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The Time Machine and Heart of Darkness: H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, and the fin de siecle

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The Time Machine and Heart of Darkness:

H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, and the *fin de siècle*

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

Much work has been done on the relationship between *fin de siècle* authors H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, Henry James, Stephen Crane, and Ford Madox Ford. As Nicholas Delbanco explains, these writers lived closely to one another in Kent during the transition into the Twentieth Century. While scholars have stressed the collaboration between Conrad and Ford and the disagreements between Wells and James, fewer have treated the relationship of Wells and Conrad. Their most widely read works, *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness*, share remarkable similarities that reveal common topical influences on both writers. Furthermore, I argue that Wells and his novella influenced some aspects of Conrad's most popular text.

From a historical contextual approach, I examine the relationship between the two authors, several themes shared by the two works, and their balance between social criticism and aesthetic responses. The novels feature a movement through time and space, a divided humanity, and cannibalism. *The Time Machine* critiques England's socioeconomic circumstances and the Social Darwinist belief in progress, while *Heart of Darkness* depicts the Belgian Congo under the merciless King Leopold II. Wells and Conrad rejected the artistic labels of impressionism and aestheticism, though their novels fulfill many aims of these movements. An understanding of the Wells-Conrad friendship and *fin de siècle* society opens each text to interpretations from diverse areas of criticism and is key in identifying the most important elements of the novels.

Introduction

On January 23, 1918, Joseph Conrad met fellow novelist Hugh Walpole at the Carlton Hotel in London for a luncheon party. Accompanied by Walpole's lover, American stage and costume-designer, Percy Anderson, the men discussed each other's works and those of their contemporaries. When the conversation drifted to acclaimed writer H.G. Wells, Conrad recalled a final meeting with *The Time Machine* author in 1911 following the publication of Wells's *The New Machiavelli*. To Walpole, Conrad claimed to have concluded his decade-long friendship with Wells with this remark: "The difference between us, Wells, is fundamental. You don't care for humanity, but think they are to be improved. I love humanity but know they are not" (Smith 167).¹

Wells and Conrad struggled to maintain a relationship regularly threatened by disputes over literature, politics, science, and the future of humankind. The social and political uncertainty characterizing the *fin de siècle* and Edwardian Era (1901-1910) exacerbated the conflicts between the two authors. While the resolute, progressive, and sometimes arrogant Wells wrote criticism to ameliorate and educate society, the wavering, pessimistic, and humble Conrad developed aesthetics influenced by Flaubert, French Symbolism, and Walter Pater. Frederick Karl attributes their disharmonious friendship to this division over humanity and art, along with disparity in birth and background. Conrad's closing statement to Wells at their last encounter illuminates the

1. We cannot be sure that Conrad actually said this to Wells, but, as Smith explains, whether or not he did is irrelevant, for many have reached Conrad's conclusions on their own.

decisive ideological discord lurking beneath their friendship. Yet we find within their fiction remarkable similarities that reveal Wells and Conrad's attitudes about society as well as the extent of their influence upon one another. Published nearly five years apart, *The Time Machine* (1895) and *Heart of Darkness* (1899) share themes, narrative style, and topical elements related to the state of Europe as the new century approached.²

While scholars have granted much attention to the exchanges between these and other writers, as on the collaboration between Ford and Conrad and Wells's feud with George Bernard Shaw over Fabian politics, less has been done on the relationship between Wells and Conrad and the parallels in their fiction. My objective in this study requires a detailed account of the Wells-Conrad relationship to explain the similarities in their most renowned works. I treat the novels as enduring examples of short fiction with a wide range of interpretations and as artifacts that disclose the skepticism toward progressive doctrines of the late 1800s. I begin with the first correspondences between Wells and Conrad and include the most significant exchanges that took place as Conrad prepared *Heart of Darkness*. I discuss the deterioration of their friendship, which occurred well into the Edwardian Era, to explore Wells and Conrad's conflicting beliefs as they emerge earlier in *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness*. Before readers can fully appreciate what the texts have in common, they must understand the *fin de siècle* itself; I detail the social conditions, attitudes, and scientific movements characterizing these decades to establish a historical context for the novels. I then identify Wells's influence on Conrad by tracing three aspects of the texts: movement through time and

2. Wells explored the concept of time travel first in 1888 with *The Chronic Argonauts*. *The Time Machine* was published in serial form by Heinemann in 1895. *Heart of Darkness* was published as a three-part serial in 1899 in *Blackwood's Magazine*. The novella was published in 1902.

space, cannibalism, and a divided humanity. Next, I illustrate the topical concerns of both authors; Wells sought to bridge the inequality “between the Capitalist and the Labourer” with his own unique brand of socialism, while Conrad exposes the horrors of imperialism in the Belgian Congo under King Leopold II (46). The influence of Darwin, Kelvin, and other iconoclasts of the Nineteenth Century also appears in each work. I then address the authors’ attempt to convey a bizarre and nightmarish experience, linking this to estrangement and, finally, to Wells and Conrad’s perspectives on art. While both opposed the Aesthetic Movement, Wells remained more outspoken in his denunciation of ‘art for art’s sake,’ lamenting that his contemporaries neglected “the possible use of the novel as a help to conduct” (Delbanco 32). Conrad frequently advised Wells to tone down the didacticism in his fiction, as in *The Food of the Gods* (1904), and wrote to him in 1903, “you are an uncompromising realist. There is a cold jocular ferocity about the handling of mankind in which you believe that gives me the shudders sometimes” (Karl 1055). I use the similarities in Wells and Conrad’s texts and their remarks about society and art to situate the authors within the *fin de siècle*, arguing that *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* harbor traces of the initial warmth between the two writers and the dissension that ultimately triumphed over their friendship.

Chapter 1: The Wells-Conrad Relationship

Wells anonymously critiqued Conrad's *An Outcast of the Islands* in the *Saturday Review* on May 16, 1896. He began, "Mr. Conrad is wordy; his story is not so much told as seen intermittently through a haze of sentences.... You stumble, you protest, you blunder on, for the drama you saw so cursorily has hold of you" (Karl 1052). Despite this adverse criticism, Wells finally concedes that " 'An Outcast of the Islands' is, perhaps, the finest piece of fiction that has been published this year." This fusion of hostility and cordiality prefigures the friendship that Wells and Conrad would develop, as irreconcilable disagreements about art and humanity persistently accompanied their amiable letters and encounters. When Conrad, then thirty-eight years old, discovered the name of his critic, he composed this to Wells, who was eight years his junior, but a more famous and established writer:

If I prized the review before I knew who wrote it – it became still more precious now when the name of my kind appreciator is known. Strangely enough – almost five months ago when turning over the last page of "The Wonderful Visit," in the full impression of the extraordinary charm and suggestive realism of this book I remember reflecting – with contemptible bitterness – that a mind that [could] conceive and execute such work was absolutely beyond my reach. That, to a man who could think and write so anything I could do – or attempt to do – would probably never seem worth a second glance. This a shameful confession but you know how difficult it is for a common mortal to kick himself free of his own clamorous careers... Your books take hold of one with a grasp that can be felt. I am held by the charm of their expression and of their meaning. I surrender to their suggestion. I am delighted by the clearness of atmosphere, by the sharp definition even of things implied – and I am convinced by the logic of your imagination so unbounded and so brilliant. (Smith 1:320-21)

Conrad's praise of his reviewer contrasts with Wells's rather lukewarm recognition of *Outcast* and the talents of its author, more of which appears in his response to Conrad:

I am very glad indeed that my review of your book was to your liking. Though I really don't see why you should think gratitude necessary when a reviewer gives you your deserts... If I have instead put my finger on a weak point in your armor of technique, so that you may be able to strengthen it against your next reviewer, I shall have done the best a reviewer can do. You have everything for the making of a splendid novelist except dexterity, and that is attainable by drill. (Smith 1:262-4)

This, too, betokens the future of their relationship, as Conrad expressed a degree of admiration for Wells that went unanswered, especially between 1896 and the start of the Edwardian Era. At the time of his anonymous critique, Wells had achieved a name for himself with *The Time Machine* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896). As Karl illustrates, "The groundwork, then, for the confrontation and friendship between Wells and Conrad was set... Conrad was certain to overpraise Wells, while the latter was almost certain to feel condescending toward someone he had commended and yet who was so different from himself. From the start, the two were as different as poetry and applied science" (1052).

During the following two years, Conrad "accepted each Wells criticism as though from the Delphic Oracle" and continued to commend the latter on his latest works (Karl 1052). In a letter to Wells dated September 6, 1898, Conrad writes, "I have lived on terms of close intimacy with you, referring to you many a page of my work, scrutinising many sentences by the light of your criticism. You are responsible for many sheets torn up and also for those that remained untorn" (Smith 1:293). As Conrad typically treated those in a position to advance him with obsequious compliments and esteem, particularly during his early career as a writer, we cannot be sure of his total sincerity toward Wells. Yet most of Conrad's letters to his younger colleague contain instances of such flattery, and we tend

to regard Wells as unappreciative not only as a result of his rather disparaging remarks about Conrad in *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), addressed later, but because much of the Wells correspondence is missing; as Conrad frequently disposed of any mail that his wife, Jessie, did not purposely retain, we cannot know the degree to which Wells returned his admirer's praise. The writers developed a close friendship after Conrad moved to Pent Farm, only miles from Wells's residence at Sandgate, in October of 1898. Conrad recorded his "state of jubilation" upon relocating so near to Wells (Jean-Aubry 249). Conrad greatly enjoyed *The Invisible Man* (1897) and addressed Wells as "O! Realist of the Fantastic, whether you like it or not," commenting on the blend of realism and artistic vision that he found in Wells's novels.

The two visited each other frequently through the mid-Edwardian years, due in part to the friendship between Mrs. Wells and Mrs. Conrad. While Conrad's appearances at Sandgate were characterized by hopeful enthusiasm on his part, Wells commonly ridiculed his accent and mannerisms and seemed unable to overlook Conrad's cultural differences. To Edward Garnett, Wells wrote in June of 1900, "Conrad is good but his temperament is utterly different from mine—we speak a different language" (Smith 1:359). No more compassionate are Wells's descriptions of Jessie Conrad as "a Flemish thing from the mud flats" and Conrad's "lump of a wife" (Meyers 104). Yet Conrad's loyalty to Wells endured for most of the next decade, as seen in Conrad's letters from the period (much less obeisance marks his later recollections of Wells). When he fell ill in late 1898, Wells received sympathy and encouragement from Conrad: "When are you going back to work. May it be soon! I—for one—cannot have enough of your work. You have done me good. You have done me good every day for many months past. Some day

you will perhaps deny me—cast me out—but it will be too late. I shall always be yours” (Jean-Aubry 249).

While my evidence favors Conrad as an initially humble follower who flattered an unappreciative mentor, I should note that Wells’s gratitude from Conrad was not entirely undeserved, nor was Wells wholly negligent or unkind to his contemporary. To Grant Allen, Wells described Conrad as his “friend and neighbor,” and regularly praised specific qualities of his writing (Smith 1:345). For instance, Wells nominated *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897) for *The Academy*’s award for literature. In Wells’s response to Benjamin Swift’s “The Decay of the Novel” (1903), he claims, “The novel has altered its form—it is shorter, has fewer ‘characters’ and more shape, symmetry, and directness than it had in the sixties...But for the life of me I can’t see any decay in its quality. Consider—taking instances haphazard—the character-drawing and the texture of Mr. Joseph Conrad” (Shipman, et al. 151). Also, Wells assisted Conrad in obtaining a pension from the Royal Literary Fund in 1908, which eased the latter’s financial troubles.³ In 1906, Conrad dedicated *The Secret Agent* to Wells and expressed that he owed much of his reputation to his influence.

Nicholas Delbanco examines Wells and Conrad with Henry James, Stephen Crane, and Ford Madox Ford (then Hueffer), a group of authors living near Pent Farm in England whose camaraderie included collaboration and the exchange of ideas.

For Delbanco, these writers lived in “exile,” as none were raised in the area, and operated as “literary outlaw[s]” by regularly offending England’s literary circle (17; 19).

3. Wells wrote to Edmund Gosse about Conrad’s pension in July of 1904: “I taxed him [Pinker] with the matter of Conrad after I saw you on Saturday. Frankly, I think there has been a lot of very shoddy lying about J.C.’s distresses. I approve very highly of Civil List pensions for all worthy writers of anything indeed that lifts us out of our accursed servitude to sales, but I do not see why Conrad’s agent & all his unfortunate friends should be blackened in the process” (Smith 2:39).

He discusses the conversations probably held by the group about their works in progress, and offers,

these books bear witness to their origins in speech. Marlow and Dowell have the kind of narrative ease that bespeaks a long habit of fireside discourse—as well as the conviction that some friend will sit and listen. What Marlow most wanted of Kurtz was the chance to have a talk... If Kurtz can be a Green Beret captain gone mad in Vietnam (as in *Apocalypse Now*), why couldn't Marlow's interlocutors—those silent friends who hear him out in *Heart of Darkness*—be Crane, Ford, James, and Wells? (34-5)

Although unlikely, Delbanco's suggestion that Conrad's colleagues inspired the static figures aboard the *Nellie* reinforces the trade of ideas and advice between the authors that may result in similarities of the kind I explore in *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness*. Delbanco treats Wells and Conrad as part of this group that originated before the turn of the century and flourished mainly during the early Edwardian years.

Correspondences dated after 1903 reveal trouble in the Wells-Conrad relationship. In November of 1904, Wells wrote to novelist Morley Roberts, "What do you think of Conrad? I began the course of praise ten years ago, but I'm cooling off considerable. Short stories is his game. *Nostramo* is dessicated conglomerate" (Smith 2:58, underline in original). Wells, perhaps unduly, gives himself credit for Conrad's success and admits skepticism of his abilities. Wells's involvement with the Fabian Society seeded this "cooling off" of their friendship, as Conrad strongly disapproved of the socialist organization. Wells contemplated joining the Fabians to Elizabeth Healey in November of 1888. In 1901, he received attention from the society with *Anticipations*, a nonfiction work in which Wells forecasts changes in society, technology, education, and class. Although Conrad described the text as "splendid," he began to doubt his compatibility with Wells's beliefs, and felt unable to "follow him down every road" (Smith 100). In the spring of 1904, Conrad responded to what he interpreted as Wells's growing elitism,

demonstrated by the latter's aim toward a smaller, Fabian audience in an early draft of *A Modern Utopia*; Conrad wrote to Wells,

I however (with my man in view) have looked at the *tactics* of what seems to me the opening of a campaign on your part... It is—and as a matter of fact the whole tone of it implies that—it is a *move*. Where the move to my apprehension seems unsound is in this, that it seems to presuppose—or even to establish—a sort of select circle to which you address yourself, leaving the rest of the world outside the pale. It seems as if they had to *come in* into a rigid system, whereas I submit that Wells should *go forth*, not dropping fishing lines for particular trout but casting a wide and generous net, where would be room for everybody; where indeed every sort of fish would be welcome, appreciated and made use of. Your first few pages proclaim an intellectual exclusiveness—and also an exclusiveness of feeling which (legitimate as it may be) can also serve your sincerity at the expense of truth. (Jean-Aubry 328, italics in original)

Here we note more direct criticism of Wells from Conrad. Honest and pointed opposition replaces the enthusiastic devotion from Conrad's earlier letters. This shift denotes the impending rupture in their friendship to which Conrad contributed as he sensed an inevitable division over art and politics. Still, he ends this letter with a cheerful request to visit Wells at Sandgate in the near future.

Conrad generally approved of Wells's Edwardian fiction, but repeatedly advised him to minimize the overt socialism they contained; *Mankind in the Making* (1903), *The Food of the Gods* (1904), *A Modern Utopia* (1905), *In the Days of the Comet* (1906), and *New Worlds for the Old* (1908) manifest Wells's increasingly didactic intent. Related to their political disagreements, the two drifted apart due to a more fundamental discord regarding the purpose of art and beliefs about humanity, discussed later. Conrad, Ford, and James would openly oppose Wells's explicit socialist message. Around 1910, the literary establishment criticized Wells's involvement with Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy; these voices included Conrad, who censured the trio for "being too down-to-earth, too detailed, too full of characterization, and being unwilling to spend the time to

hone their prose, to utilize the art of construction, to make the medium the message”

(Smith 159). Details of the Bennett-Wells-Galsworthy group do not hold as much significance to my purpose here as does Wells’s reaction to his colleagues’ objections.

According to David Smith,

The criticism struck too close to the bone: so many people had welcomed him as a new literary voice, for using powerful and relatively little-known techniques and for applying his ideas to hitherto forbidden or hidden subjects. As he went on in his life, the scientific side, with its promise (or threat), became increasingly important to him. As a result, the ends began to matter more than the means. (159)

Wells parted with those who could not accept his views. By the end of the Edwardian Era, Conrad had realized his incompatibility with Wells and hesitated little in letting their friendship dissolve. Smith summarizes the Wells-Conrad legacy: “From early on in the relationship the two men were really working to convert each other—Conrad to make Wells into a more traditional and less political writer, Wells to make Conrad into a Fabian, a socialist, or at least into a republican who could use his knowledge of the depths of men to help illuminate possible future worlds” (163).

I have included these excerpts to demonstrate, comprehensively, both Conrad’s devotion to Wells through the early Nineteenth Century, and the latter’s reluctance to reciprocate such fondness. Karl accurately stresses that the disparity between Wells and Conrad’s literary achievements at the time contributed to Conrad’s excessive approbation and, as his letters would likely show, to Wells’s tepid and even haughty replies. As Conrad’s reputation grew, he would become more outspoken against Wells’s didacticism, attitude toward humanity, and participation in the Fabian Society. For now, however, I suggest that these and other factors support the influence of Wells’s *The Time Machine* on *Heart of Darkness*; Conrad’s effort to establish himself as a respected author, Wells’s

role *as* this author, the frequent communication between the two, and the short distance between their residences would have allowed Conrad to adapt certain aspects of his colleague's work. I do not underestimate the impact of Conrad's personal experiences in the Congo or his own talents on *Heart of Darkness*, but rather propose that his incorporation of Wells's text is neither unnatural nor unexpected of an aspiring novelist, and the resulting similarities link the books as artifacts that reflect both the writers' ideologies and the *fin de siècle* from which they originated.

Chapter 2: The *fin de siècle*

Fin de siècle, or “end of the century,” refers to the last years of the Nineteenth Century, when society anticipated change with a mixture of despair, excitement, and hope. The term carries different connotations for each European country, but most commonly applies to France (specifically Paris), where *La Belle Époque* was sometimes used. The “Beautiful Era,” which endured until World War I, indicates the cultural energy and artistic productivity of Europe coupled with boredom, *ennui*, and “a widespread malaise” (Laqueur 5). Walter Laqueur notes that *fin de siècle* has been synonymous with “morbidly, decline, [and] decadence” and, in England and France, signifies “the world of the weary dandy with the cult of the self” (5; 10). It has also represented symbolism, aestheticism, and narcissism. Russia’s *fin de siècle* (1895-1914) was also known as the Silver Age, during which authors such as Vladimir Solovyev and Vyacheslav Ivanov forecasted the imminent arrival of the Antichrist. In England, *fin de siècle* was linked to works like Oscar Wilde’s *Salomé* (1891) and to *The Yellow Book*, which captured the “emotionalism, pessimism, and despondency” of the period (Laqueur 13).⁴ In *Degeneration* (1893), Max Nordau describes the *fin de siècle* spirit as “the impotent despair of a sick man, who feels himself dying by inches in the midst of an eternally living nature, blooming insolently forever” (Laqueur 12).

4. Linda Dowling links Wilde and Beardsley, along with Conrad, Joyce, Lawrence, and Faulkner, to Victorian literary Decadence, a “cultural episode with sensational or lurid overtones” that “emerged from a linguistic crisis” involving new theories of language as autonomous and separated from historical context (ix; xi).

As we can see, these years are remembered more for their decadence and dread of the future than for the hope and enthusiasm with which some greeted the Twentieth Century. Yet encasing the *fin de siècle* were various optimistic attitudes of the 1800s and early 1900s. The *Belle Époque* anticipated modernism with its emphasis on entropy and despair, likely a response to the turbulent 1890s, the decade during which Britain saw a declining growth rate, a decrease in exports, and dwindling agriculture. As England was slowly losing its place as supreme world power, optimists and pessimists clashed over the nation's future in a world still reeling from the scientific, religious, and psychological upheaval induced by Kelvin, Darwin, Nietzsche, and others; the breakthroughs of Freud and Einstein, contributed after the *fin de siècle*, would help usher in modernism in the Twentieth Century.

Generally speaking, the sixty-three years in England under Queen Victoria were defined by a belief in continual progress. As Lacqueur observes, "one is impressed by the optimistic note struck everywhere. Mankind had never had it so good and the progress was bound to continue" (17). By the onset of the *fin de siècle*, England owned one quarter of the land on Earth and was then the most prosperous country. It was first to benefit from the Industrial Revolution, which occurred in England nearly one hundred years before developing in the United States and elsewhere. Faith in progress continued even after setbacks such as the Boer War in South Africa (1899-1901) and the United States and Germany surpassing England in economic production. Many were confident that science would continue to advance and the number of educated citizens would rise. Most authors of the period, including those from other countries, promoted this notion of progress with utopian fiction, such as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888).

Robert Browning voices Victorian optimism in his 1841 play, *Pippa Passes*, with the well-known lines, “God’s in his Heaven/ All’s right with the world!”

Another influence on progressivism was Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859), which spawned religious turmoil by first challenging the biblical creation story, and then by suggesting that Earth was several millions of years older than most Christians believed; it also became a tool for the Social Darwinists, who used Darwin’s theories about adaptation, natural selection, and the struggle for survival to justify various oppressive social and economic practices, such as class warfare and imperialism. Darwin never introduced a link between evolution and inevitable progress, but, as Stephen Jay Gould explains, Social Darwinists manipulated “survival of the fittest,” to indicate physical strength instead of Darwin’s intended denotation of being best suited for an immediate environment.⁵ Thus, Social Darwinists such as Herbert Spencer, Benjamin Kidd, and Francis Galton tied superior “fitness” to the right to dominate “weaker” classes and races, considering natural selection in humans requisite for progress. In his defense of imperialism, Kidd writes,

With whatever feelings we may regard the conflict, it is, however, necessary to remember that it is the first condition of progress. It leads continually onwards and upwards. From this stress of nature has followed the highest result we are capable of conceiving, namely, continual advance towards higher and more perfect forms of life ... The law of life has been always the same from the beginning,—ceaseless and inevitable struggle and competition, ceaseless and inevitable selection and rejection, ceaseless and inevitable progress. (230)

Like other Social Darwinists, Kidd regards as positive that “The Anglo-Saxon has exterminated the less developed people with which he has come into competition... The weaker races disappear before the stronger through the effects of mere contact” (230). As

5. Herbert Spencer coined the term in the fifth edition of *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1869.

we will see, H.G. Wells vehemently opposed the notion of perpetual progress and satirizes Social Darwinism in *The Time Machine*.

Those like Wells and Conrad who rejected positivism certainly had their reasons for doing so. *Fin de siècle* pessimism has several origins: it was a reaction against Victorian optimism, a fulfillment of what Nordau called “the traditional belief in the evil destiny of the closure of centuries,” and a result of religious and scientific tumult that eventually lead to modernism (Townshend 200). By the 1890s, Christianity and other religions had been threatened by events other than Darwinism. Lord Kelvin (then William Thomson), Charles Lyell, T.H. Huxley, Hermann von Helmholtz, and Simon Newcomb each postulated a much older age for the earth than 6,000 years, the age first suggested by Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656), who based his calculations on biblical genealogies. Geologist John Perry charged Thomson with “greatly underestimat[ing] the age of the earth,” and offered the more accurate 2 to 3 billion years; Thomson’s figure was 20 million to 400 million (England, et al. 4).⁶ According to Joe D. Burchfield, Lyell played an important role in the understanding of geologic time, and his concept of a much older Earth corresponds to Gideon Mantell’s discovery of Iguanodon fossils in 1822.⁷

Sir James George Frazer disputed Christianity with *The Golden Bough*, published in two volumes in 1890. His study of mythology, magic, and ritual finds similarities between Christianity and ancient pagan religions, such as those in Greece, Egypt, and Phoenecia. For Frazer, Christianity is neither original nor unique in its reliance upon the sacrificial lamb, death and resurrection, a virgin birth, consumption of a god, temptation

6. Perry’s estimate was largely ignored.

7. Mantell uncovered the fossils before Lyell published *Principles of Geology* between 1830-1833.

of the soul, etc. He approaches religion with objective indifference, treating it as a subject of academic study rather than spiritual truth. As John Vickery illustrates, *The Golden Bough* left a substantial impact on many works of literature that followed, inspiring T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and influencing the texts of William Butler Yeats, Robert Graves, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, William Carlos Williams, D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, H.P. Lovecraft, and many more.

Most British authors writing during and immediately after the *fin de siècle* were agnostic or atheist. Some, including Wells, did not associate their lack of religion with the skepticism and pessimism of the period, but considered it a trademark of enlightened secular science. Wells wrote to A.M. Davies in 1887, "I am exceedingly glad to hear of your vigorous Atheism. It behooves us who deny, to make it as clear to the world as we can for the good of ourselves & the world, that we think in this way" (Smith 1: 76-77). While Wells, Eliot, and several other modern figures returned to religion and an optimistic spirit later in their lives, Conrad remained pessimistic about humankind and its future. *Heart of Darkness* explores how the absence of God and behavioral codes in the Congo jungle allows Kurtz to indulge his savage instincts by committing various "unspeakable rites" that ultimately corrupt the surrounding tribe (50). From his teenage years, Conrad expressed a strong dislike of Christianity; he condemned its "doctrines, ceremonies and festivals" in a letter to Edward Garnett dated December 22, 1902.

Finally, Nineteenth Century science added another hypothesis to the revolutionary advances of Darwinism, geological time, and eugenics, one that consumed the imaginations of *fin de siècle* writers. Lord Kelvin, in his interpretation of the second law of thermodynamics, affirmed the theories of Hemholtz and Rudolf Clausius, suggesting

that a decline in the stars' energy would result in the death of our universe. In his 1862 paper, "On the Age of the Sun's Heat," Kelvin calculated that our local star would burn itself out, "not in hundreds of millions, but in a few tens of millions of years at the very latest" (Ruddick 345). As their letters demonstrate, Wells and Conrad had heard these calculations and were only two authors to feature the sun's death in their writing. French astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842-1925) envisions the phenomenon in *Fin du monde*, which was translated into English the same year that Wells finished *The Time Machine*; Flammarion describes the earth as a frozen tomb revolving around a black sun, creating perpetual night on the planet. While Wells and Flammarion did not expect our star's extinction to occur for another several million years, others feared it would happen before the end of the week.

Such were the conditions of the world when Wells and Conrad composed their most famous novels. Victorian positivism endured through the *fin de siècle*, but the skepticism and despair defining modernism began to emerge as a response to social and political strife, developments in science and religion, and as a manifestation of a certain dread for what the Twentieth Century might bring. Both Wells and Conrad belonged to this group of pessimists, but approached society and its future with very different attitudes. Conrad rarely disguised his "apprehension and worry," as many of his letters to his colleagues reveal (Jean-Aubry 311).⁸ Wells, however, infused his fiction with an

8. From a 1903 letter to Wells, probably written in February or March. Conrad wrote to John Galsworthy on November 7, 1900, "My flesh is weary and my spirit sinks" (Jean-Aubry 298). Many of his letters reflect this sense of pessimism and despair. Conrad was also despondent over his fiction, frequently considering himself a failed writer. He confessed to Wells on December 4, 1898, "I am not well—I am eating my heart out over the rottenest book that ever was—or will be (*The Rescuer*)" (Jean-Aubry 260). Also, to Edward Garnett on November 12, 1900: "I've been satanically ambitious, but there's nothing of a devil in me, worse luck. The *Outcast* is a heap of sand, the *Nigger* a splash of water, *Jim* a lump of clay. A stone, I suppose, will be my next gift to mankind—before I get drowned in mud to which even my supreme struggles won't give a simulacrum of life. Poor mankind! Drop a tear for it—but look how infinitely more pathetic I am!" (Jean-Aubry 299).

energetic spirit that pled for change. He had no faith in contemporary economic, political, or educational trends, and, like Conrad, defied the Social Darwinist belief in inevitable and infinite progress. *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* are deeply rooted in *fin de siècle* history, though in ways not always immediately recognizable.

Chapter 3: Three Common Themes

Having situated the two novels within the *fin de siècle*, I now examine three similarities between them to illustrate Wells and Conrad's shared influences and interests. The presence of movement through time and space, a divided humanity, and cannibalism in both texts can be explained topically, and in addition to indicating their historical roots, I analyze the artistic significance of these three aspects in *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness*. As these similarities surface again in the following two chapters, I hope to thoroughly describe their meaning, quality, and function within the larger work.

Movement through Time and Space

First, both novels involve a movement through time and space that reverses our understanding of each dimension. The Time Traveler discusses in spatial terms his journey through time, while Marlow uses temporal language to relate his course upriver. During his dinner party, the Time Traveler introduces the concept of time as a fourth dimension: "Any real body must have extension in *four* directions: it must have Length, Breadth, Thickness, and—Duration... There are really four dimensions, three which we call the three planes of Space, and a fourth, Time" (Wells 4). According to the Time Traveler, and probably to Wells, "*There is no difference between Time and any of the dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along it*" (5, italics in original). Here, the Time Traveler refers to the Newtonian scale of time on which the novel operates. In her argument that "time-travel is always potentially deconstructive,"

Veronica Hollinger denotes that the Newtonian scale enables the Time Traveler to move along a fixed time-line and to return to the same place from which he departs, much like a vehicle can return to its driveway (204). The Newtonian scale differs from the more intricate Einsteinian physics, which are subject to time-loops and various temporal paradoxes. The Time Traveler refers to a paper delivered by Simon Newcomb on four-dimensional science entitled “Modern Mathematical Thought” at the New York Mathematical Society’s annual meeting, an event that allows Nicholas Ruddick to identify the night on which the Time Traveler’s dinner gathering takes place. Wells, and likely Conrad, was familiar with emerging theories about time and space, and “the time was ripe for a work on the grand theme of humanity’s place in time that would capture the popular imagination” (Ruddick 339).

The Time Traveler, briefly alluding to the *fin de siècle* racialist discourse so prevalent in Conrad’s novel, develops his hypothesis on time travel:

For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instant of its occurrence: I become absent-minded, as you say. I jump back for a moment. Of course we have no means of staying back for any length of Time, any more than a savage or an animal has of staying six feet above the ground. But a civilized man is better off than the savage in this respect. He can go up against gravitation in a balloon, and why should he not hope that ultimately he may be able to stop or accelerate his drift along the Time-Dimension, or even turn about and travel the other way? (Wells 7)

He watches his surroundings “rise up faint and fair, and pass like dreams,” but remains in his precise location, rendering his vision of the extinction of life all the more chilling, for it occurs in the very spot on which his home stands (Wells 19). After returning to the present, the Time Traveler exclaims, “The thing had started from the south-east corner of the laboratory. It had come to rest again in the north-west, against the wall where you saw it. That gives you the exact distance from my little lawn to the pedestal of the White

Sphinx, into which the Morlocks had carried my machine,” further emphasizing his adventure in spatial terms (Wells 82). Interestingly, however, readers generally refer to the Time Traveler’s location throughout most of the story not as a physical place, but as the year 802,701 A.D.

For Conrad, Marlow’s steamboat functions as a sort of time machine, transporting him “back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings” (33). These are Marlow’s sentiments when he begins his journey along the Congo River, but *Heart of Darkness* focuses on the ambiguity between time and space much earlier. Conrad evokes this relationship in the beginning of the novel through Marlow, who muses on the fleeting nature of time: “I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago—the other day... Light came out of this river since—you say Knights? Yes; but it is like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of lightning in the clouds. We live in the flicker—may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday” (5-6). Conrad’s syntax connects the ancient Romans’ arrival to “the other day,” just as Marlow links the Thames and Congo Rivers. As the Time Traveler does not move extensively in space, Marlow does not travel through time, yet he characterizes the natives as “primordial,” and recalls,

We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil... We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember because we were traveling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign—and no memories. (Conrad 35)

In his description of the exotic forest enclosing the Central Station, Marlow reveals, “A deadened burst of mighty splashes and snorts reached us from afar, as though an ichthyosaurus had been taking a bath of glitter in the great river” (Conrad 30); by referencing an enormous marine reptile that became extinct nearly ninety-million years ago, Conrad augments Marlow’s sensation of having traveled back in Time. In *Heart of Darkness*, as in *The Time Machine*, defining movement through one dimension in terms of another enhances the uncanny, jarring effect of the protagonist’s experience. Wells also cites this creature in his text when the Time Traveler realizes that “horses, cattle, sheep, dogs, had followed the Ichthyosaurus into extinction.” This similarity suggests that the authors’ interest in time is possibly linked to contemporary findings on the age of the earth, and particularly to the fascination with dinosaur fossils following Mantell’s discoveries.

Divided Humanity

Next, both works share a divided humanity. Darwinism is important to our understanding of this theme, especially Huxley’s “devolution,” and Wells’s (and others’) defiance of the Social Darwinist belief in inevitable progress. *The Time Machine* centers on the Time Traveler’s encounter with humankind’s descendants: the Eloi and the Morlocks. Instinctively, the Time Traveler attempts to rationalize this split, eventually theorizing that the upper class, through advances in medicine and science, became the torpid, frail, and beautiful Eloi, while the laborers, after years spent underground fulfilling the needs of the privileged, devolved into the blind, savage, nocturnal Morlocks. The Time Traveler paints the Eloi as primitive and childlike, beginning with his astonishment at first trying to communicate with them; he recalls, “Then hesitating for a

moment how to express time, I pointed to the sun. At once a quaintly primitive little figure in checkered purple and white followed my gesture, and then astonished me by imitating the sound of thunder” (Wells 23). He feels “like a schoolmaster amidst children” during his first days with the Eloi, who share certain qualities with the natives in *Heart of Darkness*, although the Africans are perhaps more obviously comparable to the Morlocks. Conrad’s work features a divide between the Africans and Europeans, and Marlow, like the Time Traveler, frequently wonders at his fundamental human relationship to the outwardly ‘barbaric’ race; he recollects the “burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage” (Conrad 35). On the surface, each text contains dichotomies between civil/savage, man/animal, even moral/immoral. Yet the novels do not treat each distinction as clear-cut, offering an ambiguous and certainly debatable stance on the divisions they present.

Throughout most of *The Time Machine*, we identify with the Time Traveler’s compassion toward the Eloi and his abhorrence of the Morlocks. One seems inherently ‘civil,’ ‘human,’ and ‘moral,’ the other ‘savage,’ ‘bestly,’ and ‘immoral.’ He remembers, “I longed very much to kill a Morlock or so. Very inhuman, you may think, to want to go killing one’s own descendants! But it was impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity in the things” (Wells 63). Also, the Time Traveler explains, “However great their intellectual degradation, the Eloi had kept too much of the human form not to claim my sympathy” (Wells 59). The initial quality separating the protagonists from the Morlocks/natives in both novels is physical appearance. The Time Traveler expresses disbelief that he is related to the monstrous creatures who feed upon the Eloi:

It was not for some time that I could succeed in persuading myself that the thing I had seen was human. But, gradually, the truth dawned on me: that Man had not remained one species, but had differentiated into two distinct animals: that my graceful children of the Upper World were not the sole descendants of our generation, but that this bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing, which had flashed before me, was also heir to all the ages. (Wells 44)

Marlow partakes in the Time Traveler's incredulity, bewildered by the thought that he and the frenzied, untamed, "prehistoric" Africans of the Congo share a common ancestor.

In one of the most infamous passages from *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow proclaims,

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—you so remote from the night of the first ages—could comprehend. And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valor, rage—who can tell?—but truth—truth stripped of its cloak of time. (Conrad 36)

Much debate between scholars on Conrad as a racist has arisen based on this passage. More on Conrad's response to imperialism, the deplorable conditions in the Congo, and his beliefs about race follow in a subsequent chapter. Here, I wish to stress Marlow's initial hesitation in accepting the Africans as his own kind, which strongly recalls the Time Traveler's inability to identify with the Morlocks.

As in *The Time Machine*, the natives appear 'savage,' 'animalistic,' but certainly not 'immoral.' Clearly, Marlow despises the practices of the colonizers, such as the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, and sympathizes with the people whom they exploit. He poignantly depicts the suffering of the Africans residing in the grove of death, describing

them as “acute angles” and “black shadows of disease and starvation lying confusedly in the greenish gloom” (Conrad 17). He also portrays the process of colonization as cruel, tragic, and absurd, explaining, “Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest” (Conrad 17). Revealing his compassion for their plight, Marlow offers a biscuit to one of the starving natives and declares, “these men could by no stretch of imagination be called enemies. They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea” (Conrad 16). Marlow exhibits a sense of security and relief when he observes a group of African men freely paddling a boat along the shore, characterizing them as “a great comfort to look at,” and celebrating their “wild vitality” and “intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf”; a French man-of-war disturbs this sight, as well as Marlow’s sensation of belonging “to a world of straightforward facts” (Conrad 14). The ‘civilized’ Europeans disrupt any peace that Marlow obtains from the natural world, for their greed, arrogance, and stupidity result in such disastrous circumstances for both himself and the natives.

As Marlow sympathizes with the ‘savage,’ ‘beastly’ race of men in *Heart of Darkness*, the Time Traveler eventually regards the Morlocks with compassion and understanding. Near the end of his time in 802,701 A.D., the Time Traveler encounters a swarm of Morlocks in the forest, and uses a torch to defend himself and the terrified Weena. The Morlocks, confused by the bright, burning light, stumble toward the Time Traveler, who satisfies his urge to brutally assault them. Shortly, however, the Morlocks’ evident pain and disorientation temper his violence, and the Time Traveler confesses,

“But when I had watched the gestures of one of them groping under the hawthorn against the red sky, and heard their moans, I was assured of their absolute helplessness and misery in the glare, and I struck no more of them” (Wells 71). He realizes that the Morlocks, like all beasts, are neither moral nor immoral, but *amoral* creatures who strive to fulfill life’s basic needs without the ability to comprehend the consequences of their actions (though they do possess enough intelligence to steal the Time Traveler’s machine in the attempt to trap him). The Time Traveler justifiably defends himself against their carnivorous appetites, but acknowledges the injustice in maliciously harming them. Thus, both Marlow and the Time Traveler eventually develop sympathy for the ‘savage’ division of humanity, and both works manipulate the separation between moral/immoral and man/animal, although I argue that a separation between moral/immoral *does* exist in *Heart of Darkness*, as Marlow depicts the natives much more favorably than the avaricious colonizers.

Cannibalism

Finally, Wells and Conrad’s texts use cannibalism to comment on the divided races. I connect the act of cannibalism to each protagonist’s temptation to imitate certain behaviors of the novels’ ‘savage’ peoples. In *The Time Machine*, it requires nearly the entire novel for the Time Traveler to recognize the Morlocks as cannibals who feed on the meek, vulnerable Eloi. He remains oblivious to this, first realizing, “The Morlocks at any rate were carnivorous! Even at the time, I remember wondering what large animal could have survived to furnish the red joint I saw” (Wells 51). Wells builds a certain degree of suspense through our identification with the Time Traveler, whose

understanding of the relationship between the Eloi and Morlocks inches closer to the appalling truth:

They [the Eloi] were becoming reacquainted with Fear. And suddenly there came into my head the memory of the meat I had seen in the Underworld. It seemed odd how it floated into my mind: not stirred up as it were by the current of my meditations, but coming in almost like a question from outside. I tried to recall the form of it. I had a vague sense of something familiar, but I could not tell what it was at the time. (55)

When he does reach the unsettling conclusion that one race preys on another, the Time Traveler attempts to rationalize his discovery with evolutionary inevitability, reasoning,

Clearly, at some time in the Long-Ago of human decay the Morlocks' food had run short. Possibly they had lived on rats and suchlike vermin. Even now man is far less discriminating and exclusive in his food than he was—far less than any monkey. His prejudice against human flesh is no deep-seated instinct. And so these unhuman sons of men—! I tried to look at the thing in a scientific spirit. After all, they were less human more remote than our cannibal ancestors of three or four thousand years ago. And the intelligence that would have made this state of things a torment had gone. Why should I trouble myself? These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon—probably saw to the breeding of. And there was Weena dancing at my side! (Wells 59)

He denies the humanity of the Morlocks as part of this rationalization, and subsequently struggles against his own relationship to these cannibals. Wells intentionally depicts the Eloi as an innocent, attractive, “daylight race,” and the Morlocks as grotesque, monstrous “vermin,” influencing readers to favor one over the other; we praise the Time Traveler's heroic defeat of the Morlocks and his return to his safe, familiar laboratory. However, Wells subtly undermines the Time Traveler's (as well as our own) identification with the Eloi by characterizing him as a man with extremely violent tendencies. Cannibalism also plays a role in the protagonist's unexpected affinity with the Morlocks.

The Time Traveler repeatedly recalls his fierce, apparently unprovoked impulse to harm both races of humans in 802,701 A.D. After observing the frailty of the Eloi, the

Time Traveler envisions “flinging the whole dozen of them about like ninepins” (Wells 23). Of the Eloi’s difficulty in apprehending the meaning of his language and gestures, the Time Traveler recollects, “I had the hardest task in the world to keep my hands off their pretty laughing faces” (Wells 36). Only his desire to remain by Weena’s side at the Palace of Green Porcelain diminishes the Time Traveler’s “thirst for murder” and prevents him from “going straight down the gallery and killing the brutes [he] heard” (Wells 64). Also, he experiences a morbid sort of joy while battling the Morlocks in the forest, describing the crush of bones under his fist and revealing, “The strange exultation that so often seems to accompany hard fighting came upon me. I knew that both I and Weena were lost, but I determined to make the Morlocks pay for their meat” (Wells 70).

We perceive the Morlocks as violent beasts as a result of their bloody appetites and barbaric method of killing their prey, evidence of which the Time Traveler discovers in “the faint halitus of freshly shed blood” in the air and the sight of various decapitated animals. The Time Traveler’s vicious tendencies may be more subtly portrayed by Wells than those of the Morlocks, but his protagonist is nonetheless equally as savage as the nocturnal race. Wells uses the theme of cannibalism to enforce this notion. Despite the graphic carnage he has witnessed in 802,701 A.D., the Time Traveler arrives home “starving for a bit of meat” (14). Though clearly not a cannibal in the literal sense, the Time Traveler mirrors the Morlocks’ craving for flesh, undaunted by the spectacle of one race consuming another. Therefore, *The Time Machine* is somewhat interested in humanity’s hypocritical attitude toward its “cannibal ancestors” and in its outward denial of our ‘animalistic’ or ‘savage’ longings. The Time Traveler’s longing for a bit of meat and Marlow’s impulse to “go ashore for a howl and a dance” reflect Huxley’s belief in

devolution, that man could regress along the evolutionary scale and return to his brute, animal origins. Both the Time Traveler and Marlow struggle with their kinship to the Morlocks/Africans and with the desire to merge with the “darker” lineages.

Heart of Darkness uses cannibalism in a similar fashion. As Alan Simmons explains, scholars cannot confirm whether or not Conrad witnessed the act of cannibalism during his time in the Congo, and it is unlikely that he alludes to a certain event in the descriptions of it that appear in the novel. Perhaps ironically, Conrad refers to Sir John Franklin in the beginning of the text, using him (from the perspective of the frame narrator) as an example of European progress and enlightenment. In 1854, Dr. John Rae of Scotland postulated that Franklin and his crew resorted to cannibalism after their ships, *Terror* and *Erebus* became trapped in ice during the Northwest Passage Expedition of 1845. The “1845–48 Franklin Expedition Forensic Anthropology Project,” lead by Dr. Owen Beattie, confirmed Rae’s suggestion in 1997. Conrad would have likely been familiar with Rae’s report, which highly offended Sir John Franklin’s widow and Victorian society. Thus, from the opening of *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad alludes to the false dichotomy between ‘civil’ and ‘savage,’ suggesting that no degree of evolution can entirely separate mankind from his brute instincts and wild urges.

In the novel, Marlow introduces several members of his crew as cannibals, describing them as “fine fellows” and “men one could work with” (Conrad 34). The first passage that deals substantially with cannibalism occurs during Marlow’s account of the attack delivered by a band of natives near Kurtz’s station. A cannibal on the steamboat tells Marlow that he would like to catch one of the natives and “Eat ‘im!” Marlow reflects,

I would no doubt have been properly horrified, had it not occurred to me that he and his chaps must be very hungry: that they must have been growing increasingly hungry for at least this month past. They had been engaged for six months (I don't think a single one of them had any clear idea of time, as we at the end of countless ages have. They still belonged to the beginnings of time—had no inherited experience to teach them as it were), and of course, as long as there was a piece of paper written over in accordance with some farcical law or other made down the river, it didn't enter anybody's head to trouble how they would live. (Conrad 40).

Here we observe more commentary on time, as Marlow considers that the cannibals belong to the first ages, and additional scorn of the “farcical law[s]” of imperialism.

Following the previous excerpt is, perhaps, the most frequently cited section on cannibalism in Conrad's novel, and it further confounds the distinction between the ‘civil’ and ‘savage’ races; I include the passage nearly in its entirety, as I refer back to it periodically.

Why in the name of all the gnawing devils of hunger they didn't go for us—they were thirty to five—and have a good tuck-in for once, amazes me now when I think of it. They were big powerful men, with not much capacity to weigh the consequences, with courage, with strength, even yet, though their skins were no longer glossy and their muscles no longer hard. And I saw that something restraining, one of those human secrets that baffle probability, had come into play there... Yes; I looked at them as you would on any human being, with a curiosity of their impulses, motives, capacities, weaknesses, when brought to the test of an inexorable physical necessity. Restraint! What possible restraint? Was it superstition, disgust, patience, fear—or some kind of primitive honor? No fear can stand up to hunger, no patience can wear it out, disgust simply does not exist where hunger is; and as to superstition, beliefs, and what you may call principles, they are less than chaff in a breeze. Don't you know the devilry of lingering starvation, its exasperating torment, its black thoughts, its somber and brooding ferocity? Well, I do. It takes a man all his inborn strength to fight hunger properly. It's really easier to face bereavement, dishonor, and the perdition of one's soul—than this kind of prolonged hunger. Sad, but true. And these chaps, too, had no earthy reason for any kind of scruple. Restraint! I would just as soon have expected restraint from a hyena prowling amongst the corpses of a battlefield. But there was the fact facing me—the fact dazzling, to be seen, like the foam on the depths of the sea, like a ripple on an unfathomable enigma, a mystery greater—when I thought of it—than the curious, inexplicable note of desperate grief in this savage clamor that had swept by us on the river-bank, behind the blind whiteness of the fog. (Conrad 41-42)

The cannibals' "restraint," or the ability to suppress their hunger and not consume the other men onboard, distinguishes them from the generally inconsiderate, merciless, and rapacious colonizers exploiting the Congo. Marlow marvels that this capacity belongs to the "prehistoric man" and not to the Europeans.

Heart of Darkness focuses on Marlow's preoccupation with the enigmatic Kurtz, who has succumbed to the temptation of the wilderness. The theme of restraint emerges again in Marlow's perception of Kurtz. Of the many details Marlow records about Kurtz after arriving at his station, the impaled heads surrounding his hut are the first. Marlow claims, "They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him—some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence" (Conrad 57). In other words, Kurtz could not restrain himself from satisfying his savage urge to take "a high seat amongst the devils of the land" (Conrad 49). Marlow rationalizes that Kurtz's "nerves went wrong and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites" (Conrad 49-50). During his time at the station, Marlow must retrieve Kurtz from such a ceremony and reflects on the corruption of Kurtz' soul: "But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself and, by Heavens I tell you, it had gone mad. I had—for my sins, I suppose—to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself" (Conrad 66). Here, Marlow voices his own struggle against the lure of the unfettered Congo jungle. As its title implies, Conrad's novel follows the innate conflict lurking within all of humanity against our forbidden impulses.

Cannibalism plays a role in Marlow's temptation, for it probably occurs at Kurtz's "certain midnight dances" and is tied by Conrad to the issue of restraint. In wondering at

his kinship with the Africans, Marlow asks, “You wonder I didn’t go ashore for a howl and a dance?” (Conrad 36). Marlow’s restraint develops because he “had no time...[and] had to mess about with white-lead and strips of woolen blanket helping to put bandages on those leaky steam-pipes.” He declares, “There was surface-truth enough in these things to save a wiser man” (Conrad 36). In short, only Marlow’s distraction with the steamboat prevents him from capitulating to the same temptations that seduce Kurtz. Like the Time Traveler, Marlow experiences disgust toward specific attributes of the novel’s savage race, but harbors—however subtly—the desire to imitate its behavior. In explaining Kurtz’ lack of restraint and seduction by the wilderness, Marlow evokes an effect of the text’s frame narration previously discussed; he separates his secure, comfortable passengers aboard the *Nellie* (who, to a degree, represent readers of Conrad’s text) from his own unsettling, estranging experience:

You can’t understand? How could you—with solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbours ready to cheer you or to fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums—how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man’s untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solitude—utter solitude without a policeman—by the way of silence—utter silence, where no warming voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion. These little things make all the great difference. (Conrad 49)

Conrad himself probably saw nothing wrong in cannibalism as practiced by the Africans. When the Russian attempts to illustrate “the ceremonies used when approaching Mr. Kurtz,” Marlow refuses to hear them, musing,

Curious, this feeling that came over me that such details would be more intolerable than those heads drying on the stakes under Mr. Kurtz’s windows. After all, that was only a savage sight, while I seemed at one bound to have been transported into some lightless region of subtle horrors, where pure, uncomplicated savagery was a positive relief, being something that had a right to exist—obviously—in the sunshine. (Conrad 88)

Marlow finds comfort in the natural “savagery” of the natives, who do not try to conceal their practices, however horrifying they might be to the Europeans. Conrad depicts the colonizers as hypocritical, whose actions are just as brutal and savage as those whom they exploit. The savage behavior of the Europeans is tainted by cruelty, immorality, and a malicious will, whereas the natives’ behavior, including the “unspeakable rites” in which Kurtz participates, is likely grounded in ritual and therefore “uncomplicated.” Conrad exposes the European sensibility with regards to cannibalism throughout the text, beginning with his allusion to Sir John Franklin and ridicules the outrage felt throughout England and other countries upon learning of the explorer’s disagreeable fate.

Time and space, a divided humanity, and cannibalism are central elements in both *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness*, and emerge again in my discussion of topical criticism and aesthetics in the following two chapters. The shared features presented here illuminate the parallels between the Time Traveler and Marlow, including their journeys to distant, unfamiliar, and perilous realms, and jarring discovery of a mysterious human race to which they are genetically linked. These comparisons affirm the likelihood that Wells and Conrad were responding to identical circumstances and events from the *fin de siècle* and contemplated the same problems and ideologies in their writing.

Chapter Four: Social Criticism

In “Conrad, Wells, and the Two Voices,” Frederick Karl distinguishes between the artistic poet and the empirical scientist. The poet seeks transcendence from death and decay and “calls attention to thoughts and acts that lie deep within us and that we try to disguise with logic,” while the scientist considers “social criticism and social amelioration as the end product of literature” (Karl 1049). For Karl, Wells represents the logical scientist, interested in how his writing responds to and critiques social injustice, while Conrad exemplifies the poet, whose imagination “plays on our unconscious (what we cannot control) by appealing to our consciousness (what, we think, we can control)” (1049, parentheses in original). Both writers regarded with skepticism contemporary trends in education, science, and politics, but Wells was an “enlightened, progressive...improver” compared to Conrad, who rejected progressivism, eschewed socialism, and “grappled anew with a deeply felt cynicism” (Karl 1056). Wells the ameliorist and Conrad the artist would eventually drift apart over these incompatible goals for their writing, but topical criticism and attention to aesthetics is identifiable in the early fiction of both authors. The next two chapters address how *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* treat various subjects and events of the *fin de siècle* as well as how the novels depict Wells and Conrad’s views on art and art’s relationship to humanity. Furthermore, referencing theorists such as Victor Shklovsky and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, I

explore how the texts can fulfill more modern and post-modern concepts of artistic estrangement and moral ambiguity.

Topicality in The Time Machine

In his introduction to *The Time Machine*, Wells declares, “There will come a time for every work...when it will have served its purpose and be bereft of its last rag of significance.” Nicholas Ruddick argues that Wells’s novel has endured as a canonical text despite its numerous topical references, defying the author’s “profound disbelief in any perfect or permanent work of art.” Critics frequently disregard the topical allusions in *The Time Machine*, and Wells himself eventually considered that they reduced the text to “a polemic by an immature writer” (Ruddick 337). However, these references are, paradoxically, partially responsible for the novel’s durability. The work’s narrative sequence, which relies on three difference time-scales, can be explained by Wells’s interest in contemporary science. *The Time Machine* functions in historical, evolutionary, and astronomical time, beginning in the Time Traveler’s home in early February of 1894. As previously addressed, Ruddick examines the Time Traveler’s conversation with his guests to identify this date as Thursday, February 2, nearly one month after Simon Newcomb’s paper on modern mathematics was delivered to the New York Mathematical Society.

The Time Traveler experiences evolutionary time when he reaches 802,701 A.D. The *A.D.* recorded by the Time Traveler is unexpected in light of the complete deterioration of Christianity and the prevalence of two species incapable of measuring time. Critics cannot agree on exactly how Wells uses this time-scale to comment on evolutionary progress, but Wells, an admiring student of T.H. Huxley, certainly

subscribed to Darwinism and wrote *The Time Machine* to explore these theories. In 1893, Huxley delivered his lecture, “Evolution in Ethics” and coined the term “devolution.” He rejected the idea that adaptation would lead to inevitable progress and argued that man could never extinguish his animal nature and may eventually slide backwards upon the evolutionary scale. Conrad endorses this belief in Kurtz, who promotes himself a god but succumbs to brute, animal instincts. Wells sent a copy of his novel to Huxley in May of 1895, writing, “The central idea—of degeneration following security—was the outcome of a certain amount of biological study” (Smith 1:238). Wells probably sought to impress his former instructor with a demonstration of what he, too, regarded as the inevitable consequence of evolutionary progress. He criticized thinkers such as Kidd, maintaining that entropy, gravity, and other forces of decay will triumph. We can identify this in the Time Traveler’s physical descriptions of 802,701 A.D., beginning with his remembrance of the Sphinx that greets his arrival: “The pedestal, it appeared to me, was of bronze, and was thick with verdigris. It chanced that the face was towards me; the sightless eyes seemed to watch me; there was the faint shadow of a smile on the lips. It was greatly weather-worn, and that imparted an unpleasant suggestion of disease” (Wells 20). The Time Traveler’s impression of this future world “was of a tangled waste of beautiful bushes and flowers, a long-neglected and yet weedless garden” (Wells 24). Like Conrad, Wells references the ichthyosaurus when the Time Traveler realizes that all domestic animals must have followed it into extinction. Nearly all of the Time Traveler’s musings on the circumstances of 802,701 A.D. resonate with contemporary biological and evolutionary discourse, a trait found in Wells’s other novels of this period, such as *The Invisible Man* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. The “central idea” of *The Time Machine*

dominates these speculations, and can be traced to conditions in Wells's own time. Wells speaks through his protagonist as the Time Traveler speculates,

For the first time I began to realize an odd consequence of the social effort in which we are at present engaged. And yet, come to think, it is a logical consequence enough. Strength is the outcome of need; security sets a premium on feebleness. The work of ameliorating the conditions of life—the true civilizing process that makes life more and more secure—had gone steadily on to a climax. One triumph of a united humanity over Nature had followed another. Things that are now mere dreams had become projects deliberately put in hand and carried forward. And the harvest was what I saw! ... It was natural on that golden evening that I should jump at the idea of a social paradise. The difficulty of increasing population had been met, I guessed, and population had ceased to increase. But with this change in condition come inevitably adaptations to the change. What, unless biological science is a mass of errors, is the cause of human intelligence and vigor? Hardship and freedom: conditions under which the active, strong, and subtle survive and the weaker go to the wall; conditions that put a premium upon the loyal alliance of capable men, upon self-restraint, patience, and decision ... I thought of the physical slightness of the people, their lack of intelligence, and those big abundant ruins, and it strengthened my belief in a perfect conquest of Nature. For after the battle comes Quiet ... Even in our own time certain tendencies and desires, once necessary to survival, are a constant source of failure. ... No doubt the exquisite beauty of the buildings I saw was the outcome of the last surgings of the now purposeless energy of mankind before it settled down into perfect harmony with the conditions under which it lived—the flourish of that triumph which began the last great peace. This has ever been the fate of energy in security; it takes to art and to eroticism, and then come languor and decay. Even this artistic impetus would at last die away—had almost died in the Time I saw. To adorn themselves with flowers, to dance, to sing in the sunlight; so much was left of the artistic spirit, and no more. Even that would fade in the end into a contented inactivity. We are kept keen on the grindstone of pain and necessity, and, it seemed to me, there here was that hateful grindstone broken at last! (29-32)

I have recorded most of this passage at length to demonstrate the extent of Wells's investment in his social criticism even this early into his career. The longest and most intricate passages of the novel display Wells's commentary on government, economics, and science. Wells would outline his idea of a "social paradise" in later novels such as *A Modern Utopia* and *In the Days of the Comet*.

Wells held a cyclic view of history, one that sees society gradually improving, reaching an apex of prosperity, and then declining into decadence, stagnation, and finally dissolution. This pattern then begins anew as society regenerates, and Wells considered responding to past mistakes as key to developing a better state. He opposes the Social Darwinists with this cyclic view, parodying them in the expectations of his Time Traveler, who remarks, “You see I had always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand odd would be incredibly in front of us in knowledge, art, everything” (24). The Time Traveler meets “humanity on the wane,” instead of a highly advanced society boasting advanced technological and scientific prowess (Wells 29).

Next, as Smith explains, Wells developed his role as a social critic throughout the 1890s, and his main concerns were education and England’s economic system.⁹ Despite his profoundly anti-Marxist stance, Wells would become an outspoken socialist and supporter of a World State centered around scientific progress. He joined the Fabian Society after publishing *Anticipations* in 1901, an act which elicited scorn from Conrad, but quickly broke with the group following a series of conflicts with George Bernard Shaw, who thought Wells threatened his power within the organization. The Fabian Society left a profound impact upon Wells, “though it now appears that [his] flirtation with Fabianism was of relatively little importance in the general history of England, of Socialism, and perhaps in the biographies of the participants” (Smith 105).

9. Wells wrote ‘To the Average Man,’ in December of 1886 for the first issue of the *Science Schools Journal*, which he edited. In it, we receive some of his complaints toward contemporary education: “That our fellow-students have no time for writing, which implies that they are committing to memory classified facts without opportunity for exercise in the re-sorting and displaying thereof; that, like athletes who, professing to train, merely eat, they are fraudulently cramming; or, that they are incapable of writing, which (as above hinted), condemns the whole magnificent examination fabric of the Science and Art department” (Smith 1:51).

However, this “flirtation” irreparably damaged Wells’s friendship with Conrad.

Unlike Conrad, Wells viewed his fiction as a vehicle for educating readers and disseminating his social criticism. Vestiges of Wells’s brand of socialism surface in *The Time Machine*, as when the Time Traveler continues to rationalize the conditions of 802,701 A.D.:

At first, proceeding from the problems of our own age, it seemed clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the present merely temporary and social difference between the Capitalist and the Laborer was the key to the whole position. No doubt it will seem grotesque enough to you—and wildly incredible!—and yet even now there are existing circumstances to point that way. There is a tendency to utilize underground space for the less ornamental purposes of civilization; there is the Metropolitan Railway in London, for instance, there are new electric railways, there are subways, there are underground workrooms and restaurants, and they increase and multiply. Evidently, I thought, this tendency had increased till Industry had gradually lost its birthright in the sky. I mean that it had gone deeper and deeper into larger and ever larger underground factories, spending a still-increasing amount of its time therein, till, in the end—! Even now, does not an East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth? Again, the exclusive tendency of the richer people—due, no doubt, to the increasing refinement of their education, and the widening gulf between them and rude violence of the poor—is already leading to the closing, in their interest, of considerable portions of the surface of the land. About London, for instance, perhaps half the prettier country is shut in against intrusion. And this same widening gulf—which is due to the length and expense of the higher educational process and the increased facilities for and temptations towards refined habits on the part of the rich—will make that exchange between class and class, that promotion by intermarriage which at present retards the splitting of our species along lines of social stratification less and less frequent. So, in the end, above ground you must have the Haves, pursuing pleasure and comfort, and beauty, and below ground the Have-nots, the Workers getting continually adapted to the conditions of their labor. (46-47)

As in this excerpt, Wells frequently connects his Time Traveler’s musings to real circumstances in *fin de siècle* England. The term “East-end,” coined nearly fifteen years before Wells published *The Time Machine*, refers to the overcrowded region east of walled London and north of the Thames River. During the 1890s, reformers worked to alleviate conditions in the East-End resulting from an influx of immigrants and the poor

who sought work on London's shipping docks. Wells applauded these efforts to protect the working class and lamented the exploitation of unskilled labor to the extent that he designed the pale, blind Morlocks around the deplorable circumstances of the East-End.

The unique narrative structure of *The Time Machine* also has roots in topical events. As discussed, the date of the Time Traveler's first dinner party can be deduced by examining the guests' conversation with their host. Likewise, we can explain the year 802,701 A.D. by understanding contemporary theories on geological and astronomical time. William Bellamy first posited that 802,701 evokes a sense of "running down" to the end of terrestrial life, as seven is less than eight and one is less than two, but Ruddick indicates that this "entropic theory" does not explain Wells's choice of 802,701 as opposed to 704,603, for instance (342). In Chapter Seven of the novel, the Time Traveler regards the unfamiliar constellations hovering above himself and Weena; he reflects, "I thought of their unfathomable distance, and the slow inevitable drift of their movements out of the unknown past into the unknown future. I thought of the great precessional cycle that the pole of the earth describes. Only forty times had that silent revolution occurred during all the years that I had traversed" (Wells 58). The Time Traveler is referring to the precession of the equinoxes (also known as a great year), which requires around 25,800 years. Ruddick suggests that to reach 802,701 A.D., Wells rounded the great year down to 20,000, "perhaps because this period was associated in his mind with a temporal cycle whereby one might gauge the Time Traveler's enormous *historical* distance from his own present, while at the same time show that in astronomical terms such a distance is insignificant" (343-344). Furthermore, Wells likely subscribed to Huxley's theories on the precessional cycle. Huxley warned that no amount of human

intelligence could counter the great year's procession, which will inevitably witness a downward slope into the demise of all life on earth. Wells infused *The Time Machine* with these apocalyptic connotations. As Ruddick concludes, "Four Wellsian-Huxleyan great years of 20,000 years each plus 1894 equals 801,894. If we accept the possibility that Wells had in mind the suggestive possibility of a minimally entropic number, then the first such number after 801,894 is 802,701" (344). Thus, the year in which the Time Traveler finds himself is deeply linked to current issues and to Wells's personal relationship with his mentor.

The final setting of Wells's narrative, before his Time Traveler returns to February 1894, is a lonely, bereft beach "more than thirty million years hence," where ice and snow adorn the sea and Earth's last animal flutters about, "all bloody under the eternal sunset" (79). In "Henry James: An Appreciation," (1905) Conrad creates his own eschatological vision and likely alludes to this final journey of the Time Traveler; Conrad writes,

When the last aqueduct shall have crumbled to pieces, the last airship fallen to the ground, the last blade of grass have died upon a dying earth, man, indomitable by his training in resistance to misery and pain, shall set this undiminished light of his eyes against the feeble glow of the sun ... He is so much of a voice that, for him, silence is like death; and the postulate was, that there is a group alive, clustered on his threshold to watch the last flicker of light on a black sky, to hear the last word uttered in the stilled workshop of the earth.

Compare Conrad's language to Wells's text, in which his Time Traveler observes, "the sun had ceased to set—it simply rose and fell in the west, and grew even broader and more red ... At last, some time before I stopped, the sun, red and very large, halted motionless upon the horizon, a vast dome glowing with a dull heat and now and then suffering a momentary extinction" (77). The Time Traveler "cannot convey the sense of

abominable desolation that hung over the world,” as no evidence of human life remains (Wells 78). He witnesses Conrad’s “last flicker of light on a black sky,” for an eclipse begins, and the Time Traveler recalls, “At last, one by one, swiftly, one after the other, the white peaks of the distant hills vanished into blackness. The breeze rose to a moaning wind. I saw the black central shadow of the eclipse sweeping towards me. In another moment the pale stars alone were visible. All else was rayless obscurity. The sky was absolutely black” (Wells 80).

Contemporary discussions on the age of the earth and sun are partly responsible for the language used by Wells and Conrad to depict the end of the world. Concern over the sun’s energy explains why both Conrad and Wells concentrate on the “feeble glow” and “dull heat” of our star in their description of Earth’s demise. Furthermore, Wells believed that the end of the world involved a process that has already caused the moon to always present the same side to the earth. In 1879, G.H. Darwin hypothesized that gravity would eventually retard our planet’s orbit, causing the sun to reach only one face of the earth. Moreover, “the moon, gradually losing orbital velocity, would fall into the earth, which would subsequently and for the same reason fall into the sun” (Ruddick 345). Wells lamented the complacency of England’s educated residents, who declared their ignorance toward science and the frightening possibilities it had discovered. He appeals to the readers of 1894 through the Time Traveler, who perceives “by this slowing down of its rising and setting that the work of the tidal drag was done. The earth had come to rest with one face toward the sun, *even as in our own time the moon faces the earth*” (77, italics added).

Finally, as the eclipse casts a shadow over the bleak remnants of life, the Time Traveler illustrates, “From the edge of the sea came a ripple and a whisper. Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives—all that was over” (Wells 80). Echoes of Darwin and Huxley persist into “The Further Vision” as Wells recounts, in descending degree, a brief version of the evolutionary chain. In Greg Bear’s appendix to Chapter Eleven of the novel, Wells portrays the human race as it might appear after another tens of millions of years. The Time Traveler encounters

a number of faint grey things, colored to almost the exact tint of the frost-bitten soil, which were browsing here and there upon its scanty grass, and running to and fro ... At first I thought they were rabbits, or some small breed of kangaroo ... I was surprised to see that the thing had five feeble digits to both its fore and hind feet—the fore feet, indeed, were almost as human as the fore feet of a frog. It had, moreover, a roundish head, with a projecting forehead and forward-looking eyes, obscured by its lank hair. (Wells 111, Appendix)

A “disagreeable apprehension” occurs to the Time Traveler as he resumes his speculations upon life forms of the future (Wells 111). He ponders the little grey man and his apparent predator, an enormous insect-like sea monster, using biological and evolutionary discourse: “there is no reason why a degenerate humanity should not come at last to differentiate into as many species as the descendants of the mud fish who fathered all the land vertebrates. I saw no more of any insect colossus... Evidently the physiological difficulty that at present keeps all the insects small had been surmounted” (Wells 111-12). As Bear indicates, Wells omitted this section from the first edition of *The Time Machine* and it has rarely appeared in print since. The reasons behind this decision are unclear, although Wells likely condensed “The Further Vision” at the request of his

publishers: Heinemann in England and Henry Holt and Company in New York, both in 1895; the Heinemann edition contained only 32,334 words. Nevertheless, the appendix resonates with evolutionary dialogue and remains one of the best examples of Wells's preoccupation with Huxleyan thought and with "degeneration following security."

Unable to foresee the success of his novel, Wells eventually considered its topicality excessive. Not only did he come to scorn "the dreadful lies about the 'inevitable' freezing up of the world" told by astronomers and geologists, Wells remembered *The Time Machine* as "the product of a rapid period of composition by an immature writer at a time when the human vision of the was clouded as much by faulty scientific theory as by his own ill health and general Fin de siècle pessimism" (Wells 9-10, "Preface"; Ruddick 347). Less didactic than his later works, *The Time Machine* still features Wells's social criticism of England's working conditions, the gap between rich and poor, and the public's ignorance of and indifference toward scientific advancement. Especially in contrast to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, *The Time Machine* casts Wells as a highly political and educational writer concerned more with molding the beliefs and actions of his readers than with aesthetic awareness.

Wells's interest in social criticism eventually played a role in dissolving his friendship with Conrad. Despite Conrad's disapproval of his neighbor's topical, politicized, and didactic fiction, *Heart of Darkness* treats King Leopold's colonization of the Congo and related contemporary issues of exploitation and race. Yet Conrad did not share Wells's ambitious sense of *fin de siècle kairos*; he did not, in other words, call for an upheaval of the social order to redress the injustices depicted in his novel. Indeed, most critics regard Conrad's attitude toward imperialism and race as ambiguous and even

contradictory. *Heart of Darkness* exposes the Europeans as hollow and avaricious, and Conrad condemns their pillaging of the Congo through his primary narrator, Marlow. However, Conrad himself took little political action to decry imperialism and, arguably, never again made it as central to his writing.

Conrad and the Belgian Congo

Conrad based *Heart of Darkness* on the six months he spent in the Congo (June 12-December 4, 1890) as an officer aboard the *Roi des Belges*. During this time he likely witnessed the colonizers' deplorable treatment of the natives, which included various acts of punishment and abuse that Conrad later wished he could forget. The novel's characters are based on actual people whom Conrad knew. For instance, Belgian businessman Albert Thys (1849-1915), though not mentioned by name, is the director who wishes Marlow "*Bon Voyage*" before his journey. Also, Conrad based the manager of the Central Station, who fears Kurtz' influence, on Camille Delcommune. *Heart of Darkness* does not include names or dates, possibly because Conrad wished to avoid politicizing the text. The discussion of its topicality has usually centered on the theme of race.

Since its publication, *Heart of Darkness* has been declared a racist novel and been charged with endorsing imperialism. Chinua Achebe described Conrad as "a bloody racist" who uses the Africans as props decorating the drama of Kurtz's demise (343). Others have defended Conrad as simply a man constrained by the limits of his time, during which a lack of understanding of African culture produced mass "racist" assumptions. According to Adam Hochschild, Conrad "was partly a prisoner of what Mark Twain, in a different context, called, 'the white man's notion that he is less savage than the other savages'" (178). As Peter Firchow explains, the word "racism" did not

emerge in English until 1936, more than a decade after Conrad's death. One reason for its absence, according to Firchow, "is that thinking in terms of race...was so widespread and so 'normal' in developed countries like England during the late Victorian period that a word like *racism*, which suggests a negative view of thinking about race, was simply not needed and hence not thought of" (234).

Varying degrees of "race-thinking" (Arendt's term in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*) existed when Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*. G. W. F. Hegel provides an early example of prejudice against Africans in "The African Character," (1831) in which he notes their lack of religious consciousness, "moral sentiments," "self-control" and value for human life (210-211). For Hegel, the practice of cannibalism, polygamy, and their primitive form of government add to the Africans' "sensuous barbarism" (210). He concludes,

At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European World ... What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History. (212)

Many echoed Hegel's dismissal of Africa and its historical significance in the Nineteenth Century. "Racialist" Francis Galton, Charles Darwin's cousin and founder of eugenics, reasons that "the average intellectual standard of the negro race is some two grades below our own" (226). Conrad, too, "is undoubtedly a 'racialist,'" as Firchow indicates, for his novels investigate the interactions and conflicts between different ethnic groups (235). So prevalent was race-thinking during the *fin de siècle* that Wells, who rarely commented on imperialism or conditions in the Congo, creates an analogy between "the tale of London which a Negro, fresh from Central Africa, would take back to his tribe" and the

bewildered Time Traveler's account of 802,701 A.D. (39). Wells and Conrad encountered the same discourses on race and on those native to Africa, which probably resulted in the two men sharing similar "racialist" beliefs, but unlike Conrad, Wells had never observed the Congo for himself and remained unaware of and indifferent toward the atrocities committed there.

In "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," Achebe accuses Conrad of dehumanizing the Africans by casting them as evil darkness against the Europeans' "daylight" and "peace" (338). Achebe describes the two rivers in Conrad's novel, the Thames and the Congo, as antitheses of each other, "one good, the other bad," and represent Conrad's attitude toward the two races. Achebe identifies the most incriminating passage in *Heart of Darkness*, using it as incontrovertible evidence of Conrad's racism. Traveling alone the Congo, Marlow declares, "What thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours— ... Ugly" (Conrad 36). Achebe's assertion that *Heart of Darkness* was constructed with "preposterous and perverse arrogance" has been answered by critics such as Hunt Hawkins, who defends Conrad's portrayal of the Africans by indicating the "firmly entrenched" beliefs about social and racial evolution professed by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace (369). Social Darwinism held that the fitter, more advanced races would replace the savage and brutal peoples over time, which may account for Conrad's depiction of his quest up the Congo as "traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world" (33). As Hawkins notes, however, Conrad deviates from most Social Darwinists by proposing that "Europeans in colonies could slide backwards on the evolutionary scale" (370).

Achebe criticizes Conrad's use of the evolutionary trope to characterize Africans as primordial and brutish, but *Heart of Darkness* moves far beyond a simplistic binary of black/white and savage/civilized by portraying Marlow's sympathy toward the colonized. As discussed in the previous chapter, Marlow's hostility while in the Congo is geared much more toward the imperialists than toward the Africans. Conrad's vignettes expose the Europeans as cruel, rapacious, and even insane. The dozens of pilgrims running to and fro, seizing water using broken pails during a blaze set at the Central Station is just one such example. In a letter to his aunt, Marguerite Poradowska, Conrad records the misanthropy setting in while he traveled the Congo: "Everything here is repellent to me. Men and things, but men above all ... they all have the gift of irritating my nerves—so that I am not as agreeable to them as perhaps I should be" (263). Conrad was particularly melancholy after learning that the ship on which he hoped to earn a command position would not be ready for nearly nine months. His emotions are reflected in Marlow, who leaves the Inner Station gravely ill and imagining "some inconceivable world that had no hope in it and no desire" (70). Marlow's despair emerges as a result of his disillusionment and abhorrence toward the imperialists. I agree with those who suggest that Marlow's sympathy toward the Africans far exceeds in significance and degree the "racist" remarks and implications in Conrad's novel. Conrad's letters allow him to speak for himself; in one to Roger Casement dated December 21, 1903, his beliefs are clear:

It is an extraordinary thing that the conscience of Europe which seventy years ago has put down the slave trade on humanitarian grounds tolerates the Congo State today. It is as if the moral clock has been put back many hours. And yet nowadays if I were to overwork my horse so as to destroy its happiness of physical wellbeing I should be hauled before a magistrate. It seems to me that the black man—say, of Utopo—is deserving of as much humanitarian regard as any animal since he has nerves, feels pain, can be made physically miserable. But as a matter

of fact his happiness and misery are much more complex than the misery or happiness of animals and deserving of greater regard. (270)

When participants of the 1884-85 Berlin Conference acknowledged King Leopold II as sovereign of the Congo Free State, the Belgian ruler agreed to uphold free trade and to peacefully oversee the natives' assimilation into the modern world. His promise echoed the dominant justification for imperialism, that the civilized Europeans bore a moral responsibility to assist and educate the primitive and impoverished. King Leopold describes his mercenaries as "benevolent teachers" of whom the Africans "have so great a need" (120). We discover this belief of imperialism as a noble enterprise again in Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" (1899), which mirrors Leopold's lofty language about the sacrifice required for empire-building. Like many during his time, Kipling applauds the work of colonizers and created a type of anthem to support their cause. He writes, "Take up the White Man's burden/ Send forth the best ye breed/ Go bind your sons to exile/ To serve your captives' need;/ To wait in heavy harness,/ On fluttered fold and wild/ Your new-caught, sullen peoples/ Half-devil and half-child" (1-8). King Leopold quickly forgot his pledge to the European powers and plundered the Congo for profit, punishing those who failed to meet his demands with whipping, dismemberment, and other forms of mutilation. He allowed his men free reign in their quest for ivory and rubber. Millions of Africans were abused, enslaved, and killed under King Leopold's rule. As Hawkins indicates, it is unknown how much cruelty toward the natives was actually witnessed by Conrad, who recorded no instances of such violence in his *Congo Diary*, though he does mention passing several dead bodies.

Others who resided in the Congo Free State expressed alarm over the conditions there. George Washington Williams visited the area in 1890 hoping to observe the

fulfillment of Leopold's program of "fostering care," "brilliant enterprise," and "honest and practical effort" (123). Instead, what he encountered inspired Williams to write a detailed letter indicting the king for his "deceit, fraud, robberies, arson, murder, slave-raiding, and general policy of cruelty" (130). Washington attests,

Instead of the natives of the Congo "adopting the fostering care" of your Majesty's Government, they everywhere complain that their land has been taken from them by force; that the Government is cruel and arbitrary, and declare that they neither love nor respect the Government and its flag. Your Majesty's Government has sequestered their land, burned their towns, stolen their property, enslaved their women and children, and committed other crimes too numerous to mention in detail. (124)

Roger Casement also took a keen interest in the Congo Free State after the British Parliament sent him there in 1903. A year later, along with Edmund Morel and Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness, Casement founded the Congo Reform Association and searched for individuals able to ensure the movement's success. He asked Joseph Conrad, whom he met in the Congo in 1890, to contribute his personal accounts and experiences. Conrad obliged and wrote the Dec. 21, 1903 letter quoted above, imploring Casement to use it in any way he wished. Although Conrad abhorred King Leopold's rule of the Congo and contacted others to gain support for the reform movement, such as R. B. Cunninghame Graham, "he was pessimistic that it, or the excesses of imperialism generally, could be corrected" and did not become further involved (Hawkins 122).

Hawkins offers several reasons for Conrad's reluctance to fully support Casement's endeavor, including his illness, preoccupation with financial troubles, and hesitation in appealing to Parliament. Conrad connects nationalism to imperialism in "Autocracy and War," his 1905 essay that Hawkins suggests most clearly explains Conrad's refusal to join the CFA. In the essay, Conrad "pointed out that action, while

consolatory, might also be harmful” (Hawkins 74). Hawkins highlights Conrad’s sense of isolation felt in England, where he was alone in his memories of the Congo atrocities. Some scholars, such as Alan Simmons, explore denial as a possible excuse for Conrad’s failure to participate in the CFA. In a letter to Cunninghame Graham, Conrad writes of Casement that “He could tell you things! Things I’ve tried to forget; things I never did know” (185). Simmons offers this “suggestion of events too painful to revisit” as evidence of Conrad’s ambiguous reaction to Casement’s plea for assistance. Whatever his reasons, Conrad supplied only one letter to the Congo Reform Movement, but most consider *Heart of Darkness* his most influential contribution. Hochschild refers to the novel as “one of the most scathing indictments of imperialism in all literature,” and Edmund Morel called it “the most powerful thing ever written on the subject” (177; Simmons 192).

Hochschild summarizes the study of topicality in *Heart of Darkness*:

High school teachers and college professors who have discussed this book in thousands of classrooms over the years tend to do so in terms of Freud, Jung, and Nietzsche; of classical myth, Victorian innocence, and original sin; of postmodernism, postcolonialism, and poststructuralism. European and American readers, not comfortable acknowledging the genocidal scale of the killing in Africa at the turn of the century, have cast *Heart of Darkness* loose from its historical moorings. We read it as a parable for all times and places, not as a book about one time and place ... Whatever the rich levels of meaning the book has as literature, for our purposes what is notable is how precise and detailed a description it is of “the actual facts of the case”: King Leopold’s Congo in 1890. (175)

While Hochschild appeals for a historical reading of Conrad’s novel, Ruddick celebrates that the much-neglected topicality of *The Time Machine* has rendered Wells’s text a “timeless” work of art (348). Both authors, then, investigate contemporary issues and rely on historical events, and Conrad, I argue, much more so than Wells. Unlike Wells,

however, Conrad was not interested in amelioration, education, or changing his readers' minds. Next, I will compare the degree of social criticism and topicality in the two novels to their concern with art, estrangement, and the Aesthetic Movement of the Nineteenth Century.

Chapter Five: The Influence of Aesthetics

According to Karl, Conrad embodied the Poet and Wells the Logician. In his Preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Conrad writes, “The artist, then, like the thinker or the scientist, seeks the truth and makes his appeal ... They speak authoritatively to our common-sense, to our intelligence, to our desire of peace or to our desire of unrest; not seldom to our prejudices, sometimes to our fears, often to our egoism—but always to our credulity ... It is otherwise with the artist” (1887). I have demonstrated how both of their novels respond to topical events and how they critique certain social practices of the *fin de siècle*, therefore adhering to Wells’s didactic aim for fiction. In this section, I treat *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* as works of modern art, addressing how they fulfill the intent of “The Poet, the Artistic, [and] the Creator” with their interest in moral ambiguity, estrangement, and the unconscious (Karl 1049). I focus first on narration, specifically on the reliability of the Time Traveler and Marlow and their attempt to convey a bizarre, nightmarish experience. The tales in both texts reach us through a frame narrator, a literary conceit popular during the *fin de siècle*, such as in the work of Henry James, friend to Wells and Conrad. Next, I explore defamiliarization and estrangement in *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* and explain how the aims of science fiction reflect those of Post-Romantic art. Lastly, I indicate that despite their objections to the Nineteenth Century Aesthetic Movement, both Wells and Conrad produced novels that satisfy, to an extent, *l’art pour l’art* in their reliance on symbolism, artistic intensity, and

impressionistic style. I hope to show that these texts, with their substantial reliance on topicality and responses to various artistic movements, foster diverse interpretations from many different fields of study.

Frame Narration

Delbanco notes of the texts written by Wells, James, Conrad, and Ford during the *fin de siècle* and Edwardian Period, “these books bear witness to their origins in speech. Marlow and Dowell have the kind of narrative ease that bespeaks a long habit of fireside discourse—as well as the conviction that some friend will sit and listen” (34-35). The frame narration in *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* resonates with this “fireside discourse,” especially in Wells’s novel. Frame stories were nothing new to *fin de siècle* writers. Meaning to ‘tell a story within a story,’ frame narration had been used in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (1591/1592), John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728), Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), and Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Shortly before the publication of *Heart of Darkness*, Henry James used frame narration to write *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). According to Beth Newman, “We cannot hope to extract a single ‘kernel’ of meaning from Marlow’s story, nor from those of Frankenstein, Nelly Dean, or James’s governess, but must attend instead to the relations between the stories in the center and those in the frame, and listen to the dialogue between the voices that speak them” (141). As Newman explains, frame narration typically calls into question the reliability of the primary speaker. In *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness*, as well as in many of the texts listed above, “storytelling itself is suspect; narrative has become, in these novels, a form of seduction” (Newman 143).

Its frame narration generally ignored by scholars, *The Time Machine* features an unnamed secondary speaker who remains the only dinner guest to believe in the Time Traveler's astonishing tale of 802,701 A.D. These guests include the Editor, the Provincial Mayor, Filby, the Psychologist, the Medical Man, and the Journalist; these men are static, emblematic characters similar to the Accountant, the Lawyer, and the Director of Companies aboard the *Nellie*. Wells's novel begins with the frame narrator describing his host and the setting, which includes a brightly burning fire, "soft radiance of the incandescent lights," bubbling beverages, chairs that "embraced and caressed" their sitters, and "that luxurious after-dinner atmosphere when thought runs gracefully free of the trammels of precision" (Wells 3). The narrator's remarks establish the Time Traveler's home as a comfortable, safe place that contrasts wildly with the perilous land of the future. Wells juxtaposes the oblivious security of the Time Traveler's guests with the dangerous plight of his protagonist, an aim achieved because we immediately relate to the comfort of the frame narrator and hear the Time Traveler through his voice. The narrator distances readers from the Time Traveler and raises an air of ambiguity, fantasy, and skepticism about his story. The "trammels of precision" are lifted, and according to the speaker, "The fact is, the Time Traveler was one of those men who are too clever to be believed: you never felt that you saw all round him; you always suspected some subtle reserve, some ingenuity in ambush, behind his lucid frankness" (Wells 12). These remarks draw attention to the act of storytelling in the novel, and, more fundamentally, to the practice of interpretation as a whole; Wells encourages a close reading of the Time Traveler's account as the narrator relates it, and highlights the suggestion that,

by questioning the words of his host, the narrator challenges his own, for they are all upon which we can rely.

The Time Traveler's guests represent, to an extent, the typical middle-class professional with whom Wells was familiar. He uses them to criticize the complacency of his society, selecting the names "Blank," "Dash," and "Chose" to reflect men and women with simple, empty minds who cannot think for themselves. With the Editor, specifically, Wells exposes the avarice and materialism of his contemporaries. A profound skeptic of the Time Traveler's machine, the Editor asks, "Tell us all about little Rosebery, will you? What will you take for the lot?" He refers to Lord Rosebery (1847-1929), candidate for Prime Minister in 1894 and well-known horse racer. As Nicholas Ruddick explains,

In trying to reduce the extraordinary invention of the time machine to a device to cheat bookmakers, the Editor is revealing his utter fatuity. For Wells reserves the full measure of his scorn for those of the dinner guests, who, like the Editor, have no scientific imagination, and who consequently cannot understand that the Time Traveler has visited a future in which our descendants could not be less concerned with horse racing or election results. (341)

After the Time Traveler sends a miniature replica of his machine into the future (or into the past), the Medical Man insists, "It sounds plausible enough tonight...but wait until tomorrow. Wait for the common sense of the morning." The Time Traveler's guests partially represent this common sense, or the quotidian lifestyle defied by the journey of Wells's protagonist.

Heart of Darkness also opens with frame narration and static, nameless characters, but it differs somewhat in tone and purpose. For Newman, the frame narrative "had lain in disuse for some time before Conrad disinterred it and breathed new life into it" (142). This technique, as in other frame stories, further separates readers from the primary speaker—Marlow, in our case—and creates multiple levels of subjectivity that

influence interpretations of narrative accuracy. The frame narrator calls Marlow's experiences "inconclusive," and declares that the significance of such experiences can only be revealed as if "by the spectral illumination of moonshine" (Conrad 5; 7). Providing commentary on Marlow is one function of the frame narrator. Readers understand the protagonist through the mind of a secondary speaker. In his comparison between *Heart of Darkness* and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Alan Perlis notes, "the action in both Coleridge's poem and Conrad's novella occurs in such a dim and shifting light, in fact, that the authors must provide external narrators to corroborate the stories and their tellers, to bring their voices out from underneath their shadowy tales" (167).

Aside from offering external checks, frame narration also enhances the theme of impenetrability in the novel. For instance, Marlow frequently tells his fellow passengers that they, who have never abandoned social codes and expectations for the unrestrained wilderness, cannot possibly understand his story. The frame narrator, who disappears for most of the text, enters at a key moment as Marlow contemplates the incomprehensibility of his adventure. Marlow suggests, "it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence—that which makes its truth, its meaning—its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream—alone . . . Of course in this you fellows see more than I could then. You see me, whom you know" (Conrad 27); the frame narrator clarifies that "it had become so pitch dark that we listeners could hardly see one another" (Conrad 27). As those aboard the *Nellie* cannot see each other, Conrad believed, and sometimes feared, that readers cannot truly see himself. He refers to the incomprehensible as "detestable," qualifying our notions of his entire story (Conrad 6).

Finally, some offer that an additional function of the frame narrator is to gauge the effect of Marlow's story on his listeners. In the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, the frame speaker praises the Thames River for hosting various European explorers and their ships, "whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of time" (Conrad 4). The narrator reflects, "Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire" (Conrad 5). Here, Marlow's passenger reminds us a bit of Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), whose poetry celebrated imperialism and captured the mindset of most British citizens who supported their nation's quest for empire. By the end of the novel, however, the frame narrator looks back upon the Thames and sees only "immense darkness," suggesting that Marlow's tale has left him doubtful and pessimistic (Conrad 77).

As in *The Time Machine*, this frame narrator begins by depicting his surroundings; the Thames is "an interminable waterway" where the air above "seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth" (Conrad 1). The Director of Companies leads the men, and the narrator characterizes him as "trustworthiness personified," for he resembles a pilot, an individual responsible for guiding ships in and out of harbor. The Director is no pilot, but one who works "within the brooding gloom" of London. Through his frame narrator, Conrad establishes a setting only speciously secure, where all is not what it seems and where storytelling, as in *The Time Machine*, must be carefully interpreted. Our first image of Marlow, the only passenger portrayed in detail by the narrator, consists of his "sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect," and palms held outward,

like “an idol” (Conrad 3). Referencing contemporary theories about the sun’s inevitable death, and possibly alluding to the vision ‘Thirty Million Years Hence’ from *The Time Machine*, the narrator illustrates, “And at last in its curved and imperceptible fall the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men” (Conrad 4). Dusk falls, and the narrator continues his recollection using ominous, somber diction until Marlow affirms the tenebrous atmosphere aboard the *Nellie*: “And this also...has been one of the dark places of the earth” (Conrad 5). In distinct contrast to the warm, comforting tone of the Time Traveler’s dinner reception, Conrad establishes an air of silence, foreboding, and an odd serenity for his characters on the Thames.

Like the static figures in *The Time Machine*, Marlow’s fellow sailors partly represent the complacent, comfortable Londoner who cannot understand the estranging, uncanny experience endured by the novel’s protagonist. When Marlow returns from the Congo, he cannot relate to such men, and explains, “Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend” (Conrad 71). The Time Traveler regards his guests similarly, frequently affirming their inability to comprehend what he has endured and accepting their skepticism as inevitable. For instance, when he details the large, unearthly foliage of 802,701 A.D., he concedes, “You who have never seen the like can scarcely imagine what delicate and wonderful flowers countless years of culture had created” (Wells 24).

In both novels, the static, rational, complacent characters foil the imaginative, otherworldly tales of peril delivered by the Time Traveler and Marlow.

Conrad devotes equal attention to the act of storytelling as Wells. The frame speaker devotes several passages to Marlow's dubious narratives, beginning with the 'yarns of seaman' remark that I have quoted earlier. Conrad alerts us with the connotations of "moonshine" that his tale may be regarded as foolish nonsense, at least by Marlow's company (Conrad 7). The skeptical dinner guests and men aboard the *Nellie* function as lenses that view the Time Traveler and Marlow as unreliable narrators; their observations draw attention to the practice of interpretation—some may argue, to the very act of studying literature. Quite ironically, following the Time Traveler's account of his ordeals in 802,701 A.D., the Editor exclaims, "What a pity it is you're not a writer of stories!" (Wells 83).

Estrangement and Post-Romantic Art

I have focused on frame narration as a platform for estrangement in both novels. Throughout the text, both the Time Traveler and Marlow struggle with the limits of language and communication in narrating a bizarre, dream-like experience to which their guests and passengers cannot relate. The frame narrator further separates readers from the primary speakers, emphasizing the difficulty in understanding the story at the center of each work; the Time Traveler's guest introduces this problem early on, even calling attention to the act of composing: "In writing it down I feel with only too much keenness the inadequacy of pen and ink—and, above all, my own inadequacy—to express its quality" (Wells 16-17). Estrangement, as the Russian Formalists developed it and as Freud explored it in his remarks on the 'uncanny,' became a significant feature of modern

and postmodern texts, but the act of alienating readers to leave a more profound impression of the literature can be identified in Wells and Conrad's novels. The dream experience, with all of its eerie and unreal qualities, fosters estrangement in *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness*.

As Fredric Jameson and Matthew Beaumont have noted, one of the principle aims of science fiction is estrangement. We should, therefore, explore this theme in *The Time Machine* in connection to its genre. Several critics inform my reading of Wells's novel, including Victor Shklovsky (1893-1984) and Istvan Csiscery-Ronay. Though their contributions were made long after Wells published his book, they are helpful in understanding how *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* can qualify as Post-Romantic art, which attempts to rescue the senses from decay. As Shklovsky explains, "If we examine the general laws of perception, we see that as it becomes habitual, it also becomes automatic" (5). Time produces the habitual state wherein we perceive objects unconsciously. We grow accustomed to "prepackaged" surfaces without recognizing the intensity in an object's form, and eventually "the object fades away" (Shklovsky 5). The estrangement and defamiliarization employed in all science fiction combats the habitual routine and renews sensual perception. Referencing Darko Suvin, Istvan Csiscery-Ronay elaborates on the relationship between science fiction and estrangement. Suvin adopts the term "novum" from Ernst Bloch, for whom it meant "a moment in lived history that refreshes human collective consciousness" (Csiscery-Ronay 47). For Csiscery-Ronay, the novums in science fiction account for the genre's ability to defamiliarize its audience, and "every significant aspect of the narrative's meaning can be derived from it: the estranged conditions caused by a radically new thing, the thematic unity of the work, and even

changes in readers' attitudes toward their own world" (49). Csiscery-Ronay identifies the time machine and the devolution of humans into the Eloi and Morlocks as the two novums in the novel, and I argue that the process of time travel is a third. In *The Time Machine*, the very act of time travel jolts and disorients the protagonist, leaving character and reader alike in vertigo. The time machine itself seems "unreal" from its first description of the "odd twinkling sensation" of its handle bars (Wells 9). Of his journey, the Time Traveler recalls,

Presently, as I went on, still gaining velocity, the palpitation of night and day merged into one continuous greyness; the sky took on a wonderful deepness of blue, a splendid luminous color like that of early twilight; the jerking sun became a streak of fire, a brilliant arch, in space; the moon a fainter fluctuating band; and I could see nothing of the stars, save now and then a brighter circle flickering in the blue. (Wells 18-19)

Several defamiliarizing suggestions accompany the relation of time travel; the scientist tells us that "the slowest snail that ever crawled dashed by too fast" for him, and he "saw huge buildings rise up faint and fair, and pass like dreams" (Wells 18-19). We can understand why the Time Traveler's audience finds his story "so fantastic and incredible," for traits of the unreal and the uncanny define his narrative, as in, "The whole surface of the earth seemed changed—melting and flowing under my eyes...my pace was over a year a minute; and minute by minute the white snow flashed across the world and vanished, and was followed by the bright, brief green of spring" (Wells 19). The "splendid architecture" rising and falling before him seems "built of glimmer and mist" (Wells 19). Mist, as Beaumont notes, signifies the uncanny and unknowable in *The Time Machine*. It swirls around the enigmatic sphinx when the Time Traveler arrives; he recollects, "A colossal figure, carved apparently in some white stone, loomed indistinctly beyond the rhododendrons through the hazy downpour. But all else of the world was

invisible” (Wells 19). For Beaumont, the sphinx represents “an inescapable intellectual challenge to the reader’s imagination,” corresponding to its mythological connotations (234). The colossal figure covered in verdigris is a puzzle left unsolved, and, like the swirling mist, the time machine, and the act of storytelling, functions as a novum “whose unexpected appearance elicits a wholesale change in the perception of reality” (Csicsery-Ronay 6). The estrangement enforced by the bizarre sphinx prompts us to share the fear gripping the Time Traveler:

I looked up again at the crouching white shape, and the full temerity of my voyage came suddenly upon me. What might appear when that hazy curtain was altogether withdrawn? What might not have happened to men? What if cruelty had grown into a common passion? What if this in interval the race had lost its manliness, and had developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful? (Wells 21)

More eerie descriptions follow, such as “The grey downpour was swept aside and vanished like the trailing garments of a ghost” (Wells 21). As Frank Scafella posits, Wells’s use of white color imagery links the sphinx to the pale, leprous Morlocks and to the “white flakes” of snow falling in the Further Vision, rendering the enormous, decaying sculpture particularly uncanny. (78; Wells) Like the grey hailstorm, the Morlocks are also described as ghostly. According to Scafella, “*White* is here associated with *setting*, *dying*, ghastriness, and cheerlessness” (78, italics in original). The Time Traveler reflects of his first night in 802, 701 A.D., “I woke with a start, and with an odd fancy that some grayish animal had just rushed out of the chamber. I tried to get to sleep again, but I felt restless and uncomfortable. It was that dim grey hour when things are just creeping out of darkness, when everything is colorless and clear cut, and yet unreal” (Wells 42). For Scafella and many other critics, uncanny refers to the strange, enigmatic,

and frightening, sensations driven by Wells's desire to expose the complacency of his *fin de siècle* audience.

Beaumont offers another perspective on the 'uncanny' in the novel, demonstrating that the entire plot of *The Time Machine* strategically defamiliarizes Wells's audience. Based on Freud's argument that "it is precisely when one feels at home in an environment that one is most susceptible to the uniquely subversive influence of the uncanny," Beaumont identifies the three stages of estrangement in Wells's novel and explains his own theory on the "historical uncanny," which refers to the event anticipated by the Not-Yet-Conscious—the event *already* in motion to destroy current social, cultural, or economic institutions (231). On several occasions, the Time Traveler attempts to interpret the world of 802,701; he concludes that the poor laborers of his own time have evolved into the subterranean Morlocks, while the indulgent aristocracy now roams insouciantly above the surface. Beaumont suggests that for Marx, the revolutionary working class embodies the historical uncanny; Beaumont aligns this class with the Morlocks. The Time Traveler references the historical uncanny throughout his account, as when he hypothesizes on the devolution of the proletariat. In *Writings on the U.S. Civil War* (1861-1862), Karl Marx declared that the bourgeois was pregnant with the elements of his new society; in other words, the workers who support capitalism and ensure its success *already* plan its downfall. Beaumont locates the historical uncanny in Wells's satire on contemporary England, specifically with regards to working class conditions, which are referenced in the previous chapter. Wells encourages his audience to identify with life in 802,701 A.D.; rather than viewing the Eloi and Morlocks as irrelevant, alien, and remote, readers should perhaps recognize them as distant cousins. That the Time

Traveler moves in time but not space reinforces this suggestion; he witnesses the end of the world from the same spot on which his laboratory rests in 1894. This startling resemblance fulfills Freud's requirement for the uncanny. According to Beaumont, the Time Traveler enters this third stage of estrangement upon first discovering a Morlock. Near the conclusion, he finally reads the Morlocks as a cannibalistic *ruling* class, signifying the "ultimately uncanny" experience of the text (243).

At the end of *The Time Machine*, the protagonist finishes his tale for his guests, with most of them refusing to believe it. The Time Traveler mourns for Weena, remarking, "Now, in this old familiar room, it is more like the sorrow of a dream than an actual loss" (72). Back in his comfortable home, where the narrative began, even the Time Traveler has difficulty believing his story, confessing,

I'm damned if it isn't all going. This room and you and the atmosphere of every day are too much for my memory. Did I ever make a Time Machine, or a model of a Time Machine? Or is it only a dream? They say life is a dream, a precious poor dream at times—but I can't stand another that won't fit. It's madness. And where did the dream come from? ... I must look at that machine. If there *is* one (Wells 83).

The Time Machine and *Heart of Darkness* conclude where the frame story starts, in the Time Traveler's warm, luxurious home and aboard the *Nellie* on the Thames River. This setting is important for understanding how Freud's uncanny can be applied to both works. If "it is precisely when one feels at home" that an individual is most susceptible to the jarring and eerie effects of the uncanny, then the narrative techniques of Wells and Conrad's novels certainly achieve it. The Time Traveler returns to his laboratory, where an enormous, decaying Sphinx sits in the year 802,701 A.D., and where he himself witnesses the end of the world against the "weltering blood-red water" and "absolutely black" sky (Wells 80). Occurring in the beginning of the novel, Marlow counters the

frame narrator's noble, uplifting thoughts on the British Empire with, "And this also...has been one of the dark places of the earth" (Conrad 5). By establishing the settings as places of future and past darkness, the Time Traveler with his prophetic vision forward and Marlow with his pessimistic, ominous gaze backward, Wells and Conrad create an uncanny atmosphere enveloping their tales that defamiliarizes the reader.

Many attribute estrangement in *The Time Machine* to its science fiction genre, which Wells partially fathered. Conrad tried his own hand at science fiction by collaborating with Ford Madox Ford in 1901 on *The Inheritors*, a story loosely based on King Leopold's exploitation of the Congo, in which a journalist attempts to expose the plans of political leaders, who hail from the Fourth Dimension, to industrialize Greenland. Estrangement, the uncanny, and the energizing of sensual perception in *Heart of Darkness* have nothing to do with science fiction, however, but are closely linked to narration, the dream-sensation, and to themes discussed earlier, such as Marlow's difficulty accepting his kinship with the Africans. Marlow is distressed by the elder woman knitting wool, who, along with her partner, represents the Fates. He recalls, "She seemed to know all about them and about me, too. An eerie feeling came over me. She seemed uncanny and fateful" (Conrad 11). Like the act of time travel in *The Time Machine*, sailing along the Congo River is a sort of novum, alerting the senses to a state of mind (Marlow's) in which the familiar seems strange and reality must be questioned. Marlow describes the mysterious shoreline as he travels further into the Congo:

Watching a coast as it slips by the ship is like watching an enigma. There it is before you—smiling, frowning, inviting, grand, mean, insipid, or savage, and always mute with an air of whispering, 'Come and find out.' ... The edge of a colossal jungle, so dark-green as to be almost black, fringed with white surf, ran straight, like a ruled line, for, far away along a blue sea whose glitter was blurred

by a creeping mist. The sun was fierce, the land seemed to glisten and drip with steam. (Conrad 13)

This illustration calls to mind the Time Traveler's "misty" arrival in 802,701 A.D., and evokes the same eerie uncertainty experienced by Wells's protagonist. The strange has also become familiar. Marlow imparts,

Now and then a boat from the shore gave one a momentary contact with reality. It was paddled by black fellows. You could see from afar the white of their eyeballs glistening. They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque masks—these chaps; but they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast. They wanted no excuse for being there. They were a great comfort to look at. For a time I would feel I belonged still to a world of straightforward facts; but the feeling would not last long. Something would turn up to scare it away. (Conrad 13-14)

For Marlow, the natives belong to a sensible world of facts and want no excuse to be in the Congo. The "comfort" they provide him is disrupted by a French man-of-war firing arbitrarily into the brush. The 'civilized' Europeans, who belong to the world Marlow knows and understands, are here unsettling and unearthly. Marlow observes "the merry dance of death and trade," and tells his passengers, "Nowhere did we stop long enough to get a particular impression, but the general sense of vague and oppressive wonder grew upon me. It was like a weary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares" (Conrad 14). The Europeans who oversee operations in the Congo serve as further examples of the familiar turned strange. Of the accountant, Marlow remembers, "I saw a high starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clean necktie, and varnished boots. No hat. Hair parted, brushed, oiled, under a green-lined parasol held in a big white hand. He was amazing, and had a penholder behind his ear" (Conrad 18). Also, Marlow considers that the manager might be completely hollow, and declares, "Such a suspicion made one pause—for out there there were no external checks" (Conrad 22; 26). Marlow

cannot evaluate the manager against the others in the Congo, as he is unfamiliar with the environment, its people, and how they behave.

Before one of the few moments when the frame narrator reemerges, Marlow reveals of Kurtz,

He was just a word for me. I did not see the man in the name any more than you do. Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream—making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams... (Conrad 27)

Marlow again compares his adventure in the Congo to a dream, emphasizing the difficulty in making his audience understand. His diction, such as in “absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment” increases the estrangement of traveling upriver. Marlow’s next description of his journey recalls the “absolute strangeness” and “sickly and jarring swaying” of the time machine; he explains,

You lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once—somewhere—far away—in another existence perhaps. There were moments when one’s past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare to yourself; but it came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence. (Conrad 33-34)

Marlow feels his reality “fade” while minding the ship, such as when he must locate dead wood for fuel. One of the most uncanny moments of *Heart of Darkness* occurs shortly before Marlow reaches Kurtz’s station. Caught in a thick fog, the steamer faces an impending attack from the natives. Marlow recollects that

a cry, a very loud cry, as of infinite desolation, soared slowly in the opaque air. It ceased. A complaining clamor, modulated in savage discords, filled our ears. The sheer unexpectedness of it made my hair stir under my cap. I don’t know how it struck the others: to me it seemed as though the mist itself had screamed, so

suddenly, and apparently from all sides at once, did this tumultuous and mournful uproar arise. It culminated in a hurried outbreak of almost intolerably excessive shrieking, which stopped short, leaving us stiffened in a variety of silly attitudes, and obstinately listening to the nearly as appalling and excessive silence. ‘Good God! What is the meaning—’ stammered at my elbow one of the pilgrims... (Conrad 39)

The Aesthetic Movement

Next, both novels respond to various artistic movements of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. Conrad has been classified as an impressionist writer despite his dislike of labels. *Heart of Darkness* and *Time Machine* anticipate modernism in their moral ambiguity, skepticism, unresolved conflicts, and departure from traditional plot. Each text also fulfills certain criteria assigned by the Aesthetic Movement, which emphasized ‘art for art’s sake’. Aestheticism flourished in England between 1870 and 1900, fading out in the years during which Wells and Conrad wrote their most popular novels. As Walter Hamilton affirms, Oscar Wilde led the Aesthetic campaign after studying under Professors Walter Pater and John Ruskin at Oxford (1874-1878). Wilde stressed the importance of mankind’s ability to recognize and capture beauty in art, which became central to the aestheticism, decadence, and dandyism of the *fin de siècle*. According to Hamilton, Aesthetes “pride themselves upon having found out what is the really beautiful in nature and art, their faculties and tastes being educated up to the point necessary for the full appreciation of such qualities” (7). Like Wilde, many of his followers wore their hair long, donned dark attire, and decorated their rooms with flowers and other artistic objects. Caricatured relentlessly and scorned by critics, aestheticism nevertheless influenced many English artists and gained widespread publicity until Wilde’s arrest in 1895.

The Aesthetes “wished to quarrel with Victorian notions of seriousness and substance in art,” and instead emphasized surface details and attention to the senses (Dowling 359). Wilde offered Pater’s *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* as a manifesto for the movement. In it, Pater suggests that experience dulls our sensual perception and diminishes the intensity with which we see or feel objects. He writes,

The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind . . . How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy? To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy is success in life. (1507; Conclusion, 1512).

This was an attempt of the aesthetic movement (and, later, of the Post-Romantics)—to heighten sensory awareness by vivid descriptions that capture the beauty of objects, gestures, and personalities. For Pater and his subscribers, “the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyze, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced” (1508).

Both Wells and Conrad, in differing degrees and for distinct reasons, rejected the Aesthetic Movement but were thoroughly familiar with its interests and aims. To John Galsworthy in 1900, Wells wrote, “You see I’m an extensive skeptic, no God, no King, no nationality—and among other things I don’t believe in this ‘Artistic Temperament’. I’ve never met it to recognize it—conceivably because I haven’t the necessary ingredients for its sympathetic recognition” (Smith 1:366). A practical, didactic spirit motivated nearly all of Wells’s fiction, especially during the *fin de siècle*. He opposed ‘art for art’s

sake' and the decadence that characterized the Aesthetic Movement, believing fiction should be used to promote a socialist World State. As a contributor to several literary publications, including the *Saturday Review*, Wells frequently offered his perspective on art, which was somewhat elitist. In a letter to the editor of *Daily Mail* written in 1906, Wells laments that the success of a book is growing "more and more independent of literary quality," for the author "is forced to attend shrewdly to business considerations of a more and more squalid sort, lest presently he should be forced to cease his writing altogether" (Smith 2:112). In the same letter, he condemns the emerging American "Times" Book Club as "a quite murderous raid upon literature," and compares the organization to "a rush of wild asses into a garden," demonstrating his preference for what he regarded as the more refined European canon. Of his own work, Wells remarks, "I take myself very seriously as an author. I don't write to grow rich, I don't write to please great numbers of people; but I do seek, industriously and habitually, for the truth and beauty of things, and I try to the utmost limit of my ability to render it" (Smith 2:112). Despite his disdain for "Artistic Temperament," Wells echoes one goal of the Aesthetic Movement in his desire to capture truth and beauty in his writing.

Conrad's Preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), which Wells referred to as "the most striking piece of imaginative work" of that year, establishes his philosophy on art. He rejected labels of any kind, although many regard him as impressionist, aesthetic, modern, or romantic. Near the end of the Preface, Conrad declares,

It is evident that he who, rightly or wrongly, holds by the convictions expressed above cannot be faithful to any one of the temporary formulas of his craft. The enduring part of them—the truth which each only imperfectly veils—should abide with him as the most precious of his possessions, but they all: Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism, even the unofficial sentimentalism (which like the poor, is exceedingly difficult to get rid of), all these gods must, after a short

period of fellowship, abandon him—even on the very threshold of the temple—to the stammerings of his conscience and to the outspoken consciousness of the difficulties of his work. In that uneasy solitude the supreme cry of Art for Art itself, loses the exciting ring of its apparent immorality. It sounds far off. It has ceased to be a cry, and is heard only as a whisper, often incomprehensible, but at times and faintly encouraging. (1889)

Written three years after Wilde's disgrace in 1895, Conrad's Preface dismisses the popular artistic labels of the time but provides an ambiguous response to the Aesthetic Movement, recognizing its motto as "incomprehensible" and "faintly encouraging." Conrad sympathized with the movement much more so than Wells; whereas Wells's letters and his commentary on fiction feature only a few similarities with the Aesthetes, much of Conrad's Preface reads as if it were written for Wilde and Pater. Conrad is predominantly concerned with the reawakening of sensual perception:

Fiction—if it at all aspires to be art—appeals to temperament. And in truth it must be, like painting, like music, like all art, the appeal of one temperament to all the other innumerable temperaments whose subtle and resistless power endows passing events their true meaning, and creates the moral, the emotional atmosphere of the place and time. Such an appeal to be effective must be an impression conveyed through the senses; and in fact, it cannot be made in any other way, because temperament, whether individual or collective, is not amenable to persuasion. All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, and the artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions. (1888)

For Conrad, fiction should capture the truth of a "place and time" by precisely blending "form and substance" and using "the light of magic suggestiveness" to recharge "the commonplace surface of words: of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage" (1888). In perhaps the most referenced passage of the Preface, Conrad writes, "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*" (1888, italics in original).

Impressionism

Certainly the estranging passages of *Heart of Darkness* make us *see*, if only in the sense of recharging our sensorium. Most artistic movements, to a degree, sought the same goal of encouraging us to see our surroundings differently. Impressionism, however, defined art based on how we already view the world. An important precursor to modernism, impressionism developed out of Paris during the decades of the Aesthetic Movement, first in the art of painting, and exercised short brush strokes, vivid details, and a careful use of color to convey the intensity of first impressions. Claude Monet, whose *Impression, soleil levant* inspired the movement, disregarded traditional form in painting, interested not in volume or depth but in light and color. Frédéric Bazille, Mary Cassatt, Edgar Degas, Pierre Auguste-Renoir, Édouard Manet, and Alfred Sisley are several impressionists of the late Nineteenth Century.

Impressionism quickly spread into the realms of music and literature. Along with *Heart of Darkness*, Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915), and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) employ impressionist and stream-of-consciousness techniques. Impressionist novels are usually characterized by first-person limited narration, fewer characters, flashbacks, deliberate omissions from the plot, and untraditional symbolism; typically, they lack a chronological storyline, character background, didacticism, and a kinetic message. Impressionists desire that any meaning is left to the reader, relying on description rather than interpretation. *Heart of Darkness* and *The Time Machine* fulfill many of these qualities, though Wells's scientific and political motives in his writing distinguished him from his more impressionistic neighbors, Conrad, Ford, James, and Crane. In *Experiment in Autobiography*, Wells

maligns the aestheticism of contemporary artistic movements, citing Conrad's desire to "see with a definite vividness of his own," wherein "a boat could [never] be just a boat" (530). Impressionism "became associated in Wells's mind with an entire social and political position that was detrimental to the development of the common man" (Karl 1050). We understand the stories in both novels through the mind of one person (the frame narrator). The texts each feature two central characters, flashbacks, and bizarre, ambiguous symbols. Marlow and the Time Traveler provide little to no background on themselves or others. Most importantly, neither work endorses a single meaning or message, and a variety of interpretations can be accurately applied to both. The novels contain the "haze" of "moonshine" characterizing Marlow's tale, and offer little "kernel" about the adventures of their protagonists.

As this chapter demonstrates, *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* were influenced by a number of artistic movements, and can be read from many aesthetic angles. "Unlike his Edwardian contemporaries," Karl explains, Conrad

saw seams and crevices, areas of blockage and denial that were as important as doing and moving. Whereas Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy sensed action as the definition of man, Conrad—closer to Freudian dreams and unconscious—saw the other side of culture, that connected the inability to move, the very kind of nihilism his conscious mind would have rejected (467).

Although Wells the Logician and Conrad the Artist differed in their views on didacticism and art, we can identify political commentary and artistic concentrations in both of their most popular *fin de siècle* works. Estrangement, the uncanny, and the dream-sensation contribute to the revival of sensual perception in both novels, an aim important to Conrad's artistic philosophy, to impressionism, and to Post-Romantic art. Despite their rejection of the Aesthetic Movement, Wells and Conrad strived for beauty in their

writing. These artistic qualities of the texts are linked to frame narration, a technique used to provide insight into the Time Traveler and Marlow as storytellers. Aesthetics of *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* contribute to their prefiguration of modernism, for, like the *fin de siècle*, the modernist movement is marked by doubt and uncertainty that allows for multiple interpretations of historical and artistic significance.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to return to Conrad's final remarks to Wells, supposedly delivered shortly after the Edwardian Period. In 1911, the Wells-Conrad friendship was nearly fifteen years old, though it had been troubled for some time. Conrad's conviction that Wells despised humanity but wanted to improve it, while he, Conrad, loved mankind while accepting its inherent depravity and hopelessness corroborates many aspects of the authors' relationship. Yet much in *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* seems to contradict Conrad's suggestion. Both novels illustrate human devolution and treat an adherence to animal instinct as inescapable. Wells's text offers little faith in humanity's improvement, and Conrad himself spoke unfavorably of his fellow man throughout his life, which reflects Marlow's pessimism and hatred of "the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams" (70). However, Conrad accurately indicates the "fundamental difference" between himself and Wells that ultimately destroyed their friendship: art versus didacticism. While Wells promoted his brand of socialism, joined the Fabian society, and called for a scientific-minded World State, Conrad declined to actively aid Casement in the Congo Reform Movement, focused more on the aesthetics of his writing and that of his literary colleagues, and advised Wells to dilute the political-mindedness of his work.

Despite this disparity, the similarities between *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* are remarkable. Both begin with flat, emblematic characters who hear a tale told by a frame narrator. Both describe a journey through time and space that challenges our understanding of these dimensions. Each work explores the themes of a divided humanity and cannibalism, commenting on contemporary evolutionary theory. Both novels rely heavily on topical events and expose their authors' concerns about European society. Finally, the texts balance topicality with deliberate aesthetic motives, opening them to a variety of interpretations. In his study on Conrad and Darwin, Richard O'Hanlon affirms that little could have influenced Conrad more than "the scientific word of H.G. Wells," and notes the likenesses between Marlow's voyage into the Congo and the Time Traveler's adventure on his machine (21). O'Hanlon also identifies Wells's impact beyond *Heart of Darkness*, observing of *Lord Jim* (1900) that "Marlow, like H.G. Wells's Time Traveller, 'swung his legs out, got up quickly, and staggered a little, as though he had been set down after a rush through space'" (31). Certainly, I suggest, such an influence is possible, with Wells and Conrad living closely to one another in Kent, along with Ford, James, and Crane, with whom they likely shared regular discussions about literature.

Wells wrote extensively about Conrad in *Experiment in Autobiography*, caricaturing him and then referencing the same "fundamental" divide that came between them:

At first he impressed me, as he impressed Henry James, as the strangest of creatures. He was rather short and round-shouldered with his head as it were sunken into his body. He had a dark retreating face with a very carefully trimmed and pointed beard, a trouble-wrinkled forehead and very troubled dark eyes, and the gestures of his hands and arms were from the shoulders and very Oriental indeed ... He had set himself to be a great writer, an artist in words, and

to achieve all the recognition and distinction that he imagined should go with that ambition, he had gone literary with a singleness and intensity of purpose that made the kindred concentration of Henry James seem lax and large and pale. (472-473)

Wells “was to shift from being the literary man interested in countering the sloppy romanticism of the routine popular novel (the very kind of popularity Romance attempted to cash in upon) into an oracle with a definite social vision, for whom words were means, not ends” (Karl 552). As Karl explains, “From Conrad’s point of view, Wells—to whom he remained ever grateful for the early recognition—was no longer a literary man but a propagandist for everything the former detested: progress, technology, historical discontinuity, support of the newly emerging working and middle classes” (552). The elements shared by *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness* are even more striking in light of these perspectives.

In *Well Done*, which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* in 1918, the same year Conrad informed Walpole of his last remarks to Wells, Conrad writes,

In my early days, starting out on a voyage was like being launched into Eternity. I say advisedly Eternity instead of Space, because of the boundless silence which swallowed up one for eighty days—for one hundred days—for even more days of an existence without echoes and whispers. Like Eternity itself! For one can’t conceive of a vocal Eternity. An enormous silence, in which there was nothing to connect one with the Universe but the incessant wheeling about of the sun and other celestial bodies, the alteration of light and shadow, eternally chasing each other over the sky. The time of the earth, though most carefully recorded by the half-hourly bells, did not count in reality. (182)

This passage, with its imaginative vision of eternity, space, the universe, time, and “the wheeling about of the sun and other celestial bodies” may have been pulled straight from *The Time Machine* itself. It is only one possible allusion to Wells’s novel. While scholars of the *fin de siècle* tend to emphasize the relationship between Ford and Conrad, Wells and James, Conrad and the Congo, Wells and Bennett and Galsworthy, Conrad and the

impressionists, or Wells and the Fabians, I hope to have stressed the significance of the Wells-Conrad relationship on both writers, as comparing their personal lives, treatises on art and society, and commentary on each other delivers profound insight into their works and reveals the rich and diverse fields of study applicable to *The Time Machine* and *Heart of Darkness*.

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