*, far above the level of his humble fellows” (emphasis added 132).

While the classic study of the structure of the sublime as an appropriation of the Other into a narrative of self-aggrandizement is Thomas Weiskel’s, the imperial/colonial and racial/racist conditions of the aesthetics of the sublime have been shown by later studies, such as Rob Wilson’s *The American Sublime*, Laura Doyle’s *Freedom’s Empire*, and Andrew Libby’s Ph. D. dissertation “The Aesthetics of Adventure.” As I have argued in Chapter One, from the mid-nineteenth-century onwards there emerged in imperialist societies a collective fantasy of the colossal superiority of the West, such that the material and epistemic violence of imperialism were ideologically metamorphosed into the rapturous aesthetics of awe and wonder. As science

became hegemonic, technology provided the “tools of empire” (Headrick) and machines became the “measure of men” (Adas), and western, bourgeois capital continued to change the world after its image (Marx and Engels); the confluence of science, technology, and capital got coded by the imperialist ideology as the colossal world-transforming force of empire, which was fantasized to have brought under its gigantic heels what was deemed as the savage and barbaric wilderness of the colonies.

T. H. Huxley, too, shared the fantasy of the imperialist sublime. His claim for the sublime identity for the modern, imperial man in *Man's Place in Nature* valorizes, after all, the “*intellectual* sublimity” provided by the *scientific* view over the “the mere aesthetic intuition of the uninstructed beholder” (emphasis added). In *Evolution and Ethics*, Huxley contrasts the modern Victorian man to the “heroic youth” of the Indians and the Greeks of the past: whereas the Hindus and Buddhists in the east and the Stoics in the west avoided the problem of evil by fleeing from it or by braving both good and evil with “frolic welcome”, the modern Victorian man, like Tennyson’s Ulysses, braves the sublime adventure because “the organized and highly developed sciences and arts of the present day have endowed man with a command over the course of non-human nature greater than that once attributed to the magicians” (142). Similarly, that Huxley’s entitlement of sublime identity to the generic “Man” is, in fact, specifically meant for modern, western man is evident both in *Man's Place in Nature* and in *Evolution and Ethics*. In the former, the extensively quoted passage above follows the discussion of the comparative weights of the brains of the apes and humans, judged higher and lower in the familiar nineteenth-century savage-barbarian-civilized evolutionary hierarchy: “the difference in weight of brain between the highest and the lowest men is far greater, both relatively and absolutely, than that between the lowest man and the highest ape” (122). When, in the “Prolegomena” section of

Evolution and Ethics, Huxley's explains the "ethical process"/"the state of art" controlling the "cosmic process"/"the state of nature" with the analogy of the "colony;" he invokes the example of Tasmania where "a shipload of English colonists . . . clear away the native vegetation, extirpate or drive out the animal population" and apply themselves "energetically" lest "[t]he native savage . . . destroy[s] the immigrant civilized man" (74-75).

H. G. Wells inherited from his teacher, Huxley, not only the latter's exuberance for "the sciences and the arts," but also the anxiety that the vastly powerful "cosmic process" might triumph over the "ethical process." To Wells as well as to Huxley, such an anxiety was compounded by the end-of-the-century mood of apocalypse (Bergonzi 3-8), by an increasingly acute sense of the hollowness of the imperialist ideology while imperialism itself was ascendant (Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness* 236), by various kinds of "social unrest" and threats of degeneration in the home country (Paradis 4; Greenslade 32-46) and colonial uprisings at the frontier, and by the widespread sense of the general entropic loss as the second law of thermodynamics became an important epistemic frame (Richards 75). It is such anxieties about the dictates of evolutionary struggle and the failures of imperial civilization that predominate in the scientific romances of the early Wells. In works like *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr Moreau*, *The War of the Worlds*, and *The First Men in the Moon*, Wells represents the late-nineteenth-century anxieties about the barbarity underlying the pretenses of civilization by employing the sublime as the aesthetic of being overwhelmed by an insuperable Other.

I

A very useful introduction to Wells's scientific romances can be found in the "journalistic" pieces Wells wrote during late 1880s and 1890s. If his journalistic writings do not necessarily showcase the major social questions Wells explores in his fictions, they succinctly

represent the conceptual vocabulary through which Wells fictionalizes those questions. The most prominent Wellsian concepts, those that are crucial to understanding his scientific romances, are the cosmic vs. the human standpoint, retrogression or degradation, and civilization as the acquired, artificial factor. A variation upon the Huxleyan dilemma of evolution vs. ethics, the cosmic vs. human dichotomy is introduced in “A Talk with Gryllotalpa,” which Wells wrote during his student days at the Normal School of Science. In this brief piece written in the dialogue form, Gryllotalpa talks about “the cerulean depths of infinite space and the starry heavens, and the onward progress of the race,” a perspective that shows “the infinitesimal littleness of men” (19). The speaker counters Gryllotalpa’s idea with what he calls “a general perspective effect,” according to which “A sun may be a big thing millions of miles away, but, surely, here it is not so big as the eye that sees it” (20). While he concedes that the “duty to aid in the developing of humanity is a vast thing,” the speaker also emphasizes, “nearer, and every day before you, is your duty to serve your neighbor” (20-21). As Robert Philmus and David Hughes point out, Wells saw the opposition between the inexorable laws of nature and human effort as complementary rather than mutually incompatible, and, though the relative emphasis between the opposition would change from work to work, the cosmic vs. human standpoint remained Wells’s concern in his scientific romances as well as later works (“Introduction” 6-7). The cosmic standpoint is dominant, for example, in *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr Moreau*, and *The War of Worlds*, whereas the achievements and failures of human effort/standpoint are major concerns in *The First Men in the Moon*.

With the concept of retrogression/degradation, Wells sought to counter the popular, optimistic social-Darwinist ideas that held an anthropocentric view of the universe and interpreted theories of evolution as the continuous and onward march of human (European)

civilization. In “Zoological Retrogression,” published in 1891, Wells thus sums up the current misunderstanding of evolution theories: “It has decided that in the past the great scroll of nature has been steadily unfolding to reveal a constantly richer harmony of forms and successively higher grades of being, and it assumes that this ‘evolution’ will continue with increasing velocity under the supervision of its extreme expression—man” (158). Against such wrong-headed optimism, Wells proposes “this evolutionary antithesis—degradation” and argues that the facts of biological studies neither support “such phrases as ‘the progress of the ages,’ and ‘the march of mind’” nor offer the “guarantee . . . of man’s permanence or permanent ascendancy” (158, 167-68). Then, anticipating his stories “The Empire of the Ants” and *The First Men in the Moon*, Wells presents the apocalyptic possibility that “Nature is, in unsuspected obscurity, equipping some now humble creature with wider possibilities of appetite, endurance, or destruction, to rise in the fulness of time and sweep *homo* away into the darkness from which his universe arose” (168). In another essay, “On Extinction,” published in 1893, Wells recalls to the reader “the pitiless judgment of time,” to which many species have lost their existence, and, giving examples of lost and fast disappearing species (the pterodactyls, the dodo, the bison, etc.), suggests that what happened to them could happen to “man,” that one day the last man on the earth could be “looking extinction in the face” (169-72). While in *The First Men in the Moon* Wells improvises the idea of another species taking over humans, in *The Time Machine* and *The Island of Dr Moreau* he pursues the ideas of degradation and extinction.

Wells’s concept of civilization as the acquired, artificial factor also challenges the Social-Darwinist idea that human beings are evolving morally and mentally toward a greater and nobler future. In “Human Evolution, An Artificial Process,” published in 1896, Wells takes Benjamin Kidd’s argument in *Social Evolution* as an example of the erroneous view about human

evolution and contends that “man” is “still mentally, morally, and physically, what he was during the later Palæolithic period” and likely to remain so for “a vast period of time” (211). At a time when the Lamarkian view of “inheritance of acquired characters” was discredited, Wells proposes to explain the factor that brought about the apparent progress in humanity since the Stone Age. Wells argues that humanity has progressed by virtue of the “extrinsic” factor of “the scope and nature of the circle of thought”: first out of the development of speech and later of writing, human beings achieved “a tremendous acceleration in the expansion of that body of knowledge and ideals which is the reality of the civilised state” (216). Thus for Wells, as far as the “inherited factor” goes, the human is “the product of natural selection, the culminating ape, and a type of animal more obstinately unchangeable than any other living creature” (217). It is only through the “acquired factor” of tradition, which instructs by “suggestion,” and of individual knowledge gained by “reasoned thought” and experience, that humanity has accumulated an outer crust of civilization underneath which lurks the savage man. Morality, according to this view, then becomes “the padding of suggested emotional habits necessary to keep the round Palæolithic savage in the square hole of the civilised state” (217). The concept of civilization as an “artificial process” as well as the conflict between the “inherited factor” and the “acquired factor” appear in many of Wells’s scientific romances. The failure of tradition or the acquired factor to save humanity from degradation is represented by the dilapidated museum, the Palace of Green Porcelain, in *The Time Machine*. As Wells himself points out in the essay, the conflict between the inherited and acquired factor is the conflict dramatized as “Sin” in *The Island of Dr Moreau* (217). The rationally organized world empire of the Selenites in *The First Men in the Moon* is an example of the application of the acquired factor, “a trained reason and a sounder science,” to create a society where all are putatively “generally happy” (“Human

Evolution” 218). As the discussion below bears out, the concepts of the cosmic vs. the human standpoint, degradation and extinction, and civilization as an artificial process, inflect Wells’s treatments of the late-nineteenth-century questions of race, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism.

In *The Time Machine* Wells expresses the anxieties of late-nineteenth-century British imperialism by contrasting the Victorian complacency of the outer narrative with the inner narrative of time travel, which delivers a shocking blow to that complacency (Suvin 208). Told by a narrator, who remains unnamed but whose identity as an imperial British citizen is beyond doubt, the outer narrative is set in the cozy parlor of the Time Traveler where he discourses to his friends about his scientific and technological researches. If the professions of the Time Traveler’s friends—among whom are a newspaper editor, a journalist, a medical man, a psychologist, a provincial mayor, and a “very young man” of adventurist type—indicate a cohort of the imperialist ruling class; the premise upon which the Time Traveler argues the possibility of time travel and the time machine invokes the civilized vs. savage binary of imperialist ideology. If at present the civilized man can go back in memory but cannot stay physically in the past “any more than a savage or an animal has of staying six feet above the ground,” he is nonetheless “better off than the savage . . . [in that] [h]e can go up against gravitation in a balloon” (6). It is on the analogy of this technological precedence showing the superiority of the civilized western man that the Time Traveler argues the possibility of time travel: “why should he not hope that ultimately he may be able to stop or accelerate his drift along the Time-Dimension, or even turn about and travel the other way?” (6). If the balloon is presented here as a sign of western civilization’s technological mastery over gravitation, the fictional invention of the time machine is presented as the same civilization’s triumph over the dimension of time.

To readers who judge a fictional text by the test of verisimilitude, the time machine—with its “twisted crystalline bars” and the nickel, ivory, rock crystal, and quartz used to make it—may seem a mere gaudy trinket rather than a veritable triumph of science and technology. However, in its textual function, or its literary symbolism as Paul Alkon convincingly argues, the time machine is central and “necessary” to the narrative of *The Time Machine* precisely because it embodies scientific and technological triumph (“Was the Time Machine Necessary?” 32-35).¹ The narrative not only foregrounds the details of the time machine in terms of the millions, thousands, hundreds hands of its speedometer and the frequent stops/departures and accelerations/decelerations—drawing attention to the time machine as a technological object manipulated by a savant of science and technology; it also puts a premium on the Time Traveler’s machine, his “Occidental” aptitude to ponder long on solving intellectual puzzles, his “scientific intelligence” and his command of the nineteenth-century western knowledges of Darwinism and Marxism, and his scientific reasoning (as well as his adventurism) to set him off from his descendants of the far future. By virtue of its journey through the Huxleyan endless, cosmic time/space as well as by the scientific explanation of the four dimensions, the time machine is indeed a sublime object of science and technology, which, as I have discussed in Chapter One, were appropriated in the nineteenth century to construct the imperialist identity of superior civilization against the racial and colonized Other who were deemed savage, barbaric or stagnant.

The very idea of time travel in *The Time Machine* is premised after the long *duree* of evolutionary time, the Huxleyan cosmic time, the imagining of which was made possible by the “historical sciences,” such as geology, paleontology, and archeology (Parrinder 38; Bennett 1). It is along this evolutionary time that the nineteenth century imperialist ideology plotted the linear

narrative of progress along the savage, barbarian, and civilized trajectory. And it is on this trajectory that the Time Traveler explains the possibility of time travel and journeys into the distant future to see how imperial Britons have fared in the evolutionary history of Huxleyan cosmic time. As the momentary disorientation caused by time travel is followed by “a kind of hysterical exhilaration,” the time traveler’s anticipation of a technologically advanced Britain is initially confirmed; he whizzes past “great and splendid architecture . . . more massive than any buildings of our own time” and sees them as signs of “wonderful advances upon our rudimentary civilization” (20).

But, as Darko Suvin points out, in *The Time Machine* Wells takes up Darwin’s evolutionary schematization of species only to reverse it (213, 225). The confirmation of continuous progress is proved false when the Time Traveler continues to journey into the future and stops in the year 802, 701. Rather than ascending to the Huxleyan “mountain top” of western civilization, the descendants of imperial Britain have degenerated into the cherubic but passive Eloi and the industrious but monstrous Morlocks. Seen from this light, the sun, moon, and the stars wheezing past the Time Traveler do not suggest a positive sublime of imperial triumph but the negative sublime of the humbling of the imperial ego. Rather than conjuring up the imperial subject of layered chronological depth (positive sublime) as the nineteenth-century “historical sciences” imagined, the journey into the Huxleyan cosmic time becomes an experience in humbling, dispossession, and degeneration.² In reversal of the nineteenth-century rhetoric of progress, the Time Traveler finds the descendants of the imperial ruling class, the Eloi, degenerated into a condition that the imperialist ideology had reserved for the colonized, savage Other. The Eloi have highly reduced linguistic capacity—their language has only simple words and is not equipped with the capacity to represent complex thinking; they are ignorant,

uncurious, and superstitious—the time traveler takes initiative to learn their language, the Eloi do not; they garland him thinking that the time traveler is a sun god; they are effeminate and beautiful, in contrast to the Time Traveler’s masculine identity. The Eloi lack all that the Time Traveler represents—his imperial adventurism, his ethnographic objectifying gaze (visible in his description of the Eloi), his scientific-technological know-how and reasoning power. Indeed the imperial citizens of the future England have so much deteriorated that they have forgotten how to use the stored knowledge of the past. The institution of the museum, which as Bennett writes, was, together with the world fairs, one of the most popular Victorian institutions of public instruction, is reduced to an utter caricature, the Palace of the Green Porcelain, and functions in the text merely to contrast imperial Britain with its degenerated future.

If the representation of the Eloi ironically reverses the linear narrative of progress, the representation of the Morlocks as monstrously formless creatures exposes the internal othering of imperialism. While scholars have seen in the Time Traveler’s loathing of the Morlocks the petty bourgeoisie’s fear of falling into the abyss of the working class (Bergonzi 56; Suvin 239-40), it would be equally or more interesting to see in the hatred of the Morlocks a dynamic of disavowal in the construction of the imperial self-identity. As Ann Laura Stoler argues, the racial rhetoric of imperialism disavowed from its narrative of self-identity not only the colonized Other but also the undesirables within its own fold (96). A similar dynamics of imperial (self)othering is visible in the underground world of the novella’s future London, which bears an uncanny resemblance to the underworld of late nineteenth century London—the world of railway subways, “a complex system of pipes and wires,” as well as “a nether world of filth and stifling air”—while the Morlocks resemble the urban working class regarded as “degenerates” and likened to primitive colonials (Pagetti 123-30). Thanks to immensely popular books like Edwin Lankester’s

Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism, Benjmin Kidd's *Social Evolution*, William Booth's *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, and Francis Galton's *Inquiries into the Human Faculty and its Development*—all published between 1880 and 1894—the increasing number of the urban poor were seen by Social Darwinists as degenerate denizens of the “Darkest England” and threats to the health of the imperial body politic (Greenslade 32-39). Just as the imperialist ideology denied the urban poor proper imperial self-identity, the Time Traveler in the novella disavows his “kinship” with the descendants of the urban working class.

In facing his own unacknowledged descendants, the Morlocks, the Time Traveler is even more unhinged from his imperial self-identity than he is in recognizing the Eloi as his descendants. The Time Traveler's ethnographic gaze, so masterfully at ease when he is describing the Eloi, completely fails when he faces the underground interiority and vast webs of structures of the Morlockian world, which he glimpses only in parts in the feeble light produced by his matches. As he descends into an earth “tunnelled enormously,” the Time Traveler comes to “a vast arched cavern” to see “[g]reat shapes like big machines [rising] out of the dimness, and cast[ing] grotesque black shadows” (47, 54). In the “rayless obscurity” of the Morlockian underworld, its air “full of the throb and hum of machinery” and the smell of “freshly shed blood,” the Time Traveler confronts “the big unmeaning shapes, the obscene figures lurking in the shadows” (53-54). As a space of obscurity, darkness, vastness, and strange sounds and smell, the Morlockian underworld is thus a veritable scene of the Burkean sublime. Unlike the astronomical sublime of time travel or the technological sublime of the time machine, the plunge into the Morlockian abyss produces in the Time Traveler not a triumphant sublime of self-aggrandizement but what David Morris calls “gothic sublimity,” the sublime as disorientation and disruption of self without any recuperative transcendence (306). Since the Morlocks

represent the disavowed part of imperial self-identity, confrontation with them forces onto the Time Traveler awareness of the disavowed kinship, the internal doubling of the imperial self, which he experiences as terror and monstrosity.

The discourse of monstrosity the Time Traveler resorts to also signifies a rupture in the evolutionary narrative in which the Morlocks, as indeterminate category between the imperial self and the colonial Other, fit nowhere. In *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, Thomas Richards argues that the nineteenth-century scientific (diachronic) morphology was obsessed with co-opting the potentially monstrous forms (those formerly unmappable into the Linnaean synchronic system), even as the “monstrous” couldn’t be culturally morphed into the evolutionary narrative and appeared in new forms in Victorian literature (47-49). As a Victorian man of science, the Time Traveler also attempts to plot the strange creatures on a morphological schema but without any success: the Morlocks defy all categorization. In the course of his several encounters with the Morlocks, the Time Traveler describes them as “ghosts,” “ape-like creature[s]” “ant-like,” “human spider[s],” “whitened Lemurs”—their skin “the half-bleached colour of the worms and things one sees preserved in spirit in a zoological museum,” and their eyes “abnormally large and sensitive, as are the pupils of the abysmal fishes”—and finally exclaims, “how nauseatingly inhuman they looked—those pale chinless faces and great, lidless pinkish eyes!” (44-55, 62). Confronting what as a proper imperial citizen he vehemently disavows—the undesirables within the imperial home country—the Time Traveler suffers a rupture in his imperial self-identity, which he projects onto the Morlocks as monstrosity.

Utterly disappointed and burdened with the prophetic knowledge of the degenerated future of the imperial Britain, the Time Traveler journeys further into the future to find that not

only socially and culturally but also geologically the prospects of empire eventually end in doom.³ Consequently the “exhilarating” sublime of the early stage of time travel gives way to another kind of astronomical sublime, the imperial-human ego confronting the death of the solar system and, with it, an irrevocable unhinging of self-identity. In this future of “abominable desolation,” the moon has disappeared, the earth has come to rest, and “the sun, red and very large, halted motionless upon the horizon, a vast dome glowing with a dull heat, and now and then suffering a momentary extinction” (81-83). The Time Traveler finds that the master species of evolutionary history, the species at the mountain top, is defeated—as Wells imagined in his journalist essay “On Extinction”—and the only survivors are the lower species, “a thing like a huge white butterfly” and “monstrous crab-like creature[s]” (82-83). When the Time Traveler finally comes to the future “more than thirty million years hence,” he watches the dying sun being eclipsed by “an inner planet,” a prefiguration of the final death that momentarily renders him “incapable of facing the return journey” (84-85). Thus the journey that began with a technological triumph and anticipations of greater progress ends with the horrors of degeneration and entropic death of the solar system, thereby giving a death blow to the popular nineteenth-century Social Darwinist evolutionary narrative, which put imperial man at the apex of world-historical progress.

In *The Island of Dr Moreau* Wells does not stage any scene of Victorian complacency so as to disrupt it later for satirical purpose, as is his method in *The Time Machine*. Instead, from the very beginning the reader is thrown into a world of Huxleyan “state of nature” where prevail only blind chance, lawlessness, drunkenness-induced moral depravity, and the sheer necessity to kill in order to survive. The outer frame narrative shows the narrator, Mr Prendick luckily escape the wreckage of the ship *Lady Vain* “in the vicinity of the Galapagos, the islands on which

Darwin made the findings that eventuated in his Theory of Evolution” (Philmus, “Annotations” 89); then narrowly miss being cannibalized by fellow survivors, who draw a lot to choose the victim that would be killed to procure the “drink” for their survival; and, after the two fellow survivors fight and throw themselves overboard, drift on the waters of the South Pacific to suffer the prospect of death due to thirst and hunger. When Prendick is again luckily saved by a traveler in a passing ship—“a little trader from Arica and Callao [in Chile and Peru],” “bound to Hawaii” (6-7)—and thanks his savior, Mr. Montgomery, the latter replies shockingly that saving Prendick was merely a chance: “If I had been jaded that day, or hadn’t liked your face, well—it’s a curious story where you would have been now” (12). Then as Montgomery prepares to depart for the nearby island with the strange menagerie of animals brought for his master, Dr. Moreau, the perpetually-drunk captain of the ship insists that Prendick leave the ship, and, upon being reminded of his duty and the law, bursts out, “Law be damned! I’m king here,” before he eventually throws Prendick overboard in the same boat in which he had been found (15). Thus the location where Charles Darwin had gathered materials for his theory of evolution becomes in Wells’s *Dr Moreau* a theater for unmasking the evolution-theory-informed claims of the superiority of western civilization.

Away from the civilized society of imperial London, a Victorian gentleman, who “had spent some years at the Royal College of Science, and had done some researches in biology under Huxley” (18), Mr Prendick is finally shown another chancy mercy and is taken to the island of Dr. Moreau, a crazed Victorian scientist of Frankensteinian lineage, who has been conducting the experiment of rehearsing and accelerating the process of evolution, upon animals he vivisects into quasi-human figures and rules in a quasi-colonial manner. Between Dr. Moreau, the hero of the story’s (mis)adventures, and Mr. Prendick, the narrator and the locus of

identification for the (contemporary, imperial) reader, Wells dramatizes the hubris of the European imperialist will to civilize the other, as he also showcases the anxiety about the futility of that will and the spuriousness of the civilized-savage distinction upon which it is based. As Robert Philmus points out in his introduction to the variorum edition of the novel, *The Island of Dr Moreau* suggests colonialism's spatial economy of power—Dr. Moreau and his associates live in the relative safety of their “elevated, fortress-like enclosure,” whereas the Beast People live scattered in the island and have a separate village of their own (“Introducing *Moreau*” xxiii). If the racial nature of the description of the Beast People is more explicit in an earlier unpublished version of the text (Philmus, “Introducing *Moreau*” xxii), the references in the published version to “a black negroid face” and “brown men” still allude to the familiar stereotypes of colonial epidermal aesthetics (17).⁴ Also, although Huntington ignores the implications of his remark, the fact that humans are separated from animals only by their possession of the weapon—“the revolver, ‘the fire that kills’” (64)—also points to the classic colonial scene, as it was the possession of (superior) firearms that gave European colonizers considerable advantage over the people they colonized. The theme of colonialism is also manifest in a highly suggestive scene of the novel: when Prendick, under the false assumption that Moreau will vivisect him into an animal, threatens to sow revolt among the Beast People by openly defying him; Moreau communicates to him in Latin, the language only the two can understand, thus shutting off the native from the arcane knowledge of power. Furthermore, if Moreau plays God on the Beast people by giving them Commandments; after he is killed, Prendick plays the missionary by invoking the name of God and his Law. Thus the two cardinal hands of the colonial economy of power—dominance and hegemony⁵—are emblemized by “the fire that kills” and the power of the invisible God above.

The quasi-colonial scene of Moreau's island is also the laboratory for the experimentation of the sublime power of western (medical) science. In *The Island of Dr Moreau* the magic of Prospero—which itself is a sign of the power of knowledge—is replaced by the science of Dr. Moreau, the Victorian, albeit radical, scientist. As Patrick Parrinder observes, Moreau may be a “lone, demonic researcher” but “his outlook is not that removed from that of more orthodox scientists” (50). Indeed Moreau's project of accelerating the evolutionary process presupposes the long *duree* of Huxleyan “endless time,” which the nineteenth-century “historical sciences,” such as geology, archeology, anthropology, and paleontology, had stretched before the Victorian imagination and which the institution of the museum had popularized (Bennett 1-2). Moreau's science of vivisection has the triumphant, sublime aim of mastering evolutionary time and process, by wresting it from the whims of blind nature and restoring it to the order of reason. As Moreau explains to the amazed Prendick, his lifelong, consuming passion has been “the study of the plasticity of living forms” and the quest to “find out the extreme limit” of its possibility (46, 49). Moreau claims that “not only the outward form of an animal . . . [but] [t]he physiology, the chemical rhythm of the creature, may also be made to undergo an enduring modification” (46). And if Moreau has not been successful to bring about “an enduring modification” and “to burn out all the animal . . . [and] make a rational creature of my own,” the time he has spent on the project is nothing before the sublime end he pursues: “After all what is ten years? Man has been a hundred thousand in the making” (51). Thus in the point of view of the nineteenth-century enthusiast of science, Moreau, the desire to master the process of nature and replace the power of magic with that of science—a characteristic of Enlightenment's instrumental reason, as argued by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno—is the object of a sublime pursuit worthy of a lifetime of devotion.

But ironically, Enlightenment's will to dominate nature, which Moreau fantasizes as a positively sublime pursuit of reason, only breeds strange monsters of unreason. Wells foregrounds the latter by giving precedence to Prendick's point of view—his experience of horror at Moreau's creations—over Moreau's adventure, his sense of sublime triumph. Long before Moreau gets to the rostrum to lecture Prendick (and Wells's contemporary readers, who are supposed to identify with Prendick's point of view), Prendick's sensorium is bombarded by strange sights that defy all sense of order, which, as a late nineteenth-century student of biology under Huxley, Prendick is trained to expect in nature. Aboard the ship with Montgomery, for example, Prendick is "shocked profoundly" and "astonished beyond measure" to see the "singularly deformed" M'ling, Montgomery's assistant, whose animal-like eyes shining with "pale green light" strike Prendick "as stark inhumanity" (8, 13). When he sees more of Moreau's Beast People—the "amazingly ugly gang" of misshapen bodies and animal eyes—Prendick is hit by "a queer spasm of disgust" and later recalls "the indefinable queerness" of one of them: "I never saw such a gait, such odd motions" (17, 21). Finally, when Prendick's pent-up feelings of shock explode in the question he puts to Montgomery—"What race are they?" (23)—we begin to sense the imperial-colonial nature of Prendick's epistemological confusion: Prendick cannot place Moreau's beast people anywhere in the familiar nineteenth-century racial evolutionary narrative. Accordingly, as the Time Traveler does in regard to the Morlocks, Prendick resorts to the language of monstrosity, making clear at the same time the colonial nature of his epistemic lens. For example, when Prendick wanders into the island and comes across "three grotesque human figures," their physical appearance strikes him to be "such as I had seen in no savages. . . . Never before had I seen such bestial-looking creatures" (26). Properly neither beasts, nor savages, nor "human," the Beast People defy all nomenclature, and hence are often simply

referred to as “the Thing.” In Moreau’s jungle Prendick is thus not only physically outside his familiar imperial city; he is also epistemologically in no man’s land.

The effect on Prendick of being sensuously and cognitively dislodged from his received notions of order is the experience of indescribable terror. Out from the colonialist’s fortified sanctuary—the stone enclosure of Moreau and his associates—into the forest of the Beast People, where the hold of the colonialist’s law is tenuous; Prendick, the imperial man of refined sensibility, feels haunted by Moreau’s “spliced monstrosities” (Luckhurst 39)—human, yet not human; animal, yet not animal. In other words, Moreau’s efforts to create creatures of reason—a project in which both science and colonialism join hands—produce on Prendick the dread of unreason, making the jungle a landscape of gothic terror. For example, when the Leopard-man stalks him in the forest, the “greatly disturbed” Prendick is haunted out of his wits: “The apparition of this grotesque half-bestial creature had suddenly populated the stillness of the afternoon for me” (25). Overwhelmed by fear, Prendick then finds the forest around him “altered to my imagination. Every shadow became something more than a shadow—became an ambush; every rustle became a threat. Invisible things seemed watching me” (26). Indeed, the “apparitions” of the Beast People and the landscape populated by them provide Prendick a whole host of objects of Burkean terror. However, rather than shocking the self into a more aggrandized power (as in Burke’s theory of the sublime), the objects of terror produce in Prendick an experience of the non-recuperative, negative sublime, “a vertiginous and plunging—not soaring—sublime” (Morris 306), the sublime as “the voice from the crypt that questions the power of reason” (Mishra 38). Morris’s insight that the site and source of gothic sublimity are not the outward trappings of terror but the inward recesses of our minds accurately suggests what is happening to Prendick. Striking him with “the two contradictory and conflicting impressions

of utter strangeness and yet of the strangest familiarity” (Wells 27), the Beast People represent for Prendick the unnerving force of the uncanny—the source of gothic sublimity according to Morris—which produces an inner terror that alters the outward landscape.

If Moreau’s project embodies the ideology of evolutionary progression—from lower species to higher, and from savages to civilized—what Prendick finds in Moreau’s jungle subverts that ideology, by pointing to the anxiety of regression and by challenging the very human-animal and civilized-savage distinction. Quite in the vein of his journalist writings from the 1890s that challenged the Social Darwinist assumptions about (imperial) man’s continued preeminence in nature (and in history), in *The Island of Dr Moreau* Wells translates his caution against evolutionary optimism into a parable of the flimsiness of civilization itself. An unforgettable moment in the novel is the Saying of the Law, which, through the patent absurdity of the Saying, parodies the not-so-obvious absurdity of the law that defines the civilized imperial human. Running away from Moreau when Prendick first visits the huts of the Beast People, much to his consternation he is made to repeat the 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? (38). John Huntington seems to miss the point of Wells’s savage satire when he says, “Clearly, what defines the human is something other than what these monstrosities assert; they draw a line, but it is a trivial one” (65). On the contrary, it is precisely the trivialized form that foregrounds the performative and tenuous nature of the human identity as the civilized species. The novel presents incontrovertible textual evidence that Wells associates the Saying of the Law with the laws that keep human beings civilized. Just after the Leopard-man, the transgressor of the law against tasting blood, has

been mercy-killed by Prendick; the latter looks at the Beast People, “all overflowing with the noisy expressions of their loyalty to the Law,” and observes, “A strange persuasion came upon me, that save for the grossness of the line, the grotesqueness of the forms, I had before me the whole balance of human life in miniature, the whole interplay of instinct, reason, and fate in its simplest form” (63). Just as performative and tenuous as the law-abidingness of the Beast People is, human nature, too, reverts back to animality, once the law abiding subjects are out in the jungle of lawlessness and the artificially acquired encrustation of civilization crumbles. As Huntington himself notes—but does not attend to its historical/ideological overtones—all the distinctions that separate the human from the animals (and, I would add, the colonizer from the colonized) disappear when Prendick goes on all fours, M’ling is taught by Montgomery how to cook a rabbit, and the men in the boat plan cannibalism (65). Ironically the only distinction that remains—“the fire that kills”—does not point to any ethical superiority of the human (read imperial) civilization, but symbolizes the barbarity at the heart of it. Fittingly, the novel ends with Prendick’s realization that the jungle continues to live in the imperial city of London: “I could not persuade myself that the men and women I met were not also another Beast People, animals half wrought into the outward image of human souls, and that they would presently begin to revert, to show first this bestial mark and then that” (86). Thus, the distinction between the human and the beast, between the civilized colonizer and the savage colonized, is thematized in *The Island of Dr Moreau* only to be radically undermined.

In *The War of the Worlds* Wells appropriates and extends the contemporary popular sub-genre of future war narratives⁶ by representing imperial England invaded by the technologically and militarily superior Martians. First serialized in 1897, “the year of a second Victorian Jubilee and much British self-congratulation” (Aldiss, “Introduction” xv), the novel reverses the

colonizer/colonized binary and invites its readers to imagine the imperialist invasion from the point of view of its victims. Through a shocking narrative that shows the English landscape physically altered and the English people utterly routed by the alien invasion, Wells forces his contemporary readers to swallow the taste of the trauma the empire habitually inflicts on its others. Although the entropic cooling of Mars and the evolutionary imperative for Martians to invade Earth point to cosmic processes as the ultimate enemy, in the immediate sense, the Other in *The War of the Worlds* is not the Huxleyan “state of nature” or “cosmic process,” but the monstrous double of the imperialist self, western civilization or progress itself in its hyper-advanced form. Consequently, what would have been a means for positively sublime self-aggrandizement—uncontested technological and military superiority—could it be made a part of the imperialist autobiography, becomes in the novel the overwhelming, terrorizing negative sublime that “unmans” the imperialist ego.

The Huxleyan theme of ethics vs. evolution or “state of art” vs. “state of nature” is introduced right at the beginning of *The War of the Worlds*. The narrator is “busy upon a series of papers discussing the probable developments of moral ideas as civilization progressed” (12)—the Huxleyan question of ethical civilization—when he is interrupted by the strange news of the invasion by Martians, who, driven by the “cosmic” law of entropy (which would soon make Mars uninhabitable) and the evolutionary imperative, want to colonize the earth. Put differently, the prognosis about ethical civilization is disrupted by the reality of the evolutionary imperative. Ironically, it is the technologically more advanced and hence apparently more civilized agents that brutally invade an almost defenseless society and refuse to reciprocate the latter’s efforts at cultural contact—the repeated attempts at communication by the invaded, as we know later, are rebuffed by the invaders’ “message” of mass murder. If the profile of the invader given above

resembles that of modern European imperialism, Wells does not miss pointing it out.

Anticipating the reader's moral outrage at the monstrous barbarity of the Martians, the narrator says,

And before we judge of them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, 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. (9)

Wells scholars have noted the novel's concern with imperialism (Bergonzi 134; Huntington 84), but the narrator's inclusion of both human beings and animals in the category of victims in the quote above, as well as the repetitive comparisons of humans with animals later in the novel, points to a thematization of imperialism that is richer than what most Wells scholars have recognized.

In *The War of the Worlds*, the narrator repeatedly compares the Martian violence to human beings with the human violence to "lower" species. With the violence done to human beings (the colonized) by other human beings (the colonizer)—the example of the Tasmanians above—serving as the mediating link between the two kinds of violence, the novel thematizes imperialism as a violent engine that is at once capitalistic and governed by Enlightenment's instrumental reason. As Mark Rose points out, the unresponsiveness of Martians to human beings' efforts to communicate to them as well as "their utter reduction of mankind to degraded and anonymous masses" call for a reading of "the Martians as a metaphorical projection of the capitalistic industrial system of the late nineteenth century, here conceived as a social machine created by a ruthless economic reason that sucks the lifeblood out of human beings" (*Alien*

Encounters 76-77). Indeed, Wells's description of the Martians as giant heads and shriveled bodies, with bodily pleasures and necessities such as sleep, digestion, and sexuality either non-existent or reduced to "rational" efficiency, also suggests that the Martians are the apotheosis of capitalism's instrumental rationality. Moreover, by predicating the Martians' and humans' violence to their respective others after the identical logic of domination and (ab)use, the novel indicates that "ruthless economic reason" is itself part of a more pervasive instrumental reason (in the sense defined by Horkheimer and Adorno) that victimizes both human beings and animals and works as the operating force in capitalism-imperialism. To begin with, the narrator compares the arrival of Martians among (British) humans with "the arrival of that shipful of pitiless sailors in want of animal food [the "dodo in the Mauritius"]" (34). Then, the Martians' unresponsiveness to human efforts at communication is equated in the novel with the human disregard of "the lowing of a cow" (40). Similarly, the narrator compares the Martians' utter lack of feeling toward the human beings they terrify and murder to the lack of empathy in a human to "the confusion of ants in a nest against which his foot has kicked" (63). Likewise, the Martians going about their business of gas-poisoning their "enemies" in a cold instrumental way is described in the novel as "setting about it as methodically as men might smoke out a wasp's nest" (90). The narrator's visceral understanding of the horror human beings regularly inflict upon their others reaches its climax when he confronts "this startling vision of unfamiliar things," the colossal destruction caused by the Martians:

For that moment I touched an emotion beyond common range of men, yet one that the poor brutes we dominate know only too well. I felt as a rabbit might feel returning to his burrow, and suddenly confronted by the work of a dozen busy navvies digging the foundations of a house. I felt the first inkling of . . . a sense of

dethronement, a persuasion that I was no longer a master, but an animal among the animals, under the Martian heel. (144)

While not all examples above of human violence to animals are exclusive to European capitalism-imperialism, in the context of the narrative of *The War of the Worlds*, the comparison of the human violence to animals with the imperialist violence to the colonized foregrounds the work of instrumental rationality that pervades imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism. The equation of the imperial narrator's "dethronement" with the rabbit's displacement is thus a figurative expression of the dehumanization of the colonized under the "heel" of the colonial invader.

As examples of species more evolved along the same historical narrative that constructed nineteenth-century European imperialist identity, the Martians, with their intelligence and technological spectacle, become objects of fascination for the imperial narrator of *The War of the Worlds*. However, because the narrator is forced to occupy the position of the colonized, the possibility of identification with the Martians is disrupted by the violence of invasion, and the Martians instead appear as monsters who cannot be placed anywhere in the morphological schema of nineteenth-century evolutionary biology. The aesthetic consequence of this for the novel is that rather than yielding the positive technological sublime, the Martians and the violence they inflict on the British become objects of overwhelming terror, producing the gothic, negative sublime that dwarfs the imperialist ego. Early in the novel, the narrator uses the analogy of infusoria under the microscope to describe how miniscule and insignificant humans must appear seen through the Martian telescopes across "more than forty millions of miles of void" (7, 10). The astronomical sublime invoked here is not the positive sublime of self-aggrandizement because it is the alien enemy, "the Thing," that traverses (and displays mastery over) "the

unfathomable darkness of empty space” (10). When the first of the several gigantic cylinders carrying the Martians to the earth opens and a Martian raises its head out, the narrator finds his anthropomorphic expectations utterly frustrated; instead of seeing a creature “a little unlike us terrestrial men, but in all essentials a man,” he observes “grayish billowy movements, one above the other, and then two luminous discs—like eyes. Then something resembling a little grey snake, about the thickness of a walking stick, coiled up out of the writhing middle, and wriggled in the air towards me—and then another” (21). Like the Morlocks in *The Time Machine* and the Beast People in *The Island of Dr Moreau*, the “formless” monsters in *The War of the Worlds* defy comprehension and produce in the imperialist imagination the self-unhinging sublime of gothic terror: “A sudden chill came over me. . . . I looked again at the cylinder, and ungovernable terror gripped me. I stood petrified and staring” (21). The narrator sees “[a] grayish rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear . . . rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder” before his eyes close in upon “the strange horror of its appearance”:

The peculiar V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip, the absence of brow ridges, the absence of a chin beneath the wedge-like lower lip, the incessant quivering of this mouth, the Gorgon groups of tentacles, the tumultuous breathing of the lungs in a strange atmosphere, the evident heaviness and painfulness of movement due to the greater gravitational energy of the earth—above all, the extraordinary intensity of the immense eyes—were *at once vital, intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous*. (emphasis added 21-22)

The imperialist imagination habituated to place the Other in an appropriative self-sustaining way suffers irrevocable crisis because the “monstrous” Martians pose an insuperable threat to that economy of self-(re)production. A little later in the narrative, when the narrator is returning

home after having taken his wife to the supposed safety of her cousins', he sees, in a flash of lighting piercing the "bewildering darkness," a colossal Martian suddenly loom up before him: "A monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pine-trees, and smashing them aside in its career; a walking engine of glittering metal, striding now across the heather; articulate ropes of steel dangling from it, and the clattering tumult of its passage mingling with the riot of the thunder" (46). As before, the narrator's descriptive power fails him, making him resort to a flurry of metaphors and metonymies to capture the "elusive vision . . . [of] this problematical object" (46). Finally, while the Martians advance to London, forcing their alien presence before the complacent and unbelieving British/imperial citizens, several similarly word-defying encounters with the invaders are recounted by the victims passing their terror-tales to others. It is as if the trauma the empire inflicts upon its others were revisited upon the aggressor and had to be re-lived over and over again in the purgatory of the guilty imperialist conscience.

When Wells repeatedly stages the scene of the disruption of Victorian complacency, he may be enjoying an underdog's satisfaction of taking revenge upon a society that victimized his class. However, the repetitive staging of disruption also has an important aesthetic function in *The War of the Worlds*; it allows Wells to recreate vividly the alteration/adulteration of the physical environment of England by the alien Martian invasion, to the extent that the familiar imperial home country becomes almost completely unrecognizable. English landscape and airspace are filled by strangest sights and sounds, engendered as it were by the phallic thrusts of the Martians into the mother earth of Britannia—the colossal Martian cylinders force deep holes "sticking into the skin of our old planet Earth [literally England] like a poisoned dart" (36); the indomitably destructive Martian Heat-Ray "sweep[s] round swiftly and steadily, this flaming death, this invisible, inevitable sword of heat" (26). When the narrator returns home after

witnessing the first Martian spectacle of death and destruction and looks out through the window of his study, his field of vision is flooded by the after-effects of that spectacle: “It seemed indeed as if the whole country in that direction was on fire—a broad hillside set with minute tongues of flame, swaying and writhing with the gusts of the dying storm, and throwing a red reflection upon the cloud-scud above” (50). Then, as he looks at “irregular patches of dark country, broken here and there by intervals of dimly glowing and smoking ground,” the narrator marvels, “It was the strangest spectacle, that black expanse set with fire” (51). Similarly, if a most strange and deeply violating scene is made by the mechanical colossi of Martians prowling about English counties and the capital city, wielding machines of death, the Heat-Ray and the smoke gun; no less strange is that plant from another planet, the red-weed. Although it is the only Martian plant to “gai[n] any footing in competition with terrestrial forms,” it grows “with astonishing vigour and luxuriance,” and its “vivid blood-red tint” for a time completely overshadows the dominant color of the (English) earth—green (128). The narrator first sees the plant by the river Thames when he has just met the curate after surviving a near-death encounter with the Martians: “Looking towards the river, we were astonished to see an unaccountable redness mingling with the black of the scorched meadows” (116). The next time he sees the red plant—when he comes out of the fifteen days’ confinement with the curate in the semi-crashed house they are trapped in—thanks to its “unparalleled fecundity,” the red-weed has grown everywhere “tumultuously,” so much so that the narrator finds “the landscape, weird and lurid, of another planet” (143-45). Then there is that scene most unnerving to the complacent imperialist imagination, the massive exodus of Londoners, “[t]he whole population of the great six-million city . . . stirring, slipping, running; presently . . . pouring *en masse* northward” (82). Due to the death-bringing power of the Martian Heat-Ray and the smoke gun, “the roaring wave of fear . . . swept through the

greatest city in the world . . . the stream of flight rising swiftly to a torrent, lashing in a foaming tumult . . . the police organization, and . . . the railway organizations, were losing coherency, losing shape and efficiency, guttering, softening, running at last in that swift liquefaction of the social body” (92). English airspace is likewise bombarded with the unfamiliar sounds of loud crashes caused by the Martian Heat-Ray, the deafening concussion of a Martian cylinder that falls upon a residential area, the incomprehensible, thunder-drowning, “siren-like howls” of the Martians shouting “Aloo! aloo!” (47, 84), and the terrorized cries of the invaded. Moreover, not only the strange sounds but also the sepulchral silence of the Martian carnage announces the violation by the invader. Surveying his home country destroyed by the Martians, the narrator finds it “singularly desolate: blackened trees, blackened, desolate ruins, and down the hill the sheets of the flooded river, red-tinged with the weed. And over all—silence. It filled me with indescribable terror to think how swiftly that desolating change had come” (146-47). Thus, like their colonial counterparts of real history, imperial citizenry in *The War of the Worlds* are terrorized by the invader’s machines of death, just as the familiarity of their home country is rendered unfamiliar by the sights of the invader’s presence and the violence it entails.

The Martians and the destruction they cause are described in *The War of the Worlds* with superlative adjectives, with imagery suggestive of unparalleled magnitude and force, and with the matching “Never since/before . . .” syntax. “Never before in the history of warfare had destruction been so indiscriminate and so universal,” says the narrator as he sums up the first spectacle of the destruction by the Martian Heat-Ray, while he renders the crippled British defense with “Never since the devising of gunpowder was the beginning of a battle so still” ((55, 86). The epic scale of the exodus of Londoners is described likewise with “Never before in the history of the world had such a mass of human beings moved and suffered together,” deploying

the ascending imagery of “stream . . . torrent . . . a foaming tumult” (104, 92). Added to these superlative expressions are the narrator’s recurrent feelings of “astonishment” and “blank wonder” at the strangest spectacles of Martian power. As incomparable, indescribable “absolutely great” objects, the Martians and their techno-military exploits in *The War of the Worlds* invoke the aesthetic of the sublime, something also hinted by a perhaps fortuitous intertextuality that exists between the novel and two key theories of the sublime, Burke’s and Kant’s. Kant is said to have been inspired to write his theory of the sublime by the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 (Ray 9); imagining the shock it would have caused Londoners had the Martians not delayed their advance to London, the narrator of *The War of the Worlds* says, “as sudden, dreadful, and destructive their advent would have been as the earthquake that destroyed Lisbon a century ago” (67). Arguing the power of the real over the imagined to produce the sublime effect of tragedy, Burke offers the example of “[t]his noble capital, the pride of England and of Europe . . . destroyed by a conflagration or an earthquake” and asks, if indeed it occurred, “what numbers from all parts would crowd [sic] to behold the ruins . . .?” (47-48). Echoing Burke’s example, as it were, for the climactic scene of *The War of the Worlds*, Wells chooses the earthquake-like impact of the Martian machines of fire and smoke (which sets the whole city on the run) and aestheticizes it by inviting the reader to see the routed London from the height of a balloon (104). But unlike in Burke’s and Kant’s theories, the sublime in *The War of the Worlds* does not produce a transcendent or hyper-aggrandized self; rather, as said above, by frustrating the recuperative economy of the transformation of loss into gain, it subjects the imperialist ego to utter humiliation, forcing it to confront the terrors imperialism habitually causes to its others. To invoke words used in the novel, the negative sublime in *The War of the Worlds* “unman[s]” the imperialist self and “dethrone[s]” it from the apex of civilization, where the nineteenth century

“historical sciences” had placed the European imperial man. Modern European civilization, which according to Huxley could provide tools to triumph over the dictates of nature, is shown to be as brutal as nature, while the very distinction between nature and civilization is undermined in the form of Martians, who function in the novel as the mirror-image of modern European imperialism.

Wells’s *The First Men in the Moon* exploits the narrative tradition of lunar voyages⁷ to write a fierce Swiftian satire of capitalist instrumental rationality and its historical twin, European imperialism. The novel’s two human characters, “[t]he opposition between . . . [whom] dominates much of the novel” (Huntington 91), perceive *two entirely different moons*: to Bedford, a profit-seeking capitalist adventurer and a xenophobe, the moon represents a potential colony full of resources to be violently extracted and teeming with monstrous others to be brutally exterminated; to the “disinterested” man of science, Cavor, the moon represents an alien civilization with which he wants to establish a cultural contact, even at the risk of his own life. As Bedford’s fantasy of annexing the moon fails and Cavor finds inside the moon a civilization far more sophisticated than his own imperialist one on the earth, a shift in the novel’s aesthetic also takes place. At first we witness the positive, self-aggrandizing sublime produced by multiple means: the elaborate staging of the invention (and explosion) of the gravity-defying Cavorite, the smart object of technology—the sphere—shooting through empty space and yielding through its windows sublime astronomical sights, the wondrous lunar vegetative growth ennobling the minds of the imperial beholders inside the safety of the sphere, and the intoxicating visions of empire extending beyond earthly limitations. But soon the novel’s aesthetic moves to the negative sublime effected by the same vegetative growth that hides the sphere, by the cavernous passageways and living spaces in the interior of the moon that challenge Cavor’s “cognitive

mapping,” by the incomprehensibly advanced lunar technologies, by the vastly superior social order of the lunar “world state” as well as its wondrous/monstrous potentate, and by the vastness of the empty space that robs Bedford of his identity on his way back to earth (when he is unsure about handling the sphere, in contrast to the journey *to* the moon when the sphere was handled by Cavor who knew his stuff). Because the moon is troped both as a civilizational other and as (European) empire’s double, the negative sublime represented by the Selenites humbles the imperialist ego both by showing it lagging behind on the march of progress and by exposing a deep problem about the idea of progress itself.

At the heart of the novel is the coincidental but thematically significant alliance between the disinterested scientist and explorer, Cavor, and the profit-seeking capitalist-colonialist speculator, Bedford. It is true that the subservience of science to the cause of imperialist-colonialist invasion remains an averted possibility in the novel—thanks to Cavor’s refusal to play into the hands of capitalists and imperialists—as it is plausible that Wells here may be registering his desire to free science and technology from such servitude. But it is also evident that Wells stages that alliance—if only to fiercely satirize it. When Bedford expresses his doubts about the profitability of the lunar voyage, Cavor tells Bedford to take it as “prospecting” and promises him minerals that could be transported “packed . . . in a Cavorite case” (29). Earlier in the text, Bedford asserts himself as the practical man whom Cavor the theoretical person can rely upon (18). Hence, it is the alliance between the practical man, the capitalist-colonialist, and the theoretical man, the scientist-explorer, that makes the colonial adventure narrative possible. When Cavor tells Bedford “Think yourself a sort of ultra Arctic voyager exploring the desolate places of space,” he places the journey in the tradition of colonial travel-adventure narratives (41). Indeed, the motif of geographic explorations followed by colonial enterprise (Bedford’s

dreams thereof) evokes the history of similar explorations followed by colonial exploits, the imperial nexus of knowledge and power argued by Edward Said in *Orientalism*.

The adventure narrative in *The First Men in the Moon* is made possible by the co-presence of the related fantasies of scientific-technological breakthrough and imperialist-colonialist expansion, both of which evoke the aesthetic of the sublime, the sublime as triumphant self-aggrandizement. An eminent example of this is the representation of the power of the Cavorite, the gravity-defying substance that Cavor invents. When the heated composite substance (the mixture of “a number of metals and a few other things”) cools off, the air above the Cavorite plate loses weight because of zero gravity and the surrounding air rushing to replace it also loses weight. Bedford, the narrator, thus describes the ensuing cataclysmic effect: house chimneys “jerked heavenward”; trees “swayed and whirled and tore themselves to pieces”; the sight of “a huge white flame” was compounded by the ear-splitting “clap of thunder that left [Bedford] deaf on one side for life”; and the “discoverer [Cavor] was seized, whirled about, and blown through the screaming air” (20-21). Bedford further notes the sheer magnitude and force of the sublime impact of Cavorite: “In that instant the whole face of the world had changed. The tranquil sunset had vanished, the sky was dark with scurrying clouds, everything was flattened and swaying with the gale” (21). No less sublime in the novel is the image of the Cavorite-coated sphere shooting up the empty space and yielding through its windows the unforgettable sights of “airless, star-dusted sky” and “the blinding splendour of the waning moon” (34). Then, as the sphere lands on the moon and Bedford and Cavor look through the window, they are struck by the vast sublime expanse of the lunar rock formations and “banks and crevices of snow”— “[i]nnumerable rounded grey summits, ghostly hummocks, billows of snowy substance, stretching crest beyond crest into remote obscurity”—illuminated by the first rays of the sun and

standing out “clear and dazzling against a background of starry blackness” (49). As they continue to look, they also see the growing heat of the sun make “the mounds of masses of frozen air” melt and evaporate: “grey vapour poured upwards . . . whirls and puffs and drifting wreaths of grey, thicker and broader and denser . . . hissing and rustling, the stormy trailing of the aerial garment of the advancing day” (50-51). This aerial lunar spectacle is matched by the dynamic scene of rapid vegetative growth when, before their eyes, lunar seeds rupture and “thrust a rootlet downward to the earth and a queer bundle-like bud into the air” and they see how “[t]he bundle-like buds swelled and strained and opened with a jerk, thrusting out a coronet of red sharp tips, spreading a whorl of tiny, spiky, brownish leaves, that lengthened rapidly, lengthened visibly even as we watched” (56). Bernard Bergonzi suggests that however wondrous Wells’s description of the lunar vegetation, it is not a vital part of the novel’s satire the way, for example, the description of fleeing Londoners in *The War of the Worlds* is (159-60). But if we place the scene in the context of imperialist travel-adventure narratives and read it in contrast to the later scenes in the novel, its satirical significance becomes readily visible. The sublime scene of lunar vegetation in *The First Men in the Moon* amplifies the glory of the imperialist adventurers who become the first persons to “discover” it, and like the travelogue writers of real colonial-imperial history, become, to borrow a phrase from Mary Louise Pratt, “the monarch[s]-of-all-I-survey” (201).⁸ Thus, like the scientific-technological sublime of Cavorite and the sphere, the lunar, natural sublime in the novel is reproductive of imperial self-aggrandizement. Explorers of “the untrodden . . . moon” (60), Bedford and Cavor become sublime adventures as the nineteenth-century voyagers of the Arctic presented themselves in their highly popular travel narratives.⁹

Fittingly, the colonial travel-adventure narrative in *The First Men in the Moon* is driven also by the sublime fantasy of capitalist and colonialist expansion. The fantasy of capitalist expansion is evident in Bedford's dreams of profitable exploits coming out of Cavor's research into the gravity-defying substance: "The thing unrolled, it expanded and expanded. Among other things I saw in it my redemption as a businessman. I saw a parent company and daughter companies, applications to right of us, applications to left, rings and trusts, privileges and concessions spreading and spreading, until one vast stupendous Cavorite Company ran and ruled the world" (17). Bedford's fantasies here exemplify what Terry Eagleton calls "the 'bad' sublime" of capitalism: the sensuous life that is alienated to capital is recuperated by the capitalist by phantasmically identifying with "the power of capital itself," its incessant movement, its "endless accumulation of pure quantity" (200, 212). Bedford's dreams of an earthly commercial empire are finally dashed due to the unwieldy nature of Cavorite, but he soon switches gears and scales up his expansionist fantasies to the inter-planetary level: "Suddenly I saw as in a vision the whole solar system threaded with Cavorite liners and spheres *de luxe*. 'Rights of pre-emption,' came floating into my head—planetary rights of pre-emption. I recalled the old Spanish monopoly on American gold. It wasn't as if it was just this planet or that—it was all of them" (30). The colonialist nature of Bedford's visions of capitalist expansion becomes even more apparent, when, intoxicated with a lunar plant they have eaten, Bedford shares his annexation fantasies with Cavor: "What a home for our surplus population! Our poor surplus population We must annex this moon . . . This is part of the White Man's Burden Cavor—we are—hic—Satap—mean Satraps! Nempire Caesar never dreamt. B'in all the newspapers. Cavorecia. Bedfordecia . . . unlimited!" (77-78). If Bedford's plans reproduce the colonialist practice of using colonies as means of solving the population problems of the home country, like

a colonialist he also tries to convince Cavor of “the infinite benefits our arrival would confer upon the moon . . . [just as] the arrival of Columbus was, after all, beneficial to America . . .” (78-79). Using the point of view of the profit-mongering Bedford, Wells thus humorously presents the megalomaniac dreams of European capitalist-colonialist expansion and the aesthetic of grandeur such dreams entailed.

However, the triumphant, self-aggrandizing sublime of the imperialist self-identity turns out to be only a phantom when the reality of the intransigence of the alien space and the sophistication of its civilization begin to dawn upon the adventurers. First Bedford and Cavor, then Cavor alone, the earthly adventurers are awe-struck by the Selenites’ sophisticated machinery, their elaborate passageways and living spaces, their masterful control over space and population, and the planetary scope of their empire—all evoking the negative sublime, the sublime that refuses being recuperated into self-glorification and subjects the gazing imperialist ego to irrevocable crisis. For example, when the Selenite captors take Bedford and Cavor out of their confinement, the latter realize that “the tumult of sounds which had filled our ears” came from “a vast machinery in active movement, whose flying and whirling parts were visible indistinctly over the heads” (95). The sublime incomprehensibility of the Selenite machinery is acknowledged by Bedford when he says, “The meaning and structure of this huge apparatus I cannot explain” (95). Similarly, the dark and unknown cavernous expanse of the moon’s interior strikes Bedford and Cavor as a veritable scene of gothic terror: “The cavern spread wide and low, and receded in every direction into darkness. Its roof . . . seemed to bulge down as if with the weight of the vast thickness of rocks that prisoned us. There was no way out of it—no way out of it. Above, below, in every direction, was the unknown, and these inhuman creatures . . .” (97). Bedford and Cavor escape from the Selenites thanks to Bedford’s violent heroism, but what

they see of the Selenite world on their way up to the surface of the moon impresses them with the same sense of vastness and awe:

[W]e had emerged upon a slanting gallery that projected into a vast circular space, a huge cylindrical pit running vertically up and down. Round this pit the slanting gallery ran without any parapet or protection for a turn and a half, and then plunged high above into the rock again. . . . It was all tremendously huge. I can scarcely hope to convey to you the Titanic proportion of all that place—the Titanic effect of it. (124)

The “Titanic proportion” of Selenite engineering is radically different from what Bedford had assumed earlier when he was planning to make the moon a habitation for the Empire’s surplus population. Moreover, when they reach the moon’s exterior, what they confront is no longer the landscape they had earlier gazed upon with wonder, as if the scene of Creation were unfolding before them. The same geographical expanse—rocks, craters, and the rapid vegetative growth—now becomes an unmappable lunography where they do not know their coordinates and panic acutely because in the “vast desiccated wilderness” (after gigantic growth, the vegetation has dried now) they cannot locate their “sphere.” While Cavor is recaptured by the Selenites, Bedford survives a near death experience (the lunar night nearly asphyxiates him) to make it to the sphere and journey back to the earth. However, in contrast to the delightful astronomical sublime of the journey to the moon, on the backward journey Bedford experiences a most disorienting sublime that nullifies his imperialist ego. Seated inside “in that little speck of matter in infinite space,” he experiences “a pervading doubt of [his] own identity” and sees himself “not only as an ass, but as the son of many generations of asses” (145-46).

Before he is recaptured by the Selenites, Cavor tells Bedford what opportunities of sights and knowledge they might have missed because of Bedford's uncalled-for violence: "Caverns beneath caverns, tunnels, structures, ways. . . . greater and wider and more populous as one descends. . . . mighty cities and swarming ways, and wisdom and order passing the wit of man" (128). When he is flown down on a balloon to the innermost region of the moon, Cavor finds his anticipations come true, even beyond his imagination. He understands that the outer pasture of the Selenite world is connected to the interior imperial center through the "great shaft[s]" that make "an enormous system . . . run[ning], each from what is called a lunar 'crater' downwards for very nearly a hundred miles" and that "communicate by transverse tunnels . . . throw[ing] out abysmal caverns and expand[ing] into globular places" (168). Cavor is taken down one of these shafts below "at first into an inky blackness and then into a region of continually increasing phosphorescence . . . towards the Central Sea," the waters of which he sees "as though it were a lake of heatless fire . . . glowing and eddying in strange perturbation, 'like luminous blue milk that is about to boil'" (168-69). When he knows more about the lunar caverns and passageways that are so many, so elaborate and so intricate that the Selenites themselves often get lost, Cavor conveys his incomprehension of the Selenite world by placing himself in the position of the earthly colonized: "I have as yet scarcely learnt as much of these things as a Zulu in London will learn about the British corn supplies in the same time" (171). Similar is Cavor's reaction when he sees the Selenite emperor, the Grand Lunar's palace, made out of "a series of excavations" (188), where "The halls . . . were a cunning and elaborate crescendo of space and decoration. The effect of their progressive size was enhanced by the steady diminution of lighting, and by a thin haze of incense that thickened as one advanced. . . . I seemed to advance continually to something larger, dimmer, and less material" (190). Seeing these sights of "Titanic" engineering,

too vast, too advanced and too disorienting, Cavor says, “I must confess that all this splendour made me feel extremely shabby and unworthy” (190). As Cavor’s self-comparison with “a Zulu in London” indicates, the sublime wonder the Selenite civilization produces on the imperial beholder is not the triumphant sublime of self-glorification but the negative sublime of self-humbling, of “feel[ing] extremely shabby and unworthy.”

The representation of the Selenites in *The First Men in the Moon* is consonant with Wells’s skepticism about the continued primacy of homo sapiens in the future, a skepticism Wells expressed in his essay “On Extinction” and fictionalized in the story “The Empire of the Ants.” Partly because they are the colonial Other like the Beast People in *The Island of Dr Moreau* and partly because like the Martians in *The War of the Worlds* they are more advanced than the European imperial self (which challenges that self’s place in the evolutionary narrative line) the Selenites in *The First Men in the Moon* are seen, particularly by the xenophobic Bedford, as a monstrous species, an abomination of forms, producing in the imperialist imagination the gothic sublime which unseats it from its self-location on the evolutionary “mountain-top.” As the fittingly titled chapter, “The Natural History of the Selenites” tells us, the Selenites “fall under no division of the classification of earthly creatures” (173). “[A]s much insect as vertebrate” they have evolved, thanks to the lesser gravity on the moon, into “human and ultra-human dimensions” but resemble the human form only “in maintaining the erect attitude and in having four limbs” (173). The Selenite’s physiognomy without a nose, “bulging eyes at the side,” the neck joined in three places “almost like the short joints in the leg of a crab,” and skin “hard and shiny quite in the beetle-wing fashion, not soft or moist or hairy as a vertebrate animal’s would be”—all impress on Bedford as “the mad impossibility” of form and so frustrate his anthropomorphic expectations that he experiences “an absolute, for a moment an

overwhelming, shock” and thinks of the Selenite face “as though it must needs be a mask, a horror, a deformity, that would presently be disavowed or explained” (83-84, 93). As creatures of evident human-like intelligence but without the human form, the Selenites thus become cognitively unmappable for Beford, who translates his epistemic failure into the appellation “a monster” (84).

The Selenites Beford has seen are, in Cavor’s words, “no more than ignorant peasants, dwellers in the outskirts, yokels and labourers half akin to brutes” (128). When the recaptured Cavor is taken into the innermost region of the Selenite world—as much a captive and a curious specimen of an alien civilization as an earthly scientist and explorer—Cavor sees different kinds of Selenites, some of them with encyclopedic brains inside prodigious “braincases,” and feels dwarfed before their sublime capacities. As he is taken to meet the Grand Lunar, the all-potentate of the Selenite world empire, the earthly scientist and explorer becomes a curious, exotic spectacle to the multitudes of the Selenites who have gathered for the occasion: “Everywhere faces stared at me—blank, chitinous gapes and masks, big eyes peering over tremendous nose tentacles, and little eyes beneath monstrous forehead plates; below, an undergrowth of smaller creatures dodged and yelped; and grotesque heads poised on sinuous swan-like, long-jointed necks appeared craning over shoulders and beneath armpits” (188). In front of the description-defying crowd of the Selenites—“adrift on this broad sea of excited entomology” (sic)—Cavor is overtaken by an ungovernable terror: “Just for a space I felt something like the ‘horrors’” (189). Similar is Cavor’s experience when he encounters the Grand Lunar. Seated on his throne “[a]t the end of the vista of a flight of steps, like the steps of Ara Coeli at Rome,” shrouded “in a haze of incandescent blue,” which “give him the effect of floating in a blue-black void,” “his brain case . . . measure[ing] many yards [in] diameter,”

surrounded by hierarchically arranged body-servants who “sustained and supported him” as well as by his intellectual subordinates, his flatterers and servants, ushers and messengers, guards, and minor dignitaries (191); the Grand Lunar may look comically grotesque to the reader (Bergonzi 162) but to Cavor, a European captive before an alien emperor, the Grand Lunar is an object of sublime, gothic terror. When the eyes of the Grand Lunar “stared down at me with a strange intensity,” Cavor reports, “It was great. It was pitiful. One forgot the hall and the crowd” (192). When he is finally left by his bearers only a few steps away from “the supreme seat,” Cavor continues, “I was left naked, as it were, in that vastness, beneath the still scrutiny of the Grand Lunar’s eyes” (192). An imperial-colonial adventure narrative thus ends with the humbling of the imperial man before a greater empire and emperor, a little exotic but more “progressed” in the same terms that imperial Europe defined progress.

In representing the Selenites both as an alien species/people and as bearers of a more “progressed” civilization, Wells is able to satirize both European colonialism of the late nineteenth century, its xenophobia, and the invasion of other people and appropriation of their resources, and late-nineteenth-century capitalism, its rationalization of society according to the instrumental imperative and the dehumanizing effects of overspecialization. Bedford’s designs about the Selenite world express the rapacious greed and exterminatory violence of capitalism and colonialism as well as the self-deceiving fantasies of sublime heroism underwriting colonialist adventure. Bedford has already given the Selenites “a taste of [his] quality”—the penchant for uncalled-for violence—when he tells Cavor that they could return to the moon “with lamps to carry and climbing irons and a hundred necessary things” and take back to the earth loads of gold plentifully available on the moon (129-30). Still, despite his obsession with gold, Bedford waxes heroic about his adventure and deludes himself into thinking that he is

serving a greater purpose beyond self-interest, presumably the purpose of History: “What is this spirit in man that urges him forever to depart himself from happiness and security, to toil, to place himself in danger, even to risk a reasonable certainty of death? . . . Against his interest, against his happiness he is constantly being driven to do unreasonable things. . . . Whose purposes, what purposes, was I serving?” (132-33). On the other hand, Cavor’s reflection about the consequences of the discovery of Cavorite and the lunar world suggests that the so-called greater purpose the likes of Bedford and Cavor are serving is not that of world historical progress but of wars and genocide:

If I take my secret back to earth what will happen? I do not see how I can keep my secret for a year, for even a part of a year. Sooner or later it must come out, even if other men rediscover it. And then . . . Governments and powers will struggle to get hither, they will fight against one another and against these moon people. It will only spread warfare and multiply the occasions of war. In a little while, in a very little while if I tell my secret, this planet in the deepest galleries will be strewn with human dead. . . . Science has toiled too long forging weapons for fools to use. (129-30)

Cavor’s conversation with the Grand Lunar in the novel gives another occasion to Wells to satirize the pretenses of earthly civilization, its history of violence, and its failure to use science and technology to organize an ethical society. For example, after he informs the Grand Lunar how little of the earth’s interior has been explored, Cavor imagines the lunar potentate talking with his attendants about “the strange superficiality and unreasonableness of (man), who lives on the mere surface of a world . . . and who dares to invade another planet” (196-97). The satirical effect of the Grand Lunar’s remarks is somewhat attenuated because of his assumption that the

inside of the earth must be as easily accessible as the moon's. However, Wells's device of estrangement gathers full satirical force when Cavor tells the Selenite emperor about the details of earthly war, "the first orders and ceremonies of war, of warnings and ultimatums, and the marshalling and marching of troops" (199). As the sole emperor of the world that knows no war, the Grand Lunar is surprised by "the waste of property and conveniences . . . as much as [by] the killing" (199). Appropriately enough, when he is told of the manner and means of producing and storing knowledge on the earth, the Grand Lunar comments that the earthlings "had mastered much in spite of [their] social savagery," before he adds (in Cavor's words): "Yet the contrast was very marked. With knowledge the Selenites grew and changed; mankind stored their knowledge about them and remained brutes—equipped" (198).

If the earthly/European civilization has failed to achieve Huxleyan ethical civilization, the achievements of the Selenite empire are also ambiguous and exhibit problems inherent in capitalist "progress." The Selenite empire embodies many features that by the publication of the novel in 1901 Wells had started imagining for his future world state: effective use of knowledge in constructing a rationally organized and efficient society; the world rid of conflicting governments and perpetual wars, and united by one universal language. When Cavor confesses to the Grand Lunar, "Our States and Empires are still the rawest sketches of what order will some day be," he implies that the lunar world is the epitome of order (198). However, the very social efficiency of the Selenite world—the instrumental rationality of efficiency-driven economy, its division of labor and overspecialization—also raises doubts about the conceivability of the Selenite world as a utopia. For example, division of labor and specialization in the Selenite world have developed to such an extent that they are stamped on the very form of the bodies of its inhabitants. In one of his wanderings around in the Selenite world, Cavor comes

upon “a number of young Selenites, confined in jars from which only the forelimbs protruded, who were being compressed to become machine-minders of a special sort” (184). When Cavor remarks that the lunar method of training workers is “in the end a far more humane proceeding than our earthly method of leaving children to grow into human beings, and then making machines of them,” it is a Swiftian satire on capitalist society on Wells’s part, not an endorsement of the Selenite civilization as a utopia (184). Equally satirical is the remark Cavor makes when he finds that the Selenites drug the unemployed workers until there is suitable work available for them again: “To drug the worker one does not want and toss him aside is surely far better than to expel him from his factory to wander starving in the streets” (185). In a similar vein, the representation of Selenite mothers as creatures of prodigious bodies and small heads satirizes overspecialization, marking reproductive function on the very body form. As “a large majority of the [its] members [are] of the neuter sex,” reproduction in the lunar world is the function of a few mothers, who are not allowed to rear the children they give birth to because they suffer “periods of foolish indulgence alternat[ing] with moods of aggressive violence” (186). Rather, the Selenite children are “transferred to the charge of a variety of celibate females, women ‘workers’, as it were, who in some cases possess brains of almost masculine dimensions” (186-87). If this is a scientifically organized state, it is more a dystopia than a utopia the Selenite world otherwise embodies as a war-free world state. Thus, imagined as an alien civilization more developed than (and extrapolated from) the European civilization, the Selenite world in *The First Men in the Moon* both humbles the evolutionary presumptions of the imperialist ego and satirizes the instrumental rationality of the so-called modern civilization.

Wells’s critique of imperialism and its underlying ideologies are not as unambiguous as the reading of his scientific romances above suggests. Understandably, Wells could not escape

the “horizon of understanding” that prevailed at the time he was writing and reproduced, amid scathing satire, a lingering desire for the imperialist ethos. For example, the very threat of degeneration that Wells thematizes in the Eloi in *The Time Machine* expresses Wells’s distrust of the non-competitive socialist/communist utopia of William Morris as much as it gives vent to Wells’ hatred of the ruling class, particularly the idle aristocracy he loathed vehemently. In one of his explanations of the Eloi’s degeneration, the Time Traveler opines that the “too-perfect security” the predecessors of the Eloi had attained, thanks to their triumph over nature, “had led them to the slow movement of degeneration, to a dwindling in size, strength and intelligence” (49). Later, lamenting “how brief the dream of the human intellect had been,” the Time Traveler sees the cause of degeneration in the perfectly organized society that has “no social question left unanswered” (78). In attaining such a society, the Time Traveler continues, “It’s a law of nature we overlook, that intellectual versatility is the compensation for change, danger and trouble” (78). The implicit call for rugged individualism and “the survival of the fittest” à la Herbert Spencer marks Wells’s suspicion about a society that has eliminated conflict and approves “natural” predatory violence as a necessity for upward evolution. Similarly, however crushingly terrifying the Martians seem to the narrator as a victim of the alien invasion in *The War of the Worlds*, he is nonetheless fascinated by the capacious brains of the Martians and the spectacle of their superior military technology, and ends his harrowing tale by a call for an inter-planetary struggle for supremacy. Turning the utter terror of the Martian invasion into an experience that has brought “[t]he broadening of men’s views,” the narrator sees the possibility that like Martians human beings too will venture out to “our sister planets”: “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” (179). Moreover, as John

Rieder points out, Wells' critique of imperialism, manifest in his reference to the colonialist extermination of the Tasmanians, is offset by a tacit legitimization of the Martian colonialist invasion, in that the Martians are shown to be driven by survival necessity, their lack of moral choice exempting them from culpability ("Science Fiction" 381). Likewise, if the narrative of *The Island of Dr Moreau* exposes the pretences of European civilization by unmasking its barbarity and bestiality, the representation of the Beast People in terms that evoke the familiar colonial/racial epidermal aesthetics reproduces imperialist-colonialist discourse. In addition, even as they are used to reverse the civilizer/civilized binary, the structural variations of an African-in-London formula Wells repetitively uses in many of his scientific romances, keep intact the logic behind the binary. Even *The First Men in the Moon*, which presents an elaborate satire on colonialism and capitalism, implicitly approves the imperialist-adventurist ethos of Bedford over Cavor's reluctance about colonialist violence: Bedford survives the threat of the Selenite aliens and returns to the earth to report the adventure story; Cavor is ultimately killed by the Selenites as a threat to the integrity of their empire. However, despite exhibiting recurrent ambivalences about the imperialist ethos, the dominant thrust in Wells's scientific romances is toward a questioning and satirical rendition of the ideologies of European imperialism.

II

If in his scientific romances of the 1890s Wells challenged the complacency of imperialist Britain and satirized the ethos that underlay the European sense of superiority to "others," from the turn of the century onwards Wells would espouse the same ethos—the primacy of evolutionary struggle, the ideology of progress, and the superiority of European civilization—as he championed his future world state, conceived alternatively as a necessary consequence of the inevitable march of history and as a result of the conscious effort and active

collaboration of the intellectual and professional elite. Parallel to this ideological shift, the twentieth century Wells virtually abandoned scientific romances and wrote sociological/realist novels, future histories/prophesies, and utopias. Several Wells scholars as well as Wells himself have tried to explain this ideological and aesthetic shift. Bergonzi thinks that Wells had formed “no firm intellectual convictions of any kind during the early and mid-nineties” and that it was that lack of conviction which had yielded a richer Wellsian imagination, the Keatsian “negative capability,” in the scientific romances (168). For Huntington, the reason lay in Wells’s desire to seek unambiguous solutions to the problems he had raised and ironically as well as ambivalently treated in his scientific romances; as a result, Huntington argues, Wells prioritized either evolution or ethics in the Huxleyan dilemma he continued to work with (109-25). According to Parrinder, Wells shifted his tone “from resigned pessimism to an irascible, hectoring optimism” because Wells’s health improved after 1900 (before that Wells thought he would die soon) and because scientists opined that the entropic cooling of the solar system would occur much more slowly than what was previously supposed (46-47). One can add to these the reason that Wells himself gave for moving away from writing scientific romances. At the beginning of *Anticipations* Wells points out that fiction is not an appropriate mode for scientific predictions of the future because “the provocation for satirical opportunity” becomes irresistible for the writer and “[t]he narrative form becomes more and more a nuisance as the speculative inductions become sincerer” (3-4). No less illuminating is Raymond Williams’s suggestion in *The English Novel* that Wells had resorted to the scientific romances in the first place because the existing form of fiction—“that social fiction, the intensive realism”—did not allow him to write about his acute sense of the massively changing world around him, and after he gained recognition—from the turn of the century to 1914 when the gap between “psychological” and “sociological” novels

became unbridgeable—he sought to “bring the individual and the social into his novels,” carrying out “an assault . . . not only on the form of the novel but on an idea, *the* idea, of literature itself” (original emphasis 119-38).

Readers of Wells, however, have ignored or under-emphasized certain aspects of the Wellsian turn. First, the later Wells’s optimism is not so much about the totality of real history as it is about what Wells perceived to be its emergent scientific-technological vector. Even at his most upbeat, in his Royal Institution of London lecture, “The Discovery of the Future,” Wells admits that “it is impossible to show why certain things should not utterly destroy and end the entire human race and story,” and asserts his belief in a greater, sublime future for humanity as an act of faith beyond the scope of reason: “it is not unreasonable that for fundamental beliefs we must go outside the sphere of reason and set out our feet upon faith” (53-54). As Wells repeatedly emphasizes in his works after 1900, he was writing at a historical time when science, technology, and capital were bringing about momentous changes, which raised attendant uncertainties and dilemmas about historical choices. If such a historical time is greatly conducive to imaginations of utopias, as Frederic Jameson suggests (15), Wells exploits it to the full, posing himself as a prophet to guide the confused world to a millennial future. However, from *Anticipations* onwards Wells was also acutely aware of the dead weight of tradition and the social waste produced by the profit-hungry capitalists and incompetent politicians, an awareness that was further accentuated by the First World War and the Great Depression of the late 20s and 30s. Well represents the “dominant” vector of history—the history of colonialism, inter-imperialist rivalry, and capitalist waste—and the dead weight of “residual” tradition in his realist novels like *Tono-Bungay* and scientific romances like *The Sleeper Awakes*.¹⁰ In addition, Wells

also integrates real history as the misguided “Age of Confusion” to be overcome by the “emergent” force of scientific-technological rationality.

The other aspect of later Wells often understated by his readers is the quasi-imperialist nature of his future histories and utopias. At a historical time when imperial Britain’s industrial and commercial supremacy was being challenged by the United States and Germany (the latter with formidable imperialist ambition as well), and various world-integrative socialist/communist, imperialist, and liberalist projects/proposals were in the air; Wells, dissatisfied with all proposals on the table, proposes a world state that appears to be anti-imperialist in some ways (anti-nationalist and anti-liberal-capitalist) but is nonetheless an empire of some sort (in some ways resembling the older liberal kind of soft commercial empire)—an empire connected by commercial routes, led by “ascendant” western men and scientific-technological culture, which waves welcoming hands to the “others” if they subject themselves to the conditions of entry into it. Finally, Wells represents his world empire as a sublime, grandiose vision—as the culmination of the immemorially long history opened by the nineteenth century sciences of geology and archeology and as a stepping stone to far advanced futures, an empire in whose grand march of progress individuals insignificant on their own are invited to imagine sublime self-identities by virtue of their identification with it. Consequently, the sublimity of the world state and its citizens is not the negative sublimity of the scientific romances where the imperialist ego is subjected to an insurmountable crisis; the sublimity of Wells’s utopias and future histories is that of the positive, triumphant sublime, which inflates the imperial ego represented as the world citizen.

Whereas for the early Wells the Huxleyan endless, cosmic time and the state of nature—the immemorially long vistas of geological and evolutionary time opened up by nineteenth-

century sciences—showed the ephemeral nature of humanity’s evolutionary glory and the flimsiness of human civilization, for the later Wells the same radically expanded sense of time holds the proof of human evolution and the promise of his continued progress in the future. That such a shift in Wells’s ideological perspective is matched by the shift toward the aesthetic of the positive, self-ennobling sublime is exemplarily visible in “The Discovery of the Future.”

Invoking the vast evolutionary history underwriting Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, Wells thunders triumphantly about the epic story of evolution leading to “man” and exults in the certainty of “his” grander, limitless future:

We look back through countless millions of years and the will to live struggling out of intertidal slime, struggling from shape to shape and from power to power, crawling and then walking confidently upon land, struggling generation after generation to master the air, creeping down into the darkness of the deep; we see it turn upon itself in rage and hunger and reshape itself anew; we watch it draw nearer and more akin to us, expanding, elaborating itself, pursuing its relentless, inconceivable purpose, until at last it reaches us and its being beats through our brains and arteries, throbs and thunders in our battleships, roars through our cities, sings in our music, and flowers in our art. And when, from that retrospect, we turn again toward the future, surely any thought of finality, any millennial settlement of cultured persons, has vanished from our minds. (49-50)

The inexorable drive Wells sees in the Huxleyan cosmic force here is no more an alien, blind force which must be curbed by the ethical force; rather, scripted in nature’s immemorially long process is the destiny of “man,” his past and future glory. The Wells we see at the beginning of the new century is not the Wells who argued about the upward *and* downward movement of

evolution, not the Wells who saw the “inherited factor” of savagery lurking underneath the “acquired factor” of civilization. Established by his success as a writer and sure of his footing in the British society, Wells is determined to change both the Empire and the world.

Besides “The Discovery of the Future” (1902), *Anticipations* (1901) and *Mankind in the Making* (1903) are key texts for understanding the ideology of the later Wells. Together they present, as Wells says in his Preface to *Mankind in the Making*, “a general theory of social development and of social and political conduct” (v). While Wells would subsequently revise some of the ideas developed in these texts, they represent Wells’s thesis about an ideal future of humanity in which Western modernity, particularly its scientific-technological rationality, will play a leading role in “worlding” the planet into a global empire. In *Anticipations*, Wells looks a hundred years ahead to predict several pan-nationalist geo-political formations, among which “a great confederation of white English-speaking peoples,” led by an Anglo-American alliance but “in touch with the thought of Continental Europe through the medium of French,” will ultimately integrate others to form the world state (282-83). Until that ultimate global “synthesis” takes place, the “federal government” of the English-speaking empire “will sustain a common fleet, and protect or dominate or actually administer most or all of the non-white states of the present British Empire, and in addition much of the South and Middle Pacific, the East and West Indies, the rest of America, and the larger part of black Africa” (282-83). Moreover, to efficiently run the empire and defend its territorial integrity, “Quite apart from the dominated races, such an English-speaking state should have by the century’s end a practically homogenous citizenship of at least a hundred million sound-bodied, and educated and capable *men*” (original emphasis 283). Then, Wells continues, the Anglo-American empire will set about globalizing the world by extending the use of English globally and pursuing international diplomacy “discussing calmly

with the public mind of the European, and probably of the yellow state, the possible coalescences and conventions, the obliteration of custom-houses, the homogenization of laws and coinage and measures, and the mitigation of monopolies and special claims, by which the final peace of the world may be assured for ever” (283). Hence, Wells’s future world state would be like the soft, informal commercial empire England had enjoyed by and large before European imperial-colonial competitors became aggressive.

Mankind in the Making, which elaborates the “principles” and “methods” for developing social and material conditions conducive to the production of an efficient and desirable imperial population, was written, Wells says in the Preface, “to provide the first tentatives of political doctrine that shall be equally available for application in the British Empire and in the United States” (vi-vii). Wells’s proposals for social engineering in the text include the question of the “birth supply”—how to ensure that only healthy and able-bodied children are born—education at home and school, the political and social influences desirable for the young, the structure of higher education, etc., and the role of the state in all of these. The emphasis on “sound-bodied, educated, and capable *men*” in *Anticipations* and the elaboration of the social arrangements required to produce such an imperial citizenry in *Mankind in the Making* reflect and respond to, as John S. Partington points out, the widespread discussion about the degeneration of the imperial population in the aftermath of the Boer War, which revealed that the British soldiers were not able-bodied and efficient (51). Wells’s vision of the world empire and his proposals about imperial biopolitics were also responses to the concerns of the British Fabian Society; as Wells writes in his *Experiments in Autobiography*, the Fabian meetings of the “Coefficients” he joined from 1902 to 1908 discussed the desirable form of the British Empire—the formal, imperialist empire and the informal, commercial and cultural empire (650-54).

Wells sees what he calls the “new republican” future of the world empire as a consequence of Europe’s scientific and technological progress, either inevitably following from the latter or realizable through the active leadership of the progress-oriented. As the full title of *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought* suggests, Wells posits the millennial future as a result of objective historical causation unavoidably there in the corner if only the dead weight of tradition—“mere inertia” and “acquiescence to the familiar” (13-14)—were set aside and the capacity of European science and technology to bring under human control the things that are at present “in the domain of natural laws” (304)—Enlightenment’s instrumental rationality, according to Horkheimer and Adorno—were let to run its course. In “The Discovery of the Future,” Wells eulogizes the forward-looking ethos of “progress” against the backward-looking sluggishness of tradition, contrasting the two mental attitudes—the “legal or submissive type” and the “legislative, creative, organizing, or masterful type”—in terms that reproduce the West vs. the Orient binary of imperialist discourse (6-7). The “legislative” mind, Wells maintains, is “the mind more manifest among the western nations”; it is the type of mind that should be allowed free sway if progress is to continue unbounded. On the other hand, the “submissive” mind, while also persistent in western minds in their servitude to the past, is typically “the mind of the oriental,” exemplarily present in the Chinese (7, 20). Wells’s “legislative, creative, organizing, or masterful type” are the heroes of *Mankind in the Making*, where he puts more emphasis on the need of the new republicans to take active leadership, and not, as he implied in *Anticipations*, wait for the scientific-technological progress to have its impact on society. Wells’s new republicans would aggressively carry out an imperial biopolitics, pushing away the obstructions the tradition-bound create to the full employment of scientific knowledge and technological means for progressive ends.

In these key texts of his utopian thinking Wells presents his rhetoric of progress in positively sublime terms. While he is adamant about the need to preserve individuality, individual lives in Wells's republic have meaning primarily because they are part of what Wells calls, following Arthur Schopenhauer, "an overwhelming Will to Live manifesting itself in the universe of Matter," while appropriating it positively after Nietzschean fashion,

to see our wills only as temporary manifestations of an ampler will, our lives as passing phases of a greater Life, and to accept these facts even joyfully, to take our places in the larger scheme with a sense of relief and discovery, to go with that larger being, to serve that larger being, as a soldier marches, a mere unit in the larger being of his army, and serving his army joyfully into battle. (*Mankind in the Making* 15)

Wells's sublime revaluation of human life in cosmic terms is consistent with his imagination of new republicans in religious terms. Following the imagination of his continental predecessors in utopian thinking—for example, Henry Saint Simon, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx (Wagar 209)—Wells defines his creed of new republicanism as what D. G. Charlton calls "secular religion." In *Anticipations* Wells prophesies that his new republicans will be religious, not believing in the transcendent God of Christianity but in God as manifest purpose in nature and society, or as "an effect of purpose in the totality of things" (305). Wells's natural theology is informed by "the vaster past" revealed by nineteenth century sciences like geology and archeology—thanks to which, Wells rhapsodizes, "We see future beyond future and past beyond past"—and by "the gigantic order that evolution unfolds" (315-16). Wells pictures his natural theology, his utopian world state, as a sublime force, arising inexorably, "as some huge secular movement in Nature, the raising of a continent, the crumbling of a mountain-chain, go[ing] on to its appointed

culmination” (268-69). In “The Discovery of the Future” Wells argues for the possibility of knowing the future on the basis of the examples set by the nineteenth century sciences’ “relentless systematic criticism of phenomena, [which have] . . . absolutely destroyed the conception of a finitely distant beginning of things . . . and added an enormous vista to that limited sixteenth century outlook” (28). Such “enormous vista” conjure up the sublime again, as is also visible in Wells’s futuristic exhilaration when, in contrast to Comte to whom humanity was “the height of all conceivable things,” Wells imagines the coming of a species greater and grander than humanity (but as humanity’s offspring) “so great and splendid that beside this vision epics jingle like nursery rhymes” (48-49). The human species caught in the throes of evolution are thus lifted via identification to the sublimity of immemorial history and the inexorable cosmic will.

But Wells’s sublime vision of the new republican world state is for those only who can march with the swift pace of “progress.” In *Anticipations*, he puts the question about the slow-paced most starkly: “To the multiplying rejected of the white and the yellow civilizations there will have been added a vast proportion of the black and brown races, and collectively, these masses will propound the general question, ‘What will you do with us, we hundreds of millions, who cannot keep pace with you?’” (304). On the one hand, Wells is fervently anti-racist and opens the doors of his new republic to the people of all races—provided that they pass the test of efficiency (340). But, on the other hand, about “those swarms of black, and brown, and dirty-white, and yellow people, who do not come into the new needs of efficiency,” Wells’s proposal is coldly exterminatory: “Well, the world is a world, not a charitable institution, and I take it they will have to go. The whole tenor and meaning of the world, as I see it, is that they will have to go. So far as they fail to develop sane, vigorous, and distinctive personalities for the great world

of the future, it is their portion to die out and disappear” (342). Wells’s emphasis on “sane, vigorous, and distinctive personalities” and on the test of efficiency is not unproblematic as John Huntington suggests when, in his otherwise astute critique of the later Wells, he calls the question of efficiency “undebatable” (109). In fact, Wells’s eugenics-informed preferences are premised on the violent repression of the “Other,” those who are not desirable citizens for the world state on both sides of the colonial divide. Wells argues that Malthus’s theory of population and Darwin’s theory of natural selection have revealed the stark truth of the problem of reproduction and of the violent struggle for survival, and have proved the chimerical nature of “the rationalistic utopias” of the eighteenth century and “all the communisms, socialisms, and earthly paradise movements” of the next (*Anticipations* 313). In his zeal for formulating a consistent theory, Wells even repudiates the Huxleyan dilemma of ethics vs. evolution and claims that “a non-ethical universe in conflict with the incomprehensibly ethical soul of the agnostic is as incredible as a black-horned devil” (310). Against Huxley, Wells proposes, “If the universe is non-ethical by our present standards, we must reconsider these standards and reconstruct our ethics” (311). If nature itself violently sets aside the weak, Wells argues, why not systematize or institutionalize that process? This is the premise behind Wells’s putatively generous proposal of controlling the reproductive rights of citizens of his new republic. While he criticizes Galton’s positive eugenics of pairing the sexes of the nobility to ensure the reproduction of nobler offspring, Wells’s own proposal of altering “the law and social arrangements [that] may foster and protect the cowardly and the mean, may guard stupidity against the competition of enterprise, and may secure honour, power and authority in the hands of the silly and the base” (*Mankind in the Making* 64) is equally problematic because the value judgments the proposal implies are repressive and can be even exterminatory. Similarly

problematic is Wells's insistence that some people should be "discouraged and prevented from parentage," that "charity and poor law legislation" should be scrapped because they make the burden of parental responsibility lighter, and that under-nurtured children should be taken from their parents, who should be made to pay for the expenses incurred by the state's upbringing of their children (92-93). Thus when Wells says in *Anticipations* that things in the domain of nature will be brought under human control in the new republic, he means both nature and human population. In other words, what Horkheimer and Adorno a few decades later would denounce as the work of instrumental reason is for Wells the condition for an utopian future. Wells is equally unperturbed with the problematic consequences of making human beings the object of study, consequences Michel Foucault would make the major locus of his intervention in the latter half of the twentieth century.

From 1901 until the 1940s, when the horrors of the Second World War proved too much for the aging prophet, Wells would write several utopias and future histories as well as realist novels that thematized or openly discoursed on his utopian projects. Typically Wells conceived his utopias and future histories and their constituent aspects with the aesthetic of the sublime, even though in his realist novels like *Christina Alberta's Father*, *Mr Blettsworthy on Rampole Island*, and *The Autocracy of Mr Parham* he would sometimes ironically treat the futility of his prophetic self-portrait (Clute xiv-xv). First, Wells often presents in sublime terms the violent disruptions of the old, real history as well as the subsequent social and political changes that typically precede the formations of his utopian societies. For example, the green vapor released by the comet hitting the earth in *In the Days of the Comet* is pictured sublimely, enveloping the entire planet and swiftly transforming the hearts and minds of all its populations, who inhale the changed air. The sublime scene of planet-wide atmospheric and psychological transformation in

that novel is followed by the equally grandiose image of the bonfire where people collectively burn the debris of their old societies to clear space for the new. Secondly, Wells invariably pictures the cityscapes of his utopias as sublime visions. As we will see in more detail later, the world of *A Modern Utopia* is transformed by “Michael Angelos” working with steel and by rational-spiritual warriors forging new institutions, both with the sublimity that gives the narrator overwhelming feelings of awe and wonder. Similarly, the world of *Men like Gods* is filled with structures of “Titanic engineering,” and social institutions that have materialized ideal freedom for all. Thirdly, Wells represents the leaders of his utopian worlds, if not all its people, as adventurers who pursue sublime endeavors. In *The Food of the Gods*, the super human giants produced by the growth-accelerating “boom food” become emblems of the progressive future, the sublimity of which is figured in quantitative terms. Inversely, at other times, as is the case with the ruling elite, the Samurai in *A Modern Utopia*, it is the inner spiritual strength of his utopian leaders (their capacity to control physical desires) that Wells glorifies sublimely. Finally, and above all, Wells envisions in sublime terms information, knowledge, and education, which are the necessary conditions for his utopias. In *Men like Gods*, for example, the three-thousand-year-long history of science and technology enables the sublime project of bringing the planet under the will of human intelligence and provide resources for utopians to aim for the stars. Moreover, Wellsian utopias are planetary surveillance states thanks to their sublimely capacious archives of information about their citizens, as is the case both in *A Modern Utopia* and *Men like Gods*. Similarly, the establishment of a utopian society after a calamitous global war and liquidation of governments in *The Shape of Things to Come* entails, among other things, vast archiving of historical knowledge. As Wells argues in “The So-called Science of Sociology,” the very task of utopian writing for him constitutes part of an endless and illimitable collective

endeavor: “a sort of dream book of huge dimensions, in reality perhaps dispersed in many volumes by many hands, upon the Ideal Society” (205). Thus, unlike his scientific romances of the 1890s in which the sublime functions as an aesthetic of insurmountable loss, in his utopias and future histories of the next century, the aesthetic of the sublime expresses Wells’s faith in a progressive future, as a triumph of science and technology and the mastery of nature and society by human intelligence.

In Wells’s *A Modern Utopia* two earthly trekkers in the Alps suddenly find themselves on another planet, “far in the deeps of space, beyond the flight of a cannonball flying for a billion years” and a replica of the earth in every way but for its social conditions altered by the wiser-than-earthly ruling elite, Wells’s new republicans (15). Narrated by “the Owner of the Voice” who is Wells’s mouthpiece, the text presents its utopian world not so much as a future history or prophecy (even though that desire becomes evident when we extra-textually surmise Wells’s purpose) but as a fictional alternative history of the earth’s present—how the earthly world would have looked if the creative forces of its history had not been wasted but mobilized constructively toward progressive ends. In this first full-fledged undertaking in utopian imagination, Wells looks back at previous utopias—from Plato’s Republic through More’s Utopia down to Comte’s Western Republic, Morris’s idyllic Nowhere and Bellamy’s capitalist haven—and claims that his is a *modern* utopia different from the older ones because it acknowledges the primacy of evolutionary struggle in its social organization, because it uses science and technology to make its society continuously progressive—“kinetic,” not static and insular—and because it is planetary in scope (11-15). Wells imagines his utopian world state or global empire in sublime terms, sublime in the colossal scale and unceasing dynamism of its material and social progress and sublime also in the lofty souls of the “voluntary nobility” of its

rulers. Wells's sublime vision of planetary utopia transcends the nationalistic fervor of European imperialism and opens its doors to people of all "lineages and races" as well as to women and the underclass. However, in demanding that the citizens of Utopia must embrace the march of western modernity and pass the test of "efficiency" —or be prepared to be "ethically" exterminated in the name of the necessity of evolutionary struggle—Wells's utopia also reproduces the imperialist desire to sublimate "other" cultures and nations into the pan-European world History.

That Wells's putatively non-imperialist world-state reproduces European imperialism and its project of Europeanizing the world becomes evident in *A Modern Utopia* in several ways. For example, after conversing with his utopian double, one of the ruling elites of Utopia, the narrator underscores the Christian-European history of Utopia. He points out that in Utopia's history—that is, in the desired alternative history of the earth—"Jesus Christ had been born into a liberal and progressive Roman Empire that spread from the Arctic Ocean to the Bight of Benin, and was to know no Decline and Fall, and Mahomet, instead of embodying the dense prejudices of Arab ignorance, opened his eyes upon an intellectual horizon already nearly as wide as the world" (175). The spatial configuration of Utopia also recalls the earthly imperialist geography: Utopia's London is the cultural and administrative center of the world empire, "one of the great meeting places of mankind. . . the traditional centre of one of the great races in the commonalty of the World State . . . [the site of] its social and intellectual exchange," while Westminster is "a seat of world Empire, one of several seats, if you will—where the ruling council of the world assembles" (164). The reproduction of imperialist geography is no less evident in Wells's choice of Paris as the location of Utopia's central archive of its citizens' identification files. Moreover, Wells's argument for the necessity of Utopia to be planetary reproduces imperialist fear of the Other—a rival imperialist power or the festering diseases and rapidly multiplying numbers of the

“backward” and “barbaric” communities. As the narrator argues, “however subtly contrived a State may be, outside our boundary lines the epidemic, the breeding barbarian or the economic power will gather its strength to overcome you” (15). In other words, for the lasting security of the utopian global empire, the very existence of the Other is a threat that must be co-opted or annihilated. Wells’s “utopian” vision in *A Modern Utopia* also legitimizes a dominant ideology of nineteenth-century European imperialism, the ideology of Social-Darwinism. Wells claims his Utopia is distinctive from his predecessors in that it recognizes the “truth” that Malthus’s theory of population and Darwin’s theory of natural selection brought to human consciousness. Wells’s Utopia is different from Morris’s, for example, in being proposed more “upon a practical plane” and in recognizing that in the real world “the pervading Will to Live sustains for evermore a perpetuity of aggressions” (12). Finally, Wells reproduces the Western vs. the Oriental dichotomy of imperialist discourse when he asserts that Utopia will face “this world of conflict . . . in no ascetic spirit [like the Orientals], but in the mood of the Western peoples, whose purpose is to survive and overcome” (13).

The planetary scope and perpetually progressive dynamism of Wells’s Utopia suggest the aesthetic of the sublime underlying its imagination. Articulated administratively as a hierarchic structure between the world state and various local governments and municipalities, Utopia is a global empire that allows free flows of capital, information and technologies, and continually migrant populations, without having to face the linguistic barrier caused by multiplicity of languages. The fluid vast interconnectedness of the world state and its various constituents is fittingly expressed by the narrator using the imagery of an ecological sublime:

The energy developed and the employment afforded by the State will descend like water that the sun has sucked out of the sea to pour upon a mountain range; and

back to the sea again it will come at last . . . returning to the sea. Between the clouds and the sea it will run, as a river system runs, down through a great region of individual enterprise and interplay, whose freedom it will sustain” (66).

Moreover, fighting entropy in the vast social machine with the “sane order” imposed by its scientific, efficiency-driven management, Utopia releases tremendous surplus energy which it uses in ensuring the production and maintenance of its efficient citizens, in funding researches of magnificent scale and diversity, and in erecting architectural and other constructional triumphs designed by engineers who are Utopia’s Michelangelos and da Vincis. Wells’s Utopia has achieved the ideal of combining stability with innovation which had defied his predecessors. Of its four classes/castes—the poetic, the kinetic, the dull, and the base—Utopia mobilizes the form- and order-giving power of the kinetic, who alone run Utopia’s administration, and the innovation-and-change-bringing power of the poetic, who provide impetus for Utopia’s continuously grander progress. If the naming of Utopia’s inventors as the poetic represents them in aesthetic terms, the vast scale of Utopia’s research specifically suggests the sublime. After he contrasts the meager condition of research on the earth with that of Utopia where research is conducted in multitude, “by the army corps,” the narrator uses a conventional image of the sublime to “picture” the ambition and scale of Utopia’s research into flying: “That Utopian research will . . . go like an eagle’s swoop in comparison with the blind-man’s fumbling of our terrestrial way. . . . Tomorrow, perhaps, or in a day or two, some silent, distant thing will come gliding into view over the mountains, will turn and soar and pass again beyond our astonished sight . . .” (46-47). Similarly, the architecture in Utopia’s London strikes the narrator as monuments of sublime artistic triumphs. Pointing at Utopian London’s university buildings, the narrator says, “There’s something in its proportions—as though someone with brains had taken a

lot of care to get it quite right . . . somebody who had found the Gothic spirit enchanted, petrified, in a cathedral, and had set it free” (170).¹¹ Likewise, about artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, whose times could not provide them the means to realize their dreams, the narrator marvels, “how they would have exulted in the liberties of steel!” (164). In Utopia artists of such caliber would be creators of what David Nye in the American context calls the technological sublime. As the narrator tells us, “In our times these men would have wanted to make viaducts, to bridge wild and inaccessible places, to cut and straddle great railways athwart the mountain masses of the world” (164). Finally, the general effect on the narrator of Utopia’s institutions and its architecture is also that of the sublime. Even before he has seen it all, when he is working with his botanist companion at a toy factory, the narrator finds Utopia too overwhelming to imagine: “The World Utopia, I say, seems for a time to be swallowing me up. At the thought of detail it looms too big for me. The question of government, of its sustaining ideas, of race and the wider future, hang like the arch of the sky over these daily incidents, very great indeed, but very remote” (152-53). As the narrator sees more of Utopia and meets his utopian double, the feeling of being utterly at a loss transmutes into triumphant exultation at Utopia’s unrivalled progress.

The outward physical sublime of Wells’s Utopia is evenly matched by the militant and masculine inner-spiritual sublime of its rulers, the Samurai. The physical order of Utopia, the narrator tells us, is “only the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace” (118). Prompted by his understanding that empires and nations on the earth were destroyed by the immorality of its rulers— “a history of social collapses due to demoralisation by indulgences following security and abundance,” as the narrator’s Utopian double puts it (196)—Wells imagines the rulers of Utopia as men of formidable spiritual restraint—not given to “small

pleasures” and free of vices like “tobacco, wine, or any alcoholic drink, all narcotic drugs” (191-92). The Samurai, “who remind [the narrator] of Plato’s guardians, who look like Knights Templars, who bear a name that recalls the swordsmen of Japan,” are exemplary embodiments of a combination of rational enlightenment, religious fervor, and militant will (186). Hence if Wells is obsessed with body and bodily needs and drives, as Peter Kemp argues in *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Ape*, this obsession also takes the form of repressing the body and freeing the mind from carnal corruption. As the narrator is told by his Utopian double, to keep their spiritual strength potent and alive, every year at least for a week the Samurai “must go right out of the life of man into some wild and solitary place, must speak to no man or woman and have no sort of intercourse with mankind” (202). In this spiritual adventure, the solitary Samurai is thrown back solely to his inner resources, which turn out to carry even greater profundity than the sublimity of the material world of Utopia. In the words of the narrator’s Utopian double, “All this busy world that has done so much and so marvellously, and is still so little—you see it little as it is and far off. All day long you go and the night comes, and it might be another planet. Then, in the quiet, waking hours, one thinks of one’s self and the great external things, of space and eternity, and what one means by God” (204-5). Thus we find in Wells’s Samurai the indifference to the material world exhibited by Plato’s Guardians and the Kantian transcendental freedom of man before which the incomprehensibly great magnitude of the physical world appears a trifle. Atop the mountain of their spiritual height, the Samurai’s mind towers high enough to talk to the stars: “Yet, in those high airs and in such solitude, a kind of exaltation comes to men. . . . I remember that one night I sat up and told the rascal stars very earnestly how they should not escape us in the end” (205). And, before that spiritual delight, “the immediate heats and hurries, the little graces and delights, the tensions and stimulations of the daily world” seem remote and

insignificant (206). Thus, the biopolitics Wells championed in *Mankind in the Making* for the purpose of maintaining an “efficient” imperial population is extended in *A Modern Utopia* to the ruling class too, glorifying the disciplinary logic of biopolitics with the fantasy of insuperable spiritual strength.

A Modern Utopia is also an attempt to present a model of an inclusive progressive society; it is Wells’s response to various contemporary social movements—working-class and women’s movements, socialist proposals of Fabian, Christian, and Communist kinds, and individualist and pro-imperialist arguments.¹² Dissatisfied with the democratic fervor of Marxism—Wells did not believe that the working class had the ability or even the interest to take part in governance (*Experiment in Autobiography* 626)—with Fabian gradualism and its policy of infiltrating existing social and political institutions, with advocates of racist and exterminatory imperialism and individualism, and with what he called pre-Malthusian utopian liberalism, Wells offers his Utopia as a synthesis of different contemporary proposals, “as a sort of effectual conclusion to those controversies” surrounding “Individualism” and “Communitic and Socialistic ideas” (*A Modern Utopia* 64). Wells’s solution to the social problems of his time is the welfare world state that, on the one hand, creates social conditions for the production and inclusion of fit citizens from as many social strata and groups as possible and, on the other, requires them to compete and earn their right to live by staying usefully productive. Wells’s Utopia educates all of its citizens; if somebody is unemployed, the state bears expenses for the person to go and seek work where it is available. It is cognizant of the exploitation of women in societies of the past and gives them education and employment, and remunerates them for what was previously their liability in social advancement—motherhood. Moreover, Utopia contemptuously dismisses racism and establishes efficiency as the only test. The oppressed

groups among the formerly dominant nations as well as the people of formerly dominated societies—“blacks,” “browns,” and the “yellow”—are welcome in Wells’s Utopia if they are willing to exploit the resources offered by the world-state and train themselves to be efficient citizens. Hence, making the conditions for participation in the society equal for all, Utopia gives all equal opportunity to compete and prosper, or fail. Finally, unlike in the wasteful historical capitalism, in the state capitalism of Utopia wealth does not carry power and the rich are not allowed to exploit the poor because the world state or its local and municipal governments control most resources and private property is limited to small things recognized as the expression of people’s personalities.

However, despite its inclusive model Wells’s ideal world state in *A Modern Utopia* does not embody the Huxleyan ideal of the ethical as Huntington argues (120), nor does it replace Herbert Spencer’s “survival of the fittest” with Huxley’s emphasis on “the fitting of as many as possible to survive,” as Partington claims (3). The very condition of the sublimity of Utopia—since it is the sublimity of progress and efficient citizenship—is the violent repression and even extermination of all those who obstruct or retard Utopia’s forward flight. Moreover, as an empire that has gone planetary lest barbarism and disease from “outside” ruin it, Wells’s world state must police the “outside” forces that are brought within the regime of Utopia. Indeed, the Europeanization of the world that Wells wanted to see completed in *Anticipations* is fully realized in Utopia. It is a process that disqualifies from Utopian citizenship the slow, the incompetent, the anti-social and the dangerously sick—in short, those who fail, refuse to take, or do not pass the test of efficiency. Perpetual poverty in Utopia is a sign of incompetence and—following Wells’s more “ethical” version of eugenics—such poor are denied reproductive rights. If they produce children nonetheless, the children will be taken away by the state and the parents

will be forced to pay for the expenses incurred by the state's upbringing of them (as Wells had also proposed in *Mankind in the Making*). The sick, criminals, lunatics, etc. in Wells's Utopia are shipped away to distant islands—a solution similar in its logic to the imperialist practice of solving its social problems by exporting them to the colonies. While Wells roundly criticizes the racism of imperialist policies of his time, his non-racial/non-discriminative elimination of the unfit reproduces the imperial-colonial reproductive regime of which racism was an expression:¹³

“But Utopia would do that without any clumsiness of race distinction, in exactly the same manner, and by the same machinery, as it exterminates all its own defective and inferior strains; that is to say . . . by its marriage laws, and by the laws of the minimum wage” (225). And, although Wells insists that Utopia will be a synthesis of all cultures and will welcome the cultural wealth of other civilizations, the inclusive gesture is limited to “their little unique addition to the totality of *our* Utopian civilization” (emphasis added 225). Similarly, the “equal” inclusion of different races in Wells's Utopia is predicated to the demand to assimilate into European culture. When asked by his botanist friend whether he would like his daughter to “marry a Chinaman or a negro,” the narrator replies affirmatively and adds, “when you say Chinaman, you think of a creature with a pigtail, long nails and insanitary habits, and when you say negro you think of a filthy-headed black creature in an old hat. You do this because your imagination is too feeble to disentangle the inherent qualities of a thing from its habitual associations” (226). Here Wells is evidently critical of one kind of racism—that there are inherent psychological traits in the people of a race—but he also shows another kind of racial intolerance: for Blacks and Chinese to be desirable in Utopia, they have to unlearn their cultures and adopt the hegemonic western culture. As the narrator asks the botanist “to grasp a modern Utopian's conditions,” he explains, “The Chinaman will speak the same language as his wife—

whatever her race may be—he will wear costume of the common civilized fashion, he will have much the same education as his European rival, read the same literature, bow to same traditions” (227). As is made evident by the limitations in Utopia’s apparently welcoming gesture to other cultures, European culture and values are predominant in all that is “common” and “same” in Utopia’s culture. In other words, the “others” in Utopia are tolerated only if they assimilate themselves into the values and culture of western modernity. Thus, if Utopia is sublime in its lofty ideal of progress, it is grotesque in its violent repression of the others that could “contaminate” or “foul” the “purity” of Utopia’s progressive will.

If in *A Modern Utopia* two earthly trekkers find themselves suddenly and unaccountably in a Utopia far distant in the universe, in *Men like Gods* a similar hurtling into Utopia of a Briton, Mr. Barnstaple, and some trouble-makers of earthly history is science-fictionally posited as a journey into a planet existing parallel to Earth in the multi-verse. As in *A Modern Utopia*, Utopia in *Men like Gods* is an ideal picture of the earth as it could be if the creative forces of its recent history—science, technology, and scientific-technological rationality—were not obstructed by traditional forces, the tribal instincts of association and aggression that find expression in nationalism, patriotism, war, capitalism, imperialism, etc. Utopia in *Men like Gods* has had a longer, three-thousand-year history of science and technology; it has completed the process of bringing the planet under the control of human intelligence; and, it has solved all its social and political problems, thanks to scientific knowledge of the related phenomena. The (material and social) order and beauty achieved in Utopia, however, do not lead to degeneration as Wells had feared in *The Time Machine*; rather, they provide enabling conditions by releasing tremendous collective energy for greater and greater strides in progress, a progress that is not satisfied with a complete mastery of the earth and aims to bring the stars within the reach of its power. The

empire of Utopia appears far less imperialist than earthly imperialism, which is thematized in *Men like Gods* through the earthlings' abortive attempt to "annex" Utopia to the earthly empire, but it is an empire nonetheless, and one that is intolerant of substantive difference and dissent.

As both Hillegas and Wagar point out, the utopia of *Men like Gods* is different from that of *A Modern Utopia* mainly in being a later stage of the same process that begins with the take-over of the world by a scientifically and technologically minded progressive avant-garde (Hillegas 79; Wagar 210). Unlike the Samurai in *A Modern Utopia*, there is no governing class in the utopia of *Men like Gods*. As the earthlings are told in the conference for inter-planetary exchange of ideas, "there is no central government in Utopia at all" (49); rather than being concentrated in a governing body, authority in Utopia is "diffused back into the general body of the community" (50). Indeed, the utopia of *Men like Gods* exemplifies the shift in Wells's conception of the world state from "a series of regional unions" to the "world functional union," which Wells advocated more strongly only from the early 1930s onwards (Partington 109). The diffused governance of Utopia is carried out by a planetary social division of labor, by functional bodies of experts that look after different departments, such as food, housing, transportation, education, etc. Because its three-thousand-year long history of science and technology has brought abundance for all, and the problem of distribution has been successfully resolved by socializing wealth and eliminating the exploitative class, Utopia has few material and social conditions for conflicts among human beings and groups. Whatever instinctual anti-civilization forces the Utopians inherit by birth—Utopians are different from earthly humans because of the "artificial process" of their education, not their genetic make-up¹⁴—the comprehensive education system of Utopia transforms into nobler forms. Indeed, the project of producing ideal citizens Wells had sketched out in *Mankind in the Making* has reached such perfection in this latter-stage

Utopia that few need to be coerced into the collective good of the state: Utopian citizens spontaneously identify with the greater whole. As one Utopian tells the earthlings triumphantly, “*Our education is our government*” (original emphasis 65). Wells’s faith in education in *Men like Gods* rests on his belief—notwithstanding his skepticism about the certainty of knowledge regarding social and ethical questions, argued in “Skepticism of the Instrument” and in “The So-called Science of Sociology”—that political and economic problems are at their roots psychological and social problems, the objective laws of which can be studied and ascertained in positivistic fashion by the “sciences” of psychology and sociology. As the earthlings are told—when they persist in asking how governance is possible without a governing class—the Utopians have “a number of intelligences directed to the general psychology of the race and to the interaction of one collective function upon another” (50). That is, Utopia enjoys a spontaneous social harmony because the psychological “laws” about human nature and human association have been objectively discovered and applied in Utopian organization, and the interaction of various functional parts of the world state have been studied and resolved scientifically.

As a consequence of technological process and efficient social organization, the utopia of *Men like Gods* resembles in some ways the utopia imagined in William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*. “Anarchism” is the word one of the earthlings uses to describe Utopian social order, and when Barnstaple likens Utopia to the society imagined in Morris’s *News from Nowhere*—which he calls “a graceful impossible book”—his Utopian interlocutor and guide, Crystal confirms that Utopia is “practically a communism” (51, 225). Similar to Morris’s *Nowhere*, “work, in the sense of uncongenial toil, had almost disappeared from Utopia” (217) and Utopians work “[n]ot for wages . . . [nor for serving the idle exploitative class, but as] part of the brain, part of the will, of Utopia” (120). Utopia’s landscape is also in several ways like that of the

Morrisian idyllic garden. When the earthlings are airborne from the place they were first found by Utopians, Barnstaple sees below the low-flying plane “garden pasture with grazing creamy cattle and patches of brilliantly coloured vegetation,” “broad stretches of golden corn land,” and Utopians “working in the fields or going to and fro on foot or on machines” (30-31). Utopian architecture fuses seamlessly with the wild expanse of nature. When he sees “the Conference Place,” it impresses Barnstaple as “a sort of lap in the mountain, terraced by masonry so boldly designed that it seemed part of the geological substance of the mountain itself” (31). Indeed, as Barnstaple observes after he sees more of Utopia, art has so suffused Utopia’s material and social aspects that “The dream of artists, of perfected and lovely bodies and of a world transfigured to harmony and beauty had been realized” (211). To a fugitive from Earth’s depressing disorder, Utopia’s social order is breathtaking: “He walked agape like a savage in a garden” (213).

But is not this Morrisian garden of *Men like Gods* rather too much like the idyllic world of the Eloi in *The Time Machine*—and poised for degeneration, if not already degenerated? Wells voices this concern through an earthling, Rupert Catskill—British Secretary of State for War in the world of the novel—who argues to the Utopians that the “order and beauty” of their society, however marvelous, is threatened with the future of degeneration. Utopian civilization might subsist for some time due to the built-in “inertia,” but—as they have lost the insecurities and challenges that sharpen the survival instinct, and are thus denied moments of glory snatched from the dark forces of nature (the moments Earthlings like him are not denied)—the “Autumnal glory” and “Sunset Splendour” of Utopian civilization are short-lived (84). However, it is not for no reason that Utopians, unlike the diminutive Eloi, are taller than the earthlings and that, unlike in Morris’s *Nowhere*, advanced science and technology are major creative preoccupations of Utopians. Indeed, Wells resolves the problem—also raised in *A Modern Utopia*—of combining

order/stasis with innovation/change in a way that echoes Edmund Burke's sociological theorizing of the beautiful and the sublime. As Burke associates the beautiful with sympathy and reproduction of the social and the sublime with ambition and the forward/progressive drive of a society (44-51), Wells also contrasts the "beauty and order" of achieved progress in Utopia with the sublime adventure of its progress-to-come.

Wells's aesthetic imagining of Utopia as a dialectic of beauty and sublimity goes to the extent of suggesting a division of labor between those who reproduce the social and those who push Utopia to aim for distant stars. Reminiscent of the kinetic and the poetic classes in *Modern Utopia*, in the utopia of *Men like Gods* social labor is divided between those who are "engaged in the affairs of food and architecture, health, education and the correlation of activities," and others who are "busied upon creative work . . . continually exploring the world without or the world within, through scientific research and artistic creation" (139). Wells expresses the articulated and efficient reproduction of the social by the former group with the metaphor of an entropy-defying vast machine: The Utopians "kep[t] the economic machine running so smoothly that one heard nothing of the jangling and jarring and internal blockages that constitute the dominant melody in our Earth's affairs" (139).¹⁵ In Wells's schema, Utopia's entropy-defying social reproduction releases so much surplus energy that what Barnstaple formerly thought to be the "wild rush of inventions and knowledge" on Earth now appear nothing compared to "the forward swing of these millions of associated intelligences" in Utopia (139). Out to explore Utopia for himself, Barnstaple admires the "Cyclopean dams," that Utopians have built, and observes: "Knowledge swept forward here and darkness passed as the shadow of a cloud passes on a windy day. Down there [seen from the height of the parapet of the dam] they were assaying the minerals that lie in the heart of their planet, and weaving a web to

capture the sun and the stars. Life marched here; it was terrifying to think with what strides” (139). If its triumphs in science and technology give Utopians material plenty and social amity, resulting in their beautiful, harmonious society; the progressive drive of the same science and technology fulfills Utopia’s sublime ambitions, as they are imagined in the passage above both as terrifying dynamism and exceeding magnitude. Barnstaple’s conversation with Sungold before he departs from Utopia also forcefully brings out the aesthetic of sublimity through which Utopian progress is expressed in *Men like Gods*. At the end of their conversation, Sungold imagines a sublime future of a new Creation, as it were, before which the sublime triumphs already achieved in Utopia will prove only anticipatory: “Some day here and everywhere, Life of which you and I are but anticipatory atoms and eddies, life will awaken indeed, one and whole and marvellous, like a child awaking to conscious life. It will open its drowsy eyes and stretch itself and smile, looking the mystery of God in the face as one meets the sun. . . . And it will be no more than a beginning, no more than a beginning. . . .” (248). If we see in Sungold’s vision something like the Kantian (sublime) idea before which all presentations (images) pale into insignificance, we also note the long *duree* of the evolutionary narrative, stretching from the “pasts beyond memory” to a future beyond imagination. And, in the evolutionary sense, not only the forward drive of Utopian ambitions but their achieved social order and beauty are imbued with profound sublimity. For, the metaphor of the garden used to describe Utopia is as much Huxleyan in its provenance as it is Morrisian. Just as in “Evolution and Ethics” Huxley uses the garden metaphor as expressive of human will triumphing against the cosmopoetic energy of nature in the long history of evolution, Wells presents his utopian garden in *Men like Gods* as a culmination of the long history of gradual subjugation of the planet by human intelligence (41), by taking “this old Hag [Nature], our Mother, in hand” (87). That is, the long history of science

and technology, and the history of gradual but complete mastery of the earth by human intelligence, has been completed in Utopia. Thus, what Horkeimer and Adorno would call Enlightenment's instrumental reason a couple of decades later is extolled in Wells's Utopian imagination as the sublimity of human will triumphing over nature. The Utopian garden is the sign of man's will triumphing over the cosmopoetic will of the universe—Utopian beauty is the apotheosis of Utopians' sublime will.

As in *A Modern Utopia*, Utopia in *Men like Gods* is presented as a picture of what Earth could be if the promise of scientific-technological discoveries and inventions and the tremendous transformation of societies globally were allowed to run their courses. By 1923, when the novel was published, Wells had been acutely frustrated with what he called the traditional, backward-looking forces obstructing a utopian future. His initial hope that the First World War would be a war that ended all wars and institute a lasting world peace led by Euro-America was dashed when the war ended with the-crushingly-punitive-to-Germans Treaty of Versailles and the sharing of the German colonies by the victorious Allies (*Experiment in Autobiography* 569-72, 592-611). In *Men like Gods* Wells thematizes the Utopia-obstructing forces of nationalism, capitalism, and imperialism by sending to Utopia, in addition to Barnstaple, a fair sample of the bunglers of recent European and world history—an American, a French, and some English nationals, who are their societies' leaders and/or the leaders' hirelings. Unlike Barnstaple, they find faults with Utopian civilization and, assuming Utopians degenerated, even attempt to subjugate Utopia and make it part of the earthly empire of "Western Civilization" and "a White Man's World" (160). Rupert Catskill, the British Secretary of State for War, is the leader of the imperialist gang and represents the type that regards war as an occasion for adventurous self-assertion. Cecil Burleigh, a British conservative politician and philosopher countenances

Catskill's foolish plan, and thereby represents the ineffectual-intellectual/leader-type Wells despised in the British intelligentsia (*Experiment in Autobiography* 653-60). Lord Barralonga, who grew rich from the newly-arrived cinema and the shipping industries and from financial speculation, represents the idle-exploitative class of capitalist society. Freddy Mush, the literary-man, represents for Wells the primitivist-reactionary type that loathes technological civilization on the ground that it takes us away from nature. Mr. Dupon, the French man in the gang, represents the nationalist-jingoist type, who objects to Catskill's "Empire" on the ground that the contribution of French civilization should not be ignored. Mr. Hunker, the American "Cinema King" is the exploitative-capitalist type like Lord Barralonga; indignant of the very word "Empire," he also represents for Wells the fence-sitting United States, shirking its global-leadership responsibilities.¹⁶ For Wells who thought that the Allies bungled the prospects of lasting peace in the aftermath of the First World War, the Euro-American adventurers in *Men like Gods* represent what in the recounting of the history of Utopia is referred to as their "Age of Confusion."

If Wells expresses his frustration with recent European history through the earthlings who weave their barbaric plot of aggression in Utopia, by imagining the same history as Utopia's Age of Confusion, Wells shows his optimism that on the earth, too, a benign and progressive planetary empire would follow the crisis which early-twentieth-century rival nationalist imperialisms caused. But how different is Wells's utopian planetary empire compared to the earthly imperialisms he denounced? As a world state not administratively divided into local governments and municipalities as in *A Modern Utopia* but ruled globally as well as locally by functional bodies, the Utopia of *Men like Gods* is very different from historical imperialisms, and even from the Euro-U.S. controlled imperial global order Wells had proposed during the First

World War years and earlier. There is no exploitative relation between different geographical regions in Utopia; Utopian citizens everywhere on the planet are freely educated and given employments of their choice. However, as Huntington suggests, under its façade of order and efficiency, there lurks in the Wellsian Utopia a potential of conflict that Wells fails to address adequately (125). Wells's Utopia suffers from his positivist fallacy that not only natural phenomena but human nature, too, is governed by objective laws and can be incontrovertibly known by science. When asked what they do to a Utopian who refuses to obey the regulations, Utopians reply, "We should make an enquiry into his mental and moral health" (50). Thus, the efficacy of "Free Discussion and Criticism" (224)—one of the five cardinal principles of freedom in Utopia—is rendered doubtful by the implications of another principle—"Lying is the Blackest Crime" (222). Though Wells's indictment of lying is prompted by "falsifications of earthly newspapers" (222) and by shenanigans of diplomacy he had first-hand knowledge of during his war-time contact with the British Foreign Office (*Experiment in Autobiography* 595-603), it is also undeniable that anyone in Utopia who dared to controvert positivistically-derived "facts" and failed to bow to the normative logic would be deemed a liar and forthwith treated with the tools and knowledge of positivistic psychology. At other times it is the tyranny of common sense that rules in Wellsian Utopia. For example, when the earthlings denounce the principles behind Utopian civilization, Urthred thinks, "These things are plain . . . If they dared to see" (87). In other words, Utopian principles are "facts" out there to be "seen," not to be debated and negotiated, which suggests that the harmonious society Wells imagined in *Men like Gods* explains conflict away as a disease to be "fixed" by medical treatment.

The planetary empire in *Men like Gods* also imposes on its citizens the cultural imperialism of "progress." The seductive tactile itch for the stars so reiteratively lauded in the

novel leaves in the lurch those people who cannot keep pace with Utopia's swift "forward" march. For example, Lychnis, the elderly Utopian woman who looks after the earthlings and later nurses Barnstaple to recovery, is dismissed by the latter as "one of Utopia's educational failures," a "lingering romantic type" in the scientific-minded age (207, 233). Similarly, in Utopia those who cannot work briskly and remain "indolent" are denied mutual recognition and reproductive rights "because no one in Utopia loves those who have neither energy nor distinction" (64). Thanks to its progress in eugenics and education, Utopia has already got rid of most of its undesirables. As the Utopian educationist, Lion triumphantly asserts, "There are few dull and no really defective people in Utopia; the idle strains, the people of lethargic dispositions or weak imaginations, have mostly died out; the melancholic type has taken its dismissal and gone; spiteful and malignant characters are disappearing. The vast majority of Utopians are active, sanguine, inventive, receptive and good-tempered" (64). The quasi-genocidal reproductive regime of Utopia thus repeats what Ann Laura Stoler has pointed out as colonialism's racial-sexual matrix (5-7). Moreover, the elimination of the undesirable sections of the human population in *Men like Gods* is conjoined with the genetic manipulation and even elimination of undesirable species. For example, when Barnstaple first sees the unbelievable beauty of the Utopian world, it impresses him as "a world where ill-bred weeds, it seemed, had ceased to thrust and fight amidst the flowers, and where leopards void of feline malice looked out with friendly eyes upon the passerby" (26). The tyranny of beauty and sublimity in Wells' Utopia thus exhibits an instrumental logic of its own. Similar to what Horkheimer and Adorno explain about the work of Enlightenment's instrumental reason, in the Utopia of *Men like Gods* mastery over nature extends to the mastery over human beings.

From around 1920—John Clute writes in his “Introduction” to the 2005 edition of Wells’s *The Shape of Things to Come*—Wells lost touch with the spirit of the age he had so masterfully had for two or more decades, and, like other intellectuals of his age, suffered a sense of dislocation from actual history (xiv). But, as Clute adds, despite the recurrence of works where Wells gave free vent to his frustrations—in realist novels like *Christina Alberta’s Father*, *Mr Blettsworthy on Rampole Island*, and *The Autocracy of Mr Parham*—Wells stuck to his project of mapping a progressive future for humanity, just around the corner if only people would see it through the dead-weight of backward-looking nationalist/imperialist rivalries and capitalist waste, greed, and mismanagement. But Wells’s obstinate utopianism is not that bizarre, because, after the First World War, if more-artistic-minded intelligentsia fled from real history and wove mammoth projects of artistic grandeur, there was also a scientific-minded intelligentsia that believed that the horrors of European history did not signify the failure of scientific-technological civilization but rather, as Wells also believed, the obduracy of the past and the continuation of petty politics (Adas 380-81). While real history kept disappointing him, Wells continued to champion the utopian cause of the world state and advocate for the importance of education, because the latter alone could produce “the competent receiver,” the critical mass of the intellectual and professional elite needed to herald the new utopian future for humanity. To meet that task/challenge, urgent as he perceived it to be after the fiasco of the end of the First World War and the continuation of the status-quo in the impotent League of Nations, Wells embarked on his education campaign first with *The Outline of History* (1920), written to provide an alternative to the dominant nationalist histories, and then with *The Science of Life* (1930), co-authored with his son G. P. Wells and Julian Huxley, which aimed to put history in larger

biological, evolutionary context, and *The Work, Wealth, and Happiness of Mankind* (1931), which comprehensively set out Wells's economic and political outlook.

When the relative economic boom after the First World War led to the Great Depression and the international political scenario became grim with the rise of Italian Fascism, Hitlerism, and Stalinism, Wells wrote a magnum-opus, future history, *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), as a sort of sequel to *The Outline of History*. Described by Wells in his *Autobiography* as the last most significant thing he wrote until 1934 (640), the book is, as John Clute brilliantly puts it, “a land ironclad in words, a craft designed to carry its maker and its readers through the bad tough nurtureless years between the two World Wars intact” (xiii). Presented as the dream book of a fictional intellectual, Dr. Raven, who is said to have taken a leading role in the formation of the League of the Nations, the book contains a section for contemporary history, called “the Age of Frustration,” which involves an almost-correctly predicted Second World War, starting in 1940, and a world-scale devastation that leaves all governments defunct. The power-vacuum left is seized by a body of professionals and business men, called the Air Dictatorship (because the power asserted is based on the control of flight power), who militantly work, like the Samurai of *A Modern Utopia*, to bring discipline and order to society. Wells's history moves ahead in a dialectical manner: the newly-arrived order is devoid of any aesthetic spirit and is too repressive of little pleasures of life; to protest against it, there comes an intellectual revolutionary who heralds the new utopian age of beauty and order as Wells had imagined it in *Men like Gods*.

Although *The Shape of Things to Come* is a future history from the reader's point of view, it is narrated by a fictional historiographer anchored in the Utopian future time. As the historiographer of posterity looks back to early twentieth-century history as well as to the history

preceding and succeeding it, he presents a teleological narrative that is made up of a conflict between the inexorable logic of History moving toward the Utopian end and the antagonistic forces—vested interests fighting against History’s forward drive as well as sluggish minds unable to adapt to the new—delaying its Utopian destiny. That destiny for the narrator and for Wells is the Modern State, the planetary empire that comes about when “that aggressive energy that had well-nigh Europeanized the whole world before the [First] World War” is shored up again against the “disunited” Europe, and sovereign states are superseded by the government of the World Council (191-92). The antagonistic forces that fought against History’s utopian destiny, the historiographer notes, were the wasteful monopoly capitalism with its unscrupulous financial speculators, the military-industrial complex, and the inter-imperialist rivalry, which exploded into the First World War as rival states “attempt[ed] to become World-States on a planet on which obviously there was room for one single World-State” (62). The crisis of the war could have been used to recognize and restore History’s utopian journey—the fictional historiographer continues—but the ineffective League of Nations devoid of any real power to enforce its will on sovereign states meant that the antagonistic forces continued to obstruct History’s utopian drive. Consequently, History in the 1930s and after sees world-wide economic depression, spread of dictatorships and fascisms, decadence in education, and complete lawlessness run by “structurally great gangster systems” (158). The transformative opportunity presented by this new crisis is missed again in Wells’s future history as the meetings of a World Economic Forum fail to go beyond narrow nationalist interests and the Second World War begins in 1940, seemingly as “an attempt to reverse or confirm the Versailles settlement” at the end of the First World War (215). As the “war cycles” of 1940-50 bring to fruition “abominable novelties for the surprise and torture of human beings”—aerial bombings and chemical and

biological warfare—causing colossal destruction of lives and resources, the power of the sovereign states weakens and is finally given a death-blow by the spread of epidemics, “the empire of germs,” in the 1950s (167, 225). Consequently by 1966, as the historiographer concludes the first stage of the future history, “the great patchwork of empires and nationalist states set up during the Age of European predominance los[es] its defining lines, los[es] its contrasted cultures and elaborated traditions,” and the unprecedented scale of the crisis forces the task of creating the new world order to those who believe in the World-State (228).

Wells’s vision of future history in *The Shape of Things to Come* is dialectical: the progressive social group that ousts the traditional group in power in turn becomes an obstacle on the path of History’s progress and is replaced by another progressive group until Utopia and transcendence of the human come about. In that history the power-vacuum left by the collapse of sovereign states in the 1950s is filled by the Transport Union, “a loose association of the surviving aeroplane and shipping operators,” who work toward creating and consolidating the World-State (292). If the debacle of war and epidemics constitute the first stage of Wells’s future history, the formation of the Transport Union marks the beginning of the second stage that involves the gradual but irreversible consolidation of the power of the World-State. When the Transport Union assumes planetary power, it encounters only a feeble resistance from the remnants of the old military power which the Union easily defeats. Armed with the power that comes with the control of the world’s transportation and communication, the Transport Union then organizes a general conference at Basra in 1965 and renames itself as Air and Sea Control, under which operate the departments of Supply Control, Transport and Trading Control, and Educational and Advertisement Control. The power exercised by Air and Sea Control is far more extensive than that of the Transport Union, but the World-State still has a long journey ahead to

bring under its sway all the material and social forces of the global society. Meanwhile, as the new world order maintained by the Air and Sea Control brings great strides in material and social progress, in its shadow rise business interests of the old type, rival regional claims to power, proponents of people's rights and sovereignty rights, and aesthetes and workers dissatisfied with the ways of the World-State. To meet this new challenge, the Air and Sea Control calls another general conference in 1978 at Basra where it renames itself the World Council, dropping its disguise as transport- and communication- power and asserting itself as "the only sovereign on this planet" (336). Even though the World Council comes up with a panoply of plans—aggressively educating the young into the idea of the World-State, phasing out the old elements by temporarily recognizing personal-property rights, consolidating the police force of the State—in 2006 it is still facing, among other things, the "futile insurrection" of "Federated Nationalists," who want to revive "the poor old League of Nations" (356).

To fully and terminally stamp out the ever-resurgent antagonistic traditional forces is the major task of the third stage of Wells's future history, a task that demands that the forces of disorder be rooted out not only outside in the social structure but also in the minds and hearts of people, including those of the leaders of the World-State. The heroes of this excessively disciplinary and purgative stage of history are the younger generation of World-State leaders, who depose from power the older generation who had brought about great material plenty in the world but who had not overcome their weakness for sensual desires, making their rule marred by "the growth of rivalries and resentments" (371-72). The new generation of World-State leaders, who are like the Samurai in *A Modern Utopia*, finally complete the task of bringing all the elements of global society under the sway of the World-State, violently crushing their opponents—with "47,066 political executions" in twenty nine years—and equally violently

imposing “harshly rational schooling of human motives” (358-60). On the one hand History under the Air Dictatorship “becomes a record of increasingly vast engineering undertakings and cultivations,” and on the other it administers a moral “disinfection” of humanity, by censoring “fever rags” as literature of the old type is called and by “suppressing the suggestion systems of the old religions and superstitions” (375-76).

However, the suppression of pleasure, desire, and aesthetics by the Air Dictatorship produces discontent and revolt among the progressive class of the fourth and final stage of Wells’s future history, resulting in “the most gentle of all revolutions” (391). Represented in the text through an account of the diary of “that gifted painter and designer Ariston Theotocopulos,” the Air Dictatorship is faulted for erecting gigantic structures devoid of aesthetic proportion and for restraining freedom and creativity by the suppression of pleasure (382). With “the awakening aesthetic consciousness of the world community,” the World-State reaches its “apotheosis” at the Conference at Mégève in 2059 when the central government is dissolved and “the world which had once been divided among territorial Great Powers bec[o]me[s] divided among functional Great Powers,” departments of transport, natural products, social sanitation, education, etc. (368-70, 389-91). The task before the planet’s leaders is now that of “keying up the planet,” and with advancements in “the new experimental genetics” which release “new flora of several thousand species,” as well as with developments in mineralogy, meteorology, and biological sciences, the project of beautifying the world—“[a]n immense series of enterprises to change the soil, layout, vegetation and fauna, first of this region and then of that” takes center stage (402-10). People are given freedom to pursue their desires because with material plenty and education that fosters “continuous sublimation of interest,” desire in the utopian World-State is no longer “driven” but “masterful” (437-40). Thus, once the Samurai-like Air Dictatorship is ousted, the process of

creating a world like that of *Men Like Gods* begins, and not only the planet but its human inhabitants are sculpted into monuments of beauty. As Wells's historiographer puts it, "the greatest discovery man has made has been the discovery of himself. Leonardo da Vinci with his immense breath of vision, his creative fervour, his curiosity, his power of intensive work, was the precursor of the ordinary man, as the world is now producing him" (440-41).

As Clute observes, Wells's dialectical History is a history written by the winner with claims to scientific truth and righteousness of action, making historiography an "analysis of inevitable triumph" (xix). If Utopia is Wellsian History's destiny, the conditions necessary to wrest History from its resistors are complete scientific knowledge as well as energetic men who would execute that knowledge. Explaining why the idea of the World-State becomes realizable from the 1960s onwards whereas such attempts were unsuccessful before, Wells's historiographer claims that for the first time "the entire problem had been stated, the conditions of its solutions were known, and a social class directly interested in the matter had differentiated out to achieve it" (259). As to why the world's "sane" intellectuals and leaders would agree on one model of global society, Wells answers with the claim of science for objective, unitary truth. The new global order becomes possible in Wells' future history because "social and political science overtook the march of catastrophe" (259). Similarly, when science has solved the problems of human association—"group psychology" was Wells's magic science—"There is one sole right way and there are endless wrong ways of doing things" (271). Such claims to incontestable truth are vital not only to institute and reform the World State at various stages but also to legitimize its violence against its recurrent enemies. For example, justifying the repressive and often exterminatory practice of the Air Dictatorship, the historiographer claims, "It had been necessary to fight and destroy for ever vast systems of loyalties and beliefs that

divided, misled and wasted energies of mankind” (392). Premised as it is upon the claim to objective truth and unquestionable righteousness, Wells’s future history in *The Shape of Things to Come* is also staged as a battle between the opposing forces of chaos and order, waste and efficiency, disease and health, and the progressive class is always aligned with the positive side of the binaries. When the Transport Union assumes global power, for example, it is said to replace the wastefulness and anarchy of the capitalist-imperialist world-system with the order and efficiency of the World State. However, once the task of consolidating the power of the World-State is accomplished and global order and material plenty are reasonably ensured, it is the heroes of this progress, the leaders of the World Council, who are now on the wrong side of History and are faulted for their moral corruption. Accordingly, the next-generation leaders of the World Council, the Air Dictatorship, are represented as forces of order, efficiency, and health: they discipline the entire global population into the ideology of the World-State; they ensure efficiency and productivity by suppressing the desire for pleasure; they physically and morally “disinfect” the world by eradicating diseases and “curing” people of their vices. Then, again, when the task of vanquishing the ever-resurgent forces of the older society and psyche is finally over, the Air Dictatorship, who are now on the wrong side of History, is represented as wasteful, megalomaniacal and lacking any sense of proportion, unreasonably oppressive of human liberty and desire for pleasure, and hence unhealthy. When the Air Dictatorship is replaced by the aesthetically-minded leaders, History finally comes to an end and absolute Utopia arrives. As advancements in social and individual psychology engineer “continuous sublimation of interest,” forces of chaos, waste, and disease are successfully addressed before they threaten the realm of the social, which is forever ordered, efficient, and healthy (440).

As in *A Modern Utopia* and *Men Like Gods*, History in *The Shape of Things to Come* is an imperialist one even though, unlike in the previous utopias, Wells only infrequently invokes the sublime to glorify it. It has been noted above that Wells's planetary empire is a completion of the historical process of Europeanizing the world, which was halted by the inter-imperialist conflict between European powers in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Moreover, even though people of diverse nationalities join the leadership of Wells's World-State, Wells does not refrain from reproducing stereotypic representations of the colonial Other. When the World-State leaders are discussing ways to face the challenge posed by the resurgent powers of the past, the Chinese Fellow of the State, Shi-lung-tang is said to make "the case for Bribery" to accommodate the antagonistic forces, while the Indian Fellow, M. L. Tagore is represented as an advocate of "mystical liberalism" urging for "the practical successfulness of spiritual urgency and physical passivity" (331-33). Furthermore, Wells's World-State is forged by an aggressive obliteration of the recalcitrant forces of the Other that colonial societies and cultures are often made to stand for. For example, describing the methods the Air Dictatorship used to bring the entire planet under the dictates of the World-State, Wells's historiographer observes, "The government set itself in that year to 'tidy up' the still half-barbaric peasant populations of Haiti, Ireland, West and Central Africa, South Italy . . . Eastern Bengal, regions where traditional superstitions, secret societies, magic cults or sacrificial practices showed an obstinate persistence" (363).

However, whether it is because of the limits of the historiographical discourse (as opposed to the novel) or the point of view of the narrative (looking back at earlier stages from the future time of Utopia) or the harsh realities of the 1930s (which perhaps proved too powerful for Wells's desperate optimism) or a combination of all, the textual opportunities to wax poetic

with the aesthetic of the sublime (to glorify the planetary empire and its incessant progress) are relatively fewer in *The Shape of the Things to Come*, and when these opportunities arise, except at the very end Wells does not launch himself into the sublime as he did in *A Modern Utopia* and *Men Like Gods*. Even so Wells occasionally reverses the narrative point of view to suggest (in sublime terms) what Utopia (the historiographer's present) may look like to those in the early twentieth century. On one occasion, the description of the elaborate network of knowledge attained in Utopia evokes the archival sublime:

To the people of the Age of Frustration our interlocking research, digest, discussion, verification, notification and informative organizations, or Fundamental Knowledge System, that is, with its special stations everywhere, its regional bureaus, its central city at Barcelona, its seventeen million active workers and its five million correspondents and reserve enquirers, would have seemed incredibly vast. (143)

On another occasion the production and maintenance of knowledge is hailed by the historiographer as an endeavor to which “no limit could be set” and which could accommodate any amount of social surplus resulting from the use of technology in the fields of agricultural and industrial production (340). Similarly, when the final stage of the future history arrives, Wells invokes the sublime to suggest, for example, the immensity of the possibilities open to the new age: “All that had been done hitherto by man was like the scribbling of a little child before eye and hand have learned sufficient coordination to draw. It was like the pawing and crawling of a kitten before it begins to see. And now man's eyes were open” (399). This new age is the age of “geogonic planning”—the project of making Earth's geographies pleasant for habitation by altering environmental factors—and of experiments in genetics that would release thousands of

new desirable species and altering or eliminating the undesirable ones. However, Wells saves his most triumphant, euphoric sublime for the moment when History has transcended itself and, as it were, the ghosts of the contemporary history are finally exorcised away from Wells's imagination. In this post-History phase human beings have transcended individuality to become the selves through which "Man the Undying" is living. Wells's eloquence and exuberance about the post-human is worth quoting at length:

The body of mankind is now one single organism of nearly two thousand five hundred million persons, and the individual differences of every one of these persons is like an exploring tentacle thrust out to test and learn, to savour life in its fullness and bring in new experiences for the common stock. . . . We work, we think, we explore, we take risks and suffer . . . it is not our little selves, but Man the Undying who achieves these things through us. As the slower processes of heredity seize upon and confirm these social adaptations, as the confluence of wills supersedes individual motives and loses its present factors of artificiality, the history of life will pass into a new phase, a phase with a common consciousness and a common will. We in our time are still rising towards the crest of that transition. And when that crest is attained what grandeur of life may not open out to Man! Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; nor hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive . . . (444-45)

As the voice of the historiographer gives way to that of the prophet, Wells seems to forget the pertinacity of conflicts in the history he has just narrated and indulges in the sublime transcendence of history that his Utopia would be.

Wells's incurable optimism notwithstanding, the antagonistic and regressive forces he showed defeated in his utopias and future histories remained at the forefront of the twentieth-century history as it hurtled toward the Second World War. Even as Wells kept his utopian "faith" (as he had termed it in "The Discovery of the Future") against the intransigent historical realities of which he was acutely cognizant, the generation of writers he had inspired in the early twentieth century later turned against him, questioning the major tenets of his utopian vision.¹⁷ George Orwell's dystopian parody of the Wellsian Modern State, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, would not be published until 1949, three years after Wells's death, but in an article he wrote in 1941, "Wells, Hitler and the World State," Orwell already argued against Wells's Utopia and his belief that scientific men side with common sense, not irrational powers. Challenging Wells's faith that a scientific outlook would triumph over regressive forces, Orwell writes in the article, "Much of what Wells has imagined and worked for is physically there in Nazi Germany. The order, the planning, the State encouragement of science, the steel, the concrete, the aeroplanes, are all there, but all in the service of ideas appropriate to the Stone Age" (96). Another parody of the Wellsian Utopia, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* was published in 1932; in it Huxley imagined a World-State that uses its scientific-technological capacities of social engineering to factory-produce citizens who are taught to be happy with their assigned social functions and who make consumerism and pleasure the major tenets of their lives. Even as early as 1921, another admirer of Wells, the Russian writer Yevgeny Zamyatin wrote an anti-Wellsian vision of the future ruled by the Wellsian State. First published in English in 1924, Zamyatin's *We* pictures a world where people are living inside a giant glass-walled city, all the materials of their living are artificially produced, individuality is sacrificed for collectivity, citizens are constantly put under

surveillance, and any assertion of individual thinking or feeling is rendered anti-social and is scientifically “cured.”

Although Wells would never doubt the desirability of *his* Utopia, he was aware of the nightmarish possibilities of science and technology serving the totalitarian regimes and had partially represented them in *The Sleeper Awakes*. As the generation he inspired stopped listening to him, Wells continued to be optimistic about his Utopia and pessimistic about contemporary history, an oscillation that is visible even in his final work, *Mind at the End of its Tether*. Written in 1944 and published a year later, *Mind at the End of its Tether* is the work of a writer whose “optimism has given place to a stoical cynicism” (61). Appropriately enough, Wells begins his observations about the fate of human civilization with a categorical assertion: “The end of everything we call life is close at hand and cannot be evaded” (67). Frustrated with contemporary history, he goes to the extent of questioning the assumption of a basic congruence between the cosmic order of things and the order of the human mind—an assumption central to the Enlightenment project. Wells’s assertion about the dissonance between the universe and the human mind is uncompromising: “that congruence with mind, which man has attributed to the secular [cosmic] process, is not there at all” (68). An old prophet whose grandiose visions of history had been contradicted by another World War, Wells finally sees no rationality in history at all, no “pattern of things to come;” for him, any hope that “an ultimate restoration of rationality” would come out of “the present vast confusion of our world” has vanished amid the “hitherto incredible chaos” (69). However, even at his grimmest and most cynical, Wells cannot abandon hope completely and offers his cherished idea of the transcendence of the human as a way out of the impasse. History, Wells writes, has come to such a crisis that “Man must go steeply up or down” through the evolutionary process, and the degree of adaptation demanded

for going up would be such that “he must cease to be human” (61-62). Even as he sees the odds of going down far greater, Wells expresses hope that “a small, highly adaptable minority can possibly survive” (62).

In conclusion, whether it was the end-of-the-century mood of apocalypse, the historical conditions of working class “agitations,” capitalist waste, and inter-imperialist rivalries, or Wells’s underclass background that must have given him the advantage of an alienated gaze at the Empire—whatever the causal and/or conditional relations between these factors and Wells’s writings—the works of early Wells present a scathing satire on imperialist ideology and make the imperialist self suffer a crisis of self-humbling and painful self-recognition. Employing the aesthetics of the negative sublime that subjects the perceiving ego to insuperable loss, Wells’s early scientific romances offered the imperial audience disconcerting refracted images of themselves—more-civilized doubles of the imperialist self, degenerated progeny in a distant future, “beastly people” as imperial citizens’ mirror-images, a potential extra-terrestrial colony turning out as a hyper-advanced but horrible double of empire—images that deeply challenged the imperialist ideology of civilizational superiority. From 1901, as Wells shifted his task from “merely” critiquing the historically existent to proposing alternative models for it, he grew increasingly certain what he wanted his imperial audience to awaken to: the new reality, the new world order, and the glorious future of planetary utopia, to be heralded by the new professional elite class of the West and materializing the promise of western scientific-technological modernity. With a position that is not very different from the liberal advocates of softer commercial empire and the apologists of empire as a civilizing mission, Wells offered in his later utopias/future histories visions of the global empire in which nations have disappeared, capitalist waste is gone, the obnoxious inertia of tradition has been overcome, and continual and

unbounded progress takes History toward the triumphantly sublime utopian telos. However, whether it is the near-future or alternative-future utopia or a distant-future one, the place for the Other in Wells's utopias is only the benevolently bestowed opportunity to assimilate and be efficient citizens of the world empire conceived after a unilinear vision of world history.

Chapter Four

Sublime Capital and its Monstrous Doubling in Čapek's *R. U. R.* and *War with the Newts*

In his entry on Karel Čapek in *Fifty Key Figures in Science Fiction*, John Rieder writes that Čapek's reputation as a science fiction writer rests on the play *R. U. R.* and the novels *The Absolute at Large*, *Krakatit*, and *War with the Newts* (47). In their readings of these works, scholars have presented Čapek as a critic of technology, capitalism, totalitarianism, and absolutisms of all kinds. According to William Harkins, for example, Čapek's abiding concern was "the dehumanization of man as the price of modern technological civilization," which Čapek saw operating both in capitalism and communism, and in the (techno-utopian) absolutist fantasies of western modernity (38). Similarly, to Alexander Matuška, the invariable constant in Čapek's works is "the image of catastrophe and destruction, the explosion which will be brought to pass by the century of science and technology" (164). Serving the all-consuming and all-transforming drive of the "big industry," science and technology in Čapek's world bring about dehumanization of labor and "militarism and destructive wars," while the fantasies that the powers of science and technology engender are dystopian due to their absolutist tendencies (216). Likewise, according to Darko Suvin, "the Natural Man versus the Unnatural Pseudo-Man" was the chief preoccupation of Čapek, who saw the dehumanization of people one of the products of modern capitalism—the others being the capitalist mass culture, totalitarianism, and "international and civil warfare" (270-71). To many scholars, Čapek is thus a critic of the grandiose, a writer who sees within the utopian, totalizing drive—whether of capitalism, communism, or other totalitarianisms—the threat of a collective suicide of humanity.

While scholars have amply emphasized Čapek's critique of technology and capitalism, they have not given the same attention to the presence of colonialism and imperialism in Čapek's

science fictional works.¹ There seem to be good reasons for this relative neglect: whereas technology and capitalism feature prominently in Čapek's fictional world as the determining forces of twentieth-century history, imperialism appears either as a historical condition readily exploited by capitalism or as a residual force that derails capitalism from its fantasized, utopian *telos*. Čapek seems to suggest, for example, that the Robots in *R. U. R.* would not have revolted against their masters if they had not been first engaged in inter-imperial warfare by rival European nation-states. Likewise, the salamanders in *War with the Newts* apparently have harmonious relation with their capitalist exploiters until imperialist nations start using them for territorial expansions and warfare. However, it is also possible to read Čapek's works to argue that imperialism functions in them not so much as an external force that derails capitalism but as a basic condition for capitalism to function.² The R. U. R. Corporation, for example, would not be able to sell its Robots in gigantic numbers if the latter were not bought by imperial state powers. The Newts, likewise, can be profitably exploited by capitalist powers precisely because they can be harnessed to create/construct new territories for imperial populations. Even more importantly, capitalism itself is imperialist in Čapek's science fictions. Čapek makes clear that capitalism is driven by an imperialist ambition, as the maps on the walls of Domin's office in *R. U. R.* symbolize and as Bondy's dreams of territorial transformation in *War with the Newts* attest. Resorting to the Marxist reading when fruitful, the study of Čapek in this chapter will keep imperialism in focus and supplement the current understanding of the place of technology and capitalism in Čapek's works.

This chapter also identifies in Čapek's science fictional works an aesthetic which Čapek scholars have missed so far. I argue that Čapek deploys the aesthetic of the sublime to satirize the absolutist and totalitarian fantasy of western modernity, fantasy woven around and driven by

technology, capitalism, and colonialism. I show that Čapek's response to the historical facts of his time was to diagnose their conditions of possibility, the collective fantasy about unlimited progress. At a time when the destructive potential of technology had been made painfully clear thanks to the First World War and the instrumental rationality of Taylorism and Fordism further subjected the working class to the rhythm of the machine, Čapek satirized the absolutist, imperialist drive of capitalism by representing it with the aesthetic of the sublime. Čapek suggests that it is only the absolutist and totalizing sublime fantasy (the sublime is that which leaves no room for anything else—it obliterates everything else from one's vision; in this case, utopian progress leaves no room for anything else) that makes it possible to obliterate different perspectives, override other historical forces, and bring about destruction by the irrational excess of progress. Indeed, Čapek's supposed fascination for pragmatism and relativism should perhaps be understood in this sense, as a conceptual ground for his critique of totalizing fantasy and absolute belief in progress.³ This chapter shows that Čapek maintains the same distrust of irrational, totalizing progress and its imperialist drive in even more uncompromising terms in the 1930s when the Great Depression and totalitarianisms of various sorts—Fascism, Nazism, Communism, Capitalism—prompt Čapek to condemn western modernity in totality—its culture, political institutions, academics, businesses, humanitarians, etc. At a time when European intelligentsia were by and large struck with a sense of gloom and helplessness, Čapek located the cause of malaise in the same irrational fantasy of unlimited progress, endless territorial expansion and radical world transformation.

I develop my argument about Čapek's science fictions by closely reading his two works, *R. U. R.* and *War with the Newts*. Before that, however, I will roughly schematize the typical narrative trajectory of Čapek's science fictional works; such a schematization allows us to see

some repetitive themes and movements of Čapek's works and shows that *R. U. R.* and *War with the Newts* are products of an imagination to which technology and capitalist imperialism were objects of abiding interest and engagement. Čapek's science fictional works usually begin with a scientific-technological breakthrough, which unleashes unimaginable power and possibilities. The breakthrough sets the stage for utopian hopes and/or projects of radical transformation of society, often associated with the harnessing of scientific-technological power to capitalism. The utopian dreams/projects, however, turn into monstrous nightmares of global destruction when the capitalist drive to continuous expansion leads to economic crises and inter-imperial wars. Finally, after colossal world-destruction, things return (or, are hoped to return) to pre-capitalist and "pre-technological" stage, and a new beginning of human history without the follies of the preceding one is imagined.⁴

Not all of Čapek's science fictional works, however, follow all the stages outlined above. The plot of *The Makropulos Secret*, for example, revolves around the invention of a chemical formula for prolonging youthful life endlessly, which fits the first stage of a scientific-technological breakthrough unleashing immense power/possibilities. But, even though the play's characters entertain utopian hopes about the formula for a while, they are terrified of the undesirable consequences that would follow from it and destroy the formula, obviating the possibility of its industrialization. In *Krakatit*, to take another example, the young scientist Prokop discovers atomic power with tremendous explosive force, but Prokop subsequently fights precisely to prevent his invention from falling into the hands of political powers and becoming a part of war machinery.

But Čapek's three major science fictional works—*R. U. R.*, *The Absolute at Large*, and *War with the Newts*—come close to fulfilling the entire trajectory outlined above. In *R. U. R.*,

invention of a matter with life-like properties enables first the design and then industrial production of the Robots, who serve as a wildly cheap and tremendously productive labor force. Once the Robots flood the labor market globally, commodities of daily consumption are more than abundantly produced and prices are driven down, bringing about a utopia of plenty. The utopia turns monstrous, however, when the Robots replace human labor, causing massive unemployment, and imperial/colonial powers deploy the Robots in colossally destructive wars. Meanwhile, as the Robots acquire consciousness and become aware of their exploitation, they desire to be like their (human) masters and, to realize that aim, kill humans all over world, including the directors of the R. U. R. Corporation. Although the Robots seem doomed to die because the only copy of the formula of their production has been burnt, two of them, a male and a female who have acquired human-like emotions, are blessed in Biblical fashion to go forth and multiply, presumably to begin the history of human civilization again.

The Absolute at Large begins with the invention of a machine that can burn matter completely, releasing simultaneously its atomic power and the Absolute (God) slumbering in it. When the so-called Karburator is industrially produced, it is used globally for all kinds of energy needs. But rather than heralding the dreamt-of utopia of plenty, the consequent combination of overproduction—turned fatally worse by the Absolute that starts running factories on its own in utter disregard for human needs—and inter-imperial wars ruins the social fabric and causes incalculable destruction. Things ultimately return to normal when all karburators are destroyed one after another.

War with the Newts involves not a technological invention per se, but applications of technological/industrial rationality on the Newts, who are farm-produced, educated, and sorted into groups en masse to be deployed as cheap labor by numerous nations. This leads, on the one

hand, to unimaginable surplus for the Salamander Syndicate that enjoys monopoly on the Newts trade and, on the other, to gigantic projects such as the building of islands and continents for imperial nations hungry for more and more territory. However, the utopia of territorial expansion and economic surplus turns dystopic when the Newts, as they multiply rapidly and far outnumber the human population, start destroying islands and continents while demanding “more living space.” The novel ends with the “hope” that the Newts, who have excelled humans in every aspect, will repeat their mistakes—kill each other in wars—and make space for the few surviving humans to start civilization afresh.

Translated into the key concepts used in this dissertation—imperialism, Enlightenment, capitalism, colonialism, and the sublime—as well as into ones used particularly in this chapter, the “typical” trajectory in Čapek’s science fictional narratives appears as follows: First, “pure” and/or instrumental reason of Enlightenment makes a discovery or invention that “embodies” a sublime idea or releases a sublime force and/or magnitude. Second, plugged to the instrumental rationality of the capitalist-imperialist machine, the discovery or invention enables a sublime utopian fantasy of surplus accumulation and social transformation. Third, by the logic of the capitalist drive toward endless expansion, crises of overproduction and inter-imperial wars transform the sublime utopia into its monstrous double, the nightmare of world-destruction. Fourth, when capitalist-imperialist world-destruction has run its course, a return to a new, usually pre-capitalist, beginning occurs or is hoped for. The next two sections of this chapter examine how the trajectory outlined here unfolds in *R. U. R.* and *War with the Newts*.

I

Čapek wrote most of his science fictional works in the first half of the 1920s: *R. U. R.*, *The Absolute at Large*, and *Krakatit* were first published in 1920, 1922, and 1924 respectively.

Together, these works addressed the issue of the promise and threat of technology in the capitalist-imperialist world, and put under a critical gaze the ideology of progress and civilization. As the First World War compelled European intellectuals to question the claims of western modernity, a citizen of the newly independent Czechoslovakia assaying its journey on the road of “progress,” Čapek of the 1920s also reexamines the major forces of modern western civilization, their phantasmatic self-narrative as well as their actual performance.

These forces were diverse and often contradictory. If the late nineteenth century suffered from the insecurity and anxiety of the Godless world and succumbed to the fin-de-siècle doomsday aesthetics, the early twentieth century tried to supplant them with the God of science and technology (Conrad, *Modern Times* 13-14, 401-8). Whereas the conception of humanity had shifted toward that of a puppet determined by natural and social forces, according to the new ideology, “Technology was the evolutionary ladder which enabled the puppet to attain the powers of a god” (408). On the one hand, the First World War dealt a massive blow to the ideology of progress, to which writers—Yevgeny Zamyatin in *We*, for example—responded with anxieties about dependence on technology and the abuse of technology by totalitarian powers. On the other hand, the War was read as a political failure and hence a further proof that human society should be engineered by technocrats, such as Wells championed in his fictional and non-fictional works. Moreover, technological optimism and the ideology of progress continued in the “great exhibitions.” The British Empire Exhibition in London that Čapek visited in 1924, for example, was not only “the biggest samples fair” of colonial produce and artifacts, but also a site displaying the triumphs of mechanical engineering, achieving “in metal such poetic, inexhaustible peculiarity of form and function” (Čapek, *Letters from England* 63).

Then, the revolution in industrial production brought about by advances in technology gave rise to the contradiction between the fact of alienation and instrumental rationality and the fantasy about industrial production and technological rationality as panacea for social problems and means for utopian consumerism. For example, when Frederick Taylor advocated, in his *Principles of Scientific Management*, “scientific” restructuring of the labor process, he touted it as a remedy to the conflict between the industrialists and the working class. When the most efficient (and scientifically studied) process was taught to the workers, Taylor argued, productivity increased by such a proportion that the capitalist would reap greater profit even after handsomely increasing the wages of his workers (9-29). The same principle of rationalized labor process resulted in the assembly-line production of Fordism, which together with Taylorism, represented “the biggest collective effort . . . to create, with unprecedented speed, and with a consciousness of purpose unmatched in history, a new type of worker and of man” (Gramsci 302). On the one hand, because of the lower production costs, lower selling prices, and higher wages made possible by “rationalize[d] production and labour,” Fordism promised “the superior living standard enjoyed by the popular classes” and engendered “a Fordist fanfare . . . the affirmation that capitalism is only at its beginnings and it is necessary to prepare for it grandiose patterns of development” (285, 287). On the other hand, Fordism and Taylorism exacted from workers “the highest degree [of] automatic and mechanical attitudes” and a reorganization of their personal and sexual lives to suit the demands of the new form of labor (302, 304-5). It is this contradiction of utopianism and alienation that Čapek dramatizes so superbly in *R. U. R.*, just as it is the fantasy of unlimited productivity as panacea for social problems he satirizes in *The Absolute at Large*.

The first quarter of the twentieth century was characterized not only by technological utopianism (and dystopianism) but also by the utopianism of social engineering and fears about the totalitarianism of such engineering. The Bolshevik revolution of Russia gave rise to one kind of attempt at social engineering as the Italian Fascist State of Benito Mussolini provided another. Early twentieth-century science-fictional literary response to Communist and Fascist utopianisms ranged from Wells's (cautious) praise for their organizational efficiency to Zamyatin's denunciation of them as totalitarianism of the state. While Čapek was very sympathetic to the condition of the working class, and the problems of "the little man," he did not think that their salvation lay in Communism or any organized, centrally dictated management of the collective. In an article he wrote in 1924, "Why I am not a Communist," Čapek criticizes communist utopianism as false millennialism, which uses the masses as "a material instrument to attain certain goals," chiefly the goal of power, and which is wrongly absolutist about its dismissal of all other social orders. That is perhaps why in *R. U. R.* Čapek's Robots invite from the reader both a sympathy for their exploitation by capitalists and a horror at their collectivism exploited by their leaders.⁵

The main object of critique for Čapek in the 1920s seems to be the ideology of utopianism itself, the ideology that was shaken by the First World War but continued to survive after it. Besides the political and economic utopianism already mentioned above, there were also utopianisms of artistic and religious kinds. The religious utopianism of the Theosophical Society, about which writers artists like G. B. Shaw and Wassily Kandinsky were very passionate, offered a new world religion and the world messiah as a spiritual salve to the brutally bruised technological age (Butler, *Early Modernism* 37-40). Among literary-artistic circles, what was horror to some—displacement of the human by technology and subjection of humanity to it—

was often transvalued affirmatively as the coming of the new man, as the transcendence of space and time as the Futurists declared by riding their automobiles (Conrad, *Modern Times* 60, 67). Indeed, the ideology of progress was so dominant and persistent that even artistic movements, such as those of Kandinsky and Arnold Schoenberg, which abandoned syntax, logic, and causality in their theory and practice of art, announced their projects as progress from the past (Butler, *Early Modernism* 54-56). Čapek's response to such utopianism is skepticism: while he offers no solution to the social ills (any totalizing solution would be totalitarian for Čapek), Čapek subjects reigning ideologies of utopianism to a critique from the points of view of those parts or social forces of society which utopianism ignores or has displaced. In works like *The Makropulos Secret*, *R. U. R.* and *The Absolute at Large*, Čapek ridicules the blindness of excess in utopian ideology, whether it is technological, economic, or spiritual.

Like H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Čapek's *R. U. R.* is set in a remote, apparently unmarked, island. If Moreau transforms "his" island into a quasi-colonial setting to violently upgrade lower species into higher ones (parodying colonialism's civilizing burden, among other things), the island in *R. U. R.* is marked as a site first for the birthing of the western man of science, and then for the radical transformation of the world. It is the place where Old Rossum had come to study marine life in 1920 and subsequently discovered a matter with life-like properties; after generations (the play is set in the future), it has become the site of the R. U. R. Corporation. The stage directions amply suggest that R. U. R. Corporation rules the world by the power of the machines of production, locomotion, and communication. On the walls of the corporation's central office are "big maps depicting ship and railway lines, a big calendar, and a clock"; there are also "printed posters [advertisements of Robots] . . . transport regulations, a table of telegraph rates, etc." (3). Also, the directors of R. U. R. Corporation represent "the

cream of the creative experimental science of leading European nations” (Bradbrook 49): the engineer Fabry is English, the physiologist Gall is French, the psychologist Hallemeier is German, the business magnate Busman is Jewish,⁶ and the central director’s name, Domin, is derived from the Latin *dominus* (Bradbrook 49; Klíma 82). Together, they represent the Eurocentric nature of the capital and technology thematized in Čapek’s play. Moreover, *R. U. R.* shows that, when plugged into the capitalist-imperialist machine, “the creative experimental science” turns instrumental in the service of accumulation and domination. Or, even more accurately, the play shows that, when the capitalist drive for accumulation is the condition of possibility for the creativity of science and technology, such creativity can only lead to destructive consequences.

William Harkins notes that Čapek had “the warmest praise” for “the great scientists of the past,” whose “dreams, even their challenges to God, were proud assertions of the human spirit”; the “Don Quixotes of the nineteenth century,” Harkins quotes Čapek, were “adventurers and romantics of intellectual discovery” (87). The difference between the Old Rossum and Young Rossum in *R. U. R.* contrasts the scientific adventurer with the champion of the instrumental rationality of science in the service of capitalism. As Domin tells Helena in the “Prologue” of the play, Old Rossum “wanted to somehow scientifically dethrone God,” an ambition in which he succeeds when he discovers a matter with life-like properties and creates a human being out of it (7). Young Rossum, in contrast, has no patience with his father’s “unproductive” adventure; he intends to apply his father’s knowledge toward active profit-seeking and sets about shaping the android into an ideal laboring body. Young Rossum succeeds in “customizing” his Robots in such a way that the “superfluous” aspects of human nature—“something that feels joy, plays the violin, wants to go for a walk”—are completely eradicated (9). The idea of the Robot as the

perfect worker was already introduced in “The System,” a story Čapek co-wrote with his brother Josef in 1808 (Klíma 72-73); in *R. U. R.*, the idea is developed to become a science-fictional novum, representing at once the triumph of technology and the working class turned into a machine, as the ideology of Taylorism championed.

The contrast between Old and Young Rossum in *R. U. R.*—especially because “Rossum” comes from the word *rozum* which means “reason” in Czech (Bradbrook 44)—points to the distinction Čapek draws here between two historical careers of reason, a distinction also crucial to Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s argument about reason’s complicity with the mass exterminations of the twentieth century. In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno suggest that reason’s relation to the world is ineluctably that of domination, but whereas old metaphysics was partially redeemed by the concepts it formed (enabling self-reflexivity to thought), from the Enlightenment onwards reason’s subservience to capitalism reduces science and technology to pure instrumentality (1-3). In their reading, what was once the poetry of philosophy or thought is transformed into the grim prose of instrumental rationality, as the relation between the subject and the world is concurrently reduced to that of the dictator and his subject (2-6). But Čapek’s “Don Quixotes of the nineteenth century” compel us to think that for him the distinction between intellectual adventurers and pioneers of instrumentality is not that disjunctive. As D. G. Charlton argues, the philosophical, political, and social projects of nineteenth century thinkers—projects that were thoroughly instrumental in their European context as well as in their implications for imperialism and colonialism—were as quixotic and poetic as they were instrumental and prosaic. As they sought to replace Christianity with “secular religions,” intellectuals and reformers, such as Hegel, Comte and Saint-Simon, all shared a faith in progress and historicism, and in the sublime destiny of European man (155-79). In other

words, instrumental rationality has been historically inhabited and powered by the fantasy of adventure, and has its own poetry. Aware of such fantasy, Čapek emphasizes in *R. U. R.* its historical continuity: if Old Rossum was driven by the sublime idea of out-performing God, the fantasy that animates Young Rossum is no less sublime. His is the project to transform or de- and re-territorialize the planet and turn it into a consumerist utopia. In that sense, Young Rossum's (and his inheritor Domin's) mission is akin to the twentieth-century "utopian" ideologies of Taylorism and Fordism, which claimed to bring about social harmony as well as consumerist plenty.

Indeed, the directors of R. U. R. Corporation, with the exception of Alquist, cherish the utopian dream that capitalist production radicalized by technological innovation will bring about a world of plenty and turn humanity, currently subjected to the dictates of nature, into "the master of creation." In the Prologue, the directors of R. U. R. Corporation—the inheritors of Young Rossum's dream of revolutionized production—eulogize the virtues of robotic production to Helena Glory, a representative of "the League of Humanity," who comes to the island to instigate revolt among the Robots. Asked by Helena why they make the Robots, Fabry explains, "One Robot can do the work of two and a half human laborers," and adds: "It's great progress to give birth by machine. It's faster and more convenient. Any acceleration constitutes progress, Miss Glory. Nature has no grasp of the modern rate of work" (17-18). If Fabry equates progress with the acceleration of production by machines, Busman is ecstatic that "today all prices are only a third of what they were, and they are still falling, falling, falling . . .," and proudly points out "in the meantime we've dropped five hundred thousand tropical Robots on the Argentine pampas to tend the wheat" (20). Harry Domin, the managing director, predicts that, given such abundant production and cheap prices, "within the next ten years . . . things will no longer have

any value” and people will be able to consume freely whatever they want (21). To Alquist’s protest that “all the laborers of the world will be out of work,” Domin concedes that “people will be out of work,” but points out that when Robots do all the work, humans will be free to do “only what they enjoy” (20-21). Carried away by his utopian vision of humanity freed from the demands of labor, Domin goes rhapsodic: “O Adam, Adam! no longer will you have to earn your bread by the sweat of your brow; you will return to Paradise, where you were nourished by the hand of God. You will be free and supreme You will be the master of creation” (21). Before he shows, in Act One, the reality of unemployment, wars, and working class revolt that capitalist utopianism leads to; here, in the Prologue, Čapek gives free reign to the fantasy of the superman, which the Godless man aspires to riding on the wings of technology.

The directors of R. U. R. Corporation fantasize their utopia of a radically transformed world in a scale and magnitude that is suggestive of the aesthetic of the sublime. In a succinct gloss, Jean-Francois Lyotard defines the Kantian sublime as an idea that is in excess of representation: the sublime is an idea that can be conceived but cannot be concretized in an image (“Answering the Question” 81).⁷ When Domin dreams of a utopia of humanity freed from the burden of labor, he resorts to abstractions, such as “free, supreme . . . the master of creation”; in Domin’s fantasy, it is toward the fulfillment of these abstractions that the multitudes of Robots were produced and sold to the world’s labor market. Domin reiterates his sublime, utopian fantasy in Act Two when, facing imminent death from the revolting Robots, the directors of R. U. R. Corporation “evaluate their lives, intentions, and deeds with pathos worthy of the moment” (Klíma 76). To Alquist’s provocative suggestion that “to do away with the labor that enslaved mankind . . . was not the dream of the two Rossums . . . wasn’t the dream of your shareholders . . . [who] dreamed of the dividends” (54), the enraged Domin repeats,

To hell with their dividends! Do you think I'd have worked even one hour for them? . . . I did this for myself, do you hear? For my own satisfaction! I wanted man to become a master! So he wouldn't have to live from hand to mouth! I didn't want to see another soul grow numb slaving over someone else's machines! I wanted there to be nothing, nothing, nothing left of that damned mess of a social hierarchy! I abhorred degradation and suffering! I was fighting against poverty! I wanted a new generation of mankind! I wanted . . . I thought . . . (54)

Domin's fantasy thus conceives the revolutionary force of technology via the aesthetic of the sublime.

Čapek here seems to be satirizing the techno-utopists of the twentieth century through Domin, who, even when confronting the consequences of his actions, is blind to the folly of his absolutism—his neglect of the “other” social forces dashed by the capitalist juggernaut. Just as the techno-utopists remained adamant in their belief even after the First World War, it does not occur to Domin that his fantasy of heralding the future of “[u]nrestricted, free, and supreme people . . . even greater than people” (54) is rendered structurally impossible by the capitalist system that produces the Robots for the accumulation of surplus. It is Alquist, the play's champion of the value of human labor and crusader against capitalist greed, who gives an appropriate name to Domin's utopian fantasy by pointing to the capitalist profit motive that underlies it: “I blame science! I blame technology! . . . We, we are at fault! *For the sake of our megalomania, for the sake of somebody's profits, for the sake of progress . . . for the sake of some tremendous something* we have murdered humanity! So now you can crash under the weight of all your greatness!” (emphasis added 56). Alquist's outburst suggests that the rhetoric of progress in which Enlightenment (science and technology in the quote above), capitalism, and

colonialism coalesce is underwritten by delusions of grandeur and by a drive toward an indefinable, unrepresentable sublime— “some tremendous something.”

Alexander Matuška has argued that the utopian dream of Domin makes him “not representative of the bourgeoisie . . . [but] a Fabian socialist, in whose mind there is no room for the concept of revolution, since everything is to be achieved by technology” (205). But Domin’s technological utopianism, not unlike that of the twenty-first-century advocates of genetics, robotics, and nanotechnology, presupposes capitalism as the condition of the possibility of technological breakthrough(s). Young Rossum creates the Robots, after all, to produce perfect labor machines/bodies so that capital finds new means to generate surplus. When Domin assures Helena that the problems of the recent past are only parts of the transition into the new system, he is being a technological determinist, assuming that the new system will result simply from the insertion of technological innovation into the capitalist machine. Like the nineteenth-century votaries of “secular religions,” or Fabian socialists, or the advocates of twenty-first-century technologies, Domin does not acknowledge that technology is a social product and that collective struggle for a new system is a prior necessity for technology to work in the way he imagines. Technology or “machinery,” as Marx argues, is always conditioned by the capitalist drive toward accumulation, just as scientific developments that enable technological innovations are inextricably tied to capitalism (492-508; Harvey 98-104). So while Matuška is right to point out that Domin’s dream of a society freed from subjection to labor is not quite the dream of a capitalist, it is also true that Domin’s dream is rooted in his belief that capitalism revolutionized by technology will bring about those changes. As if he were reproducing the ideology manifest in the spectacles of the world fairs and in the Taylorist-Fordist claims about the rationalized

production and labor, Domin dreams his sublime fantasy of heralding social utopia merely on the basis of capital and technology's power to transform the world.

While Čapek satirizes the delusionary utopian fantasy of techno-capitalism, he also underscores that which the fantasy attempts to hide. If the directors of R. U. R. Corporation view their capitalist utopia through the fantasy of sublime poetics, the effects brought on society by the logic of capitalism speak the grim tale of instrumental reason. To begin with, there are the Robots, quasi-humans reduced utterly to their functionality as labor power, with "something that feels joy, plays the violin, wants to go for a walk, in general requires a lot of things . . . superfluous" eliminated from them (9). As laboring bodies synchronized to the rhythm of the capitalist machine, the Robots, especially in the play's Prologue, stand as striking examples of what Marx meant by the real subsumption of labor under capital,⁸ Antonio Gramsci by "the new type of man suited to the new type of work and productive process" (285), and Horkheimer and Adorno by Enlightenment and capitalism's logic of equivalence and identicalness. As Helena learns from Robots Sulla and Marius, the Robots' identity is utterly reduced to their functionality; happily employed and insensitive to pain and pleasure, they are examples of the mechanical efficiency in high-skilled labor pioneered by Fordism.

R. U. R. further points to the societal effects of capitalism's instrumental reason through the themes of sexuality and infertility and through its ambiguation of the difference between humans and the Robots. As early as in the Prologue, Helena marvels at the superfluity of gender distinction among the Robots and finds it "d-r-eaful!" that "[t]hey don't exhibit even traces of [sexual] attraction" (22). She learns from Domin that in the Robots sex is simulated to cater to market demand; for example, female Robots are produced because of the conventional preference for females for the jobs of "[w]aitresses, shop-girls, [and] secretaries" (22). If the

Prologue sharply contrasts the non-reproductive sexuality of the Robots with Domin's courtship of Helena and the reproductive promise of their relationship, Act One markedly attenuates the contrast when, even ten years after her marriage to Domin, Helena is yet to be pregnant. Moreover, her personal "failure" is reflective of a global trend, as she learns when she reads in the newspaper that "in the last week there has not been a single birth reported" (32). By this time in the play, the Robots have proliferated globally, relieving humans of their burden of labor, but also "people have stopped being born," making the extinction of humanity a distinct possibility (32). In a piece of terrible irony, Helena, who came to the island to "humanize" the Robots, becomes instead like the Robots. While the Robots in the R. U. R. factory and in the world show signs of resistance and "humanity," Helena is compelled to ask why "[s]terility . . . has become the latest achievement of the human race" (35), and why the flowers she is given on the day of the tenth anniversary of her arrival in the island are sterile and "cultivated—developed with artificial speed" (40). As the distinction between the organic and the mechanical does not hold any more, the humans become like their machines. Thus, the convergence of humans and the Robots dramatized in the theme of sexuality/(in)fertility also powerfully presents the social effects of instrumental rationality, effects that Horkheimer and Adorno call the reduction of the non-identical to the identical, the equivalent and the merely functional.

Čapek's critique of the ideology of progress in *R. U. R.* also takes the form of staging the ways of understanding the world that are under threat in the capitalist world. When Helena poses the question of infertility to the directors of the Corporation, the explanations she is given indicate the narratives that the capitalist rhetoric of progress has delegitimized. According to Dr Gall, the influx of Robots in the labor market has resulted in such "a surplus of labour power . . . [that] man is virtually an anachronism"; human beings are losing their reproductive power "as

though nature were offended by the production of Robots” (39). Alquist, who calls himself “a dreadful reactionary,” links the infertility to eradication of suffering as well as to the superfluity of human labor (34-35). Because human beings no longer “grow old with labour . . . with the cares of rearing children . . . from poverty” but indulge in “carnal passions,” he concludes, “women . . . [will not] have children by such men” (35). While Alquist’s vituperation against “carnal passions” does indeed make him a moralist reactionary, the representative rural voice in the play, Nana’s categorical denunciation of technology expresses a religious orthodox position. She attributes the reproductive calamity to the “Satanic pride” and “impiety and blasphemy” exhibited by Domin and company’s assumption of the role of God in the creation of the Robots (32). The characters’ moralist denunciation of “carnal passions,” lamentation over the loss of supposedly salubrious effects of physical labor, and accusation of violation of the laws of nature as well as God’s prerogative of creation—all of these may be reflective of Čapek’s intention to dramatize different, “equally serious truths and equally noble ideals” constituting the early-twentieth-century crisis of the capitalist-imperialist world (qtd. in Klíma 79).⁹ Although it is hard to imagine Čapek literally endorsing the view of Nana, her discourse of the “Satanic pride” and “blasphemy,” or even Alquist’s denunciation of “carnal passions,” by means of relativistically staging different viewpoints, Čapek seems to be registering his dissent to the totalizing drives of techno-capitalism and the ideology of progress, which violate the right-to-coexist of other social forms and narratives.

R. U. R. thus dramatizes a glaring discrepancy between the sublime fantasy of capital and the pervasive effects of capitalism’s instrumental reason the sublime fantasy masks. As discussed in Chapter One, such a discrepancy is brilliantly theorized by Terry Eagleton’s thesis of the psycho-social substitution at work in the capitalist sublime. Due to the universality of exchange,

Eagleton points out, capitalism abstracts the sensuous from the social—from human beings' relation to each other and to objects they produce and consume—and projects it to the phantasmic realm of exchange, money, and commodities (200-213). While working-class bodies are reduced to bare necessities and instincts (as opposed to overflowing drives, which are blunted by the workers' subjection to the rhythm of capitalist machine), the capitalist “alienate[s] his sensory life to capital . . . vicariously to recuperate that estranged sensuality by the power of capital itself,” as the “unstoppable metonymic chain” of sublime capital offers the capitalist a plane of identification (199-200, 212). The capitalist sublime, according to Eagleton, “resides in the restless, overweening movement of capitalism itself, its relentless dissolution of forms and commingling of identities, its confounding of all specific qualities into one indeterminate, purely quantitative process.” If representation-defying “endless accumulation of pure quantity” is the crux of the capitalist sublime, its corollary is money as the “major signifier” (212). In other words, the corrosive reality of capitalism's instrumental rationality—the reduction of the singular or the non-identical to the abstract and the equivalent—engenders the phantasmic sublimity of capital, which presents to the capitalist a compensatory substitute for the reified social.

That capitalist instrumental rationality can be invested with a substitutive sensuous and sublime aesthetic is also borne out by the R. U. R. Corporation's directors' euphoria over the mechanical speed and precision as well as the magic of ever-growing magnitude of production. We have discussed above that to the engineer Fabry the speed of mechanical production by itself constitutes “progress” (Prologue). In Act One, momentarily mistaking the timely arrival of the mail-boat *Amelia* with the defeat of the revolting Robots, Hallemeier offers an effusive paean to precision: “When precision reigns, human law reigns, God's law reigns, the laws of the universe reign . . . The timetable is greater than Gospels, greater than Homer, greater than all of Kant. The

timetable is the most perfect manifestation of the human intellect” (44). Similarly, the motif of quantity and a sensuous investment of it recur in Busman’s fascination with R. U. R. Corporation’s achievements. In the Prologue, he corrects Domin’s inexact figures by pointing out that the number of Robots in the factory’s warehouse is “[t]hree hundred forty-seven thousand,” not “about three hundred thousand” (17). In Act Two, when R. U. R. Corporation’s directors mull over the crisis of robotic revolt, Busman finds a sanctuary in “balanc[ing] the accounts” (52). Busman’s sensuous investment of numbers representing the Corporation’s profit is dramatically contrasted in the play with Hallemeier’s sudden realization of the missed sensuous. “Thunder, there are so many beautiful things! The world was beautiful and . . . what did we ever take the time to enjoy?” exclaims Hallemeier, while in the next line we hear Busman utterly thrilled with the profit the Corporation has made: “Four hundred fifty-two millions. Excellent” (55). Busman ultimately ends at “Five hundred twenty million! Good Lord, half a billion!” before he offers to the directors’ ongoing assessment of their past deeds his understanding of what went wrong:

The whole world wanted its Robots. My boy, we did nothing but ride the avalanche of demand, and all the while kept blathering on—about technology, about the social question, about progress, about very interesting things . . . *And all the while the whole mess picked up speed under its own weight, faster, faster, still faster—and every beastly, profiteering, filthy order added another pebble to the avalanche.* (emphasis added 59-60)

In other words, the impersonal systemic drive of capital has a force and magnitude that befits its representation as sublime. Moreover, through Busman’s remarks here, Čapek is suggesting that

the capitalist sublime is not only the individual capitalist's fantasy but a social and collective one.

Despite Domin's refusal to acknowledge the consequences of his actions, the revolt of Robots confirms that the sublime fantasy that capitalism engenders is undermined and turned monstrous by capitalism's inexorable drive toward accumulation and crisis. Busman's double emphasis on the collective desire—"The whole world wanted its Robots"—and on the systemic drive—"the whole mess picked up speed under its own weight"—accords with the Marxist idea that capitalism is a system which is collectively produced but functions autonomously with its own logic. Contrary to Domin's utopian fantasy, the efflux of Robots in the global market brings about typical capitalist crises of overproduction and unemployment, which rather than leading to a labor-free society as Domin imagined, precipitate inter-imperial wars as (unsuccessful) means of obviating crises. In other words, the sublime fantasy of capital doubles into the monstrous nightmare of death and destruction.

Already at the beginning of Act One, before the Robots' revolt takes a decisive turn against humans, Helena reminds Domin how in the last ten years his utopian plans "backfired" one after another: "When workers rose up against the Robots and destroyed them, and when people gave the Robots weapons to defend themselves and the Robots killed so many people . . . And when governments began using Robots as soldiers and there were so many wars" (30). Against the backdrop of the news of Robots mobilizing against humans and the failure of the mail-boat to arrive for a week, Domin is disturbed by Helena's painful reminders and "stands up and paces" about the floor; yet, his response is an adamant denial that he was wrong. He dismisses Helena's anxieties about Robot-engendered unemployment and wars as merely temporary—parts of "the transition to a new system" (30). What Domin will not acknowledge is

that the means by which he wishes to herald the new system—the deployment of Robots as global work force—is in fact a classic case of the capitalist system resorting to technological innovation as a temporary and ultimately unsuccessful antidote to the problems of overproduction and falling rate of profit.

As Karl Marx argues, technological innovation is one of the means by which a capitalist fights the odds against the drive toward greater accumulation of surplus, because superior technology enables him not only to stay ahead of other capitalists, outcompeting them by producing cheaper commodities, but also to keep workers in check by producing a greater reserve of industrial army of laborers (772-802; Harvey 119-25). Similarly, when capital faces the threat of massive devaluation of capital due to overproduction, to continue accumulation of surplus and to counter the falling rate of profit, the capitalist must abandon or destroy existing sites of infrastructure and investment and pour capital into new sites (Harvey 424-31). Thus, young Rossum's perfection of labor-machines which are cheaper and more productive than human workers gives the R. U. R. Corporation a decisive advantage over other capitalists and is a crucial part of the corporation's ambitions of global capitalist empire. Also, as is shown by the example of "five hundred thousand tropical Robots [dropped] on the Argentine pampas to tend to the wheat (20)," the innovation of Robots as workforce produces a greater mass of the industrial reserve army of labor, beneficial to the capitalist system at least until all human laborers are replaced by the Robots. Finally, because the Robots are not only the labor-force limited to the production at R. U. R. factory but commodities that are mass-produced and sold globally, the trade in Robots is also an exemplary case of capitalist investment into new economic sites for the extraction of a greater rate of profit.

Čapek might not have been imagining the plot development of his play particularly through a Marxist perspective; even so, his satirical critique of Domin's chimerical fantasy is best articulated with the Marxist theory of capitalism, according to which neither technological innovation nor investment of surplus in new economic sites can obviate the crises they are deployed to resolve. The doubling of the sublime capital into nightmarish crises in *R. U. R.* demonstrates that massive unemployment resulting from technological innovation may be temporarily fine for the capitalist to the extent that it produces the reserve army of labor, but it is ultimately system-threatening because it produces an insurmountable gap between production and consumption. So while the widespread use of Robots in industries produces consumable goods in plenty and drives prices down—as Busman triumphantly brags before Helena in the Prologue—because of rampant unemployment, people would not have purchasing power to buy those cheap goods, as is exemplified by the conflicts between humans and Robots Helena reminds Domin of in Act One. On the other hand, Domin's dream that one day goods will cost nothing is totally blind to the fact that, were it so, the capitalist would have no means to extract surplus.¹⁰ If Čapek criticized communist utopianism for its millennialism and Party dictatorship (“Why I am not a Communist”), his dismissal of capitalist utopia points to its structural impossibility: The structural necessity of capitalism to overaccumulate and to suffer devaluation offers no basis for Domin's chimerical hope that the crises of unemployment and wars are only parts of transition into a new system.

Furthermore, even though the setting of *R. U. R.* on a remote island does not allow it to stage capitalist expansionism globally—the way the roving narratives of *The Absolute at Large*, *Krakatit*, and *War with the Newts* do—the play refers to imperialism both as condition and consequence of Domin's capitalist empire. As it is shown by the geo-political events that unfold

in the play in the wake of R. U. R. Corporation's global "success," the twinned capitalist crises of overaccumulation and devaluation bring imperialism into the scene and make wars endemic because investment into the war machine provides the capitalist an eminently desirable option to ensure profit for the accumulated capital.¹¹ In Act One, as the characters pass suspenseful moments awaiting news from the world outside the island, Nana stumbles upon a week-old newspaper and reads from its pages: "Figh-ting in the Bal-kans" (31); "Ro-bot sol-diers are spar-ing no one in the oc-cu-pied ter-ri-to-ry . . ." (32). In Act Two, when the potential doom has become a palpable reality, Dr. Gall exclaims in dismay: "[I]t was criminal of old Europe to teach the Robots to fight! For God's sake, couldn't they have left us out of their politics? It was a crime to make soldiers out of living work machines!" (53). What Dr. Gall, like Domin, will not acknowledge is that in the face of the crises the efflux of Robots as a global force has engendered, insertion of Robots into the war machine becomes a necessity, not an aberration. Similarly, the lament, "couldn't they have left us out of their politics?" is only disingenuous because furtherance of capital's drive for accumulation presupposes/necessitates political arrangement of the social to the advantage of the capitalist. Contrary to Dr. Gall's disbelief, a state-sponsored war machine and imperialism and colonialism have historically been crucial for the longevity of capitalism; *R. U. R.* only dramatizes the horrors Dr. Gall's "old Europe" visited upon itself and to the colonies that "began" with "the scramble for Africa" of 1880s and reached its crescendo in the First World War. As David Harvey points out, when various means of accumulating surplus from within the existing site of economic circulation run out or become increasingly disadvantageous, capitalism must resort to imperialism-colonialism and inter-imperialist wars to ensure and perpetuate primitive accumulation and "to visit the costs of devaluation to another" (441).¹²

The imperialist ideologies underlying Domin's capitalist empire are also revealed in the reasons the Robots give for defying human power and killing humans. In Act One, when Helena assures the disgruntled Robot Radius that he is not a slave but a master who can live at par with humans, Radius retorts that he not only refuses to acknowledge a master but also wants to be the master of others and the master of people (37). The reason he gives for it—"I know everything"; "I can do everything" (37)—anticipates the evolutionary, social Darwinist logic that is spelled out in the pamphlet issued by the first union of Robots instituted at Le Havre. Reading from the pamphlet that has arrived with the first mail-boat after seven days' lapse, Domin says "They go on to assert that they are higher than man on the evolutionary scale. That they are stronger and more intelligent" (48). The Robots' takeover, therefore, follows the same logic that drove Domin's millennial vision, the supposed right of the "stronger and more intelligent" to exercise mastery over the class they have the power to exploit. In Act Two, after killing the directors of R. U. R. Corporation (except Alquist who is deemed a Robot because he works/builds with his hands) as well as Helena and Nana, Radius says, "The world belongs to the fittest. He who wants to live must rule. We are the rulers of the earth! Rulers of land and sea! Rulers of stars! Room, room, more room for Robots!" (70). It is as if Domin's dream to create the supermen were here ironically materialized in its monstrous form in the imperialist Robots. Indeed, it seems as if the Robots' cry for more and more room for themselves is the manifest double of the repressed territorial drive of Domin's fantasy, objectified in the various maps on his office walls but willfully unrecognized by him. Furthermore, as they explain to Alquist in Act Three, the Robots ascribe to humans all that they have learned about the social-Darwinist ethos and the imperial "right" of territorial expansion: "We wanted to be like people. We wanted to become people"; "We wanted to live. We are more capable, We have learned everything"; "You gave us weapons.

We had to become masters”; “You have to kill and rule if you want to be like people . . .” (74). Thus, *R. U. R.* shows that the empire of plenty that Domin fancied the sublimely revolutionary power of technology and capital would herald cannot but be turned monstrous by the structural necessities of capitalism, which must resort to imperialism and to wars to keep its vampire-body continually bloated. The Robotic takeover of the imperialist mission is motivated by the same ethos that underwrites Domin’s fantasy of supermen; it is a monstrous double of the imperialism that is both the condition and consequence of the capitalist empire aspired by R. U. R. Corporation. Just as the First World War forced Europe to face the destructive side of the ideology of progress, in the play he wrote within a few years after the War ended—changing nothing about the forces that led to it—Čapek constructs a science-fictional world that refers to the recent history as well as to the enduring malaise of western (capitalist) civilization.

II

When Čapek turned to the science fiction genre in the 1930s, the future of mass production, mass unemployment, and inter-imperialist rivalries that he had projected in *R. U. R.* had come true, thanks to the Economic Depression and the consequent rise of totalitarianisms. As Eric Hobsbawm writes in *The Age of Extremes*, the impact of the Big Slump was more global than that of the First World War. The United States, which had remained unhurt in the First World War, became its epicenter; the world saw “a spectacular collapse” of the monetary system as well as “unemployment on an unimagined and unprecedented scale” (86-92). Even after the worst cycle (1929-32) was over—and even though the decade saw “considerable technological innovation in industry”—the expected growth and employment did not return and the industrialized part of the world remained amenable to anti-liberal, totalitarian politics.

The political fallout of the Economic Depression was the retreat of liberalism on the one hand and the rise of anti-colonial resistance on the other. After Hitler's rise to power in Germany, Italian Fascism and German National Socialism inspired and supported fascist forces in the world, such that "in the 1930s [fascism] looked like the wave of the future" (Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* 112). Even though the U.S.S.R. proved an exception to the worldwide economic slump (96), the rise of Stalinism made communism equally totalitarian. Conversely, the Big Slump provided conditions for more massively mobilized anti-colonial resistance movements. While the history of anti-colonial resistance is as old as colonialism itself, after the First World War resistance against colonialism took "agrarian and industrial political forms" and was voiced through "developed intellectual cultures of journalism and publishing," such as pamphlets, newspapers, and books (Young, *Postcolonialism* 162). Precisely because the entire world had been penetrated by the global economy of capitalism, the Economic Depression proved a fertile ground for anti-colonial resistance (Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* 204). As the colonial-metropolitan economic relation based on the exchange of raw materials and manufactured goods was disrupted and became patently disadvantageous to the colonized masses, anti-colonial resistance began to have wider appeal, no longer a concern of the urban politicians only but also of the uneducated rural people (213).

The only sector of the economy that defied the general trend of the 1930s was what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno would call the "culture industry." As Hobsbawm writes, the 1930s saw the spectacular growth of the illustrated press, the mass radio, and the Hollywood movie industry, and, to serve a population that had plenty of time to kill, "the giant movie theaters rose like dream palaces in the grey cities of mass unemployment" (*The Age of Extremes* 102). Dependent on the big industry of "steel, petroleum, electricity, chemicals," the

entertainment industry could serve only capitalist consumerism; the radical potential of the use of technology in cultural production was anathema to the culture industry that “confine[d] itself to standardization and mass production” (Horkheimer and Adorno 95-96). Prefabricating the aesthetic-cognitive work of the subject in the product itself, the culture industry entertained mass audiences with “standardized forms” and “ready-made clichés,” such that the apparent differences among mass-cultural products only “assist[ed] in the classification, organization, and identification of consumers” (95-98).

If to such historical forces of the 1930s H. G. Wells responded by calling it the Age of Frustration while proposing the planetary empire as a utopian antithesis to it, Čapek, who was more ambivalent about technology and was skeptical of it in the service of capital, uses utopia as a narrative form to denounce western civilization *tout court*, including the scientific-technological aspect that Wells was enamored of. Čapek of the thirties satirizes the grandiose dreams of capitalist expansionism, which turns quantity into the absolute value as well as into a phantasmic poetics, and leads to the “progress” that is destructive of both nature and culture. Alarmed by Hitler’s expansionist ambitions and the Allied Powers’ policy of appeasing the Fuhrer, Čapek emphasizes the active part imperial expansionism and consequent wars play in humanity’s active collaboration in collective destruction (Klíma 198-99), while he also points to the exploitation and torture that imperialism perpetrated on the colonized. Somebody with long experience of working with newspapers, Čapek of the thirties also ridicules the state of culture in high capitalist societies, both the sensationalism of mass media and the “average intelligence” of the population fed on it.

The classic work in which Čapek of the 1930s articulated his comprehensive critique of the contemporary world (dis)order is *War with the Newts*. First serialized in the Czech daily

Lidové noviny before its publication in book form in 1936, *War with the Newts* was written—“between spring and September of 1935” (Bradbrook 103)—at a time when the geo-political theater quaked with the likes of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, General Franco, and Joseph Stalin. Although it is premised on the fantastic idea that evolution could have favored a different species as the master race, *War with the Newts* is firmly tethered to contemporary history. As Čapek insisted in the epilogue he wrote for the first book edition, “There is no utopia here, only the present. There is no speculation about the future, but a mirroring of that which exists and the surroundings in which we live” (qtd. in Harkins 96). A roving *roman feuilleton* and a brilliant pastiche that parodies diverse kinds of writings, such as newspaper articles, memoirs, scholarly works, and manifestoes, Čapek’s dark satire holds an entire civilization to account. As William Harkins notes, *War with the Newts* is not “an allegory of Nazism alone; it is an allegory of contemporary civilization, of which Nazism is a part” (99). No longer a writer for whom everybody has her relative truth (Suvin 275), Čapek constructs in his masterpiece a world where almost nobody is right.

Čapek’s “allegory of contemporary civilization” draws up a historically resonant genealogy of European imperialism and colonialism. *War with the Newts* begins on an island in Indonesia, where Captain J. van Toch of the Dutch merchant ship *Kandong Bandoeng* is exploring the potential of pearl-fishing at the behest of his bosses in Amsterdam. It is perhaps not a mere coincidence that Čapek refers to Dutch imperialism and colonialism as an originary setting for the historical dynamic that ultimately leads to the near-destruction of humanity. The Dutch rose as a global maritime power after the Treaty of Westphalia, which saw the formation of several European nation states and led to a European balance of power for which an unequal relation to the non-European world was a defining condition (Silver and Slater 151-59).

Moreover, the motley crew of van Toch's ship point to the population "management" of European imperialism and colonialism. Sailors of different nationalities hired and fired as the circumstances change, the crew—a Swede, a Finn, an Irish, etc.—exemplify the social debris of Europe, rendered worthless in home countries but elevated to imperial citizens in the colonies.¹³ Furthermore, the hunt for pearls also symbolizes what Hannah Arendt calls imperialist-capitalist investment in a useless commodity, such as what happened in the rush for gold in Africa (188-89). The pearls-motif also recalls the hunt for fabled colonial treasures for which European imperial powers colonized other nations and often fought each other. Finally, the enlisting of Newts as procurers of pearls for European "consumption"—which van Toch so successfully does—alludes to an abiding fantasy of European colonialism: the natives do not know the value of their resources and are happy to part with them.¹⁴

War with the Newts thematizes mercantile capitalism and industrial capitalism as major phases of modern European imperialism and (neo)colonialism. Captain van Toch's twenty years' career as a sea captain has involved the traffic of imperial-colonial mercantile trade; he has taken his ship to places such as Java, Borneo, Philippines, Fiji Islands, Solomon islands, Carolines, Samoa, and Clipperton Island (23). His *Kandong Bandoeng* carried "some of the blessings of the island (copra, pepper, gutta-percha, palm oil, tobacco and labour)" when it left the Tana Masa island for Surabaya (18-19). As he finds in the Newts cheap pearl-fishers (who procure him pearls in exchange for food and mechanical tools) and hits upon the idea of founding a highly profitable pearl trade by transporting the Newts to shallow coastal waters all over the world, van Toch meets G. H. Bondy, an eminent Prague businessman and a board member of several companies, and proposes a partnership in the pearl trade. Though Bondy finds the captain somewhat whimsical, he agrees to buy a ship when van Toch offers him to carry merchandise in

addition to the Newts. What begins as a tentative partnership venture between a captain and a capitalist soon grows into a veritable trade and becomes part of the mercantile empire of Pacific Export Company. In addition to the trade in pearls and coral, as the manager informs the shareholders in a general meeting, the Company profits from “secondary articles, such as exports of textiles, enamelled hollow-ware, wireless sets and gloves to the Pacific islands” (98). A company with shareholders and board members of international (imperial) cast,¹⁵ the Pacific Export Company thus marks the early, mercantile stage of capitalism.

When the hero of the pearl trade, van Toch, dies, Pacific Export Company disbands itself to form a much vaster capitalist enterprise, the Salamander Syndicate. The chapter of pearl trade needs to be closed because, as Manager Volavka explains to the shareholders in the Company’s general meeting, the excess of pearls glutting the market have made their prices fall sharply forcing the Company to suffer loss for the first time in its history (98). In his turn, Bondy asks the shareholders to think the problem that the rapidly growing numbers of Newts will cause in the future—from the present 6 million, Bondy projects, the Newts will grow to 300 million next year, and to 15 billion in three years—and points to them that “every Newt represents some economic value, a workforce value waiting to be exploited” (102). Then, emphasizing the economic value of Newts, Manager Volavka adds, “the Newts are especially suited to the construction of dams, dykes and breakwaters, the deepening of harbours and waterways, the removal of sandbars and mud deposits, and for keeping shipping lanes clear” (102). To fully exploit the workforce potential of Newts, Bondy proposes formation of the Salamander Syndicate—“a new vertical trust . . . [t]he members of [which] would be . . . a number of major enterprises and financially powerful groups”—the task of which “will be the cost-effective cultivation and exploitation of the Newts” (104). Such a “giant concern” will not only profit from

the trade of Newts but will also control all businesses that relate to the cultivation of Newts and various construction projects for which the Newts will be used (105). Bondy promises his shareholders that the conglomeration will give the Syndicate a “virtual monopoly” on the Newt trade and increase its power to such an extent that “the great powers will be interested in the business” (106). As subsequent developments suggest, by “the great powers” Bondy alludes to imperial nations eager to exploit the Newts for the projects of territorial expansions. Thus, what begins with imperialist-colonialist exploitation of native resources grows through a mercantile empire to a global capitalist trade that forces imperial states to follow where the capital flies.

Čapek satirizes capitalist expansionism by representing the capitalist’s attitude to capital in aesthetic terms. *War with the Newts* shows that the expansionary projects of mercantile and industrial capitalism enthuse the capitalist as sublime visions of global (re)territorialization. When van Toch meets Bondy with a bag of pearls and an adventure story, the capitalist Bondy is only too eager to suspend his routine and indulge in the exoticism of a high-sea-man’s tale and the sensuousness of commodity fetishism. Looking at van Toch’s visiting card, Bondy feels “the breath of distant parts engulfing him,” and the name of the captain’s ship, *Kangdong Bandoeng*, hits his aural sensorium as “a gong being struck” (30). Anxious whether the captain has brought another regular (dull) business deal, Bondy bursts to himself: “To hell, I am no shopkeeper. I’m a visionary. I am a poet in my way. Tell me, Sinbad the Sailor, about Surabaya or the Phoenix Islands. Have you never been carried off by bird Roc? Are you not returning with cargo of pearls, cinnamon and bezoar?” (32). Bondy’s fascination with the exotic is not the expansionary vision of a capitalist—not yet—but it bespeaks the compensatory, phantasmic indulgence in the sensuous denied in the reified social. As he listens to van Toch’s adventurous story about the Newts, Bondy feels “enthralled” and “gasp[s],” “That’s the best tale I ever heard” (36).

Similarly, when, as an evidence of the truthfulness of his adventurous account, van Toch opens his bag of pearls, Bondy is enraptured to see the pearls of different shapes, sizes, and colors; the visual ecstasy of commodity fetishism compels him to “let them run through his hands, roll them between his finger-tips, cover them with his palms,” and then “gasp,” “Beautiful, just beautiful . . . Captain, this is like a dream!” (41). Finally, when van Toch proposes to carry merchandise (along with the Newts) in the ship that he advises Bondy to buy, Bondy readily agrees, “we’ve got to find new markets for our industry . . . I’d like to buy a ship or two, one for South America and the other for eastern parts” (43). The possibility of cross-continental commerce so enthuses Bondy that in his heart “some fantastic chord [is] touched” and a vision of “[s]hips carrying pearls and coffee, ships with spices and all the perfumes of Arabia” overwhelm his imagination (44). Thus, as a sensuous vision of globe-girdling commercial traffic looms up before the capitalist’s mind’s eye, his phantasmic aesthetic ratchets up from the beauty of commodity fetishism to the sublimity of a grandiose mercantile empire.

In the Big Slump of the 1930s, it would seem counterintuitive to think of the capitalist as a visionary dreamer; however, with the intention to draw up the history as well as the “diagnosis” of capitalism-imperialism, Čapek constructs his capitalist, Bondy, as an economic adventurer, who dreams of the far and finds in the capital an object for sensuous fulfillment. Hence, when the mercantile empire of the Pacific Export Company has exhausted its profitability and needs to be merged into the grander Salamander Syndicate, Bondy waxes even more triumphant, euphoric, and poetic. He hits the aesthetic register when he explains to the shareholders that the business of Newts/pearls led by van Toch had “the style of the adventure novel. . . the style of Jack London, of Joseph Conrad and others” (101). He points out that such “old, exotic, colonial, almost heroic style . . . of adventurous and juvenile epics” has no room in

the future, which demands “not a new chapter but a whole new concept, a task for a new and substantially different imagination” (101). Bondy exhorts the shareholders to dream the new era as poets—“We have got to be poets if we want to keep the world turning” (101)—and extols the future of the Syndicate as well as the world the Syndicate will de- and re-territorialize in sublime terms:

The Syndicate will be looking for work for millions of Newts throughout the world. It will supply plans and ideas for control of the seas. It will promote Utopias and gigantic dreams. It will supply projects for new coasts and canals, for causeways linking the continents, for whole chains of artificial islands for transoceanic flights, for new continents to be built in the oceans. (105)

In other words, what the construction of the railways had meant to the English in the mid-nineteenth century (Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* 91) and the construction of technological triumphs to Americans in the nineteenth and the twentieth century (Nye, “Introduction”), the project of transforming the face of the planet means to Čapek’s Bondy. Spurred by “a whole new concept” which seems to be in excess of any representation, Bondy goes on a spree of metonymic slippages. He promises his shareholders that “we shall replace the adventure story of pearls by the hymnic paean of labour”; he teaches them entrepreneurial poesis: “We can either be shopkeepers or we can be creators; but unless we think in terms of continents and oceans we shall fall short of our potential”; and, he invites them to “think in terms of entire billions of Newts, of millions and millions of labour units, of transformation of the earth’s crust, of a new Genesis and new geological epochs . . . of a new Atlantis, of ancient continents which will stretch out further and further into the world’s oceans, of New Worlds . . . [of] Utopia” (105-6). Conjuring up images “incomprehensible” by imagination, the capitalist thus fantasizes a shrewd

plan of economic colonization by erecting a giant monopoly as the sublime poesis of geo-transformation. In other words, epoch making changes to be brought about through the labor of the Newts-multitude are phantasmically consigned to capitalist authorship. In “The System” that he co-authored in 1908 with his brother Josef, Čapek defined big industry as “a fever, nourished by enthusiasm, flight and idealism” and set to process the whole world, “[t]he heavens and the earth, mankind, time, space and infinity, everything” (qtd. in Matuška 182). Writing at the time of Economic Depression, in *War with the Newts* Čapek humorously satirizes the expansionist hubris of economic boom periods, when the expansionist power of capitalism seems limitless to the capitalist.

Furthermore, through the narrator’s account of the Newt-labor-powered socio-economic-cultural changes, Čapek suggests that the sublime fantasy of capitalist reterritorialization of the globe is not limited to the capitalist but is a collective fantasy. As it radically expands and accelerates the production and circulation of capital, the Salamander Syndicate heralds a “new epoch,” a defining feature of which is the compression of historical time as such: “historical events could no longer be measured in centuries or even decades . . . but by the three-month periods for which the quarterly economic statistics were published” (121). Once the Salamander Syndicate begins its globalized trade of the Newts of various capacities and purposes, “vast waves of colonisation” by Newts (administered, of course, by those who profit from it) hit “Indian and Chinese harbours . . . the coast of Africa and . . . the American continent” (122). Imperial nations—Italy, Japan, Germany, Holland, France, and the United States are mentioned by the narrator—embark on their projects of territorial expansion by building new islands and continents—the likes of “Greater Italy” and “New Nippon” (134). In addition to “a well-organized market,” the narrator tells us, “extensive press publicity” and “a huge wave of

technological idealism” pave the way for the global spread and popularity of Newts (134). As the Newts carry territorializing projects to the ocean waters, the post-Newt world is caught by a utopian frenzy: “it seemed that the last barriers had fallen which the world’s oceans had erected to human progress; it was the dawn of a joyous new age of amazing technical projects; man was beginning to realise that only now was he truly becoming the Master of the World” (134). With the Newts “on the road to their finest flowering” human beings are also “enjoying unprecedented prosperity: “New continental coasts are being feverishly constructed, new dry land is emerging from where shallows used to be; artificial air support islands are springing up in the middle of the ocean” (165). Summing up the achievements of the “Newt Age,” the narrator says,

Say what you will, the Newts have brought enormous progress to the world, as well as an ideal called Quantity. Real, self-assured Newt Age people will no longer waste their time meditating on the Essence of Things; they will be considered solely with numbers and mass production. The world’s entire culture lies in a continually increased consumption and production—so we need even more Newts to produce even more and to consume even more. (166)

The capitalism-ushered “Happy New Age” Čapek satirizes in *War with the Newts* is thus jubilant at having replaced the poetry of the “Essence of Things” by that of “numbers and mass production” and of “even more.” As “Quantity” becomes its mantra and techno-capitalist utopianism and imperialist-expansionist frenzy become imbued with the sensuousness of the grandiose, the triumphant, self-aggrandizing sublime serves as the aesthetics of this Brave New World’s perception of its historical agency.

If Čapek satirizes the sublime fantasy driving the ideology of progress, he also exposes the sordid reality ignored by the fantasy. Similar to the contradictions of capitalist fantasy in *R.*

U. R., the sublime visions of capitalist imperialism in *War with the Newts* contrast sharply with the instrumental reason that characterizes the operations of the Salamander Syndicate, the illegal Newt trade, and the scientific studies of Newts. When the shareholders of the Pacific Export Company mull over the potential Newt trade as well as the problem raised by the rapidly reproducing Newts, the possible actions they explore reveal the logic of cold calculation of profit and utter disregard of ethics. The shareholders consider whether the Newts are edible (to be sold as food), whether their skin is of any value (to be turned into leather products), why the Newts are given expensive tools and rich food and whether such expenditure can be radically curtailed, whether only male Newts should be sold to keep their procreation under the company's control so as to maintain monopoly on the Newt trade, and finally whether they could be just left to die (100-3). Later, as predicted by Bondy, when the number of Newts keeps growing and they flourish in areas unprofitable for high-volume trade, both the Salamander Syndicate and the colonial governments, we are told, turn a blind eye to the illegal Newt trade that grows to assume one third volume of the trade. The two reasons given for the oversight are that thereby the Newts poaching farmers' fields will be disposed of and, because more than two thirds of the Newts die during transportation by illegal traders, the problem of the overpopulation of Newts would also be taken care of (130-33). Čapek did not live to see the Nazi agents of death display fondness for aesthetic rapture, but his satire of the ideology of progress points to a similar contradiction at the heart of capitalism.

The "legal" trade of the Newts handled by the Salamander Syndicate, likewise, shows industrial instrumental rationality in the way the Syndicate classifies the Newts according to their labor value and the way it carries out their education/training to optimize their labor power. Operating from its headquarters in Singapore, the Syndicate sells the Newts classified into the

types of Leading, Heavy, Odd Jobs, Trash, and Spawns. The classifications are based on the Newts' mental capacities and physical strength, their usefulness for different kinds of works, their age and weight, and, of course, their market prices. The Leading are "specially selected intelligent Newts . . . carefully trained to be leaders and supervisors of Newt work teams," and cost "sixty dollars apiece" (125-26). On the other hand, the Heavy are "athletically built . . . [and] are trained to perform the heaviest kind of physical work, such as breaking rocks, rolling away boulders and suchlike" (126). They are sold in "gangs" of six "bodies," each gang costing 317 dollars. Similarly, sold in groups of twenty workers each, the Team are "ordinary working Newts . . . intended for collective work and find their best employment in dredging and in the construction of banks, dams, etc." (126). Both Heavy and Team require a Leading to lead them in work. On the contrary, the Odd Jobs, which "have not undergone either collective or specialized training . . . are marketed individually or by the dozen and employed on various auxiliary jobs or lesser projects which do not warrant the use of entire Newt gangs or teams" (126). Odd Jobs are also used as "Newt raw material to be further developed by individual entrepreneurs and then classified into Leading, Heavy, Team or Trash" (126). Then, there are the "inferior, weak or physically deficient Newts" called Trash which "are not marketed individually or in definite quantities but collectively by weight, usually by entire tens of tons" (126). The Spawn make the final category: "tadpoles up to one year old," they are "bought and sold by the hundred" and make a lively trade because they are cheap and can be transported easily to be nurtured and trained only after they have reached their destination (127).

Just as in *Brave New World* (1932) Aldous Huxley imagined a society that produces its citizens pre-programmed into different functional classes, in *War with the Newts* Čapek imagines a world where the working class are produced and trained according to their functionality. The

different types of Newts in the novel are cultivated in Newt Farms consisting of “several kilometers of empty foreshore with just a few corrugated-iron huts” to house the veterinary surgeon, the manager, and the supervisory staff. The coastline is divided into several basins, so that each type of Newts can be put in a different basin to be fed and trained separately (128). The Newts are given speaking lessons, marching lessons, physical training, instruction in the handling of various tools and weapons, and practical work on hydro-engineering jobs under the supervision of instructors (128). When the time for “recruitment” comes, “a ship’s officer, the farm manager and the veterinary surgeon sit at a small table with a lamp on it, while the supervisors and the ship’s crew block the salamanders’ retreat to the water.” Then “One Newt after another steps up to the table and is pronounced fit or unfit for service,” before the fit are taken to tank ships to be carried to wherever the Newt labor is needed (128). At once the colonial scene of the Slave Trade (“recruitment”) and the site of the production of the real subsumption of labor to capital, the Newt Farm is as exemplary of capitalist instrumental rationality as is the rational classification of Newts according to their labor value and function. In other words, Čapek’s fierce critique of the capitalist-imperialist system sees the capitalist instrumental rationality and colonial exploitation of “resources” as two sides of the imperial power.

Čapek’s critique of his contemporary society sees the work of scientists as similarly governed by instrumental rationality and subservient to the logic of capitalism. The scientific studies of Newts in the novel exhibit the barbarity of instrumental (ab)use as they reduce the Newts to things and subject them to torture, either to satisfy scientists’ senseless curiosities or to produce knowledge profitable for businesses and state war machines. In an account of “a scientific congress” discussing their “investigat[ions] [into] the physical and psychological aspects of the Newts,” we are told of experiments where scientists discuss “the phenomena

which arise when some sensory canal in Andrias's brain is severed . . . how Andrias would behave if the mechanism corresponding to the labyrinth of the inner ear were crushed," how Andrias reacted to "electrical stimulation," and what "disturbances" resulted when Andrias's "right frontal or left optical lobe had been removed" (136). The cruelty meted out to the Newts is so gruesome it makes the narrator of the account wonder: "what kind of disturbances would appear in Professor Devrient if I removed his right frontal lobe? And how would the smiling Dr Okagawa react if I stimulated him electrically? And how would Professor Rehmann behave if someone were to crush his inner-ear labyrinth?" (136-37).

Similarly, in a pastiche account of the Hamburg researcher Wuhrmann's investigation into the "usefulness of the Newts," we are told that Wuhrmann conducted experiments with the Pacific Giant Salamander with "a very definite aim: to examine the Newts' resistance to ambient changes and other external factors and thereby to demonstrate their practical utility in different geographical regions and under different environmental conditions" (138). The experiments were conducted in a series: the first aimed "to determine how long a Newt can live outside water"; the second "was concerned with the resistance which the Newts, originally tropical animals, would show to cold"; the third explored the Newts' "sensitivity to chemical factors"; the fourth determined "how long a Newt can survive without food"; the fifth "was concerned with the Newts' powers of regeneration"—whether a chopped off part of its body can grow by itself; the sixth conducted by Wuhrmann's assistant Dr Walter Hinkel "investigated the Newt's value in terms of useful raw materials" (138-40). In these experiments the Newts were exposed to most cruel and torturous conditions: they were kept in dry tanks for seven days periodically sprinkled with water to revive them and "burn[ed] with the electric cautery" to check if they would show any reaction after "a state of cataleptic rigor (xerosis) set in"; they were kept in water at a

temperature of below 5 degree centigrade until “they dropped into a state of hypothermic rigor (gelosis)” and “were refrigerated and kept frozen into a block of ice for several months”; they were exposed to “greatly diluted alkali, industrial effluent, tanning agents, etc.” until “their skin peeled off in strips and . . . died of some kind of gangrene of the gills”; one Newt was starved for six months until, when a “chopped liver” was thrown into its tank, “it was so weakened that it failed to react at all”; the Newts’ tails, legs, eyes, tongue, etc., were cut off to see if these organs would grow again (138-40). The results of these experiments show that the Newts are useful to humans in different ways: they are “eminently suitable even for work on dry land, subject to only two conditions: that they are not exposed to direct sunlight and that they are hosed down with water over the whole surface of their bodies at frequent intervals”; the Newts “can quite easily become adapted also to our [German] climate and indeed as far north as northern Norway and Iceland”; “the Newts are not in fact suited to our rivers” because of harmful chemicals there; “They can go hungry for three weeks and more without showing any signs other than a certain lethargy”; because of their incomparable “resistance to all sorts of injury . . . [the Newts] would make a first-rate, almost indestructible, warfare animal”; their bodies contain “an exceptionally high proportion of iodine and phosphorous . . . [which] could be extracted industrially; their skin “can be ground up and fed into powerful presses to produce an artificial leather that is light, reasonably strong and could serve as a substitute for ox-hide”; their fat, “unfit for human consumption,” can be used as “industrial lubricant on account of its very low solidification point”; the flesh, again “unfit for human consumption” can become edible “if the cut meat is scalded with hot water . . . and after thorough rinsing is pickled for twenty-four hours in a weak permanganate solution” and “boiled or steamed . . . will taste like inferior beef” (139-40). Thus, whether it is for putatively disinterested inquiries or those with overt, “useful” aims, the

scientific studies of Newts treat a sentient and intelligent fellow species as objects for instrumental use, by which *War with the Newts* parodies what Horkheimer and Adorno call Enlightenment's reduction of the relation between humans and the world to that of a dictator and his subject.

Just as Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of western civilization is a totalizing one, Čapek's critique does not spare any aspect of his contemporary society, whether it is the capitalist treatment of labor, science and scientists in the service of capitalism, or mass culture produced by capitalism. In *War with the Newts*, the state of popular culture arising from the exoticization of Newts signifies general societal and cultural commodification, which stands in sharp contrast to the sublime utopias based on the Newts' productive labor power. The Newts become objects of exotic fantasies first for a group of young people holidaying on the island of Tahuara on the yacht of a Hollywood tycoon, and later for people at large who are fed with the Newt-exotica through "news" stories with fanciful titles and movies with mythical settings. On the Pacific island where the young people sojourn, sent there by Mr. Loeb's rich father "to see something of the world," Lily Valley, alias "Sweetiepie Li" entertains ideas of making a film starring her as a female Crusoe, who would be taken by a savage to a camp where "[t]hose cannibals would want to sacrifice me to their idols and they would be singing Hawaiian songs meanwhile" (55). When the Newts appear before her and Mr. Loeb, and provide them with pearls hoping to get knives in return, Mr. Loeb launches himself into mythical fantasy about sea gods appreciating Li's beauty and showering her with gifts, while Li duly lets her robe fall to oblige the sea gods by showing her nude body. Next evening when Li and Mr. Loeb return to the scene with two other friends, Fred and Judy, and the captain of the yacht, they are armed with pistols (should the strange creatures cause trouble) and a movie camera to shoot Li with the sea-

gods (should they appear friendly). Although Lily Valley is very scared when one of the Newts touches her, after the Newts return to the waters, she discovers, “they have brought me pearls again!”

Fascinated by the encounter, which the introduction of pearls has turned fantastic, Mr. Loeb and companions start wondering about the titles the event would make in newspapers, some of which run like the following: “ANTEDILUVIAN LIZARDS PAY HOMAGE TO YOUTH AND BEAUTY”; “LOVERS ON PEARL ISLAND”; “TRITONS SHOWER WHITE LILY WITH PEARLS”; “HOMAGE FROM POSEIDON’S REALM!”; “A NEW APHRODITE!”; “HUMANS CLASH WITH PRIMEVAL REPTILES!”; “FILM ACTRESS ASSAULTED BY SEA MONSTERS”; “A MODERN WOMAN’S SEX APPEAL TRIUMPHS OVER PREHISTORIC LIZARDS!” (69-70). Thus, the Newts’ hope for an exchange of tools (knives) with pearls is turned into fantastic narratives by a group of people whose unfulfilled desire for the sensuous drives them to seek in the islands of their fantasy the compensatory sensation of the exotic. Čapek’s reference here is, of course, to the Slump-defying growth of the entertainment industry, the illustrated press and the Hollywood, which “virtually monopolised the international movie market” (Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* 100). Čapek’s allusion to the culture industry becomes starkly manifest when the group fantasy of the tourists later turns into a collective fantasy engendered by the entertainment media. The narrator tells us that nearly all of the titles fancied by the group were used “in hundreds and hundreds of American and foreign dailies, weeklies, and magazines” (71), and that the event gave rise to a film “by Jesse Loeb Pictures, with Miss Lily Valley in the leading role” and the cast comprising “600 young Nereids, one Neptune and 12,000 extras dressed up as various antediluvian reptiles” (70). A perfect example of the capitalist culture industry critiqued by Horkheimer and Adorno, this

transformation of Newts into culture-as-commodity spectacle shows Čapek's satire of the news and entertainment media that grew gigantically in the 1920s and 30s.

The limited linguistic capacity of the Newt kept in the London zoo, Andrias Scheuchzeri, and assessments of his intelligence made by scholars provide Čapek another textual occasion to critique the commodified state of culture in the capitalist society. Andrias can converse with the ward keeper and, later, with whoever comes near him by using the bits and pieces he has heard from zoo visitors and read in the papers provided by the ward keeper. Andrias utters words and phrases such as "Look, a newt"; "Yuk, isn't it ugly? . . . Let's go on, darling"; "I am scared of it . . . Mummy, what does it eat?"; "Daddy, why is he so black?"; "Yuk, isn't he horrid?" (79-80).¹⁶ The director of the zoo, Sir Charles Wiggam, who has earlier heard the Newt talk, invites a group of professors—Sir John Bertram, Professor Ebbingham, Sir Oliver Dodge, Julian Foxley and others—to talk to Andrias. They ask him questions, which he answers in short phrases borrowed from headlines and advertisements. When asked, for example, what most interests him in the news, Andrias answers, "Police Court news, horseracing, football" (82). The professors are stunned to hear "answers" such as "WILL THERE BE WAR?"; "GERMANY BUILDS A NEW TYPE OF SUBMARINE"; "WILL PEHLAM BEAUTY OF GOVERNADOR WIN THIS YEAR'S DERBY?"; and, "BUY BRITISH . . . SNYDER'S BRACES ARE BEST" (83). The report of this conversation published in *Natural Science* finds in the Newt "no suggestion of independent thought" and concludes that "[i]ts intellectual life—in so far as one may speak of any—consists precisely of ideas and opinions current at the present time" (85). The report also adds, "There is absolutely no need to overrate its intelligence, since in no respect does it exceed the intelligence of the average person of our time" (85). By equating thus the "intelligence of the average person of our time" with the Newt who can only croak scraps he has read in the

newspapers, *War with the Newts* makes a satirical comment on universal literacy under capitalist modernity.

If Čapek revels in showing the ugly truth of capitalist rationality behind its sublime expansionist fantasy, he also narrates with gusto the apocalyptic consequences the expansionist drive of capitalism ultimately leads to. Indeed, Čapek's narrative of capitalism so astutely captures its structural logic that it echoes the Marxist interpretation of capitalism and imperialism. In *War with the Newts* the capitalist sublime, compensatory as it is of the sensuous denied by the system's societal reification and cultural commodification, doubles itself into the monstrous when the imperialist-colonialist conditions of the system as well as the remorseless logic of capital unfold, revealing the contradictions the fantasy aims to mask. Just as Domin's sublime capitalist fantasy in *R. U. R.* is rent asunder by the deployment of Robots in the state war-machines and the revolt of Robots against the yoke of capital, in *War with the Newts* Bondy and his shareholders' fantasy of capitalist utopia is undone by the imperial rivalries the Salamander Syndicate must feed on and by the increasing armament of Newts which must continue for the interests of capital. We have already discussed above the imperial-colonial conditions of the international trade run by both the Pacific Export Company and the Salamander Syndicate. Although Bondy is a capitalist located in Prague, the capital he acts in the interests of belongs to the shareholders of international, imperial cast; also when Bondy and van Toch venture into the pearl trade, they enter into a global mercantile traffic the sources and pathways of which are guarded by imperial-colonial states, ready to strike against the natives should they attack capitalists' "prerogatives" of "free trade." Similarly, as pointed out above, the fortunes of the Salamander Syndicate are inextricably tied to the Newt colonizations in India, China, Africa, and America, just as the recruiting and shipping of the Newts as labor power resembles the

colonial slave trade. In the plot of the drama of capitalism staged in *War with the Newts*, capital's expansive strides feed for some time the capitalist-imperialist fantasy of remaking the world after its image—as the Newts zealously build “their Essens and Birminghams on the sea bottom” (165)—but, ultimately, it is the very triumph of capital that turns the imperial-colonial conditions of its operation and profit into the causes of world destruction.

As Bondy's prediction that great powers will be interested in the Newt trade comes true and imperial nations compete with each other in their projects of territorial expansion, inter-state conflicts, massive augmentation of state war machines, and deployment of the Newts as soldiers inevitably follow. A conference held in London “to elaborate and approve an International Salamander Convention,” which is touted as ensuring “the depoliticization of the Newt Problem” and providing “one of the guarantees of world peace,” fails miserably when imperial nations' territorial expansions are deemed as threatening each other's interests (167-68). As the typical Čapekian little man in the novel, Mr. Povondra, reads in the papers, imperial Japan is not happy with China employing two million Newts on the Yellow river; France is alarmed that “Italy is enlarging the island of Lampedusa” and has turned the latter “into a full-size naval base”; and a British lawmaker is worried that “Great Britain is lagging behind other countries in these underwater constructions” (171). Similarly, because “France is extending her coast at Calais,” the British are alarmed that the French would be “able to fire across the Channel if it gets narrower” and propose that they “could extend their own coast at Dover and shoot at France” (171-72). Britain and France come to the brink of a war when “British Newts” and “French Newts,” deployed to build military fortifications in the English Channel, fire “hand grenades” and “trench mortars” at each other (189-90). Meanwhile Germany, growing frenzied over the racist myth of its noble Newts, aims to secure plans to build “5,000 kilometers of new sea coasts

within the next three years” to provide “new space for our Newts” and has built a formidable Newts-war-machine: “5 million regular combat Newts . . . [and] some 17 million Newts in the technical and supply services, ready to operate at any time as a reserve or an army of occupation” (193-94). Writing at a time when totalitarianism was on the rise and imperial rivalries intensified with the increased aggression of Germany and Japan, Čapek thus satirizes the war-hungriness of imperial states, which are eager to outpace each other in exploiting a new “resource” for mutual destruction.

Likewise, if Čapek satirizes the expansionist fantasy of capitalism-imperialism with the aesthetic of the triumphant, self-aggrandizing sublime, he also shows how that fantasy leads to its monstrous double, war as an aesthetic event. In *War with the Newts*, the “territorial logic” of imperial states serves the “logic of capital” ultimately doubling the capitalist sublime into the monstrous sublime of military spectacle. A “magnificent explosion” occurs, for example, when, in a joint exercise of the German Navy, land forces, and the combat Newts,

a Newt sapper platoon . . . blew up a strip of undermined [by pneumatic drills used by Newts for underwater constructions] sand dunes near Fugenwalde, an area of six square kilometers, with a dreadful rumbling, the earth rose up ‘like a cracked ice-floe’, to break up a moment later into a gigantic wall of smoke, sand and boulders. The sky grew dark, almost as though it were night, and the raised sand fell over a radius of nearly a hundred kilometers . . . (195)

Read from the Marxist viewpoint, such monstrously sublime spectacles of destruction work very well for the interests of capital eager to avoid the threat of the devaluation of accumulated surplus by profitably investing in state war machines and by visiting the cost of devaluation on to the other. Interests of capital are no less furthered by the Newts’ increasingly greater demand for

instruments of war, such as arms and explosives, in addition to the increasing demand for food and building materials. However, the territorial ambitions of imperial nations soon begin to collide with those of the Newts, who need larger areas of coastal waters for their rapidly increasing numbers. A new series of monstrously sublime spectacles follow one after another, producing an ironic reversal of the capitalist Bondy's and imperialist states' projects of constructing new islands and continents. First in Louisiana, then in the Kingsu province of China, and again in West Africa, colossal explosions of landmass (interpreted as earthquakes by human scientists) are carried out by the Newts to create larger areas of coastal waters for their habitation. Each explosion is a sublime spectacle in terms of the magnitude and force it exhibits. According to eye-witness accounts of the one in West Africa, "a column of fire and steam had burst from the ground, accompanied by a frightful rumble, flinging sand and stones over a wide radius; after that the sea was heard rushing into the opened rift" (214). As if he were anticipating the "atomic sublime" or the aestheticization of war that would be increasingly dominant from the Second World War onwards, Čapek here satirizes the will to destruction and the collective death drive that lurks at the heart of "civilization."

Moreover, it is amid the monstrously sublime scenes of aquatic expansion that one morning past midnight the Newts commandeer European radio transmissions to broadcast the croaky voice of the Chief Salamander, who returns to imperial nations the language of territorial logic they had acted on so far. "Hello, you humans!" begins the Chief Salamander and expresses regret at the loss of human lives caused by the Newts' explosions. Asking humans "to evacuate the seashores in the places we shall notify you of from time to time," he explains, "We only need more water, more coasts, more shallows to live in. There are too many of us. There is no longer enough room for us on your coasts. That is why we have to dismantle your continents. We shall

turn them all into bays and islands” (215-16). The next morning a British gunboat that has set out to destroy the Newts’ transmitter station is torpedoed and the crew drowned; another British ship that refuses to hand over to the Newts the explosives they had previously ordered is sunk; to counter the British government’s order prohibiting all trade with the Newts, British merchant ships are destroyed one after another until “Britain lost four-fifth of all her tonnage” (219). In addition to Britain, the Chief Salamander “address[es]” Germany: “I am increasing my order for high explosives tenfold”; orders the French to “[s]peed up deliveries of ordered torpedoes to submarine forts C-3, BFF and Ouest-5”; and gives Italy notice to “[p]repare to evacuate the region Venice-Padua-Udine” (217-18).

The atrocious demands of the Chief Salamander are based on a rationale that is in no way worse than what has historically guided imperial-colonial exploitations of other people’s territories. The Chief Salamander offers magnificent prices for the landmass he wishes to destroy for the Newts and claims the Newts’ “right to live” as a justification for his aquatic expansions (220). At the Vaduz Conference convening in the aftermath of the Newts’ war on Britain, the Newts’ delegate cites the Newts’ right to free trade and blames Britain for “violating business relations with the Newts” (224). It is instructive to recall that the Newts, like the Robots in *R. U. R.*, are products of imperialist capitalism and, in the process of their integration into the capitalist-imperialist system—so brilliantly charted in “Up the Ladder of Civilization”—become exemplary agents of the system that initially exploited them. The story of replication/doubling narrated in the *War with the Newts* is thus a scathing commentary on the imperialist civilization produced by the confluence of Enlightenment, capitalism, and colonialism. The authorial comments in the final chapter of *War with the Newts* bear this out:

The world will probably disintegrate and become inundated—but at least it will do so for universally accepted political and economic reasons . . . with the aid of science, engineering and public opinion, with the application of all human ingenuity! No cosmic catastrophe—just national, power-political, economic and other reasons. (238)

The monstrous doubling of sublime capital thus only unmaskes the fantasy that glosses the instrumental logic of capitalist knowledge/power as a grandiose poesis of world-transformation. The doubling lays bare totalitarianism and war-hunger that get poeticized as utopian progressivism.

As if they were classic Freudian dream texts, Čapek's science-fictional novums, both the *Robots* and the *Newts*, are thus invested with complex and polyvalent meanings. As the reading of *R. U. R.* above shows, the *Robots* mean at once an "ideal" working class—working with the rhythm of Taylorist industrial rationality, or fully subsumed by the logic of capital—and a triumph of technology, which replaces human labor and keeps the working class in check by producing the reserve army of labor. Furthermore, if we read *R. U. R.* allegorically, through the lens of our neo-liberal contemporaneity, we can also find in Domin's utopian fantasy an allegory of the international division of labor. When Domin shifts the burden of physical labor on to the *Robots* so that his imperial humans can seek the exploits of the mind, he sets a prescription for our current neo-liberal political economy of labor that assigns manufacturing tasks mostly to the postcolonial/third-world nation(al)s and reserves labor of high-information value to those in the first world. Moreover, as the drama unfolds in *R. U. R.*, the *Robots* also represent the global working class in revolt against the oppression of capitalism—the formation of an international union of *Robots*, after all, echoes the *Workers' International*. However, the success of the

Robots' revolt becomes also their failure. Rather than disrupting the structure of the system that oppresses them, the Robots only reproduce it. Although they are doomed to be destroyed, in routing human capitalists the Robots themselves become capitalists.

If the Robots simultaneously signify the triumph of technology, the "ideal" working class, the global working class in revolt, and capitalists, the Newts in *War with the Newts* also mean multiple things: the colonized, the slave labor, the global working class, and capitalists and imperialists. An animal species with human-like intelligence, as they replace the Sri Lankan pearl-fishermen employed by van Toch, the Newts acquire the role of the colonized employed in the labor of parting with their resources for the interests of the capitalists/colonialists in Amsterdam. With the formation of the Salamander Syndicate, the Newts become at once the slave labor (echoing the colonial history of the slave trade) and the global working class fully subsumed under the logic of the capital.¹⁷ Then, as the Robots do in *R. U. R.*, the Newts score victory over the humans, which, given the earlier representation of the Newts as the colonized and as the working class, can be taken to represent the latter's victory over the capitalist imperialists. But, as in *R. U. R.* again, the victory does not dismantle the structure of the system the Newts revolt against, and the Newts in turn become capitalists and imperialists.

The complex and polyvalent meanings of the Robots and the Newts in *R. U. R.* and *War with the Newts* are consequences of a narrative desire to compress the long *duree* of the history of capitalist imperialism as well as to verbalize its central contradictions. Čapek's multivalent narrative desire is aptly noted in the following remark by John Rieder on *War with the Newts*: "Čapek captures in the same stroke both the optimistic ideology of capitalist progress culminating in a world workers' revolution and the pessimistic expectation, widespread in fiction of this decade, that the imminent collapse of nineteenth-century imperialism into the final,

cannibalistic self-destruction of humanity itself was at hand” (385-6). Seen from a theoretical premise that demands from science-fictional narratives a coherent critique of the social, the multiply resonant signs of *R. U. R.* and *War with the Newts* may indeed appear inconsistent and contradictory. Darko Suvin, for example, criticizes Čapek for the ambiguity about the meaning of the Robots and the Newts, who represent “on the one hand a wronged inferior race or class (at the beginning) and on the other a menacing embodiment of the worst in modern humanity—both Nazis and robotized masses” (280-81). However, there is a deeper sense in which the seeming contradictions of Čapek’s narratives are deeply meaningful, which becomes visible in the narratives of *R. U. R.* and *War with the Newts* when all the different meanings/identities of the Robots and the Newts coalesce into the one and only. This is the moment of doubling—when humans have become like Robots/the Newts and Robots/Newts like humans; when the differences of imperial, working class, colonized, and non-human identities are flattened into the apparently seamless proliferation of the imperial self-identical. In that sense, in *R. U. R.* and *War with the Newts* Čapek could be writing allegories not only of his contemporary history but also of an “alternative” and/or future history, the history in which the working class and the formerly colonized have risen to power but only to reproduce the world that is flattened into the self-same by the universal equalizer of value, capital.

Notes

Introduction

1. The American situation was rather different. See Adas for a discussion of the continued enthusiasm for science and technology in the United States even after the First World War (402-12).

2. See Michael Nerlich's *Ideology of Adventure*; Martin Green's *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, Daniel Headrick's *The Tools of Empire*; and Michael Adas's *Machines as the Measure of Men*.

3. See also Chapter 3 (part II), "The Growth of the Reading Public," of Raymond Williams's *The Long Revolution* (173-213).

4. The exception is Čapek's *Absolute at Large*, which has not been retranslated. In fact, the translator of the existing one is not known. The recent publication of the novel by Nebraska University Press uses the same translation and does not mention the translator.

Chapter One

1. In *The Detached Retina*, Aldiss mentions how he wrote *Billion Year Spree* to address the needs of teaching SF as it became highly demanded in the seventies (2).

2. In an interview, Foucault says of Horkheimer and Adorno and the Frankfurt School that they "had tried, earlier than I, to say things I had also been trying to say for years," and thus phrases the common problem both Foucault and the Frankfurt School were grappling with: "the effects of power in their relation to a rationality that was defined historically and geographically, in the West, from the sixteenth century onward" (*Power* 273). The differences lay, Foucault points out in the same interview, in their "conception of the subject"—that of the Frankfurt School was "rather traditional, philosophical in nature . . . permeated with Marxist humanism"—

and the School's subscription to "certain Freudian concepts, such as the relation between alienation and repression . . ." (274-75).

3. To quote Spivak at length: "It is well known that Foucault locates epistemic violence, a complete overhaul of the episteme, in the redefinition of sanity at the end of the European eighteenth century. But what if that particular redefinition was only a part of the narrative of history in Europe as well as in the colonies? What if the two projects of epistemic overhaul worked as dislocated and unacknowledged parts of a vast two-handed engine?" (281).

4. Eurocentrism was indeed so pervasive in the knowledges produced about non-European peoples that the formative thinkers of the western tradition, such as Kant, Hegel, and Marx, all shared in it. The youthful Kant drew up an aesthetic of the sublime that was very racialist in its characterization of non-Western peoples and the denial of the true sublime experience to them (Doyle, "Sublime Barbarians" 333-34). Hegel notoriously placed "the Orient" (India and China) out of modern history, pushing it to the prehistory (Guha, *History at the limit of World-History* 36-37). Marx, otherwise very sympathetic to the peoples European capitalism exploited, held the British colonialism in India a necessary process of history (Young 108). Nineteenth-century liberalism, which played a key role in the fabrication of the White Man's Burden, duplicitously claimed the universality of its doctrines but denied their application to non-European peoples, consigning them to the perpetual need of European tutelage (Mehta 30-35).

5. Weiskel also calls the metonymical sublime the "positive sublime" and the metaphorical sublime the "negative sublime" (31). I have not reproduced Weiskel's terms here so as to avoid confusion with the sense in which I use the "positive sublime" and the "negative sublime" in the dissertation.

6. Doyle seems to use the term “racialist” to designate racial identity in intra-European context, and “racism” to designate the appropriation of racial identity to justify subjugation of colonial, Non-European others. According to her, in seventeenth-century revolutionary England, Anglo-Saxon Protestant English defined the Norman monarchy as a foreign intrusion and identified native Englishness with the free, Gothic Saxons, their “native” lineage, equating freedom, Englishness, Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, and the right to political sovereignty. Such formation of racial identity, Doyle adds, provided “the infrastructure for racist and imperial ‘white’ subjectivity in transatlantic culture” (4-5).

7. In “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” Althusser argues that ideology has a material existence, which ideology works through “free” subjects acting out their ideas materially in practices/rituals that already have socially-coded meanings. If a person “believes in God,” Althusser gives an example, the person “goes to Church to attend Mass, kneels, prays, confesses, does penance . . . and naturally repents and so on” (696). That is, the ideology of religiosity works through the normative practices associated with it, or one is a religious subject *because* one practices religious rituals. Likewise, the visitors to the imperial exhibitions re-enacted their imperial identity by observing the displays of technology (carefully organized to showcase European progress against colonial backwardness), products of empire, and ethnographic displays of other cultures.

8. Thus go Marlow’s often quoted lines: “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. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea--something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . .” (7).

9. In “Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?” Jean-François Lyotard argues that by “invent[ing] allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented” the aesthetics of the sublime can mount a challenge to the totalizing imperative of totalitarianism (81). (Lyotard is also aware, however, that the sublime can also be “neutralized and converted into a politics of myth” and serve totalitarianism (“The Sublime and the Avant-Garde” 209)). Similarly, reading Stephen Frears’s film *Dirty Pretty Things* through the Kantian sublime and Jacques Rancière’s politics of aesthetics, Michael J. Shapiro’s “The Sublime Today: Re-Partitioning the Global Sensible” develops a model of politics that has the twin sides of radically pluralized subject(s) and radically fluid visibility for (unrecognized/unlegislated) politics. In “Toward a Female Sublime,” Patricia Yaeger contrasts the romantic (male) sublime with the female sublime. The former involves conquering the Other and internalizing it, destroying the Other’s otherness; the latter is a phenomenon of expenditure, not of dominance, where the Other is allowed to remain alien and sovereign.

10. Some science fiction scholars have seen the aesthetic of the sublime operative in post-1960s SF narratives of extraterrestrial “big dumb objects,” adventures of inter-galactic empires, and networks of cyberspace. In “Big Dumb Objects in Science Fiction: Sublimity, Banality, and Modernity,” Christopher Palmer shows how in the Big Dumb Objects narratives in SF—particularly Larry Niven’s *Ringworld* (1970), Arthur C. Clarke’s *Rendezvous with Rama* (1973), and Bob Shaw’s *Orbitsville* (1975)—human space adventurers are represented as awed and dwarfed before sublimely colossal objects they encounter in other worlds. In another essay “Galactic Empires and the Contemporary Extravaganza: Dan Simmons and I. M. Banks,” Palmer reads the SF of Dan Simmons and I. M. Banks as post-Cyberpunk versions of traditional galactic empire SF, and notes apropos galactic-empire narratives that empty space or the void seems to

have a fascination and terror for Western imagination, exciting in it a compulsive desire to fill the void and conquer it. In “Neuromanticism: Cyberspace and the Sublime” Jack Voller argues that William Gibson’s Matrix trilogy—*Neuromancer*, *Count Zero*, *Monalisa Overdrive*—revise/transform the romantic sublime of spiritual transcendence into transcendence into the “secular God” of capitalist power in its high-tech form. In *Virtual Geographies: Cyberpunk at the Intersection of the Postmodern and Science Fiction*, Sabine Heuser argues that cyberpunk SF, best exemplified in the works of William Gibson, Pat Cadigan, and Neal Stephenson, is infused with the aesthetic of the “virtual sublime.” When cyberpunk cow-boys interface with the digital world, their visual boundaries are blurred and their bodies are left behind, while the vastness and infinity of the virtual realm as well as their tremendous speeding through it offer them (though not necessarily to the reader) both the (Kantian) mathematical and dynamic sublime (205-12).

Chapter Two

1. Evans also sees the connection between the Romantic and Enlightenment strains in Verne. He argues that in Verne’s works science is used as “the logical springboard to a Romantic contemplation of Nature” and that science helps Vernian heroes to hold “both enlightening and intrinsically poetic” view of reality (63). My argument is that Verne’s celebration of the Enlightenment has its Romantic, aestheticist side to it.

2. Verne also mentions this exhibition in *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*: a “breech-loading cannon” on the American frigate *Abraham Lincoln* is referred to as “identical to the one to be exhibited at the 1867 Universal Exposition” (22).

3. The textual evidence of such displacement in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* can be seen, for example, in Axel’s reference to travelers to Africa and New World: “Those travellers

who penetrate to the middle of the deserts of Africa or the heart of the forests of the New World are forced to watch over each other during the hours of sleep. But here, absolute solitude and complete safety. Savages or wild beasts: none of these harmful races were to be feared” (96).

4. See Andrew Libby’s Ph. D. dissertation “The Aesthetics of Adventure: Sublime Confrontation and the Making of Empire” for a study of such discursive/ideological economy in English imperial adventure narratives.

5. The reference here is to Borges’s one-paragraph story “On the Exactitude of Science.”

6. The narrator calls Hatteras’s obsession with the North Pole a “sublime passion” (348).

7. In *Geography Militant*, Felix Driver writes that in nineteenth-century travel writings and pictorial representations thereof, scientist-travelers to Africa and South America were represented as embodiments of scientific reason in the wilderness of the colonial world—the vehicle they traveled in (equipped with books and instruments) became “a mobile laboratory,” while the traveler’s function amounted to “the extension of the knowledge of the cabinet [library] into, and through, the field [colonial wilderness]” (17-18).

8. As James Buzard writes in *The Beaten Track*, from the 1820s onwards organized tours and popular guide books made intercontinental travel open to a greater number of the public, which then gave rise to anti-tourism discourse that set up the traveler as authentic and the tourist as a mere casual observer and consumer (6).

9. That the gun and the projectile are impossible means for a manned space flight makes little difference as far as the ideological import is concerned, because like Wells’s anti-gravity sphere in *The First Men in the Moon*, the gun and the projectile are posited in the name of science and are functionally invested as scientific/technological objects, and the readers are invited to read them likewise.

10. See, for example, his “definitive’ biography of Verne (*Jules Verne* 149, 287) and his Introduction to *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas* (ix-xiv).

11. Although Aronnax here evokes the aesthetics of the beautiful—“I was in ecstasy at the brilliance of their appearance and the beauty of their forms,” this is still a sublime scene because what is perceived as beautiful when things are looked at individually becomes sublime when the perception of the whole is attempted.

12. One may recall here that in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* Marlow uses the steamer’s whistle to scare the natives into submission.

13. Regarding “the relationship of SF and future history,” Jameson argues that the genre’s “deepest vocation is over and over again to demonstrate and to dramatize our incapacity to imagine the future, to body forth . . . the atrophy in our time of what Marcuse has called the utopian imagination, the imagination of otherness and radical difference . . .” (288-89). Even though Jameson’s point is about “the nature of utopia as a genre in our own time” (289), that is, the late twentieth-century, the same can be said of Verne’s utopias: they are so bound by the imperial ethos of the time of their production that even a radical otherness in them turns out to be reproduction of the imperial self.

14. When Verne describes the construction of the raft with the same enthusiasm he employs in describing the *Nautilus*, he does it because the indigenous technology is part of the same universalist narrative of civilization, according to which Europe is the most contemporary and most advanced while the indigenous technology represents the distant past of humanity. The model is the history of civilization staged in *Exposition Universelle* in Paris (Greenhalgh 20). A corroborative evidence in Verne’s text is the description of the Amazon forest as emblematic of the childhood of humanity (86).

15. While the majority of scholars see Verne as a prophet of progress, William Butcher argues that because Verne's narratives mostly feature existing or already dated technologies, Verne is not a prophet of progress, nor even a science fiction writer. In his *Verne's Journey to the Center of the Self*, Butcher considers it "the naïve view [to think] that Verne's works are in any real sense about the future" (2). Similarly, in the Introduction to the edition of *Twenty Thousand Leagues* translated by him, Butcher says emphatically, "Verne is *not* a science-fiction writer: most of his fictions contain *no* innovative science" (original emphases ix). On the other hand, Carl Freedman, who emphasizes the futurist Verne, limits the backward gazing Verne to a mere formal element: "In Verne science fiction separates itself from the comparatively static, ahistorical travel narrative by actually *disguising* itself as the latter" (original emphasis 51).

Chapter Three

1. Hillegas lists the antecedents of the use of the time travel concept: Mercier's *L'An 2440* (1772), Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), Hudson's *A Crystal Age* (1888) and Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1891), and argues that Wells's is an improvement on them because they used "such clumsy devices as dream, hypnosis, accident, or trance," whereas "Wells's machine is considerably more suitable, given the sophisticated requirements for plausibility of a new scientific and mechanical age" (27). Also, the usual litany of Wells scholars that science to him is not important as it was to Verne is only partially true, and misses the point. However unconvincing Wells's attempt at scientific explanation in terms of passing the test of our knowledge of the world, the very attempt means that Wells's narratives intend those objects/explanations as scientific/technological.

2. The sense of humbling and dispossession is suggested in the Time Traveler's feeling of being naked when he sees the statue of the sphinx, as if before the judgment of the Sphinx he

were divested of his imperial mantle. As “the sightless eyes” of the sphinx watch him, the time traveler fears that to the people of the future he “might seem some old-world savage animal, only the more dreadful and disgusting for our common likeness” (21-22).

3. As to the question why the future of the solar system is possibly meant as a blow to the imperialist ideology, the answer lies in the construction of the past and the linear narrative of progress made up by the nineteenth-century “historical sciences.”

4. Equally revealing is Prendick’s remark about the “three grotesque human figures”: “their skins were of a dull pinkish-drab colour, such as I had seen in no savages” (26).

5. In *Dominance without Hegemony*, Ranajit Guha argues that in the colonial state (in contrast to the metropolitan state) “persuasion [is] outweighed by coercion,” that is, hegemony by dominance (“Preface” xii). While this is true in the case of the subaltern people, for the native elite comprador class of the colonial state, hegemony does play a more powerful role.

6. See I. F. Clarke’s *Voices Prophesying War*.

7. See Chapter Two, “Lunar Perspective,” of Robert Philmus’s *Into the Unknown: The Evolution of Science Fiction from Francis Godwin to H. G. Wells* (37-55).

8. For an account of the aesthetic ideology of the Victorian imperialist rhetoric of discovery, see Chapter Nine of Pratt’s *The Imperial Eye*.

9. For an argument about the place of Arctic voyages in the construction of the European heroic, sublime self-image, see Chauncey C. Loomis’s “The Arctic Sublime,” discussed earlier in Chapter Two.

10. *The Sleeper Awakes* is a rewrite of Wells’s *When the Sleeper Wakes*, which was published in 1899.

11. The “Gothic” invoked by Wells here is not the gothic that splinters the imperialist ego in his scientific romances; rather, it represents the self-aggrandizing sublime, the appropriation of the “barbaric” force of the Goths for assertion of English identity in sublime terms (Doyle, “Sublime Barbarians” 329-30).

12. Wells came across these contemporary debates as a science student in South Kensington and later when he attended the meetings of the Coefficients with British Fabians (*Experiment in Autobiography* (198-216, 650-55).

13. In *Society Must be Defended*, Foucault discusses “a biologico-social racism” which connects the racism manifest in “European politics of colonization” to the racial discourse in imperial metropolitan societies functioning as “a principle of exclusion and segregation and, ultimately, as a way of normalizing society” (60-61). See also Stoler for a study which shows that in the imperial economy of power the functioning of race cuts across the colonizer/colonized divide.

14. The point is similar to the one Wells developed in his essay “Civilization, an Artificial Process,” discussed earlier in this chapter.

15. Thomas Richards reads Wells’s *Tono-Bungay* as a novel about the high entropic loss in capitalism, which is opposed with the entropy-defying machine of the nephew, symbolizing the new efficient social order of Wellsian Utopia (94-103).

16. Wells had hoped that at the end of the First World War the United States would take a more active global leadership in a Euro-U.S. led world empire (*Experiment in Autobiography* 604-612).

17. According to Hillegas, “the great anti-utopias” of twentieth century—Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We*, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, and George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-*

Four—are “both continuations of the imagination of H. G. Wells and reactions against that imagination,” an “impact” that is partially explained by Wells’s “enormous popularity with the generation reaching maturity in the first decades of the twentieth century” (5).

Chapter Four

1. Among the book-length studies of Čapek, only Alexander Matuška’s *Karel Čapek* mentions imperialism and colonialism (243, 269). Among shorter studies, Rieder’s “Science Fiction, Colonialism, and the Plot of Invasion” argues for the primacy of colonialism in Čapek’s *War with the Newts* (384).

2. This could well be Čapek’s purpose. Given the way Čapek exults in the fantastic, it is difficult to read his intentionality in the “logic” of his narratives.

3. Nearly all Čapek scholars emphasize this point. See, for example, Harkins (28), Klíma (41-46), and Matuška (41-52). The same scholars have also noted Čapek’s critique of absolutisms of all kinds (Harkins 102-3; Klíma 88-89; Matuška 202-5).

4. This is an aspect criticized as well as defended by Čapek scholars and admitted as weakness by Čapek himself. However, it serves a narrative purpose: the entire narrative can be said to be a nightmare about capitalism and technology dreamt from the position that seems forcibly inserted into the text.

5. In a letter he wrote to Olga Scheinpflugová, Čapek thus records his impressions while writing the play: “I was seized by a dreadful fear, I wanted to warn against mass production and dehumanized slogans and, all of a sudden, I became anxious that it could happen . . . somebody else may lead the ignorant mass man against the world and God” (qtd. in Bradbrook 45).

6. See Hannah Arendt on the inter-European classless class of the Jewish bankers (11-28).

7. To Lyotard, the sublime marks the failure to attain a totalizing representation and hence is an enabling aesthetic. In Domin's case, however, the evocation of the ideas of reason does not signify failure; rather it legitimizes the current changes as approximations toward the totalizing goal and, hence, becomes ideologically self-aggrandizing. Lyotard is aware of a similar appropriation of the sublime when he points to "the bad sublime" exploited by the Nazi ("The Sublime and the Avant-Garde" 209).

8. According to Marx, when a capitalist uses non-industrial, non-capitalist forms of labor, the latter is only formally subsumed under capital. But, when the capitalist is able to harness the worker to industrial production in such a way that the very process of labor changes and greater surplus can be extracted by changing the process of labor not by increasing the hour of work alone, it becomes the real subsumption of labor under capital (1019-38).

9. Responding to the debate among English writers about *R. U. R.*, Čapek wrote that in the play he wanted to write both a "comedy of science" and a "comedy of truth." By the latter, he wanted to refer to "the most dramatic element of modern civilization, that one human truth is opposed to another truth no less human, ideal against ideal, positive value against value no less positive" (qtd. in Klíma 78-79).

10. Indeed, if Domin's dream came true, it would produce the kind of crisis Čapek satirically portrays in *The Absolute at Large*, where production is so plentiful that prices disappear and, with it, the circulation of goods, which in turn produces scarcity of goods everywhere.

11. For a discussion of how imperialism is a consequence of capitalism's "global crises," see Harvey (439-45).

12. Harvey explains how regional alliances fail when conflicts over “access to labour reserves and natural resources” bring an end to internationalism and multilateralism and lead to autarky “as the means to preserve the position of some particular region in the face of internal contradictions and external pressures,” until big wars open the frontiers again and bring about new geo-structuring (444).

13. In the chapter titled “The Alliance between Mob and Capital” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt argues that one of the conditions of imperialism is the mobification of people, who, pushed outside the class system, are drifters readily exploitable by imperialism (147-57).

14. For a discussion of this “ideological fantasy” in colonialist discourse, see John Rieder’s *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (31).

15. One can note English, French, German, and Japanese nationalities in the following names, all board members of the Company: Dr. Hubka, M. Louis Bonenfant, M. H. Brinkelaer, Col D. W. Bright, C. von Frisch, S. Weissberger.

16. People’s reactions at the sight of the Newt are oddly similar to the black man’s experience Fanon narrates in *Black Skin, White Masks* (91-92).

17. In an “anachronistic” mélange of history, the colonial slave trade functions side by side with the neo-colonial international division of labor. On the other hand, it is not so anachronistic because capitalism continues to deploy pre-capitalist forms of subjugation if the latter is more profitable.

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