

Becoming a “Nation that is Not a Nation”:  
National Image, Lost World Narratives, and American  
Antarctic Literature

by

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## Abstract

This dissertation identifies the lost world narrative genre as being central to the history and development of American Antarctic literature, a connection which has not previously been explicitly identified, or explored in any sustained way. As a genre, lost world narratives render places that are “outside time,” which dovetails with the literary figuration of Antarctica as a place of “frozen” time. These facts converge in the lost world narrative of the American Antarctic literary tradition, in which the Antarctic lost world setting serves as a platform for a conservative, or static, national image of American society which is frequently grounded in discourses of evolution, including pre-Darwinian theories of racial difference, that are mobilized in particular to reflect historically contingent, ideologically-motivated ideas of masculinity and race. Such national images are conservative insofar as they foreground discourses which reflect the values and seek to perpetuate the social power of specific groups (namely, white men). Through its examination of Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), Charles Romyn Dake’s *A Strange Discovery* (1899), Edgar Rice Burroughs’s *Caspak* trilogy (1918), H.P. Lovecraft’s *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936), and Marvel Comics’ *Ka-Zar* (1965-2011), the present work demonstrates that while these aspects provide a sense of cohesion to American Antarctic literature and do, in fact, help to distinguish it from trends in the Antarctic texts of other nations, ultimately that cohesion only represents the projection of a limited national image based on white masculine social hegemony in the U.S.. Despite this normative vision that they advance, however, these texts also exhibit a strong counter-current that manifests in different ways but always works to break down the surface cohesion provided by the conservative

national images fostered by American Antarctic lost world narratives.

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## Introduction

### *On the Origin of Theses*

Since the mid-1980s, the broad field of Antarctic studies, which has long been almost exclusively the domain of science, has expanded to give serious critical attention to cultural perspectives on the continent. Eminent Antarctic literary scholar Elizabeth Leane calls this shift the “cultural turn” in Antarctic studies (*Antarctica in Fiction* 6). In the last three decades, cultural engagement with the southern continent has manifested in two essential ways: first, through the creation of new Antarctic art (books, poetry, photography, music), encouraged in part by various national programmes, such as those of the U.S., Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as by new tourism opportunities (7); and second, through the increased academic attention that new and existing Antarctic works have attracted.

What has emerged from both of these forms of cultural engagement with Antarctica is that, far from its reality as a barren and inhospitable place, the continent has rich mythological and semiotic roots dating back to the Ancient Greeks’ hypothesis that there must exist “a large southern land mass to balance that of the north” (Leane *Fiction* 26), which has deeply permeated historical conceptions and fictional representations of the region. Indeed, even in the fifteenth century “the belief in a temperate, inhabitable southern continent was widespread” (27). Although the existence of this temperate, hypothetical continent was ultimately dispelled following James Cook’s circumnavigation of the Antarctic circle in the 1770s and the official discovery of the Antarctica itself in 1820, the notion of a temperate or tropical *Terra Australis Incognita*

populated by “[m]utated humans, animals real and fantastic, and monstrous and demonic creatures” (27) persists even in the Antarctic literature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Another curious trend that has emerged from the subsequent study of Antarctic literary texts is that, although there are some common elements that recur, different nations have distinct Antarctic literary traditions. In fact, Antarctic literary criticism has generally tended towards using national frameworks to decode the continent’s symbolic resonances in specific cultural and historical contexts. As Elizabeth Leane claims, approaching Antarctic renderings through various national lenses makes sense given that the continent has been the subject of “intense national interest” from several sources for hundreds of years (*Fiction* 17). Elena Glasberg’s dissertation *Antarcticas of the Imagination: American Authors Explore the Last Continent, 1818-1982* (1995), for instance, was the first work to consider the significance of Antarctica in a national imaginary. Glasberg claims in this study that American literary engagement with Antarctica is deeply rooted in American culture and ideology. The continent itself is used variously as an extension of manifest destiny, a parallel to U.S. continental expansion, and a background against which the American desire to re-enact, extend, redeem, and rewrite its own mythic origins of discovery can take place. Subsequent works have further explored American cultural engagement with Antarctica, such as Williams Lenz’s *The Poetics of the Antarctic* (1995), which is mainly concerned with how Antarctic exploration (and exploration more generally) was connected to the cultural aspects of nationality and contributed to the self-definition and self-determination of American national culture (xxvii), and Johan Wijkmark’s dissertation “*One of the Most Intensely Exciting Secrets*” – *The Antarctic in American Literature, 1820-1849* (2009), which

intensively examines what the continent was “made to represent” (11) in its earliest American instantiations. Other works, like Francis Spufford’s *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (1996), have conducted similar studies regarding the cultural significance of the Antarctic and Antarctic exploration within British literature, while Leane’s body of criticism has addressed in particular the significance of early twentieth-century Antarctic continental exploration narratives within British and Australian culture. It has only been since 2012, with the publication of Leane’s *Antarctica in Fiction* and Elena Glasberg’s *Antarctica as Cultural Critique*, that the scholarship has begun to shift the focus away from purely national frameworks, and towards the relationship between national imaginaries and popular and legal conceptions of Antarctica as an international, pan-national, and non-national space.

Despite the fact that American cultural engagement with Antarctica is one of the most intensely studied aspects of Antarctic literature at large, the field itself is still relatively nascent, and so there remain significant gaps in the scholarship that need to be explored in greater depth. For example, while nineteenth-century American Antarctic texts have attracted a relatively generous amount of critical attention, their twentieth-century counterparts have been largely understudied. In particular, there has been a conspicuous lack of scholarship regarding American Antarctic literature written during the early twentieth-century “Heroic Era” of Antarctic exploration, especially given that British texts of the same period have been studied in great detail. Although Glasberg, Lenz, and Wijkmark have in their own ways sought to explore the ways that the United States has engaged with Antarctica on a cultural level, larger structural questions remain: is American Antarctic literature a body of works with definable conventions that

distinguish it from other national traditions? If so, what are its main concerns and how does it articulate them? Have these conventions or concerns changed over time with advances in real-world Antarctic knowledge and changes in how the continent was conceived (and perceived) geopolitically? This work represents my attempts to answer these questions, in at least some limited way.

After considering the types of texts that comprise the body of American Antarctic literature, I realized that there is a notable generic bias towards speculative fiction. Most specifically, the lost world narrative<sup>1</sup> genre has been central to the history and development of American Antarctic literature, though this connection has never been explicitly identified, or explored in any sustained way. As a genre, lost world narratives render places that are “outside time,” which dovetails with the literary figuration of Antarctica as a place of “frozen” time (*Leane Antarctica in Fiction* 154). These facts converge in the lost world narrative of the American Antarctic literary tradition, in which the Antarctic lost world setting serves as a platform for a conservative, or static, national image of American society which is frequently grounded in discourses of evolution, including pre-Darwinian theories of racial difference, that are mobilized in particular to reflect historically contingent, ideologically-motivated ideas of masculinity and race. Such national images are conservative insofar as they foreground discourses which reflect the values and seek to perpetuate the social power of specific groups (namely, white men). While these aspects provide a sense of cohesion to American Antarctic literature and do, in fact, help to distinguish it from trends in the Antarctic texts of other

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<sup>1</sup> There are slight differences in terminology across the scholarship, but the conventions of “lost race” narratives and what Becker calls “Lost Worlds Romances” are so close that they are essentially indistinguishable. Though the terms can be read interchangeably, for my own purposes I attempt to use the title “lost world narrative” for consistency as an encompassing name.

nations – in particular those of Britain, whose iconic Antarctic literary tradition principally stems from non-fictional accounts of the Heroic Era expeditions of Scott and Shackleton – ultimately that cohesion only represents the projection of a limited national image based on white masculine social hegemony in the U.S.. As a genre, American Antarctic lost world narratives therefore foreground a normative national image for the United States that reinforces white male power.

While all of the texts surveyed in this study contribute towards discourses of race and gender that reinforce and rationalize white male dominance in American society in some way, there is nevertheless a strong counter-current that manifests in different ways but always works to break down the surface cohesion provided by the conservative national images fostered by American Antarctic lost world narratives. Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), for instance, dramatizes the process of national identity creation and expansion through its repeated pattern of revolt and recoil; in this pattern, the Antarctic comes to signify the absolute horizon beyond which national identity loses its cohesion. In Charles Romyn Dake's *A Strange Discovery* (1899), although the framing plot principally centers around the American characters pulling one over on the gullible British narrator, the text satirizes American self-regard in the process. Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Caspak* trilogy (1918) presents a critique of American isolationism by justifying U.S. involvement in the First World War, and arguing more broadly for increased American geopolitical action. H. P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) is easily the most unconventional lost world narrative examined here, but its evocation of the sublime to generate awe at the accomplishments and extreme duration of the Old Ones' civilization – the original, star-headed inhabitants

of Earth – helps to create Lovecraft’s cosmic indifferentism, in which the very existence of humanity, to say nothing of any particular nation, is reduced to the status of a joke or accident. Finally, *Ka-Zar*’s (1965-2011) long-standing attempts to grapple with race, masculinity, and nationhood culminate with a shift towards conceiving of national images as the result of multiple imagined communities speaking simultaneously. Even while they help to reinforce a conservative American national image, each of these texts therefore resists complicity with depicting it as completely cohesive.

### *National Images*

At the core of this study is the question of how American national images, or the way Americans conceive of their nation’s role and place in the world, are constructed through literature in general, and Antarctic texts in particular. These national images are generally conservative, likely owing to the fact that “American national identity has been and continues to be constructed as largely white, Christian, and masculine” (Hogan 75). Past scholarship on the relation between literature and nationhood has tended to focus on three interrelated processes: how literature serves as a unifying force by providing a shared experience across a readership; how that shared experience helps to articulate, reinforce, and even create common social and cultural values; and how different genres have been used at various historical moments to help codify national identity. Critics of American Antarctic literature have been especially interested in these processes, and seem to agree that Antarctica, as a literary setting, emerged in the nineteenth century as a vehicle for channeling them. This critical landscape sets the stage for my own contention that American Antarctic literature’s affinity for the lost world narrative serves to reinforce

a conservative, or relatively static, American national image that is principally, though not exclusively, predicated on a normative racial and gendered vision, and which is mobilized by evolutionary discourses.

The first key theme in the scholarship regarding the relationship between literature and nation is that the former serves as a unifying force by providing a shared experience across a readership. This principle is essentially the thesis of Benedict Anderson's benchmark work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983). In this work, Anderson reformulates the idea of a "nation" as a cohesive "imagined political community" (6) – imagined because the members may never know each other personally and can be spread over vast geographic distances, but are still aware of one another's existence; and a community because they are united by a sense of common experience and fraternity as a result of that awareness. The idea of imagined communities set the stage for a number of critics who have shown how shared literary experiences help a readership to articulate, reinforce, and even create common social and cultural values that contribute to national identity formation. In this vein, Anderson turns to the novel and the newspaper as not just formal analogies for "representing" the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation" (25), but also as the means by which national publics began to conceive of their own nation-ness. Indeed, he cites print capitalism as being integral to allowing "rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profound new ways" that made it possible to imagine the "deep, horizontal comradeship" that undergirds nation-ness (36, 7); literature and the news, he argues, helped make it possible for people to develop an imagined sense of kinship and community with anonymous others, even over

significant, though necessarily limited, geographic distances. This concept of modern nations as imagined communities made possible by shared literary experiences is the theoretical bedrock on which subsequent scholarship regarding the relationship between literature and nation-ness is built.

Other critics have added to our understanding of the relationship between literary production and national identity in different ways. Susan M. Matarese's *American Foreign Policy and the Utopian Imagination* (2001) refocuses this discussion using the concept of a "national image," or "a relatively coherent, emotionally charged, and conceptually interlocking set of ideas that give order to a people's vision of the world and the place of their country within it" (Matarese 2) that emerges out of, and is inextricably connected to, the nation's imagined community. According to Matarese, American literature serves a pivotal function in the processes of U.S. national image creation and maintenance since "images presented in popular literature both reflect and contribute to the stability of widely shared beliefs about America's role in the world" (6-7). Phillip Wegner, meanwhile, takes the relationship between literature and nation a step further in his *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* (2002) by suggesting that both literary genres and national identities function as institutions that are self-conscious of their antecedents but still responsive to their specific historical contexts. The modern nation-state, like the literary genres that construct the identities and images that help define it, hence has "enough flexibility to adapt to . . . different cultural and historical niches with the rigidity necessary to maintain shared institutional identity across . . . various contexts" (8).

Given this dialectical flexibility, different genres have been used at various

historical moments to help codify American national images. Matarese and Wegner, for example, are most interested in how the utopia helped to construct and reinforce American identity. Matarese argues that late nineteenth-century American utopias served as a vehicle for articulating the nation's long-held cultural beliefs, rooted in its national myths and symbols, and exploring how those beliefs informed perceptions of the United States' (potential) role in the world. Wegner is not concerned with the U.S. in particular, but argues more broadly that not only does the narrative utopia "[play] a crucial role in the constitution of the nation-state as an original spatial, social, and cultural form" (xvi), but also that the imaginary communities the genre generates are themselves "a way of imagining space, [and] thereby helping the nation-state to become both the agent and locus of much of modernity's histories" (xvii).

William Lenz's *The Poetics of the Antarctic* explores not only the importance of exploration fiction to the constitution of nineteenth-century American national identity, but also how the literary setting of Antarctica emerged in the nineteenth century as a vehicle for that process. For Lenz, the key to understanding the function of nineteenth-century American Antarctic literature for the imagined national community of the United States lies in the cultural significance that exploration and exploration narratives contained for Americans of the time. As he identifies, "[f]or many nineteenth-century Americans, exploration was a cultural activity that connected historical and mythical conceptions of nation and self" (xxi), and was a "defining habit of self-conception" (xxii): to "explore *out there* is also to explore *within*, to probe the meaning of the self and community within an alien Nature" (xxii, emphasis in original). Although Anderson is never directly cited, the language Lenz uses to emphasize his point about the centrality of

exploration as a cultural enterprise for Americans has a strong Andersonian connotation to it through its reference to definitions of “self *and* community” (xxii, my emphasis). Extending the spirit of Anderson, Lenz goes on to note that even if “they stayed stock still in their comfortable parlors, Americans could still participate in the drama of exploration through the act of reading explorers’ narratives, seamen’s accounts, travel literature, and sea fiction” (xxii). Such works, he claims, “pander[ed] to a rather prurient need for the stimulation of exoticism” while “satisfy[ing] the exploration impulse in comfortable, sedentary readers,” effectively “contain[ing] the exotic in a tight cultural envelope, a sanitary package ready to be pleurably consumed” by the public (xxv).

In framing his arguments around exploration as a cultural activity, Lenz is driving towards his larger point that exploration narratives served a “deeper cultural function” for U.S. society in the nineteenth century (xxiv), one that hinges on the exotic as a literary trope and a motivation for exploration. Indeed, the most central question of his entire study is how “acts of exploration, especially Antarctic exploration, contribute[d] to [American] cultural self-definition and self-determination” (xxvii). The key event he uses as a jumping-off point is the Wilkes Expedition,<sup>2</sup> which is flagged as “a kind of cultural synecdoche for the larger process of American exploration” (xxvi). Officially titled the United States Exploring Expedition, the Wilkes Expedition was a federally-funded endeavour by the United States’ Government designed to initiate the U.S. into “the community of exploring nations dominated by Russia, England, and France” (xxvi). Lenz is concerned less with the details and accomplishments of the expedition itself than with “the impressions of exploration [it left] on the minds of Americans, Americans who . . . were part of the process of accumulating, evaluating, codifying, and structuring

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<sup>2</sup> The significance of the Wilkes Expedition is discussed further in Chapter 1.

perceptions of an exotic landscape that played an important role in national self-definition” – the Antarctic (xxvi).

The nebulous emphasis in this text on the “impressions” the Wilkes expedition left is echoed in Lenz’s acknowledgement that it “had an effect upon American culture that is more difficult to measure” (xxvii). Indeed, Lenz seems to skirt over the particulars in favour of providing his own general impression of the expedition’s legacy when he claims that “it encouraged Americans to reconceive of the nation’s role in the world order; it stimulated global thinking; it offered an immediate focus for feelings of patriotism; it confirmed and codified national values; and it allowed individuals to participate imaginatively in the communal and officially sanctioned cultural activity of exploration” (xxvii-xxviii). This nebulosity aside, perhaps the most lasting cultural resonance to come out of the Wilkes Expedition was that it established “Antarctic exploration [as] a symbolic act with mythic significance that transcended the materialistic or scientific goals of the expedition. It was an exploration of origins, an exploration of national character, an exploration of self, of future personal and national dreams. To succeed was to confirm in reality the mythic status of American pursuits” (xxviii). Although the specific meanings that the Antarctic would take on changed after the Wilkes Expedition, as Lenz argues the Expedition itself is a touchstone that crystallized the idea that “[w]ithin American culture, the Antarctic . . . swam before Americans’ eyes as a realizable goal to confirm national identity through personal action” (xlii), and hence its purpose is to serve as a medium for seeking and defining America’s national image.

Two other Antarctic literary critics, Elena Glasberg and Johan Wijkmark, have remarked the peculiar role of Antarctic literature in American national identity creation

between 1820 and 1850. As Wijkmark outright claims, “19<sup>th</sup>-century American conceptualizations of the Antarctic were closely connected to contemporary ideas of nation building. The Antarctic was seen as a natural extension of national interests, a proto-version of Manifest Destiny transposed to the Antarctic but relying on the same kind of expansionist rationale” (11-12). Far from simply being just another frontier for American explorers, the Antarctic was therefore intimately woven into ideas of American identity and ideological destiny.

The use of the real-world Antarctic as a focal point for the American cultural imaginary in the early- to mid-1800s is paralleled by its fictional “transform[ation] into a productive site for Americans to project desires for national distinction” (Wijkmark 9). For Glasberg, “Antarctic fiction written by Americans . . . offers the most wide-ranging reaction of a culture to the unknown continent [of Antarctica]. And this reaction – of a people self-consciously inhabiting the lately discovered North American continent to a place that may not exist – is represented not by land, but by text” (*Imagination* 2). Glasberg further explicates that “fictions of Antarctica are not shaped by what Antarctica is but only what it comes to figure for those encountering it” (6), suggesting that the “wide-ranging reaction” of American fiction to the continent reflects a breadth of specifically American social and cultural concerns. Wijkmark picks up on this idea, but makes the more pointed claim that early American Antarctic texts were “written in opposition to the British and [reflect] a desire among Americans to reject their colonial history and have the nation assume its rightful place in the international community of nations,” which he sees as “a parallel development to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American desire for creating a national literature that would stand up to international standards” (8). For

Wijkmark, then, literature, and particularly Antarctic literature, served as both a constructive and destructive means of national identity creation: it helped to define American nationhood both by what it was (a nation with its own specific social and cultural concerns) and what it was not (not British, or merely derivative).

One of the specifically American concerns to which both Glasberg and Wijkmark give significant attention is race. Both critics seem to agree on the principle that Antarctica, as a literary setting, functions as a rhetorical surface on which American racial fantasies and anxieties are projected. Glasberg's account of race in American Antarctic texts is largely confined to the chapter she devotes to explicating her reading of whiteness and blackness in Adam Seaborn's *Symzonia* and Poe's *Pym*. In one of the only other acknowledgements of the lost world narrative's place within Antarctic literature, Glasberg provides a brief, but sweeping, summary of how she perceives race to be figured in Antarctic texts between the early nineteenth century and pre-World War II. According to her account, the racial focus of such texts changes over time from polarized white and black symbolism to "reflecting Fascist and Nazi racial discourses" (161), with the only constant being that the "assumption of white superiority remained constant" (161). Wijkmark, on the other hand, addresses the topic of race throughout his work, and is more attentive to how historical, social, and political developments in the nineteenth century United States regarding race, and slavery in particular, inflected and informed the discourses of the antebellum American Antarctic texts he considers.

As we have seen, as "relatively coherent, emotionally charged, and conceptually interlocking set[s] of ideas that give order to a people's vision of the world and the place of their country within it" (Matarese 2), national images are significantly indebted to the

system of print capitalism for their creation and maintenance, and to the literary products of that system for the generation and reinforcement of their content. Antarctic fiction in particular emerged as a vehicle for defining the U.S.'s national image in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, partially because such works corresponded with increased public and political sentiment for the nation to become more active in global exploration and scientific discourse – a sentiment that the Wilkes Expedition emblemized and manifested. Located at the nexus between literary production, popular and political support for national prestige in the global community, and the timely emergence of interest in polar exploration, early American Antarctic texts were well-positioned to articulate a national image for the United States, overwhelmingly through the lost world narrative. However, such texts also display a strong tendency towards articulating a counter impulse that breaks down elements of the national images they attempt to construct.

### *Lost World Narratives*

More than any other genre, the lost world narrative is central to the history of American Antarctic literature, dominating it from the very first text, Adam Seaborn's *Symzonia* (1820), up until the post-Heroic era. Yet, for some reason this connection has never been extensively explored. Aside from Glasberg's brief acknowledgement of the genre in *Antarcticas of the Imagination*, in which she lists several key texts and gives a cursory overview of their racial concerns, Elizabeth Leane devotes a few pages of her *Antarctica in Fiction* to articulating the specificities of Antarctic lost world narratives by identifying them as a subgenre of "allochronic" Antarctic literature, which

characteristically “stage[s] the juxtaposition of two or more periods of history” (159). In the typical Antarctic lost world narrative, “a ring of ice hides a temperate or tropical interior (land or island-dotted sea)” (161). This hidden area “harbour[s] beings who seem to belong to an earlier stage in history – descendants of people who long ago colonized the region and have remained isolated ever since” (161). Although Leane notes that allochronic Antarctic fiction has been a consistently used subgenre, her focus here is on the turn of the twentieth century during what is called the “Heroic Era” of Antarctic exploration<sup>3</sup> by various nations and national actors. In such narratives around the turn of the century, “[t]he discovery of an entirely uninhabited and undeveloped continent in a period of rapid industrialization and mechanization is appealingly incongruous,” allowing Antarctica to “provid[e] the perfect ‘lost world’ in the midst of modernity” (161) – anxieties which are certainly at the core of *A Strange Discovery* and *Caspak*, examined in Chapter 2. She remarks, however, that a distinct shift occurred after the Amundsen and Scott expeditions both reached the South Pole; following this milestone, writers adapted their narrative strategies somewhat by “replac[ing] the hidden inhabitable land with less obviously unrealistic scenarios, such as caverns beneath the ice” (161). Even after this shift took place, however, such narratives “inevitably centre[d] on the intrusion into the lost polar civilization of contemporary protagonists, so that the far south becomes the site of different but co-existing temporalities” (161).

As Leane explains, though, this temporal distancing “is not neutral, but carries political implications” (160). In particular, she notes that although in some such cases the lost races are culturally or technologically more advanced than the author’s society in their particular historical moment, “more often they have remained ‘frozen’ in the

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<sup>3</sup> The Heroic Era of Antarctic Exploration is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

primitive state of their ancestors while the rest of humanity moved on. In many cases, the ‘lost race’ represents an earlier evolutionary stage and reflects post-Darwinian anxieties about racial hierarchies” (162). Leane hence sees Antarctic lost world narratives as exposing ideological values through their juxtaposition of an author’s contemporary society with that of the lost race, and specifically as reflecting discursive notions of, and anxieties about, racial hierarchies. These conclusions largely accord with those of other critics of lost world narratives – Alan Barnard in particular – with the key distinction that the Antarctic setting’s association with “frozen” time underscoring and amplifying the effect. For Leane, then, the Lost World Narrative is a small corner of Antarctic allochronic fiction, which itself is a subgenre of wider Antarctic literature. In the approximately three pages devoted to theorizing the lost world narrative in *Antarctica in Fiction*, its function is described as setting up an explicit contrast between modernity and a primitive past, sometimes for specific political or ideological reasons. This is certainly true, but goes nowhere near far enough to describe the genre’s centrality within the American tradition of Antarctic literature. To unpack the significance of this centrality, we must look to the broader scholarship on the genre.

An analysis of lost world narrative criticism yields several overarching lines of inquiry and internal dialogues that are pertinent to the present discussion. First, there is broad consensus that the genre is a form of nascent science fiction that is most closely associated with the utopia and exploration/romance/adventure narratives. Although there is some debate over what fields of natural science are the most salient in its constitution, with different critics championing the disciplines of archaeology, geology, and anthropology, the influence of these fields on the genre helps to account for the fact that it

draws on evolution as a core principle and trope, which is discussed later in this introduction. Second, there have been parallel lines of inquiry that have considered the specific American and British valances of texts of the genre. These studies have identified tropes and themes that help to distinguish American lost world narratives from those of Britain, chief among them their treatment of race. Whereas in British lost worlds “a return to the past is not equated with a descent into the primitive” (Hanson 498), and thus white or “near-white” races are generally used to place “narrative emphasis on racial and civilizational similarity between the English heroes and members of the lost race” (499) in order to connote a sense of British cultural superiority and imperial permanence, it seems that for American authors encounters with lost races at the far corners of the earth typically carry ideological messages of white supremacy through implicit or overt contrasts between the ostensibly white protagonists and the racial Others. Third, in American lost world narratives in particular, there is a recurring theme that advocates for closeness with nature, and which often serves to foreground constructions of masculinity (and an accompanying chauvinism) that are deeply engrained within the genre’s discourse.

As a genre in itself, the lost world narrative is a form of science fiction that “evolved from utopian fiction and the travel tale” (Becker 2), and thrived from the early nineteenth century until the ascendancy of interplanetary science fiction in the twentieth (2-3), at which point it “evolved into a new literary form in which men voyage to the far frontiers of space where they explore an infinite variety of worlds ranging from lost colonies that originated on earth to those populated by strange and unusual beings” (2-3). In her work *The Lost Worlds Romance: From Dawn Till Dusk*, Allienne R. Becker

explicates the origins of the genre as arising out of “the conditions of the nineteenth century,” and in particular the nascence and development of the natural and social sciences, which writers used to transform the eighteenth-century’s fantastic voyage into what is recognizable as the “Lost Worlds Romance” (4). Writers therefore “[e]nthusiastically . . . drew upon these developing sciences to make their fantastic voyages more appealing to a reading public that was dazzled by new scientific discoveries” and “inspired . . . with a desire to know more of the exotic places they often described” (4). Using advancements in the fields of archaeology, geology, geography, anthropology, psychology, and sociology (9), as a genre lost world narratives hence generated interest by applying a pseudo-scientific veneer to fantastic stories of discovery. Over the course of the form’s development, it developed a sizable list of tropes that characterized its works, including, but not limited to, “a lost race, a highly regulated society, a dystopian world, cannibalism, euthanasia, evolution, humanoids, monsters, [and] dinosaurs, among others” (153-54).

Becker’s monograph provides one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the lost world narrative to date through its broad examination of the genre’s texts to create a list of common conventions. Though thorough in this regard, the study lacks a sophisticated analysis of the deeper historical and ideological significance of the genre that critics like Thomas Clareson, Alan Barnard, and John Rieder provide. In his chapter “Lost Lands, Lost Races: A Pagan Princess of Their Very Own,” for instance, Thomas Clareson sees the lost world narrative as using the primitive as a vehicle to explore contemporary ideas and theories in geology and archaeology. He begins by identifying the lost race narrative as an important subgenre of science fiction that “provid[ed] a

much-needed link between the imaginary voyages to the ends of the Earth, so frequent in the eighteenth century, and the interstellar flights of recent decades [in the twentieth century]” (118). Clareson expands on the reasons for lost race narratives’ popularity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, noting that in Britain and America between the 1870s and 1930s, the lost race novel not only was “by far the most popular kind of imaginary voyage” (118), but “inasmuch as it reflected current knowledge and theory in geology and archaeology, . . . it was [also] the most popular form of science fiction of its period” (118).

In his article “Tarzan and the Lost Races: Parallels Between Anthropology and Early Science Fiction,” Alan Barnard likewise traces the popularity of lost world narratives during this period to concurrent developments in the field of Anthropology and their permeation into public discourse. Building upon Clareson, Barnard begins his examination of lost world narratives with the emergence of science fiction “as a separately identifiable form of writing” out of the larger genre of the “romance,” and particularly the “scientific romance,” around 1870 (232). Such narratives – which included “travel to other ‘worlds’ . . . , inter-’world’ warfare, and the social structure of, and contact between, ‘primitive’ and ‘advanced’ civilizations” (232-33) – developed a recognizable set of themes and conventions, but also, though the “mass publication of many such works in relatively cheap editions” (232-33), significantly contributed to the circulation and widespread acceptance of those themes and conventions, which became the bedrock of Science Fiction proper in Europe and North America (233).

Significantly for Barnard, this same period in which science fiction set itself apart as a distinct genre was “a period of rapid development for social anthropology too” (233).

Ultimately, he sees the rise of social anthropology as indelibly inflecting the character and concerns of early science fiction by lending early forms of the genre its “core two scientific bases: the theory of evolution (both biological and social) and the foundation of ethnographic fact” (233). The emergence of Anthropology as a field during the late nineteenth century hence gave rise to some of the earliest science fiction themes, including “ones of the exploration and recording of the indigenous habitation of the non-Western world, and, later, of reflections on the nature of early humankind” (233-34). This observation spurs Barnard to closely examine three prevailing motifs that come out of the nexus of science fiction and anthropology: “lost races,” “future wars,” and “early man” (234). Of these, he identifies that “lost race” and “early man” narratives are closely related and, indeed, often coincide within the same texts (236). As a subgenre of science fiction, “early ‘lost race’ narrative[s were] partly an outgrowth of the much earlier and interrelated genres of ‘utopian’ and ‘imaginary journey’ fiction, but [they] eventually acquired an independent status” (239). Mirroring the simultaneous development of science fiction with anthropology, “the production and popularity of the ‘lost race’ motif followed closely the exploration of the African interior” (239). As such, the “lost race” motif became “the paradigm of both early science fiction and the contemporaneous, emerging social anthropology” (241), with the idea of the alien “other” both coming to be “a necessary narrative device for social anthropology through much of its historical existence” and a central science fiction *novum*,<sup>4</sup> first with its lost races, but later in the form of extraterrestrials (241).

To better explicate his claims, Barnard uses Burroughs’s Tarzan as an exemplar of

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<sup>4</sup> In his landmark *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, Darko Suvin claims that the genre of science fiction is “distinguished by the narrative dominance or hegemony of a fictional ‘novum’ (novelty, innovation) validated by cognitive logic” (63, italics omitted).

both the “lost race” and “early man” motifs. For him, Tarzan was an icon who “rapidly came to symbolize the most desired objects of Western culture, especially American white male culture: power, youthfulness, and rugged individualism” (249). Ultimately, Barnard sees these qualities that Tarzan (and his imitators) come to represent as epitomizing the ethos of Fredrick Jackson Turner’s Frontier Thesis, which proposes that American cultural identity is derived from “self-identification with the western frontier” (250). He is uninterested, however, in whether or not the Frontier Thesis accurately accounts for the historical patterns of Euro-American society, but claims rather that it is of interest simply because “[it] became the accepted theory of the development of American nationhood and that this theory dominated American historiography from the 1890s to the 1930s” (250). Both science fiction and its social scientific muse, anthropology, “have elements of this frontier myth at their very core,” through their respective preoccupations with otherness as a narrative device for “analysing the familiar through the unknown,” and expressing a “need to understand one’s own culture by studying other, generally more ‘primitive’ cultures, on the fringe of the social universe of Western society – whether in the ‘wild west’ or on some far away ‘lost continent’” (250). Following Clareson, Barnard therefore considers early science fiction to be in dialogue with emerging fields of knowledge at the time of its development; however, unlike Clareson, who views geology and archaeology as the most foundational sources for fledgling science fiction (and lost world narratives in particular), Barnard here argues for contemporaneous developments in social anthropology as its most salient influence, which, as we will see, is particularly the case in Antarctic lost world narratives. In linking the exemplary figure of Tarzan to the ethos of the frontier, Barnard is additionally adding

a particularly American valence to the lost world narratives genre.

John Rieder's study, *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*, accords with Clareson's and Barnard's accounts of lost world narratives as a subgenre of early science fiction. Where Clareson attends to how advances in geology and archaeology informed the development of the lost world narrative, and Barnard maintains a correlation between the genre and the rise of anthropology as a field, Rieder is concerned with the influence of colonialism on the form, claiming that "[l]ost-race fiction shares [its late nineteenth century] romantic reference to colonialism with a larger and far better studied class of narratives, best referred to simply as tales of adventure" (34). However, as a "blending of the imaginary voyage and imperial tale of adventure," the genre is "not merely a source of chauvinistic fantasy," but rather a lens for examining "some of the central formal and aesthetic problems of science fiction," and as a result "has much to tell us about how the intersection of imaginary voyages, tales of adventures, and colonial discourses affected the shape of emergent science fiction" (35).

Although the works of Clareson, Barnard, and Rieder comprise the most thorough analyses of the historical, material, and ideological influences on the emergence and development of lost world narratives, other critics, like Nadia Khouri, Marianne Sommer, and Jason Haslam, have extended our understanding of them in different ways, such as by identifying tropes and themes that distinguish American lost world narratives, particularly in relation to their British counterparts. For instance, in her "Lost Worlds and the Revenge of Realism," Khouri argues that such lost world narratives "dramatiz[e] a tension between a primitive mode of accumulation and one of conspicuous consumption, a tension conditioned by a neurotic ambivalence towards such elements of American

myth-history as the American Dream” (170). What Khouri terms “lost-race utopias” function as “extraordinary voyages through a contemporaneous antiquity,” through which “memories of an ambiguous promise of fulfillment surface as the kitsch version of the American Dream” (174). As she goes on to explain, the treasure troves of riches found among such lost races are meant to spur fantasies of upward social mobility (174-75), which itself is driven by the fact that the U.S. has “traditionally consecrated as ideals both equal opportunity and the self-made man” (176). Khouri further relates the genre to the American frontier, which, though closed by the end of the nineteenth century, still provided a “lucrative space” for lost-race utopists, and served as a narrative engine for the myth of the American dream (178). For Khouri, the protagonist of a lost world narrative “is legitimated in so far as he carries the traditionally praised qualities of the American character: entrepreneurship, opportunistic individualism, pluck, and courage. But unlike the traditional hero of American history, it is not a frontier which he must conquer, but the Olympian world of the tycoon, a commodified utopia which not only contains a hidden treasure . . . but also the patented power of social supremacy” (185).

In her “The Lost World as Laboratory: The Politics of Evolution between Science and Fiction in the Early Decades of Twentieth-Century America,” Marianne Sommer is also interested in the specifically American character of lost world narratives. Here, Sommer’s focus is on “the fantasies of prehistoric lost worlds that were written into the collective memory” (302) of the United States, and, in particular, how the idea of evolution is mobilized to reflect conservative American notions masculinity and race. To this end, Sommer analyses the ideological assumptions that underpinned the literary works of Edgar Rice Burroughs and the anthropological agenda of American Museum of

Natural History President Henry Fairfield Osborn, arguing that both “conveyed thinly veiled commentary on sociopolitical issues” (309). Sommer claims that Burroughs and Osborn naturalized essentialist social, gender, and racial hierarchies by framing them in terms of social and biological Darwinism in the prehistoric and primordial context of the lost world setting; by “stripp[ing competitors] of their cultural advantages and disadvantages . . . [and] exposing them to the Darwinian game of the struggle for survival” in a lost world setting, the hierarchies are seemingly naturalized by reducing complex social, political, and cultural interactions to a base evolutionary analogy (309). Burroughs in particular was reacting to the “consequences of industrialization and urbanization with growing alarm,” as well as to “the mass migration of Southerners to the North” (325), phenomena that he saw as threatening the nativist “myth of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority . . . and the illusion of a particularly American male way of life” (325).

Jason Haslam’s chapter on Tarzan and lost world narratives in his book *Gender, Race and American Science Fiction: Reflections on Fantastic Identities* is similarly concerned with representations of American masculinity through figures like Tarzan and Buck Rogers in the context of an ever-more urbanized, globalized, and technological world around the turn of the twentieth century. During a period of such rapid and seismic social shifts, both in the United States and globally, “SF men began to look backwards (to use Bellamy’s phrase) in an effort not to redefine white masculinity *per se* but to reinforce white supremacist, patriarchal hegemony” (76-77). As a result, around this time science fiction magazines saw a resurgence of Romantic protagonists “in the form of the idealist Thoreauvian reformer returning to the woods” (77). Like Sommer, Haslam sees the processes of urbanization, increased technologization, and globalization that were

occurring around the turn of the twentieth century as threatening white male gender and racial supremacy. For him, as a “quintessential re-Romanticized masculine hero, Tarzan . . . forms [Burroughs’s] primary archetype for the manner in which the ‘proper’ neo-Romantic man can live in the modern world” (77), which is through the “cosmopolitan form of cultural consumption” that he embodies (78). Indeed, one of this chapter’s central claims is that “Tarzan’s ideal Anglo-Saxon manhood is constituted not just or even primarily by physical prowess, nor by the form of blunt consumer power, but instead by a form of essentialized cosmopolitan cultural access, an inborn sense of what constitutes ‘proper’ appropriation” (86). Tarzan’s “smooth, brown skin,” Haslam claims, is, ironically, the main signifier for this cosmopolitanism since it represents “a cultural hybridity that nonetheless shores up, rather than undermines, his essential white manhood” (86-87). As a figure, he “correct[s] the hyper-rationality of Victorian whiteness [by] offering a re-Romanticized American definition of whiteness that asserts moral right over all,” making him the “epitome of white masculinity because it can be translated into any cultural context, across any border or boundary” (87).

Although some of these critical works on lost world narratives that have been examined so far have addressed imperialism and colonialism, as well as British examples of the genre, none have made the interplay of the genre with British culture their explicit focus. This is precisely the intent of Carter F. Hanson’s “Lost Among White Others: Late-Victorian Lost-Race Novels for Boys.” Through its specific examination of juvenile lost world narratives in the late Victorian period, this work argues that although “many English social critics and imperial romancers . . . were convinced that England was in a state of imperial decline and regression, the authors examined [by Hanson] provided

young male readers with narratives of imperial permanence” by indoctrinating them into “various myths of origin that emphasized a racial similarity between the British race and a ‘lost’ Other,” and also by leveling “social critiques of ‘lost’ societies that reinforced the superiority of British culture” (497). To this end, although Hanson notes that lost world narratives are possibly a form of science fiction, he describes this status as “ambivalent” since “[m]ost SF scholars have either ignored lost race [sic], or, like critic and bibliographer Darko Suvin, disowned the subgenre as SF by claiming that lost race tales generally fail to explore any of the sociopolitical or technological questions they potentially raise” (498). Instead of identifying lost world narratives as a form of nascent science fiction like most other critics, Hanson rather sees them as examples of fantastic literature, and specifically a relative of “imperial gothic,” which, as a generic classification, serves to “underscor[e] for lost race [sic] what has long been taken for granted regarding imperial romance: that representing the other, or here, more specifically, discovering the other, necessarily reveals much more about anxieties of empire than it suggests anything of the complexities of colonial cultural exchange” (498). However, Hanson himself admits that this classification is not perfect since, for instance, the novels he studies do not conform to the imperial gothic’s convention of using atavism; instead, in the popular English lost world narratives examined in his study “a return to the past is not equated with a descent into the primitive” (498), which makes sense if the point is, as Hanson claims, to place “narrative emphasis on racial and civilizational similarity between the English heroes and members of the lost race” (499) and thereby use these lost civilizations to “reinforce the superiority of British culture” (497).

This is a clear point of departure from what previous critics have written about the function of lost world narratives for American culture – although Sommer and Haslam, for example, see the genre as reinforcing ideas of masculinity as well, they claim that the ideal American masculinity projected is inevitably located in how the atavism of the texts help modern heroes to rediscover the basis of their masculine identities in the primitive and synthesize a new, superior masculinity by striking a balance between civilization and nature. It overwhelmingly seems that the racial dimensions that are part and parcel of encountering “lost races” in the far corners of the Earth always carry ideological messages of white racial supremacy for American authors. As Hanson claims, however, this was not the case with their British counterparts. Not only did American lost world narratives “greatly eclips[e] British tales in sheer numbers if not in popularity” around the turn of the twentieth century (522), they also “differed in their cultural preoccupations from British variants” in that they “did not share the British fascination with lost white races to nearly the same degree” (523). By typically figuring white or near-white lost races in their lost world narratives, British authors “provided young male readers with narratives of imperial permanence . . . through various myths of origin that emphasized a racial similarity between the British race and a ‘lost’ Other, and also through social critiques of ‘lost’ societies that reinforced the superiority of British culture” (497) instead of propagating notions of racial and racist hierarchies like their American cousins.

Finally, there is a thread of inquiry within the scholarship on lost world narratives, and American lost world narratives in particular, that identifies the genre’s association between closeness with nature and idealized constructions of masculinity, as well as accompanying discourses of chauvinism. Clareson, for example, sees the genre as using

the primitive as a vehicle to reinforce male chauvinism through the genre's ideological constructions of gender and sexuality. Insofar as the genre imagined utopian societies, he claims, a consistent message espoused by writers seems to have been that "[any] perfect society can exist only when man lives close to nature" ("Lost Lands" 121). In this regard, lost world narratives contained an anti-modern impulse in the form of a "new primitivism, a rejection of the increasingly complex urban-technological society being spawned by the new century" (121), yet they also sought to negotiate present science with that nostalgic primitivism. As Clareson goes on to explain, writers of lost world narratives "emphasized primitivism and sought to reconcile old beliefs with the facts and theories of the period. When their use of the past did not answer their questions nor solve their problems . . . they created a new, erotic escapism" (137), increasingly moving the genre towards being a "proving ground for the protagonists' masculinity" through sheer survival and physical prowess, as well as in relation to the obligatory primitive female love interest (137).

Haslam's reading of *Tarzan* in many ways extends Clareson's account of the relationship between the primitive and masculinity, though in a more nuanced and historically attentive manner. For Haslam, if the primitive stands for a "nostalgia for a masculinity lost in the decadence of civilization" (87), Tarzan's cosmopolitanism – his ability to move back and forth seamlessly between different natural and cultural contexts – represents an ideal masculinity through its balance between nature and civilization, which itself is a reiteration of Clareson's account of the core utopian message of lost world narratives generally. In addition to being a response to these larger, global trends of urbanization and globalization, Haslam also sees Tarzan (both the character and the work)

as a reaction to domestic anxieties and debates in the United States in the early twentieth century over “the influx of rural African Americans into the then largely white urban centers” (87). According to him, both character and text “us[e] the trope of cannibalism in order to function as an apparently racist ‘corrective’ to progressive, liberal race relations, while simultaneously appearing to deny the most obvious violent aspects of the history of racism and imperialism (allegorized as a cannibalism Tarzan denies),” making Tarzan “an especially pernicious and long-standing figure of racism in American popular culture” (87). While this argument that the use of the cannibalism trope signifies *Tarzan*’s (and thereby Burroughs’s) inherent racism is compelling, it is difficult to say whether this particular trope is consistently mobilized across all lost world narratives, or even just American ones. What is true for *Tarzan* may not be true for others.

Sommer closely accords Haslam’s account of Tarzan’s brand of cosmopolitanism as a masculine ideal, though in her study of Burroughs’s *Caspak* series she ultimately sees the trope of evolution (or, rather, devolution) as fulfilling the same function, while additionally naturalizing racial hierarchies that uphold the white, Anglo-Saxon protagonists’ racial superiority. As she explains, although at first “the transformation the English and American heroes [in Burroughs’s *Caspak* Trilogy] undergo in the course of their northward journeys appears like regression . . . it is in fact an advance” that brings them closer to nature while “[r]etaining their intellectual and moral superiority” and “find[ing] the way back to their true American/Anglo-Saxon masculinity” (322). According to Sommer, the “laboratory of evolution” found in Burroughs’s works not only propagates an idealized notion of Anglo-Saxon masculinity which, Burroughs repeatedly suggests, the forces of urbanization and industrialization have diluted, but it also

naturalizes racial hierarchies as being a corollary of evolution itself.

### *Chapter Summaries*

The use of evolution as a generic trope is one of the key ways that American Antarctic lost world narratives generate national images for the United States. While several critics of the genre, including Leane, Becker, Claerson, Barnard, and Sommer, have identified the centrality of evolution within it, as a convention it is mobilized differently at discrete historical moments. This is partly the result of the long timespan over which American Antarctic lost world narratives have been written; the earliest of them, Adam Seaborn's *Symzonia*, dates back to 1820, while the latest work studied here, Marvel Comics' *Ka-Zar* series, last appeared in 2011. A key turning point in the discourse surrounding evolution was obviously the publication of Charles Darwin's landmark work *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, in which Darwin put forth his theory that species evolve as a result of a gradual process of natural selection, or the "preservation of favourable individual differences and variations, and the destruction of those which are injurious" to survival (64). Though a landmark scientific theory in and of itself, the idea of evolution through natural selection, or what Darwin terms "survival of the fittest" (64), also challenged theological conceptions of the origins of the world and humankind, as well as accompanying discourses that attempted to naturalize racial hierarchies to privilege the white, Euro-American West for various political and economic reasons, including, notably, the institution of American slavery. It is therefore difficult to frame the question of how the trope of evolution contributes to the construction of U.S. national images in American Antarctic lost world narratives without using Darwin's theory of

evolution as a benchmark.

The first text considered in this study, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), predates *Origin of Species* by some twenty years, and thus represents a pre-Darwinian conception of racial difference that unabashedly places white, Euro-Americans at the apex of the racial hierarchy. Although later lost world narratives, as we shall see, advance similar national images that favour visions of a white-dominated America, they typically do so through an emphasis on social Darwinism, eugenics, or (much later) genetic engineering. By contrast, *Pym* was written in the 1830s against a backdrop of heightened racial fears and anxieties stoked by slave insurrections like the Nat Turner rebellion, which led the Southern States in particular to seek new legal and discursive measures to further reinforce the already-present systemic racism by "pass[ing] stricter laws regulating slaves' behavior and censoring antislavery writing while defending their system with biblical references and pseudoscientific 'evidence' of 'black' inferiority" (Peeples 70). It was in this social climate that the anthropological theory of polygenesis – the idea that "different races of mankind had different origins and were therefore not genealogically related to each other any more than to any other species" (Wijkmark 114) – took root and found legitimacy by shoring up the ideological justifications for black slavery. In fact, the theory became such a "predominantly American discipline . . . that it was referred to as the 'American school' of anthropology" (114). By adopting this theory, proslavery parties could further write racism into the fabric of American cultural and legal discourse by falling back on a supposedly "scientific," though in reality deeply flawed, set of assumptions. *Pym* reflects this essentializing of racial difference, and is complicit with the classification of black people

as sub-human or inhuman by characterizing them as uniformly duplicitous and malevolent. Indeed, the Tsalal natives' treachery underscores the racial dimension of the conservative national image foregrounded in *Pym* by motivating the text's most prominent instance of rebellion, against which Pym recoils and is reinscribed within normative (i.e. white, middle class) American values.

Chapter 1 of this study examines how although *Pym* attempts to foster a cohesive white American national image by essentializing race in order to naturalize racial hierarchies, these efforts to articulate a coherent, white vision of America are undermined by elements of the narrative that either shine a light on deep divisions within American society, or metaphorically suggest the limits of national identity. Despite the fact that the text's constantly recurring instances of revolt and recoil showcase its tendency towards a conservative national image by consistently reinscribing its characters within the social status quo, this pattern also signifies the limit beyond which that national image begins to break down and become unrecognizable. *Pym* itself signifies this breakdown by using its Antarctic setting to dramatize the limits of national image construction through its continual narrative movement towards, but never beyond, geographic and epistemological boundaries.

Evolution, or more specifically the ideas of natural selection and the "survival of the fittest," also inflects the national images foregrounded in the works examined in Chapter Two: Charles Dake's *A Strange Discovery* (1899) and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Caspak* Trilogy (1918), which is comprised of *The Land that Time Forgot*, *The People that Time Forgot*, and *Out of Time's Abyss*. In Dake's sequel to Poe's *Pym*, for instance, although the Hili-lites, whom Arthur Pym and Dirk Peters discover deep in the Antarctic,

are more socially and culturally advanced than the protagonists' contemporary American society, their facile mode of existence and uniformly temperate environment have bred the ruggedness and physical resilience out of them, leaving them especially susceptible to natural disasters such as the freak cold snap that befalls them. Despite the fact that in many ways Hili-lite society represents an idealized version of the United States, the message here seems to accord with Sommer and Haslam's accounts of the genre by suggesting that any American national image requires the kind of masculine qualities embodied by Pym and Peters in order to endure, thus cautioning against the kind of overly-idealistic complacency of the Hili-lites.

Burroughs' *Caspak* trilogy is even more bound up in evolutionary ideas through its dramatization of the process of evolution by incorporating it directly (and literally) into the social hierarchy and ontological makeup of Caspak. Almost all human-like life in Caspak begins as proto-human beings that climb the evolutionary ladder as they develop. Once again, there is a racial dimension to this development since individuals progress from earlier stages of evolution that are characteristically "negroid" in appearance to strata that are increasingly white, thus co-opting Darwinian ideas of survival of the fittest – as dramatized by the progressive eschewing of stereotypically African-American features as individuals progress up the Caspakian evolutionary ladder – while still remaining true to the same discourse of race found in *Pym* which sees white people as the apex in its racialized evolutionary schema.

Deeply entwined with this obviously racialized evolutionary hierarchy is the idea of eugenics, which in its most basic form attempts to create a more perfect society through selective breeding for desirable traits. Eugenics was a popular concept in the

early twentieth-century United States (English 2), and Burroughs specifically has been noted for attempting to “[reflect] post-Darwinian anxieties about racial hierarchies” (Leane *Fiction* 162) by “impl[ying] more than once [in his works] that white American and Western European (most notably British) stock is the pinnacle of evolutionary trends, and [that] other national and racial groups are somehow lacking by comparison” (Holtsmark 48-49), particularly through his most famous character, Tarzan. The *Caspak* Trilogy demonstrates this affinity for the idea by contrasting its Anglo-American protagonists favourably, almost to the degree of caricature, against the less-than-fully-evolved inhabitants of Caspak, and especially the principal German antagonists. Eugenics itself goes hand-in-hand with the notion of national images since both are concerned with idealized perceptions of a national society; rather than merely describing what is the desired perception, though, in practice eugenics takes that ideal as a realizable goal and provides a strategy for its attainment. In *Caspak*, Burroughs heralds masculinity, in the form of the Anglo-American rugged individual, as the hallmark of the most evolutionarily developed nations. There is a certain irony to this, however, since Burroughs seems to suggest that masculine virtue can only be fully realized through a return to nature and a corresponding rejection of the comforts of modernity. Rather than leading to individuals devolving into savagery, the “regression” into nature is actually an advance towards the kind of idealized masculinity Burroughs envisions (Sommer 322), and furthermore dovetails with the discourse of the American frontier at the time, which, according to Frederick Jackson Turner, provided a source of “perennial rebirth” for American social development by keeping people in “continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society,” and thereby “furnish[ing] the forces dominating American

character” (2-3). Most significantly, frontier discourse, as it is mobilized in Burroughs, works alongside the idea of eugenics, linking the individual to the larger process of nation building by providing a crucible for people of “good stock” to realize their potential through close contact with nature and the corresponding struggle for survival, thus continuously rejuvenating Anglo-American nationhood at the horizon of the frontier.

Chapter 2 explores the reasons for the generic divergence between American and British Antarctic literature plots during the “Heroic Age” of Antarctic exploration around the turn of the twentieth century by examining how Charles Romyn Dake’s *A Strange Discovery* and Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *Caspak* trilogy figure the Antarctic as just such a frontier at which the inborn superiority of (white male) Americans becomes realized through contact with the primitive lost world. While both nations’ Antarctic literature of the time served the same basic purpose of advancing their respective national images, especially through idealized constructions of masculinity, the racial conventions of British lost world narratives, which typically identified a lost race with British whiteness in order to generate a sense of imperial permanence, was less pointedly amenable to projecting the kind of paragon image of Britishness necessary to mobilize nationalistic sentiment at the time – a function that the tragedy of the Scott expedition could perform much better, and more organically. As a non-participant in the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration, the United States had no comparable non-fictional narratives, and neither did it have to contend with the psychological toll of extended fighting in the First World War. Instead, American Antarctic lost world narratives of the time were more concerned with the *loss* of masculinity and white supremacy in an increasingly modern context, and hence sought to look backward toward a pre-globalized, pre-technologized world in

which a nostalgic American national image, one based on a valorized sense of masculine rugged individualism and essentialized racial hierarchies, was preserved. As with *Pym*, however, these national images are subject to a counter impulse. In *A Strange Discovery*, for instance, the text's satiric nature undermines much of the national image it seemingly constructs, reserving for Pym and Peters alone a kind of non-ironic heroism, which forms the core of its account of American masculinity. Though much less destructive towards its own national image, the *Caspak* trilogy likewise levels an explicit critique of American isolationism by essentializing national, as well as racial, characters.

Evolution in H.P Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* is used less as a vehicle for constructing racial hierarchies than as a means of foregrounding Lovecraft's brand of "cosmic indifferentism" and ultimately undermining national identity and ego by reducing humanity itself to the status of a joke. As Dyer infers from the sculptures he and Danforth find in the deserted and ancient Antarctic city, the star-headed Old Ones, the original inhabitants of Earth, came from outer space and were responsible for seeding all other life on Earth. Although much of it was genetically engineered to suit the needs of their society, certain species that were "products of unguided evolution acting on life cells made by the Old Ones" were "suffered to develop unchecked because they had not come into contact with the dominant beings," while "[b]othersome forms . . . were mechanically exterminated" (67). Humans were one such species to accidentally develop and be permitted to survive by the Old Ones because they served a dual function as food and buffoon-like entertainment (67). In the grand scale of the Old Ones' civilization, humanity literally is reduced to an accident and joke of evolution; this cosmic indifference effectively undermines human existence, let alone that of any individual

nation, by demonstrating its insignificance both in an unfavourable contrast to the scale and accomplishments of the Old Ones, and in the nature of humanity's relationship with them.

The first part of Chapter 3 focuses on how Lovecraft's *Mountains of Madness* uses the genetic engineering of the Shoggoths and the genetic accident of humanity to respectively create the text's conservative national image and counter-impulse. In setting up the alien Old Ones as an analogue for white America whose slave creations, the Shoggoths, threaten their racial superiority, as well as masculinity itself, Lovecraft creates an askew, but recognizable, national image that articulates his own personal anxieties about how immigration and racial miscegenation would cause radical social change in the United States. The Shoggoths' racialized and gendered otherness thus combines in this text to present them as an existential threat to the Old Ones' static white masculine social hegemony. This is undermined, however, by the author's brand of "cosmic indifferentism," which reduces humanity itself, to say nothing of the petty idea of a "nation," to utter insignificance.

Marvel Comics' *Ka-Zar* begins as a more subtle recapitulation of the evolutionary ideas found in Burroughs' fiction regarding white Anglo-American superiority, but over time evolves a pluralistic conception of race and nationhood. As a character, Ka-Zar is a carbon copy of Burroughs' Tarzan – he is the son of an English aristocrat who is orphaned and left to fend for himself from childhood in a savage junglescape. In this sense, Ka-Zar comes already loaded with the values (and baggage) associated with his literary predecessor, including his inherent superiority as a result of good breeding and the crucible of his jungle upbringing. This connection is underscored by the fact that Ka-

Zar's first appearance was in *X-Men*, a series that has been both defined by its novum of naturally-occurring genetic mutations and noted for its parallels to the American Civil Rights movement. In fact, Ka-Zar is originally mistaken for a mutant when he is first observed on television by the X-Men.<sup>5</sup> Like Tarzan, Ka-Zar's whiteness stands him apart from the other inhabitants of the Antarctic Savage Land, whose antagonistic otherness is coded in terms of race and species.

For most of the first twenty years of Ka-Zar stories, the eponymous character's superiority of breeding, training, and (later) education uncritically establish him as the central authority and mediator within the Savage Land, a region populated by prehistoric creatures and lost races. Like his Savage Land home, Ka-Zar therefore appears to be an example of the kind of "frozen time" trope one comes to expect from Antarctic literature, but he also represents a kind of "frozen discourse," a holdover of ideas of white racial superiority that are found in Burroughs and Poe, even if they are not as overt. It is only in the 1980s that this discourse begins to "thaw," first by the discovery of a hitherto unexplored region of the Savage Land, called Pangea, that is populated by human-animal hybrid beings, and later by the ascension of the combined Savage Land tribes to the larger community of global nations. In the first place, though still fairly uncritical of Ka-Zar's role as a racial mediator, the inclusion of the genetically engineered human-animal hybrid Pangeans gestures towards conceiving of divisions by race as a cultural artifice. More significantly, however, the unification of the racially disparate Savage Land tribes into a "nation that is not a nation" (Jenkins Issue #5, 22) suggests the Antarctic's potential in creating a paradigm shift in the broader conception of national images by serving to allegorically point to the pluralism of real-world Antarctic identity. In this way, Ka-Zar

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<sup>5</sup> In *X-Men* #10 (Lee "The Coming of Ka-Zar").

ultimately suggests that, although it may be dominated and influenced by a seemingly homogenous group of people for their own ideological ends, the national image of the United States, or any diverse imagined community, cannot remain static since it is constituted through the dialogue between multiple imagined communities simultaneously. It will, on a long-enough time scale, evolve.

In this vein, the second part of Chapter 3 examines how *Ka-Zar* has attempted to evolve beyond its early ambivalent or patronizing treatments of race, and associated white supremacist national image, towards a vision of social harmony through racial and cultural pluralism, emblemized in the series through the human-animal hybrid Pangean tribes. Although the series struggles, with questionable success, to rid itself of a perception of race that fundamentally sees whiteness as normative, it is ultimately productive in using its fictional Antarctic setting allegorically to transcend the static conception of national images by foregrounded a pluralistic view of national identity itself as the combination of multiple imagined communities in dialogue with one another.

## Chapter 1

### Geographic and Absolute Horizons: The Antarctic and the Limits of American National Image in Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*

“And now we rushed into the embraces of the cataract, where a chasm threw itself open to receive us. But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow” (Poe 175)

This passage is perhaps the most memorable from Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, and certainly among its most discussed. The scholarly attention these few lines have attracted might be surprising if it were not for their conspicuous placement in the text: they mark the work's conclusion, or rather its lack thereof. With no other explanation than a brief, unsatisfying explanatory “Note” from an anonymous editor regarding the missing ending, the enigma created from these words is emblematic of the rich interpretive possibilities that the entire novel of *Pym* invites. In the succinct words of Douglas Robinson, *Pym* is indeed “an interpreter's dream-text” (47).

Beyond even the mystery of the white figure and the apocalyptic anticipation of the cataract, the fundamental reason that this passage is a lightning rod for interpretation is that it ends the narrative climactically *in medias res*. The story does not resolve, it

simply ends without warning, balking all narrative convention. We are told by the editor that the rest of the narrative still exists, most readily in the knowledge of mediating author Edgar Allan Poe, but that Poe himself refuses to have his name and literary reputation associated with the ending owing to his “general disbelief in the entire truth of the latter portions of the narrative” (176). How do we interpret the idea that this story has an ending, but that it is deemed too incredible to even be presented?

If the ending is precipitated by the appearance of the cataract and the white figure, then these events must mark the point beyond which the narrative, in Poe’s judgment, loses all semblance of believability and breaks down; they mark, in effect, an absolute horizon of this narrative, and narrative in general. This moment is, however, merely a flashpoint in a more sustained thematic development throughout Poe’s *Pym* which dramatizes the limits of the American national image – or at least a dominant version of it that reflects the world view and values of the ruling white middle class – specifically in relation to American exploration of the Antarctic region in the 1830s. The Antarctic ultimately serves as an absolute horizon beyond which the American national image breaks down in this text.

To support this thesis, the chapter will challenge the pervasive, if implicit, assumption in the field of Antarctic Literature that American Antarctic texts present a unified American national image by drawing on criticism from the larger body of scholarship related to Poe’s *Pym* to help demonstrate how this text in fact exposes fractures in its contemporary American society. Instead of a unified or harmonious nation, *Pym* alludes to a society that is deeply riven along racial and geographic lines, and, through its recurring theme of revolt, gestures towards both American myths of origin

and the point beyond which the American national image can be expanded no further without being overextended, breaking down, and becoming unrecognizable as a projection of white middle class Americans' conception of the U.S. Even the Tsalal episode, which attempts to mobilize pre-Darwinian discourses to naturalize racial differences in an effort to consolidate and justify a national image that upholds white supremacy in the United States, cannot help but suggest the deep divisions that existed in 1830s American society. As *Pym* demonstrates, American national image is ultimately limited by what is considered acceptable according to the normative social values, racial discourses, and economic practices of the dominant American white middle class, who were also Poe's readership.

#### *A Nation Built on Racial Fault Lines*

Although it materially represented a new economic frontier for American explorers, the Antarctic was also intimately woven into nineteenth-century ideas of American national identity. Reflecting this fact, *Pym*'s thematic concerns with American national identity are intimately tied up with its generic parallels to contemporary American nautical exploration in the 1830s. During this time in the United States, there was significant "patriotic fervor for exploration" (Gitelman 350), which found a major outlet in Charles Wilkes's South Seas Expedition. At stake in American exploration was not merely commercial expansion or the stature of the U.S. as an international player, but also the search for an American national identity. As Gitelman elaborates, "Wilkes and his companions were groping for a sense of national identity as surely as they were scouring the South Pacific for land" (351). Indeed, on the home front the Wilkes

Expedition “encouraged Americans to reconceive of the nation’s role in the world order; it stimulated global thinking; it offered immediate focus for feelings of patriotism; it confirmed and codified national values; and it allowed individuals to participate imaginatively in the communal and officially sanctioned cultural activity of exploration” (Lenz xxvii-xxviii). Antarctic exploration in particular “was a symbolic act with mythic significance that transcended the materialistic or scientific goals of the [Wilkes] expedition. It was an exploration of origins, an exploration of national character, an exploration of self, of future personal and national dreams. To succeed was to confirm in reality the mythic status of American pursuits” (xxviii).

In his *Poetics of the Antarctic*, Lenz links early- to mid-nineteenth century American interest in global exploration, and especially Antarctic exploration, to the introspective search for American national selfhood and origins, and explicitly identifies *Pym* as a central work of fiction that helps to reflect and reinforce that coding:

A belief in the power and significance of exploration characterized nineteenth-century American culture . . . For many nineteenth-century Americans, exploration was a cultural activity that connected historical with mythical conceptions of nation and self . . . to explore *out there* is also to explore *within*, to probe the meaning of the self and community within an alien nature. (xxi-xxii)

Lenz later goes on to claim that Poe’s *Pym* in particular “explores the quest motif characteristic of exploration narratives . . . and identifies the national quest with the exploration of the Antarctic” (41). To support this point, he draws significant parallels to the concurrent Wilkes Expedition, whose agenda, as previously noted, was indeed at least

partially to expand U.S. geopolitical influence and prestige, as well as its economic markets, and therefore to circumscribe the Antarctic within the American national image. As Lenz notes, however, insofar as *Pym* is in dialogue with the Wilkes Expedition, it “is critical of the certain bounty [the Expedition] seemed to offer Americans, suggesting that its mythical power may be dangerous and self-deceptive” (xxviii). In this way, Lenz’s analysis of *Pym* supports the overall thesis advanced here that the text demonstrates the breakdown of national identity as much as it propagates its construction.

As far as *Pym*’s partial setting in, and exploration of, the Antarctic associates it with the American quest for a national self, the deeply racist overtones that characterize Antarctic exploration in this text reveal the racial anxieties that pervade and define American society during this time, but which also inevitably threaten its national cohesion. That *Pym* exposes the racial fault lines in the United States during the 1830s is no new argument; several works, including Kennedy’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym and the Abyss of Interpretation* (1995), Mitchell C. Lilly’s *Impossible Storyworlds and The (Unnatural) Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (2014), and Johan Wijkmark’s “*One of the Most Intensely Exciting Secrets*”: *The Antarctic in American Literature, 1820-1849* (2014), have compellingly demonstrated how *Pym* articulates the ideologically divisive nature of the slavery debate in the United States around the time it was published. Furthermore, in her PhD Dissertation, *Antarcticas of the Imagination*, Elena Glasberg was the first to advance the thesis that the fictional setting of Antarctica is used both in American Antarctic literature generally, and in *Pym* in particular, to evoke “national anxieties and dreams” (52), including racial anxieties, though Glasberg sees the text as showing the instability of racial categories in nineteenth-century American culture

(128), arguing that it was Americans “who first imposed fantasies of racial origin onto the regions of the pole” fictionally (129). One of the most powerful claims Glasberg makes in her work is that “the cross-cultural reconnaissance on Tsalal is the paradigm for the creation of racial difference” discursively in this text by its white protagonists (150); that racial difference is actually a social construction, which *Pym* dramatizes. If the novel does dramatize the creation of racial categories, then it is also dramatizing the genesis of the racial anxieties that come out of the process by framing “the mutual enmity of the races [in this text] as natural rather than as a consequence of the colonial encounter” (153).

In *Pym*, the characterization of the Tsalal natives does indeed serve to naturalize racial differences by presenting them as essential qualities. Despite the initial impression that they are an honourable and trustworthy people, the Tsalalians turn out to be defined by their supreme treacherousness:

I believe that not one of us had at this time the slightest suspicion of the good faith of the savages. They had uniformly behaved with the greatest decorum, aiding us with alacrity in our work, offering us their commodities, frequently without price, and never, in any instance, pilfering a single article, although the high value they set upon the goods we had was evident . . . we should have been the most suspicious of human beings had we entertained a single thought of perfidy on the part of a people who treated us so well. A very short while sufficed to prove that this apparent kindness of disposition was only the result of a deeply-laid plan for our destruction, and that the islanders for whom we entertained

such inordinate feelings of esteem were among the most barbarous, subtle, and bloodthirsty wretches that ever contaminated the face of the globe.

(145)

The most significant aspect of the Tsalalians' treachery is that it comes seemingly without cause, and certainly without notice, begging the question of why they should seek to kill the *Jane Guy*'s crew. One telling item is the fact that they seem mortally afraid of anything the colour white, which inspires terrified cries of "tekeli-li!" (157, 173). This idiosyncrasy, combined with their defining "jet black" appearance (which is underscored by the omnipresence of blackness on their island), creates a black/white dichotomy that contains an obvious racial dimension. At one point, Pym even refers to himself and Peters as "the only living white men upon the island" (151) despite the fact that earlier in the novel much attention is paid to the fact that Peters is a "half-breed Indian;" Peters is hence only considered "white" when he is forced to be classified in terms of the absolutes of white and black that the Tsalalians create (Lilly 81).

The stark dichotomy of white and black presented here seems to be synonymous with that of good and evil, suggesting that race brings with it certain inherent, essential qualities. This suggestion dovetails with the pre-Darwinian conception of polygenesis and one of its key influences, the idea of the "great chain of being." According to Wijkmark, the great chain of being was a central concept in 18<sup>th</sup> century naturalism, and fundamentally held that all creatures could be "organized into a natural hierarchy . . . in a rising order of complexity and extending into the spiritual realm" (99). This idea was "effortlessly adapted to racial ranking," and was "productively reconfigured to substantiate a racial hierarchy by which the 'lower' races of mankind are realigned to

function as a buffer between animals and the Caucasian” (114). This naturalization of racial hierarchies set the stage for the rise of polygenesis, or the theory that the “different races of mankind had different origins and were therefore not genealogically related to each other any more than to any other species,” as an anthropological movement in the United States (114). Though operating in different ways – on one hand as a faith-based argument that effectively denies the existence of evolution as a process,<sup>1</sup> and the other as a pseudo-scientific rationale that co-opts it to justify white Euro-American superiority of not just race, but species – both of these ideas helped to discursively reinforce and perpetuate the institution of slavery. By correlating the Tsalalians’ characterization as “the most wicked, hypocritical, vindictive, bloodythirsty, and altogether fiendish race of men upon the face of the globe” (Poe 169) with the color of their skin, Poe is therefore drawing upon established systems of naturalized racial hierarchies that had permeated the 19<sup>th</sup> century American public consciousness.

The association of the Tsalal natives’ blackness with their wickedness and treachery in *Pym* hence reinforces a conservative American national image that favours white power by naturalizing racial traits and correlating the racial hierarchy with a moral one. This racialized national image advanced here is tenuous, however, and ultimately points to deep divisions within United States society. It is precisely to such divisions that we now turn.

### *The Divided States of America*

Contrary to the prevailing, if implicit, assumption within American Antarctic literary scholarship that the American culture and identity portrayed is unified, *Pym*

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<sup>1</sup> Since by extension of its logic it “did not allow for the creation of new species” (Wijkmark 100).

criticism broadly demonstrates how the novel exposes deep fractures within nineteenth century American society. Within Antarctic literary criticism, but especially within studies that focus on the place of Antarctica in American culture (such as those of Glasberg, Lenz, and Wijkmark), Poe's *Pym* is a touchstone. There are perhaps multiple reasons for this, including the fact that *Pym* has more broadly enjoyed a surge of critical interest over the last fifty years. But the most salient reason that studies of American Antarctic literature keep returning to *Pym* as a touchstone is that, as Glasberg first claimed, it is a rich text that inscribes the Antarctic within an American cultural imaginary by projecting specifically American desires and anxieties onto it.

The existing Antarctic literary scholarship on Poe's *Pym* has done a fine job of developing the particular American inflections that the continent takes on in the work, notably its articulations of nineteenth-century concerns over race and imperialism in the United States, as well as deeply rooted ideas of exceptionalism and (Anglo) American myths of origin. In doing so, however, these critical works rest heavily on the assumption that the American culture and nation portrayed is unified while missing the fact that *Pym* itself is about breakdowns of order (hierarchies, race) and communication – that is, of narrative and national identity. Even Leane and Glasberg, the first scholars to move the field beyond considering only national frameworks, do not go so far as to suggest overtly that Antarctica operates as a fictional setting where national identity breaks down. Glasberg's *Antarctica as Cultural Critique* approaches this territory in her discussion about the ambivalence Admiral Byrd's vision for real-world Antarctica as both a site of U.S. power and a place of international convergence, but her analysis is concerned with the ambivalent past and present place of Antarctica in real-world U.S. and global

geopolitics rather than how the fictional Antarctic helps to reveal the cracks in the fabric of 1830s American culture and society.

There are two erroneous, if implicit, assumptions made by Antarctic literary critics who treat *Pym* as presenting a unified American national identity: first, that the Antarctic exploration in the Tsalal episode of *Pym* is an American enterprise; and second, that the American national discourse and identity projected in *Pym* is unified and harmonious. However, neither of these assumptions is correct. In fact, as the wider scholarship on *Pym* has overwhelmingly shown, the text more accurately points toward the U.S. as a deeply divided nation, and its frequent miscommunications suggest it is a work thematically about dissonance rather than harmony or unity. Significantly, the Antarctic is used as a site where the text's breakdowns are most severe, first at Tsalal with the decimation of the *Jane Guy*'s crew by the native people, then later near the South Pole where the narrative itself simply ends without conclusion. Before turning in earnest to the functions of the Antarctic in this scheme, it is fruitful to begin by exploring the reasons why the above assumptions made by critics falter under closer scrutiny.

Given the fervent interest of the American public for Antarctic exploration in the 1830s (Gitelman 350; Lenz xxviii), it is not surprising that critics of *Pym* commonly link Pym's and the *Jane Guy*'s fictional exploration of the high austral latitudes to parallel endeavours on the part of the U.S. at the time. In *Antarcticas of the Imagination*, Glasberg even goes so far as to claim that "[i]n *Pym*, the Wilkes Expedition is less basis of fiction than parallel or alternative text (or fellow explorer) in what was, in the dearth of actual voyages of exploration, a 'paper chase' for Antarctica" (95). While it has been convincingly argued by Glasberg and Wijkmark that the concurrent popular interest in

Antarctica and a U.S. south seas expedition likely account for *Pym* being partially set in the region, there is not sufficient grounds to claim Antarctic exploration in the novel as wholly, or even mostly, American in character. Arthur Pym and Dirk Peters might be the work's main protagonists, but the *Jane Guy*, her Captain, and most of her crew were British. Even if, as Pym insists, he personally "must still be allowed to feel some degree of gratification, however remotely, in opening to the eye of science one of the most intensely exciting secrets which has ever engrossed its attention" (130) – the Antarctic – the main (fictional) credit for their discoveries should properly be British, not American.

And herein lies the often overlooked reality of American Antarctic exploration: it did not exist in a vacuum, but rather was indebted to European, and particularly British, science and exploration. This indebtedness was articulated by no less than President John Quincy Adams, who claimed in 1825 that the United States held a "sacred debt" to contribute to global knowledge because it had benefitted so much from European science (Wijkmark 32). President Adams's sentiment would later be mobilized by a man named Jeremiah Reynolds, a crusader for American Antarctic exploration, in his own arguments to the U.S. House of Representatives for a naval expedition to the far South Seas (34). These examples are flashpoints in a wider trend that saw the discursive wedding of scientific discovery and exploration to (inter)national prestige take root in the U.S. in the period from 1800-1850, during which there was a "surge in scientific professionalization and expansionist fervor which cumulatively resulted in the Anglo-American theory of Manifest Destiny" (Nelson 92).

There is a certain amount of irony to this trend, however, since the desire for the United States to "take its rightful place" as a major international player is ultimately used

to reinforce the logic of American Exceptionalism, which attempts to distance the U.S. from its European origins by claiming its historical uniqueness and departure from the patterns and cycles of European nations. This is consistent with Susan M. Matarese's argument in her exploration of the cultural beliefs that underpin America's national image, *American Foreign Policy and the Utopian Imagination*, that there is an inherent tension between two impulses that come out of American exceptionalism: introversion and messianism. These competing impulses are commonly derived from "a self-consciousness regarding role that has been a constant in the nation's history," a conception of its own exceptionalism which holds that "the United States is unique, different in crucial respects from virtually all other countries, but most notably in its divergence from the patterns of historical development that characterized the Old World" (35, 72). The entrenchment of exceptionalism as a key element of the American national image "result[s] in a dynamic tension between the desire to withdraw from world affairs into a kind of virtuous isolation and a view of the United States as an international savior: righteous, benevolent, invincible, and destined by history to redeem the world" (36). The discourse of American exceptionalism is therefore fundamentally ambivalent, but both of its competing impulses agree on the supremacy of American ideals, if not how to enact them. To define *Pym*'s fictional Antarctic exploits as specifically American requires another kind of ambivalence that on one hand emphasizes the historical parallels to the Wilkes expedition and U.S. national and cultural interest in the Antarctic in the 1830s, while on the other overlooks both the real-world European influences on U.S. exploration and the aspects of *Pym* itself that point to U.S. and European science and exploration in dialogue with one another. In fact, not only does the novel signify the cross-pollination of

American and European knowledge of the globe by placing the intrepid Pym aboard a British ship, but its repetition of American myths of origin could suggest the United States' insecurity over its own cultural identity, and thus its cultural desire to distance itself from the Old World.

A passage that symbolically represents the interconnectedness of American and Old World knowledge, culture, and, most specifically, Antarctic endeavours is the description of the symbiotic nesting relationship between albatrosses and penguins, to which Poe devotes a full two pages of the text:

Between [the albatross] and the penguin the most singular friendship exists. Their nests are constructed with great uniformity, upon a plan concerted between the two species; that of the albatross being placed in the centre of a little square formed by the nests of four penguins. (113)

Pym then proceeds to enumerate the many points of interest in their relationship, from the geometric layouts and precision of their common shared rookery's construction, to the "thievish propensities prevalent in the rookery" (114). Though frequently overlooked or excused as a stylistic choice calculated by Poe to align *Pym* with the generic expectations of travel writing and sea adventures, this section in fact can be read as a metaphor for the interrelation of American and British South Seas exploration at the time. Under this interpretation, the albatross, an obvious allusion to Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, one of the first and most canonical texts in Antarctic literature, most easily represents the British, leaving the penguin to signify the Americans. Like the albatross, which is known for its ability to fly very long distances and for "never coming on land except for the purpose of breeding" (113), a form of expansion, Britain's geopolitical

reach and nautical might at the time was vast. Compared to the albatross, the flightless penguin is more limited in its mobility, though still sea-capable, and therefore serves as a good metonym for the United States in relation to Britain's maritime prestige. Yet as this passage elucidates, the two dissimilar birds coexist in their habitations despite their apparent differences, which can be allegorically read as signifying the interconnectedness of British and American cultural roots and shared knowledge base. Indeed, the reference to the "thievish propensities prevalent in the rookery" (114) perhaps even suggests the dual logic of American exceptionalism at play – that although American culture and knowledge is principally indebted to Britain, it is frequently "stolen" or passed off as being American in character and origin.

In addition to assuming that South Seas exploration in *Pym* is a fundamentally American enterprise, Antarctic literary scholars have also tended to assume that the American national discourse and identity projected in *Pym* is unified and harmonious. However, despite capturing the contemporary American national mood for global, and specifically Antarctic, exploration,<sup>2</sup> as well as the desire for the United States to "contribute to the community of nations" (Wijkmark 35), *Pym* also points to the fractures in the American national imagined community at the time. Its treatment of American racial discourse, and specifically the hot-button issue of slavery, is at times ambivalent, but always deeply racist. In spite of, or perhaps because of, this ambivalence, *Pym* points to the rift between the North and South, as well as between Native Americans, European Americans and immigrants, and black slaves.

Although the field of Antarctic literary studies has not delved into how *Pym* highlights major fault lines in nineteenth-century American society, *Pym* scholarship

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<sup>2</sup> As emblemized in the Wilkes Expedition.

more generally has positively blossomed with explorations of the ways in which the text exposes the rifts and fissures in 1830s American society, principally through its treatment of race. *Pym* was written at a time when tensions between the North and South over the issue of slavery were heating up. The occurrence of slave rebellions<sup>3</sup> in the South and the rise of polygenesis as an essentialist theory of racial difference exacerbated the ideological divide between North and South, which, of course, would ultimately lead to the American Civil War. Scholars who have engaged with *Pym*'s treatment of race have come at it from several angles, including debating evidence of Poe's personal and political views on the subject,<sup>4</sup> as well as its role in positioning *Pym* in the literary market. On this last point, Terrance Whelan has suggestively argued that, although Poe's personal views on slavery remain ambiguous, he used a sort of "average racism" in his works as a strategy for courting a national readership in both the abolitionist North and the slave-holding South (29-30), effectively remaining ambivalent on the specifics of his racial politics in order to negotiate the turbulent waters created by the growing division between North and South.

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<sup>3</sup> Slave rebellions, and specifically the Nat Turner Rebellion, have often been cited as a major catalyst that drove up the rhetoric around slavery in the United States in the 1830s. As Lilly explicates, the Nat Turner rebellion "caused hysteria over the possibility of further slave insurrections on American soil, and led to white retaliation against innocent black slaves. The questions of slavery and race were debated at the pulpit, with abolitionists preaching biblical injunctions decrying the practice of slavery in a nation under God, and pro-slavery advocates counter-preaching that scripture upheld that slavery was ordained by providence. Antebellum America's questions and divisions over race ultimately led to the division of the country in a bitter and bloody civil war that ended American slavery but did not, in the end, answer America's questions on race" (84).

<sup>4</sup> In the past, some scholars, like Dana Nelson (*The Word in Black and White*) and John Carlos Rowe ("Poe, Antebellum Slavery, and Modern Criticism"), have argued that *Pym* is a proslavery text based on an essay attributed to Poe that ardently defended slavery as a property right and was published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, the magazine for which Poe was once editor. It has since been compellingly proven by Terrance Whalen, however, that this article had been wrongly attributed to Poe, having been written instead by proslavery advocate Nathaniel Beverley Tucker (7-11). As a result, subsequent studies regarding slavery and race in *Pym* have tended to assume (more safely) that Poe's "views were fairly typical of white attitudes [toward slavery]" in his era (Kennedy "Trust No Man" 236). *Pym* is therefore perhaps best viewed as the cultural product of a writer instantiated in a society that was systemically and "fundamentally racist."

The *Grampus* Episode of *Pym* represents this deep national division in two ways: through the ambivalent portrayal of the racially liminal Dirk Peters and, second, through the metaphor of the ship as the “Ship of State” in severe disrepair. Beginning with Peters, the character is fascinating precisely because he simultaneously conforms to a stereotypical caricature of Native Americans, but also becomes a main protagonist, following Pym. Peters’s dynamic positioning is mainly set up during and following the mutiny aboard the *Grampus* by establishing his moderating position when contrasted with his fellow mutineers. As Pym learns from Augustus upon leaving his hiding place in the ship’s hold, the mutineers were not a united front:

There now seemed to be two principal factions among the crew – one headed by the mate, the other by the cook. The former party were for seizing the first suitable vessel which should present itself, and equipping it at some of the West India Islands for a piratical cruise. The latter division, however, which was the stronger, and included Dirk Peters among its partisans, were bent upon pursuing the course originally laid out for the brig into the South Pacific; there either to take whale, or act otherwise, as circumstances should suggest. (45)

Given the options of turning pirate or carrying out their original commercial purpose, Peters not only chooses the latter but is singled out by name as one of its primary advocates (45). As the mate slowly shifts the balance of power between the two groups by winning supporters over to his piracy scheme, Peters remains one of the only hold-outs for the most “legitimate” direction for the ship to take. He was also “the main instrument in preserving the life of Augustus” by preventing both his murder during the

mutiny and his being set adrift with the rest of the captured crew members (39). In doing so, Dirk Peters becomes the self-appointed liaison and mediator not only between Augustus (and eventually Pym) and the mutineers, but also between the ship's original purpose of whaling and the most radical course of piracy proposed by some of the other mutineers.

His race, place of origin, and experience further position Peters as a liminal or moderating character. As Pym describes, Dirk Peters:

was the son of an Indian woman of the tribe of Upsarokas, who live among the fastnesses of the Black Hills, near the source of the Missouri. His father was a fur-trader, I believe, or at least connected in some manner with the Indian trading-posts on Lewis river. (38)

Given that this portion of the narrative is set in 1827, it therefore seems likely that Peters would have been born in South Dakota around the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803; that is, at the frontier. The passage above acknowledges as well that he is racially mixed, being the product of a Native American mother and (presumably) white fur-trading father, a fact which is later reinforced by other characters referring to him derogatively as “half-breed.” Peters’s origins, therefore, mark him as a liminal character, being both in-between (racially), and at the edge (on the frontier). Socially, aboard the ship, he is an outsider who “was regarded, at the time of the mutiny, with feelings more of derision than of anything else” (39). This is probably in part because of his mixed racial status, but it is also likely the result of his grotesque physical appearance.

Peters himself was one of the most ferocious-looking men I ever beheld. He was short in stature, not more than four feet eight inches high, but his

limbs were of Herculean mould. His hands, especially, were so enormously thick and broad as hardly to retain a human shape. His arms, as well as legs, were bowed in the most singular manner, and appeared to possess no flexibility whatever. His head was equally deformed, being of immense size, with an indentation on the crown (like that on the head of most negroes) and entirely bald. (38)

These outward features, along with a constant expression of “demon”-like merriment on his face and anecdotal cause to doubt his sanity (39), mark Peters as an outsider even among the mutineers. Yet ironically he is the most redeemable of all of them.

Peters is therefore a deeply ambivalent character: he is a mutineer, but an outcast among the mutineers, and one who opts for a return to the status quo (i.e. to basically carry out the ship’s original whaling mission) rather than going pirate. He is also a “half-breed,” born at the frontier, and with both European and Native American ancestry. Through his liminality, Peters represents an attempt at negotiating the deep divisions – ideological and racial – that existed between the American North and South at the time. Yet the character himself is grotesque, both in appearance and physical abilities, which, if Peters is read as some kind of personified negotiation of the fractures in American society, suggests that such a mediation would itself be grotesque in nature.

Aside from his mediating role and the significantly greater attention that Poe gives to describing him relative to his fellow mutineers, Peters is granted one further important narrative distinction from his shipmates: he is the only other character besides Pym to survive the entire affair of mutiny, counter-mutiny, and extreme deprivation aboard the *Grampus*. Indeed, Peters not only survives the ordeal but goes on to be Pym’s

companion through the rest of the novel, being the only crewman aboard the *Jane Guy* besides Pym to survive the Tsalal episode as well. But this fact begs the important question of *why* Poe chose him as the only other character besides the eponymous Pym to twice survive such cataclysm.

The answer to this question links back to the larger issue here of national image in the deeply divided American society of the 1830s. In short: it is precisely because of Peters's liminality and grotesqueness that he is made to survive along with Pym. His actions, appearance, race, and character all mark him as an outsider, even among the mutineers, yet he ultimately is a conservative figure, opting for the most legitimate course for the ship following the mutiny, refusing the radical leap to piracy outright, and eventually becoming reinscribed within the dominant order. Even his grotesque appearance strains the limits of what may be considered human features while still remaining fundamentally recognizable as a version of the human form. Peters is an embodiment of how *Pym* encodes the limits of American national image by pushing racial, social, and physical boundaries while ultimately never undermining the normative (white, middle class) order.

#### *Mutiny Aboard the Ship of State*

The metaphor of the *Grampus* as the ship of state serves as an interpretive vehicle for exploring how *Pym* uses the recurring theme of revolt and revolution to dramatize the limits of American national image through social breakdowns, exemplified in this episode by the mutiny, counter-mutiny, murder, and cannibalism that occur on board. Indeed, these breakdowns of order are so severe that by the end of the episode the *Grampus* is

reduced to wreckage. In “Poe’s *Pym* and the American Social Imagination,” Eric Mottram connects the metaphor of the ship as American society with *Pym*’s overarching themes of revolt and deception. Fundamentally, Mottram views the text’s rebellions as being against not just authority, but also society:

Clearly, *Pym* is not the bourgeois social novel as it had developed since the eighteenth century. The ship is a traditional synecdoche for society, but what is Pym’s function within it? It conceals him, he is buried in it inactively; when he tries to join it, it is through rebellion, mutiny, revolt and chance. From this point on the ship will be his means of moving out of society toward the unknown, the altogether other. This is to be a fiction of the self alone. A society does not hold him. He makes his own way to discover the world as if it were new, and merge with it. (38)

Mottram therefore sees Pym’s rebellion as an indictment of social integration. Ultimately, Pym’s rejection of society contributes to the text’s “subversion of the great dream of union and stability,” which Mottram claims is the reason why “Poe and Pym persist in the American social imagination” (52).

The conflicts aboard the *Grampus*, the “ship of state,” are emblematic of the novel’s broader thematic preoccupation with revolt, which lies at the heart of American national identity. Eminent *Pym* scholar Gerald Kennedy has argued that *Pym*’s themes of revolt and deception are indeed so pervasive that they must constitute a deliberate design (“Trust No Man” 244), a point which he uses to counter the claims of other critics who dismiss *Pym* for its patchwork quality and numerous narrative inconsistencies. Kennedy even links Pym’s class revolt from paternal authority and wealth to the racially-charged

revolt by the Tsalal natives in the Antarctic:

Without denying the “negrophobia” of the Tsalal episode, we may observe that *Pym* both affirms and questions Anglo-Saxon racial hegemony . . . although the novel unfolds from the subject position of a young white American horrified in the final chapters by the murderous behavior of black “savages,” the narrator is nevertheless (as we see in the opening chapters) in revolt himself against wealth, property, and trade – against the same commercial forces that the natives repulse by their actions. (244)

Although Kennedy is (rightfully) careful here not to dismiss the obviously racist dimensions of the text, he is apt to note the consistency between the Tsalalians’ violent rejection of the *Jane Guy*’s attempts to indoctrinate them, and indeed make them “productive” within, Western geopolitical and economic frameworks and Pym’s similarly-motivated rebellion at the beginning of the novel. Fundamentally, these acts of rebellion and revolt are against the will of a (presumed) authority figure that is external to the subject person or group. In this sense, the recurring theme of revolt in *Pym* has an antecedent in a foundational event: the American Revolution. The very birth of the United States in the Revolutionary War was itself an act of revolt against a paternalistic colonial authority, a violent rejection of Britain’s political and economic control over its North American colonies.

At their root, instances of revolt, rebellion, and revolution in this text point to fissures in American society, but also form the thematic basis of the text’s allegory for national identity creation in its implicit assertion of renewal and newness. The text continually recoils in the face of revolt and revolution, however, pointing to the existence

of an absolute horizon beyond which identity becomes unrecognizable and thus breaks down. There are several occasions in *Pym* that suggest the existence of such absolute horizons. One of the most prominent is Pym's rebellion against his family early in the narrative. After feeling the draw of the sea and already experiencing one minor (though still life-threatening) nautical misadventure aboard the *Ariel*, Pym becomes determined to return to the sea:

It might be supposed that a catastrophe such as I have just related would have effectually cooled my incipient passion for the sea. On the contrary, I never experienced a more ardent longing for the wild adventures incident to the life of navigator than within a week after our deliverance. This short period proved amply long enough to erase from my memory the shadows, and bring out in vivid life all the pleurably exciting points of color, all the picturesqueness of the late perilous accident. (13)

Eighteen months after the *Ariel* incident, his longing finds a potential new outlet in the form of the impending departure of the *Grampus* on a whaling expedition. The *Grampus*, coincidentally, is captained by the father of Pym's friend Augustus Barnard, with whom he shared his first sea adventure on the *Ariel*, and who would be accompanying his father aboard the *Grampus* for her journey. At first, Pym seeks permission from his family to go with his friend for the voyage:

My father made no direct opposition; but my mother went into hysterics at the bare mention of the design; and, more than all, my grandfather, from whom I expected much, vowed to cut me off with a shilling if I should ever broach the subject to him again. These difficulties, however, so far

from abating my desire, only added fuel to the flame. I determined to go at all hazards; and, having made known my intention to Augustus, we set about arranging a plan by which it might be accomplished. (14)

What this passage tells us, apart from the fact that Pym was intent on going to sea, is that by embarking on the *Grampus* and undermining the wishes of his family Pym rejects the modes of production that attempt to exert authority over him. Central to this rejection is Pym's grandfather, who is both an elder male authority figure and also represents Pym's capitalist birthright. Indeed, it is rarely remarked that this rejection is trumped by the fact that virtually the first details Pym tells us about himself at the very beginning of the novel are not his interests or concerns, but his staunchly middle-class lineage:

My name is Arthur Gordon Pym. My father was a respectable trader in sea-stores at Nantucket, where I was born. My maternal grandfather was an attorney in good practice. He was fortunate in everything, and had speculated very successfully in stocks of the Edgerton New Bank as it was formerly called. By these and other means he had managed to lay by a tolerable sum of money. (4)

Implicit to this passage is that Pym's identity is first and foremost predicated on his inherited social class, as signified by the professions and wealth of his father and grandfather. By explicitly going against the wishes of his grandfather, Pym therefore rejects his inheritance (both material and social) and all prospects of a comfortable, profitable, and, above all, secure life as heir to a successful New England family in favor of pursuing the romantic lure of adventures at sea.

The mutiny aboard the *Grampus*, like the Tsalalians' rebellion against the *Jane*

*Guy*'s crew, parallels Pym's revolt against his family and their expectations since all are forms of revolution against the dominant capitalist mode of production. Given his own recent rebellion on similar grounds, it is therefore significant that Pym recoils in the face of actual revolution and becomes, as a result, reinscribed within the dominant order by sheer virtue of his automatic opposition to the radical notions of mutiny and piracy. Read more allegorically, Pym's "softer" rejection of capitalism and the authority of his family represents a personal movement toward creating a new personal subject position for himself – that is, a movement toward changing his identity into one that is different but still recognizably Pym. The mutiny, despite sharing the same rebellious underpinnings as Pym's revolt, however, is so radical a change that its result is not recognizable to Pym. In this sense, the mutiny is an absolute horizon of identity creation. The shipwreck and cannibalism that follow as a direct result of the mutiny serve to further underscore the mutiny as a kind of absolute horizon. Aesthetically, these events are characterized by Poe's evocation of the grotesque, both in the spectre of the plague ship and the consumption of Parker's body following the gruesome lottery. The recoil that occurs as a result of these grotesque occurrences parallels the kind of recoil Pym experiences when confronted with real revolution. The very idea of mutiny is itself also grotesque since it is a perversion of the social order aboard the ship, a fact which is perhaps most pointedly signified by the emergence of the black cook as one of its principal leaders. Though Pym is figuratively reinscribed in the dominant order in his opposition to the mutineers, it is only after his and Peters's rescue by the *Jane Guy* that it is physically consummated and the social status quo restored. The fact that the rescuing ship is named after a woman is also tempting to interpret as a return to domesticity, which was precisely what Pym was

rejecting in going to sea.

*The Absolute Horizon of Antarctica: The Edge of Fact and Identity*

Having recoiled in the face of radical changes to social structure, the novel, through Pym, shifts its approach to dramatizing the limits of the American national image from the metaphorically social to the geographic: the exploration of the (at the time) uncharted high austral latitudes. The Antarctic region serves as a new American frontier that parallels both the 1830s American Western frontier and American interests (commercial and geopolitical) in South Seas exploration in this text (Glasberg *Imagination* 45-46). But more than simply being an object of imperial aspirations or outlet for nationalism, the as-yet-unknown Antarctic represents both a potentially fertile new ground to be circumscribed by the American national image, as well as an absolute horizon beyond which that concept of national selfhood breaks down. By signifying the world's geographic limit, the Antarctic becomes a site of crisis for American ideology and identity, and one where the text's breakdowns are most manifest and severe, first at Tsalal with the decimation of the *Jane Guy*'s crew by the native people, then finally near the South Pole where the narrative itself simply ends without conclusion.

The idea that the Antarctic is figured as an absolute horizon for the American national image of the 1830s can be gleaned if the novel's narrative course is loosely mapped against the history of American territorial expansion. The plot, like Euro-American history in what is now the United States, begins in New England but is quickly seized by the protagonist Pym's desire to move and expand. The *Grampus* episode does not actually parallel any physical or historical movement, but rather, as noted above, uses

the recurring theme of revolt and revolution to dramatize the limits of the American national image through social breakdowns. Appropriately, though the *Grampus* is obviously in the North Atlantic, this entire part of the narrative takes place at sea with no landmarks to pinpoint the ship's geographic position, besides which the ship(wreck) is adrift for a significant portion of the episode. The *Grampus* ship and episode are effectively "in-between" destinations, which underscores the metaphorical purpose of this section. By contrast, the *Jane Guy* section of the novel has definitive direction: South. In the most literal sense, then, the narrative moves from New England and expands South. As Leslie Fiedler notes, this movement is thematically reflected in the imagery and racial anxieties stirred by the Tsalal episode:

Insofar as *Gordon Pym* is finally as social document as well as a fantasy, its subject is slavery; and its scene, however disguised, is that section of America which was to destroy itself defending that institution . . . Though the movement of *Gordon Pym* seems to bear us away from America, once Nantucket and New Bedford have been left behind, and to carry us through remoter and remoter seas toward the exotic Antarctic, it ends in a region quite unlike the actual polar regions. Heading toward an expected world of ice and snow, Pym finds instead a place of tepid waters and luxuriant growth; seeking a white world, he discovers, beside and within it, a black one. (397)

Fiedler is by no means the only *Pym* critic to claim that the *Jane Guy* goes "not to the South Pole, but to the American South" (398). In his encompassing survey *The Critical History of Edgar Allan Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, Ronald

Harvey identifies such scholars as Harry Levin and Sidney Kaplan among the “[n]umerous *Pym* commentators [who] have taken the Tsalal episode to be an allegorical statement on this situation” of racial anxiety in the South, and notes that “a few have made it a major part of their interpretation, generally seeing it as, for instance, an apocryphal warning of the nightmare scenario of slave revolt” (144).<sup>5</sup> Within such common interpretations, the ship’s literal movement southward directly parallels the narrative’s allegorical trajectory into the American South. As is widely acknowledged, and as argued above, the Tsalal episode of *Pym* foregrounds the deeply racist attitudes held by Poe’s contemporaries towards black slaves and articulates anxieties over race and slavery that divide North from South. But if the *Jane Guy*’s movement toward the South Pole in *Pym* is, as scholars like Fiedler claim, metaphorically a movement to American South, then the South itself is defined entirely by antagonistic race relations in this work – another powerful example of how the text shows a deeply riven American national identity.

As previously explicated, there is another line of interpretation, principally advanced by such scholars as Glasberg and Lenz who are interested in the ways that Antarctica itself has been mobilized within American culture, which asserts that the *Jane Guy*’s journey south coincides with American continental expansion westward. Since the parallels between the American frontier and Antarctica for the U.S. in the 1830s have already been established, it is unnecessary to rehash this point completely. It is worth noting, however, that unlike “Antarctic as American South” readings, which are historically grounded in the social, cultural, material, and economic realities of 1830s

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<sup>5</sup> One of the most commonly cited signifiers for the “Antarctica as the South” interpretation is that upon entering the tepid Antarctic the ship is greeted by a small rocky islet that is described as having “a singular ledge of rock . . . bearing a strong resemblance to corded bales of cotton” (Harvey 128).

America, Glasberg's interpretation of *Pym*'s speculative Antarctic as the American West instead allows the region to serve as a warning for the future:

the story of the search for the last continent . . . encompasses conflicts in American ideologies of creation and expansion. Antarctica is a new world, and yet as geographical terminus, it conjures the end of progress, of knowledge, and of literature. The Antarctica of *Pym* confronts the locus of imperial desire, individual power, and the immanence of a "cosmic" end.  
(*Imagination* 122)

By ironically standing for the end of geographic expansion, the Antarctic is therefore an absolute physical horizon for 1830s America. In the fictional world of *Pym*, the encounter with the towering white figure at the very end may represent, among other things, the approaching limit of global geographic expansion;<sup>6</sup> indeed, Glasberg herself claims that the text "undermines . . . the imperial assumption that there will always be more land to explore" with its inconclusion (90). The world's finite amount of space available for expansion was a deeper problem for 1830s America, however, since, as Glasberg remarks above, American society was rooted in "ideologies of creation and expansion" (122). What does a nation whose *modus operandi* is to continually extend itself do once there is no more room to physically grow? By signifying the world's geographic limit, the Antarctic becomes a site of crisis for American ideology and identity. If *Pym*'s fictional exploration of the Antarctic is taken as an attempt to circumscribe the far south within American cultural identity, then the white figure at the end is the absolute horizon of identity expansion, but its use to end the novel suddenly and enigmatically also represents

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<sup>6</sup> Though it is not my focus here, there may be a link between the diminishing room for the US to expand around this time and the appeal of Symmes's "holes at the poles" theory, which, had it been true, would have left open the inner earth for exploration and expansion.

the lack of an answer for what happens after an unstoppable force meets an immovable object. Critics have been trying to decipher the enigma of the white figure at the end of *Pym* since the novel was published, but maybe the enigma is the point: it is the uncertainty that lies beyond known limits, be they physical or ideological.

The Tsalal episode is the clearest example of where the Antarctic serves as a site where the American national image rooted in “ideologies of creation and expansion” (Glasberg *Imagination* 122) breaks down in this text. This breakdown occurs as a result of the failure of Pym, Peters, and the crew of the *Jane Guy* to indoctrinate the Tsalal natives within a recognizably American economic and racial paradigm in the hopes of making them productive in the broader global system of capitalism. As Lenz notes, the expansion of economic markets, particularly for the whaling and sealing industries, was in fact one of the main material motivations behind the Wilkes Expedition (121), a priority that *Pym* echoes. Upon arriving at Tsalal, Captain Guy resolves to stay some time “with a view of discovering what were the chief productions of the country, and whether any of them might be turned to profit” (140). The crew noted on arrival the presence of *bêche de mer*, a kind of sea cucumber that “commands a great price” in China (143), and quickly learn from the natives that it is in such abundance that they “could easily load a dozen vessels with the animal if necessary” (141). Within days, they “established a regular market on the shore” (142) to barter with the natives for supplies, and Captain Guy “resolved to enter into negotiation with Too-wit [the native chief] for the erection of suitable houses in which to cure the [*bêche de mer*], and for the services of himself and the tribe in gathering as much as possible” (142). As these descriptions connote, no time is wasted in attempting to encourage Tsalal and its people to adopt the ethos of

capitalism. The use of the jet black Tsalal natives as a form of cheap labour additionally suggest a specific American character to this form of capitalist expansion, as it recreates a system of racialized exploitation similar to the antebellum U.S. domestic slave economy.

However, the Antarctic in *Pym* proves to not be reducible to raw, racialized form of economic exploitation like that of the domestic United States, nor is it amenable to being circumscribed as a new market within a wider system of global capitalism. The Tsalal natives revolt, not just against the crew's scheme to have them harvest *bêche de mer*, but against the *Jane Guy* itself – the vehicle for capitalist expansion in this text. Insofar as the U.S.'s national image is aligned here with American “ideologies of creation and expansion” (Glasberg *Imagination* 122) and the domestic slave economy, the Tsalal episode of *Pym* represents a wholesale breakdown of that national image. The Antarctic in this text is therefore a site of crisis for American capitalism, which grounds its dominant ideology and identity, and indeed more broadly signifies the limits of capitalist thought, a fact which in many ways anticipates the continent's continued resistance to the traditional logic of capitalist expansion and exploitation into the present Treaty Era.

Several *Pym* scholars have previously claimed that elements of the novel signify the limits of knowledge itself as well. Gitelman, for instance, asserts that the 84<sup>th</sup> parallel is the “edge of fact” in *Pym*, which Poe does not cross in his efforts to negotiate empirical knowledge of the Antarctic region and his own speculative fiction. Glasberg likewise contends that in this work Poe “conflates scientific and literary discourses in order to question the basis of all institutionalized forms of knowing” (*Imagination* 90), and further makes “[a]ny point of reference . . . be it Aurora or South Pole, [remain] on one level always unattainable, always mythical and beyond the scope of knowledge” (103). It is in

Wijkmark's *One of the Most Intensely Exciting Secrets*, however, that the thematic relationship between Antarctica and knowledge in *Pym* are most saliently linked. In this study, Wijkmark argues that "[t]he shift from a fantastical to a realistic mode of Antarctic representation [in American literature] occurred in perfect synchronicity with the empirical discovery of the continent" between 1820 and 1849 (11); *Pym* therefore "dramatize[s] the limits of geographical knowledge . . . figuring as the possible limit of human understanding" (13). He goes on to claim that *Pym* was a "symbolic recreation of the general sense of anticipation in the 1830s before an imminent exploration [Wilkes] that would finally put an end to centuries of Antarctic speculation," and thus occupies a transitional place along the trajectory from fantastic to realistic fiction (151). The ending, under this reading, stops the narrative short of actual discovery, paralleling *Pym*'s publication on the eve of the Wilkes Expedition's launch.

There is, however, a facet to *Pym*'s ending (or rather the ending filled in by the post-textual "Note") that is often overlooked and therefore under-discussed: Pym returns from the Antarctic region to tell the tale, or most of it at any rate. As the extra-textual editor<sup>7</sup> claims of the narrative:

It is feared that the few remaining chapters which were to have completed [Mr. Pym's] narrative, and which were retained by him, while the above were in type, for the purpose of revision, have been irrecoverably lost through the accident by which he perished himself. This, however, may

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<sup>7</sup> The editorial voice in the concluding "Note" establishes that it is not (or at least not supposed to be) Poe through third person reference to "The gentleman whose name is mentioned in the preface" as the literary craftsman of Pym's supposedly factual account, i.e. "Mr. Poe" (176-77). In fact, the editorial voice of the note goes to some lengths to distance itself from both Poe and Pym by pointing to their shortcomings in identifying the symbols in the chasms on Tsalal as having antecedents in other, existing written languages (177-78).

prove not to be the case, and the papers, if ultimately found, will be given to the public.

No means have been left untried to remedy the deficiency. The gentleman whose name is mentioned in the preface [Poe], and whom from the statement there made, might be supposed able to fill the vacuum, has declined the task; this, for satisfactory reasons connected with the general inaccuracy of the details afforded him, and his general disbelief in the entire truth of the latter portions of the narrative. (176)

From a structural perspective, this passage operates as a plausible explanation for the lack of resolution in the overall narrative, while also leaving the door open to a sequel if Pym's papers are "ultimately found" or if the still-living Dirk Peters "may hereafter be found, and will, no doubt, afford the material for a conclusion of Mr. Pym's account" (176). This point has been mobilized by various *Pym* scholars seeking either to point out the work's (and Poe's) narrative failures, or to suggest Poe is indeed attempting to lay the groundwork for such a sequel.

But, to come back to the present thesis, what does this hurried and seemingly insubstantial conclusion to the narrative say about the American national image, if anything? To answer this question, we must return to the obvious but overlooked fact here: Pym returns to tell the tale. Contrary to the readings of Gitelman, Glasberg, and Wijkmark, however, the appended "Note" is not merely about the limits of knowledge, narrative, or progress; the knowledge/narrative still exists, and therefore can still progress, in the form of Pym's missing notes, Poe's editorial knowledge, and Peters's as-yet-untold account. In the cases of Pym's notes and the inability to locate Peters to verify

the ending, the lack of an ending is purely circumstantial. However, the second reason for *Pym*'s inconclusion – Poe's refusal to complete it on the grounds of the "general inaccuracy of the details" and his "disbelief in the entire truth of the latter portions of the narrative" (176) – is one of deliberate choice by the ultimate author. It is not that the narrative details cannot be located or do not exist, it is that they defy general believability. In a way, Poe uses his cultural capital as a writer of gothic stories to bolster the idea that the end of *Pym*'s account was unbelievable by placing it in unfavorable comparison to Poe's other fantastical narratives; even Poe thought the ending was not tenable, implying that *Pym*'s ending must have been truly preposterous. Sustaining the parallels used heretofore in this chapter, if the American national image is viewed as a self-constructed cultural narrative, and the narrative of *Pym* is chosen not to be concluded by Poe because it is less and less believable the closer it gets to the South Pole, then the message seems to be that the American narrative of self falls apart the closer it gets to realizing its goal – in this case, the quest to "[open] to the eye of science one of the most intensely exciting secrets which has ever engrossed its attention" by solving the mysteries of the Antarctic (Poe 130). Considered more broadly, if the Antarctic here, as the object of American national interest and endeavour, is merely the latest manifestation of the American drive for progress and expansion, then *Pym*'s "apocalyptic (in)conclusion in a polar abyss [undermines] the imperial assumption that there will always be more land to explore" (Glasberg *Imagination* 90), thereby articulating a cultural anxiety that the end of progress and expansion effectively means the end of American nationhood.

All this is to say that the Antarctic is used as a site where the text's breakdowns are most manifest and severe, first at Tsalal with the decimation of the *Jane Guy*'s crew

by the native people, then finally near the South Pole where the narrative itself simply ends without conclusion. Even communication itself breaks down in the Antarctic, as evidenced by Pym and the *Jane Guy*'s crew's inability to properly interpret the words and intentions of the Tsalal natives (and later the hieroglyphs).<sup>8</sup> The recurrence of such miscommunications suggests that *Pym* is a work thematically about dissonance rather than harmony or unity. By signifying the world's geographic limit, the Antarctic becomes a site of not just dissonance, but also crisis, for American ideology and identity. It is both promised land and wasteland in *Pym* – a place promising untold riches in untapped resources<sup>9</sup> and trade opportunities, but also characterized by death, destruction, and horror. It stands as a metonym for the American desire to expand and assimilate, but also as the spectre of the end to such outward movement (Glasberg 122). Like a star that becomes too massive, an American national identity predicated on expansion seems doomed to eventually collapse in on itself under the weight of its own gravity.

### *Conclusion*

Edgar Allan Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* undoubtedly is concerned with American national identity and image: its recurring theme of revolt and revolution bring allusions to the birth of the United States in the American Revolution; the parallels it draws between the Antarctic and the western frontier both anchor the text in real-world U.S. Antarctic exploration endeavours and suggest a common refrain of expansionism;

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<sup>8</sup> The editor of the final "Note" overtly points to the theme of misreading and misinterpretation by remarking on Pym's inability to properly read and interpret the hieroglyphs broadly as writing, and as having specific antecedents in other language systems. For an excellent analysis on Pym's inability to properly "read" in this text, see Dana Nelson's chapter on *Pym* in *The Word in Black and White* (1992).

<sup>9</sup> As Glasberg notes, Poe "envisions treasure from an Antarctic which initially seems barren; in the case of *Pym*, the prize is an island of dark, volcanic rock with sparse vegetation and scarce wildlife. However, a possibility of profit stems from trade with the Tsalalian natives" (*Imagination* 118).

and the Tsalal natives are rendered to essentialize racial qualities in order to naturalize the moral and racial superiority of white people over people of other ethnicities, making the case for both black slavery and white rule. These attempts to generate a unified national image for the United States in *Pym*, however, begin to collapse under scrutiny. On closer inspection, instances of revolt are commonly followed by a recoil from the result and subsequent return to the status quo; expansionism threatens to crush the protagonists by throwing them out of their ken too much too quickly; and rather than uniting white America under a common banner, the discursive racial divide figured here exposes deep social and cultural divides that existed in the 1830s United States.

Considered in its totality, although *Pym* attempts to create a singular national image for the U.S., the text itself dramatizes the limits of national identity creation and expansion, most poignantly through its enigmatic (in)conclusion with the appearance of the white figure, through the liminal and grotesque character of Dirk Peters, the various ways that it undermines the national unity that it seems to try and create, and the questionable credibility of the narrative itself. Through all this, the Antarctic is a central component of such breakdowns since it serves as an absolute horizon beyond which the American national identity becomes incoherent in this text.

## Chapter 2

### The Unheroic Era: American Antarctic Literature at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

“For four days we have been unable to leave the tent – the gale howling about us. We are weak, writing is difficult, but for my own sake I do not regret this journey, which has shown that Englishmen can endure hardships, help one another, and meet death with as great a fortitude as ever in the past. . . . Had we lived, I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman.” (Robert Scott “Message to the Public”)

These words were among the last recorded by Robert Scott before he and the remainder of his Antarctic expedition members froze to death in their tent in March, 1912. More than anything else, they are prophetic of how Scott and his men would be mobilized in British culture in the coming years as the nation struggled with the staggering losses of the First World War. In the entire body of Antarctic literature as well, Scott’s journal would come to be “often recognized as the continent’s most canonical document” (Leane *Fiction* 8-9), and his tragedy one of its most central narratives.

In the early twentieth century, Scott, and Britain more generally, were at the forefront of what became known as the “Heroic Age” of Antarctic exploration. Indeed, as a nation at the height of its imperial reach, Britain dominated Antarctic exploration during this time,

with Scott's tragic narrative helping it to seal its cultural claim on the continent in a way that Norway and Roald Amundsen, the winners of the Race to the Pole, could not (Glasberg *Cultural Critique* xi-xii). It is for this reason that scholars continue to be enthralled with British Heroic Era exploration narratives, and that of Scott in particular.

But while the British were out exploring the continent in reality and weaving Scott's tragedy into their national imaginary, Americans were still writing romances about lost civilizations and dangerous, exotic beasts in the Antarctic. After being a leader in Antarctic exploration in the early- to mid-nineteenth century with the Wilkes Expedition, the United States "sat out the Heroic Era" altogether (Glasberg *Cultural Critique* xv). That fact alone, however, does not account for the distinct generic differences between Heroic Era American Antarctic texts and their British counterparts. A core question at issue in this chapter, then, is what deeper ideological motivations are at work in the fact that American Antarctic texts of the Heroic Era continued to espouse the lost world narrative as a narrative vehicle? While comparisons to concurrent British Antarctic literature are inevitable and even necessary, it is not the intent here to become mired in comparing American texts to their British counterparts. This is especially the case given the fact that the vast majority of scholarship on Heroic Era narratives concerns British texts, while practically none have made their object to explore trends in American works at the time. Part of the novelty of this chapter therefore comes as a result of it being the first to examine the American Antarctic literature during the Heroic Era as a subject of inquiry in and of itself.

Fundamentally, American and British lost world texts differ in their concerns and the kinds of ideological work they seek to accomplish. American lost world narratives typically create national images for the United States using the tropes of primitivism and evolution to articulate racial hierarchies and discourses of masculinity that privilege and reinforce white

male social hegemony in the United States (Haslam 76-77). As Hanson explains, this is quite different from their British lost world cousins, which, although they did level “social critiques of ‘lost’ societies that reinforced the superiority of British culture” (497), this was accomplished by placing “narrative emphasis . . . on racial and civilizational similarity between the English heroes and members of the lost race” (499); in British lost world narratives, race is thus used as a foil for British culture, and usually served as a platform to articulate desires for British imperial permanence (497). As I will argue, this difference between American and British cultural inflections in lost world narratives explains why American Antarctic literature did not follow British representations of the continent by shifting towards non-fictional renderings of the continent at the beginning of the twentieth century: whereas the stories that emerged out of the British Antarctic expeditions of figures like Scott (who led expeditions from 1901-04 and 1910-13) and Shackleton (who led expeditions from 1907-09 and 1914-17) could be, and were, mobilized to exemplify a kind of essential British character and British imperial might and geopolitical supremacy – functions that, according to Hanson, were previously carried out by British lost world fiction – American Antarctic literature in the early twentieth century maintained its near century-old tradition of representing the region through lost world narratives. This is partially the result of the United States’ lack of any substantial involvement in real-world Heroic Era exploration during this period, but also because the lost world genre had already established its effectiveness at articulating cultural concerns regarding race and masculinity through the tropes of evolution and the primitive.

The differences between British and American historical involvement in Antarctica during the Heroic Era are therefore reflected in how each national culture engaged with the continent generically. In British literature, the non-fictional narratives that emerged from

Antarctic exploration came to have significant cultural resonance, which were further grounded and given tangible value by the scientific and geographic research that drove the exploration itself. Conversely, because the U.S. was not involved in Heroic Era exploration, American literature was untethered from the reality of the continent, and the work accomplished by the American lost world narrative genre (which was virtually synonymous with Antarctic fiction at large in this period) was far less transferrable to a realistic Antarctic context than British non-fiction, which depended on it wholesale. In what might be better termed the Unheroic Era of American Antarctic literature, the Antarctic setting in American texts therefore lacks the specificity of place and pointed cultural resonance of its British counterpart, and instead relies on a nostalgic sense of the continent's epistemological uncertainty and potentiality as the vehicle for its atavistic and racial fantasies.

As exemplified by Charles Romyn Dake's *A Strange Discovery* (1899) and Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Caspak* trilogy (1918),<sup>1</sup> American Antarctic texts of this period form a vision of U.S. nationhood primarily through constructions of masculinity and racial discourse. Central to these constructions are the tropes of primitivism and evolution. Echoing back to Sommer's account of the genre, American Antarctic lost world narratives of the Heroic Era use primitivism to articulate an ideal of masculinity that, if not entirely anti-modern, views close communion with nature as necessary for its attainment. In Dake's sequel to Edgar Allan Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym*, his renderings of Arthur Pym and Dirk Peters, for instance, demonstrate this nature-linked masculinity through favourable comparison to their genteel Antarctic hosts, the Hili-lites, whose virtually effortless mode of living has stripped away both their physical endurance and decisiveness in crisis situations. Likewise, the American and British protagonists in the *Caspak* trilogy closely follow the

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<sup>1</sup> Consisting of his *The Land the Time Forgot*, *The People that Time Forgot*, and *Out of Time's Abyss* (1918).

masculine model set down by Burroughs's most famous atavistic character, Tarzan, by embodying the kind of cosmopolitanism – or the ability to move seamlessly and expertly between modern society and the primitive lost world – that Haslam claims defines his brand of masculinity (86). In both cases, the texts examined generate a certain national image by presenting their protagonists as emblems of a particularly American brand of masculinity.

Both Dake's and Burroughs' texts are also concerned, to different degrees, with race, and use their proffered racial discourses to similarly advance a national image rooted in white supremacy. In *A Strange Discovery*, the inner tale's presentation of the Hili-lites' historical account of the failed surprise assault on their city by the black Tsalalian natives (the principal antagonists of the Antarctic episode in Poe's *Pym*) subtly signifies the absolute superiority of white society over black people. The *Caspak* trilogy takes a different approach to the same end by appealing to the idea of eugenics and essentializing racial difference by relegating black people to the lower strata in Caspak's evolutionary scheme. These texts hence foreground a similar national image that privileges white Americans by discursively reinforcing notions of white superiority and continuing to cast racial difference as the result of inherent (and inherited) traits.

Like *Pym* before them, these texts also contain a kind of counter-impulse that works to disrupt the surface cohesion created by the national images generated through their discourses of masculinity and race. In Dake's text, for example, the literal register of the framing plot, which centers around the American characters exploiting the gullibility of the British narrator, satirically presents U.S. society in self-congratulatory terms. In the allegorical register as well, the Hili-lite society discovered in the Antarctic in the text's inner tale serve as an overly idyllic end case for Dake's contemporary America, but is actually shown to be less potent than the masculine ideals embodied in Arthur Pym and Dirk Peters,

whose non-ironic heroism end up saving the Hili-lites from cataclysm. Burroughs's *Caspak* trilogy likewise presents a critique of American geopolitics even while advancing its national image based on discourses of gender and race. In particular, these texts critique American isolationism by highlighting the United States' moral culpability of inaction earlier in the First World War and justifying the U.S.'s subsequent involvement, thereby making the wider case for increased American geopolitical presence.

*The Heroic Era of Antarctic Exploration and the British Cultural Imagination*

After the surge of efforts to explore and map the Antarctic region in the 1830s and -40s, geopolitical interest in the continent declined significantly until the late Nineteenth Century. It was at this point that the "Heroic Age" of Antarctic exploration began. As Leane explains, the Heroic Age/Era/Period "refers to the time when Antarctica was explored primarily by foot, ski and dog sledge; it corresponds roughly to the years from the mid-1890s to the early 1920s, although dates vary from text to text" (*Antarctica in Fiction* 186n). As Leane's description notes, there is some debate over when exactly the Heroic Era started and ended. Glasberg, for instance, claims that the Heroic Age "commenced with the revival of interest in Antarctica around 1900 and ended before the era of mechanization and aerial reconnaissance beginning in the late 1920s" (Glasberg *Cultural Critique* 19), while in his *The Antarctic: A Very Short Introduction* Klaus Dodds narrows this period to 1898-1916 (28).

Even if the precise start and end cannot be pinpointed, however, there is unanimous agreement that this period of Antarctic exploration is comprised of the earliest attempts by

various nations and national actors to explore Antarctica's continental interior.<sup>2</sup> There is also broad consensus that the climax of this period of men exploring the remotest area of the globe on foot and sledge and ski was the so-called "Race to the Pole" between Great Britain's Robert Scott and Norway's Roald Amundsen:

Coinciding with the invention of the modern Olympics, the 'race to the pole' was driven by a combination of geopolitical, imaginative, and scientific ambition . . . men like Robert Scott, Ernest Shackleton, and the Anglo-Australian Douglas Mawson were agents of the British Empire but they were also curious about the environments they encountered. This was also the case for other Europeans such as the Norwegian Roald Amundsen and the German explorer/scientist Wilhelm Filchner. Amundsen's Fram/South Pole Expedition (1910-12), involving four sledges, up to 52 dogs, and five men, arrived at the South Pole on 14 December 1911 . . . The Terra Nova Expedition (1910-13), led by Robert Scott, aimed explicitly to be the first to reach the South Pole . . . Scott and his party reached the South Pole on 17 January 1912, but discovered that the rival expedition led by Roald Amundsen had triumphed some 33 days earlier. (Dodds 29-30)

The Race to the Pole may have been little more than a side note to Amundsen's victory in achieving the Pole first had it not been for the demise of Scott's entire party on their return trip, which was chronicled by their discovered diaries and subsequently published for public consumption. On their way back from the Pole:

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<sup>2</sup> Although there were no direct national actors for the United States taking part in this period of Antarctic exploration, the "Heroic Era" was broad enough in scope (comprising the efforts of several nations, notably Britain, Norway, Japan, and Australia) that it applies to the period of time during which such exploration occurred. So while there was no specifically "American Heroic Era" of Antarctic exploration per se, we may still speak of American cultural engagement with Antarctica during the Heroic Era. Indeed, that is the subject of this chapter.

despite initially enjoying reasonable weather and decent progress, [Scott's] five-strong party encountered difficulties, including physical disintegration due to frostbite and malnutrition. Assailed by ferociously cold weather, sledging became akin to 'pulling over desert sand'. With shortages of food and fuel, one member of the party, Captain Lawrence 'Titus' Oates, sacrificed himself for the sake of the remaining three, after the early death of Evans. The final three, Scott, Wilson, and Bowers, trudged on and made it to 11 miles short of their main depot before a blizzard prevented further progress. Their bodies, journals, and other items, including rock specimens, were discovered some eight months later. (30)

For the memorability of his expedition's tragic end, as well as because the "time and place [Scott] lived" allowed his tragedy to "provid[e] a focus for grief" amid the events of the First World War (McInnes 77, 75), the tale of Scott's *Terra Nova* Expedition has become the "one story that dominates both fiction and non-fiction narratives of Antarctic exploration" (Leane *Fiction* 86), and subsequently is "often recognized as the continent's most canonical document" (8-9).

It is exceedingly commonplace for the grim resolve and rugged tenacity with which Scott and his party not only faced the challenges of their endeavour, but also – more importantly, from a dramatic perspective – met their doom, to be interpreted as exemplifying an idealized version of British national character. In his "Rethinking the Heroic Era: Lieutenant Shirase Nobu and the *Kainan Maru* Expedition of 1910-12," Ben McInnes addresses the larger phenomenon of marrying Scott's narrative to his "Britishness":

Considerable mileage is made in the literature of the fact that Robert Falcon Scott was British. Scott reportedly became the 'iconic British hero'. Of

course, Scott himself did not discourage such associations, writing in his ‘Message to the Public’ for example that, had he lived, he would have had a tale to tell that would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. . . . Innumerable examples . . . appeared in the press, referring to ‘English heroism’ and the English, or British, tragedy; the *Illustrated London News* argued that Scott’s expedition proved ‘the inherent heroism of British men of action’, and the *Observer* that there had never been ‘a more heroic vindication of British character’. (69)

But while most critics hold that “the loss of Scott and his party . . . helped to cement in the British and wider imagination a vision of tragic heroic figures battling against the odds, enriched by a dedication to duty and to one another” (Dodds 33), McInnes was the first to posit that “[t]he creation and endurance of Scott’s legend owe nothing to his ‘Britishness’ – he was, and to some extent is, a hero because of the time and place in which he lived” (77). Rather, Scott’s narrative’s massive resonance in the British cultural imagination came as a result of his party being mobilized as cultural icons for a nation at both the height of its imperialistic reach and the depth of its national sorrow in the First World War:

in Great Britain, in the face of the enormous tragedy that was World War I, with such horrendous death tolls and futile losses, both soldiers and civilians needed some way of digesting the horror. Scott’s story provided one means by which this could be attempted. Even for those who had not directly suffered bereavement, Scott provided a focus for grief – one individual whose tragic death could provide a more manageable locus for the anguish than the endless lists of dead on the battle field. (75)

Instead of Scott himself exuding some kind of essential, ideal Britishness that was simply

communicated to the British public, “England *made* Scott its example of heroic endurance, and its interpreter, and for some reason, most researchers have ever since followed in this now well-worn path” (77). The expedition members were therefore shaped into the cultural icons they came to be in order to serve as rallying points or touchstones for Britain at a time when emblematic heroes were in need. This idea that Scott and his men were constructed into “stereotypes of class, masculinity, nation and empire associated with [the Edwardian] period” (Leane *Fiction* 92) is supported by the fact that “pictures of imperial heroes such as Titus Oates [were] shown to British troops serving in the trenches in Europe” during the First World War (Dodds 33; Leane *Fiction* 87). Indeed, among the expedition members, Captain Oates in particular has been singled out for his selfless act of sacrifice in order to try and save the lives of his fellow expedition members, an aspect of Scott’s narrative that was easy to propagandize because it “struck a chord with British notions of duty and stoicism” (Leane *Fiction* 90). More generally, the expedition itself came to be seen as resonating with a kind of romantic, idealized version of British masculinity as a result of the hardships endured and the intensive physical labour involved with the manual hauling of sledges across the ice – a point which distinguished the British from the Norwegians, who used dogs for transport and (later) food. With all this said, Glasberg perhaps had the most succinct, and biting, way of explaining the posthumous discursive mobilization of Scott’s party when she noted that “[t]he British have managed to put a heroic spin on an expedition for which heroism and failure seem inseparably linked” (*Cultural Critique* 19).

Science was a key motivator for Heroic Age exploration, though ironically the pursuit of scientific discovery has also been cited as one of the reasons for the tragedy of Scott’s polar expedition (Dodds 31). In his study *An Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton, and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Science* (2011), Edward J. Larson examines the central role of

science for Heroic Era British expeditions, and particularly how it served as the justification for Antarctic adventure and exploration (126, 249), and, later, as a consolation for failure and tragedy:

If the race to the South Pole eventually consumed Scott, it was never at the expense of science. His two expeditions and Shackleton's 1907-9 venture carried enormous scientific baggage. If getting to the pole first was Scott's overriding objective, he went about it the wrong way. If he meant to get to the pole first while doing meaningful science along the way, he did it right – but in doing so, he fatally handicapped himself in a contest against Roald Amundsen, a polar adventurer of proven ability who cared only about winning the race. Focus overpowered him. Scott and Shackleton served many masters, one of which was the British conception of scientific discovery, exploration, and conquest. (x)

In addition to being a *modus operandi* for the expeditions themselves, science also functioned as a conduit to give them cultural purchase in British society. For instance, although Shackleton's expedition is "known and remembered mostly for [his] dramatic dash towards the South Pole," it was "[s]cience [that] made the overall enterprise respectable in Edwardian England and helped secure Shackleton's knighthood" (126). Likewise, Scott's tragedy had enough intrinsic dramatic material already to give it cultural resonance, but "[a]fter word came that all members of [his] Polar Party had died on their way back still dragging their field notes and geological specimens, the scientific purpose of the *Terra Nova* expedition initially grew in significance for many in Britain," allowing science to "[give] meaning to the death of Scott and his men in a manner that a failed dash to the pole could not" (287).

This scientific impetus for Antarctic exploration helped to buttress British Antarctic literature of the Heroic Era to the realm of empirical facts. This makes sense, given that the discovery of new empirical knowledge, most specifically of the makeup of the Antarctic continental interior, but also of the various geological, physical, and biological data collected, solidified the epistemological reality of the continent, making it less abstract or theoretical to science and the wider global imagination. However, there is another compelling reason why British Antarctic literature of this period espoused non-fictional narratives: Britain had a timely need for cultural icons and a nationally epitomizing narrative, which the Scott expedition provided. Scott's tragedy contained enough dramatic material and could be made into an exemplar of idealized British nationalism, national character, and masculinity so easily that it had instant appeal for large segments of British culture. As a result, there was no real incentive for British Antarctic literature of the time to move very far beyond the non-fictional since history had been so kind as to provide it with a ready-made narrative that none at the time could hope to compete with for imaginative supremacy or sheer cultural resonance. As Spufford so accurately described, "[l]ike any successful myth, [Scott's narrative] provides a skeleton ready to be dressed over and over in the different flesh different decades feel to be appropriate" (4).

This state of British Antarctic literature during the Heroic Era, however, stands in direct contrast to its American counterpart at the time. Rather than mobilizing first-hand empirical knowledge of the continent like the British, American Antarctic works of the Heroic Era maintained – or rather, returned to – the long-standing tradition of speculative fiction in the form of lost world plots. I say that the overall state of American Antarctic literature “returned to” such speculative narratives because, as Johan Wijkmark convincingly argues in *“One of the Most Intensely Exciting Secrets”*: *The Antarctic in American*

*Literature, 1820-1849*, American Antarctic texts trended from fantastic to realist representations from the early- to mid-nineteenth century, a shift which he claims corresponds to the accumulation of new empirical knowledge of the continent over that period (11). The trajectory Wijkmark notices arrives at a realistic Antarctic region in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Sea Lions* (1849), but significantly the trend ends there. By the Heroic Era, the fantasy of the lost world narrative once again reigned supreme in American Antarctic texts.

#### *Lost World Narratives and American Cultural Preoccupations*

The question that needs to be asked is why, in the presence of even greater empirical knowledge of the Antarctic continent<sup>3</sup> – including, for the first time, knowledge of its interior – did the trend towards realistic Antarctic renderings that Wijkmark notes characterized the trajectory of the earliest American Antarctic texts not extend into the Heroic Era? The answer to this question is also the explanation for why American Antarctic texts differed so radically from their British counterparts in content and mode during the Heroic Era: because the genres that each espouses – the lost world narrative for American texts, and non-fiction for British – are best suited to give voice to the particular concerns or needs of their respective cultures. Fredric Jameson's dialectical approach to genre in his *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* explains how genre functions to articulate these concerns and needs in historically contingent ways. As he asserts, generic analysis traditionally has bifurcated into two strands: the *semantic*, in which genre is “essentially apprehended as a *mode*,” and the *syntactic*, or structural approach, which

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<sup>3</sup> Americans would have been aware of advances in Antarctic knowledge as a result of the highly publicized nature of British Heroic Era exploration.

“aim[s] less at discovering the meaning of the generic mechanism or process than at constructing its model” (108). He ultimately sees this interpretive binary between asking “what a text means” and “how it works” as reductive, leading him to suggest a new, historically reflexive dialectical approach to genre criticism that “also involves the study of the concepts and categories (themselves historical) that we necessarily bring to the subject” (109). Jameson disrupts this binary by interjecting a “third term” – history itself – to create a new interpretive model in which the manifest text, deep structure, and history are related to each other in a permutational scheme, or what he calls a “*combinatoire*,” in which “the systematic modification or commutation of any single term – by generating determinate variations in the other two – allows us to read the articulate relationships that make up the whole system” (146). By triangulating the relationships between a work’s content, form, and historical context, Jameson’s model therefore transcends the interpretive binary that has historically dominated genre criticism. For him, genre exposes deeper ideological motivations at particular historical moments, and genres themselves are not static categories but dialectical forms contingent on their specific historical contexts.

Within this framework, it is evident that the obvious generic differences between American and British Antarctic literature during the Heroic Era are the result of these nations having different cultural and social preoccupations during this time. Due to its geographic removal from Europe and late entry into the First World War,<sup>4</sup> the U.S. not only was insulated from the war’s most devastating effects, tallying an estimated 117,000 military deaths in comparison to the United Kingdom’s 761,000 and France’s 1,327,000 (Prost 2014), but also economically profited from it (Keene 23), principally through loans to Britain and France, as well as munitions sales. In contrast to Britain, for whom the First World War

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<sup>4</sup> Although World War I officially began in 1914, the U.S. did not declare war on Germany until April 1917.

was a monolithic event, the United States' comparative distance from the War perhaps explains why American lost world narratives of the time were more concerned with the effects of modernization and urbanization on its way of life, as well as ever-present anxieties regarding race in American society. British Antarctic literature's decided shift towards a representing the Antarctic through non-fiction during the Heroic Era, on the other hand, is most readily understood as being in dialogue with nationalistic motivations that were fed by the ever-present reality of the War. The non-fictional accounts of British Heroic Era explorers, especially Scott and his party, provided the raw narratives that easily dovetailed with and fed into ingrained cultural notions of British national spirit, determination, and masculinity; the fact that such narratives were non-fiction gave them an air of credibility that they presented "factual" evidence which verified and validated larger cultural narratives that claimed some essential heroic English national character.

However, the transition towards non-fictional representation of imperial adventure through Scott and Shackleton in Britain was also a transition away from British lost world narratives, which, I contend, did similar ideological work in British culture prior to the Heroic Era. Although the genre was prevalent in both England and the United States in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as discussed in the introduction there were notable distinctions between its instantiations in these respective nations that reflected the type of cultural and ideological purposes they served in each. To briefly recapitulate, Carter F. Hanson illustrates the peculiarities of the British lost world narrative in his "Lost Among White Others: Late-Victorian Lost-Race Novels for Boys" by noting that in such texts "a return to the past is not equated with a descent into the primitive" (498), and that considerable "narrative emphasis [is placed] on racial and civilizational similarity between the English heroes and members of the lost race" (499), which ultimately serves to

“reinforce the superiority of British culture” (497) and to create a sense of imperial permanence (497). This observation runs completely contrary to how critics like Sommer and Haslam, who focus on American instantiations of the genre, claim that tropes of the primitive, the lost race, and evolution function to “look backwards . . . in an effort not to redefine white masculinity *per se* but to reinforce white supremacist, patriarchal hegemony” (Haslam 76-77) by setting up an implicit or explicit contrast between their white protagonists and the racially Other inhabitants of the lost world.

This pivotal difference in the nature of the “lost races” respectively encountered in British and American lost world narratives is the key to understanding one of the main reasons why American Antarctic literature did not undergo a similar shift towards realistic representation of the continent during the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration as occurred in Britain. By using white and near-white lost races to reinforce British cultural superiority and project a sense of British imperial permanence, British lost world narratives did remarkably similar ideological work as their non-fictional Antarctic exploration narratives of the Heroic Era. Where the former operated almost entirely in a speculative realm, however, Heroic Era exploration’s grounding in empirical fact and material reality solidified the purchase of British imperialism, lending more gravity to the same arguments for cultural superiority and imperial permanence by providing a real world arena in which the British could engage in “unashamed heroism” (Glasberg quoting Driver *Critique* 55). Not only did Americans not have any non-fictional Heroic Era narratives to rival those of Britain (or any at all, for that matter), but American lost world narratives had inherently different concerns from their British counterparts to begin with, using tropes of the primitive and evolution as a platform both for projecting an idealized masculinity that strikes a balance between civilization and nature, and for naturalizing racialized hierarchies to discursively reinforce white Anglo-

American racial superiority. Although they both fall under the banner of Antarctic literature, American lost world narratives and British non-fiction of the Heroic Era represented very different sets of ideological values and anxieties of their respective cultures.

*A Strange Discovery, or The Gulling of the Greenhorn*

Charles Romyn Dake's *A Strange Discovery* attempts to reiterate a conservative national image through discursive constructions of masculinity and race typical of American lost world works, but struggles to gain purchase in this regard as a result of its satirical elements. Published in 1899, Dake's novel came near the beginning of the Heroic period. The work itself has been almost entirely ignored by scholars, whether in the field of Antarctic literary studies or in the wider scholarship concerning American literature at large. The main reason the text is noted at all is because of its relationship with Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.<sup>5</sup> Dake's *A Strange Discovery* is a sequel or continuation of *Pym* that offers a resolution to Poe's work, which ends indeterminately, and is usually only remarked upon because of that fact, often with only a single line or footnote to reference the relationship.<sup>6</sup> Very few critical texts devote more attention to Dake's work, and frequently it is of the most superficial nature or in direct (and still very brief) relation to *Pym* or questions of genre. Clareson's *Some Kind of Paradise*, for example, gives the text scarcely more attention than most treatments with its half paragraph discussion of how *A Strange Discovery* "negates much of the sense of wonder found in both Poe and [Rider]

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<sup>5</sup> At the time of *A Strange Discovery*'s publication, "American regard for Poe and his novel [*Pym*] remained virtually stagnant and unchanged" since being mostly dismissed by critics when it was first published in 1837 (Lilly 8).

<sup>6</sup> For instance, the work is given the barest mention in Clareson ("Emergence of Science Fiction" 9), Eco (7), Fisher (31), Glasberg (*Imagination* 33, 121, 160, 193n), Glasberg ("Refusing" 118n), Khouri (172), Kopley ("Readers Write" 403), Kopley ("Secret" 203), Leane (*Fiction* 64), Montwieler and Boren (32n), and Wijkmark (230). Eric Mottram is comparatively generous with two sentences ("Social Imagination" 51).

Haggard” (161). Both Seed (90-91) and Becker (66-67) lend the work about a page of attention; while the former examines Dake’s work as a continuation or extension of *Pym*, the latter is more concerned with its place in the lost world genre. Here Becker offers an analysis of the work’s significance in the wider genre:

The best comment one can make about this book is the oft-repeated remark of one of its characters, “Great geewhilikin!” It is a romance that blends science with the lost-race theme in presenting a sequel to Poe’s *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*. Following the example of Haggard’s *She* and other romances, it contains a love affair; in the evolution of the Lost Worlds Romance this has become an integral convention. It differs from most of the works of the genre in that it is not fantastic; nothing rationally inexplicable takes place in the story. (67)

Similarly, in his dissertation *The Emergence of American Science Fiction: 1880-1915* (1956), Thomas Claerson dedicates a few brief pages to explicating *A Strange Discovery*’s generic situation, claiming that it “merits attention” because it “reveals the differences between the earlier romanticism and that at the end of the [nineteenth] century” better than any other work at the time (165). Jules Zanger’s “Poe’s Endless Voyage: *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*” is easily the most insightful critical work that references this text. Zanger is also interested in the generic situation of the text, but, bucking all other extent readings, identifies it as belonging to a “traditional American comic form – the gulling of the greenhorn” (281) while disguising itself to the “unwary reader as a genuine sequel to Poe’s work” (280). This interpretation effectually forms the text’s satiric core.

*A Strange Discovery* is written from the perspective of an unnamed middle-class British merchant as a reflection on events that transpired while he was on a trip to the United

States in 1877 to settle some business affairs brought about by the death of his father (6). In the course of settling his late father's affairs, the narrator finds himself in Bellevue, southern Illinois, where he makes the acquaintance of Drs. Bainbridge and Castleton through the bell-boy of his hotel, Arthur. The narrator is immediately taken with Dr. Bainbridge, and the two particularly enjoy discoursing at length on various literary subjects, among them Edgar Allan Poe. Bainbridge is particularly interested in Poe's *Pym*, and is convinced that "the story has a foundation in fact, and that Poe himself never learned more than a foundation for the portion which he wrote" (30-31). When it is subsequently discovered that Dirk Peters happens to be a patient of Dr. Castleton's, the narrator and Bainbridge become preoccupied with discovering how the story of *Pym* actually ended.

The remainder of the novel consists of Bainbridge mediating Peters's account of what happened following the abrupt ending of *Pym* by relating it to the narrator over the course of several evenings in his hotel room. As Bainbridge tells it, Peters and Arthur Pym stumble upon a lost civilization deep in the Antarctic. The people, who call themselves the Hili-li, are descendants of the Ancient Romans who have lived there for centuries. The Hili-lites are a genteel people and accept Pym and Peters into their society, though not without some initial wariness towards Peters because of his grotesque appearance. Over the course of several months, Pym and Peters learn their language, and Pym becomes enamoured with a young high-born Hili-li woman, Lilama. In a dramatic twist, Lilama becomes abducted by a young man named Ahpilus, who was outcast from Hili-lite society but remained in love with her. Pym and Peters spearhead a rescue for Lilama, and she is eventually brought to safety as a result of Peters's heroics.

Upon returning to the Hili-lite city, the rescue party, and Peters chief among them, are treated as heroes (155). Pym and Lilama are married shortly thereafter, and would have

lived happily ever after if it were not for a freak cold snap, which occurs in their region once every forty-seven years or so (167). The Hili-lites, who are both ill-equipped and ill-adapted to weather such an occurrence, are saved by Pym and Peters, who are more acclimatized to colder temperatures. Despite saving most of Hili-lite society, tragically they are unable to save Pym's new wife, Lilama. Heartbroken, Pym is allowed to leave the Hili-lites to return home, along with Peters.

Dake's *A Strange Discovery* addresses American society and culture in two seemingly distinct registers: the literal and the allegorical. The text's literal commentary on the United States emerges out of the framing narrative, and in particular the discourse the narrator has with the characters he meets during his stay in Bellevue concerning literature, culture, politics, and historical events. During such conversations between the narrator and his companions, Arthur and Drs. Bainbridge and Castleton, direct observations about American society are made which, on the surface, would seem to constitute a glowing national image of the United States as a racially and socially egalitarian country. However, as the ludicrous nature of some of the overt claims Dr. Bainbridge makes regarding the United States becomes apparent on closer inspection, the literal register of this novel is most compellingly read as an ironic commentary on American society, undermining the cohesion of American national image that its grandiose pronouncements regarding the U.S. are intended to create. Zanger effectively articulates why Bainbridge's statements must be taken with a grain of salt:

What Dake has done, of course, is to link the Pym-Peters fantasy to a traditional American comic form – the gulling of the greenhorn, or, in this case, of the English Gentleman who is made the butt of an elaborate literary prank. (281)

If the literal register's direct commentary on the state of U.S. society is actually taken to be ironic, then it operates similarly to the text's allegorical register, which indirectly generates readings that critique American society through its analogue, the Hili-lites. As an estranging setting, the Antarctic therefore enables this indirect means of commentary by working as a rhetorical tool to create the critical distance necessary for critiquing American society in this work; its actual remoteness translates into a discursive remoteness that makes critical reflection possible.

The overriding sentiment that emerges out of the framing tale's literal discussions of the United States is one of self-adulation. In particular, there are three noteworthy lines of commentary regarding American society that emerge from the narrator's observations or from conversations between the narrator and his companions which, taken at face value, create an overwhelmingly favorable perception of the nation, but which tend to crumble under the least amount of scrutiny: the discussions about how American society is "classless," of how Americans do not hate anyone, and of the abolition of slavery in the U.S.. Although in each of these cases the initial impression created is flattering, on closer examination they are facades, which seems to confirm the fact that Dr. Bainbridge is speaking ironically in order to wind up the gullible English narrator.

The first of these illusory perceptions is that America is a classless society. While entertaining the idea of writing a book on the topic of "American Manners and Customs" upon his return home to England, the narrator resolves to question Dr. Bainbridge regarding "the mooted point concerning the existence of an aristocratic feeling in the United States," since "[s]ome of [their] English writers on 'American Manners and Customs,' and [their] most acute analysts of American character, say that the Americans are great snobs and are only too glad to claim the possession of even the most distant aristocratic connection" (54).

In response, Bainbridge thoroughly rebukes that claim:

It interests me to convince you . . . that in the United States there is scarcely a vestige of aristocratic feeling. In fact as in theory, there is in this country but one class of people. Such supposed barriers as wealth and political position are only partitions of paper – relative nothings. I do not mention heredity, because here in the United States all attempts to establish a family line result in the family rotting before it gets ripe. The only pretense to hereditary pride which we have here, exists in two States; in one of them some four or five hundred persons cannot forget that their forefathers got to shore before somebody else; and in the other a few families still dispute over the threadbare question of whose great-great-grandmother cost the most pounds of tobacco. Now, candidly – is this sufficient to justify a reproach from Europe that we are striving to claim or to create an aristocracy? (55)

The portrait that Bainbridge paints of a classless (or rather, a mono-class) United States is an idealized fantasy that plays into the idea of American Exceptionalism – the belief that the U.S. represents a break from the historical cycles in which European nations seem to be caught. It also seems to play on the egalitarian myth of the American Dream that any person could achieve wealth and prosperity in the United States. Indeed, Bainbridge goes on to explain that, in his opinion, the United States has only a single class of people:

[T]here is, as I have intimated, in the United States but one class of people. This truth seems sometimes to be questioned in Europe – why, I can but guess. Who would attempt to enter the nurseries and schoolrooms of our land today, and, by inquiring as to the parentage of the children, select from among them any approximation to those from whom are to come, in twenty or thirty

years, the men that shall then govern our States, sit in our National Congress, direct our army and navy, and control our commerce? I have heard that in Europe it is rather the exception for a son to reach exalted position when the father has earned a living by manual labor. In the United States this is not the exception, but the rule. At this moment the positions alluded to are here filled by the sons of poor fathers. With us, inherited wealth appears to be rather a detriment than an aid to political advancement of more than a petty kind. 'And yet,' you may say, 'your people are not always satisfied.' No advanced, upward-looking people is ever satisfied. (56)

Here, ironically, Bainbridge connects the idea of a mono-classed United States to the American dream of upward social mobility. In a sense, his argument has the advantage that it appeals directly to the most fundamental principles of the American Republic that are laid out in the Declaration of Independence: that "all men are created equal" and therefore should have equal rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (US 1776), which in theory would seem to undermine the idea of a stratified social system. However, Bainbridge's claim that the United States has a single class of people is, in reality, pure fabrication. One need look no further than the continued economic exploitation of black people in the American South, even after Emancipation, to refute this point. As Howard Zinn points out, President Andrew Johnson's failure to force Confederate States to institute equal rights for black people as a precondition to rejoining the Union after the Civil War effectively allowed them to continue to perpetuate racially discriminatory practices by "enact[ing] 'black codes,' which made the freed slaves like serfs, still working on plantations" (194).

Bainbridge's assertion that the existence of a single class of people in America gives rise to increased social mobility is, furthermore, antithetical unto itself. Barely a page before

Bainbridge's initial assertion regarding the U.S.'s supposed singular class, the narrator remarks upon the racial prejudices of the American working class (54). True, the narrator is an outsider, and British, and hence is entrenched in a view of society that is ordered by a very regimented class system, but this certainly begs the question how Dr. Bainbridge, an educated man and member of the social elite, would explain that himself and what the narrator terms "working class" Americans are in the same social stratum.

The second illusory perception that contributes to the wider, self-congratulatory sentiment regarding American society in the framing tale is that Americans are not xenophobic. This proclamation is made based on the narrator's own experiences in the country up to this point and the fact that "[he] did not meet an American that seemed to hate anybody – [he] did not conceive it possible for an American to harbour the feeling of hatred" (54). As with the claim that America has but a single class of people, this perception is patently false. Indeed, there is a statement earlier in the very same paragraph that demonstrates the author himself recognizes the prejudices and animosities that exist in American society:

The friendly manner in which I had been treated by all whom I had met in America, from the millionaire coal operator down to the bell-boy, came into my thoughts. I had not been treated as a foreigner, except to my own advantage, the older residents of the town seeming to look upon me more as they might look upon a man from another State of the Union. In America, even the inland towns are cosmopolitan, while in England only the larger cities and seaport towns have that characteristic. I was therefore able to judge of certain questions not only from hearsay, but from actual observation. I noticed, for example, that among the American working classes there existed

a feeling of repugnance for the Chinaman. Of the lower-class Italian, everybody thought enough to keep out of his reach after dark. Germans and Irishmen were numerous, and each individual was taken on his own merits. The English were universally liked, wherever I went. . . . If there exists in the American heart a drop of bitterness for the English, I never discovered it. I am writing now of the American-born American. I gathered the idea that Frenchmen, as seen in America, were scarcely taken seriously; though all Americans have been systematically educated to respect and admire the French Nation. Of Spaniards, the prevalent idea seemed to be that they were better at arm's length. (53-54)

This passage is laden with cultural and racial stereotypes that clearly demonstrate the prejudices and animosities held by “American-born Americans,” which is to say, white Anglo-Americans. Rather than proving that Americans are not xenophobic, the text here is instead using irony to not only continue to expose the gullibility of the narrator, but moreover to undercut national image facade that underlies his belief that it is not “possible for an American to harbour the feeling of hatred” (54).

The third self-congratulatory perception of American society that is advanced by the framing tale here comes from its brief discussions of, and position on, the abolition of slavery. Set in 1877, the narrative takes place a mere 12 years following the conclusion of the American Civil War. Of slavery itself, there are only a few direct references in the text, such as this exchange between Dr. Bainbridge and the narrator:

“Yes, we managed to finish up a pretty fair revolution here some twelve years ago; but that revolution was caused by a disagreement about the R. of B. Now-

“Pardon me,” I said “but what was the R. of B?”

“Oh, excuse me,” he answered. “The R. of B. was the Relic of Barbarism, human slavery – the only relic the United States has ever had, too.” (56-57)

The most telling aspect of this exchange is the choice of words, in particular Dr. Bainbridge’s reference to slavery as the “Relic of Barbarism.” Bainbridge’s use of this phrase to describe slavery in the U.S. certainly seems to imply a political and moral judgement here that slavery was a “barbaric” institution and a “relic” of a previous, less civilized instantiation of American society which the United States has subsequently put behind it with abolition and the conclusion of the Civil War.

Yet again, history contradicts Dr. Bainbridge’s assertions. Although slavery legally ended as an institution after the Civil War with the introduction of Thirteenth,<sup>7</sup> Fourteenth,<sup>8</sup> and Fifteenth<sup>9</sup> Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, the racial discourse that propped up the ideology of slavery persisted. That discourse emerged in the Southern US as a result of the perceived need by the proslavery interest to protect itself from growing abolitionist sentiments from the North. In *The Ideology of Slavery*, Faust notes the increasing systematization of the discourse created to support slavery:

Although proslavery thought demonstrated remarkable consistency from the seventeenth century on, it became in the South of the 1830s, forties, and

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<sup>7</sup> The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery by affirming that “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

<sup>8</sup> The Fourteenth Amendment granted US citizenship to former slaves by declaring that “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside.”

<sup>9</sup> The Fifteenth Amendment guaranteed that “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

fifties more systematic and self-conscious; it took on the characteristics of a formal ideology with its resulting social movement. The intensification of proslavery argumentation produced an increase in conceptual organization and coherence within the treatises themselves, which sought methodically to enumerate all possible foundations for human bondage. (4)

This systematization of proslavery discourse is part of what motivated the search for a scientific racialism, like the theory of polygenesis discussed in Chapter 1. As Horsman explicates, “[a]lthough American intellectuals in 1815 generally accepted the environmental view of racial differences which they had inherited from the European Enlightenment, there were already signs that informed American opinion was ready to provide a scientific rationale for what was believed by many of those in direct contact with blacks and Indians” (118). As a result of this quest to scientifically correlate racism:

By the early 1850s the inherent inequality of races of simply accepted as a scientific fact in America, and most of the discussion now concerned either the religious problem of accepting polygenesis as an explanation of racial differences or the problem of exactly defining the different races. (134)

So widespread was the belief in the inherent inferiority of black people – that “blackness, not slavery, was the essential cause of the Negro condition” (123) – that even “as the northern attack on slavery increased in intensity [in the 1830s], northern racial theorists generally agreed with the South that the colored races were unfit to mix with the whites on any equal basis” (125). Throughout the antebellum United States:

the idea of a hierarchy of races, with the Caucasians clearly and permanently at the top, was generally accepted. American science provided Americans with a confident explanation of why blacks were enslaved, why Indians were

exterminated, and why white Americans were expanding their settlements rapidly over adjacent lands. (137)

These ideas, however, did not simply cease to exist with the abolition of slavery. On the contrary, they insidiously “permeated the main American periodicals and in the second half of the [nineteenth] century formed part of the accepted truth of American schoolbooks” (157).

Indeed, as Hazel V. Carby notes in “Ideologies of Black Folks: The Historical Novel of Slavery,” the “material conditions and social relations [of American slavery] . . . continue to influence society long after emancipation. The economic and social system of slavery is thus a pre-history (as well as a pre-text to all Afro-American texts), a past social condition that can explain contemporary phenomena” (125-126). By the late nineteenth century, black people were no longer slaves in the United States, but they were still the objects of “intense racism” (Zinn 307). For instance, “[i]n the years between 1889 and 1903, on average, every week, two Negroes were lynched by mobs – hanged, burned, mutilated” (307-08). Zinn further expands on how the racial memory of slavery was not so easily forgotten:

The memory of oppressed people is one thing that cannot be taken away, and for such people, with such memories, revolt is always an inch below the surface. For blacks in the United States, there was the memory of slavery, and after that of segregation, lynching, [and] humiliation. It was not just a memory but a living presence – part of the daily lives of blacks in generation after generation. (435)

Although events such as the Civil Rights movement have brought about increased equality for African Americans, the discursive legacy of slavery – the persistent discrimination and violence to which black people are subjected – hence continued, and continues, to echo well

beyond the antebellum era.

Even within the text of *A Strange Discovery* itself, Bainbridge's moral pronouncement that slavery is a "Relic of Barbarism" here is further undercut by a previous statement he makes regarding his apparent political leanings:

I, sir, am – or I was until recently – a Jeffersonian Democrat. But our Party made a great mistake a few years ago by sticking to the slave interest too long. I finally became hopeless of success at the polls. (44-45)

Though Bainbridge here identifies that the Democratic Party's support of "the slave interest [for] too long" accounts for his choice to abandon them politically, the exact reason he gives – that their continued support of the slave trade made them unelectable – betrays his own cynicism and effectively pulls the rug out from under his subsequent moral judgement of slavery.

Moreover, other statements made in the text corroborate not only that prejudices based on racial stereotypes still persist in the United States, but also that slavery is indeed neither "the only relic the United States has ever had" (56-57), nor the only racially-motivated one. On this first point, the irony of the narrator's enumeration of the many racial prejudices commonly held by Americans being immediately followed by his assertion that Americans do not hate, or have the capacity to hate, anyone has already been discussed. Regarding the second point, while describing how Pym and Peters rise to the occasion when the extreme cold snap occurs much later in the text, Bainbridge makes a passing remark which seems to fly in the face of his earlier assertion that slavery is the United States' only relic:

Pym and Peters had sprung from races that had in the past thousand years gone through hundreds of struggles, amid every kind of danger, for existence;

and Peters, on his mother's side, she being an American Indian, belonged to a race which had gone through what was infinitely worse than a barbarian invasion – namely, a 'civilized' and 'enlightened' invasion. (172)

Clearly Bainbridge is speaking of the effects of Western imperialism on Native Americans. Just as clearly, however, this passage points out that America has more skeletons in its closet than just slavery. Again, although he identifies that this invasion was disguised as a "civilized" and civilizing mission, like his earlier comments on slavery it seems to presume that these events are solidly in the past and not resonating in his present – that the cultural narrative of the United States has turned the page on these relics and does not continue to be haunted by them. As evinced above, this was obviously not the case.

Contradicted by both historical fact and evidence from elsewhere in the text of *A Strange Discovery*, Bainbridge's claim that slavery is the United States' former and only "relic of barbarism" is therefore false, yet the British narrator seems to accept it at face value. The irony created as a result not only supports Zanger's argument that the framing tale is generically designed as a comic "gulling of the greenhorn," but also turns the framing tale into a critique of the United States, much like the inner tale.

### *The Inner Tale and Race*

*A Strange Discovery's* inner narrative of Pym and Peters among the Hili-lites further highlights how deeply the discourse of American racial prejudice runs, thereby allegorically reinforcing racial discourses that inform American national image. One of the most telling examples of this is the Hili-lites' account of their war with the Tsalalians – the black natives who were the main antagonists in the Antarctic episode of Poe's *Pym*. According to Peters, the Hili-lites explained to him that long ago the Tsalalians mounted a surprise attack on their

city with a hundred thousand men, but were repulsed so thoroughly that eighty thousand were killed during the assault at the cost of only twelve Hili-lites. After the remaining twenty thousand surrendered:

what could so noble a people as were the Hili-lites do? They could not slaughter in cold blood nearly twenty thousand trembling human creatures. So it was finally decided to build a thousand large-sized row-boats, and it being the best time of the year for that purpose, take them back to their own islands. This was done. But in punishment for their offence, and as a constant reminder of the existence of the Hili-lites . . . as a constant reminder, I say, of a people so powerful, they were ordered never, on any island in their group, to display and object of a white color – the national color of the Hili-lites. (107)

In spite of the Hili-lites' apparently humane treatment of the Tsalalian aggressors, this passage suggests several ways that their response in victory is, or becomes, racialized. First and foremost is the punishment levied on the Tsalalians. Helping the surviving invaders to return home in safety rather than seeking revenge for their trespasses is a seemingly magnanimous gesture, however this act has a real-world antecedent in the various propositions entertained by U.S. lawmakers to resettle African Americans outside the U.S. in order to homogenize America as a white nation:

[The American] desire and rationale for separating Africans by sending them to Africa, predated the nineteenth century. Early leaders such as Abraham Lincoln and Henry Clay favored the separation of Africans or their return to Africa. During the Civil War, when the nation was sharply divided over the question of slavery and the integration of Africans into American society, Lincoln asked the Congress of the United States to allot funds for the

settlement of free Africans in Central America. Two other American presidents, George Washington and William Howard Taft, encouraged free Africans to emigrate. President Grant worked diligently after the war to annex Santo Domingo for the settlement of Africans living in America. (Johnson 4)

There is therefore a clear parallel between U.S. political leaders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who sought expedient means of getting free Africans out of the country and the Hili-lites' assistance to the Tsalalians in speeding them on their way home. However, the psychological and discursive resonance of the Tsalalians' punishment – to never display anything colored white on any of their islands – runs much deeper. Indeed, their punishment was so strictly enforced that:

the natives were ordered to take each of their descendants as soon as his teeth appeared, and color them with an indelible, metallic blue-black dye, repeating the operation every year up to ten, and thereafter once in five years. The command closed with the statement that the [Tsalal] natives would be allowed to retain the whites of their eyes, but only for the reason that, as they looked at each other they would there, and only there, see the national color of the Hili-li, and so have always in mind the promise of the victors, that if another descent on Hili-li were ever attempted, no single native – man, woman, or child – would be allowed to live. (Dake 107)

By forcing the Tsalalians to follow the letter of their edict down to their teeth but excepting the whites of their eyes to remind them of the cost of any future treachery is nothing short of perpetual psychological warfare. White and black become discursively encoded metonyms for the Hili-lites and Tsalalians respectively. Although this coding is, at least initially, a national signifier – white being the “national color” of the Hili-li – if it was not racialized to

begin with, the white/black dichotomy certainly becomes so over time, sowing the seeds of racial fear and hatred. Intertextually, this provides a neat explanation for the Tsalalians' massacre of the *Jane Guy's* crew in Poe's *Pym*, which, as argued in Chapter 1, is merely written off as a demonstration of the natives' base and treacherous nature, traits that are essentialized as inherent to race in that text.

When considered in the socio-cultural context in which *A Strange Discovery* was written, the racialized nature of this encoding becomes even more readily apparent, principally because the Hili-lites are designed to have parallels with American culture and history, thus forming the core of the text's allegorical register. The very fact that the Hili-lites have white as their national color is enough to suggest a racial dimension at play in the construction of national images in this text, but the defining blackness of the invading Tsalal natives solidifies that racial coding. There are other aspects of the novel that further support a reading of Hili-li as (white) America. Take, for instance, how they came to be in the Antarctic:

At about the most trying period of the barbarian invasion of Southern Europe [in the fourth century] . . . a number of men with their families and a few slaves, took advantage of a momentary lull in the terrors of the period to save themselves. They purchased a number of vessels, and loading each with tools, seeds, animals, valued manuscripts, and all that they possessed worth moving, started to seek a land in which they might colonize, there in time to found a new empire beyond the reach of all barbarians. They passed out of the Mediterranean and down the west coast of Africa. . . . When well on their way, one of those rare, prolonged storms from the north came on, and the vessels were soon driven far from land, and separated, each from all the

others. One of these vessels managed to outlive the terrific storm, which lasted for thirty days; and when the winds abated, the hundred or more men, women, children, and slaves, found themselves among the islands of what is now named Hili-liland. There they settled – there, where nature furnishes, without labor, light and heat the year round, and vegetation is literally perpetual. (94)

The Hili-li fleeing the Mediterranean to escape barbarians and start anew here has a real-world analogue in the Puritans fleeing England for America in order to escape religious persecution. Their means of discovering their lush and fertile new home – the thirty-day storm that drove them farther and farther south – further underscores this comparison with its providential aspects; the storm effectually led the Hili-lites to the promised land, which could supply their every want.

The fact that the Hili-lites are of Roman descent serves to foreground even further the notion that they are designed to stand in metonymically for Americans in this text. As Margaret Malamud makes clear in her study *Ancient Rome and Modern America*:

ever since republican independence in 1776 and right up to the present day, images and narratives of the rise and decline of Rome have played a vital role in how Americans have understood themselves and their history. Americans have legitimated, debated, and contested their political and cultural identities and concerns through selective references to the Roman past. (3)

Dake's choice to make the Hili-lites Roman descendants in *A Strange Discovery*, then, comes loaded as a pre-existing signification in American culture; they are meant to be an analogue for Americans. Yet because this signification maintains a certain amount of interpretive distance between the Ancient Romans and Modern Americans, the analogy here

is effectively estranged so as to allow critical reflection on nineteenth-century American society, allowing the Hili-lites to serve a critical function.

Another point of similarity between Hili-li and American history is their common abolition of slavery. Though the framing tale's treatment of the Civil War and slavery has already been noted, Peters's mediated inner narrative also addresses abolition, but in an indirect, allegorical way since at the time the inner narrative occurs the Civil War was still over thirty years away. Instead, the abolition of human slavery, a relatively recent event in the framing narrative, is again reflected through the history of the Hili-lites:

[F]or seven or eight hundred years slavery had been prohibited in the [Hili-li]land, all existing slaves having been emancipated – after which, in the course of a few generations, Hili-lian history says, the slaves and the slave-spirit were lost in the mass of the population. (108)

Here Hili-lite history is used as a means of articulating an idyllic picture of what could become of the remnants of slavery in American society following emancipation – as the text projects, eventually no one will be too worse off for it. If the “slave-spirit” referred to here is akin to the entire discourse of slavery that was entrenched in American society and culture as a result of the socio-political realities of the slave trade, then the text's account of post-abolition Hili-li society is perhaps a hopeful projection of how the United States will in time lose its own discursive “slave-spirit.”

On a more fundamental level, Hili-li and the U.S. both share a common victory culture narrative that informs both how they see themselves and how they present themselves to others. As Tom Engelhardt explains in his *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation*, what he terms American “Victory Culture” was ideologically propagated by a series of narratives – both official (i.e.

educational) and popular (through media like film and literature) – that depict white American wars as being defensive actions precipitated by external (and/or ethnically other) aggressors (4-5). According to Engelhardt, then, American Victory Culture creates narratives to present white Americans as the set-upon rather than the aggressors, which cedes them the moral high ground and provides a justification for waging war (39). He expands this point by noting that “[a]t the heart of the [American] war story lay the ambush, extraordinary evidence of the enemy’s treacherous behavior. While all ambushes involved deceit, none was more heinous than the ‘sneak attack,’ that surprise assault on a peaceful, unsuspecting people” (39). Herein we see some striking parallels between the American war story and the Tsalalian attack on Hili-liland; the Tsalal natives’ assault the Hili-li city is a sneak attack on a peaceful civilian population by a numerically superior and ethnically other foe. The base treachery of these actions in turn subtextually justifies the extreme disparity in the number of Tsalalian versus Hili-li casualties – eighty thousand to twelve – as well as the insidiousness of the punishment imposed upon the Tsalal natives following their defeat.

Yet the Victory Culture tropes in *A Strange Discovery* stand out from Engelhardt’s analysis of how race was traditionally encoded, principally by its conflation of African and Native Americans. According to Engelhardt, Native American interaction with white European-Americans in both historical colonial narratives and Westerns were typified by tropes like “[t]he sneak attack, the assault on the fort, the use of fire, [and] the savagery of the killing” (16), which were “later to be transformed into specific ‘Indian’ traits in the American war story” (16). On the other hand, African Americans held an ambivalent place in American society – they were feared but “not an enemy, excluded yet close by, demeaned but needed” (28), and so were inassimilable to the same types of Victory Culture narratives and tropes as Native Americans (31). In *A Strange Discovery*, however, these positions are

effectively reversed; in place of Native Americans, the black Tsalalians are the perpetrators of the sneak attack which justifies the Hili-lites' actions and their punishment, while Peters, who is part Native American, occupies the more liminal, ambivalent position. In the context of the tropes of Victory Culture, this racial conflation – or rather, reversal – seems to underscore a perception that African Americans are a more threatening racial other within the white American national narrative. This makes sense since, as we have already seen, the text generates racially codings that reinforce white social hegemony in the United States. Even though there are overt statements in *A Strange Discovery* regarding the evils of slavery that on the surface appear to rebuke the racial discourses that undergirded it, ultimately the work's allegorical register is concerned with presenting a national image for white America through its analog, the Hili-lites.

*Non-ironic Masculinity Surrounded by Satire*

American masculinity is one aspect in which the U.S. has an advantage over the genteel Hili-lites in *A Strange Discovery*. Indeed, in a text that is fraught with irony, Pym and Peters's heroism stands out as an example of a non-ironic masculinity that helps to define American national image by juxtaposing it favourably with the Hili-lites' lack of endurance and indecision. In particular, there is an implicit comparison suggested here between the Hili-lites and Pym and Peters – whereas the former are described as genteel to the point of denigrating, even criminalizing, overly “masculine” behaviors, such as engagement in rough sports, the American protagonists are set apart and venerated because of their physical endurance and decisiveness. This contrast suggests that despite its general idyllic nature in comparison to late nineteenth-century United States, Hili-li has lost some of the stereotypically masculine virtues that could still be found in the U.S.. This sentiment is

most clearly demonstrated in the sudden cold snap episode:

[Peters] looked from the window, and saw that a very fine snow was falling, the separately almost invisible flakes whirling in sharp spirals as they fell. The sailor instinct – the aptitude of the navigator – instantly told him what this thermic change meant for Hili-li. . . . Pym did not seem at once to realize the danger; and Lilama said she had heard of these storms, but did not think that they lasted long . . . Soon, however, all except Pym and Peters were shivering; and every article of covering was in use. . . . Peters, stoical, but always on the alert, called Pym aside and explained to him that this change meant nothing less than the devastation of Hili-li . . . Quickly [Pym's] mind grasped the circumstances in which they were placed . . . He scarcely thought of himself – he thought only of Lilama, and, in a measure, of the other residents of the beautiful, stricken city. Exposure to danger had made Pym in times of trouble a rapid thinker. (169-71)

As this passage summarizes, Pym and Peters's conditioning to better withstand frigid temperatures and to think quickly during crises are instrumental to the survival of the Hili-lites, who, by their acclimation to a comfortable, temperate existence and leisurely pace of life, have conversely been conditioned to not be able to so easily weather adverse conditions. This stark contrast between the products of a flawed but enduring society – Pym and Peters – and an idyllic but otherwise soft one here suggests that although Hili-li represents an idealized social state of the U.S., such an outcome should not be realized by compromising the perseverance that Pym and Peters embody.

As has been shown, the text uses its literal and allegorical registers to reflect on aspects of American society, though often in an overly optimistic and idealized manner. In

doing so, *A Strange Discovery* effectively critiques the United States through its satirical elements, contrasting the national image it seeks to present with the one it actually does. The literal register of the framing tale provides direct reflection on the state of U.S. society in its setting of 1877, but does so often ironically by making boldly self-congratulatory statements about the current social state of the U.S. while at the same time demonstrating antithetical textual evidence. On the other hand, the allegorical register of Peters's inner narrative, as told through Dr. Bainbridge, serves as a platform to comment indirectly on United States society by mediating that commentary through the Hili-lites, who metonymically stand in for (white) Americans. Through them, the text presents an overly idealized future for the United States that is free from the racial baggage of its historical past, while at the same time exposing the highly racialized nature of nineteenth century American society and presenting a warning against losing the kind of masculine virtue embodied by Pym and Peters's non-ironic heroism.

### *The Caspak Trilogy*

Unlike Dake's *A Strange Discovery*, Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Caspak* trilogy is by no stretch satiric, and in fact is very straight-forward in articulating an American national image through its constructions of masculinity, race, and nation by comparison. This is not to say, however, that these works are uncritical of the United States; on the contrary, the *Caspak* works actively make the case for the U.S. to abandon its isolationism and shoulder a greater role and responsibility in global geopolitics, as emblemized here by the First World War. The discourses of race and masculinity that it foregrounds ultimately favour not just a *white* America, but a *white America* by essentializing both race and nationality through its comparisons between the Anglo/American protagonists with both their pre-evolved

Caspakian and treacherous and cowardly German antagonists. In doing so, these texts reserve for their heroes their highest form of masculinity, defined by cosmopolitanism, competence, and moral supremacy.

Set amid World War 1, Burroughs's *Caspak* is told in three parts. Part one, *The Land that Time Forgot*, follows the American industrialist Bowen Tyler as the ship he is on gets torpedoed by a German U-Boat, which is ironically the product of his family's shipyard. Bowen survives, along with his eventual love interest, Lys La Rue. After a series of back and forth struggles between the British and German sailors, as well as sabotage, the survivors end up in the far south seas, and are pressed by the urgent need to find a source of fresh water to explore a large landmass they encounter. They reach the land via an underwater passage that leads up from the sea, only to discover a lost world of dinosaurs and pre-evolved humans. Backstabbed by the Germans, Bowen and Lys are stranded in Caspak to fend for themselves. They send out a message in a bottle in the hopes of being rescued.

*The People that Time Forgot* and *Out of Time's Abyss* expand the cast of characters and extend the plot of the first part of the trilogy. In *The People that Time Forgot*, Bowen Tyler's long-standing friend and business associate, Tom Billings, seeks to mount a rescue operation for him after receiving Bowen's message for help. Tom uses the Tyler family business's resources to find Caspak with a well-equipped search and rescue vessel; Tom leads the search, only to have his plane go down and end up stranded in Caspak himself. He befriends a young woman, named Ajour, after saving her life, and the two travel to Ajour's people (the Galus) while searching for Bowen and Lys. In the end, Tom and Ajour make it to Galu territory, stop a plot to overthrow the Galus, and are themselves rescued from certain death by Ajour's people, along with Bowen Tyler. Bowen and Lys escape Caspak, but Tom stays to be with Ajour.

The final installment of the Caspak trilogy, *Out of Time's Abyss*, fills in the gaps regarding the remaining characters that are left behind or disappear in *The Land that Time Forgot*, focusing particularly on the English sailor Bradley. On the way back to their base in Caspak, Bradley is abducted by two Wieroos, a winged species in existential conflict with the Galus in Caspak, and flown to their island domain, Oo-oh. In time, he escapes imprisonment along with a Galu woman named Co-Tan. Bradley and Co-Tan survive for a time in the wilderness on Oo-Oh, but eventually escape by blackmailing a captured Wieroo assault party into returning them where they came from. There, they save Bradley's crewmates from the Germans, killing the commander, Captain von Schoenvorts, in the process. They seize the U-Boat, extricate Tom Billings and Ajour, and escape Caspak for good.

Like Burroughs's most famous fictional series, *Tarzan*, the *Caspak* texts are concerned with constructions of masculinity and race, but unlike *Tarzan* they are overtly concerned with the U.S.'s larger geopolitical role. From the above description, for instance, it is clear that the First World War plays a fairly prominent role in the Caspak trilogy, and seems to be both a main narrative engine and a primary subject of commentary in these works. Indeed, the first action that precipitates all subsequent events in the trilogy is the torpedoing of Bowen and Lys's American passenger liner by a German U-Boat in the English Channel. Much of the action throughout the novels is additionally underwritten with the subtext of the War, which greatly informs the stereotypical and nationally biased characterizations of the American, English, and German characters. Ultimately these reductive national stereotypes, as well as the thread of War narrative throughout these texts, stand to comment on the United States' role in wider global affairs, and in particular seem to use the First World War as a rallying cry for increased American geopolitical intervention,

effectively critiquing American foreign policy and isolationism. On the other hand, the lost world portion of the narrative serves as a platform to construct an American national image. In particular, the evolutionary schema at work in Caspak identifies some ideological assumptions regarding race and the American capitalist system that are deeply embedded in the discourse of U.S. society and play a formative role in American national identity.

*Authorial Intrusion: The Life of Edgar Rice Burroughs*

This reading of the figurative significance of both the War narrative and Lost World romance genres used in these works is corroborated by biographical details of Burroughs's life. As John Taliaferro notes in *Tarzan Forever: The Life of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Creator of Tarzan*, in his works Burroughs "frequently held forth, usually allegorically but sometimes quite overtly, on a wide range of political and social issues" (19), those issues, of course, often reflecting his own views. For instance, from his "days at the military academy in Michigan [1892-95] and [his] stint in the United States Army in Arizona, it is clear that Burroughs was fascinated by military life in general" (Holtmark 8-9), and later "proved to be a strong patriot" and fervent supporter of the military through his work as a War correspondent in the Pacific Theatre in the Second World War (9). Politically, he was "vociferously anti-German" (9), and typically depicted Germans in his books "in highly derogatory stereotypes as incarnations of evil and cruelty" (9). Indeed, as Taliaferro notes, the entire Caspak trilogy is "ham-handedly laden with anti-German hyperbole; as frightening and fascinating as the Caspakian creatures may be, they are not as low-down or as loathsome as the German submariners who abandon Tyler and his mates on the Savage island" (137). Burroughs's views on race, however, were more ambivalent. Although he "seems to have conceived a strong respect and empathy with . . . Indians" over the course of his time in the

Army in Arizona during the Apache wars (Holtsmark 36), his portrayal of black people in his works is uniformly, “if not overtly racist, certainly very patronizing” (48). As Holtsmark remarks, though, Burroughs was “keenly aware of the racist nature of American society” (48), and despite his patronizing characterizations of black people in his works, they contain “unmistakable criticism of contemporary attitudes towards blacks” (49). A key way that his patronizing attitude manifests in his wider oeuvre, and the *Caspak* trilogy in particular, is through its marriage to ideas of Eugenics, with which Burroughs was fascinated:

All of [Burroughs’s] plots, especially the Tarzans, boil down to survival of the fittest, a theme both romantic and political. Burroughs, like so many of his contemporaries, believed in a hierarchy of race and class. In the Tarzan stories, blacks are generally superstitious and Arabs rapacious. On Mars, the races descend from a Tree of Life and, like fruit, are color-coded red, green, yellow, and black. Burroughs was obsessed with his own geneology and was extremely proud of his nearly pure Anglo-Saxon lineage. He came from “good” stock, a critical ingredient for good standing, he asserted. Over time, his fervid appreciation of genetic predetermination led him to the radical fringe of Darwinism: eugenics. (Taliaferro 19)

Throughout his works, then, “Burroughs implies more than once that white American and Western European (most notably British) stock is the pinnacle of evolutionary trends, and other national and racial groups are somehow lacking by comparison” (Holtsmark 48-49). With its derogatory characterization of Germans and racialized evolutionary schema, the *Caspak* trilogy is no exception.

Indeed, Burroughs’ thematized idea of eugenics is the single unifying *novum* in these works, and its function is to articulate an American national image by essentializing racial

and national traits. Although on the surface these texts may seem a strange marriage of war narrative and lost world romance, their disparate generic modes are sutured together here by Burroughs's allegorized racial and national hierarchies. The entire war story, for instance, is narratively predicated on essential differences between the heroic Anglo-American protagonists – notably Bowen, Tom, and Bradley – and the cruel and cowardly Germans, as embodied by Von Schoenvorts. Not only does this polarization of Anglo-Americans versus Germans establish the trilogy's national hierarchy and moral dichotomy, but it continues to creep into and complicate the protagonists' attempts to survive in the unforgiving Caspakian jungle. In that sense, the war story and lost world genres here are not discrete, but interdependent – linked by Burroughs's own sense that people of American and English nationality occupy a higher evolutionary position than those of German ancestry.

Caspak's highly racialized evolutionary schema also attests to the prominence of eugenics as a unifying theme in trilogy. According to Daylanne K. English, "in the United States of the 1910s and 1920s, eugenics became so widely accepted that it might be considered the paradigmatic modern American discourse" (2). In fact, during that period, "eugenics was, for the vast majority of the U.S. population, simply 'true' – just common sense" (33). If eugenics rose to prominence in the United States as a result of "anxieties regarding widespread foreign immigration and domestic migration" (11), as well as a "prevailing national perception that a new, increasingly global form of economy had arisen . . . that required new, more competitive kinds of American labor and of American laborers and their management" (145-46), its ultimate goal was nationalizing in scope, but with a very narrow national vision:

[American e]ugenics has always been primarily concerned with what the nation would look like: surveying which women were bearing which men's

children, tabulating (and frequently fabricating) hereditary disabilities, asserting biological determinants of sexual and political behavior, and zealously guarding the entryways to America's bloodlines. By warning against Latin American, Asian, eastern and southern European, and North African immigration, twentieth-century eugenics was a significant tool in the hands of those seeking to construct and preserve an Anglo-Saxon nation. These "interlopers," along with American Blacks, were viewed as both contaminated bodies and contaminators of the body politic. (Ordover 6)

As an ideology, American eugenics was hence motivated by the pursuit of a homogeneously white nation. It is for this reason that "eugenics in the United States is frequently aligned with scientific racism" (Stern 3), with some organizations, like the Pioneer Fund, conducted "studies aimed at furnishing a scientific basis for racial discrimination" (4). Tapping into an already-present nineteenth-century proslavery discourse that, as we have already seen, remained entrenched in the fabric of American society even after emancipation, eugenics therefore reinforced essentialized notions of a racial hierarchy:

The turn of the twentieth century was the heyday of racial taxonomies that placed whites and Europeans at the apex of civilization, blacks and Africans on the bottom rungs, and nearly everyone else in the suboptimal middle position of hybridity and mongrelization. In the United States, the solidification of these racial hierarchies was integral to the entrenchment of Jim Crow segregation after [post-Civil War] Reconstruction and the rise of Sinophobia and anti-Asian discrimination, and it helped to rationalize colonial ventures in Latin America and the Pacific. (13)

Ultimately, the American fascination with eugenics in the early twentieth century was a

nationalizing ideology that served to justify a racialized worldview which discursively upheld and naturalized white European and American global supremacy.

The reduction of the overall character of different nations to stereotypical elements, even caricatures, in the *Caspak* trilogy not only points to the influence of eugenics thought through an essentializing view of other nations and peoples, but further mobilizes those sentiments politically through its critique of American involvement in the First World War to suggest the United States move away from its geopolitical isolationism. Put simply, whereas the American and Anglo-European characters in the narrative are overwhelmingly heroic, moral, and competent, the Germans are uniformly portrayed as cowardly, treacherous, and pseudo-incompetent villains. Moreover, the reader is steered to regard these qualities as being essential characteristics that are innate to the nationality of the person in question. Take, for example, the altercation between Bowen and Von Schoenvorts over the latter's treatment of one of his own men:

Two of the men, both Germans, were stripping a felled tree of its branches. . . . One of them threw to his rear a small branch that he had just chopped off, and as misfortune would have it, it struck von Schoenvorts across the face. It couldn't have hurt him, for it didn't leave a mark; but he flew into a terrific rage, shouting: "Attention!" in a loud voice. The sailor immediately straightened up, faced his officer, clicked his heels together and saluted. "Pig!" roared the Baron, and struck the fellow across the face, breaking his nose. I grabbed von Schoenvorts' arm and jerked him away before he could strike again, if such had been his intention, and then he raised his little stick to strike me; but before it descended the muzzle of my pistol was against his belly and he must have seen in my eye that nothing would suit

me better than an excuse to pull the trigger. Like all his kind and all other bullies, von Schoenvorts was a coward at heart, and so he dropped his hand to his side and started to turn away; but I pulled him back, and there before his men I told him that such a thing must never again occur – that no man was to be struck or otherwise punished other than in the due process of the laws that we had made and the court we had established. (55-56)

Putting aside for a moment the various, more subtle codes that are present here, the overall impression is unmistakable: Bowen, the American, is the moral and just figure standing up to the bullying and cowardly German, von Schoenvorts. This incident therefore typifies the reductive essentialist logic which these texts espouse to underscore their geopolitical critique of American isolationism by using the essentialized racial and national hierarchies created both to privilege a white American national image and ultimately justify U.S. intervention against the Germans in the First World War. Von Schoenvorts' reaction to a minor accidental injury by seeking retribution through breaking his own subordinate's nose exemplifies a meanness of national character that is consistent with the depiction of the Germans in the work heretofore, and is set in explicit contrast both to Bowen's refusal to stoop to the level of raw vengeance by shooting the German Captain, and his upholding of the rule of law over the more base "eye for an eye" mentality which his counterpart exhibits. Moreover, the text leaves no uncertainty that von Schoenvorts' outright cowardess makes him "[*l*ike all his kind" (my emphasis), and is hence supposedly typical of the German people. The implicit message in this statement would seem to be that whereas von Schoenvorts' actions prove him, and by extension all Germans, to be cowardly and base, Bowen's actions alternatively provide evidence of American justness and virtue.

There is also a social dimension to this passage that contrasts the idea of American

social mobility favorably with continental European Aristocracy and inherited prestige. When von Schoenvorts strikes his crewman, he is not referred to in the text by his name or his military rank, but rather by his title, "Baron." The choice to describe him by referencing his Aristocratic lineage in this moment generates a social inflection which suggests that his brutal act of retribution for a comparatively insignificant injury is at least partially about class; from von Schoenvorts's perspective, the assault on his person by a social and military subordinate, however minor or unintentional, is an unacceptable affront to someone who should be considered the crewman's social better. Given this reading, the assistance of some of the German subordinates in ultimately overthrowing von Schoenvorts later in *Out of Time's Abyss* could therefore be construed as a sort of social revolution against tyrannical aristocratic rule. Bowen's even-handedness in the above incident further implies a comparison between rigid European social stratification and American social mobility. From the very beginning of the trilogy, Bowen bases his judgements of people on the merits of their actions, and gives the German sailors several opportunities to demonstrate their trustworthiness through cooperation. In fact, in a reflection of his own meritocratic ideals, he is made the de facto commander of the U-Boat due to his intimate knowledge of the ship from having personally overseen its construction and early sea trials, and hence possessing the greatest practical knowledge of the sub's capabilities and operations. An upper-middle class American himself, Bowen is the embodiment of earning his upward social mobility as a result of his own merits.

Bowen's family business of shipbuilding is also intimately bound up in the Caspak trilogy's geopolitical critique, principally because it signifies in a tangible way how even if the United States was not a direct participant in the War in Europe, it was still inextricably connected with it economically and politically, and therefore must acknowledge both its role

and the material and ethical implications of its involvement, or supposed lack thereof. Indeed, Bowen attempts to establish a veneer of neutrality for his family's shipbuilding operations at the very beginning of *The Land that Time Forgot* as he introduces his own background:

My home is in Santa Monica. I am, or was, junior member of my father's firm. We are ship-builders. Of recent years we have specialized on submarines, which we have built for Germany, England, France and the United States. I know a sub as a mother knows her baby's face, and have commanded a score of them on their trial runs. (4)

This is undercut, however, scarcely a page later when Bowen catches a glimpse of the submarine that is shelling the boat he is on:

I saw one shell burst in a group of women and children, and then I turned my head and covered my eyes.

When I looked again to horror was added chagrin, for with the emerging of the U-Boat I had recognized her as a product of our own shipyard. I knew her to a rivet. I had superintended her construction. I had sat in that very conning-tower and directed the efforts of the sweating crew below when first her prow clove the sunny summer waters of the Pacific; and now this creature of my brain and hand had turned Frankenstein, bent upon pursuing me to my death. (5)

The distance from the War that was originally created from his family's policy to express neutrality by building ships for any nation that wants to buy them is quickly eroded when Bowen witnesses the indiscriminate killing of innocent women and children using not only a product of their shipyard, but one whose construction and shakedown he personally oversaw.

The political message here is clear: the U.S.'s previous neutrality in the First World War did not absolve it from culpability or guilt for the soldiers and civilians that are killed using weapons and supplies it provides to both sides. As Bowen's indirect, but still personal, responsibility for the destruction he witnesses attests, war might be good for business, but the profits reaped as a result of American economic involvement in the War means that the United States has a measure of blood on its hands too, thus providing a moral dimension to the text's polemic for greater U.S. involvement in global affairs. Bowen, in fact, reflects this guilt:

[Lys] looked up into my face with a rueful expression. "[The Germans] seem bent on our destruction," she said, "and it looks like the same boat that sunk us yesterday."

"It is," I replied. "I know her well. I helped design her and took her out on her first run."

The girl drew back from me with a little exclamation of surprise and disappointment. "I thought you were an American," she said. "I had no idea you were a—a—"

"Nor am I," I replied. "Americans have been building submarines for all nations for many years. I wish, though, that we had gone bankrupt, my father and I, before ever we turned out that Frankenstein of a thing." (12-13)

Here, virtually in the same breath, Bowen notes that Americans are responsible for building war boats for various countries and then expresses deep regret for his personal role in that industry, and the construction of the U-Boat that is immediately threatening them in particular. The immediacy of the War seems to cause Bowen to re-evaluate the ethics of building war machines for foreign powers, and thereby to associate that endeavour with his

own sense of personal guilt.

The multiple allusions to *Frankenstein* here are telling as well, if a bit muddled. At their core, Bowen's references to Shelley's canonical work evoke the uncanny, both in the sense that something that he had known so very well – the U-Boat – has become completely alien and *unheimlich* to him, and in its direct reference to the uncanny monster of that text. Tied up in the uncanniness of the first allusion noted above is the conflation of life and death – that an icon of Bowen's family's livelihood and something that he personally helped to create and “bring life” to should actually turn out to be an instrument of mass murder. Once again there is the question of culpability: did Bowen and his family (and, by extension, the U.S.) really believe that the Germans wanted the sub for anything but killing people? However, Bowen's allusion to *Frankenstein* is ultimately a confused analogy since he sets up both himself and the submarine he built as Victor Frankenstein, the monster's creator, but yet also clearly refers to the U-Boat as a “creature.” In doing so, he is either conflating Frankenstein and his creation, or is committing the fallacy that has become commonplace in popular culture and confusing the two. Under this conflation, the U-Boat, and by extension the Germans who sail it, are indeed monstrous as a result of their indiscriminate killing of civilians. However, Bowen and his family, as well as the United States at large, are also monstrous for not fully contemplating the real cost in human lives of selling a weapon to a nation at war (especially the potential loss of innocents), or the consequences of their geopolitical neutrality more generally. The muddling of the Frankenstein analogy in this text hence is playfully ambivalent since it can stand for U.S. culpability for war casualties as much as for German war atrocities. Both interpretations, however, provide a moral justification for the United States entering the War.

The framing war narrative therefore serves to critique the United States' role in

global affairs by using the First World War as a flashpoint to foreground and interrogate the morality of inaction. As such, the trilogy synthesizes Burroughs's anti-German prejudices and his fascination with eugenics to create a national hierarchy that is narratively predicated on essential differences between the heroic Anglo-American protagonists and the cruel and cowardly Germans. This essentialized national hierarchy ultimately privileges a white American national image, and serves as a moral justification for the U.S.'s intervention against Germany in the First World War. The *Caspak* trilogy thus betrays an ideological agenda that would see a movement away from the status quo of American isolationism towards the United States taking a much more active, leading role in global geopolitics; that is, for a shift in not just America's foreign policy, but its national image as well.

If the framing war narrative in these texts stands to comment on the U.S.'s role in wider world affairs, the inner lost world narrative is more a reflection of how discourses of masculinity and race inflect America's national image. Indeed, when the plot arrives in Caspak, there is a discernible generic shift from war drama to lost world romance; although elements of the war narrative continue to seep into the lost world portion of the plot, such as the ongoing stereotypical characterizations of different nationalities, they become secondary to lost world tropes. This transition is overtly marked in the text as the crew's priorities change from playing out a microcosm of the geopolitical struggle in Europe to sheer survival. As Bowen notes in his speech to both Anglo and German occupants of the U-Boat alike:

“There is no reason why we should carry our racial and political hatreds into Caprona [Caspak],” I insisted. “The Germans among us might kill all the English, or the English might kill the last German, without affecting in the slightest degree either the outcome of even the smallest skirmish upon the

western front or the opinion of a single individual in any belligerent or neutral country. I therefore put the issue squarely to you all; shall we bury our animosities and work together with and for one another while we remain upon Caprona, or must we continue thus divided and but half armed, possibly until death has claimed the last of us? And let me tell you, if you have not already realized it, the chances are a thousand to one that not one of us ever will see the outside world again. . . . What is your answer?" (48-49)

Again, although the War continues to reverberate into this portion of the narrative, Bowen's offer to suspend hostilities and cooperate in the spirit of mutual survival here quite pointedly marks its relegation to the background in favor of the more immediate lost world narrative.

#### *Evolution and Racial Hierarchies*

Aside from admitting fantastic beasts plausibly into the plot and enabling raw adventure tropes, the most seminal aspect of the lost world portion of the narrative is the evolutionary hierarchy that defines and shapes human and proto-human existence in Caspak. Though hinted at early in the trilogy, it is Tom Billings who first learns the truth about Caspak's evolutionary schema while travelling the breadth of the land from south to north: except for among some of the Galus who have gained the ability to procreate themselves, humans and near-humans in Caspak do not have children in the conventional way but rather take part in a daily ritual in which the tadpole-like embryos, called "ata," that eventually evolve to become the Ho-lu, are released by Caspakian women at every stage of development into a river that runs the entire length of the land from north to south and delivers these embryos back "towards the beginning," where the individual evolutionary process begins. Moreover, the Galus – the "highest" form of human life in Caspak – are

locked in an ontological conflict with a rival species at a comparable level of evolutionary development, the winged Wieroo, to determine which of them “would eventually dominate the world” (134). This conflict is tacitly based on which will be the first species to reach the next evolutionary level; the Galu are thought to be on the verge of it since they occasionally produce offspring, which they call *cos-ata-lo* and *cos-ata-lu*: women and men “who did not come from an egg and thus on up from the beginning” (133). The Wieroo, on the other hand, are unable to reproduce among themselves and so resort to kidnapping Galu *cos-ata-lo* women to bear children so that they can attempt to win the conflict. From an analytical standpoint, this *novum* is the main vehicle used to articulate the American national image foregrounded in these texts, specifically with regards to its racial anxieties and the permeation of capitalism into its culture. Examining how these dimensions are reflected in the texts exposes the ideological assumptions that undergird Burroughs’s commentary here.

There is an overtly racial (and racist) paradigm at work in Caspak’s evolutionary schema, as evidenced by the language used to describe members of the various stages. The lower, least “manlike” (46, 48) spheres, for instance, are pointedly referred to as having “negroid” features. Take Bowen’s description of the members of Tsa’s tribe when he goes to rescue Lys:

I saw at a little distance a great fire around which were many figures – apparently human figures. . . . They were human and yet not human. I should say that they were a little higher in the scale of evolution than Ahm, possibly occupying a place of evolution between that of the Neanderthal man and what is known as the Grimaldi race. *Their features were distinctly negroid, though their skins were white.* A considerable portion of both torso and limbs were covered with short hair, and their physical proportions were in many ways

apelike, though not so much so as were Ahm's. . . . Evidently they were very low in the scale of humanity, but they were a step upward from those I had previously seen in Caspak. (66-67, emphasis mine)

This passage unequivocally establishes the trilogy's racial politics by correlating evolutionary development with stereotypically racial physical traits. The model of human evolution that is implied here is essentially a continuum from apes to humankind which locates black, or "negroid," features with lower orders while reserving whiteness for the more advanced strata; the text overlays a black/white racial dichotomy onto a low-to-high evolutionary spectrum, creating a racial hierarchy that socially privileges white people over racial others.

Significantly, though still ideologically racist, this racialized model of human evolution moves away from the polygenesis-based paradigm that informed the politics of Poe's *Pym*, as discussed in the previous chapter. Rather, this new model falls back on post-Darwinian notions of evolutionary development and instead posits a "natural" explanation for racial difference: non-white peoples are simply at less advanced evolutionary stages. Furthermore, white people, in the Caspakian schema, are purportedly at the top of the evolutionary chain and seemingly cannot be improved upon. Though not stated in so many words, the implication of the description we are given of the ontological struggle between the Galu and the Wieroo is that Cos Ata Lo and Cos Ata Lu Galus – women and men who are born and thus do not come up "from the beginning" – represent a new and final evolutionary stage, which would therefore cede the metaphysical war to human beings over the Wieroo. The conclusion that readers are meant to extrapolate from this implication is, of course, that white people in the rest of the world (all of whom are born in the way that is exceptional among the Galu) are the highest possible evolutionary stratum for humankind.

In perhaps the strongest connection between *Caspak's* inner and outer frames, the Galus' conflict with the Wieroo suggests that even among the white nations of the world there are differences that set Anglo-Americans, who are most closely associated with the Galu and obviously represent Burroughs's evolutionary ideal, apart from other white nations. The most apparent parallel for the Wieroo implied by the text seems to be the Germans. Like the Germans, whom Burroughs pointedly singles out by characterizing them as base, cowardly, and borderline incompetent, the Wieroo are similarly rendered in unforgiving terms, principally through the institutionalized use of murder as their chief form of internal social advancement:

All Wieroos are murderers. When they have committed a certain number of murders without being caught at it, they confess to Him Who Speaks for Luata and are advanced, after which they wear robes with a slash of some color – I think yellow comes first. When they reach a point where the entire robe is of yellow, they discard it for a white robe with a red slash; and when one wins a complete red robe, he carries . . . a long, curved knife . . . ; after that comes the blue slash on a white robe, and then, I suppose, an all blue robe. (224-25)

The extent of the Wieroos' baseness is thus not just outwardly signified, but color-coded and worn proudly in their society as symbols of social status. Whereas the racialized lower evolutionary strata of *Caspak* frequently serve as threats to the lives and safety of the Anglo-American and Galu protagonists throughout these texts, as a rival species at a comparable evolutionary level, the Wieroo are the Galus' main antagonist because they represent a fundamental threat to Galu evolutionary advancement as a result of their policy of abducting cos-ata-lo Galu women. This reading of the Wieroo/Galu rivalry as a parallel for the conflict

between the Germans and Anglo-American protagonists (and, indeed, the First World War) in the broader War narrative of these texts is solidified by the fact that Lys la Rue, Bowen's romantic interest and eventual wife in *The Land that Time Forgot*, was originally betrothed to be married to the chief German antagonist, Baron von Schoenvorts. Lys's betrothal to von Schoenvorts here directly parallels the Wieroo abductions of the Galu Ajour and Co-Tan in *The People that Time Forgot* and *Out of Time's Abyss*, respectively, suggesting through this parallel structure that the Wieroo are intended to be analogous to the Germans in these texts.

There is also a geopolitical dimension coded into Caspak's discursively racist evolutionary order. The fact that Caspakian individuals follow a trajectory from south to north as they progress from lesser-evolved strata towards becoming Galus effectively dichotomizes the land into a racially-other, less evolved south and a white, highly evolved north. This dichotomy is an analogy for the Western imperialist perspective of global geopolitics that sees the northern industrialized nations as being socially, culturally, and technologically superior to southern nations, which are inhabited by non-English speaking, racially-other people, and discursively constructed as typically being less advanced. The wider north/south geopolitical division in terms of industrialization is also reflected in the Caspak analogy since its evolutionary schema is also signified by the progressive use of tools and more advanced weapons. The Bo-lu, for instance, are likened to Neanderthals and described as "negroid," and are only advanced enough to wield clubs as weapons, but as individuals progress beyond the Bo-lu stratum to become to Sto-lu, Bandlu, Kro-lu, and Galu citizens, their intelligence grows proportionally and they are able to master the use of hatchets, spears, bows, and rope. Galus are even shown to have advanced enough in their knowledge of metallurgy to be able to effectively manipulate gold for use in their tools, clothing, and ornamentation. This system of overlaid dichotomies – north and south,

advanced and primitive, intelligent and stupid, white and non-white (“negroid”) – clearly reflect a discursively Western and imperialist view of the modern geopolitical world which sees North American and European peoples as superior to those of racially and geographically other nations and regions.

In addition to encoding racist ideological values, the Caspakian evolutionary schema is also a commentary on the cultural narratives that spring from American society’s long-standing and deep-rooted relationship with capitalism that also inflect its national image, most notably the myth of the “American Dream.” Evolution itself here is a literalized Darwinian “survival of the fittest” where only a small fraction of each stratum even has the capability to progress beyond their current level. Some simply get killed by the vicious predators that populate Caspak in droves, but others, like the Kro-lu Chief, Al-tan, in *The People that Time Forgot*, hit a developmental dead end and are unable to progress any further. The people of Caspak call such individuals “batu,” which is explained to Tom in the text:

I asked them what batu meant, as I had not before heard the word. Literally translated, it is the equivalent to through, finished, done-for, as applied to an individual’s evolutionary progress in Caspak, and with this information was developed the interesting fact that not every individual is capable of rising through every stage to that of a Galu. Some never progress beyond the Alu stage; others stop as Bo-lu, as Sto-lu, as Bandlu or as Kro-lu. The Ho-lu of the first generation may rise to become Alus; the Alus of the second generation may become Bo-lu, while it requires three generations of Bo-lu to become Bandlu, and so on until Kro-lu’s parent on one side must be of the sixth generation. (142)

Clearly the evolutionary schema then also contains an analogy to intergenerational social mobility. Yet as the above passage illustrates, such social mobility is only possible for an increasingly small portion of the population the higher the strata, and an individual's capability to "evolve" socially in large part results from generations spent at each stage.

This scheme has implications for the popular cultural narrative of the American Dream. Effectively, the system of intergenerational social mobility described above implies that the "rags to riches" American dream is possible, but takes multiple generations to realize. In the sense that native Caspakians are fully aware of the gradual nature of this mobility, the dream of social advancement towards becoming a Galu in Caspak is contrasted with that of the American dream insofar as the latter is a discursive narrative fed to the masses to encourage the illusion of rapid social advancement for individuals who earn it by being industrious. The Caspakian system of social mobility hence estranges the popular myth of the American dream by placing it in a fantastic analogy, and, in doing so, ironically conveys a more realistic sense of how such social advancement is achieved – through the accumulation of intergenerational wealth, be it economic or genetic.

In fact, unlike its pointed calls for the U.S. to abandon its isolationism, the texts seem to generally espouse a conservative approach to national images, for instance by resisting any radical departure from the established Caspakian model for intergenerational wealth accumulation. In preserving the social status quo in Caspak, the texts reinforce a vision of society in which social barriers are less permeable than the myth of the American dream suggests. The most salient example of this in the text is the batu Chief of the Kro-lu, Al-tan, in *The People that Time Forgot*. After many years as a Kro-lu, many of them as Chief, Al-tan has concluded that he is batu and therefore unable to progress to become a Galu in the usual way. To circumvent the system, however, he aligns himself with a young Galu upstart, Du-

seen, who has “taken it upon himself to abrogate the ancient laws of Caspak” by seeking an alliance with the Kro-lus to stage a coup of the Galu leadership and become Chief (141). As Tom and Ajour’s Kro-lu ally, Chal-az, notes, the plan is not without its supporters:

The younger of the Kro-lu favor [Du-seen’s] plan . . . since they believe they will thus become Galus immediately. They hope to span the long years of change through which they must pass in the ordinary course of events and at a single stride become Galus. We of the older Kro-lu tell them that though they occupy the land of the Galu and wear the skins and ornaments of the golden people, still they will not be Galus till the time arrives that they are ripe to rise. We also tell them that even then they will never become a true Galu race, since there will still be those among them who can never rise. It is all right to raid the Galu country occasionally for plunder, as our people do; but to attempt to conquer it and hold it is madness. For my part, I have been content to wait until the call came to me. I feel that it cannot now be long. (141)

The fact that Al-tan and Du-seen’s plot not only does not succeed but ultimately leads to both of their deaths is a further affirmation of the social status quo over radical social transformation. By preserving the Caspakian evolutionary order, the text espouses a conservative outlook on social mobility as the result of generations of wealth accumulation (as analogized by generations of successive natural selection). Indeed, the ill fate suffered by Du-seen, Al-tan, and the rest of the upstart Kro-lu tribespeople as a result of their attempt to subvert the social and evolutionary order of Caspak represents a sound rejection of the idea of rapid social advancement, and, by extension, radical shifts in national identity.

Given the already racialized nature of the Caspakian evolutionary hierarchy, the system of intergenerational wealth accumulation analogized here seems to structurally

privilege those in the higher strata – that is, the white Galu. Caspak’s racialized evolutionary schema thus reflects Burroughs’s wider views on race by presenting a kind of fantasy in which anxieties over the social advancement of the “lower” Alu, Bo-lu, and Sto-lu strata, who stand in for black Americans here, are allayed by the existence of structural impediments to that advancement; while the Alu, Bo-lu, and Sto-lu are not strictly forbidden from progressing the evolutionary ladder, they face significantly more challenges in attempting to do so. In comparison to the Galu, who have reached the point where they have begun to liberate themselves from the evolutionary scheme of Caspak altogether through the birth of cos-ata-lo and cos-ata-lu people, the lower strata must contend with the interrelated challenges presented by the escalating number of generations it takes for them to produce progeny capable of reaching the next level of development, as well as the greater concentration of voracious predators in the physical environments occupied by the lower evolutionary orders. In this way, although the analogy of American social advancement found within Caspak’s system of evolutionary development does not preclude the possibility of “lower” races benefiting from the intergenerational accumulation of wealth to become upwardly mobile, the system appears designed to structurally perpetuate class divisions along racial lines by making it more difficult for lower evolutionary strata to progress.

*Conclusion: Caspakian Masculinity*

There is a peculiar triangulation of masculinity, evolution, and the primitive in the *Caspak* works whose common denominator of demonstrating essential and immutable qualities also suggests that these texts seek to discursively reinforce the social status quo. Even evolution, which by its very definition connotes change, is a conservative force here through its mobilization to essentialize hierarchies of race and nationality. Aside from its

obvious argument for increased U.S. involvement in global affairs, the *Caspak* trilogy advances a conservative American national image which uses the trope of evolution to essentialize racial and national hierarchies that place white Anglo-Americans firmly at the apex of human biological, social, and moral development. This crowning achievement is signified in the texts through the American and British protagonists' superior brand of masculinity, which, as per Haslam, is characterized by their cosmopolitanism. Such representations of masculinity in American lost world narrative ultimately work to reinforce white Anglo-Saxon social hegemony.

Although a fuller account of Sommer's and Haslam's arguments has already been given in the introduction, it is beneficial to review their key points regarding masculinity in American lost world narratives as a starting point for this conclusion, and to extend them slightly using Chris Gavalier's identification of Tarzan's duality, which Haslam describes as his "cosmopolitanism," to the discourse of eugenics. In "The Lost World as Laboratory: The Politics of Evolution between Science and Fiction in the Early Decades of Twentieth-Century America," Sommer claims that American lost world narratives, and Burroughs's *Caspak* trilogy in particular, naturalize essentialist social, gender, and racial hierarchies by framing them in terms of social and biological Darwinism in the prehistoric and primordial context of the lost world setting, thereby reducing complex social, political, and cultural interactions to a base evolutionary analogy (309). The devolution into the primitive that occurs to the American and English heroes of the trilogy are actually an advance toward "find[ing] the way back to their true American/Anglo-Saxon masculinity" that Burroughs saw as threatened by the modern, urban world while still "[r]etaining their intellectual and moral superiority" (322).

Haslam's chapter on lost world narratives, and specifically the iconic character of

Tarzan, in his book *Gender, Race and American Science Fiction: Reflections on Fantastic Identities* accords with Sommer's interpretation that rapid social shifts in the United States in the early twentieth century caused science fiction writers "to look backwards . . . in an effort not to redefine white masculinity *per se* but to reinforce white supremacist, patriarchal hegemony" (76-77). For him, the primitive therefore represents "nostalgia for a masculinity lost in the decadence of civilization" (87). Burroughs presents a solution to this problem by creating Tarzan as the "primary archetype for the manner in which the 'proper' neo-Romantic man can live in the modern world" (77). According to Haslam, the basis of Tarzan's ideal masculinity is his cosmopolitanism – his ability to move back and forth seamlessly between primitive and modern contexts (78). In his "The Well-Born Superhero," Chris Gavaler is also concerned with the duality of Tarzan's identity as jungle lord and aristocrat, though he sees these two facets as working in concert to present a solution to a core problem of eugenics: degeneration from within society. For Gavaler, Tarzan's jungle upbringing purges any "degenerating attributes of the aristocracy . . . allowing [the character's] full genetic potential to flourish" (190). Burroughs hence uses the primitive jungle setting as "a fantastically transformative narrative element, possible only in genre fiction, which condenses the long-term breeding process to achieve instantly the goal eugenics advocates could otherwise only forecast" (190). In this way, the Tarzan's atavism cleanses and inoculates him against of the degenerative aspects of Anglo-American society, making him a paragon of the eugenic ideal of the white superman.

Perhaps the most pivotal point to take away from Sommer's and Haslam's accounts of masculinity in American lost world narratives is that, fundamentally, they emerge out of anxieties about rapid social change and express a kind of nostalgia for, and desire to retain, white male social hegemony. In this way, their account accords with the present argument

that the *Caspak* trilogy espouses a conservative national image that resists radical reinvention, and instead seeks to reinforce established social power. Like *Pym* before it, *Caspak* in a way dramatizes the process of national identity expansion through the idealized, cosmopolitan masculinity it imbues on its Anglo/American characters. As Haslam claims, the cosmopolitanism that defines Tarzan and his ilk has one foot in the primitive but the other in the modern. This cosmopolitanism is replicated in the American and British protagonists of *Caspak* as well: Bowen Tyler in *The Land that Time Forgot*, Tom Billings in *The People that Time Forgot*, and Bradley in *Out of Time's Abyss* all move seamlessly from sailing state-of-the-art U-Boats and flying biplanes to fighting saber-tooth tigers and dinosaurs. Effectively, these characters' ability to transition seamlessly from the modern world to the jungle demonstrates that they share the same cosmopolitan access that Haslam sees Tarzan as exhibiting, yet, as Gavalier points out, the jungle itself seems to be the key transformative element – the crucible that purges degenerative social attributes and allows unrealized genetic potential to be optimized. Given the framing of this lost world narrative within the larger geopolitical scope of the First World War, Bowen, Tom, and Bradley's encounter with the primitive in *Caspak* could be viewed as not merely a temporary escape from the modern horror of the War, but an opportunity to bring back to the modern world the kind of nostalgic white masculine potency that it is missing.

### Chapter 3

#### **The Weird and the Marvel-ous: Post-Heroic National Images in Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* and Marvel Comics' *Ka-Zar***

“Poor Devils! After all, they were not evil things of their kind. They were the men of another age and another order of being” (Lovecraft 99).

“Today, a nation that is not a nation – a nation without a voice – has spoken very loudly to the rest of the world” (Jenkins *Ka-Zar* #5, 22).

In the post-Heroic Era of Antarctic literature, American lost world narratives continued to be produced, though they were profoundly changed. Although, as critics like Clareson and Barnard have noted, the genre has always been a form of science fiction owing to its dialogue with such fields as anthropology, archaeology, and geology, beginning in the 1930s American lost world narratives started to take on elements of more modern science fiction by developing tropes like extraterrestrial beings, alien invasions, and genetic engineering. Perhaps not coincidentally, this period also saw a renewed effort on the part of the United States to engage with the Antarctic geopolitically and scientifically, particularly through the efforts of Admiral Richard Byrd who, among other initiatives, used advances in aviation technology to usher in the era of mechanical Antarctic exploration.

As a consequence of modern technology being integrated into Antarctic exploration – and, indeed, of technology becoming such an accepted part of modern American life – the

post-Heroic Era American lost world narrative therefore changed to no longer consider technology as a threat to American masculinity, but rather a complementary development to rational, scientific exploration, which is rhetorically set in opposition to the stereotypically feminine qualities of emotion and irrationality. As a result of the Antarctic continent being made more accessible and less remote by advances in communication and transportation technologies, however, lost world narratives were forced to “replac[e] the hidden inhabitable land with less obviously unrealistic scenarios, such as caverns beneath the ice” (Leane *Fiction* 161). The imaginative space for Antarctic lost worlds therefore got smaller, and the genre had to adapt by turning away from renderings of a naturally-occurring temperate zone in the region towards either creating lost worlds in a frozen Antarctic expanse, or in some artificially-maintained tropical area. Such is the case with H. P. Lovecraft’s *At the Mountains of Madness* and Marvel Comics’ *Ka-Zar*.

Although they are both, strictly speaking, lost world narratives, and they both largely conform to the discursive patterns of previous texts in terms of their constructions of race and masculinity, these texts work in very different ways. *At the Mountains of Madness* is by far the most aberrant instance of the lost world genre in this study, principally because the lost world society it figures is alien, non-anthropomorphic, virtually extinct, set within a frigid Antarctic, and older than all other life on Earth. Given these clear departures from previous instantiations of the genre, it is therefore surprising how similar it is in terms of how it operates. For instance, although race and masculinity are not overt elements of the text, they are constructed indirectly through the amorphous Shoggoths, whose creation as a slave race aligns them as a racial other to the Old Ones, and whose shapeshifting and mimicking abilities represent a kind of feminine otherness through their evocation of the grotesque. The Old Ones themselves function as an analogue, however bizarre, for white

Americans through the account of their rise and fall, as well as their dependence on a slave class, the Shoggoths, whom they create. Significantly, the cultural attitudes examined in Chapter 2 that considered modern technology and urbanization as fundamental threats to masculine potency are abandoned in *Mountains*. Instead, Lovecraft's own anxieties about how immigration and racial miscegenation would cause radical social change in the U.S. are allegorized in the Shoggoths, whose racialized and gendered otherness combines in this text to present them as an existential threat to the Old Ones' static white masculine social hegemony, which persevered for eons.

As a descendent of both Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan* and *Caspak* series, Marvel Comics' *Ka-Zar* is a much more conventional lost world narrative than *Mountains of Madness* in many ways, but attempts to transcend the static figurations that have heretofore been typical of the genre. As a result of the series' long history, *Ka-Zar*'s constructions of race, as well as the national image that it puts forth, have changed over time by attempting to move beyond conservative constructions that previous American lost worlds – and, indeed, *Ka-Zar*'s early series (1965-77) – espoused. *Ka-Zar*'s early figuration of race, for instance, are at best ambivalent, and frequently reinforce an American national image based on white, male social hegemony by setting up Ka-Zar himself as a kind of white emancipator. Beginning with *Ka-Zar the Savage* (1981-84), later series mark an attempt to move away from an American national image based on white male power by using notions of hybridity to signify racial and cultural plurality through the various human-animal tribes of Pangea, an agenda that is somewhat undercut by the fact that *Ka-Zar* insists on the normativity of white “humanity” as a common ground for racial dialogue and social harmony.

Yet continuing the trend that has been established in previous American Antarctic lost world narratives, these works also show resistance to the kind of conservative national

images they in other ways help to create. Although *Mountains of Madness* paints a bizarre conservative picture of white America, its warnings against revolutionary action as a result of its own discursive constructions of race, analogized here in the amorphous Shoggoths, dramatize the limits of white, masculine national image in a way similar to its intertext, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. Where *Pym* further signified that limit through its sudden (in)conclusion and references to the incredible nature of the rest of the story that was left out, *Mountains of Madness* uses the narrative's strain on both the narrator's sanity and credulity to accomplish the same. Furthermore, Lovecraft's evocation of the sublime in representing the Old Ones' unfathomably long history and the extreme scale of their accomplishments calls into question the relative significance of any modern nation. Indeed, by denigrating human life to the status of a joke or accident in comparison to the sublime stature of the Old Ones' civilization in this text, identity, whether personal or national, is forced into a kind of existential crisis that reflects Lovecraft's worldview of "cosmic indifferentism" – his belief that humanity is cosmically insignificant yet "falsely convinced of its own importance on a universal scale" (Smith "Re-visioning" 835). *Ka-Zar* also articulates a counter-current that dispels the surface cohesion created from its other aspects that point towards an American national image. Although it uses the impulses of American exceptionalism as an interface to construct the relationship between its national and international valences, the most recent instantiations of the series have begun to move beyond national frameworks by extending the pluralistic conception of national identity as the combination of multiple voices coexisting in polyphony more broadly to the Antarctic's confluence of nationalizing and internationalizing discourses. In doing so, *Ka-Zar* also moves towards a pan-national, or even post-national, means of representing Antarctica in the Treaty Era which does not deny the specifically American valences

imposed upon the continent, but rather suggests that they simply represent a single perspective among many.

*The Old Ones and White America*

First published serially in 1936 (though written in 1931), Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* is one of the most canonical – as well as one of the most bizarre – American lost world narratives to come out of the post-Heroic Era. The lost race that it depicts is not only extraterrestrial, but utterly alien in its appearance, and even resists attempts to classify it within the logic of modern science since its members are neither plant nor animal, but have some qualities of both. Despite their alien nature, the Old Ones nevertheless stand in as analogous to white, male American society. This is principally accomplished by setting them in opposition to their creations, the Shoggoths, whose function as slave labour, as well as their amorphous composition and shapeshifting abilities, respectively establish them as the racial and (feminine) gendered other to the Old Ones. By giving an account of the rise and fall of the Old Ones' civilization at the hands of the Shoggoths, the text not only creates a static national image for the United States by valorizing the scale and duration of the Old Ones' civilization, which reigned over the planet for more than a billion years without fundamentally changing, but also underscores the conservative nature of that vision by advancing an anti-revolutionary message through its allegory for Lovecraft's views regarding white supremacy and the radical social threat posed by racial pluralism and miscegenation.

The 1931 completion date of *Mountains of Madness* places it after the close of the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration, at a time when the U.S., principally through the agency of Admiral Richard Byrd, was taking a more active interest in the region again after being

conspicuously absent from all major Antarctic endeavours of the early twentieth century. When considered in light of the cultural attitudes discussed in Chapter 2 that viewed modern technology as a fundamental threat to masculine potency, this text registers Byrd's influence in its use of such technology to facilitate Antarctic exploration. Although Admiral Byrd is "known for being the first to fly over the South Pole, [and for] his establishment of a series of navy bases on the Ross Ice Shelf" called "Little America" (Glasberg *Cultural Critique* xv), he also championed the idea of the United States registering "an official claim [to the continent] based on his explorations and encampments" (xvii). To a very limited extent, he was successful, since his 1929 polar flight in particular "awakened frontier fantasies in the United States" (57) and helped set the stage for its renewed interest and increased involvement in the region moving forward. In the end, however, his "more straightforward hopes of claiming Antarctic territory ran aground of the influence of the 1924 Hughes Doctrine in which the then secretary of state declared only permanent colonization of territory adequate to constitute territorial claim . . . [which] meant that Byrd's marker-dropping from the air and other symbolic acts could not anchor claims" (58). Despite never achieving his ultimate endgame, Byrd's vision of framing Antarctic occupation in terms of scientific endeavour continues to resonate, and in fact forms the core of the Antarctic Treaty's (1959) positioning of Antarctica as a continent for science. Lovecraft's text picks up on this continental framing in terms of science, and actually references Byrd several times.<sup>1</sup> By reframing technology – in this case, advances in aeronautics – as an aid to scientific and geographic exploration, Byrd's Antarctic exploration helped to shift American Antarctic lost world narratives discursively away from the kind of "nostalgia for a masculinity lost in the

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<sup>1</sup> Several critics, notably Waugh (91) and Glasberg (*Critique* 64-65), have identified Byrd's overt influence on *Mountains*.

decadence of civilization” through urbanization and technologization (Haslam 87), which permeated texts like Burroughs’s *Tarzan* and *Caspak*, towards a new conception of masculinity that was augmented, rather than threatened, by the use of that technology. Lovecraft’s *Mountains of Madness* reflects this shift, since it is ultimately the Shoggoths, rather than advances in the human technosphere, that undermine the masculine character of the Expedition.

Set in 1931, *At the Mountains of Madness* gives an account of a scientific expedition to Antarctica by a team from Miskatonic University in New England. During overland flights, the advance team comes across a mountain range that is “higher than the Himalayas” (73) and discover the remains of several barrel-shaped, winged creatures underground. When the advance team does not radio updates, the remaining expedition members go to investigate, only to discover everyone in the camp either dead or missing, and the specimens gone or buried. The main character, Dyer, leaves the ruined camp the next day with Danforth to explore what is on the other side of the enormous mountains. They discover an ancient, frozen, abandoned city that stretches beyond sight. In the city, they learn some of the history of the city’s builders, the Old Ones, including their origins from outer space billions of years ago, the extent of their vast empire on Earth, their creation of the Shoggoths and humans, the Shoggoths’ rebellions, and the decay of their civilization. After a horrifying episode in which they encounter a Shoggoth, Dyer and Danforth flee the ancient city. Dyer’s account is framed as a warning against further exploration, which is implied to be imminent.

Before turning to the novel’s construction of the Old Ones as an analogue for the hegemonic social power of white male Americans, we must first unpack the racial and gendered significance of their slave creations, the Shoggoths. The Shoggoths are the centerpiece of *Mountains of Madness*’s allegory for Lovecraft’s anxieties about how

immigration and racial miscegenation in the U.S. in the 1920s and -30s would lead to radical social change in the U.S. that he feared would undermine white, Anglo-Saxon social hegemony. While several critics, like Don Smith, James Goho, and Vivian Ralickas, have noted Lovecraft's racist views, and specifically his prejudices against black people and Jews (Goho 129), S. T. Joshi, in his biography *I am Providence: The Life and Times of H. P. Lovecraft*, thoroughly charts the origins and development of Lovecraft's racism, which he sees as having their foundations in the writer's "familial influence[s], [his] reading of specific volumes, and the general beliefs of his community and his class" (215). In particular, there seem to be three main, interrelated strands to Lovecraft's racism that were relatively consistent throughout his life: his belief, based on racialist evolutionary theories like those discussed in Chapter 2, in the inherent superiority of the white civilization (213); his belief in the "*biological* (as opposed to the cultural) inferiority of blacks" and Australian aborigines (112, 936, emphasis in original); and his advocacy for "an absolutely rigid color line against intermarriage between blacks and white, so as to guard against 'miscegenation'" (936). Of these three beliefs, the only one Lovecraft was forced to retreat from – and even then, not completely – was his notion of the "superiority of the [white] Aryan (or Nordic or Teuton) over other groups *aside from blacks and aborigines*" (937, my emphasis). While he eventually conceded that Asian, Jewish, and Mediterranean peoples, for instance, were the evolutionary equals of the Caucasian race, Lovecraft never renounced his view that blacks were biologically inferior (216), which explains his desire to maintain a strict color line between white and black people in order to prevent intermarriage; for him, the "increasing racial and cultural heterogeneity of his society was . . . the chief symbol of *change* – change that was happening too fast for him to accept" because he valued social stability as "a necessary precondition of a vital and profound culture" (942-43). As Joshi notes, whereas

Lovecraft constantly readjusted his position on metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, and politics to incorporate new knowledge, “[o]nly on the issue of race did his thinking remain relatively static” over the course of his lifetime (939).

The Shoggoths’ racialized and gendered otherness thus combines in this text to present them as an existential threat to the Old Ones’ ancient, but static, white masculine social hegemony. As Dyer interprets from the Old Ones’ mural carvings of their history, the Shoggoths were among the first life created on Earth by the Old Ones:

It was under the sea, at first for food and later for other purposes, that [the Old Ones] first created earth life – using available substances according to long-known methods. . . . They had done the same thing on other planets, having manufactured not only necessary foods, but certain multicellular protoplasmic masses capable of molding their tissues into all sorts of temporary organs under hypnotic influence and thereby forming ideal slaves to perform the heavy work of the community. These viscous masses were without a doubt what Abdul Alhazred whispered about as the “Shoggoths” in his frightful *Necronomicon*. (64)

The Shoggoths were therefore engineered explicitly as a slave race to carry out the “heavy work” of building and maintaining the Old Ones’ empire. However, as an unintended consequence their creation, the Shoggoths “acquired a dangerous degree of accidental intelligence,” and “presented for a time a formidable problem” for the Old Ones by rebelling (69):

They had always been controlled through the hypnotic suggestions of the Old Ones, and had modeled their tough plasticity into various useful temporary limbs and organs; but now their self-modeling powers were sometimes

exercise independently, and in various imitative forms implanted by past suggestion. They had, it seems, developed a semi-stable brain whose separate and occasionally stubborn volition echoed the will of the Old Ones without always obeying it. (69)

A “veritable war of resubjugation” ensued in which the Old Ones attempted to bring their rebellious slave race back in line (69). For their part, the Shoggoths were particularly brutal with their preferred manner of executing their Old One masters by decapitating their star-shaped heads (69). Ultimately, however, the Old Ones “achieved a complete victory,” and went on to “tam[e] and br[eak]” the Shoggoths “as the wild horses of the American west were tamed by cowboys” (70). Nothing significant is mentioned about the Shoggoths until near the end of the novel Dyer and Danforth come across the recently-decapitated bodies of a group of Old Ones – ostensibly the ones who were discovered and (it is implied) revived by the expedition’s advance party. This discovery causes both characters to recall “certain very vivid sculptures of the Old Ones’ history” in which “the frightening Shoggoths had characteristically slain and sucked to a ghastly headlessness [Old Ones] in the great war of resubjugation” (98). The implication of this recently-committed horror seems to be that the Shoggoths eventually did start a new rebellion and annihilated their Old One masters, accounting for the massive dead and derelict city that Dyer and Danforth discover. The protagonists’ own close encounter with a Shoggoth before fleeing the city further corroborates this interpretation.

By establishing the Shoggoths as a race of beings engineered explicitly as slaves, the text sets up an association between them and black slaves in the U.S.. As discussed in Chapter 1, slave rebellions occurred in the antebellum American South, and were a source of fear that helped fuel racial discourses at the time that constructed black people as being

inferior to whites. Like the white social and political establishment in the antebellum South, the Old Ones put down the rebellion and retamed the Shoggoths back into servitude. This linkage is further underscored by Dyer's conclusion about the Old Ones upon learning the fate of the revived specimens, as well as that of their entire species:

Poor devils! After all, they were not evil things of their kind. They were the men of another age and another order of being. Nature had played a hellish jest on them . . . and this was their tragic homecoming. They had not even been savages – for what indeed had they done? That awful awakening in the cold of an unknown epoch – perhaps an attack by the furry, frantically barking quadrupeds, and a dazed defense against them and the equally frantic white simians with their queer wrappings and paraphernalia . . . poor Lake, poor Gedney . . . and poor Old Ones! Scientists to the last – what had they done that we would not have done in their place? God, what intelligence and persistence! What a facing of the incredible, just as those carven kinsmen and forbears had faced things only a little less incredible! Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star-spawn – whatever they had been, they were men! (99)

This description of the Old Ones as the “men of another age and another order of being” (99) both humanizes them in spite of their radical, alien alterity, and further demonizes the Shoggoths for succeeding in their genocide of this ancient race. Indeed, if the Old Ones are set up as the pinnacle of social and cultural hegemony for the untold eons in which they ruled their vast empire, the Shoggoths – who are principally figured in this text in terms of their creation as a slave race, their gruesome mode of killing Old Ones through decapitation, and, finally, their genocide of the Old Ones – clearly represent not just a racial other to the Old Ones, but one whose species elicits terror and is antagonized as a shapeless, feminine,

and emasculating evil.

*The Shoggoths as Feminine Other*

The threat the Shoggoths represent to the Old Ones' hegemonic power is expressed not just in racial terms, but is gendered as well. In particular, the Shoggoths signify a feminine counter, albeit stereotypically, to the analogy of the Old Ones as white, masculine America through their grotesqueness, which manifests through their amorphousness and shapeshifting abilities, as well as through their associations with madness, the irrational, and decapitation/castration. To explicate the feminizing nature of the Shoggoths' amorphousness and shapeshifting, I turn to Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr.'s account of the grotesque in his *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*. In this study, Csicsery-Ronay devotes an entire chapter to considering the role of the grotesque in science fiction at large. As he claims, the grotesque "involves recuperative recoil, allowing us to see the disorderly and repulsive as a part of the natural order, letting us believe that we have established a better, more encompassing mental order that is more resistant to shock" (188). It operates differently from the sublime insofar as it "turns the arrested attention intensely toward things, in which it detects a constant metamorphic flux, an intimate roiling of living processes that perpetually change before understanding can stabilize them" (190). As he goes on to explain, however, the grotesque has a specifically feminine valence to it:

The grotesque's metamorphic physicality has always linked it with femaleness, to the degree that some theorists argue that it is essentially a response by exaggerated male rationality to exaggerated female physiology . . . The very origin of the term *grotesque* refers back to dark and moist interior spaces. Metamorphic energy is easily associated with the momentous,

uncontrollable, and juicy changes that occur in the female body (at least compared with the conventional standard of the male body) in menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, menopause. From the phallogocentric male perspective, these physical processes are uncomfortably insistent: they distract, they interrupt, they stink, and they stain. They are seen as physical concomitants of women's grotesque mental processes: changeability, undependability, materialism, and inability to abstract from their immediate, personal situations. (193)

Here we begin to see strong connections to Lovecraft's Shoggoths. Before exploring this point in more detail, it is worth noting that there is a precedent for reading Antarctic shapeshifting creatures as manifestations of a sinister discourse of femininity, which is found in Elizabeth Leane's interpretation of the metamorphic monster in "Locating the Thing: The Antarctic as Alien Space in John W. Campbell's 'Who Goes There?'" In this article, Leane's argument centers around her claim that, in Campbell's novella, the alien Thing's "ability to change the shape of its body, its leaking fluids, its threat to the expeditioners' own bodily boundaries . . . link it with the female (and more specifically the maternal) body" (233). Ultimately, she claims, this boundary-breaching, amorphous, and ever-mutable aspect of the alien Thing reflects the Antarctic's changing glacial spatiality. Although a similar analogy could be made for Lovecraft's Shoggoths and the Antarctic, of more immediate concern is the recognition, both generally in the case of Csicsery-Ronay's account of the grotesque and in particular through Leane's reading of Campbell's Thing, that the defining shapeshifting and amorphous qualities of the Shoggoths are rooted in a polarizing discourse of gender that fundamentally aligns these aspects with the feminine through grotesque imagery and descriptions.

The Shoggoths therefore represent a female otherness that is set up in opposition to the masculine, rational, scientific, technologized, and homosocial character of Dyer's expedition. Their grotesqueness is the key way in which their alignment with the feminine is established, and it is constituted in a number of ways. As suggested above, the most obvious aspect of the Shoggoths that contributes towards this figuration is their shapeshifting and amorphousness, which signify the stereotypically feminine by evoking the changeable and the material. There is also their preferred method of executing the Old Ones by decapitation, whose descriptions in themselves are grotesque, but also which signifies a form of castration and, hence, emasculation. Upon discovering the bodies of several Old Ones killed in this fashion, Dyer remarks that he saw "the freshly glistening and reflectively iridescent black slime which clung thickly to those headless bodies and stank obscenely with that new, unknown odor whose cause only a diseased fancy could envisage" (99). This viscerally descriptive passage covers several tropes that encompass the grotesque according to Csicsery-Ronay. The "glistening" and "reflective" black slime harkens to the "dark and moist interior spaces" of the female body (193), as well as his axiom that "the grotesque reduces to goo" (195). The repetition of smell-evoking phrases ("stank obscenely" and "unknown odor") as well not only imbues the scene with a sense of physical imminence, but is also obviously meant to imply bodily processes, such as decomposition. The choice of descriptors like "clung thickly," "stank obscenely," and "diseased" further underscore the visceral nature of Dyer and Danforth's discovery, and help to give it a distinctly negative immediacy. Finally, the act of decapitation itself is doubly grotesque since it combines the horror of dismemberment with the Shoggoths' use of their gelatinous bodies to physically suck the Old Ones' heads from their bodies, a gruesome process that involves "hellish[ly] tearing" the heads off rather than "any ordinary form of cleavage" (98). The act of

decapitation here is also, from a psychoanalytic perspective, a symbolic form of castration, which only serves to further emasculate the Old Ones.

Dyer and Danforth's direct contact with a Shoggoth presents one last way in which the amorphous beings signify femininity through their grotesqueness: the experience leaves Danforth "totally unstrung" (104), which further sets up an opposition between an irrational femininity, symbolized by Danforth's madness, and a rational masculinity, which characterizes the scientific nature of Miskatonic Expedition and, indeed, is echoed in the description of the Old Ones as "[s]cientists to the last" (99). Dyer struggles to adequately describe the encounter in *Mountains*, and ultimately ends up summarizing it through analogy to an oncoming subway train:

What we did see – for the mists were indeed all too malignly thinned – was something altogether different, and immeasurably more hideous and detestable. It was the utter, objective embodiment of the fantastic novelist's 'thing that should not be'; and its nearest comprehensible analogue is a vast, onrushing subway train as one sees it from a station platform – the great black front looming colossally out of infinite subterranean distance, constellated with strangely colored lights and filling the prodigious burrow as a piston fills a cylinder.

But we were not on a station platform. We were on the track ahead as the nightmare, plastic column of fetid black iridescence oozed tightly onward through its fifteen-foot sinus, gathering unholy speed and driving before it a spiral, re-thickening cloud of pallid abyss vapor. It was a terrible, indescribable thing vaster than any subway train – a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary

eyes forming and unforming as pustules of greenish light all over the tunnel-filling front that bore down upon us, crushing the frantic penguins and slithering over the glistening floor that it and its kind had swept so evilly free of all that litter. Still came that eldritch, mocking cry – “*Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!*” – and at last we remembered that the demoniac Shoggoths . . . had likewise no voice save the imitated accents of their bygone masters. (104-05)

Dyer struggles to verbally capture the horror that the Shoggoth inspires in himself and Danforth, and by his own admission he is only able to approximate it through analogy. This breakdown of language to describe their experience in fact signifies the breakdown of order itself, which is embodied in Danforth’s subsequent madness. The Shoggoths other-worldly cry of “*Tekeli-li!*” is not only a direct intertextual reference to Poe’s *Pym* (it is the same cry uttered by the Tsalal natives to express their fear of everything white), but is also repeated by Danworth himself at the very end as they are flying away from the dead city of the Old Ones and the Mountains of Madness. Although Danforth “refused to tell [Dyer] what final horror made him scream out so insanely” as he took one final look back while they flew to safety (109), the fact that he screamed out the same sinister sound as that made by the Shoggoth at the very moment when his psyche seems to have suffered some irreparable harm from catching a “single fantastic, demoniac glimpse, among the churning zenith clouds, of what lay back of those other violet westward mountains which the Old Ones had shunned and feared” (109) suggests a link between his madness and his encounter with the shapeshifting creature. Danforth’s insanity, as well as Dyer’s inability to adequately verbally describe the horror of the Shoggoth, ultimately connect the Shoggoths’ grotesqueness with the irrational and the breakdown of order, which in turn sets them in opposition to the rational, masculine, scientific character of Dyer’s expedition.

In the sense then that the actual discoveries of the Miskatonic Expedition undermine its rational, scientific, and ostensibly masculine character, the radical nature of the knowledge that Dyer gains thus has an emasculating potential by threatening to rewrite humanity's conception of the Earth's history, as well as its own centrality within that history, and reduce it into cosmic insignificance. The gendered and racial valences that the Shoggoths take on combine here to once again articulate, in an estranged manner, Lovecraft's anxieties over whether white civilization would continue to wield social and cultural hegemonic power in American society. As Joshi claims, the "increasing racial and cultural heterogeneity of his society was for Lovecraft the chief symbol of *change* – change that was happening too fast for him to accept" and which ultimately served to stoke his "frantic desire for social stability" (942-43). It is precisely this desire for social stability – for the continuance of white power – that Lovecraft is dramatizing in *Mountains* through the radical threat posed to not just science, but also the human-centered version of history, by his Expedition's discoveries. Dyer is forced to tell his tale "altogether against [his] will" (1) as a result of the imminence of another Expedition, which he fears may spell either discursive or actually doom for humanity:

But now that Starkweather-Moore party is organized, and with a thoroughness far beyond anything our outfit attempted. If not dissuaded, they will get to the innermost nucleus of the Antarctic and melt and bore till they bring up that which we know may end the world. So I must break through all reticences at last – even about that ultimate, nameless thing beyond the mountains of madness. (36-37)

This passage seems to suggest that Dyer understands the radically paradigm-altering nature of those discoveries and so wishes to convince "scientific leaders who have . . . sufficient

influence to deter the exploring world in general from any rash and over ambitious program in the region of those mountains of madness”(1) in order to stop any current and subsequent expeditions. Thus forced to break his silence, Dyer hopes to save (white) human civilization from being torn apart by either the knowledge of its true origins or, more viscerally, by the recently reawakened Shoggoths.

### *Cosmic Horror and the Weird Lost World*

Although *Mountains of Madness* flouts certain generic conventions common to the lost world narratives examined thus far in this study, it still functions in a way that is consistent with previous lost world narratives by constructing a national image that reinforces the social hegemony of white men in the United States. However, the work also follows the established pattern of creating a counter-current that undermines the surface cohesion of that conservative national image. Indeed, despite the fact that the Old Ones are presented as an analogue for white America in this text, the duration and accomplishments of their civilization undercuts the national image created by reducing the conception of the modern nation to insignificance in comparison to the sublime scope of the Old Ones’ civilization presented. These aspects of the text are symptomatic of Lovecraft’s worldview of cosmic indifferentism, which is a constituent element of his particular brand of “weird” fiction. According to Philip Smith, Lovecraft typically reflects this outlook in his works by populating them with “creatures far older than humanity which, rather than seeking to manipulate, frighten or otherwise interact with humans are utterly indifferent to them” (“Re-visioning” 835), like the Old Ones in *Mountains*. This “sense of humanity’s utter insignificance . . . produces a terrible enlightenment and madness in [Lovecraft’s] characters,” and is the very foundation of his brand of horror (835). Lovecraft’s cosmic

indifferentism is demonstrated in *Mountains of Madness* through the reduction of humanity literally to the status of a joke or accident.

At the heart of this interpretation is the idea of the sublime. As Csicsery-Ronay explains in his *Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*, the sublime, like the grotesque, involves a recoil and recuperation, but in this case it is as a “response to a shock of imaginative expansion” in which the consciousness attempts to “cop[e] with phenomena suddenly perceived to be too great to be comprehended” by “expand[ing] inward to encompass in the imagination the limits to its outward expansion of apprehension” (146). Yet the sublime at work in *Mountains* takes a form that is separate from the classical, European mathematical sublime, or the “experience of infinity” (148), and even strictly the dynamic sublime, or the “response to the sheer physical presence of powerful phenomena” (149) – it operates, fittingly, through the American technological sublime:

Th[e] constellation of ideas surrounding the sublime change[d] radically in nineteenth-century America. Unlike Europeans, Americans did not view nature as an inscrutable and resistant domain, in which humans are embedded and from which they were simultaneously alienated. . . . Kant had authorized the feeling that reason allowed humans to measure themselves against the omnipotence of nature, through the recognition of their freedom and moral law. Americans, in a characteristic move, interpreted this recognition as a magnificent destiny to dominate nature physically. (156)

What emerged from this interpretation is the American technological sublime. As Csicsery-Ronay notes, this form of the sublime is so very practical that “[i]t eschews contemplation, and so the mathematical sublime plays only a secondary role” (157). Rather, “[i]n extending technological control over the continent, which was so full of sublime scenery that it became

commonplace, it all became a matter of the dynamic sublime” (157). American expansion proceeded first horizontally “via railroads, bridges, [and] canals” (157), not to mention the progression of the American frontier, before asserting “control over vertical space, via skyscrapers from whose heights the city became a visible abstraction” (157). Indeed, for quite some time such expansion continued unabated to the point where “the national ego seemed to expand without serious challenge from the material universe, with an attendant sense of vertigo at its own powers” (157). By placing at its core the “disembodied principle of human greatness” that sees the “conquest of natural forces through the extraction of their essence and the reapplication of humanly controlled technologies [as] no longer measur[ing] itself against a cosmic limit” (158), the American technological sublime signifies that “[p]roduction, rather than philosophical contemplation or political revolution, [is] the model for the success of a society” (158).

This form of the sublime, typified by unfettered expansion and production, is exemplified by the Old Ones. Through their surviving sculptures, Dyer and Danforth are able to piece together, over the course of approximately 20 pages of the text, a rough history of their society, which predates all life on earth and lasted up until just a few million years ago. According to that history, not only did the Old Ones come to the lifeless Earth from outer space, but they actually began all life on the planet, “at first for food and later for other purposes” (64), demonstrating clearly superior knowledge of genetic engineering. In this sense, the Old Ones actually confound the distinction between the natural and technological sublime, since they implement their advanced methods of genetic engineering to shape the Earth’s biosphere to suit their own needs. As creatures of the land, sea, air, and (apparently) outer space, they were able to live virtually anywhere on the planet, though their great Antarctic city remained “the most sacred spot of all, where reputedly the first Old Ones had

settled on a primal sea bottom” (72). In fact, as their empire began its long period of decline, the Old Ones increasingly retreated to the refuge of their Antarctic city.

Although Dyer’s interpretation of the Old Ones’ history tends to emphasize their many accomplishments and victories, it also highlights their descent into decadence. Over the eons, the Old Ones managed to prosper despite facing several existential threats, which include the previously discussed Shoggoth uprising, and invasions by two of their cosmic enemies: the Cthulu spawn and the Mi-Go, a species from which the legend of the abominable snow men of the Himalayas has its roots (70). That the Old Ones were successful in re-establishing the order of their society following the slave rebellions, and victorious in their wars from external aggressors attests to the resilience of their civilization, however there are indications from their historical artwork that the Old Ones devolved into decadence, and even lost some of their previous abilities from complacency. Indeed, despite the fact that their “prevailing intellectual and aesthetic life was highly evolved, and produced a tenaciously enduring set of customs and institutions . . . [that] varied slightly according to sea or land residence, but had the same foundations and essentials” (66), certain extraordinary capabilities fell out of their cultural memory. In particular, over time they “lost track of the method” of “absorbing certain chemicals [to] bec[o]me almost independent of eating, breathing, or heat conditions,” which was a necessary condition for their “prehistoric flights through cosmic space” (66). Dyer also notes their decline through later changes in their aesthetic practices:

Art and decoration were pursued, though of course with a certain decadence.

The Old ones seemed to realize this falling off themselves, and in many cases anticipated the policy of Constantine the Great by transplanting especially fine blocks of ancient carving from their land city, just as the emperor, in a

similar age of decline, stripped Greece and Asia of their finest art to give his new Byzantine capital greater splendors than its own people could create. (78)

There are two main points to draw from this description and its greater context. First, the overt comparisons here between the Old Ones and the Byzantine Empire are clearly meant to convey parallels between Old One civilization and human history. Although the analogy in the above passage is relatively straightforward, closer scrutiny of any such historical comparison between the Old Ones and human beings must end with a kind of sublime realization of the extent and accomplishments of the former next to the relative insignificance of the latter. Though Old One civilization is certainly not infinitely long, the mathematical sublime is implicated since its billions of year of history when compared to the duration of a single human lifetime may as well be infinite. This extreme temporality is figured through a spatial rendering of the dynamic sublime in the text:

Here, on a hellishly ancient table-land fully twenty thousand feet high . . . there stretched nearly to the vision's limit a tangle of orderly stone which only the desperation of mental self-defence could possibly attribute to any but a conscious and artificial cause. . . . Only the incredible, unhuman massiveness of these vast stone towers and ramparts had saved the frightful thing from utter annihilation in the hundreds of thousands – perhaps millions – of years it had brooded there amidst the blasts of a bleak upland. . . . For boundless miles in every direction the thing stretched off with very little thinning; indeed, as our eyes followed it to the right and left . . . we could see no thinning at all except for an interruption at the left of the pass through which we had come. (45-46)

The endless city of the Old Ones here literally stretches beyond Dyer and Danforth's sight,

creating a spatial metaphor for the sublime temporal scale of their civilization. Like all instances of the sublime, Dyer's analogy between the Old Ones' decline and that of the Byzantines is hence incredibly reductive, yet necessarily so in order to collate the information and make it sensible and representable to the reader.

The unfathomably long duration of the Old Ones' civilization on Earth additionally naturalizes their sovereignty over the planet in a way similar to how white American history has glossed over the fact that Native American peoples were displaced and their cultures devastated by the colonization and continental expansion of white Euro-Americans. In keeping with the parallels already established between the Old Ones and white America, their arrival on Earth eons ago reflects aspects of the white colonization of North America, though it conspicuously erases Native Americans from the allegorized narrative by describing the Earth as "nascent" and "lifeless" when they arrived (63). While the text never suggests any reason to doubt this account, it is important to note that its heavily mediated account of the Old Ones' civilization here could easily omit the presence of any pre-existing life since the reader is only given access to this history through Dyer's interpretation of their artwork (principally sculptures), which is the self-reported dominant narrative of the Old Ones. Since the Old Ones stand allegorically for white Americans, the apparent lack of any previous indigenous life on Earth when they arrived serves to discursively reinforce white Euro-Americans' claim over the New World by erasing the presence of Native groups.

The second main point that should be derived from the above passage concerning the Old Ones' decadence is that it is in this context and period of social decline, which Dyer places at some time in the last five hundred thousand years, that the Old Ones created humanity. It was previously noted that the Old Ones created life on Earth "first for food *and later for other purposes*" (64, my emphasis), with their "more elaborate experiments

[coming] after the annihilation of their various cosmic enemies” (64). The Shoggoths are an obvious contender for life created later for other purposes, yet as the same paragraph details they were also an early creation, and thus pre-dated the invasions by the Cthulu spawn and Mi-Go (64). Dinosaurs are another pre-invasion form of life that the Old Ones allowed to prosper, and even used to help build their land cities (67). Humankind is the only species specifically cited as being created after the invasions. Yet what are we to make of the fact that humans are the only species referenced as creations of the Old Ones that fit the categories of “later” and “more elaborate?” There are two telling passages that provide an answer. In the first, we learn that there are certain species that were “products of unguided evolution acting on life cells made by the Old Ones” that were “suffered to develop unchecked because they had not come into contact with the dominant beings,” while “[b]othersome forms . . . were mechanically exterminated” (67). Second, and immediately following these statements, Dyer notes that “some of the very last and most decadent sculptures [depicted] a shambling, primitive animal, used sometimes for food and sometimes as an amusing buffoon by the land dwellers” (67); in these figures, Dyer remarks, the “vaguely simian and human foreshadowings were unmistakable” (67). Together, these passages strongly imply that humankind was created in the decadent, later age of the Old Ones as a means of entertainment.

The effect of this reading is, literally, to reduce humanity in the cosmogony of the Old Ones to the status of a joke, which of course has damning implications for the American national image created through other valences in the novel. If humans were an accident of evolution that the Old Ones suffered to exist for their value as entertainment and food, then the value of human civilization itself, let alone individual human nations, is called into question, especially in comparison to the sublime scale and duration of the Old Ones’

society. This interpretation is further consistent with the cosmic indifferentism that defines Lovecraft's specific brand of horror. As Ralickas explains, Cosmic Horror "compels the expansion of the experiencing subject's imagination" through the "fear and awe we feel when confronted by phenomena beyond our comprehension, whose scope extends beyond the narrow field of human affairs and boasts of cosmic significance" (364). Lovecraft's creation of Cosmic Horror in his works is in large part the result of the cosmic indifferentism it displays by simultaneously signifying the vastness of space and time, as well as the insignificance of humanity within it (366). This cosmic insignificance, this reduction of human life to near nothingness, in *Mountains of Madness* helps to "[destroy] all aspects indispensable to the integrity of Lovecraft's white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant and predominantly male characters' sense of selfhood – their traditions, morality, race, psyches, and bodies" (368), thereby complementing the existential threat to white American social and cultural hegemony posed by the Shoggoths' racial and gendered otherness in this text.

### *Ka-Zar the Savage*

Marvel Comics' *Ka-Zar* is very different from Lovecraft's *Mountains*, and in many ways represents a return to familiar lost world renderings seen in previous texts examined in this study. In other ways, however, *Ka-Zar* is distinct since it is the only work examined here that was published in the Antarctic Treaty Era, and which has spanned five decades (and counting). In this Marvel Comics series we therefore see elements that we have come to expect, such as tropes of the primitive and evolution, as well as a continued concern with American cultural preoccupations, most notably race, that help to articulate an American national image. As a result of its long publication period and situation in a Treaty-era Antarctic context, however, the series has evolved to represent a new kind of conceptual

framework for the continent by suggesting a counter-reading that moves away from purely national conceptions towards viewing the Antarctic as a polyphony of distinct national voices in harmony and competition with one another.

Since first appearing in 1965, *Ka-Zar* (the series and the character) has had two distinctive periods that are set apart not only by the rendering of Ka-Zar himself, but also through their narrative preoccupations. Ka-Zar's early instantiations, including his guest appearances in other *Marvel* titles in the 1960s (some of which were collected and republished as the first *Ka-Zar* series in 1970-71), as well as his *Astonishing Tales* run (issues 1-20, 1970-73) and *Ka-Zar: Lord of the Hidden Jungle* (second series, 1974-77), mark a version of the character that is basically a carbon copy of Burroughs's Tarzan set in the shared Marvel Comics universe. The timing of Ka-Zar's emergence in fact coincides with resurgence of interest in Tarzan in the 1960s, which was aided by the series' republication in paperback after Burroughs's estate let copyright lapse following his death (Torgovnick 42-43), leading to Tarzan novels accounting for "one out of every thirty paperbacks sold" in 1963 (42). Perhaps in an effort to capitalize on the incredible commercial success *Tarzan* had enjoyed since its original publication (Abate and Wannamaker 2), early *Ka-Zar* is altogether similar to its predecessor, and thus echoes the way that Tarzan and the Anglo-American protagonists of Burroughs's *Caspak* series (examined in Chapter 2) foreground discourses of race and masculinity that reinforce an American national image based on white, male social hegemony by setting up Ka-Zar himself as a kind of white emancipator.

Although *Ka-Zar*'s early instantiations place it firmly within the established conventions of how the lost world narrative genre has typically operated in the texts hitherto examined in this study, its later series mark an attempt to move away from simply

allegorizing an American national image based on white male power towards becoming a platform for a more nuanced examination of national identity, racial and cultural pluralism, and imperialism, though one which still insists on whiteness as normative. This shift occurs with the publication of *Ka-Zar the Savage* (1981-84), and is sustained in *Ka-Zar*'s third series (1997-98) and fourth series (2011). While these series do not do away with the American national allegory altogether, the principle means by which they signify racial issues – the Savage Land's human-animal hybrid Pangean tribes – simultaneously serves to create an international allegory as well by both analogizing the United Nations and appealing to popular and legal conceptions of the Antarctic as a site of international cooperation. The national and international valences in these series frequently overlap, transforming *Ka-Zar* into become a ground for examining how the United States' national image interfaces with its broader role in global geopolitics through a complex appeal to the nation's deeply held belief in American exceptionalism, which on one hand calls for a kind of virtuous isolation to preserve American ideals, while on the other sees it as the duty of the United States to spread those ideals to the rest of the world. This ambivalent framing of the Antarctic in *Ka-Zar* as both allegorizing national image and analogizing international conceptions of the continent signifies a reconception of Antarctica as a place where multiple national, cultural, and racial perspectives can coexist polyphonically. The tension between singular national imagined communities in Antarctica and the continent's figuration as a site of global convergence dramatized here ultimately forms the core of *Ka-Zar*' counter-impulse. Rather than completely undermining the American national image foregrounded in other parts of the series, *Ka-Zar* sees the American national image it creates as one voice among many that speak simultaneously to try to define the Antarctic region.

*Serialization and the Literary Production of National Images*

The relationship between literary production and national images is integral to understanding the resilience of figures like Tarzan and Ka-Zar, and, in the case of the latter, explaining the kind of serialized praxis that is key to *Ka-Zar*'s evolution over its fifty-year history. As discussed in the Introduction, critics like Anderson and Matarese have previously identified print as a vehicle for generating and reinforcing ideas of nation-ness, and hence serving to create and maintain national images. At the core of this discussion is Anderson's conception of the nation as a cohesive "imagined political community" (6). Anderson turns to the novel and the newspaper as not just formal analogies for "'re-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation" (25), but also as the means by which national publics began to conceive of their own nation-ness. Indeed, print capitalism is cited as being integral to allowing "rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profound new ways" that made it possible to imagine the "deep, horizontal comradeship" that undergirds nation-ness (36, 7); effectively, the "convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, in which its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation" (46). The regularity but ephemerality of the newspaper, for instance, helped the reading public to gain a sense of unity through the metaknowledge that unknown others elsewhere were reading the exact same text as them on a daily basis. This daily "mass ceremony," in which "each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion" (35), therefore helped make it possible for people to develop an imagined sense of kinship and community with anonymous others, even over significant, though necessarily limited,

geographic distances.

Building upon Anderson, other critics have suggested that serialized novels and comic books contribute to these same processes in specific, formally contingent ways. In fact, the phenomenon of serialization itself may formally aid such processes, especially since the very logic of serialization produces a kind of mass ceremony effect similar to that which Anderson claims occurs with newspapers. In his study *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*, Charles Hatfield explicates three functions of comic book serialization:<sup>2</sup> that it “encourages authors to build discrete episodes” (154); that it “lends certain structural and design elements that can be used to reinforce the shape and continuity of an overarching story” (155); and that it allows “[a]uthors whose work is serialized while still in progress . . . [to] reply to the public reception of their work, by commenting (in a direct or coded fashion) on readers’ reactions, or by altering the substance of their work in response to reader feedback” (159). Of these three functions, the latter two provide the most insight into how serialization may contribute to national images.

These two points are, in fact, intertwined. Addressing the third function first, if serialization allows authors and readers (potentially) to engage in a dialectic regarding the narrative, then such a hypothetical exchange would connote a kind of narrative and economic praxis in which author and producer respond to what did and did not work for readers and consumers, and subsequently alter their approach. While there is nothing to suggest that authors unequivocally “write for the readers” (they may actually resent having their work criticized), this dynamic points to a crucial tension in the field of cultural production: the balance between art and economics. For the most part, comic books and

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<sup>2</sup> Though Hatfield explicates these functions in terms of comic book and graphic novel serialization, I will be applying them to novel serialization as well.

print novels are the result of a heteronomous system of production, meaning that even though they are artistic works, they ultimately are produced to be sold and make money. For this reason, it might be suggested that “giving the market what it wants,” and thus not alienating readers, works in the best economic interest of the publisher, who is likely looking at the bottom line.<sup>3</sup>

This market logic also suggests why serialized “long-form” narratives, and comics in particular, tend toward the status quo rather than revolutionary change (Dittmer 642), since publishers have little motivation to allow frequent artistic experimentation or radical plot twists if sales are good and doing so would only serve to alienate their paying readership. In this sense, comics are an ideal platform for presenting conservative national images. In fact, such conservatism is a component of Hatfield’s second function of serialization, which is to “[lend] certain structural and design elements that can be used to reinforce the shape and continuity of an overarching story” (155). Extending the logic of this point, those structural and design elements become increasingly reinforced the longer a series runs, which itself is a disincentive to change if the series is doing well economically. As a result, the protagonists of such long-form series tend to reflect this formal conservative market approach thematically, such as by appealing to readers through narrative elements that reflect and reinforce their national image. Prime examples of this process are the iconic superheroes Captain America and Superman, both of whom are meant to embody the essence of American national identity and narratively reinforce the tropes that underpin an American national imagined community.

The *Tarzan* and *Ka-Zar* series are good examples of such interactions between

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<sup>3</sup> Sean Howe’s *The Untold History of Marvel Comics* depicts Martin Goodman, owner of Timely Comics and, later, Marvel Comics, as one such publisher who seemed to care more for the profitability of the industry than its artistic or cultural merits.

serialized stories and the market, and the persistence of both figures suggests their continued cultural resilience. It is difficult to mount any meaningful discussion of the cultural and ideological work done by *Ka-Zar* without comparing it to its most obvious antecedent, Burroughs's *Tarzan*. It is perhaps a foregone conclusion for scholars of American literature that *Tarzan* "has been a long-standing phenomenon in American popular and material culture" (Abate and Wannamaker 2). Indeed, the franchise has had a long history spanning multiple media: originally published in a serial magazine format in 1912, Burroughs subsequently produced dozens<sup>4</sup> of novels based on the character, who has further spawned a formidable number of film, comic book, radio, and television adaptations. This significantly abbreviated account of Tarzan's fictional appearances across a variety of media, however, does not even encompass the numerous imitations and blatant knock-offs that the character has inspired since his creation.<sup>5</sup> The existence of such a large number of derivative characters points to the continued cultural resonance of Tarzan-like figures within American culture. Given his nearly identical background to Tarzan, *Ka-Zar* is a prime example of one of these derivative characters.

As previously noted, Burroughs's *Tarzan* has had incredible longevity, and even saw a resurgence of interest in the 1960s. Marianna Torgovick attributes his renewed popularity, attested to by the fact that "one out of every thirty paperbacks sold [in 1963] was a Tarzan novel" (42), to the series' republication in paperback after Burroughs's estate let copyright lapse following his death (42-43). An interesting element of the Tarzan phenomenon is that the series retained its popularity despite, or perhaps even because of, its extremely repetitive

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<sup>4</sup> 24 *Tarzan* novels by Burroughs were published between 1912 and 1965.

<sup>5</sup> In the article "How Many Darn Jungle Lords Do We Need Anyway?" on [www.comicvine.com](http://www.comicvine.com), user TerryMcC lists 83 fictional characters who are Tarzan-like. Of these characters, he notes only two that were created before Tarzan: Mowgli (of *The Jungle Book* fame) and Rima. Despite there being two earlier jungle characters, the author specifically cites Tarzan as the figure who "g[a]ve birth to dozens of other jungle lords over the years."

use of the same narrative tropes. This aspect was quickly recognized by critics, who “took the series to task for its increasing reliance on formula and repetition” (Gleason 42), and inspired one British commentator to scathingly remark that “[i]n America, they have always maintained that it is impossible to have too much of a good thing” (42).<sup>6</sup> Yet the series sold well. Reasons for Tarzan’s popularity have been explored over the years, with one common line of thinking claiming that “Tarzan has freedom and strength and power [and that] we read him to reclaim a little of our own” vicariously through the atavistic power fantasy he represents (Torgovnick 43). Regardless of whether or not “[t]he man in the lion skin was a fantasy-projection of the man in the pin-stripe suit or on the assembly line” (43), the very repetition that critics deplored in the series in fact “reinforce[d] the shape and continuity of the overarching story” (Hatfield 155), apparently giving Burroughs’s readership what they wanted and making a mint in the process. The fact that the series was so centrally reliant on the repetition of a few key tropes and remained successful suggests that Burroughs availed himself of the kind of reflection that Hatfield suggests long-form serialization allows, only he must have chosen not to heed his critics in favour of exploiting a formula that obviously worked.

The *Ka-Zar* series actually draws from both Burroughs’s Tarzan character and his Antarctic Caspak setting, which was discussed in Chapter 2. Tarzan and Ka-Zar share a strikingly similar personal narrative insofar as both are aristocratic British boys marooned in the jungle as children and raised by wild animals following the death of their respective parents. Likewise, Burroughs’s Caspak and *Ka-Zar*’s Savage Land are both tropical jungles hidden within the Antarctic and populated by prehistoric creatures. On the one hand, these series are similar in that, despite their apparent British heritage, both Tarzan and Ka-Zar are

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<sup>6</sup> Gleason is quoting E. H. Lacon Watson from his article “‘Tarzan’ and Literature.”

avatars of a white, masculine American national image, albeit at different cultural moments in U.S. history. The projection of this American national image onto their respective exotic settings is enabled by discursive figurations of both Africa and Antarctica as “blank” spaces to be physically and ideologically populated by Western nations. It is against this perceptually blank space that an American national image is projected, in this case by reinforcing white supremacist discourses.

In contrast to Tarzan, who has always been instantiated as John Clayton, Lord Greystroke, Ka-Zar has had two distinct incarnations. The first is Ka-Zar the Great, who first appeared in a short-lived<sup>7</sup> eponymous pulp magazine published by Martin Goodman’s Manvis Publications in 1936-37, but went on to become a comic book hero a few years later for one of Goodman’s other publishing companies, Timely Comics.<sup>8</sup> These Golden Age Ka-Zar stories appeared in *Marvel Comics* #1 (1939), *Marvel Mystery Comics* #2-27 (1939-42), and *The Human Torch* #5 (1941). Born David Rand, Ka-Zar the Great survived a plane crash in the Congo with his upper-middle class parents as a toddler and, following their deaths, was raised by the lion, Zar. Eventually taking the name “Ka-Zar,” or “brother of the lion” (Thompson “Adventures of Ka-Zar the Great” *Marvel Comics* #1, 65), the Rand version of the Ka-Zar character is even more closely identifiable with the antecedent Tarzan than its modern cousin because of its Congo setting and colonial associations.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most interesting aspect of these Golden Age Ka-Zar stories is that the traditional jungle adventures, whose repetitive plots revolved around defeating villainous ivory hunters and emerald-seeking prospectors, shortly came to be replaced with equally repetitive fights

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<sup>7</sup> The pulp, written by Bob Byrd, only ran for three issues.

<sup>8</sup> Timely Comics was rebranded to what we now know as Marvel Comics in the early 1960s.

<sup>9</sup> David’s British father lived in Johannesburg and owned a “rich diamond field in the Transvaal” (Thompson “Adventures of Ka-Zar the Great” *Marvel Comics* #1, 54), evoking obvious associations to British imperialism in Africa.

against Nazis in Africa during the Second World War. Indeed, Ka-Zar the Great takes out so many hidden Nazi bases on the continent that he is dubbed “[t]he Fuehrer’s Greatest Enemy in Africa” (Thompson “Adventures of Ka-Zar the Great” *Marvel Mystery Comics* #25, 44). Though the reasons for this shift may only be guessed at, it was likely a response to market demand for the more popular (and therefore better-selling) anti-Nazi plots, which were popularized by iconic characters like Captain America. Furthermore, the erratic placement<sup>10</sup> and ever-shortening lengths<sup>11</sup> of these Golden Age Ka-Zar stories within their containing books<sup>12</sup> presents more circumstantial evidence that the publisher was struggling to (re)kindle interest in the character by constantly tinkering with his stories’ spatialization. Ka-Zar the Great’s adventures were ultimately discontinued after *Marvel Mystery Comics* #27, presumably to make room for more popular features that might drive up sales. While the publication history of this instantiation of Ka-Zar suggests that the writers and publishers engaged in a kind of praxis by using the market reaction to the character and his stories to inform the narrative direction he would take and the positioning of his stories in subsequent issues, unlike Burroughs they never found a winning formula that would make the character sustainably popular.

Although Marvel Comics’ Ka-Zar shares the name of the Golden Age Ka-Zar the Great, he is a separate character with a different origin. Born Kevin Plunder, the modern Ka-Zar reprises Tarzan’s aristocratic origins, but sheds the African setting of both Tarzan and Ka-Zar the Great in favour of a Caspak-like Antarctica. Ka-Zar saw his modern rebirth in

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<sup>10</sup> Golden Age comics tended to contain multiple stories of different characters in each issue. Ka-Zar the Great’s stories oscillated between being near the end of the issue (where he typically was found) and much closer to the beginning, with little consistency in their placement before they stopped appearing.

<sup>11</sup> Between his appearance in *Marvel Comics* #1 and *Marvel Mystery Comics* #27, his typical story length went from 14-16 pages to 5-6 pages.

<sup>12</sup> As was common in Golden Age comic books, Ka-Zar the Great was only one discrete story contained within the book itself. *Marvel Mystery Comics* typically featured the Sub-Mariner, the Human Torch and at least 2-3 more stories besides Ka-Zar in every issue.

1965 with his guest appearance in *X-Men* #10, and continued to show up sporadically in titles like *Daredevil*, *Amazing Spider-man*, *Fantastic Four*, and *The Incredible Hulk* throughout the 1960s. Some of these early appearances were collected and reprinted as the first series of *Ka-Zar* in 1970-71, which chronicles the character's transformation from jungle "savage" to fully realized English nobleman. In addition to his continued guest appearances among other Marvel titles, Kevin Plunder as Ka-Zar has been featured in five other ongoing series, four of which have born his name: *Astonishing Tales* (issues 1-20, 1970-73), *Ka-Zar: Lord of the Hidden Jungle* (second series, 1974-77), *Ka-Zar the Savage* (1981-84), *Ka-Zar* (third series, 1997-98), and *Ka-Zar* (fourth series, 2011). This frequently broken line of modern Ka-Zar appearances in some ways disrupts the kind of continuity that Hatfield associates with serialization in his second function. Yet despite being one of the most frequently cancelled titles in Marvel comics history,<sup>13</sup> the publisher periodically returned to the character, which in itself implies that it saw him as profitable enough to be worth revisiting. While Ka-Zar's intermittent publication would seem to limit its ability to engage in the kind of serialized praxis adopted by writers of other continuously-running comic book superheroes, each new series provides an opportunity to soft reset and reorient the series, thus allowing the new writer to address the reasons that the previous series waned in popularity and reclaim a readership. This in itself is a form of serialized praxis akin to the kind Hatfield describes, only it occurs between the cancellation of one Ka-Zar series and the beginning of another.

The modern Ka-Zar's periodic narrative course corrections in response to frequent

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<sup>13</sup> At the end of the last issue of *Ka-Zar the Savage*, there is a metafictional vignette in which Ka-Zar joins the ranks of the other Marvel characters whose series have been cancelled; the writers poke fun at his title's tendency to get cancelled more than any other by making him "Lord of the Land of Cancelled Heroes" (Carlin "Savage in a Strange Land" 30).

cancellations paint a very different publication picture than Burroughs's repetitive but stable rendering of Tarzan, yet the resilience of these figures indicates that they continue to have cultural purchase with readers. This continued cultural resonance of both Tarzan and Ka-Zar is the result of their status as avatars of an American national image rooted in white male social hegemony. In his article "A Geneology of Evil: Captain America versus the Shadows of the National Imagined Community," Christian Steinmetz triangulates the relationship between nationhood, (national) myths, and print literature:<sup>14</sup>

While the concrete space of geographical borders may outline a state, a nation's boundaries are intangible, more of an imagined community than a material one. This doesn't mean that a nation's limits are unable to be traced, just that they are defined more by culture than by their actual physical location. Since modern human beings still require myths to affirm their social context, we can understand common myths as a foundation for the culture that defines the imaginary space we call today a nation. As Benedict Anderson has revealed, the convergence of capitalism, print media and different localized vernaculars gave birth to this idea of the nation. Since they narrate modern myths within our market-driven print industry, comic books are an ideal site to observe this manufactured nationalism. (191)

Steinmetz here indicates the place of popular literature within a system of discursive reproduction. As mass-produced print narratives whose power fantasies are (presumably)<sup>15</sup> designed to appeal to a market of adolescent boys, figures like Tarzan and Ka-Zar aid in the

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<sup>14</sup> Though his argument does involve the print capitalism at large, Steinmetz is specifically concerned with comic books in this article.

<sup>15</sup> Though this assumption is problematic, it is one made by critics and publishers alike. Torgovnick, for instance, begins her chapter on Tarzan by citing his influence on "US males" (42), and comic book industry giant Stan Lee has noted that this demographic was their perceived market (Lee *Origins* 14).

discursive construction of U.S. nationhood by implicating that “manufactured” image of American nationhood as part of its mythic history and destiny to successive generations of young men.

One specific way that such images are targeted to young men, ostensibly to aid in their own discursive reproduction, is through constructions of an idealized masculinity. To reiterate the points of Sommer and Haslam discussed previously, Burroughs’s fictional series repeatedly suggest that the modern forces of urbanization and industrialization have diluted masculinity. To remedy this, Burroughs uses tropes of the primitive and evolution not just to show American men “the way back to their true American/Anglo-Saxon masculinity” while “[r]etaining their intellectual and moral superiority” (Sommer 322), but also “to reinforce white supremacist, patriarchal hegemony” (Haslam 77). As Burroughs’s “primary archetype for the manner in which the ‘proper’ neo-Romantic man can live in the modern world” (77), Tarzan represents an idealized masculinity that strikes a balance between civilization and nature through his “form of essentialized cosmopolitan cultural access, an inborn sense of what constitutes ‘proper’ appropriation” (86), which allows him to seamlessly move between different natural and cultural contexts. As an imitation of Tarzan, especially in his early series, Ka-Zar also takes on these values. His primitive situation within the larger Marvel continuity – an internally consistent and self-coherent set of characters and narratives set within a decidedly modern and predominantly urban context – serves to further underscore this positioning for the character. The fact that Ka-Zar’s strength, agility, and combat abilities are the result of his jungle upbringing (rather than a radioactive spider, or cosmic rays, for instance), but that he can still walk right into the urban jungle of New York without missing a beat, signifies the natural roots of his kind of masculine cosmopolitanism that Haslam identifies. In *Ka-Zar*, as in *Tarzan*, the eponymous hero’s primitive nature is meant

to compensate for “a masculinity lost in the decadence of civilization” (Haslam 87).

*Ka-Zar and American National Image*

Published more than fifty years after *Tarzan* was first introduced to readers, *Ka-Zar* (especially in his early series) still constructs a similar American national image rooted in white male social hegemony, though it does reflect some of the social progress made in the interim period. As previously noted, *Ka-Zar*'s masculinity is established, especially in his early series, in essentially the same way as *Tarzan*'s: through his cosmopolitan access to both primitive junglescape and urban high society, which acts as a curative for the “masculinity lost in the decadence of civilization” (Haslam *Gender* 87). In terms of its treatment of race, although *Ka-Zar* never demonstrates the type of discursively American racial antagonism that *Tarzan* typically shows toward black Africans (*Tarzan* 163), his positioning in relation to race is frequently ambivalent or even patronizing, as evidenced by *Ka-Zar*'s repeated figuration as a kind of white emancipator. This portrayal does not substantively change until the character's 1981-84 series *Ka-Zar the Savage*, which, in spite of its more concerted attempts to address racial pluralism in positive terms through the inclusion of the human-animal hybrid Pangean tribes, nevertheless ultimately insists on white American values as normative.

*Ka-Zar*'s first modern appearance in *X-Men* #10 (1965) seems to treat race fairly ambiguously despite the fact that, as comic critics and historians like Sean Howe have noted, the *X-Men* series served as an analogue for the civil rights movement in the 1960s. The racial allegory of *X-Men* functions not along the lines of white versus black (or any non-white, for that matter) ethnicity, but rather is estranged by placing it in terms of regular

humans versus mutants.<sup>16</sup> Once again, we see here the trope of evolution, so common to the lost world narrative genre, in a different, more modern science-fictional form, yet still serving the same basic function of mediating the topic of race in American society. This figuration was ground-breaking for the comic industry in the 1960s, since it was “one of Marvel’s earliest acknowledgements of the fissures in American society” (48-49). Just as cultural critic Walter Benn Michaels claims that “[t]he difference between black and white skin looks pretty insignificant compared with the difference between humans and walking mollusks” or other aliens in science fiction (27), this move in *X-Men* toward viewing otherness along the lines of the human versus post-human superbeing dichotomy also serves to make racial differences in appearance (i.e. skin color) appear equally trivial. Given this general orientation of the *X-Men* series in the 1960s, the ambivalent portrayal of race in Ka-Zar’s debut issue appears significant.

The question of race comes to the fore in *X-Men* #10 when the X-Men see a news report from Antarctica that shows footage of a mysterious man in a loincloth, later determined to be Ka-Zar, exhibiting almost super-human strength, agility, and speed (Lee “The Coming of Ka-Zar” 3); despite Professor Xavier’s proclamation otherwise, this causes the team to believe (or at least hope) that the man might be a mutant like themselves. The question of Ka-Zar’s ontological status – whether he is a “regular” human or super-powered mutant – thus serves as a racially motivated impetus for the X-Men to investigate. The group are introduced to Ka-Zar after they are beset by the marauding Swamp Men, whom Ka-Zar scares off with his fearsome war cry, but not before the telekinetic X-Man Jean Grey is carried off as a prisoner (6-9).<sup>17</sup> Friendly relations are waylaid, however, by a

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<sup>16</sup> Or, as the X-Men’s arch villain/sometimes-ally Magneto calls them, “homo superior.”

<sup>17</sup> Jean Grey’s abduction is an obvious parallel to Jane Porter’s abduction in *Tarzan of the Apes*.

misunderstanding<sup>18</sup> that causes a brief altercation between Ka-Zar and the remaining X-Men, which lasts until they are interrupted by another common foe, Maa-Gor of the Man-Ape tribe (10-11). After quickly defeating Maa-Gor, the X-Men ally themselves with Ka-Zar in order to rescue Jean from the Swamp Men.

The skirmishes that take place in this issue show the ambiguity of *Ka-Zar's* racial politics. For example, Ka-Zar initially assists the X-Men in their fight against the Swamp Men because they are his “enemies” (Lee “The Coming of Ka-Zar” 12), though the underlying reason for this antagonism is never made clear. While Ka-Zar’s characterization of the Swamp Men recalls Tarzan’s identification of black people as “enemies” in *Tarzan of the Apes* (163), whether or not racial difference is a factor, or at least a signifier, of the swamp people’s enemy status is difficult to ascertain. On one level, their garb and physical appearance mildly suggests a kind of orientalism, but these features are not rendered in sufficient detail to make a definitive determination of their race. The X-Men’s dispatching of the Swamp people is further reminiscent of Engelhardt’s discussion in *The End of Victory Culture* regarding how non-white others in American westerns and war films “died at a distance, while ‘we’ [white Americans] were hurt up close and in individual ways” (41). This perspectival logic of self and other is at play in *X-Men #10*: the Swamp Men are generally seen at a distance, and are defeated by the horde rather than individually, as opposed to our heroes who are rendered close up and whose actions, injuries, and captures are given individual attention. Though the comic frames the Swamp People similarly to how Engelhardt argues non-white antagonists are in war and western movies, it is unclear whether this strategy is intended to connote racial otherness specifically. Far from adding to

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<sup>18</sup> Beast attempts to compliment Ka-Zar on his biceps, laying a hand on one, which causes Ka-Zar to recall an incident “[m]any moons ago” in which surface people accosted him and forced him to flee back to the Savage Land (Lee “The Coming of Ka-Zar” 10).

the allegory for civil rights that *X-Men* represents, the first modern appearance of Ka-Zar in *X-Men* #10 therefore seems at best to be ambivalent toward racial otherness.

The second Ka-Zar series is not as racially ambivalent as either the first series or his *Astonishing Tales* run, yet despite token attempts to depict racial harmony, the character and his plots are also no more progressive. Take, for instance, the introduction of the Zebra tribe in issue #12. Although the Zebra tribe are a racially-integrated people who undermine racial difference by having its white members painted with black stripes and its black members painted with white stripes, their introduction represents a missed opportunity. Despite the rich potential for a positive racial message, the two members who approach Ka-Zar for help in dealing with their shaman, who has seized power and divided the tribe against itself, insist that “it is not a matter of *race* – but of *power*” (Moench “Wizard of Forgotten Flesh” 3, emphasis in original). If anything, the second series’ most common recurring trope is to figure Ka-Zar as a kind of white emancipator. Of the seven story arcs of this series (issues 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9, 10-11, 12-13, and 14-20), some form of this motif occurs in five of them, with only the one-shot issue #9 and the final story arc not sharing the theme. In these plots, Ka-Zar repetitively exposes the false Gods and “backward” traditions of various Savage Land tribes, effectively “freeing” them from enslavement to superstition. That Ka-Zar does not seek to rule or otherwise control the peoples that he helps to liberate is a further testament to his extolling American “virtue.” Despite such apparent beneficence, his figuration as an emancipator suggests the loaded value judgement that less advanced peoples are dependent on the benevolent liberation that can only occur as a result of exposure to Western, and specifically white American, civilization and culture.

*Ka-Zar the Savage* represents a turning point for Ka-Zar in many ways, not the least of which is because of its treatment of race. This series attempts to address issues of race by

analogizing social pluralism through its inclusion of the human-animal hybrid Pangean tribes.<sup>19</sup> As a reformulated version of the classic lost world trope of evolution, Pangea's numerous distinctive human-animal hybrid populations set it up as a racially diverse place, yet also one with the potential for a considerable amount of racial tension, not unlike the United States itself. Indeed, when first encountered by Ka-Zar and Shanna,<sup>20</sup> these various hybrid peoples prefer to have little to do with one another, and when they do interact it is not always under amiable circumstances. The differences among the Pangean peoples are demonstrated and exacerbated, for example, by the manipulations of the Pterons, who seek to divide and conquer all of Pangea by exploiting those perceived differences (Carlin *Ka-Zar the Savage* #31). While faced with escalating tensions among their peoples near the end of the *Ka-Zar the Savage* series, the conference of the respective tribal leaders is gridlocked by the partisan interests of each for their own people rather than the common good. It is only after being informed by Dherk, the last Atlantean, of their shared origins as genetically engineered amusement park workers who, united, rose up against their oppressive creators for their collective freedom that they are finally able to work toward a common interest. This moment of revelation shifts the emphasis from their differences (each group's distinctive animal traits) to their similarities, their common partial humanity. Indeed, Ka-Zar and Shanna's function as mediators is predicated on their humanity, which serves as a baseline for finding common ground among the hybrid peoples.

In reality, however, rather than representing a kind of harmonious racial pluralism,

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<sup>19</sup> There are a huge variety of different human-animal hybrid peoples that populate Pangea, including the cat people of Lemuria, the Aerians of Aerie Shalaan, the Pterons (human-pterodactyl hybrids), and the monkey-like Tree People of Botor. These peoples are only discovered after Ka-Zar and Shanna first discover Pangea at the beginning of *Ka-Zar the Savage* (Jones "A New Dawn . . . A New World!"), yet quickly become a mainstay of the series.

<sup>20</sup> Though Shanna is first introduced in the *Ka-Zar* title early in the second series, she does not become a mainstay until the beginning of *Ka-Zar the Savage*. That series follows the development of their relationship, which culminates in their wedding in issue #29 (Carlin "A Match Made in Hell!").

the Pangeans' common humanity ultimately undermines the ideal of a mosaic society by instead reinforcing white racial normativity. "Humanity" simply becomes the "right" (and white) way of looking at things at the expense of any hybrid perspectives. As white, completely human interlopers, Ka-Zar and Shanna impose their normative values on Pangea, discursively homogenizing it into a melting pot which insists on conformity to white, human values, all under the aegis of peace and social harmony. This positioning of Ka-Zar and Shanna as racial mediators is consistent with how theories of white (and specifically Anglo-Saxon) racial superiority are "often mingled with th[e] sense of duty" for the United States to "export [their ideals] to less fortunate peoples" within the logic of American exceptionalism (Matarese 50).

*American Exceptionalism and Inter/National Constructions of Antarctica*

Although the later *Ka-Zar* series maintain an American national allegory by using the Pangean tribes as a means of signifying racial issues, these same Pangeans simultaneously serve to create an international allegory for Antarctica by both analogizing the United Nations and appealing to popular and legal conceptions of the continent as a site of international cooperation. These national and international valences frequently overlap as a result of the discourse of American exceptionalism, which acts as an interface that links the U.S.'s national image with its broader role in global geopolitics through its complex appeal to its competing drives towards introversion and messianism. As previously noted, the tension between two impulses of American exceptional forms the foundation of Matarese's exploration of the cultural beliefs that underpin America's national image. These competing impulses are commonly derived from "a self-consciousness regarding role that has been a constant in the nation's history," a conception of its own exceptionalism which holds that

“the United States is unique, different in crucial respects from virtually all other countries, but most notably in its divergence from the patterns of historical development that characterized the Old World” (35, 72). The entrenchment of exceptionalism as a key element of the American national image “result[s] in a dynamic tension between the desire to withdraw from world affairs into a kind of virtuous isolation and a view of the United States as an international savior: righteous, benevolent, invincible, and destined by history to redeem the world” (36). Fundamentally, both impulses agree on the supremacy of American ideals, but where the introversionist tendency works toward perfecting the practice of ideals domestically, the messianic impulse operates with the assumption that such ideals are universal, and thus views it as “America’s special mission to preside over the transformation of the world, taming disorder and converting history into a kind of *Pax Americana*” (35). As both Tarzan and Ka-Zar help to demonstrate, however, while the introversionist tendency often seems to operate as a critique of its messianic counterpart, such a “critique” is hollow insofar as it still insists on the primacy of American ideals. The duality inherent to American exceptionalism therefore recursively reinforces the very assumption upon which that exceptionalism is predicated.

Regardless of what kind of American exceptionalism they exemplify at any given moment, the semantic malleability of *Tarzan*’s Africa and *Ka-Zar*’s Antarctica is premised on a common gesture: their discursive figuration as “blank” spaces make them ideal sites upon which Western (in this case American) values and identities may be projected. Brady Earnhart addresses this use of Africa in the *Tarzan* films in his article “A Colony of the Imagination: Vicarious Spectatorship in MGM’s Early Tarzan Talkies,” noting that its space is constructed as a sort of *tabula rasa*, a “blank surface just waiting for Westerners to fill it” (347); indeed, Earnhart further contends that Western culture is and was “too obsessed with

projecting itself on Africa to leave room for any accurate representation of Africa at all” (347, emphasis in original). David Spurr summarizes the link between this process of representation and cultural imperialism when he comments that “[t]he great emptiness signified by the blank space on the [geographic] map becomes the site of narrative colonization” (94-95). Africa in *Tarzan* hence serves to enable plot by providing an exotic, “blank” space that Burroughs could exploit to render whatever narrative circumstances he wanted to use.

Antarctica serves this same basic purpose, increasingly so since such impositions of Western values on African space have come to be recognized as cultural imperialism. As African colonies sought independence from their European colonizers in the post-World War II era of decolonization, distinct imagined communities and national identities, previously subordinated to the overarching identity as members of a commonwealth or empire, necessarily emerged, dispelling the Eurocentric construction of a “blank” Africa. Given that African nations continue to struggle with the spectre of colonialism on a cultural level and must contend with neo-imperialism in the post-colonized era, Western narratives about Africa always risk being implicated as culturally imperialist. If, as Earnhart claims, Africa in the age of imperialism was a *tabula rasa* that enabled narratives with exotic and extraordinary circumstances, Antarctica arrives as a seemingly appropriate successor for this narrative purpose in a post-colonized world; it effectively retains the isolation and exoticism that made Africa so appealing as a Western fictional setting, but does not evoke the specificities of Africa’s colonial past. While *Tarzan*’s Africa and *Ka-Zar*’s Antarctica are both predicated on discursive constructions of those regions as being “blank”, the latter is therefore a less controversial space upon which to project an American national image in a post-colonized era. Indeed, the Antarctic’s stark landscape and lack of an indigenous

population make it as “blank” a space as one might hope to find in the world. As Elena Glasberg suggests, this “blankness” accounts for the fact that “fictions of Antarctica are not shaped by what it is but only by what it comes to figure for those encountering it” (*Imagination* 6). In this sense, Antarctica, like imperial Africa, is treated as discursively blank, and its placehood is generated through externally ascribed values.

Antarctica’s perceived “blankness,” however, is itself a fiction perpetuated to disguise the nationalistic appropriations of its space. The U.S., in particular, has a long-standing history with the Antarctic dating back to the whaling and sealing industries of the early nineteenth century. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, following a period of declining national interest in the continent following the Wilkes Expedition (1838-42), “the United States got back in the Antarctic game” after the First World War, spearheaded by the efforts of Admiral Richard E. Byrd (Glasberg *Cultural Critique* xv). Because the discourse of American “exceptionalism . . . refuses to see U.S. interest in Antarctica as connected to discourses of empire” (56), the nation has veiled its territorial interests in the continent by exerting hegemonic and economic, rather than military, influence over how the place is governed, effectively hiding behind a “disinterested” internationalist facade while advancing American economic and neoimperial interests. Contrary to the continent’s popular figuration as a site of international cooperation that concerns itself with “the interests of science and the progress of all mankind” (*The Antarctic Treaty* 2), national presences in Antarctica “[are] not benign, natural, or necessary,” and in particular “U.S. empire is distinct in Antarctica: not absent, but different and under-studied” (*Cultural Critique* 55, 56). Indeed, U.S. interests<sup>21</sup> in the continent frequently hide behind its figuration as a “continent for science,”

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<sup>21</sup> Though the focus here is on how the United States disguises its nationalistic intents by laundering them through the seemingly neutral agenda of scientific advancement, it would be foolish to assume that it is the only nation to do so. What sets the US apart, however, is its leading role in such an agenda.

obfuscating the U.S.'s nationalistic interests with a supposedly objective and universal agenda of scientific advancement:

the United States . . . has never registered claims [to Antarctica], though it retains the option of future claims. Yet, today, the United States functionally occupies the South Pole with its new Amundsen-Scott Station and maintains the most lavish and well-funded bases in the continent, anchored by the largest base, McMurdo Station. The tension between territorial claim and other forms of occupying Antarctica – in particular science – is displayed in Byrd's career in which contradictory forces within the United States vied to solve the problem of what to do with the enormous fact of Antarctica. (56)

In effect, by assuming a central role in modern Antarctic governance and scientific research, the United States has associated its presence on the continent with disinterested science and international cooperation in order to mask its neoimperial agenda. Beyond its political dimension, however, this strategy also calls attention to Antarctica's complicated system of signification. In one sense, the continent is a site on which national images are projected, and hence serves to reflect pure national allegories. In another sense, however, Antarctica is a construction of the international community, a place that signifies the utopian vision of global cooperation through the seemingly non-ideological "objectivity" of scientific advancement. Effectively, these two formulations are the nationalizing and counter impulses that I claim have existed in American Antarctic lost world narratives from their earliest texts. Neither of these ways of viewing the continent are completely correct, however, since the former ignores the multiplicity of national images that Antarctica is woven into and the latter denies that science itself is ideological, but nor are they entirely wrong. In reality, Antarctica both is and is not national allegory, just as it both is and is not international space. As the *Ka-*

*Zar* series demonstrates, it is a site of discursive convergence, a nexus in which national and international figurations of the continent are in constant dialogue and may even become entangled.

The Pangean peoples, and particularly the Council of Tribes, form the core of *Ka-Zar*'s counter impulse – its resistance to a totalizing national image – by demonstrating Antarctica's ambivalent signification as both a national and international space simultaneously, “a nation that is not a nation” (Jenkins #5, 22). On one level, their shared geographic space and representative government through the Council of Tribes seems to indicate that they represent a nation. The description of the Pangeans as “a thousand races shaped into impossible genotypes” and living together in a “turbulent harmony” (Jenkins #1, 2-3) further suggests that they are an analog for Americans given their (literal) exceptional nature and the pluralistic composition of their combined society, which is basically a cultural and ethnic melting pot. They even achieved freedom from their oppressive creators through revolution (Carlin *Ka-Zar the Savage* issue #31), paralleling the American Revolution. Following these associations with the U.S., in the fourth *Ka-Zar* series (2011) the Pangeans also respond to the neoimperial appropriation of the Savage Land, its commercial<sup>22</sup> exploitation by multinational corporations with an introversionist desire to preserve their peoples, environment, and unique way of life. This conflict with the greater global community is ultimately resolved after Arwandi, a sitting member of the Council of Tribes, delivers a pleading address to the United Nations asking to be left alone:

I've come to ask you to forgive us. The people of Pangea are complicated . . .

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<sup>22</sup> Commercial/resource exploitation has been a motif in *Ka-Zar* since its first series introduced the fictional element “vibranium,” which has the ability to break down metallic objects and hence has potent military applications. Until the fourth series, however, operations to recover quantities of vibranium and bring it to the outside world (invariably for nefarious purposes) were typically quite small. These relatively minute operations are overshadowed by the colossal oil rigs and deforestation projects that are constituent to the fourth series.

Moving from one tribe to the next is sometimes like moving to another world. But now the people of Pangea are coming together for the first time and the thing that has brought us to a place of one mind, where we share opinions is the very thing that threatens to destroy us . . . Our waters are poisoned by oil that spills from a rusting machine you abandoned. We did not ask for you to bring the machine, and we did not ask for you to leave it. We ask only that you fix it . . . Outsiders urge us to burn our forests, to plant palm oil trees for outsider commerce. In order to save ourselves from famine we are told to burn our homes . . . We are starving. We are tired. We have no food and no way to grow it this year. And yet the people of Pangea beg your forgiveness. Forgive us, for we cannot let you save us . . . If we allow trade, your values will become ours. So forgive us. We cannot trade with you . . . Forgive us. And then leave us in peace. (Jenkins #5, 6-10)

While this passage overtly addresses how external agents that are exploiting the region and its peoples are contaminating it both environmentally and culturally, thus making the case for why introversion is necessary or desirable, Arwandi's plea for the Savage Land to be free from such influences itself foregrounds the strategic function of the introversion impulse as a hollow critique of American messianism in the series. In asking for the Savage Land to be rid of interference from the nations and corporations of the world who are plundering its resources and displacing its peoples, Arwandi is therefore attempting to effect a policy of introversionism designed to preserve and protect Pangean cultures from external contamination, but in so doing he springs the two-pronged trap of American exceptionalism. By seeking to isolate the Savage Land and its peoples from the rest of the world, he simultaneously rejects outside influence while affirming the American introversionist ideal,

and thereby effectively reinforces the *Pax Americana* belief in the supremacy of American ideals.

In a complementary way, the Pangean peoples can also be read as an international community. Arwandi's descriptions of the Pangean peoples as "complicated" and that "[m]oving from one tribe to the next is sometimes like moving to another world," for example, perhaps encode the Council of Tribes as more of an international, rather than a national, assembly (Jenkins #5, 6). Indeed, both the Council of Tribes and the UN are described by Arwandi in similar terms as places where "we will speak our differences" (Jenkins #1, 22) and where "you come together to resolve differences" (Jenkins #5, 10) respectively. If the Pangeans signify an international, rather than national, community, then Ka-Zar's Americanizing influence on the Savage Land represents the messianic impulse in action. The most overt example of Ka-Zar's messianism occurs in issue #1 of *Ka-Zar's* third series (Waid "Out of the Savage Land . . . and Into the Fire!!") where he teaches several tribes to play baseball together in an effort to dissipate racial and tribal hostilities by channelling them into competitive sports rather than warfare.<sup>23</sup> In serving as a vehicle for peacekeeping, baseball, a clichéd symbol of Americana, is symptomatic of Ka-Zar's belief in the messianic potential of American culture. His importation of the sport to the Savage Land therefore represents a kind of "neoimperial occupation and appropriation of Antarctic space" (Glasberg *Cultural Critique* 79), or an attempt to culturally indoctrinate its fictional occupants into that *Pax Americana* vision, which itself is facilitated by the region's perceived discursive "blankness." *Ka-Zar* hence exemplifies how fictional representations of the Antarctic can project national images onto that continent, and in so doing presents

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<sup>23</sup> When reprimanded by Shanna for teaching them baseball, Ka-Zar responds that "at least they weren't fighting over land rights this time. The point is to bridge their language gap" (Waid "Out of the Savage Land . . . and Into the Fire!!" 18).

American messianism as a “benign” influence globally.

Ka-Zar’s particular ideological vision, signified in the messianic potential of baseball, does not pass unchallenged, however, since his wife Shanna questions him regarding the ethics of importing baseball to their jungle home. The argument that ensues between Ka-Zar and Shanna over the ethics of importing baseball is actually a pivotal moment in the entire *Ka-Zar* continuity, since it marks a turning point away from the kind of cultural imperialism, however benign it may seem, that the game represents. Indeed, Shanna’s “Prime Directive”<sup>24</sup> perspective thematically resounds in the Third *Ka-Zar* series’ two biggest story arcs: the destruction of parts of the Savage Land by the God Thanos (Waid and Kubert “Garden of Evil!”), and Shanna’s becoming a living Goddess with powers over nature and evolution (Waid “Earth Mother”). Both of these story arcs represent the destructive potential of external influences<sup>25</sup> on the Savage Land and its native peoples. Though Thanos is ultimately defeated (Waid and Kubert “Garden of Evil!”), and Shanna voluntarily gives up her power when she realizes its corruptive nature (Waid and Kubert “Revolution!”), the dangers to the Savage Land, both geopolitical and cultural, posed by the outside world are crystalized for its inhabitants, who pin the blame squarely on Ka-Zar:

Kevin Plunder. Your presence for the last two decades has disrupted the engineered balance of this land. We cannot allow the taint of the outside to throw our preserve into flux – to let the chaos of the outside world pull us down in a torrent. (Felder “Lord of the Savage Land” 24)

As a result of this verdict, Ka-Zar, Shanna, and their young son Matthew freely (but

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<sup>24</sup> The “Prime Directive” is a reference to Star Trek’s law of the same name, which prohibits the Federation from technological, social, and cultural involvement with less advanced societies.

<sup>25</sup> These destructive external influences are embodied by Thanos and Shanna (who, though naturalized, is an outsider to the Savage Land).

temporarily)<sup>26</sup> go into exile from the Savage Land, but not before commending the indigenous peoples for having “taken [their] destiny into [their] own hands” (27) by standing up to their super-powered Bhawuan rulers and declaring that they “will no longer be slaves to nature and superstition . . . [and] will follow [their] hearts and do what [they] know to be right” (26). Like the Council of Tribes’ move toward a policy of introversionism in the fourth *Ka-Zar* series, this action is ironic since by rejecting the messianic potential of outside, and specifically American, influence, the Savage Land peoples are not only making their own “Declaration of Independence,” but furthermore are actually embracing introversionism to preserve their unique way of life: even in rejecting American ideals, the Savage Land peoples embrace them. Once again, introversion serves as a hollow critique of American messianism since, ultimately, it is American ideals that are inescapably affirmed. The Third Series’ ambivalent conclusion, moreover, calls into question whether Shanna’s prime directive approach is effective, or even possible, in the era of globalization, and suggests that, having already been discursively contaminated by other cultures, the Savage Land’s way of life can never again be free of such influences.

#### *Antarctica as a Collective of Imagined Communities*

This chapter has thus far analyzed how *Ka-Zar* imprints its Antarctic setting with a conservative American national image, principally through discourses of gender, race, and exceptionalism, but also resists being complicit with this static rendering by representing a new kind of imagined community as well, one that emerges out of the continent’s real-world state of being geopolitically unsettled (Glasberg *Cultural Critique* 56). The word “unsettled”

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<sup>26</sup> Indeed, *Ka-Zar*, Shanna, and Matthew all returned to the Savage Land prior to the beginning of the fourth series.

here has two different but relevant meanings: it can be taken to refer to either the fact that the continent's population is limited to the small number of people transiently assigned to the relatively few bases and research stations that litter its space, or the fact that the Antarctic Treaty effectively suspends any existing territorial claims to Antarctica, leaving them unsettled while keeping the door open for future claims by other nations.<sup>27</sup> The continent's limited settlement and temporary population reinforce its discursive figuration as a "blank" space, and its unsettled territorial status allows for parallel renderings of the place in distinct national imagined communities. While a series like *Ka-Zar* may therefore exploit Antarctica's presumed blankness to impose an American cultural identity onto the place, that imposed identity has one foot in the imagined community of its originary nation and another foot in a collective of imagined communities from various nations with stakes in Antarctic appropriation and development.

While this study may be the first to explicitly suggest the idea that Antarctic literature is a nexus of multiple national imagined communities, Leane and Glasberg have gestured toward this idea on multiple occasions. Leane, for example, claims "the continent is (like any other) a complex, heterogenous place that needs to be understood from multiple perspectives" (*Antarctica in Fiction* 9-10), and further evokes Benedict Anderson to explicate how Polar expeditioners' hand-made newspapers "provided a much needed sense of connectedness – of simultaneity through time – with the larger community 'back home'" as well as with the geopolitical empires of which they were a part ("Polar Newspapers" 29). Glasberg more directly notes that it is:

useful to see Antarctica as outside conventional limits of national studies.

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<sup>27</sup> Glasberg singles out Russia and the US as two nations that might make such a claim in the future (*Cultural Critique* 56).

Approaching Antarctica as outside convenes recent turns to hemispheric models that seek to break up naturalized spatializations such as north–south, east–west, and on transnational or post-national conceptualizations attending to flows across borders of historical periodization as well as of geography. (“Who Goes There” 643)

Rather than eschewing the nation as a delimiting unit as Glasberg suggests, it is fruitful instead to consider how the roles of Antarctica in various national cultural contexts operate in parallel or even compete with one another, effectively creating one overarching Antarctic cultural discourse out of a myriad of separate national ones. The continent’s role in discrete national imagined communities (and hence national images) has, indeed, already been explored by some scholars. The significance of “Heroic” Antarctic explorers like Amundsen and Scott to their respective Norwegian and British cultures, for example, is well-documented,<sup>28</sup> as are, to a lesser extent, figures like the Australian Sir Douglas Mawson,<sup>29</sup> and America’s Admiral Richard E. Byrd<sup>30</sup> and Lt. Charles Wilkes.<sup>31</sup> Such figures are cultural icons for national involvement in Antarctica, and thus serve as touchstones to anchor the continent within national imagined communities historically and symbolically. How those discrete imagined communities interact to generate a mosaic continental discourse, however, is a question not yet addressed in Antarctic cultural studies.

While providing a comprehensive analysis of such interactions is well beyond the

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<sup>28</sup> See, for instance, Elizabeth Leane’s “Going Outside: Captain Oates’ Literary Legacy,” Jane Stafford’s “Before Immortality: Captain Scott and A.E.W. Mason’s *The Turnstile*,” and Philip Sidney’s “Reading (-)Matters on the *Terra Nova* Expedition” from the collection *Imagining Antarctica*, as well as Peder Roberts’s “Heroes for the Past and Present: A Century of Remembering Amundsen and Scott.”

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, Christy Collis’s “Mawson’s Hut: Emptying Post-Colonial Antarctica.”

<sup>30</sup> Elena Glasberg attends to Admiral Byrd’s contributions to Antarctic exploration in the name of the United States in her book *Antarctica as Cultural Critique*.

<sup>31</sup> William Lenz attends to Charles Wilkes’s role in Nineteenth-Century Antarctic exploration in his work *Poetics of the Antarctic*.

scope of this project, the *Ka-Zar* series has moments that gesture towards the existence of multiple imagined communities for Antarctica even while foregrounding a specifically American national image. Perhaps the most sustained example of this duality in the series is the previously discussed human-animal hybrid tribes that populate Pangea. Setting aside their potential national (specifically American) and international significations listed earlier, the tension between the Pangean tribes' distinguishing animal traits and common humanity make them a fairly good metonym for the set of discrete national imagined communities that overlap in their appropriations of Antarctic space and collectively form the continent's overarching discourse, which itself could be symbolized by the Council of Tribes. Even the name "Pangea" means "all of the earth," signifying the confluence or convergence of different global communities.

Although this interpretation foregrounds the collective imagined communities that constitute a larger discourse of Antarctica, it is still amenable with earlier readings in this chapter that viewed the Pangean peoples as helping to reproduce the discourses of American exceptionalism and race if the collective and national perspectives are seen as being in constant tension with one another. Despite the continent's popular figuration as a site of international cooperation for all humankind (*The Antarctic Treaty 2*), national presences in Antarctica "[are] not benign, natural, or necessary" (Glasberg *Cultural Critique* 55) and, indeed, are still predicated to some degree on a sense of national rivalry and self-interest. In particular, "U.S. empire is distinct in Antarctica" (56), especially since it "lead[s the world] in expenditures and personnel" (Glasberg "Who Goes There" 641) for the continent and otherwise benefits from its global economic and cultural hegemony. This is not to discount the influences of other nations on the overarching Antarctic discourse, but rather to suggest that although multiple imagined communities exist for the place, they constantly, if often

indirectly or even unknowingly, compete with one another through representations of the continent. The Savage Land itself can be considered a metaphor for these competing discourses; the Savage Land's location on the Antarctic Peninsula, the most territorially disputed region of the continent,<sup>32</sup> signifies how any literary representation of the continent takes place within a larger context of competing national imagined communities that coexist within Antarctic space.

Beyond gesturing toward the existence of multiple imagined communities for Antarctica, the series also calls attention to the ethics of any external imposition or projection of cultural values on the continent through Ka-Zar and Shanna's debate over the latter's "Prime Directive" approach to the Savage Land (Waid "Out of the Savage Land . . . and Into the Fire!!" 18-19). As previously stated, their argument foregrounds the possibility, even probability, that once the continent's discourse becomes entangled with the other national imagined communities it may be impossible to disentangle them. How Antarctica is figured in literature, therefore, may have far-reaching consequences for how future generations conceive of its value or even decide its ownership. Indeed, it is not a stretch to argue that the process of future Antarctic claim-staking is grounded by fictional representations of the continent, which thus add to the legitimacy of any territorial claim by allowing the nation to gesture towards the extent to which Antarctica has permeated its collective cultural imagination. This perhaps partially explains why, since the 1990s, there has been what Leane calls a "cultural turn" in Antarctic studies (*Antarctica in Fiction* 6), wherein the field has begun to shift away from a purely scientific agenda toward more representation of the continent's place in the Arts, and a greater consideration of it in the Humanities. In fact, this shift has been affirmed through official sanction:

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<sup>32</sup> Argentina, Chile, and Great Britain have all registered claims to the Antarctic Peninsula.

In 1996, the twentieth meeting of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCP) had passed a resolution recommending the '[p]romotion of understanding and appreciation of the values of Antarctica, in particular its scientific, aesthetic and wilderness values,' through educational activities and 'the contribution of writers, artists and musicians.' (7)

This resolution was passed by the collective body of the ATCP, which at present currently consists of twenty-eight separate nations.<sup>33</sup> While its apparent intent to move the focus of Antarctic studies from the sterile domain of science toward artistic representation is admirable in one sense, the resolution overlooks the ethical dimension of such representations. Such a sanction of artistic representations of the continent can only serve to intensify the imposition of national images on Antarctic space as a means of further substantiating potential future claims to its resources.

### *Conclusion*

In the increasingly globalized world of the post-Heroic Era, although the imaginative space for Antarctic lost worlds got smaller, the genre persisted by turning to popular tropes from modern science fiction, such as aliens and genetic engineering, to (largely) maintain its well-trod conventions. This is not to say, however, that the Antarctica such works used as their narrative setting was the same as it always had been; as the world's geopolitical landscape changed over the course of the twentieth century, so did Antarctica's place in it. It is only recently that lost world narratives have begun to catch up.

Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* and Marvel Comics' *Ka-Zar* in many ways retread the same discursive ground as their predecessors, and the national images they create

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<sup>33</sup> For a complete list of consulting parties, please visit the Antarctic Treaty website: [www.ats.aq](http://www.ats.aq)

might mobilize tropes in new ways, but ultimately towards a similar, conservative end that upholds the supremacy of white men in the American social order. Yet they also follow the established pattern by developing counter impulses which, even if (in the case of *Ka-Zar*) they do not always directly undermine or break down the cohesion of the national images constructed, at the very least point to the fact that those images are only one part of a larger conversation.

It is this last point that represents what is perhaps the single greatest development of American Antarctic lost world narratives since the genre emerged: the recognition that the national image they construct is not to the exclusion of all others. This end point, fittingly, could be seen as natural progression for a genre that consistently manifests a counter impulse that works to break down the surface cohesion of the very national image they seek to construct.

## Conclusion

As a means of organizing the conclusions of this study, I will return to the broad lines of inquiry that initiated my research for this project. At the beginning of my introduction, I posed three questions: first, was American Antarctic literature a body of works with definable conventions that distinguished it from other national traditions? If so, then, second, what were its main concerns and how did it articulate them? And finally, did these conventions or concerns change over time with advances in real-world Antarctic knowledge and changes in how the continent was conceived (and perceived) geopolitically? Through my examination of American Antarctic lost world narratives in the preceding chapters, I believe my research has at least provided some partial answers to these questions.

To answer my first question of whether American Antarctic literature is a body of works with definable conventions that distinguish it from the Antarctic literature of other nations, it must first be broken down into two discrete questions: whether it is a body of works with definable conventions, and whether it is distinct from the Antarctic literature of other nations. In terms of its defining conventions, I have claimed here that the lost world narrative genre has been central to the history and development of American Antarctic literature, yet this argument does not necessarily mean that the collective body of American Antarctic works automatically conforms to the conventions of that single genre. Indeed, just as the body of American literature at large is not defined solely in terms of the conventions of any of its innumerable constituent genres, as a body of texts the sub-division of American Antarctic literature is likewise not wholly defined by the conventions of any of the genres it encompasses either. However, insofar as American Antarctic literature has, at points in its

development, been constituted almost entirely by texts of this genre, then the genre has at least provided a set of the normative conventions for the body of works. Not only were “all Antarctic fictions [written] in English from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century . . . American” (Wijkmark 9), but also three of the four novels published were lost world narratives.<sup>1</sup> From the mid-nineteenth century until the end of the late 1930s, as well, there were twenty-two American Antarctic novels published, of which sixteen were lost world narratives<sup>2</sup> (Leane *Representations of Antarctica*), which yields a similar ratio to the previous period. Although these proportions have gone down significantly since the 1930s, it is clear from these numbers that the genre was predominant among American Antarctic works up until that point. It is therefore safe to say that the lost world narrative and its conventions likely had a defining, formative influence on the development and trajectory of American Antarctic literature as a whole, even if that body of texts cannot exclusively be defined in terms of those generic conventions.

Is the body of works that comprise American Antarctic literature then distinct from the Antarctic literature from other nations? From the conclusions drawn from the arguments made throughout this study, the answer is yes. One of the key assumptions here, which is rooted in Glasberg’s foundational account of American Antarctic literature in her *Antarcticas of the Imagination*, is that American literary engagement with Antarctica is deeply rooted in

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Seaborn’s *Symzonia* (1820), James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Monikins* (1835), and Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838). The last novel, Cooper’s *The Sea Lions* (1849) is a romance about the sealing industry which is set in a more realistic Antarctic.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Cowan’s *Revi Lona: A Romance of Love in a Marvelous Land* (c1880s), Eugene Bisbee’s *the Treasure of the Ice* (1898), Charles Willing Beale’s *The Secret of the Earth* (1899), Charles Romyn Dake’s *A Strange Discovery* (1899), Charles Kurtz Hahn’s *The Wreck of the South Pole: or The Great Dissembler; and other Strange Tales* (1899), Albert Bigelow Paine’s *The Great White Way* (1901), Frank Savile’s *Beyond the Great South Wall: The Secret of Antarctica* (1901), Charles B. Stilson’s *Polaris of the Snows* (1915), *Minos of Sardanes* (1916), and *Polaris of the Immortals* (1917), Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *Caspak* trilogy (1918), Ray Cummings’ *Snow Girl* (1929), Edison Marshall’s *Dian of the Lost Land* (1935), and H. P. Lovecraft’s *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936).

American culture and ideology, and articulates specific cultural anxieties (most notably those regarding race). We have seen this dynamic play out in the readings of the five texts examined here. *Pym*'s recurring theme of revolt gestures towards the American myths of origins in the Revolutionary War, and its demonization of the Tsalal natives is entrenched within the racist discourses of its time that encode white and black as signifiers of essential racial qualities, which served to uphold white supremacy and, ostensibly, to justify the system of institutionalized black slavery. Ironically, in doing so, the text points to fissures in American society that threaten its fundamental cohesion. Dake's *A Strange Discovery* is likewise preoccupied with critiquing American society, only it does so mainly through its satiric treatment of the subject. This work does, however, foreground American masculinity unironically as one of the United States' key virtues. Where *A Strange Discovery* views the masculine heroism of Pym and Peters as a strength, in his *Caspak* trilogy Burroughs bemoans what he sees as the loss of American masculinity in an increasingly urban and modern world. Fittingly, the remedy he prescribes is the atavism offered by the lost world setting itself, which brings the male characters closer to nature. The highly racialized orientation of *Caspak*'s evolutionary schema once again brings the focus back to essentialized notions of race in order to naturalize racial hierarchies. Lovecraft's Old Ones in his *At the Mountains of Madness* further provide an estranged analogue for white Americans, especially in relation to their slave creations, the Shoggoths, which not only serve as a threatening, grotesque racial other, but whose amorphousness also functions to emasculate. Finally, over the course of Marvel Comics' *Ka-Zar* long run, the series became more self-aware of the potentially destructive nature of the kind of American exceptionalism that it, and texts like it, reinforce, and also developed a perspective on race through its depiction of the human-animal hybrid Pangean peoples that considers white American values to be

normative.

All this it to say that, as per Glasberg's assertion, American Antarctic lost world narratives articulate a national image for the United States – a way that it sees itself in relation to other nations – using a vocabulary of national myths, social anxieties, and (normative) cultural ideals. Most notably, American Antarctic literature is distinct from the Antarctic literature of Britain. As Wijkmark has remarked, “[t]o a large degree, the American [Antarctic literature of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was] written in opposition to the British and reflects a desire among Americans to reject their colonial history and have the nation assume its rightful place in the international community of nations” (8). This sentiment led to the emergence of “a distinctly American discourse on the Antarctic . . . in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century” (8), which Wijkmark's dissertation explicates. As Chapter 2 of this present study has shown, the American lost world narratives of the Heroic Era provide a stark contrast from the British non-fictional accounts of Antarctic exploration of the time as well. Whereas in British literature the non-fictional narratives that emerged from Antarctic exploration, and specifically the tragedy of the Scott expedition, arrived at a time when the nation had great need of symbols it could mobilize as representing some paragon of Britishness through its tale of duty, honor, and sacrifice against an unforgiving nature, the U.S.'s lack of involvement in Heroic Era exploration meant that it had no such non-fictional heroes to raise up, and its relative separation from the First World War in Europe until its late entry meant that had no urgent need for any. Lacking the specificity of place and pointed cultural resonance of its British counterpart, the Antarctic setting in American texts instead relies on a nostalgic sense of the continent's epistemological uncertainty and potentiality as the vehicle for its atavistic and racial fantasies, which it uses to construct an American national image. Although no explicit comparisons to British Antarctic literature are made in

Chapter 3, the gradual replacement of Ka-Zar's British aristocratic ancestry with increasingly American characterization and sensibilities – signified in later series by his adoption of less formal language and love of popular (and specifically American) culture over “high” culture<sup>3</sup> – could be read as an analogy to the movement witnessed in the post-Heroic Era away from an imperial conception of the continent under the traditional system of imperialism towards questions over what American cultural and geopolitical hegemony means, and how control over the Antarctic has shifted to neoimperial forms of occupation. This is precisely the subject of Glasberg's 2012 book, *Antarctica as Cultural Critique*.

What, then, are American Antarctic literature's main concerns, and how does it articulate them? Inasmuch as the lost world narrative genre exerts a formative, and, for more than a hundred years, predominant, influence on this body of works, this question is the central topic of the present study. Through the preceding analyses, some patterns have become apparent. Firstly, there is a racial dimension to all the texts examined in the project, which is typically foregrounded by the presence of a racial other in the Antarctic lost world. Sometimes, these racial others help to foreground American social anxieties about race, such as with *Pym*'s Tsalal natives or *At the Mountains of Madness*'s Shoggoths, but in all cases they are used to discursively reinforce white power. This is usually achieved by appealing to essentialized notions of race, which then form the justification for racial hierarchies. In *Pym*, for instance, the Tsalal natives' supreme treachery is attributed to the baseness of their race,

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<sup>3</sup> In issue #17 of *Ka-Zar the Savage*, for instance, we learn that he loves detective stories and has a subscription to the hard-boiled pulp *Thrilling Detective Magazine*, which he has specially flown into the remote Savage Land with his mail every month (Jones “Tag, You're It!”). Near the beginning of his third series, as well, Shanna discovers his “stash” of brand name electronics and CDs, which notably include albums by Pearl Jam, Nirvana, the Smashing Pumpkins, and Bush (Waid “Vengeance Quest . . . In the Savage Land!” 7; Waid “In the Spectre of Death . . . Their Final Battle!” 31), all of which were popular Alternative bands during the 1990s and, with the exception of Bush, all American. In the subsequent issue #5 of the third series, when Ka-Zar suggests that he will be bored at a high society function they are attending, Shanna quips that “[m]aybe they'll have a gameboy [he] can play with or something” (Waid “Here Comes . . . the Rhino!” 6).

of which their jet black skin is a signifier. *A Strange Discovery*, meanwhile, presents these same Tsalal natives only as a story within a story, and rather than commenting directly on the inherent evil (not to mention incompetence) of their race, it instead uses that assumption to justify the psychological punishment levied on them by the Hili-li for attempting to invade their city. The *Caspak* trilogy is perhaps the most literalizing case where essentialized notions of race are used to construct a racial hierarchy, since that is precisely how Caspak's evolutionary schema operates. Here, races are essentially instantiated as different species, with "negroid" features progressively subsiding as individuals climb the Caspakian social ladder, a hierarchy that marries levels of social and technological development with higher evolutionary strata, whose apex is whiteness. *At the Mountains of Madness* uses its gelatinous Shoggoths as a kind of ultimate racial other whose amorphousness stands in opposition to form of any kind, even the utterly non-human, winged, barrel-bodied, tentacled, star-headed Old Ones, who are the text's estranged metonym for white Americans. Originally created as slaves, the Shoggoths additionally take on the specific valence as stand-ins for black slaves, a reading that becomes portentous given that they eventually revolted against their masters and destroyed them through genocide. Finally, *Ka-Zar*'s most significant depiction of race is in its genetically engineered, human-animal hybrid Pangean tribes. Although tempting to read as an analogy to postmodern conceptions of identity, ultimately the message the series espouses is that it is only through their common humanity, codified here as the normative white American values embodied in Ka-Zar, that they are able to coexist peacefully.

The tropes of evolution and the primitive are frequently used to mobilize these racial hierarchies, although significantly the form that the evolutionary trope takes is contingent on the historical situation of the work in question. For example, published in 1838, *Pym*'s racial

discourse is pre-Darwinian, and is most closely linked to the essentialist anthropological theory of polygenesis. By contrast, *Caspak* not only co-opts Darwinian evolution to reinforce the racial hierarchy it presents, but also uses ideas of eugenics to essentialize national characters. This idea of purposely altering the reproductive course of society for productive ends takes an extreme form in *Mountains* and *Ka-Zar* with the inclusion of genetic engineering as well. The trope of the primitive initially works along the same lines to help stratify races according to their development (such as in *Pym* and *A Strange Discovery*), but as Sommer and Haslam have pointed out, and as I have shown here, a return to the primitive eventually comes to signify a progression rather than a regression, and became an integral part of a cosmopolitan ideal of white American masculinity as lost world narratives began reacting to the conditions of modernity.

Indeed, the depiction of masculinity is another prevalent concern of American lost world narratives. Both *Caspak* and *Ka-Zar* manifest the idealized cosmopolitan masculinity that Haslam originally identifies with *Tarzan*. This is unsurprising considering that the *Caspak* trilogy is also written by Edgar Rice Burroughs, and *Ka-Zar* begins as an obvious remediation of core narrative elements from Burroughs's *Caspak* and *Tarzan*. However, this masculine ideal of being able to move seamlessly between surviving in a jungle and surviving in an urban jungle is not typical of all the texts examined. *A Strange Discovery* is somewhat similar in that it valorizes Pym and Peters's ruggedness in comparison to the genteel Hili-lites, but the implication seems to be that these characters are indicative of an American rugged masculinity that is the rule rather than the exception, which is the foundation for reading the Hili-lites as a warning against losing that kind of virtue. Although published only twenty years before *Caspak*, *A Strange Discovery*, however, is less concerned with the conditions of modernity, and its depiction of masculinity is essentialist rather than

nostalgic. Conversely, *Mountains of Madness* does not directly articulate a masculine ideal, but rather represents its breakdown through the emasculating force of the Shoggoths. As I argued in Chapter 3, their grotesque nature, which is a product of their amorphousness and shapeshifting abilities, aligns the Shoggoths with the feminine to begin with, but their destruction of the Old Ones, who are described as the “*men* of another age and another order of being” (99 my emphasis) and are further linked with rationality through their scientific accomplishments and curiosity, signifies a form of emasculation. The novel also concludes with Dyer and Danforth surviving their encounter with the Shoggoth but the latter suffering a nervous collapse from the experience, which once again undermines the rational, “masculine” character of their scientific expedition.

These texts also indicate that American Antarctic literature is in dialogue with U.S. cultural myths. The frontier and the birth of the Republic in the American Revolution certainly are woven into this body of works, as is especially evident in *Pym*, which, as I have claimed, dramatizes the limits of national identity expansion, particularly through its narrative pattern of revolt and recoil. Perhaps the most prevalent of these, however, is the idea of American exceptionalism. As Matarese asserts, American exceptionalism, or the belief that the United States represents a departure from European historical patterns, manifests in a kind of dual logic that on one hand advocates for retaining that exceptional nature through isolation, but on the other hand sees it as the nation’s duty to use its might to redeem the world by spreading American values. It is perhaps as a result of this dual logic that American exceptionalism is principally the vehicle these texts use to drive the counter-impulses they articulate. *A Strange Discovery*, for instance, critiques American exceptionalism itself both by satirizing American self-regard in the framing narrative and through comparison to the overly-idyllic Hili-lites. Through its shameless villainizing of the

Germans as essentially evil, cowardly, and incompetent in contrast to the supreme moral, masculine competence of the Anglo/American protagonists, as well as its implication of American moral culpability in the First World War through inaction, the *Caspak* trilogy blatantly criticizes American foreign policy as too isolationist, becoming a kind of call to action to realign it with the messianic impulse of American exceptionalism. Lovecraft's *Mountains of Madness* ultimately undermines the entire conception of this exceptionalism by reducing the United States to a state of supreme unexceptionality through its nihilistic cosmic indifferentism. Finally, *Ka-Zar* struggles with the entire debate over isolationism versus messianism with its discussions of Shanna's "Prime Directive" regarding the ethics of importing American culture to help solve the long-standing conflicts between the Pangean tribes. It eventually settles for a kind of compromise that sees the Pangeans purposely isolate themselves from the rest of the global community to preserve their unique ways of life while effectively becoming their own little "United States" through their domestic governing body, the Council of Tribes.

Having arrived at some conclusions regarding the conventions and concerns of American Antarctic lost world narratives, I can now begin to address whether they changed over time with advances in real-world Antarctic knowledge and changes in how the continent was conceived geopolitically. From the results of my research, it seems that the conventions and concerns of these works did change over time, either in terms of their focus or how they manifested, but that those changes were not always or necessarily linked directly to developments in Antarctic knowledge or the continent's geopolitical status, although they sometimes reflected either broader global trends or changes within American society.

Despite spanning almost 175 years, the texts studied here show few fundamental

changes in their treatment of race, outside of how they mobilize the lost world trope of evolution to help manifest it. At their core, these works function to conserve the idea of white racial superiority over racial others. To this end, they all share the same basic assumption that race connotes certain essential qualities that are immutable. The most that can be said about the development of the genre's conception of race is that it has become less overtly demonizing. Published in the antebellum U.S., *Pym*'s racial discourse comes from a period where institutional slavery was legal and pervasive, and the debate over abolition was polarizing. Aided and abetted by essentialist racial discourses, such as the pre-evolutionary anthropological theory of polygenesis, *Pym* reduces racial difference to a simple matter of black and white: the Tsalal natives are uniformly constructed as inherently evil and treacherous, a fact which is signified by their black skin. In the post-abolition, post-Darwinian world, Burroughs changes tactics by using the very idea of evolution to separate white and black people into different species in Caspak's evolutionary hierarchy; these species are linked only by the fact that the former represents the most highly evolved form of the latter, separated by several intermediary stages of course. *Ka-Zar* represents a more modern iteration of this same phenomenon, only instead of polygenesis or a distorted Darwinism, it uses genetic engineering to literalize the separation of the races in terms of species. Although the trope of evolution has taken different forms in these texts, they continue to reinforce essentialist notions of race.

The changes with regards to how masculinity has been figured in these texts, as well as the reasons for that change, have already been stated above, but I will briefly repeat them. Initially, American masculinity is presented as a kind of cultural given, a quality of American men that is the result of the kind of rugged character that defines the nation. Such is the case in *A Strange Discovery*, where we see Pym and Peters favorably contrasted with

the Hili-li, who are very intellectually and morally evolved but lack physical endurance and decisiveness in a crisis. However, the state of American society changed significantly between *A Strange Discovery*'s publication in 1899 and the *Caspak* trilogy's publication in 1918 as a result of the forces of globalization, urbanization, and technologization brought about by modernity, which accounts for the shift in how Burroughs's texts construct an ideal masculinity. In an ever-more modern world, the lost world narrative presented an opportunity for a nostalgic return to nature while still retaining access to modern society. The result, as Haslam has claimed, is the genre's cosmopolitan, "best of both worlds" man who is as comfortable at a cocktail party as he is in a war party. This same masculine ideal persists into the figure of Ka-Zar as well, ostensibly for the same reasons.

Of all the elements discussed here, the changes to how American cultural myths are articulated in American Antarctic texts are the most closely related to developments regarding knowledge of the continent and its geopolitical status. Scholars like Lenz, Wijkmark, and Khouri have previously linked Antarctic exploration to the American frontier, both as a direct comparison and in terms of their shared ethos, a parallel that is seen in *Pym*. Though on a figurative level *Pym* dramatizes the limits (or "frontier") of national identity expansion, in the basic plot of the *Jane Guy* episode it effectively treats the Antarctic as a wild west, a frontier for exploration where there are potential dangers, but also the potential for discoveries and profitable prospects. Perhaps the reason that the frontier does not figure so prominently as a symbol in the other, later texts studied here is that by the time they were published (1899 and later), the American frontier was closed, and all that remained of the Antarctic frontier was the continental interior. The force of globalization further changed the American imaginative interaction with Antarctica. In an increasingly globalized world, American isolation – part of the duality of American exceptionalism – came under fire by

Burroughs in his *Caspak* trilogy. Although his criticism of this isolation is mainly leveled at the United States' lack of involvement in the First World War, the effects of that isolation extended to the U.S.'s Antarctic exploration, or rather its distinct lack of participation in Heroic Era exploration. Given the justifications that were previously made for the Wilkes expedition – that the U.S. had a duty to contribute to human knowledge, and would use its geographic and scientific exploration of the Antarctic as a way of taking its rightful place in the larger community of nations – the simplest explanation for American lack of involvement in both the early years of World War 1 and Heroic Era Antarctic exploration is that the pendulum swing back towards isolationism. *Caspak* rights this perceived lack by calling for the former kind of intervention, and imaginatively enacting the latter. *Ka-Zar* continues this debate over isolationism versus messianism into a Treaty-era Antarctic context. Although a lost world, *Ka-Zar*'s Savage Land is contemporaneous with the Antarctic Treaty, which effectively establishes it as a neutral site with its peaceful orientation towards the collective “interests of science and the progress of all mankind” (*The Antarctic Treaty* 2), but also a decolonized, and increasingly globalized, world. In this context, *Ka-Zar*'s debate over the ethics of American messianism, essentially a form of cultural imperialism, makes perfect sense, and in fact reflects larger questions regarding both the continent's ultimate geopolitical destiny, as well as whether either of the options in the dual logic of American exceptionalism is tenable in the postmodern geopolitical world. The conclusion that the series arrives at, its figuration of Antarctica as a collective of multiple imagined communities, as a “nation that is not a nation” (Jenkins #5 22), perhaps provides a new framework for considering the continent, and all nations, as inherently polyphonous moving forward.

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