Prehistoric Heroes in Victorian Fiction: The Antiquity of Man and the Evolutionary Human

Martin Irwin

University of Strathclyde

English Studies

School of Humanities

PhD Thesis

2016

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the cultural and literary impact of the establishment of the 'antiquity of man', or the discovery of human remains in geological association with those of extinct mammals. This mid-nineteenth-century scientific development greatly extended the length of human (pre)history and, when read in conjunction with the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin, allowed for the possibility of the prior existence of other species of human.

The thesis pursues contemporary discussions of human antiquity in the popular and periodical press before moving on to an examination of early 'prehistoric fiction', much of which was published in magazines and periodicals. Rather than dealing with the implications of human antiquity and evolution on their own terms, early prehistoric fiction, I suggest, amounted to a Victorian colonisation of human evolutionary history.

The remainder of the thesis is given over to an analysis of the implications and effects of what I have termed 'evolutionary colonialism' through the work of George Meredith, Arthur Machen and Joseph Conrad – three writers with very different places in relation to the canon. Meredith's work often seems to warn of the dangers of evolutionary colonialism, while in a handful of stories dealing with human antiquity Arthur Machen offers an alternative reading of human evolutionary history. Finally, in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* it is possible to perceive the consequences and underlying logic of the colonial interpretation of the evolutionary human.

Acknowledgements

My first thanks go to my primary supervisor, Erica Fudge, who has been a steady source of knowledge, advice, encouragement and support all the way through this project. Her extensive comments on numerous drafts of individual chapters, and the thesis as a whole, have undoubtedly helped to improve my work greatly. I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Richard Niland, who has led me to countless sources that I would have otherwise struggled to find. I have particularly valued and benefited from his expertise as a Conrad scholar. My thanks are also due to my examiners, Mark Llewellyn and Christine Ferguson; the thesis is stronger thanks to their comments, questions, and suggestions. I must also thank the University of Strathclyde for supporting me with fees and funding for the first three years of this project. Without that, I would never have been able to consider doctoral research at all.

I would also like to thank my father, Chris Irwin, for always encouraging me to pursue my own interests and for providing more than enough financial and other support over the years. I owe similar thanks (and money!) to my partner's parents, Ronnie and Lillian Goldie, who were supportive enough to allow us to live with them for five months while I finished writing up. With a particularly energetic toddler in tow, this was no small ask.

I will also be eternally grateful for the sacrifices made by my partner, Claire Goldie, while I was completing this thesis. You have been a great source of love and support over the years and, without you, I would probably have struggled to complete my Honours degree. And to our daughter, Lily, I'm sorry that your first couple of years have been as unsettled as they have been, but I hope it will all be worth it in the end – to be fair, though, none of it seems to have held you back!

My thanks also go to my fellow postgraduate students in the English department, particularly Kevin Wilson, for their friendship and the odd moany chat. I have also benefited from similar support from the many doctoral students in the University of Glasgow's Widening Participation office.

Finally, to my mum; I didn't really get the chance to know you very well, but I have it on good authority that you would've been right into this kind of stuff, so I'm hopeful that you would have enjoyed it.

Contents

Introduction

Late November 2015 saw the forty-first anniversary of the discovery of a large portion of the skeleton of Lucy, a young female of the hominin species *Australopithecus afarensis.* This species is characterised by evidence of an upright gait in combination with a brain size closer to that of apes than to humans. Lucy's significance, in terms of palaeoanthropology, is that she seems to give credence to the idea that the increased brain size evident in the genus *Homo* followed the transition to bipedal locomotion, most likely because the hands were then free to do other things; the increased repertoire required more cognitive power, which in turn required bigger brains. The anniversary of Lucy's discovery occasioned a Google 'doodle' – a stylised version of the famous 'March of Progress' image (see Appendix, p. 1) – which in turn led to commentary in various newspapers. It is the underlying assumptions of articles like these that I seek to explore and challenge in this thesis, not because they are particularly bad but because they demonstrate what I consider to be typical misapprehensions about our status (the status of *Homo sapiens*) as what might be termed an evolutionary species – a species with a long evolutionary past which has seen it develop from and alongside many other species of the genus *Homo,* as well as countless other non-*Homo* species*.* Thus, for James Titcomb of *The Telegraph,* at 3.2 million years old Lucy is "the oldest known example of a bipedal primate and a crucial stepping stone between apes and homo sapiens". Her discovery, moreover, gave scientists "enough information about [her] species to help understand the transition to homo sapiens" (2015). Likewise for Keegan Thomson of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Lucy's bones helped to "shine a light on the way in which our species evolved from tree dwelling apes to the tall statured and intelligent human beings we are today" and, because they were fairly complete and intact, the bones have allowed scientists "to learn a lot about the evolution of the human species" (2015).

Even in such a small amount of text, there is a lot to unpack. For example, Titcomb's claim that Lucy helped to elucidate the rather singular "transition to homo sapiens" seems to imply a teleological understanding of human evolutionary history, or the belief that our species is, or has been, the ultimate goal of the whole process. In Thomson's case, on the other hand, the reference to "the human species" is oxymoronic, inasmuch as it presumably refers to '*Homo sapiens*' – that is, one particular species of human among many others. The confusion lays in the assumed designation of the term 'human', which is taken to refer to '*sapiens*' rather than to '*Homo*' – the latter being the synonym of 'human'. More fundamental, perhaps, is the tacit assumption, evident in different ways in each of the quotations, that there are no other species of *Homo*/human between ourselves and Lucy (who is, again, not a member of *Homo*): in each case, the evolutionary series moves from apes to Lucy to *Homo sapiens*. This is why Titcomb writes of a single, emphatic "transition to homo sapiens"; while Thomson's claim that Lucy helps to illuminate the way "our species" evolved from apes to the "intelligent human beings" of today suggests that, at the same time as being the ultimate goal of the process, "our species" is also the one doing the evolving. In each case, not only are 'we' implied from the beginning, but 'we' are also the only human species fit for the task of becoming *Homo sapiens*. And remember, too, that Lucy is the ostensible subject of each article, yet she very quickly becomes little more than a signpost on the road to us.

In reality, there have been many other species of human. Given the nature of palaeoanthropological research – how its evidence base is, and always will be, quite small, and how even its most established conclusions can only ever be provisional because they can, and frequently have been, overturned by a new discovery – it is not really possible to say exactly how many species of human there have been.[1] Among the more widely accepted are *Homo habilis, Homo erectus, Homo sapiens, Homo heidelbergensis,* and *Homo neanderthalensis.* Some of the uncertain species (uncertain

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[1] See Reader (1981) for an account of how "unequivocal interpretation" of fossils is "rarely possible" (17).

because some palaeoanthropologists argue that they are instead subspecies of the more established species listed here) are *Homo ergaster* (a possible subspecies of *erectus*)*, Homo antecessor* (classed by some as *heidelbergensis*)*,* the recently-discovered *Homo naledi* (possibly an early type of *erectus*)*, Homo floresiensis* (nicknamed the 'Hobbit' because of its small stature, with this stature having been seen by some as pathological rather than suggesting that *floresiensis* is a distinct species), and many others beside. Ultimately, of course, it is for palaeoanthropologists to determine the number of human species that have existed. All that can really be achieved in history or literary studies is to establish exactly how the knowledge of these other species has been received by our own since the mid-nineteenth century and, further, how this new knowledge has been incorporated into and remoulded by literary texts. Or, as it may be, how we have ignored or downplayed this knowledge in different ways; how it may be akin to what Jacques Derrida calls the "calculated forgetting" of animals in the history of philosophy, a forgetting that is at the very centre of philosophy itself (2008: 11). As applied to these other humans, it may be that our "calculated forgetting" of them is a constituent part of our 'human' identify. The analysis of our reception of these other humans is one of the principal tasks of this thesis.

For reasons that will become clearer, the Victorians had less of a notion of individual species of human than we do, so what is of more interest here is simply the idea that there have been other species of human, and thus other forms of humanness, at all. The point, though, is that it is not just the Victorians who are 'guilty' of this, as the Titcomb and Thomson articles attest. In many ways, the Victorian response to the idea of a deep human (i.e. *Homo*) past is the progenitor of articles and assumptions like these. In coming to terms with the establishment of the antiquity of man – the mid-nineteenth-century scientific discovery that forms the backdrop to this thesis – many in the Victorian period engaged in what I have termed 'evolutionary colonialism', or the colonisation of the evolutionary history of *Homo* by *sapiens* – a concept that will be developed at length over the course

of the thesis. For them, as for Titcomb and Thomson, there were no other forms of human between *Homo sapiens* and the so-called missing link. Instead, they populated the gap between them (rather, the gap between the missing link and the 'highest' form of *Homo sapiens*) with various 'lower' forms of *sapiens*. The precise ordering of the scale from degradation to civilisation differed from writer to writer, but it was generally composed of various types of 'savage', and of labourers, 'idiots' and, occasionally, women. Nevertheless, each of these groups were all acknowledged to be 'human' – that is, *Homo sapiens* – no matter the extent of their supposed degradation. The close relation between the concepts of race and species in the Victorian period, what John Miller describes as their "inter-implication" (2012a: 3), has of course been noted many times before.[2] What is often missing from such accounts, however, is the human evolutionary reality concealed by the imposition of this race-based developmental scale: the time between Lucy and ourselves was occupied by a number of other species of human such as those listed above. This is not to downplay the serious implications of the proximity of the categories of 'race' and 'species' for various ethnic groups, both today and during the nineteenth century; it is instead an attempt to look at the same issue from the other perspective in order to better understand the implications for what is often termed 'the human' in much contemporary academic discourse. By largely disregarding those species of human who were not us, I argue, we risk uncritically accepting a rather Victorian understanding of the evolutionary human.

The Antiquity of Man

The principal scientific discovery with which this thesis is concerned is what was known at the time as the establishment of 'the antiquity of man', or the discovery of chipped-flint tools in geological

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[2] For a thorough-going analysis of the concept of race over the last three hundred years or so, see Ernst and Harris (1999). For one more specific to the "origin of man controversy", see Haller Jnr. (1970). See also Smedley and Smedley (2005) for a critique of the social construction of race in various historical periods.

association with the fossil remains of extinct fauna. It was on this basis that the idea of a human

prehistory, in its current signification, first emerged, leading ultimately to the conclusion that

humans had been living on the earth for far longer than had previously been accepted.[3] The official,

properly scientific establishment of human antiquity took place between late 1858 and the summer

of 1859 – that is, just a matter of months before Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* appeared

in November 1859. It is no doubt due to its proximity to Darwin's great work that the establishment

of human antiquity has gone relatively unnoticed, at least as far as literary studies is concerned. [4]

However, even in the history of science, where it has received repeated attention, this pales in

comparison to the voluminous output of the so-called 'Darwin Industry' which looks at every

conceivable – and sometimes even inconceivable – aspect of Darwin's life, work and scientific and

intellectual influence.[5] It is curious, however, that antiquity should be thus comparatively under-

studied because there is undoubtedly a case to be made that it brought humans into the initial

controversy that followed publication of Darwin's *Origin*. This will be covered in greater detail in the

first chapter, but it is enough to say here that, for the most part, Darwin left humans out of this first

exposition of his thesis, yet much of the following discussion centred on the subject of the

implications of evolutionary theory for humans. It therefore seems plausible that, when Darwin

came along, the newly-revealed and greatly-extended human past became exposed to his ideas, and

to the slow and gradual process of evolution by means of natural selection. This thesis is in fact

supported by the extensive examination of contemporary periodicals, magazines and newspapers

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[3] For a thorough account of the development of 'prehistory' as a concept from classical antiquity all the way to the nineteenth century, see Kelley (2003).

[4] To avoid irritating repetition, throughout this thesis I will use 'antiquity' interchangeably with 'human antiquity', 'the antiquity of man', 'the establishment/discovery of human antiquity' etc.

[5] For more on the 'Darwin Industry' phenomenon, see, for example, Ruse (1996) and Oldroyd, Ruse, Pearson and Herbert (2007). For previous studies of the establishment of human antiquity from historians and philosophers of science, see Oakley (1964), Gruber (1965), Van Riper (1993), Sackett (2000), and Goodrum (2012). For analyses of the roles of specific individuals in these scientific developments, see Bynum (1984) and Cohen (1998) on Charles Lyell, and Sackett (2014) on Jacques Boucher de Perthes. See also Goodrum (2009) and Gundling (2010) for discussions of the history of studies of, and research into, human origins. Van Riper's account of antiquity is the one most often cited, and it has been extremely useful for my own research, both in terms of content and methods – he examined the response to human antiquity in roughly one hundred journals or periodicals, demonstrating that arguments disputing the idea effectively stopped after 1863.

that I have conducted as part of this research. For many commentators, there was little or no distinction between discussing human antiquity (typically taking the form of reflections on stone tools and deep time) and the possibility, likelihood, or unlikelihood of human evolution by Darwinian or any other means. Indeed, the close conjunction between human antiquity and evolution is abundantly clear in the Neanderthal controversy of the early 1860s. In a hostile review of geologist David Page's *Man: Where, Whence, and Whither* (1867), for example, the author complains that "we are not only to accept the humiliation that our ancestors were painted or naked savages" as per the implications of stone tools and antiquity, "but we must [also] trace back our lineage to semi-human beings with 'Neanderthal' skulls, and through them to chimpanzees and gorillas; while they again may be followed through the labyrinths of Molluscan, Radiate, and Globular descent" ('The Origin and Antiquity of Man', November 1868: 981).

In outlining the establishment of human antiquity and tracing its impact, then, this thesis seeks to fill a perceived gap in Victorian literary studies.[6] It is noteworthy, on this front, that in the 'Chronology' that guides Gowan Dawson's and Bernard Lightman's eight-volume *Victorian Science and Literature* (2011-12) there is no mention of human antiquity. Predictably, the only entry from 1858-59 that has any bearing on human development through time refers to the *Origin of Species*. Further, there is scant reference to this aspect of nineteenth-century scientific debate (i.e. palaeoanthropology and prehistoric archaeology, whether Palaeolithic or Neolithic) in the collection. Claims of this type can of course be made against any anthology whatsoever. The intention here, however, is simply to point out just how little-known or, alternatively, how under-valued antiquity seems to be outside the history of science. This is not to say that no literary scholars have studied antiquity; only that it has yet to receive any sustained attention and discussion. The clue is doubtless in the title, but Virginia

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[6] See McNabb (2015) for a discussion of H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) in relation the 'eolith controversy', which the author, a palaeolithic archaeologist, refers to as the "second antiquity of man debate" (386).

Richter's *Literature After Darwin* (2011) is a good example: "the question of the 'antiquity of man', [which] constituted a major controversy in palaeoanthropology in the 1860s", is dealt with in a single footnote (224, n74). That Richter restricts the antiquity debate to a single decade highlights a further misunderstanding, inasmuch as this was a discussion that persisted from 1859 until well into the 1920s, a period marked by seemingly-relentless palaeoanthropological discovery. Indeed, even before 1859 claims had been made for the antiquity of man, but these were widely regarded as lacking proper scientific rigour.[7] In an article on "the prehistoric man of the 1890s", Richard Pearson (2007) demonstrates more of an awareness of the length of this debate, hinting at some of the later discoveries in the Dordogne. However, he too restricts his focus to a single decade, the 1890s, at which time he claims there arose "a *sudden* general cultural interest in prehistoric man" (61, my emphasis). Finally, though his history of 'prehistoric fiction' (pf) has been incredibly important to this thesis, Nicholas Ruddick gives only a very brief account of the establishment of human antiquity in 1859 before continuing with his history of the pf genre (2009: 5-6). In a similar way to other scholars, Ruddick is more interested in human evolution than human antiquity – a distinction upon which I will elaborate shortly.

One goal of this thesis, then, is to address this apparent imbalance, and to bring a broader and more detailed understanding of the antiquity debate into literary studies, both for its own sake and for the new light it can throw on the wider evolutionary debate of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[8] When distinguishing between 'Victorian literary studies' and 'Victorian studies', the first is intended to refer to studies of Victorian culture whose principal objects of study are literary texts, while the second is intended to refer to those whose principal objects of study are *not* literary texts.

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[7] Among these previous claims were those of John Frere (1740-1807), John MacEnery (1797-1841), and Jacques Boucher de Perthes (1788-1868). See Sackett (2014) for an account of de Perthes the man, and of the likely reasons behind his dismissal by the scientific establishment of both France and Britain.
[8] An article on Arthur Machen's fiction to which I will return in chapter four, Worth (2012), discusses the idea of prehistory in a fair amount of detail, but little is said about the initial establishment of the idea.

The latter category is of course very broad, but its use here is meant only to highlight the relatively scant attention the establishment of human antiquity has received by scholars of Victorian literature – especially when compared to the attention Charles Darwin's impact has received. There is also a considerable degree of overlap between the two terms, as historians often make passing reference to the period's most famous novelists. On the whole, however, their principal focus lies beyond these novelists. The importance of examining human antiquity from a specifically literary angle is that literature can often be seen as one of the principal mediums through which a given culture assesses its own time and navigates its possible futures. Further, literary texts are not merely passive receptacles and they can actively shape a given culture's understanding or interpretation of, for example, the scientific discoveries of the day. In fact, one of the assumptions of this thesis is that early prehistoric fiction interpreted human antiquity and evolution in its own particular way, and that this interpretation had a lasting impact on Victorian and our own understanding of the evolutionary human. At any rate, in trying to address human antiquity's comparative absence in Victorian literary studies, I hope to demonstrate its massive impact by showing that, far from being encapsulated by developments in the 1860s, and far from being a sudden development in the 1890s, the establishment of human antiquity – in conjunction with the general interest in various evolutionary theories – led to a "general cultural interest in prehistoric man" (Pearson: 61) that spanned and surpassed the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, one indication of the cultural significance of this debate can be seen in the war musings of an anonymous writer for *The Academy* in July 1915. While reflecting on the destruction brought by the war to the "priceless objects" of Belgium and northern France (including paintings, galleries, and Gothic cathedrals), the writer asks "What unforgivable mutilation, necessitated by works of defence or produced incidentally by shell-fire, has been made in those historical gravel-pits of the Somme and the Meuse, which have been so closely associated with the controversy on prehistoric man?" ('The Ruling Passion', 3rd July 1915: 4). Since the mid-nineteenth century, the gravel pits of these two rivers had

been closely associated with the human antiquity "controversy" and with the very idea of human prehistory itself; that this writer sees fit to rank them and their potential contents alongside more typical, and actually-existing, cultural treasures is highly illuminating, both in terms of the importance accorded to them, and of the apparent freshness and immediacy of the "controversy".

Previous Studies

As mentioned above, while literary studies have been limited there have been many examinations of the establishment of human antiquity by historians of science, and I have found many of these particularly useful. However, because these have been undertaken by historians of science, the principal focus is obviously the science – its relation to past work and assumptions; the degree to which it was accepted, and in what time frame; and the impact that it had on the scientific community and on future scientific thought. More recently, however, scholars including Chris Manias have begun to trace the trajectory and intellectual contours of the debate as it progressed over the course of the century, in Britain and elsewhere.[9] Alongside an outline of the science of human antiquity, the historical research undertaken for my project will be discussed in the first chapter, though it will of course be referred to over the course of the thesis as a whole. Aside from its ultimately literary focus, where this research differs from Manias's is in its concern for the wider cultural significance of these scientific developments. In pursuing the more diffuse impact of the debate, I have followed broadly similar lines to those of the editors of the various volumes of Dawson's and Lightman's *Victorian Science and Literature*, which is to say that I have traced the antiquity debate in the periodical literature of the latter half of nineteenth-century Britain. In an

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[9] For example, Manias (2012) examines the ways in which the discovery of deep human history fed into discussions about British identity in a time of empire and the forward march of 'civilisation'. In the same article, Manias also notes the scant examination of the establishment of human antiquity outside the history of science, when compared to the "Darwinian revolution": "the impact of the extension of human existence into the new domain of 'prehistory' has been relatively underexamined, even if it is being slowly acknowledged that the field had crucial implications for the stated national, global, and civilizational significance of Britain in the world" (913-14). See as well, Manias (2013a, 2013b, and 2015).

attempt to determine the degree to which these issues and ideas penetrated everyday life, though, I

have also followed the debate as it was reported and discussed in newspapers and magazines. One

assumption underpinning this approach is that, at that point when the latest palaeoanthropological

discoveries are being reported in newspapers like *The Star* of Guernsey, then it can be said that

there is widespread public awareness, and that these issues have become, or are becoming, part of

general, public consciousness. Indeed, this is especially so when the tone of such articles is as jaded

as the one reporting the significant discovery at Spy, Belgium, in 1886 (where two almost complete

skeletons of what were later recognised as Neanderthals were discovered in association with stone

tools of the Mousterian culture, the culture now typically associated with the Neanderthals): "if this

latest discovery is to be accepted", the author concludes, "man is of an antiquity which probably

enough some of his species may regard as far from respectable" ('Pre-Historic Man', 7th October

1886: 4).[10] Similarly, when a politician can be lampooned in a magazine like *Fun* (a rival to *Punch*) on

the basis of being "generally of the sort of politics one would expect of the fossil man of Neanderthal,

if he were to come to life again" ('Lives of Eminent Statesmen', 27th February 1864: 243), then a fair

amount of cultural processing of these issues and developments can be assumed to have taken

place.[11] In contrast to Manias's focus on the scientific debates and how they inflected different

countries' sense of national identity, I am interested in the rather more nebulous task of determining

the extent to which these developments and ideas became part of Victorian culture in the widest

sense – how they were discussed, analysed, processed, and ultimately became part of daily language

and culture, rather than something that was debated by intellectuals alone. In later chapters, I set

out the importance of fiction in this process of acclimatisation to the idea of a deep, prehistoric

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[10] The Spy find was covered in a great many national and local newspapers including, for example, *The Times* ('Primitive Man', 8th September 1886: 8), *The Pall Mall Gazette* ('Discovery of Primitive Skulls', 8th September 1886: 10), *The Morning Post* ('Multiple Advertisements and Notices', 9th September 1886: 1), *The Birmingham Daily Post* (untitled, 10th September 1886), *Berrow's Worcester Journal* ('Primitive Man', 11th September 1886: 6), and *The Derby Mercury* ('An Important Discovery', 15th September 1886). Indeed, with the exception of the Guernsey *Star* one, these are all the same article, one that was evidently syndicated from *The Standard* earlier that month.
[11] This is the earliest pejorative use of 'Neanderthal' that I have been able to find, while the earliest given in the Oxford English Dictionary (online) is 1928.

human past. Although this approach (with the exception of the later focus on narrative) is similar to the one taken by Van Riper (1993), it exceeds his in temporal and numerical scope, and is original in its attention to both specialist and non-specialist discussion of these issues in a variety of contexts. Whereas Van Riper focused on nearly one hundred articles in more learned periodicals between 1859 and 1875, I have examined many more articles from periodicals, magazines and newspapers from 1858 until the 1920s.[12] Moreover, while Van Riper was only interested in explicit commentaries on human antiquity, I am equally interested in these and in passing references to the issue in articles that otherwise have nothing to do with antiquity at all.

One of the most obvious issues to address at this stage is the question of the value of studying the cultural impact of the establishment of human antiquity, as opposed to that of Darwinian evolutionary theory.[13] As I argue in chapter one, when considering the broad-based and wide-ranging discussion of human origins that loomed large in the periodical, magazine and newspaper literature of the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is almost impossible, in practice, to separate the discussion of human antiquity from the discussion of human evolution: to the extent that a given writer is discussing one, they almost inevitably invoke the discoveries or controversies of the other. Though there are considerable differences in terms of emphasis, these were, in effect, two aspects of the same, larger debate. Given this degree of imbrication, viewing the larger debate through the prism of human antiquity will, at the very least, throw new light on the contemporary reaction to Darwin's theories. At the same time, however, it is hoped that this slightly altered perspective will

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[12] I did not record the exact number of articles that I read, but I have notes for roughly three hundred. However, there were at least as many again that I read but decided were less immediately relevant to my purposes. As with those listed in footnote ten (above), many articles were also syndicated from bigger titles by a large number of smaller, regional ones. In most cases like these, I disregarded the repetitions. This is not to mention some of the more obscure books on the same subject – or on completely unrelated subjects – that I examined as well.

[13] For some of the more famous examples of the influence of Darwin on Victorian culture, see Henkin (1940), Ebbatson (1982), and Shuttleworth (1984). To this list must also be added Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots* (1983) and George Levine's *Darwin and the Novelists* (1988), both of which shifted focus towards Darwin's impact on the formal aspects of the work of writers like George Eliot, Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope. Indeed, in Levine's case, evolutionary theory becomes inseparable from realism itself. For a more recent example, see Glendening (2007).

help to address the imbalance noted above. In the main, the historical research conducted as part of

this project suggests that, to the extent that a given writer can be said to be focusing more on

antiquity than evolution, they are likely to be reflecting more on the human in deep time – with a

particular focus on duration – rather than on the relation, or the dividing line, between human and

animal, and all the concomitant issues thus raised. As with the example from the Guernsey *Star*

above, for writers more concerned with addressing the antiquity aspect of this debate the reality of

a greatly enlarged human past is of more concern than what Freud referred to as "the barrier that

had been arrogantly set up between man and beast" (cited in Lippit 1994). This is not to say,

however, that these two concerns are mutually exclusive. Indeed, in an article from the more high-

brow *Athenaeum* ('Primitive Man', '13th August 1870), it is clear from phrases like the "mysteries

surrounding the origin of the human species", "the human animal" and "rude races of men", that

the anonymous author makes the connection between antiquity and evolution. Again, however, it is

the journey back ever deeper "into the dark arcana of time", to "ages far more remote than those

which we call historical", that is driving the evident sense of wonder and anxiety. All of this is given

symbolic representation in the stone tools, the "relics" of "primitive men" who lived so long ago that

they were "dwelling upon lands which were yet subject to those great catastrophes which have

brought our continents and islands to their present physical conditions":

> It cannot but be evident to every one, who will dispassionately examine the flint
> implements and the bone tools found in the Drift formations, that they indicate the efforts
> of thought of rude races of men, whose mental powers were slowly being awakened by the
> necessities of the conditions in which they were placed. The conditions under which these
> relics are found being such, that none but those who perversely close their eyes to the
> glimmer of light which they afford, can doubt that they indicate an antiquity which cannot
> be reached by what we call historic time" (213)

Here, as in the example from *The Star*, it may well be that duration through time implies human and

animal propinquity, but this remains a comparatively minor concern in relation to the "rude

weapons" (213) and their likely age.

The chapters that follow will respect this same distinction by focusing more on Palaeolithic stone tools, the human occupation of deep time (as opposed to the discovery of geological time in itself),[14] and different species of human, while concentrating less on those things typically associated with an evolutionary focus.[15] Anger (2014) provides a useful overview of these, the "groundbreaking ideas" that emerged from Darwin's work. These include human-animal "continuum", the amorality of natural process, progress, heredity, and the deep time revealed by geology (55). Anger also goes on to detail Darwin's impact later in the century, as seen in degeneration theory, imperialism, the theory of race, eugenics and so on (55-61).[16] Alongside the desire to chart the role of the establishment of human antiquity in the Victorian human origins debate, the attempt to focus less on evolutionary theory is also a pragmatic move, made with the intention of avoiding undue or repeated focus on the issues listed by Anger. Taking antiquity as my principal frame of reference, I will instead examine what I consider to be one of the single most neglected implications of evolutionary theory in analyses of its impact on Victorian culture – namely, the fact that it allowed for the possibility of there having existed, at some point, other species of human. The extent to which this conception was actually made at the time, however, is a matter for debate, as we shall see – and, indeed, as we have already seen with regard to Lucy in our own time. Nevertheless, the fact that this is debatable at all is interesting enough in itself, and is potentially very revealing. The focus on anthropic variety also necessitates an examination of the human occupation of deep time –

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[14] For more on the cultural impact of the discovery of geological time, see Dean (1981), O'Connor (2007), Heringman (2004), Heringman (2009) and Emmott (2011).

[15] For a recent look at the pervasive impact of evolutionary theory on various aspects of Victorian culture (including fiction, early cinema, poetry, and the stage), see Lightman and Zon (2014). See particularly Cannon Schmitt's chapter (pp. 17-38) for an analysis of Darwin's impact on literary language, and for how, "Without evolutionary theory, Victorian fiction as we know it would not exist" (17). See Glendening (2007) for a study of "the impact of evolutionary thinking on late-nineteenth-century British novels" (7). Finally, see Holmes (2009) for an account of a Darwin-inspired trend in British and American poetry that became a counter-tradition to modernism. One of the poets Holmes studies is George Meredith, the subject of chapter three.

[16] For a fairly recent examination of eugenics, see Richardson (2003). See also Burdett and Richardson (2007) for a look at eugenics in relation to posthumanism, or the posthuman condition. Richardson has also edited and contributed to a volume on the impact of Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) on the late-Victorian understanding of emotions. See Richardson (2013). For more on the impact of degeneration theory on the novel, see Greenslade (1994). For a more recent discussion of degeneration theory – this time in relation to the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic, see Karschay (2015).

specifically, the fact that humans, of whatever kind, had evidently lived in the period known as 'the

Drift', something that had been unthinkable ever since the "Drift formations", as the *Athenaeum*

author described them, had come to geologists' attention in the 1830s and '40s. This focus will thus

add to a growing body of recent scholarship on the quality of time in the Victorian era.[17] Where

these scholars analyse the increasing control over present and future time brought about by

industrialisation, I am interested in the control exerted over prehistoric time by means of narrative

and the implications of this for the Victorian understanding of human evolutionary history.[18] This is

largely what I mean by the term 'evolutionary colonialism'.

Evolutionary colonialism is one of the principal ideas explored in this thesis and is therefore

something that will be picked up to a greater or lesser extent in each of the following chapters.

Nevertheless, it will be instructive to give an account of the concept in broad terms here, and it will

also be worth setting out what I do *not* mean by it. Ultimately, I argue, evolutionary colonialism is

the result of early prehistoric fiction's account of human evolutionary history, an account based on

narrative and the particular exigencies of narrative ('prehistoric fiction', or 'pf', is nineteenth-century

fiction about prehistoric humans in prehistorical time – as opposed to prehistoric humans emerging

into modernity). This is the subject of chapter two, whereas each of the later chapters examines

various consequences of this basic argument. The means by which early prehistoric fiction may be

said to colonise human evolutionary history has three principal elements. Although presented

separately here, these are very much interconnected and each corresponds to a different layer of

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[17] See Zemka (2011) for a critical evaluation of the importance of the moment in Victorian (and present day) culture, particularly against a backdrop of so-called industrial or economic time. Similarly, Ferguson's edited volume (2013) covers the cultural response to the industrial standardisation of time. Finally, see Barrows (2011) for an illuminating account of the standardisation of global time in the mid-1880s and of how this helped facilitate colonial expansion and domination.

[18] For example, Zemka points out that industrialisation – inclusive of factory production and shift working, the establishment of the postal service, and the development of the railways and the related need for standardised time – considerably altered "the lived experience of time" in Victorian Britain. It brought about "a wider distribution of abstract time", an understanding of "homogeneous, quantifiable, and neutral" time divorced from local contexts and traditions of time keeping. Abstract time is also "precise to the minute" and "standardised across geographical space by institutional practices and business or political agreements" (2011: 2).

analysis. The first relates to what individual characters in pf stories actually do in their own environments, the second to the construction of these individuals as heroes in the western, humanist tradition, and the third to the projection of this form of narrative onto the vast expanse of human evolutionary history that had only recently been revealed by the establishment of human antiquity. Early pf's narrative answer to antiquity is seen as a method of organising and controlling the unruly reality of what were previously-unknown stretches of time. It is this third level that allows evolutionary colonialism to be considered apart from early prehistoric fiction – as it is in later chapters – because it primarily concerns the *implications* of looking at the full span of human evolutionary history through a narrative lens. Often, therefore, the analyses of various writers and texts offered in chapters three to five take the form of reflections on some of the consequences of projecting this kind of narrative account onto human evolutionary history. They are concerned with what such a conception of human evolution might mean.

On the most basic of these three levels, the heroes of early pf narratives are imperial in the sense that, by means of reason and technology, they dominate and take possession of their local environment, inclusive of both physical space and of other human and animal species. Indeed, more than any other it is this basic tendency which marks the pf hero as what is referred to in chapter two as a "worthy ancestor". In the stories themselves, it is precisely this domineering, imperial behaviour that sets the hero apart from everyone else around him. Most obviously, this is because he kills them, but it is also because the willingness and ability to dominate everything else becomes a signifier of the hero's latent humanity, and is therefore offered as the ultimate source of the ontological break between human and brute (animal as well as sub-human). That which is 'human' (or, rather, that which is the right kind of 'human') is imperial and domineering. On the second level of the concept, the hero's domination is characterised by the violent application of reason (most often in the form of stone technology) to the less than ideally rational – animals and other species of

human. Following the work of scholars in the fields of animal studies and posthumanism, it is on this basis that I argue that the pf hero's domineering heroism is remarkably similar to western or humanist ideals. This humanist essence has no real right to a place in prehistory – in fact, the idea that these heroes were too modern for prehistory was a recurring theme in the few contemporary reviews of these stories I have been able to find. In early pf the character of the hero figure represents something of an imposition on prehistory; humanist heroes are written into, or are projected onto, the evolutionary history of *Homo.* In this way, they are said to colonise human evolutionary history, and to steer the process of evolution towards themselves. The haphazard nature of human evolution is thus recast as an orderly and managed process.

The third layer of the concept of evolutionary colonialism develops from the second and helps to justify the use of the term 'colonialism', because it recalls a concerted effort to annex, bring under control, and manage an unruly province populated by equally unruly savages – a spatialised understanding of temporal duration occupied by various species of *Homo*. This third layer rests on an understanding of narrative (of the form found in early pf) as rationalisation, and as a particularly 'human' way of bringing time to order. The establishment of the antiquity of man brought with it a vastly-extended, chaotic and irrational human past. As I have already suggested (as have others), this was deeply troubling for many in the nineteenth century. Early pf's handling of this unknowable stretch of time is therefore analogous to the pf hero's violent application of reason to the irrational he found all around him: in early pf, narrative is projected onto prehistory, thus becoming a technology of control which brings to order the less than ideally rational in human evolutionary history. It conceals the unsettling presence of other species of human who are themselves deemed insufficiently rational: instead of meeting the implications of human antiquity and evolution head on, early pf therefore avoids them altogether.

As regards the evolutionary history of *Homo,* early prehistoric fiction is triply colonial: the genre's heroes quickly establish themselves as expansive masters of their own particular environments; they do this in such a way as to flag their own modernity and reveal themselves as nineteenth-century inscriptions into prehistory; and the narratives in which they appear project order onto chaos, refashioning the random and unknowable contingency of human evolution into an entirely managed process that leads inevitably to the western, humanist supremacy of nineteenth-century modernity. Each of the three elements of evolutionary colonialism are dealt with in greater detail in chapter two. The rest of the thesis is more concerned with analysing the implications of the closely related second and third elements, or the consequences of the colonisation of human evolutionary history for our understanding of ourselves. Of course, using a term like 'colonialism' in the looser, more figurative sense proposed here risks emptying it of its historical specificity – the very real suffering of various non-Euro-American populations in the nineteenth and other centuries. Clearly, this is not my intention, and care is taken to examine some of these historical details at different points throughout this thesis. Nevertheless, there is a basic connection between 'evolutionary colonialism' and colonialism proper, and it is to be found in the second and third layers described here: the two forms of colonialism share many of the same assumptions and justifications; they are different expressions of the same ideology. My use of the term 'colonialism' in 'evolutionary colonialism', then, is based on – and seeks to examine – this structural affinity, and it is intended to refer to the domination of one group by another, based on the perceived inferiority of the dominated group. However, whereas actual nineteenth-century colonialism was predominantly an expression of domination in spatial terms, evolutionary colonialism clearly has more to do with the temporal. Rather than dominating current places and populations deemed inferior, evolutionary colonialism is about supplanting, and therefore eliding, the insufficiently-rational stretches of the newly-revealed, vast expanse of human evolutionary history.

Theoretical Considerations

Many of the areas of study noted by Anger, above, are also taken up by scholars working on Victorian literature in and between the related fields of animal studies, posthumanism and ecocriticism, where there is particular interest in the conceptual oppositions of human and animal, culture and nature. Thus, Richter's book "dedicat[es] itself to the analysis of [post-Darwin] literary representations of human-animal relations and the fears sparked by this suddenly precarious relationship" (4). The "fears" mentioned here relate to what she goes on to call "anthropological anxiety" (6), or a "pervasive sense of a fundamental category crisis" regarding human and animal, one that is "based on an attempt to separate the *anthropos* from the non-human, the animal, the mechanical" (8). In *Empire and the Animal Body* (2012), John Miller is similarly interested in the distinction between human and animal in the years following the appearance of Darwin's *Origin* and the controversy sparked in the early 1860s by Paul du Chaillu's 'discovery' of gorillas.[19] Specifically, Miller argues that hunting and imperial adventure narratives are "key sites for interrogating the human/animal binary in a colonial context" (3), thereby bringing postcolonial studies and postcolonial ecocriticism into the discussion as well.[20] The various textual analyses in the following chapters are informed by similar theoretical concerns to those that underpin Richter's and Miller's work but, where these scholars interrogate the point of transition between human and animal in various forms of Victorian discourse, I seek to interrogate the construction of the 'human' half of the binary in the wake of Darwin and antiquity, its elided points of transition between different kinds of human. This is in order to better understand how, why and the extent to which 'human' or 'man'

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[19] See pages 97-99 for Miller's account of the post-Darwin controversy, in which antiquity doesn't feature at all. For another example of Victorianist scholarship that addresses the "question of the animal", see Denenholz Morse and Danahay (2007). See Rohman (2009) for a look at the same question in relation to modernist fiction. For similar work outside literary studies, see Ritvo (1987) and Saha (2015). For a recent introduction to and overview of the study of the animal in Victorian culture, see McKechnie and Miller (2012). Finally, for more on animal studies in a variety of arenas see, for example, Rothfels (2002), Daston and Mitman (2005), Simmons and Armstrong (2007), Freeman, Leane and Watt (2011), and Weil (2012).

[20] For an explication of postcolonial ecocriticism, see Huggan and Tiffin (2010); and for its application to Victorian Studies, see Miller (2012b). Saha (2015) similarly brings postcolonial theory into the study of Victorian conceptions of empire and the animal. For more on ecocriticism itself see, for example, Garrard (2004) and Clark (2011).

remained specific rather than generic terms – that is, terms tied to a species (*Homo sapiens*) rather

than a genus (*Homo*). I am thus interested in the resistance of the notion of the 'human' to the

implications of antiquity and evolutionary theory – principally, that 'humanness', as an evolved

quality, has taken many forms. It might also be said that, where animal studies, following

structuralist and poststructuralist theories of meaning, examines the construction of the human vis-

à-vis its relation to the animal, in this study I examine the construction of the human vis-à-vis its

elided relation to other humans. And I am further interested in the implications of this for our

understanding of 'the human' considered as an evolutionary being – as something that evolved

alongside other animals and other kinds of human in climatic and environmental conditions very

different to those we know now.

In the fields of animal studies and posthumanism, the culturally-constructed dividing line between

'human' and 'animal' is, as I have said, a primary concern.[21] Indeed, as Matthew Calarco has pointed

out, "traditional human-animal distinctions, which posit a radical discontinuity between animals and

human beings, have been relentlessly attacked from multiple theoretical, political, and disciplinary

perspectives" in the humanities and social sciences in recent decades (2008: 3). Rarely, however, has

what might be called human multiplicity been taken into consideration. In analyses of "traditional

human-animal distinctions", 'human' often implicitly refers to *Homo sapiens* rather than to, say,

Homo neanderthalensis and/or *Homo erectus.*[22] This is no doubt explained, in part, by the fact that

the 'human' under discussion is most often a cultural construction, a product of humanism and the

Enlightenment, rather than a biological taxon. Nevertheless, there is something violent in reducing

the multiplicity of human species to the singular 'human' – or, conversely, in appropriating and

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[21] By 'posthumanism' I do not mean that which is beyond or exceeds the limitations of the human, the kind of bionic superhuman of science fiction. Instead, I use the term in the more historical sense proposed by Cary Wolfe – that which comes after humanism and is critical of some of its philosophical props. I shall return to this below

[22] Existing for well over 1.5 million years, the latter of these is by far the most durable human species yet to have lived – something which, one might think, would at least ensure some consideration, however slight.

making singular what is in reality a shared name. Indeed, this is a similar point to one made by

Jacques Derrida about the concept 'animal' in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008):

> among nonhumans, and separate from nonhumans, there is an immense multiplicity of other living things that cannot in any way be homogenized, except by means of violence and wilful ignorance, within the category of what is called the animal or animality in general [...] The confusion of all nonhuman living creatures within the general and common category of the animal is not simply a sin against rigorous thinking, vigilance, lucidity, or empirical authority, it is also a crime (48)

Whether or not the use of the word 'human' in a similar manner is a "crime" against other human

species, the reduction and homogenisation of all that time and all those species into, essentially, an

Enlightenment understanding of 'the human' – as rational being and the measure of all things etc. –

does suggest a lack of "rigour" and "vigilance". This is not to equate the real suffering of animals in

industrial systems of food production – what Derrida earlier calls "the production for consumption

of animal meat" (25) – with the purely conceptual 'suffering' of other humans deemed, by omission,

unworthy of the name. The point, rather, is to suggest that, if the purpose of animal studies and

posthumanism is to overturn "traditional human-animal distinctions" and, indeed, to insist on the

distinctions between individual animals and individual species of animal, then it makes sense to

interrogate as well the distinctions hidden in the 'human' half of the binary, to insist on the fact of

distinction in itself.[23] Otherwise, 'the human' will always be truly exceptional. Some recent work in

animal studies and posthumanism, such as Marvin and McHugh (2014) and Hauskeller, Philbeck and

Carbonell (2015), does demonstrate an awareness of the length of *Homo*'s past, but this is very often

just a passing concern. Moreover, in their respective references to "Early humans" (1) and "our

Pleistocene past" (3), there is little indication of the various iterations of *Homo* over this vast span of

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[23] One danger that should be acknowledged here, though, is one that will be referenced throughout – that during the Victorian era, and others, the 'human' status of various human populations was, to say the least, a matter for debate. There were, in other words, plenty of distinctions within the category 'human'. Thus, in order to be of any use in rethinking 'the human', and in order to mitigate the reappearance or perpetuation of similar dangers, the consideration of ourselves as truly an evolutionary species, as specific members of a genus, can only really proceed by thinking in terms of species, and by ignoring the idea of race. Whether or not this could actually ever happen is of course another issue entirely.

time - the Pleistocene lasted for roughly two and a half million years, ending just over eleven thousand years ago. With the exception of these last eleven thousand years, the Pleistocene epoch also encompassed the appearance and evolution of *Homo*.[24]

A large portion of this thesis is given over to an examination and critique of 'prehistoric fiction' (which I will discuss at greater length shortly) and the stories that it told about the emergence of *sapiens* from *Homo*. In short, I read these texts as giving a humanistic, narrative-based account of human evolutionary history and of our ultimate emergence and domination. This, I argue, has serious implications for our understanding of ourselves and our species in evolutionary terms. The discussion of prehistoric fiction and its relation to the work of various authors (principally George Meredith, Arthur Machen and Joseph Conrad) takes its lead from Cary Wolfe's theorisation of the posthuman moment in *What is Posthumanism?* (2010). Giving more attention to the establishment of human antiquity and to prehistoric stone tools, it is hoped, will lead to a greater appreciation of what Wolfe refers to as the "embeddedness of the human being" (rather, the embeddedness of human being in its various manifestations) "in its technological world, the prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools" (xv). At the same time, however, I argue that early prehistoric fiction's essentially colonial account of the evolutionary history of *Homo* is best described as an example of a humanistic "cultural repression", and a "philosophical evasion", of the implications of the antiquity-evolution debate (xvi). In effect, this "cultural fantasy" of humanist autogeny meant that the Victorians never really came to terms with the notion of the evolutionary human.[25] Similarly, if the press coverage of the anniversary of Lucy's discovery is any kind of reliable

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[24] Vilém Flusser makes a similar point when he notes the "embarrassing reality" that philosophy is "a mode of reflection that was devised, not too long ago, by a handful of Greeks" (2012 [1987]: 46). The equivalent "embarrassing reality" here is that much contemporary discourse in the humanities neglects the fact that *Homo sapiens* is so far fairly short-lived. Thanks to Erica Fudge for bringing this similarity to my attention.

[25] These terms are adapted from Wolfe's original, where he refers to the posthuman as a "historical development" that requires "a new mode of thought that comes after the cultural repressions and fantasies, the philosophical protocols and evasions, of humanism as a historically specific phenomenon" (xvi).

measure, it may be that we, too, have yet to really deal with the possibility that humanness can cross – and has crossed – specific boundaries, that it belongs to all *Homo* rather than to *sapiens* alone.

A further point made about posthumanism by Wolfe is that it is about more than registering "the decentering of the human in relation to either evolutionary, ecological, or technological coordinates" (xvi). In short, thought itself must become posthuman: "the point is not to reject humanism *tout court* – indeed, there are many values and aspirations to admire in humanism – but rather to show how those aspirations are undercut by the philosophical and ethical frameworks used to conceptualize them" (xvi). His argument is that, while humanism may have many laudable "aspirations" as regards equality and respect (both among humans themselves and between humans and other animals), often the "philosophical and theoretical frameworks" that are called upon to fulfil these goals ultimately "reproduce the very kind of normative subjectivity – a specific concept of the human – that grounds discrimination" in the first place (xvii). The importance of this higher-order critique to the emergence of a genuinely posthumanist politics is also stressed by Matthew Calarco, who frames it as a questioning of the anthropocentric base of humanism. For Calarco, the development of a new politics is not to be achieved simply by an extension of consideration to animals in the typical manner of interests-based liberal humanism, but rather by "a direct *challenge* to liberal humanism and the metaphysical anthropocentrism that underlies it" (2008: 6, original emphasis). This stems from the observation that, inasmuch as animal rights movements are concerned with extending moral consideration to (some) animals based on their fundamental similarity to humans in, say, having complex social structures, they use the same approach that has "been used to deny animals basic moral standing for centuries" (9). As such, it is "paradoxical, to say the least", that animal rights discourse is conducted according to the same criteria.

This argument has interesting implications for the claim made here that humanness should be recognised as a generic rather than a specific trait. To the extent that, as Wolfe and Calarco suggest, the underlying aim of much critical discourse is essentially to restore or extend 'human' status to those from whom it has been withheld at one time or another, the category 'human' has rightly been expanded to include all races, sexes, sexualities, physical abilities etc. However, as is evident from the Thomson and Titcomb articles cited at the very beginning of this introduction, the underlying framework for our understanding of ourselves in evolutionary terms is still largely Victorian. The tension between this Victorian framework and contemporary political improvements for marginalised groups does have interesting implications, however. Whereas the Victorians filled the temporal and, for them, evolutionary distance between their 'highest' selves and the missing link with, for example, the 'lower' races, today the corresponding space – between Lucy and *Homo sapiens* – remains unfilled, and this gives it a reality or significance that it did not possess in the nineteenth century. Indeed, one of the most common arguments in analyses of Darwin's impact on Victorian culture (including in some of the studies mentioned above) is precisely that the absolute distinction between 'human' and 'animal' was breaking down. In some perverse, horrible way, the Victorians' racist and discriminatory system may have dealt better with the very idea of human evolution more successfully than we do today because intrinsic to that system was the notion of different (albeit hierarchically ordered) kinds of humanness. Today, on the other hand, it might be that we are comfortable with only one form of humanness. Contrary to evolutionary theory, then, 'the human' is now even further removed from the non-human, the animal, the natural and so on than it was in the nineteenth century – rather, the break between them has never seemed so definite. While the political and ethical implications of this change are to be celebrated (because we no longer have a racist understanding of human evolution), the theoretical implications outlined here do also need to be addressed. We have left no space for other species of human in our understanding of 'the human' as an evolutionary being among others and in relation to the world. If

the current aim of some theory and criticism is to break down the absolute distinction between

human and animal in western thought and politics, it is essential that we interrogate the

commonalities and distinctions between the Victorian understanding of the evolutionary human and

our own understanding of it. In order to fill the void that appears between human and animal, and

therefore to bring them closer together, it is crucial that other species of *Homo* be taken into

consideration; not because they demonstrate evolutionary grades of humanness, as it were, but

because they occupy the time between Lucy and ourselves and because they allow for the possibility

of radically different forms of humanness – including, according to recent palaeoanthropological

research, more than one humanness without language.[26]

Narrative and Genre

Wolfe's point that posthumanism gives a name to "a historical moment in which the decentering of

the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks is increasingly

impossible to ignore" (xv) is one that is important in various theorisations of the posthuman –

including those by Hayles (1999), Braidotti (2013) and Gomel (2014). And this seems to lead

naturally to science fiction (sf), to stories of the present and of the future – both Hayles and Gomel,

for instance, explore the posthuman moment in relation to sf. That this thesis focuses on the deep

human past, and in a broadly posthumanist register, thus requires some kind of explanation – aside

from the fact that antiquity might lead to a greater understanding of what Wolfe calls "the

prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools". Fundamentally, this has to

do with the technicity of narrative and, ultimately, with the product of narrative thus conceived – i.e.

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[26] See Dediu and Levinson (2013) for a recent analysis of the likely emergence and development of speech capabilities in different species of *Homo*. In short, they argue that *Homo heidelbergensis* (which is most typically seen as a descendent of *Homo erectus* and the last common ancestor of *Homo sapiens* and *Homo neanderthalensis*) was the first species of human with the capacity for speech.

the human. In *Exploring the Limits of the Human through Science Fiction* (2012), G. A. Miller Jnr

writes that "narrative functions as humankind's most basic tool for navigating and making sense out

of reality – it operates as a kind of universal code that transcends linguistic and sociocultural

boundaries and that lies at the very core of the human" (1):

> *To be human is to narrate*; hence, any attempt to explore the human and its limits must necessarily consider narrative. All narratives function on both ontological and epistemological levels - they build our images of the world and our selves, and they store and transmit our knowledge in intelligible packages. However, certain forms of narrative make the ontological and epistemological nature of narrative more apparent. Science fiction (SF) represents a unique form of narrative because it inscribes a distinctive kind of space that allows for the interrogation, elucidation, and generation of theoretical concepts (2, original emphasis)

In my examination of narratives of human evolutionary history (specifically prehistoric fiction), I am

exploring "the human and its limits", but from the perspective of the deep past rather than that of

the techno-societies of today and the future. More than this, though, I am in broad agreement with

Miller as to the function of narrative: at various points over the course of this thesis, narrative is

understood as a means of creating or defining 'the human' – or, rather, what passes for 'the

human'.[27] However, when applied to the deep human past, the human-making tendencies of

narrative become problematic, inasmuch as they have the potential to skew our understanding of

the human that results. In effect, this leads to something of an incestuous understanding of 'the

human' when considered as an evolutionary being. Thus, whereas Miller argues that sf narratives are,

or can be, critical assessments of future possibilities for the human and for society, I argue that a

narrative account of human evolutionary history is, or can be, dangerous for the human and for

society, inasmuch as it represents a colonisation by *sapiens* of the evolutionary history of *Homo*.[28] It

therefore leads to fantasies of our self-creation as a species, thus entrenching the notion of 'human'

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[27] The idea that narrative is a means of cognitively ordering the world, and the further notion that it is a vehicle for knowledge, are of less relevance here. For a very different take than Miller's on the function of narrative, see Joseph Carroll (2011) and Jonathan Gottschall (2012), both of whom treat narrative as an evolutionary adaptation.
[28] For an important study of the relation between sf and imperial expansion, see Rieder (2008).

exceptionalism even while explicitly negotiating the very idea of the evolutionary human.[29]

This thesis is thus partly an examination of the implications of using narrative as a tool to make, view and attempt to understand the evolutionary human. The paradigmatic example of this use of narrative is to be found in the handful of texts which, alongside the establishment of human antiquity, form one of the bases of the thesis. These stories are now said to belong to the genre of prehistoric fiction, or pf – though it is arguable that, by focusing on some of the earliest productions of this 'genre', I am studying it before it had actually become a genre. In any case, these texts were chosen according to the formal criteria Nicholas Ruddick sets out in *Fire in the Stone* (2009), a history of pf from its beginnings in the early 1860s until the present day. More information will be given under this head in chapter two, but Ruddick's principal criteria for what he calls "pure pf" are, first, that the narrative must take place entirely in prehistory and, second, that it must be transmitted to the present by unknown means. If either of these two criteria are not met, Ruddick claims, we are not dealing with pf but with a sub-genre of sf – "prehistoric sf". While my interest in pf is more contextualist than formalist, the formal characteristics outlined by Ruddick do allow for the possibility of an entirely encapsulated portion of time (that is, a portion of time entirely separate from the present, even though it has somehow made its way into the present in narrative form), and this is something that recurs at various points throughout this thesis, particularly in chapter four.[30] Rather than concentrating on form, then, I seek to relate these early pf stories to their historical context (the human antiquity-evolution debate), and to explore the reciprocal influence between

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[29] Some explication of the apparent juxtaposition of the terms "incestuous" and "self-creation" is necessary here. The overall effect of a narrative understanding of human evolutionary history is, or has the potential to be, incestuous in the sense that narrative – inherently a human-making enterprise, according to Miller and many others – is being employed to determine how the 'human' was made. As regards the fantasies of self-creation, these are what we are left with if this aspect or effect of narrative goes unconsidered – effectively, if we take early prehistoric fiction at face value.

[30] This preference for context over form in the discussion and analysis of genre fiction brings me in line with current thinking in genre theory, particularly as regards sf. See Rieder (2010) for a thorough exposition of this thesis, as well as for a critique of the formalist interpretation of genre. G. A. Miller makes a similar point about formalist studies of sf, saying that he aims "to bypass the hopeless morass of taxonomic genre definitions" (2012: 7).

text and context.[31] This kind of approach is similar to the one taken by Gillian Beer in *Darwin's Plots*

(1983), where she argues for the influence of Milton's poems on Darwin's formative years during the

Beagle voyage, and it challenges the notion that science is the source of facts and ideas that are

passively reflected in culture and cultural productions.[32] On the whole, this kind of analysis is lacking

in previous studies of the impact of the establishment of human antiquity, likely because it has yet

to be seriously examined from a literary or cultural perspective.

At root, this thesis is an examination of the historical treatment of other species of human – how

one particular culture, the Victorians, reacted to the possibility of there having been other species of

human. It is further guided by what I consider to be insufficient awareness of the implications of the

prior existence of these other humans in both popular culture and in the so-called humanities.[33]

Anat Pick's (2011) analysis of William Golding's *The Inheritors* (1955), which she praises as a

"fictional retrieval of an extinct sensibility" (54), is a notable and impressive exception. Even here,

however, there is evidence of the same misapprehensions about the evolutionary human as are

evident in Titcomb and Thomson's accounts of the significance of Lucy's discovery. Pick claims, for

example, that "Rather than combine human and nonhuman, Golding explores different modes of

perception, Neanderthal and human being in the world" (54). It is of course possible that Pick is

talking about the Enlightenment human discussed above but, in the context of a discussion of

human species and "extinct sensibilities", we need to learn to avoid opposing "Neanderthal and

human being". Neanderthal being is human being, and human being is *Homo* being – interestingly,

the only thing without being, in this case, is *sapiens*. In Pick's opposition, then, is a fundamental

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[31] The contextual influence will be explored at great length. However, one of the more novel examples of the influence these narratives had on the discussion of the evolutionary human is to be found in mathematician and educational reformer Mary Everest Boole's pedagogical theories. In her *Lectures on the Logic of Arithmetic* (1903), she uses one of these stories (Stanley Waterloo's *Story of Ab*) as a model for learning mechanisms in children.

[32] See Beer (2000 [1983], chapter one) for her discussion of Darwin's literary influences.

[33] The 'so-called' here is intended to draw attention to the fact that the presence of these other types of human is not signified, or is not commonly understood to be signified, by the 'human' of 'humanities'.

denial of a generic *Homo* being, of which Neanderthal being and *sapiens* being are specific variations. There is also, therefore, a fundamental denial of the humanity of the Neanderthals. Put differently, we need to be careful to acknowledge other forms of humanness *as* humanness rather than, as here, nonhumanness or animalness. Otherwise, in these absolute distinctions between Neanderthal and 'human', we remain as isolated as we have ever been, in spite of the implications of evolutionary theory and the efforts of contemporary critical theory, inclusive of Pick.

Summary of Chapters

Having set out the broad interests of the thesis, all that remains is to give a more specific indication of what each chapter is about and to explain the selection of these particular texts. In chapter one, alongside a more detailed discussion of the establishment of the antiquity of man, I argue for the value of an actor network theory (ANT) approach to understanding both the acceptance of the new discoveries and their subsequent impact on Victorian culture. In effect, the tools and fossil bones unearthed at various sites across Europe entered a new actor network alongside some of the most eminent scientists of the day, and the truth of the antiquity of man was thus very quickly accepted by almost every commentator (even those arguing against human evolution). Over the course of the century, stone tools and prehistoric humans made their way into public consciousness, appearing in a bewildering range of discourses – both related, and very much unrelated, to antiquity and evolution. Further, towards the end of the chapter, I chart the appearance of what I have called Primitive Man and relate this to the more well-known figure of the missing link. Rather than a stable concept in itself, Primitive Man was the product of a certain method of enquiry, the ultimate referents of which were the stone tools and fossil bones that helped establish antiquity in the first place. In many ways, Primitive Man can be seen as a general concept that housed the implications of antiquity and evolution – namely, the possibility of other kinds of human.

Building on this, chapter two examines the treatment of Primitive Man in early prehistoric fiction –

specifically, how he was the foil against which more 'suitable' ancestors defined themselves,

establishing their superiority and therefore clearing space for 'our' emergence and later dominance.

In this chapter I also explore the concept of evolutionary colonialism along the lines laid out above,

something to which I return a number of times over the remainder of the thesis. In brief, I argue that

evolutionary colonialism stems from early pf's essentially biopolitical treatment of human

evolutionary history – biopolitical because it can be seen to share certain similarities with both

Giorgio Agamben's and Michel Foucault's differing accounts of biopolitics and biopower. A major

focus of this chapter is the hero of early pf narratives – a hero of the humanist tradition who actually

does the colonising of human evolutionary history.

Chapter three pursues this same figure into the Victorian present in the work of poet and novelist

George Meredith. Meredith wrote extensively about egoism and, rather than the animal holdover as

which it has often been interpreted, I argue that this egoism is a purely human monstrosity that

ultimately derives from the type of evolutionary figure represented by the pf hero. As regards

evolutionary colonialism, the Meredith chapter is concerned with the idea that narrative necessarily

creates idealised versions of ourselves and that Meredith is keen to warn against the dangers of this

for contemporary society. In anticipation of later chapters, the Meredith chapter concludes with an

analysis of the implications for present and future society (according to Meredith's criteria) of the

uncritical celebration of evolutionary heroes. As with later chapters, it therefore deals with the

implications of evolutionary colonialism.

Chapter four is about the work of occult writer Arthur Machen, and looks more at narrative itself –

at how a narrative account of the time of human evolutionary history can be colonial in the sense set

out here. It seeks to elucidate what might be considered a 'non-narrative' account of human

evolutionary history – an account that does not project narrative onto the temporal span of human evolutionary history and therefore does not attempt to impose order upon it. It is an account which stares the contingency of human evolutionary history in the face and avoids evolutionary colonialism. It is important to point out that I do not mean that Machen wrote 'non-narrative' stories, only that he presents the notion of human antiquity and evolution non-narratively; this non-narrative treatment of human evolutionary history is to be found embedded in the stories under discussion.. Using Slavoj Žižek's theorisation of parallax, I argue that, in those Machen stories which make use of prehistoric stone tools, we have access to the 'parallax view' of human evolutionary history. Rather than using other species of human as what might be termed evolution fodder after the manner of early pf, Machen allows us to glimpse the (admittedly sensationalised) alterity of other forms of human being, while also drawing attention to the highly disruptive nature of this new awareness. It is also in this chapter that I most fully explore the concept of human deep time, drawing on Paul Ricoeur's work on narrative.

Finally, in chapter five I return to the notion of evolutionary colonialism in an examination of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and its relation to imperial adventure fiction. I argue that Conrad's novel can profitably be understood as a pf narrative, and that Kurtz can likewise be seen as a pf hero. Negotiating the novel's manipulation of historic and prehistoric time, I further suggest that Kurtz is the ultimate consequence of the logic of evolutionary colonialism, making *Heart of Darkness* a rather apt novel with which to conclude this study.

I chose to write about these particular authors and their works for a variety of reasons. There were, however, two over-riding considerations – one concerning historical influence, the other literary or cultural influence. The historical consideration was more dominant in the earlier chapters (particularly the chapter on early prehistoric fiction), while the consideration of literary influence

was more important in later chapters. From the research I had conducted into the establishment of the antiquity of man came a desire to assess the impact of this scientific development on debates, writers, and texts that had previously tended to be viewed principally in relation to Darwin and evolutionary theory. This consideration, as I have said, was one of the main drivers behind text selection for chapter two. In *The Fire in the Stone*, Nicholas Ruddick argues that these texts were some of the most important early examples of the emergent pf genre; that they were the first wave of explicitly post-Darwin narratives about human development through time. Following my research into the establishment of human antiquity, and my later archival research into its cultural impact, I therefore determined to look at these stories, as far as possible, from the perspective of the establishment of human antiquity. More than this, however, there was also a high degree of resonance between certain elements of these stories and the issues that arose in the popular discussion of human antiquity. Given all this, and that Ruddick deals with the establishment of human antiquity in just a few pages, it seemed necessary to bring out and analyse the various connections of these stories to the wider antiquity debate.[34]

It is true that, according to this criterion of historical influence, any traditionally 'Darwinian' text could have been selected for analysis. Ultimately, in fact, this is something that I think should be pursued: following on from Gillian Beer and George Levine, for example, it would be interesting to try to determine the extent to which the establishment of human antiquity influenced writers like George Eliot, and to see whether this was a part of a more rounded response to contemporary science or whether antiquity can be said to have brought its own peculiar concerns. Nevertheless, given that this thesis is the first to analyse the establishment of human antiquity at any considerable

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[34] It should be pointed out, however, that the process of selection and inclusion wasn't always as uni-directional as that described here. As noted above (footnote 31), Stanley Waterloo's *The Story of Ab* is mentioned in M. E. Boole's *Lectures on the Logic of Arithmetic* (1903), and some of the pertinent passages of the latter book were themselves excerpted in a number of review articles I encountered.

length, I thought it important to focus on writers and texts that made direct and tangible use of human antiquity and its tropes. With the exception of Joseph Conrad (whose inclusion is justified in terms of literary influence), the writers discussed in this thesis all include stone tools and primitive humans in their stories, albeit in very different ways.

The same motivation to assess the impact of the establishment of human antiquity where others had tended only to see the influence of Darwin also lies behind George Meredith's inclusion in the thesis. As will be discussed in chapter three, for a long time Meredith has been interpreted principally in relation to Darwin, and there is some excellent work by Patricia O'Hara, John Holmes and many others that brings out the strong evolutionary themes in his work. What hadn't really been discussed, though, was the use Meredith makes of flint tools and cave-dwellers – two of the main tropes of the antiquity debate – in certain key and often-quoted passages of his novels. These are of course explicit references to contemporary debates, and they therefore fall under the heading of historical influence. At the same time, however, the question of literary influence also begins to emerge in Meredith's work because he alights at a similar notion of evolutionary heroism to the one that is evident in much early prehistoric fiction. His figure of fun, the egoist, is essentially the uncritically-celebrated hero of early pf.[35] Much like Arthur Machen, Meredith's engagement with the human antiquity and evolution debate can be seen in terms of both historical and literary influence: their work is marked by the presence of prehistoric stone tools and Primitive Man in combination with generic or thematic similarities to early pf. This makes both Meredith and Machen key figures of interest for any assessment of literary responses to and recreations of human evolutionary history.

It is also worth noting that a large part of my interest in Meredith and Machen stems from their

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[35] Rather than a question of influence, it may be more accurate to talk of literary echoes because it seems likely that Meredith arrived separately at a similar understanding of the evolutionary hero as the one evident in early pf. Instead of celebrating this figure, however, Meredith criticises it. I will return to these questions in chapter three.

similar use of what might be called narrative disruption, though this is only really discussed in chapter four. There, as I have said, I pursue the notion that Machen offers a non-narrative interpretation of human evolutionary history (I will expand on this in due course, but by this I mean an interpretation that does not rely on narrative to explain the similarities and differences between different species of human). In effect, Machen disrupts the tightly controlled narrative account of human evolutionary history offered by early prehistoric fiction by making it a structural impossibility in his stories. As for George Meredith, he achieves a similar degree of narrative disruption, but through different methods – namely, a deliberately tortuous and opaque style which has the effect of bringing to a halt an already scant narrative momentum. Unlike Machen, Meredith is more explicit (to the extent allowed by his style, at least) about the benefits of such narrative disruption in relation to the story of human evolutionary history: it counters the creation of the kind of evolutionary hero found in early pf, what Meredith calls the "purer" – a term he uses as a noun rather than an adjective. Indeed, Meredith is more concerned with the consequences of this kind of attitude for contemporary and future society, and this is the principal focus of the relevant chapter – an analysis of Meredith's style and its effects on narrative momentum in relation to human evolutionary history would be too much of a diversion from the broadly contextualist concerns of this thesis. Nevertheless, by disrupting or challenging the pf account of human evolutionary history, both Meredith and Machen avoid the creation and celebration of evolutionary heroes. In different ways, they therefore counter, or warn against the consequences of, evolutionary colonialism.

Finally, the inclusion of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in the thesis was almost entirely a question of literary or cultural influence, because there are no real references to the establishment of human antiquity, nor any of its recurring tropes – prehistoric flint tools, for example – in the novel. It was chosen purely on the basis of its similarities to an early pf narrative – specifically, the similarities between Kurtz and pf heroes in terms of both method and purpose. Given that early pf

has received very little scholarly attention, it almost goes without saying that *Heart of Darkness*'s

relation to the genre is yet to be considered. Another important factor in the selection of Conrad's

novel for inclusion was that it brings into focus the connection between evolutionary colonialism and

colonialism proper – or, at least, the connection between evolutionary colonialism and the ideology

of the civilising mission that often lay beneath colonialism proper. It has the further benefit of

demonstrating the perverse consequences of a colonial account of human evolutionary history – the

notion that evolution is 'achieved' by categorically distinct individuals at the expense of their

inferiors – when taken to its logical conclusion.[36] As a whole, then, this thesis aims to do a number of

things. First and foremost, it aims to bring attention to the impact of the establishment of human

antiquity on Victorian culture. While this influence cannot really be dissociated from that of

evolutionary theory (for reasons I will go on to explain in the next chapter), antiquity played a huge

part in the wider debate and this should be more widely acknowledged than it is at present – though

there are, of course, exceptions. A further intention behind this thesis is to demonstrate the

reciprocal influence between the antiquity-evolution debate and literary productions, both in terms

of ideas (as in George Meredith's treatment of egoism, a trait which later became a key focus of the

discussion of the psychology of Primitive Man) and in terms of the individuals involved, many of

whom (like H. G. Wells and Andrew Lang) straddled the boundary between science and literature.

Finally, this thesis also aims to engage with current theoretical concerns surrounding the figure of

'the human' in new and fruitful ways. Ultimately, I hope to demonstrate the importance of other

species of human to any attempt to interrogate 'the human' and its relation to 'the animal'.

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[36] As above, the example of Kurtz reveals the interrelation between the different layers of signification in the term 'evolutionary colonialism': he is an imperious individual in a particular environment, and very much the Great Man of western tradition, but the story itself also demonstrates the consequences of the colonial interpretation of the evolutionary history of *Homo*. This argument is developed in chapter five.

1. The Establishment of Human Antiquity and the Emergence of Primitive Man

This chapter is about the establishment of what, in the mid-nineteenth century, was known as the "antiquity of man". Doubtless the controversy stirred by Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) – and later *The Descent of Man* (1871) – is much more widely known; indeed, it is commonly regarded as *the* scientific controversy of the nineteenth century. However, the human aspect of that debate (that is, the question of whether or not humans were the product of evolutionary processes, of whatever type) was deeply intertwined with the fallout from the establishment of the antiquity of man just a few months before the publication of Darwin's *Origin.* And both were heavily inflected by the Neanderthal discovery of 1856 – which failed to garner much interest in Britain until 1861, one of the most fervent phases of the wider evolutionary debate.[1] At the most basic level, the establishment of human antiquity extended the age of the 'human race' by tens, or perhaps by hundreds of thousands of years (absolute dating was impossible at this time, so the number of years by which human time had been extended was also the subject of much discussion) and it thus gave those arguing for the long evolution of all species the time they needed for the inclusion of humans in the same process. Without the prior establishment of human antiquity, human evolution by natural selection or other means would have been very difficult to argue for, let alone prove. Moreover, it seems likely that human antiquity helped to do exactly what Darwin was reluctant to do – that is, to raise the possibility of human evolution. Although there are various analogies scattered throughout the *Origin*, his only explicit comment on human evolution was left until the very end, where he merely says that "light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history" (1979:

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[1] Another aspect to all of this was Paul du Chaillu's sensational gorilla narratives, which appeared in his *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (1861). Du Chaillu was also a celebrated public speaker, and his talks at various learned societies were very well received. For a recent discussion of du Chaillu, see Miller (2012a). For a more experimental, narrative account see Ayers (2014).

458). Where Darwin prevaricated, then, the establishment of human antiquity inexorably brought humans into the discussion of his ideas.

Ultimately, this chapter charts how a small piece of open valley and two caves were divested of their natural and cultural mammalian contents – bones and stone tools – between 1856 and 1859; how the discoveries made at each of these sites helped to establish human antiquity; and how each fed into the wider discussion about human evolution. Cumulatively, these digs led to the emergence of at least two new sciences (palaeoanthropology and palaeolithic archaeology) as well as the appearance of the largely discursive creature that, in the last part of this chapter, I will refer to as 'Primitive Man'. The sites to be discussed are Brixham cave in Torbay, the Somme valley in northern France, and the Feldhofer grotto in the Neanderthal – or, appropriately, the New Man valley of Germany's river Düssel. The methodological contrasts between, on the one hand, the first two digs and, on the other, the Neander valley dig impacted on the disinterred objects and on the ways they were interpreted. In short, some quickly became, and were accepted as, reliable facts, while others made it to the textbook by a more circuitous route. The larger part of the chapter, then, will be given over to an account of each of these discoveries, accounts informed by Actor Network Theory. Building on this, the final part of the chapter will regard Primitive Man in similar terms, as a product of what ANT theorist Bruno Latour refers to as "hybrids", or "quasi-objects" or "quasi-subjects" (1993).

My intention in this chapter (and, indeed, in this thesis) is not to give an authoritative history of the establishment of the antiquity of man, as this task has been ably performed many times before – although, again, not from a literary studies perspective.[2] Instead, I want to chart how this debate merged with the various others and to speculate on how the combined product of these discussions

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[2] See note five of the previous chapter (page 12) for the details of a number of such studies.

led to the emergence of Primitive Man, an important, if sacrificial, figure in the early prehistoric

fiction which is the focus of chapter two and a touchstone for the remainder of the thesis.

Brixham Cavern

On 14th July, 1858, the excavation of Brixham cave (Torbay) began. Situated on Windmill Hill, above

the town's Bolton Street, the cave had been accidentally discovered in January of the same year

while locals were quarrying for limestone. Shortly after its discovery, William Pengelly (a local

teacher and amateur geologist and archaeologist) attempted to get permission from the landlord to

excavate the cave, only to be faced with "obstacles which then prevented this object being carried

to execution" (Prestwich et al. 1873: 471). While visiting nearby Torquay a few months later,

eminent palaeontologist, botanist, and former colonial physician, Hugh Falconer, heard about the

cave's discovery. Impressed with its palaeontological potential, Falconer sent a letter to the

Geological Society in the middle of May 1858. In a matter of weeks, a Committee of the Geological

Society had been established, and among its members were some of the most eminent scientists of

the day (including Falconer himself, Joseph Prestwich, Charles Lyell, George Busk, and Richard Owen).

A local Torquay sub-committee, "deputed by the London Committee to cooperate with them and

superintend the actual working of the cave" (475), was also established. The only man to belong to

both committees was William Pengelly. Because the Geological Society did not "have at their

disposal funds for undertaking such work" (475), the excavation was initially funded by a £200 grant

from the Royal Society – on the understanding that any discoveries would eventually go to the

British Museum – as well as a £50 donation from the wealthy philanthropist Baroness (Angela)

Burdett-Coutts, and two smaller donations of £5 each from Sir James Kay Shuttleworth and R.

Arthlington, Esq. After Pengelly's initial failure even to get permission from the landlord to start

digging, Falconer's letter succeeded in mobilising the full might of the British scientific establishment

and its society backers, such that the excavation was ready to begin within two months.

Being an experienced excavator and the most senior member of the Torquay sub-committee, Pengelly took care of the day-to-day running of the project. In place of the standard excavation technique of the time which, whether in caves or not, consisted of sinking vertical shafts over a given area and cataloguing any disinterred items, Pengelly "devised and implemented a revolutionary method of excavation". This new method was more horizontal in nature and involved removing whole layers of earth one by one and logging the position of any discovered items – the particular layer in which they were found, and their location relative to the mouth of the cave and to each other (Van Riper 1993: 86-7).[3] As the initial report from early September 1858 states, this methodology was designed to avoid "confounding the remains of different levels" of earth (Falconer et al. 1868 [1858]: 494). This was the principal shortcoming of the vertical method and, as the authors explained, it had "vitiated the results obtained in many other cave-explorations, more especially in regard of the contested position of human industrial remains" (493-94), leaving no way to conclusively determine whether or not humans had lived at the same time as the extinct or, as regards current geographical location, the incongruous mammals among which tools had previously been found. Falconer did not mention the human antiquity question in his initial letter to the Geological Society (he appears to be concerned with only extinct non-human mammals), and the later mention of it in the initial report demonstrates an early awareness of the significance of their discovery.

As had been demonstrated by Charles Lyell almost thirty years before in his landmark, three-volume *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), cave floors were thought always to have been "disturbed by the aboriginal inhabitants of each country, who have used such retreats for dwelling places, or for concealment, or sepulture" (1832: 226). Thus, any collocation of "human industrial remains" and extinct faunal remains in the same stratum of cave earth could always be rejected on the basis of

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[3] For Pengelly's own account of the method he used at Brixham, see Prestwich et al. (1873: 483-95).

their demonstrating human interference rather than human antiquity. Indeed, this was William Buckland's argument in the section of *Reliquiae Diluvianae* (1823) which describes his excavation of Goat's Hole in south Wales, a cave which contained the remains of numerous "extinct species" (89) as well as those of what came to be known as the Red Lady of Paviland. The Oxford lecturer (and later president of the Geological Society) argued that their collocation was caused by "repeated diggings in the bottom of the cave" (87).[4] The presence of "extinct species" (such as cave hyenas) in south Wales, on the other hand, was explained by reference to the Flood. And this, in turn, exposed another weakness of cave finds: even without divine agency, their contents may have simply been washed in through fissures – a particular problem for rocks like limestone which, comparatively speaking, are not very durable.

Ultimately, then, Pengelly's new excavation method allowed him and his team to keep a meticulous record of the cave's stratigraphy (the order and extent of its various layers of earth), and to determine whether or not the layers had been disturbed since their deposition. If Pengelly and the London Committee wanted their efforts to yield success (however this was defined by individual members – that is, whether it was related to human antiquity or not), both the cave floor and the excavators themselves had to be brought under strict control. Indeed, one of the complaints Hugh Falconer had made in his letter to the Geological Society was that previous cave digs, particularly in Britain, had been undertaken in too haphazard a fashion. It was his hope that, with the Society's help, a "thorough investigation of [this] well-filled virgin cave" (Prestwich et al. 1873: 474) would yield reliable evidence "before mischief is done by untutored zeal and desultory work" (473). In Bruno Latour's terms, Brixham cave had to become something of a laboratory, or a fully managed environment in which Pengelly had control over all of the variables. To have any hope of being accepted, the evidence had to result from this strict management; it had to be "fabricated", or

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[4] The Paviland remains have since been proven to be the oldest fossilised remains of an anatomically modern human yet found. In 2009, the bones – of a man in his early twenties – were dated at 33,000 years old, extending the previous estimate by some eight thousand years (Richards & Trinkaus 2009: 16036).

derived by methods as controlled and as artificial as possible. This is not to question the facticity of

laboratory facts, but only to bring to light their emergence from within complicated networks of

people, things and processes – including, in this particular case, scientific heavyweights, the postal

system, wealthy backers (including one from the banking system), rigorous methods, and a well-

used notebook.[5]

As regards the content of Brixham cave, according to the initial report from September 1858 the first

six weeks of the excavation yielded around 1500 bones or "organic remains". Though the greater

portion of these belonged to small, recent animals like rabbits and foxes, the authors professed to

be sure that "the great harvest of remains will be found in the low-level deposits, which have not yet

been penetrated". Despite their impatience for the future, there were a few less typical finds at this

early stage – including remains from the woolly rhinoceros, the cave bear, and the cave hyena (all of

which had long been extinct), as well as some reindeer remains (Falconer et al. 1868 [1858]: 494-5).

More importantly for my purposes, however, the team also found strong evidence for human

antiquity in the form of "Flint Knives" lying in undisturbed stratigraphic association with the remains

of these extinct or incongruous mammals. Despite this, in the relevant section of the initial report,

which bore the title "Human Industrial Remains (?)" (495), the writers seem awkwardly aware that

their interim conclusions had not yet been granted fact status by the scientific community:

> One of these so-called 'Flint Knives' was brought up from the deposit [i.e. layer] No. 2 from
> a depth of 30 inches below the superficial stalagmite No. 1. We failed in detecting evidence
> that these so-called 'Flint Knives' were of a different age, as regards the period of their
> introduction, from the bones of the extinct animals occurring in the same stratum of cave-
> earth, or that they were introduced into the cavern by different agencies (495-6)

The burden of proof for the establishment of human antiquity was so onerous that the excavators

couched their claims behind scare quotes, repeated 'so-calleds', and strange verbal constructions

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[5] For more on laboratories and the fabrication of facts, see Latour 1993 – particularly section two on the "Constitution" of the moderns, pp. 13-48. For an analysis of Latour's ideas in relation to modern archaeological methods, see Martin (2005).

which suggested that they had actively sought contradictory evidence from the usual quarters, but which they nevertheless "failed in detecting". Rendering their claim in more positive terms, however, the report goes on to describe a "result of great interest": the "superposition of undoubted remains of the Reindeer", in the form of an antler, "above the so-called 'Flint Knives'" (496). That the antler of an arctic mammal had been found embedded in the cave floor, nine inches *above* a stone tool, suggested – and only suggested at this point – that the antler, and probably the reindeer too, had entered the cave long after the tool had been entombed. Thanks to William Pengelly's new method and its textual representation in his notebook, a piece of flint, a reindeer antler, and the various layers of mud that surrounded them became, or went into the fabrication of, a "flint knife" of vast antiquity – or at least a potential flint knife of vast antiquity, for it had yet to be put before competent judges in the wider scientific community.

Abbeville and Amiens

In the light of the new evidence for human antiquity from Brixham, some Committee members crossed the channel to visit Jacques Boucher de Perthes to investigate his previously disparaged claims for the co-existence of humans and extinct mammals. As Claudine Cohen (1998) has pointed out, the Brixham excavation, which would last for a number of years yet, did not conclusively prove human antiquity at this time. Whatever they thought privately, Committee members were well aware that cave evidence alone "was not sufficient" (86). Indeed, this is attested by their eagerness to present themselves as having exhausted all possible means of finding contradictory evidence. Many of the members, including Falconer, Pengelly, and Robert Godwin-Austen, had experienced first-hand the reluctance of the geological community to accept, on stratigraphic and other grounds, that humans had lived contemporaneously with extinct mammals (Bynum 1984: 180). Other members, particularly Lyell, were responsible for having rejected these and similar claims in the first place. In short, more evidence was needed to clarify the implications thrown up by Pengelly's

horizontal method at Brixham.

In search of this evidence, over the course of the next year many Committee members visited Boucher de Perthes to re-evaluate his previous claims about stone tools and mammalian fossils in and around the city of Amiens. For Joseph Prestwich, the previous "rejection" of de Perthes's claims had been due "in a great degree" to the "indifferent execution" of the latter's accompanying illustrations, and his inclusion of many drawings of objects about which "there might reasonably be a difference of opinion" – for many observers, in fact, these had been indistinguishable from rocks (1859: 56).[6] Now that evidence which supported human antiquity had been derived from their own efforts, however, some Committee members became more sympathetic to de Perthes's finds, which also had the benefit of being made in open valley, in superficial deposits known as 'drift', which meant any stratigraphic doubts could be easily countered. Before getting to the results of these researches, though, we must first understand the terrain upon or within which they were made.

Unsurprisingly, the terminology used by nineteenth-century geologists is often different from that used by their modern counterparts. In the fifth edition (1855) of his *Manual of Elementary Geology*, Charles Lyell gave the term 'Post-Pliocene' to what is now known as the Pleistocene. In accordance with the relative-dating techniques of the day (which he helped to develop, and which are still in use today), Lyell described Post-Pliocene deposits as those "which are characterized by having all the imbedded fossil shells identical with species now living", whereas the upper layers of the Pliocene proper (i.e. those directly below the Post-Pliocene) "contain always some small proportion of shells of extinct species" (1855: 117). Lyell further subdivided the Post-Pliocene into "those strata which can be shown to have originated since the earth was inhabited by man", and those "of far greater extent and thickness, in which no signs of man or his works can be detected" (117). The first of these

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[6] Rocks like these later became known as "eoliths", or dawn stones supposed to be the earliest of all human tools. For more on the "eolith controversy", see De Bont (2003) and O'Connor (2003).

was often referred to as 'recent' and corresponds roughly to what is now known as the Holocene, which began about twelve thousand years ago and encompasses human history following the beginning of the (European) Neolithic period. The second of Lyell's subdivisions, those deposits "of far greater extent and thickness, in which no signs of man or his works can be detected", was known as 'drift' or 'river-drift'.

Partly defined by human absence, the Drift was somewhat awkward. It is perhaps symbolic of this very awkwardness that in both the first and second editions of Edinburgh geologist David Page's *Handbook of Geological Terms*, the entry for 'Drift' refers the reader to 'Glacial Drift', which latter entry does not exist in either case (1859: 149; and 1865: 181). The clue, nevertheless, is to be found in 'glacial': the Drift consisted of "the widespread sands, gravels and boulder clays thought to have been deposited by glacial ice" (Gibbard and Van Kolfschoten 2004: 441). In the 1850s the 'glacial theory'[7], as it was often called, was only in the process of being accepted by the geological community, having previously been seen as wild and outlandish because the dominant 'cooling earth theory' suggested that the earth had been warmer in the past than it was in the present and would be in the future.[8] In the beginning, then, the glacial theory was illogical. Over the course of the 1850s and 60s, however, it gained gradual acceptance as the best way to explain various phenomena within the Drift deposits, such as striated rocks and buried 'erratics' – the huge boulders transported from one area to another by previously unknown means. A good example of the Drift's novelty, and the challenges it presented for thought, can be found in William Hopkins's 1852 presidential address to the Geological Society. "We have reason to regard it", he said, "as a period of peculiar conditions, and of phaenomena referable to peculiar causes", the study of which "has also led us to a knowledge of climatal conditions not before suspected". In other words, from a mid-Victorian

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[7] See Hansen (1970) for an introduction to the progress of the glacial theory in Victorian geology in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

[8] Fleeming Jenkin's (1867) famous critique of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, in fact, is based on the cooling earth theory. Jenkin's essay is reprinted in Hull (1983 [1973]: 303-44).

perspective it was an altogether new and entirely strange period of deep and lasting cold (xxv).

When viewed on its own terms and in the light of prevailing thought, the Drift was, as Hopkins had it, "peculiar". It represented something of a conceptual barrier because not only was its climate different to anything that had previously been considered possible, it was also the point at which, looking backward, all trace of human activity stopped.[9]

That de Perthes's discoveries (dating from the 1840s) were made in Drift deposits was no doubt one of the reasons, alongside his poor draughtsmanship, that they were initially rejected; humans in the Drift was just too unlikely. Following their visits to de Perthes, however, Joseph Prestwich and John Evans announced precisely that – in separate papers given in May and June of 1859, less than a year after the Brixham cave excavation began. As Van Riper remarks, they "discussed different sites but drew a single conclusion: humans had lived among now-extinct mammals in a Europe that was topographically and climatically different from that of the present day" (74).

In his paper, Joseph Prestwich sets out the geology of the Somme valley in the kind of exhaustive detail that many found to be lacking in de Perthes's original accounts. Over the course of twelve pages – easily the longest section of the paper – he describes the order and extent of various strata of earth at multiple locations in the valley. His account of the pit at St. Acheul (a suburb of Amiens), for example, proceeds from the surface down through four layers of slightly different "brown loam", and a layer of "white siliceous sand and light-coloured marl, mixed with fine chalk grit". At the bottom of the next and final layer – which alone contains at least thirteen different types of sand, gravel, stone, and pebble – and at a depth of more than twenty-two feet from the surface, Prestwich

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[9] The alterity of the drift is still evident much later, in Grant Allen's essay 'Who Was Primitive Man?' (1882) – to which I will return below. Allen singles "Drift Man" out as irredeemably backward when compared to "Cave Man" – effectively a distinction between palaeolithic and neolithic, or chipped stone and polished stone, tools. Drift Man's denigration is such that Allen effectively kills him off by arguing, after William Boyd Dawkins, that he left no descendants in Europe and that, therefore, modern Europeans ultimately descend from Cave Man. This is interesting in light of the prevalence of the use of the term "caveman" as a pejorative today. For example, Jon Stone of *The Independent* (and many others) reported former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair referring to nationalism as "the politics of the first caveman council" in a speech about the Scottish National Party and the current situation in Scottish politics.

writes that "mammalian remains and flint-implements [are] dispersed throughout" (1860: 289-90).

As was the case at Brixham, the discovery of so-called human industrial remains alongside fossil

fauna was not enough in itself to prove human antiquity. Instead, their discovery had to be preceded

by meticulous observation and record-keeping – as well as having to be found in the right way,

moreover, they had to be found by the right people. To avoid the taint of human error or

presupposition, these objects – which, again like Brixham, were made up of stone tools, fossil bones,

and the earth surrounding them – had to be fabricated in a controlled environment by eminent and

respectable men. In order for them to be considered worthy of scientific consideration, these

compound objects had to be produced in such a manner as to make it at least theoretically possible

that they could be returned to their original state and location in the wider valley, thereby entirely

erasing the process by which they were produced. Only then could they be put before their

assessors in the wider scientific community.[10]

It is worth digressing briefly here to clarify the likely origin of the stone tools found in and around

Amiens. Today these tools are said to belong to the late Acheulean (or Acheulian) cultural complex –

named after the type site of St. Acheul, the same site described by Joseph Prestwich.[11] The simplest

tools of which we currently have knowledge belong to the Oldowan cultural complex (Tanzania's

Olduvai Gorge being the type site in this instance), and while these are sometimes referred to as a

"Mode 1" industry, early Acheulean tools are "Mode 2". As a whole, the Acheulean cultural period

lasted from approximately 1.7 million years ago to 250,000 years ago (Toth and Schick 2007: 1943).

Notwithstanding the fact that, as Ian Tattersall makes clear, "there is no way to associate specific

types of stone tools with any particular kind of hominid" (2008: 62), the early Acheulean culture

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[10] For John Evans, this could only succeed if geology and archaeology lent each other "brotherly assistance". In order to properly interpret the significance of these implements being found in "undisturbed beds of gravel, sand, and clay" alongside their fossil neighbours twenty feet below the current surface of the valley, a more holistic approach was required, one which took cognisance of both cultural and natural data (Evans 1860: 280).

[11] For more information on the characteristics of the Acheulean, see Nicoud (2013).

tends to be associated with *Homo erectus/ergaster*.[12] A likely descendent of this species, *Homo heidelbergensis* (itself considered by some to be the common ancestor of *Homo sapiens* and *Homo neanderthalensis*), is typically associated with the later Acheulean, a culture which, in Europe, began around 500,000 years ago (Klein and Edgar 2002: 134).[13] With the lack of absolute certainty characteristic of palaeoanthropology, then, the hand axes and other implements found in the Drift gravels of northern France in 1859 were possibly made by *heidelbergensis* and are likely to be between 400,000 and 500,000 years old.[14]

At the 1859 meeting of the peripatetic British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), held in Aberdeen in September, Sir Charles Lyell gave the presidential address to the geological section. This was roughly three months after Prestwich, Evans, and Falconer had delivered their papers, of which the speech itself was really just a recapitulation; this was also about six weeks before the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Lyell began by acknowledging that "no subject" had recently "excited more curiosity and general interest among geologists and the public" than whether or not "we have sufficient evidence to prove the former co-existence of man with certain extinct mammalia, in caves or in the superficial deposits commonly called drift or 'diluvium'" (1860: 93). And he concluded this section of his speech by saying that, "in regard to the age of the flint implements associated in undisturbed gravel [...] with the bones of elephants" in northern France, he was "fully prepared to corroborate" the findings of his colleagues (94).

The importance of this speech has often been debated. For J. W. Gruber (1965), because Lyell was such an influential figure, and because he had previously rejected the idea, his public announcement

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[12] For some, *Homo erectus* and *Homo ergaster* are the same species, while others argue that they are distinct – with *erectus* apparently having developed separately in Asia following an early migration of *ergaster* from eastern Africa.
[13] See, for example, Klein and Edgar (2002: 133-4), Tattersall (2008: 62-3), and Toth and Schick (2007: 1944).
[14] All of this of course raises the question of which cultural period the Brixham tools belonged to. As James Sackett notes, however, despite their "great significance" the Brixham tools remain "something of a mystery" because there were comparatively very few and because some of these have been lost over the years, meaning that their "industry was never satisfactorily determined" (2000: 46).

of support for human antiquity was a significant moment in the history of science.[15] For W. F. Bynum, on the other hand, its "scientific significance should not be exaggerated" because Lyell was "merely joining a considerable band of individuals who realized that the evidence favoring man's antiquity was irrefutable" (1984: 162). While Van Riper leans more toward Gruber's position, he lays greater stress on the importance of networks of expert geologists and palaeontologists discussing and deliberating the matter in private before making their views known publicly (113-16). The truth, I would argue, lies in a mixture of all three. Fabricated by rigorous method and, in the case of Brixham, generous funding, the evidence for human antiquity was indeed "irrefutable", but on its own this would not be enough. New scientific facts are not pieces of transcendent truth which lay waste to all that has gone before and leave only false beliefs and 'facts' in their wake. Instead, they have to be propagated – to be put before a scientific and, ultimately, a popular jury. In our case, in getting from the first to the second of these juries, there can be no better advocate than the doyen of Victorian geology, itself the most popular science of the day. Not only was human antiquity "irrefutable", then; it also had the great benefit of having the public support of one of the most respected and influential intellectuals of the day.[16]

Feldhofer Grotto

The August 1856 discovery of the first plausibly antique human skeletal remains to gain wide scientific attention was followed by a degree of controversy, and the episode serves as a negative

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[15] On the back of his three-volume *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) alone, Lyell commanded great respect. For fifty years, *Principles* "held its place as a standard work" and was read by "almost all the other leading authors of the Victorian period in Europe and North America" (Secord 1997: xxxv, xxxiv-xl).

[16] Quite apart from Lyell's reputation and the claims he was making, it is likely that his speech was the source of much gossip. Contrary to protocol, Lyell, as president, did not officially open the geology section. His speech was delayed "at the request of H. R. H. the President" ('The British Association Meeting at Aberdeen', 21st September 1859: 9). To accommodate Prince Albert, who was BAAS president for that year, Professor James Nicol opened the geology section, and was followed by the Reverend Dr John Longmuir. Not long into his paper, Longmuir was interrupted: "Here his Royal Highness the Prince Consort entered, who was received by the company standing, and took his seat on the right hand of the President" (9). Evidently feeling unable to finish, and "having expressed his fear that [...] he had become tedious, the Rev. Dr. sat down amidst loud applause" (9).

demonstration of the benefits of Pengelly's rigorous method of excavation. Ultimately, of course, the find made in the Kleine Feldhofer Grotte of western Germany's Neanderthal would lend its name to a previously unknown species of hominid. Two specimens of what were later recognised as Neanderthals had been found earlier in the century, though their significance went unrecognised at the time.[17] As was the case with the discovery of Brixham cave, the Neanderthal type specimen – now known as "Neanderthal 1" – was discovered by quarrymen. In this case, they were extracting limestone from the valley for the booming Prussian construction industry (Schmitz et al. 2002: 13343). Shortly after, they notified the local schoolmaster, Dr Johann Carl Fuhlrott, and he, in turn, brought in Professor Hermann Schaaffhausen, an anatomist from the nearby university in Bonn. Schaaffhausen analysed the remains and published his findings in 1858 (Trinkaus and Shipman 1994: 3-7, 49). The initial discussion about the nature of these remains was mostly a German affair, with little notice being taken in Britain until the appearance of George Busk's translation of Schaaffhausen's paper in April 1861.[18] Thus, although the Neander valley discovery was made before the establishment of human antiquity and the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, in Britain it was subsumed into these on-going discussions.[19]

How, then, was the Neanderthal discovery received in Britain? The first thing to note is the most obvious: the remains were found in a cave and were thus susceptible to the same challenges that had always been levelled against cave finds. However, this pales into insignificance when we

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[17] The first was from Engis cave, near Liège, in Belgium in 1829-30, and the second from Forbes' Quarry, Gibraltar, in 1848. The Engis discovery – a fragment of a child's skull – was only recognised as belonging to a Neanderthal in the early years of the twentieth century ('Timeline in the Understanding of Neanderthals', 2001), while the Gibraltar one was recognised as such by George Busk in 1864. The skull fragment from Engis was part of an earlier claim for human antiquity that was refuted on the usual grounds. The larger part, however, was played by the skull of a so-called anatomically modern human found in association with the remains of extinct mammals. After the establishment of human antiquity, the Engis skull (not the Neanderthal child's skull fragment) was often compared to the Neander valley skull.

[18] See Drell (2000: 1-6) for more on the initial response in the German states – and also see Schmitz et al. (2002). For analyses of the reception of the Neanderthals in a variety of contexts over the course of the past one hundred and fifty years, see Hammond (1982), Graves (1991), Moser (1992), Trinkaus and Shipman (1994), Van Reybrouck (1998), Hackett and Dennell (2003), and Hamilton (2005).

[19] The same is also true for Paul du Chaillu's *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* and his highly successful lecture tour, both of which brought a popular audience into these wider debates about human origins and history (Ellegard 1990: 43). For contemporary response to du Chaillu, see 'A Hunter Killed by a Gorilla' (14th May 1861), 'The Discoveries of M. Du Chaillu' (May 1861), and 'Equatorial Africa, and Its Inhabitants' (July 1861).

remember that, unlike at Brixham and the Somme valley, the operation at the Feldhofer grotto was in no way methodical. In order to get to the underlying limestone, the quarrymen hastily removed what to them would have been the cave's extraneous material: disregarding all but the larger bones, they threw everything else, including all stratigraphic information, more than twenty feet to the ground (Schmitz *et al.* 2002: 13343).[20] Even if the skeleton had been found in association with stone tools and extinct mammals, its rough treatment meant that there was now no way of determining it. In *The Antiquity of Man*, Charles Lyell reports having visited the site with Fuhlrott in 1860, and his account of the trip gives an idea of the effects the quarrying operation had on the area. "In the interval of three years", he writes, "the ledge of rock on which the cave opened, and which was originally twenty feet wide, had been almost entirely quarried away, and, at the rate at which the work of dilapidation was proceeding, its complete destruction seemed near at hand" (1863: 76).

The only reliable information the site had yielded was therefore the bones themselves. In contrast to Brixham and the Somme, science was, and could only be applied to the Neander valley bones long after they had been disinterred. It fell to the anatomists to determine whether or not the discovery had any significance. Thus, according to the exigencies of their preferred position on the matter of human evolution, a given commentator simply either denied or accepted the antiquity of what, in terms of conformation, were commonly regarded as extraordinary bones. This degree of flexibility had been impossible at Brixham and Amiens. For Schaaffhausen (a pre-Darwin evolutionist) it was "beyond doubt", even though he had "no proof in support of [the] assumption", that the remains dated from a period when "the last animals of the diluvium [Drift] still existed" (1861: 155).[21] Similarly, for George Busk, Schaaffhausen's translator and a senior member of the Brixham cave Committee, the circumstances under which the bones were found, "though not altogether

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[20] See the same article for an account of how, between 1997 and 2000, the contents of the Feldhofer grotto which had been so violently discarded 150 years ago were found in nearby slagheaps by researchers. Three fragments of the Neanderthal 1 skeleton (as well as non-Neanderthal fragments and some mammalian fossils) were unearthed.
[21] Darwin mentions Schaaffhausen as another evolutionary thinker in the prologue to his *Origin of Species.*

demonstrative of their real geological position, leave no doubt of their enormous antiquity" (Busk 1861: 172). This assumption on Busk's part allowed him to move on to evolutionary concerns, his principal intention being to determine whether and how "the priscan [primitive, ancient] race or races may have differed from those which at present inhabit the earth" (172).

For those opposed to the idea of human evolution, on the other hand, it was very easy to undermine evolutionary claims by pointing out the huge assumption that Busk, Schaaffhausen and others had made. For example, in an 1864 paper Charles Carter Blake observed early on that "no English geologist" had "stepped forward to corroborate" the "opinions" of Busk and the German geologists regarding the skeleton's antiquity (cxl). Rejecting the antiquity of the remains – on what, it has to be said, were reasonable grounds – Blake accounted for what he saw as their anatomical abnormalities by concluding that they were fairly recent but pathological, having belonged to "some poor idiot or hermit, who died in the cave where his remains [had] been found" (cxliii). Similarly, because the bones were not accompanied by the mud that had entombed them, another sceptical author for *The Eclectic Review* concluded that they had actually been "washed into the cave" and belonged to "an unfortunate chimpanzee or gorilla, who came to grief in comparatively recent times" ('The Antiquity of Man', May 1863: 412). Having been found and unearthed in a haphazard fashion – which amounted to something far worse than Hugh Falconer's fear of "untutored zeal and desultory work" – the antiquity, and therefore the evolutionary significance, of the bones could easily be challenged, leaving the skeleton to speak for itself on these pressing issues.

Although the find was comprised of various bones and fragments (including a shoulder blade, a femur, a pelvic bone, and some ribs), the principal, and often only, focus of the later discussion was the cranium (Drell 2000: 6; Trinkaus and Shipman 1994: 51).[22] According to Schaaffhausen, the skull

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[22] Technically, "cranium" refers to the bones of the upper jaw, face and braincase, while "skull" refers to the cranium plus the mandible, or lower jaw. However, I use the two terms interchangeably throughout.

represented "a natural conformation hitherto not known to exist, even in the most barbarous races" (155):

> The cranium is of unusual size, and of a long-elliptical form. A most remarkable peculiarity is at once obvious in the extraordinary development of the frontal sinuses, owing to which the superciliary [brow] ridges, which coalesce completely in the middle, are rendered so prominent, that the frontal bone [forehead] exhibits a considerable hollow or depression above, or rather behind them, whilst a deep depression is also formed in the situation of the root of the nose. The forehead is narrow and low, though the middle and hinder portions of the cranial arch are well developed (156).

Despite the "unusual thickness" of all the bones, the "great development of all the elevations and depressions for the attachment of muscles", and the "unusually rounded shape and abrupt curvature" of the ribs, which made them more reminiscent of the "ribs of a carnivorous animal than those of a man" (157-8) – in short, despite the phenomenal robustness of the whole skeleton – it was still only really the skull, and the "unusually savage aspect" that it must have given the "human visage" (166), that drew the attention.

Indeed, the skull's fame was such that it very quickly became commercially exploitable. In April 1863, *The Athenaeum* carried an advert from James R. Gregory[23] which informed "Gentlemen interested in Ethnology, &c." that he could now supply CASTS of the Neander valley and the Engis skulls (see note seventeen, page 55) for ten shillings each (Gregory 1863: 442, original capitalisation).[24] Nor did interest wane over the remainder of the century. In August 1880, Schaaffhausen appeared unannounced at that year's BAAS meeting in Swansea. According to one report in *The Daily News*, a placard "appeared on the walls of the reception room about midday" informing people that the professor, who was "merely passing through Swansea", had arrived and had brought the "famous

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[23] According to the Mineralogical Record website, Gregory was one of the best mineral and fossil dealers in London. The company he founded is the second oldest "mineral specimen dealership in the world", while the oldest is to be found in Bonn, where Schaaffhausen was based (Wilson 2014).

[24] According to the 'average earnings' measure, one of Gregory's casts would have cost £301 today (Officer and Williamson 2014).

Neanderthal skull" with him ('The British Association', 28th August 1880). Though it seems to have been forgotten about today, Schaaffhausen's appearance with the skull was widely reported at the time. Another account from *The Scotsman* says that by two o'clock "the hall was well filled, in anticipation of Dr Schaaffhausen's appearance". Schaaffhausen was received with "loud applause" and, "with little ceremony", he placed the "precious skull" on the table; and "upon it all eyes were turned" ('The British Association', 28th August 1880).[25] Twenty years after it first came to public notice, then, the Neanderthal skull still had the enormous pull that it had had from the beginning. Indeed, by this time, any skull under discussion in either a scientific or a colonial context – though the distinction was rarely that clear – was inevitably compared with what *The Lancaster Gazette* referred to a few years later as "the skull of what has, by common consent, come to be known everywhere as the Neanderthal man" ('Primitive Man', 12th December 1883).[26]

An ANT Summary

In discussing Bruno Latour's famous work on the subject, Ilana Gershon gives the following (Latourian) account of Louis Pasteur and microbes:

> Microbes were invisible until Pasteur's techniques of isolating and growing bacteria made them visible. Outside of the laboratory, microbes mixed with other beings willy-nilly, not only invisible to the human eye but so intricately entangled with other life that they were difficult to isolate. Pasteur, however, removed them from their concealing context. He took them into isolated spaces – petri dishes – where he provided them with a feast that encouraged them to multiply until they betrayed their existence and became visible to the human eye (2010: 164)

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[25] On the whole, there are striking similarities between this event and the 'plot' of an anti-evolutionary tract by the Rev. Bourchier Wrey Savile, called *The Neanderthal Skull on Evolution, in An Address Supposed to be Delivered A. D. 2085* (1885). Savile also made use in this book of a drawing that was circulated by Schaaffhausen at the BAAS meeting (see Appendix, p. 2). It was what Savile described as an "imaginary portrait" (2) of the owner of the skull, and it later became quite famous. See also 'The British Association at Swansea' (4th September 1880) for an example of the drawing being reprinted at, or near, the time of the meeting.

[26] Identical phrasing appeared in a *Manchester Guardian* article from few days before ('Professor Owen on "Primitive Man"', 8th December 1883: 9).

Though they clearly existed before Pasteur's intervention, microbes were part of the general muddle "outside of the laboratory". Once brought into a controlled environment and treated according to their own needs, however, they became visible and were enabled to enter a new actor-network through which they made their influence felt in, for example, agriculture and public health. In essence, this is precisely what did not happen at the Feldhofer Grotto and what did happen at Brixham cave and in the Somme valley. The horizontal excavation method and meticulous record-keeping of Pengelly and Prestwich combined to turn these two sites into laboratories – controlled spaces where phenomena could be "isolated" from the confused imbrication of the outside world.

Strictly speaking, it was not the tools and bones that the new method made visible. Rather, it was their stratigraphic association. Other stone tools had already been found with other fossil mammals by other people at a range of other sites, but they – like the Neanderthal bones – were found in the wrong way: in both their discovery and their subsequent treatment they had been mixed "willy-nilly" with soil and other objects, such that their collocation remained "invisible".[27] In contrast, by analysing and recording in exhaustive detail the composition of the soil, the order of its layers, and the exact position – on three axes – of every noteworthy object they discovered, Pengelly and the others removed pieces of flint from their "concealing context" and thereby "fabricated" flint tools of vast antiquity. The effectiveness of this fabrication was such that, by March 1863 at the latest, the fact of human antiquity was beyond doubt: "the opinion now held by geologists", claimed an author for *All the Year Round* (edited by Charles Dickens), was that humans had been around for a length of time "much greater than chronologists [had] hitherto supposed" ('How Old are We?', 7th March 1863: 37).[28] According to John Law, the actor network theory (ANT) "diagnosis" of science is that "it is a process of 'heterogeneous engineering' in which bits and pieces from the social, the technical, the

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[27] See Falconer's letter for a list of such complaints.

[28] The most famous of these Bible chronologists was Bishop Ussher, according to whose calculations Adam had been created some time during the evening before 23rd October 4004 BC. The conclusion drawn by the author regarding the conversion of scientific opinion by 1863 is confirmed by Van Riper's (1993) authoritative study.

conceptual and the textual are fitted together, and so converted (or 'translated') into a set of equally heterogeneous scientific products" (1992: 381). This, I argue, is what happened at Brixham and Amiens, where "heterogeneous engineering" led to the "translation" of various "bits and pieces" into the "scientific products" which came to be known as prehistoric flint tools.

In the same article, Law goes on to describe how, from an ANT perspective, society, organisations, people, objects, and machines are nothing more than "*patterned networks of heterogeneous materials*" (381, original emphasis). That is, they are the result of complex interactions between multiple objects, technologies, people, and processes. For instance, from an ANT perspective "analytically, what counts as a person is an *effect generated by a network of heterogeneous, interacting, materials"* (383, original emphasis). As regards the establishment of human antiquity, then, that pieces of flint were able to be interpreted as prehistoric stone tools was an effect of one such network of heterogeneous materials – mud, fossilised animal bones, money, excavators, writing etc. Of course, they were not mere "pieces of flint" before they became part of this mid-Victorian network; from the time of their first fabrication, they were clearly tools. One reviewer for Charles Lyell's *Antiquity of Man* conjectured as to "the state of public opinion about these flints". After the publication, in the reviewer's magazine and others, of "so many communications and remarks upon the circumstances" of the tools' discovery, public opinion, they write, is "probably nearly this":

> the majority of readers are unwilling to accept the fact of their human workmanship, having never seen specimens of them. On the other hand, all who have seen good specimens of them, such, for instance, as several exhibited in London, have been compelled, however reluctantly, to confess that something beyond nature has shaped these flints, and that they bear every appearance of human handiwork ('Literature', 14th February 1863: 220)

The certainty that "something beyond nature" had shaped these objects only took on significance when the tools became Victorian "scientific products" with demonstrably ancient origins. When the tools entered a new "patterned network of heterogeneous materials", their effects changed; as Law

notes, "durable material forms", like late-Acheulean hand axes, "may find other uses" (387).

Foremost among these new effects was, of course, a huge increase in the duration of human history.

A further effect of the "patterned network" of which the Brixham and Somme tools were a huge part

– as was the controversy stirred by "the Neanderthal man" – was Primitive Man, the focus of the

remainder of this chapter. Indeed, as part of their speculation on the state of public opinion

following the discovery of the flint tools, Lyell's reviewer wonders about the fate of Christian

doctrine, noting that "This Neanderthal man was brutal to such a degree that no amount of physical

degradation would allow of his descent from Adam in a direct line; and even supposing that it did,

we have the skull from Engis, which while it was probably more ancient, or at least quite as ancient

as the one from Neanderthal, is decidedly more intellectual" (221).

Missing Links and the Emergence of Primitive Man

As might be surmised from the brief discussion above, the Neanderthal cranium entered popular

discourse even without the benefit of a methodical extraction from its cave. In fact, "the fossil man

of the Neanderthal" was said by *The Westminster Review* to have "made much more noise in the

world in his present fleshless condition than he or any of his contemporaries ever did while living"

('Science', April 1866: 556). Aside from the lack of other data and its "extraordinary form"

(Schaaffhausen 1861: 155), the extended focus on the skull was also partly due to the popularity of

craniology – a kind of population phrenology which tried to match the intellectual and cultural

'advancement' of a given race with the shape and volume of apparently representative skulls.[29]

Craniology was thus one of the principal entry points of colonial politics into the debate about

human antiquity and evolution and, as a science (or, rather, 'science'), it also evinces the porous

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[29] See Morse (1999) for more on craniology, particularly its relation to the so-called Three-Age system of archaeology (Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age) developed in Scandinavia – and see Trigger (1990) for more on the development of the Three-Age system. See Hartley (2001) for a thoroughgoing examination of the full range of nineteenth-century responses to the head, the face and the emotions – including physiognomy.

boundaries between the terms 'species' and 'race' in the Victorian era. By far the greater portion of Schaaffhausen's analysis of the Neander valley skull consists of comparisons between it and countless others from all races and ages. Similarly, in *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863), which includes what is probably the most famous early discussion of the cranium, Thomas Henry Huxley used a similar methodology – as had most commentators in between, and as would most who followed. After a lengthy analysis, he determined that although it was "the most pithecoid [i.e. ape-like] of human crania yet discovered", its capacity was equal to that of various "savage" populations, which in turn suggested that its "pithecoid tendencies [...] did not extend deep into the organization" (181). The skull, that is to say, fell well within the range of human (that is, *Homo sapiens*) cranial variability, such that it was "by no means so isolated as it appeared to be at first", and instead represented "the extreme term of a series leading gradually from it to the highest and best developed of human crania" (183). Though definitely human, the skull belonged to an individual from the 'lowest' race of which it was possible to conceive.

When Huxley declared that the Neander valley remains belonged to a member of his own species (he uses the term *Homo sapiens*, and I will return to this in the next chapter), he was simultaneously denying that they belonged to the so-called missing link between humans and apes. For the most part, this became the settled position. After examining one of the earlier but unnoticed Neanderthal skulls (the one found in Gibraltar in 1848 – see note seventeen, page 55) George Busk was enabled to answer the question he had posed a few years earlier. He determined that the Neander valley cranium was not due to "a mere individual peculiarity, but that it may have been characteristic of a race extending from the Rhine to the Pillars of Hercules" (Busk 1864: 110). Similarly, Busk's partner in Gibraltar, Hugh Falconer, wrote to a friend that

> I do not regard this *priscan pithecoid man* as the 'missing link', so to speak. It is a case of a very low type of humanity – very low and savage, and of extreme antiquity – but still man, and not a half way step between man and monkey (Falconer 1868: 561, f.n. 2, italics in original)

These two specimens, then, belonged to what was often called the Neanderthal race, rather than to

a species between humans and other primates. The only other genuine contender for the title of

missing link would not appear for another thirty years, with Eugène Dubois' 1891 discovery of what

he called *Pithecanthropus erectus* – now known as *Homo erectus*. In the interim period, however, a

much lesser known figure than the missing link was the object of detailed discussion by innumerable

commentators; this figure was known by many names, but here I will use the term Primitive Man.

In the first instance, Primitive Man is best approached via a comparison with the missing link

because, while being fundamentally different, they do share certain similarities. In *Literature after*

Darwin (2011), Virginia Richter examines Charles Darwin's portrayal of the missing link in *The*

Descent of Man (1871), noting that he "metaphorises the missing link on two levels". On the

"structural level", the missing link is what is inferred from a gap in current knowledge; it is "a trace

implied by the factual absence of intermediary forms". Further, because both it and its progenitor

are equally "unknown", it is figured by Richter as "an equation with two unknown variables": the

only thing with which we are familiar is the most recent descendent, the modern human – or the

sum of the equation. The second level of the missing link's figurativeness relates to Darwin's

analogical approach:

> Diverse 'lower' groups, such as women, 'idiots', 'savages' and apes serve as signposts to
> human origins. The *missing* link is thus exchanged for an existing, living connector that
> takes on its function as a marker of hybridity, boundary confusion and threatening
> extinction (53, original emphasis)

When attempting to flesh out his understanding of the missing link, Darwin only manages to create a

number of "replacement links" that signify something which is itself only a gap in present knowledge.

Not only is the missing link a fundamentally hollow concept, then, but this "signifier of absence" can

also only be approached by substitution – or, in Richter's more Derridean reading, by the logic of the

supplement. Its foundational emptiness invites projection, and this renders the concept itself

nothing more than a collection of significations from a variety of discourses – all of which gives it "an almost mythical quality" (52-3). This mythic status limits the range of things that can actually be said about the missing link when considered as an object – principally, that it has or has not been found, or that it will or will not be found. Aside from the spectacle of such events, this is why the missing link tended to be discussed most often following palaeoanthropological discoveries which brought to light more 'primitive' body forms than had hitherto been known about, such as the Neander valley find and Eugène Dubois' discovery of *Pithecanthropus erectus*. The link's "missing" status meant that it was something to be pursued, found, and catalogued.[30]

While the missing link was the aggregate and ultimately baseless product of evolutionary, colonial and other discourses, this is only half true for Primitive Man. Like the missing link, Primitive Man was approached analogically by reference to apes and various 'savage' populations. Where the two figures differ, however, is on Richter's "structural level". Instead of using "signposts" (53) to point only to an empty space, those interested in the lifestyles of their very earliest ancestors used the same signposts to point to the "scientific products" fabricated at Brixham, Amiens, and many other sites over the remainder of the nineteenth century, and on into the twentieth. It is thus that Primitive Man may be said to be an "effect" of the "patterned network of heterogeneous materials" of which the flint tools were themselves a big part, as indeed was the Neander valley cranium. In the prehistoric stone tools, those seeking information about ancient humans already had the kind of solid, factual, material (and fully textualised) foundation that was lacking in the missing link and was a primary focus of its pursuit. Primitive Man, therefore, was not merely a discourse-based "signifier of absence". Instead, he was the answer to questions relating to who had made the stone tools: what were his thought processes? To what extent, if at all, could he reason? Did he have a religion? Was he a moral being? In short, while the missing link was a hypothetically discoverable physical

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[30] In fact, Dubois travelled to Java for exactly that purpose – to discover the missing link, or Ernst Haeckel's *Homo allalus.*

object, Primitive Man was not. And this allowed the concept to be much more fluid, with Primitive Man making his way into some very strange places by the turn of the century and into the Edwardian era – including, for example, a children's arithmetic book (Boole 1903) and a host of articles about subjects as diverse as music ('Pianoforte Case Building and its Difficulties', March 1910; 'The Flute', 27th October 1900; and Donovan 1900), architecture ('The History of Architecture', 3rd March 1866; and Cowan 1908), military training (for examples, see page 171, note 3, of this thesis), gardening (Dunington 1910), child psychology (a very large portion of the output of the American journal, *Pedagogical Seminary* from around the turn of the century), ship decoration (Sparrow 1901: 296), and many more besides. Further, whereas the missing link was resisted by many, Primitive Man was both seen and accepted as an ancestor. Thus, in an article otherwise hostile to the primitive turn in art during the first decade of the twentieth century, Richard Middleton accepts without further comment "the primitive man who lurks in some dim oubliette of everybody's consciousness" (1911: 152).

Primitive Man at the Limits of Reason

Perhaps the most important consequence of Primitive Man's radical materiality and factuality was that the development of the concept was a much more plural affair than was the case with the missing link, which belonged only to the evolutionists – the eventual victors. The indisputable nature of the evidence for some kind of prehistoric human meant that commentators of all positions, including anti-evolutionists, accepted their existence as truth and speculated at length about their nature.[31] While the missing link was reduced to cameo appearances at moments of increased interest like Dubois's discovery of *Pithecanthropus erectus*, the concept of Primitive Man was

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[31] I am also indebted to Van Riper's (1993) statistically-supported argument that, by 1863, resistance to the idea of human antiquity and prehistory had effectively withered.

constructed by a wide variety of commentators over a number of years.[32] As we have seen, when it

came to human development, the Victorians often thought in terms of race rather than species. This

is a subject to which I will return in the following chapter but for now it will be enough to say that,

despite the emergence and growing influence of Darwinian theory, there prevailed at the time a

strong tendency towards what Will Abberley has termed "species essentialism" (2011). With regard

to culture, this meant that whatever made tools was human (that is, *Homo sapiens*); whereas for

morphology, it meant that whatever looked sufficiently human was essentially and fully human.

Recall that, for both sides of the debate, the Neander valley remains were unquestionably human.

For Blake, the man from the Neanderthal was a pathological human; whereas for Huxley and the

evolutionists, he was from the lowest race of *sapiens* of which it was possible to conceive. Human

primitiveness, then, was often conceived in racial and/or cultural terms. It was quite conceivable

therefore that someone wholeheartedly opposed to evolutionary theory in any of its forms could

accept a race of antique humans who, with respect to material culture, lacked any degree of

sophistication, but who nevertheless shared an essential, albeit dormant, humanity. Louis Figuier's

Primitive Man (1870), for example, contains etchings of primitive men, women and children who are

essentially modern Europeans wearing rags, carrying stone tools, and sitting around fires (see

Appendix, p. 3). George Campbell (the eighth Duke of Argyll and a noted opponent of evolutionary

theory) argued in a similar vein that "along with a complete ignorance of the Arts it is quite possible

that there may have been a higher knowledge of God" and that, therefore, the earliest humans did

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[32] Another group in the discussion was the "dualists" (as opposed to the "monists", or Darwinians), whose most famous proponent was Alfred Russell Wallace, the co-discoverer evolution by natural selection. The dualists believed that, when it came to human evolution, the body had evolved but the brain and/or mind had not: "A supporter of the dualistic hypothesis must, on the other hand, maintain that man at the very first moment of his existence was at once essentially man, and separated, at his very origin, from the highest brutes by as impassable a gulf as that which anywhere exists between them to-day" ('Primitive Man', July 1874: 41). The article from which this quotation is taken sparked a small controversy – see Darwinian, A. (1874) and 'Quarterly Review' (October 1874) for two responses. One interesting thing to note about the "dualistic hypothesis" is that, like the review of David Page's book (see page 13, above), it challenged the dehumanisation of "savages" by over-eager Darwinians. The author of article quoted here, for example, goes on to write that "The recklessness with which assertions are made about savage tribes [specifically, specious tales about some without any language at all] is […] so great that no account ought to be fully received without a knowledge of the bias of the relater and a careful criticism of his statements" (43-44).

not necessarily live in a state of "utter barbarism" (1868: 392).[33] For Campbell, Figuier and many

others, primitiveness was a matter of culture rather than morphology.

That Primitive Man's factual basis was widely accepted means that he may be seen as the product of

a very broad discussion in which there were no ultimate victors – or, at least, where the stakes were

not quite as high as they were with regard to the missing link. Primitive Man was the collection of

traits that amassed over a number of years as countless individual writers sought to understand the

"habits of life and general characters of our early ancestors", the "desire for information" upon

which subject had "increased vastly" by the mid-1860s ('Primitive Man', January 1865: 491). Given

his plural origins, Primitive Man may therefore be defined as the least culturally advanced creature

of which a given writer, in their particular field of interest, was able or prepared to conceive.

Pursuing their own interests, individual writers sought to understand different traits, behaviours,

beliefs, and objects. However, no matter the writer, their particular interest, or their position on

evolutionary theory, many used a very similar method of enquiry. The philologist Friedrich Max

Müller, another prominent opponent of Darwinian evolution, gave the clearest exposition of this

method, which for him was "the true work of the historian, and of the philosopher too" (1885:

110).[34] The aim was

> to go back as far as literature, language, and tools will allow us, and for the time to consider
> that as primitive which, whether as a tool, or as a word, or as a proverb, or as a prayer, is
> the last we can reach, and seems at the same time so simple, so rational, so intelligible, as
> to require no antecedents (110).

Both before and after this intervention, a number of writers engaged in precisely this practice and,

over the course of the second half of the century, Primitive Man emerged as a collection of tools,

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[33] For other biblically-minded commentators, there was also the possibility that the so-called Preadamites were responsible for making the tools found in caves and Drift deposits. For a very thorough account of the Preadamite theory, see Livingstone (1992).

[34] In a similar manner to those supporting the "dualistic hypothesis", in this article Müller criticises the tendency of evolutionists to dehumanise so-called savages.

customs, beliefs, and behavioural traits which were "the last we could reach" before getting to non-culture. It was of comparatively little importance whether the first thing with culture was the offspring of God or of an ape; the only thing that really mattered was that it represented the first emergence of culture in a natural world.

To give just two, admittedly trivial, examples of Müller's method in action: One anonymous writer sought to explain the first appearance of the lamp. Though "it would be hazardous to conjecture what the first wick consisted of" ('The Light of Other Days', 20th January 1900: 114), he or she nevertheless discarded caution and claimed that the lamp itself was the result of the joint observation that artificial light was good, and that animal fat burned and ran to the ground: if light were to be portable, *something* would be needed to catch and store the fat. And here, therefore, is the lamp of the "aboriginal races of mankind" (113), the least advanced lamp of which this particular writer was able to conceive. Similarly, in 'A Chat about Spoons' (1904), Richard Quick traced the origins of this "common yet useful utensil of our every-day life", arguing that it derived from the use of shells for the same purpose (24). Thus, "the primitive shell spoon, as used by prehistoric man" was the last Quick could reach before getting to no spoon at all. Taken as a whole, and including contributions on less trivial subjects, Müller's method led to a conception of Primitive Man, in cultural terms, as the last human thing, or the first non-animal thing, of which a given writer was prepared to conceive.

Of course, depending on the writer, this could mean very different things but, in both their method and their ultimate conclusions, there are clear similarities. In an 1882 article of the same name, the author and populariser of evolutionary theory, Grant Allen, asked 'Who Was Primitive Man?' In answering this question, he constructs a hierarchical system which proceeds downwards from the cultured European (who is only very rarely mentioned; his dominance taking him almost entirely out of the evolutionary fray), through cave men, working-class labourers, contemporary savages,

different kinds of contemporary savage, then beyond the drift men and on, ultimately, to his version

of Primitive Man.[35] In similar fashion to that later prescribed by Max Müller, Primitive Man is for

Allen the last human thing, or the first non-animal thing he can reach. It was with Primitive Man that

reason was born; for he "must have been acquainted with the use of fire, and have been sufficiently

intelligent to split rude flakes of flint", though "his brain was no doubt about halfway between that

of the anthropoid apes and that of the Neanderthal skull" (319). Although Christian geologist, John

William Dawson, would clearly have disagreed with the particulars of Allen's argument, his own

account of the "day when the first man stood erect upon the earth and gazed upon a world which

had been shaped for him" by God's geology bears comparison with Allen's. For it is on "that day"

that the world became "for the first time the habitation of a rational soul", when "the old and

unvarying machinery of nature first became amenable to the action of a conscious, independent

earthly agent" (22-23: 1874).

The conclusive establishment of the antiquity of man in 1858-59 was very quickly caught up in the

controversy that followed the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* a few months later,

while these two developments were themselves brought to bear on the Neanderthal controversy

from 1861 onwards. Although it is often very difficult to isolate antiquity and evolution one from the

other in this larger discussion (which endured well into the twentieth century), antiquity was much

more widely accepted than Darwinian evolution, and Actor Network Theory seems to explain this

most fully. The broad-based discursive construction that I have termed Primitive Man was ultimately

an effect of the new actor network that emerged during the excavation of Brixham cave, and which

later incorporated such wildly divergent views as Allen's and Dawson's. For both the evolutionist and

the anti-evolutionist, Primitive Man, though very different in particulars, represented the first

emergence of reason in an otherwise irrational world. It is between these two seemingly opposite

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[35] In light of what was said about the Drift above, it is worth noting that drift men are rather harshly treated in this essay: they are killed off and said to have left no trace in the modern world.

but actually fairly similar perspectives that, in the next chapter, I will situate prehistoric fiction – a genre concerned with what Dawson refers to as the "mysterious meeting-place of the past and present" (23), or the first emergence and later development of a rational essence.[36]

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[36] Looking ahead, this kind of tension between two opposing perspectives on the same object is in chapter four described in terms of parallax. The perspective that is somewhere in between the two but is irreducible to either is known as the "parallax view". According to Slavoj Žižek's theorisation, the parallax view can be a particularly fruitful site for critique.

2. Prehistoric Fiction: Biopolitical Humanisation and Evolutionary Colonialism

In much the same way that it led to the emergence of new scientific disciplines, the establishment of human antiquity and evolution was also the impetus behind the appearance of a new genre of fiction, what Nicholas Ruddick (2009) calls "prehistoric fiction", or simply "pf". Prehistoric fiction can thus be counted among the "effects" of the "patterned network of heterogeneous materials" which includes the Neander valley cranium and the prehistoric flint tools from Brixham, Amiens, and a range of other sites from across Europe.[1] Following on from the previous chapter, this one will explore the manner in which early pf might be considered a reflection of the pluralistic human antiquity debate, as opposed to the more divisive debate about the possibility of human evolution. At the close of the previous chapter, it was suggested that pf is situated somewhere between Grant Allen's and John William Dawson's competing interpretations of Primitive Man, and of human antiquity and evolution more widely; that it combines both the pro- and anti-evolutionary responses to the establishment of the antiquity of man. Endowed with a full but latent humanity, pf heroes are dropped, like Dawson's Primitive Man, into human evolutionary history whereupon they set about establishing rigid distinctions between themselves and those around them, a move that is characteristic of Allen's essay. Ultimately, this chapter is based on the notion that, while the mechanism and narrative driver of early pf is evolutionary in nature, its heroes owe more to what might be classed as the anti-evolutionary response to the establishment of human antiquity – that is, to people like Dawson, a deeply Christian geologist, for whom the human might have been very old but, over the course of this newly-lengthened history, it had always been as human as it was in the

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[1] As the century wore on, there were many more significant palaeoanthropological finds. These include the 1866 discovery of a Neanderthal mandible (lower jaw) at La Naulette in Belgium; the 1868 discovery of six anatomically modern human skeletons in association with sophisticated tools and art objects at Cro Magnon; and the 1886 Spy discovery mentioned above (page 17). For an example of a contemporary response to the Naulette find, see 'Gossip about Portraits' (11th August 1866); and for Cro Magnon, see *The Examiner* (19th June 1869: 397) and 'Article VI' (October 1870).

nineteenth century. Reading early pf through the prism of human antiquity rather than human evolution thus reveals a central contradiction between the heroes' innate superiority and the concept of evolution itself (that is, a nineteenth-century concept of evolution, otherwise known as progressive development).

It is in *The Fire in the Stone* (2009) that Nicholas Ruddick sets out the generic peculiarities of pf, attempting to establish it as a genre distinct from science fiction, with pf often tending to be considered a subgenre of the latter.[2] It is on this basis that he makes a distinction between "pure pf" and "prehistoric science fiction" (or "prehistoric sf"). According to Ruddick's criteria, most of the narratives discussed in this chapter are pure pf. Like H. G. Wells's *A Story of the Stone Age* (1897), for instance, they are "set exclusively in prehistory" and they have either a modern third-person narrator who "recounts prehistoric events without explaining how he or she acquired knowledge about them", or a prehistoric first-person narrator who "recounts events without any explanation of how s/he is transmitting them to the present". In short, works of pure pf "conceal the time machine that makes them possible". When the time machine is acknowledged, either implicitly or explicitly, we are dealing with prehistoric sf. In the terms of fiction if not those of science, an explicit time machine is rather straightforward. An implicit time machine, on the other hand, may be considered as any literary device which bridges the temporal gap between the events described and their appearance in a nineteenth century book or magazine, such as the isolated South American plateau in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912) or the "race memories" of the narrator of Jack London's *Before Adam,* serialised in 1906 and 1907 (Ruddick 3-4).

I do not dispute Ruddick's generic distinctions, and it is according to his criteria for pure pf that most of the texts for this chapter have been chosen. Indeed, the principal frame of reference throughout

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[2] See Evans (2009: 15) for a recent example of this tendency.

this chapter will be the genre as a whole, rather than individual texts. Nevertheless, it is often the case that works of early prehistoric fiction which meet Ruddick's criteria still strain any notion of "purity". In texts which were intended as satires, for example, the prehistoric elements might easily be considered as being of secondary, or even of incidental, importance; the events of the story could just as easily have taken place in a foreign country, or even on another planet.[3] Moreover, three of the stories to be discussed in this chapter originally appeared in periodical publications alongside a host of both related and, more often, unrelated texts – including, for example, adverts, essays, articles, book extracts, book reviews and, finally, other fictional narratives.[4] The physical medium through which these stories were initially delivered to their audiences thus provides something of a contextual "time machine" that helps to connect the otherwise self-contained prehistoric elements of pf stories to the nineteenth century. Finally, this thesis is more concerned with tracing how the establishment of human antiquity and evolution crossed disciplinary and generic boundaries, with how the ideas of prehistory and the antiquity of man appeared in variety of contexts. In light of all this, the focus on a specific genre in this chapter is a practical consideration rather than a theoretical one, and both here and in the thesis as a whole care will be taken to avoid erecting retrospective barriers where once there were none, or were few and minor. The slips and interplays between and among genres and disciplines are, for me, among the most interesting things about prehistory and the emergence of prehistory into Victorian consciousness. This chapter simply deals with some of the more explicit fictional treatments of the subject.

In the broadest terms, pf is concerned with "hominization", or "the evolutionary process that made us the kind of species that we are" (Ruddick: 3). In accordance with contemporary

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[3] This is the case with Andrew Lang's 'Romance of the First Radical', Henry Curwen's *Zit and Xoe* (1886) and, to a lesser extent, Ashton Hilliers's *The Master-Girl* (1910). Indeed, one contemporary review of Lang's 'Romance' entirely ignores the prehistoric elements of the text, preferring instead to interpret it as a humorous discourse on politics and theology that "might be bound up with Mill 'On Liberty'" ('In the Wrong Paradise and other Stories', 11th December 1886: 778).
[4] Lang's 'Romance' was first published in *Fraser's Magazine* (September 1880); Curwen's *Zit and Xoe* in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (April-May 1886); and Wells's 'Story' first appeared in *The Idler* (May-September 1897).

palaeoanthropology, Ruddick acknowledges that human prehistory was "the period between the emergence of the first hominids and the invention of writing" (1), and that it therefore covers the genus *Homo* as a whole. It is presumably for this reason that he avoids using the term "humanisation". Ruddick's scope, however, is much wider than mine: his book covers the history of the whole genre, whereas this chapter will concentrate on only a handful of texts from the first forty or so years of this history – until the end of the nineteenth century. In these narrower confines, the avoidance of "humanisation" appears more normative than descriptive, for early pf (that is, the pf of this first period of roughly forty years' length) is an inherently teleological genre and, as has been suggested already, individual texts usually have an essentially modern central protagonist.[5] It is for these reasons that I will adopt the term "humanisation" throughout, and this will have the further benefit of calling attention to the semantic tensions between the terms 'human' and '*Homo*', tensions which are implicit in early pf and, I would argue, contemporary culture.[6]

Finally, the inclusion of Elie Berthet's 'Parisians of the Stone Age' in a discussion of Victorian literature should be explained – the original was published in French in 1876, with Mary J. Safford's translation appearing in 1879. Berthet's inclusion is justified on the basis of his fairly strong presence in the British literary market at around this time – the late 1870s and early 1880s. Advertisements for translations of his latest work appeared fairly regularly, as did reviews of these and of their French originals. Indeed, the few mentions of 'Parisians of the Stone Age' that I have been able to find in the periodical literature refer to the French original rather than the translation, and this is also the case for many references to his other works.[7] Strangely enough, one such mention of 'Parisians' came before the publication of the book in which it appeared, which suggests a certain

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[5] Even in William Golding's *The Inheritors* (1955) – widely considered as a triumph of the genre and its first masterpiece – there is still a reliance on *Homo sapiens*, inasmuch as they provide the narrative impetus and they are the conclusion to both the book and the evolutionary process.

[6] In palaeoanthropological terms the two are synonymous, but while the majority of pf's various prehistoric populations may be *Homo*, they are not yet human. This is seen as a later development. Indeed, the human is regarded as *Homo* plus *sapiens* rather than merely as *Homo* itself – or even as just another form of *Homo*.

[7] For a brief review of Berthet's *Histoires des unes et des autres*, for example, see 'French Literature' (6th July 1878).

degree of interest and anticipation. In 'Literary Gossip', among a list of various literary happenings, the anonymous author informs their readers that "A novel, the scene of which is laid in Antediluvian ages, has just been completed by Elie Berthet, 'Les Parisiens à l'Age de Pierre', and is to be the first of a series of such romances" (1875: 217).[8]

Judging by these and other references to Berthet and his work, he seems to have been known as a writer of either low-rate or amusing, distracting tales, depending on the perspective of the reviewer. For one reviewer of Gilbert Venables's 1880 translation of Berthet's *The Sargeant's Legacy*, for instance, Berthet's original could "not [have been] the production of a heaven-born novelist" (Baker 1880: 200). While for a reviewer of Berthet's *Les Honilleurs de Polignies* (1866), the book was "an extremely pretty story" ('French and German Novels', January 1877: 21). For an author as prolific as Berthet, such differences of opinion are unsurprising. However, each of these reviews and mentions, in combination with the numerous advertisements for the latest of Berthet's novels to appear in translation, do demonstrate that he was reasonably well-known, if not widely read. A further consideration, however, is that the French perspective on the establishment of human antiquity was very important because the majority of the discoveries that had any bearing on the issue were made – and would continue to be made – in France.

Humanisation and the Pf Hero

In Ruddick's analysis, the humanisation process described in pf is marked by discrimination between the more and the less human; and this leads, he argues, to "certain individuals [being] promoted to the rank of worthy ancestors and others [being] demoted to savagery or animality". This is perhaps the defining characteristic of the genre: without it, in fact, "there can be no effective pf" (2009: 19).

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[8] For a post-publication review (again of the French original), see 'French Literature' (2nd September 1876).

This, I argue, is certainly the mechanism that drives pf; however, when the genre is viewed in relation to the wider antiquity and evolution debates, there can never really be any question of "promotion". Always already "worthy ancestors", pf heroes police the boundary between the sufficiently and the insufficiently human. In Elie Berthet's 'The Parisians of the Stone Age' (1879 [1876]), for example, with the exception of the hero, Fair-Hair, and his betrothed, Deer, the scattered population resemble gorillas and/or Neanderthals: they are "short and sturdy in figure", with skulls "of the elongated form naturalists call dolichocephalic" – that is, Neanderthaloid. They have, moreover, flat noses and "extremely prominent" brow-ridges and jaws (17-18). "Still more fierce and brutal" than even these, however, is Red (24). And it is against him, the least advanced specimen of non-animal life in the narrative and the neighbourhood, that the inexplicably unprecedented Fair-Hair will later establish his superiority in bloody fashion. To the extent that he has located the underlying mechanism of pf, then, Ruddick is correct in his analysis; it is about sorting the worthy from the unworthy, the fit from the unfit. The hero's worthiness, however, is not the result of some organic evolutionary process at the end of which they are rewarded with their "promotion". Instead, they and their fitness are there from the beginning, guiding the whole process of human evolution.[9]

The tension between the hero's superior, though latent, essence and its emergence over time is thus a constituent part of early pf's colonisation of the evolutionary history of *Homo*. It can be viewed in relation to the first and second elements of evolutionary colonialism outlined in the introduction (see pages 21-24) –namely, what the hero does in his own particular environment, and his innate superiority as an ideal of the humanist tradition. Indeed, it demonstrates the very close connection between the two: the hero's behaviour is an expression of his superior, humanist essence, which is itself only visible through the expansive behaviour. At the same time, however, that the hero's

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[9] See Hensley (2002) for a discussion of Stanley Waterloo's *The Story of Ab* in relation to turn of the century eugenic theory in Britain and America.

superior essence has to emerge over time at all is a consequence of narrative: if his superiority was made plain from the beginning, there would be no story. Whereas in the introduction to this thesis I set out three distinct elements of evolutionary colonialism in fairly hierarchical terms, in truth they are very much interconnected; each one is implicated in the others. In early pf, the clearest articulation of this can be seen in the hero's assumption of biopolitical management of the process of human evolution. First, however, it is necessary to give a fuller account of the hero's unexplained superiority.

One of the more striking differences between pf heroes and their neighbours is the latter group's lack of expressive faces, something which, in a Levinasian manner, rather aids their marginalisation.[10] As was the case with craniology (see previous chapter, page 62-63), in a nineteenth-century context physical appearance is often commensurate with moral and intellectual advancement, which is to say, as Herbert Spencer put it in 'Personal Beauty', that there is a link between "beauty of character and beauty of aspect" (1858: 417). In Berthet's 'The Parisians of the Stone Age' (1879 [1876]) – the first of three separate narratives in his *The Prehistoric World* – the superiority of Deer and, particularly, of Fair-Hair is marked on their heads and faces. Thus, while Deer's mother is "a most repulsive specimen of the feminine sex" of that time (19), Deer herself has "a sort of relative beauty" and, although her appearance "preserved the indelible signs of her race", "her person revealed the first dawning of that coquetry which was afterwards to be so prodigiously developed in her descendants, the Parisians" (19). Similarly Fair-Hair, though he was not "handsome according to our particular type of beauty", nevertheless "afforded a proof of the fact recognized by

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[10] In Emanuel Levinas's philosophy, the face is the guarantor of ethical treatment. In Carrie Rohman's assessment, for Levinas "the face of the other opens the ethical relation, [which is] a relation between humans" since the "ethical call cannot issue from the nonhuman face" (2009: 10). The face in Levinas's philosophy is notoriously difficult, and there has often been debate as to whether it should be understood as a metaphor or as a real human – and therefore not animal – face. According to Colin Davis's reading, however, "face" in Levinas "both does and does not refer to real human faces". In any case, "the notion of the face as expression plays an important part in Levinas's thinking" (2004 [1996]: 46). In a Levinasian context, therefore, the heroes of early pf should not feel guilty for destroying their inexpressive evolutionary subordinates: lacking expressive faces they are technically non- or subhuman. Undeserving of ethical consideration, they can be exterminated without compunction. For more on Levinas and the 'face of the other', see also Calarco (2008: 55-77).

modern scientists, that in those remote ages two different races of men inhabited the banks of the Seine" (36). As opposed to Red and other "dolichocephalic" neighbours, Fair-Hair "belonged to the brachycephalic type" (36), meaning that his forehead did not slope backwards and that he was instead possessed of the "elevated cranial dome" which William King, in a discussion of the Neander valley skull, had claimed as the essential characteristic of *Homo sapiens* (1864: 96). To "make amends" for his flat nose, prominent brow-ridges and thick lips, Fair-Hair's "eyes were bright and clear, and his irregular features expressed craft and good-humor, if not intelligence" (36).

The same is true in Stanley Waterloo's *The Story of Ab, A Tale of the Time of the Cave Man* (1897), a novel in which Ab and his partner, Lightfoot, pass through a large part of the humanisation process.[11] Aside from there being "a suggestion of something more than down" upon Ab's mother's face, there were also "certain irregularities of facial outline", and her nose "possessed a certain vagueness of outline not easy of description" (12-13). Her face borders on the indescribable. Rather than expressing it only "suggests", and that which it suggests is merely a combination of vague "irregularity" and "vagueness" itself. In contrast, Ab is very different: his eyes "were bright and keen" and his nose and mouth, the latter of which "did not lack expression", were "worth looking at" (33). Similarly, when Lightfoot is compared to her friend, an "exceedingly hairy young woman" called Moonface (172), Lightfoot's superiority is conveyed by the contrast between her more human face and the wide, bright, vacant and generally lunar appearance of her friend's. The hairy, soulless, loyal and dog-like Moonface is said to recognise in Lightfoot "a stronger and dominating spirit", one who was "not quite like any of the other girls about her" because her eyes were "larger and softer and there was more reflection and variety of expression in them" (172-4). Similarly, Ab's principal antagonist, Boarface, is figuratively lacking a human or expressive face; hence Ab's victory in the

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[11] For a contemporary review of Waterloo's novel, see 'The Story of Ab, By Stanley Waterloo' (25th June 1898). Though quite short, the review makes a similar point to the one I am making here: "We see the genius of this particular person [Ab] lifting up the whole race. It may be said that he does too much and too quickly; that progress must have been slower, inventions worked out more slowly, and conceptions more gradually evolved" (11).

novel's culminating battle scene could never be in doubt.

The superiority of pf protagonists, then, is often marked by an ability – if such it can be called – to express things, whatever they may be, via the face. In contrast, their neighbours, families, and apparent conspecifics merely have loci of sensory organs which, at best, are difficult to describe and, at worst, are incapable of expressing anything at all – not least because, in the case of Ab's mother's face at any rate, they are covered with "something more than down". Thus, while Deer, Fair-Hair, Lightfoot and Ab are "worth looking at", the others are not. In this respect and others, most of early pf's central protagonists appear to have simply been born different from those around them; they are made, miraculously and immaculately, *in utero*. While Ab's mother has simian habits and an indescribable and inscrutable face, Ab and Lightfoot have neither;[12] and while the general population in Berthet's 'Parisians' is Neanderthaloid in appearance, Deer and Fair-Hair are not. There is no accounting for their difference or their arrival: they belong to the same population, group or tribe but are nevertheless wholly separate. It is in this way that their presence in an account of human evolutionary history can be seen in colonial terms. Specifically, the unprecedented nature of the pf hero is part of the second element of evolutionary colonialism outlined in the introduction. Their arrival is reminiscent of John William Dawson's account of "the day when the first man stood erect upon the earth and gazed upon" it. On this day, the world, "for long ages the abode of brute creatures, became for the first time the habitation of a rational soul"; it "became amendable to the action of a conscious, independent earthly agent", to a "new and marvellous power – that of human will" (22-23). As was suggested above, the pf hero's unprecedented nature is closely bound up with the genre's discrimination between the more and the less human, or what the hero does in his own particular environment. The hero's innate superiority simultaneously explains and justifies the often violent treatment of his lesser neighbours. At the same time, however, the discrepancy between the

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[12] Upon hearing a hyena near the baby Ab's bed of leaves, the "vigorous matron" grabs him with her feet and proceeds to climb very quickly, by her hands only, twenty feet up a nearby tree (15-16).

originary presence of this superior essence and the need for it to emerge over time is an effect of narrative itself. At the confluence of each of the three aspects of evolutionary colonialism is the genre's biopolitical management of the process of human evolutionary history.

Towards the end of Waterloo's *Story of Ab*, after the more human-looking, "more active, more powerful [...] and certainly more intelligent" (332) Ab has killed Boarface and the wider battle has been won, twenty surviving members of Boarface's tribe seek refuge in a nearby cave, barricading themselves inside. While some want to let this group die by starvation, Ab instead offers the survivors the choice of "death or obedient companionship". The group "did not hesitate long": after accepting Ab's leadership they "came out and fed and, with their wives and children, who were sent for, became of the valley people" (344). In Ruddick's terms, then, while Boarface is "demoted to savagery [and] animality", Ab proves himself a "worthy ancestor". Indeed, following the absorption of the defeated tribe into Ab's (the valley people), the descendants of this new tribe were apparently later able to resist the "first feeble vanguard of the Aryan overflow"; and long after this first skirmish, "the end of the struggle [...] was, not a conquest, but a blending". And in the veins of "the great liberator, the man wonderful even in old age, the heart-stirring writer, [and] the man of giant personality physical and mental" has "danced the transmitted product" of the blood of Ab, Lightfoot and the valley people (348-50). In other words, after Boarface's subhuman taint was removed and could no longer threaten the bloodline, the newly invigorated valley people were fit enough to continue on to the next phase(s) of humanisation. It is this tendency, this often violent discrimination between worthy and unworthy ancestors, or between the more and the less human, that makes "effective pf" an inherently biopolitical genre, inasmuch as its narrative momentum may be said to derive from what Giorgio Agamben calls the "anthropological machine", his metaphor for the mechanism by which *zoe* and *bios* – "bare life" and political life, animal and human – are separated in order to produce the citizen or the subject. This is what humanisation in pf means.

Described by Agamben in *Homo Sacer* (1998 [1995]), bare life is that which is excluded from the political realm, that which is without rights or protection under the law. It is a purely material existence, what Thomas Lemke describes as "the form of existence reduced to biological functions" (2011: 6). Nevertheless, political life is built on top of bare life: that which is favoured with *bios* must first and necessarily have *zoe* and, moreover, in order for *bios* to be, *zoe* must first exist and then be excluded. This is what leads Agamben to speak of bare life's "inclusive exclusion" in the political tradition of the west. "In Western politics", he writes, "bare life has the peculiar privilege of being that whose exclusion founds the city of men" (12). In his later work, *The Open: Man and Animal* (2004 [2002]), Agamben argues that the "caesura" between the human and the animal, between *bios* and *zoe*, is not to be found lying between *Homo sapiens* and all other species, but instead "passes first of all *within* man" (16, emphasis added). In the western tradition, he points out, "man has always been thought of as the articulation and conjunction of a body and a soul, of a living thing and a logos, of a natural (or animal) element and a supernatural or social or divine element". Rather than marvelling at the "metaphysical mystery of conjunction", however, we should look instead at "the practical and political mystery of separation". We must ask, that is to say, "in what way – within man – has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human"? (16). The wonder is not that the human is a partly divine animal, but that it has made itself such by repressing one half of itself. The stakes here are of course very high, for if this is a "practical and political" separation it is not a matter of transcendent truth, but is instead a historically contingent decision. Because the human has to be produced again and again in different cultural and political contexts, its limits, what Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin refer to as the "species boundary", are flexible; they can be extended or reduced either inadvertently or intentionally.[13] The mobility of this boundary can have "lethal and bloody" (38) consequences for those, such as the savage in the nineteenth century,[14] and

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[13] Huggan and Tiffin describe the "species boundary" as the "discursive construction" of a strict dividing line between human and animal based on "the possession (or lack thereof) of traits such as speech, consciousness, self-consciousness, tool use" (2010: 139n2).

[14] See chapters 11-13 of John Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times* (1865) for a comprehensive account of the whole range of

Jews under National Socialism, who find themselves on the animal side.[15]

Agamben's answer to the question of the "mystery of separation" is the anthropological machine, the mechanism by which the "caesura", or "the open", between *zoe* and *bios* within the human is continually made and remade. In terms of function, the anthropological machine denies the humanity, dignity, and political existence of the already human – that is, it animalises the human – at which point this "human animality" can then be excluded from "the ethico-political realm" without compunction (Calarco 2007). To the extent, then, that pf is about anthropogenesis and the sorting of "worthy ancestors" from "savagery [and] animality", its organising principle is the anthropological machine. Moreover, many of the stories' supposedly non-fictional elements were often gleaned from other instances of the machine's use in ethnology and colonial discourse. Representations of what are apparently beings toward *sapiens* – the details of their habits and customs – were reconstructed, according to the narrator of 'Romance of the First Radical', from "the study of contemporary savages, among whom no Radical reformer has yet appeared" (289). Thus the anthropological machine determines pf narratives at both the structural and the local level: the separation, within the human line, of *zoe* from *bios*, Boarface from Ab, is the whole story, and it is mirrored in the refusal of a political existence, and therefore of political consideration, to the already human but insufficiently Radical "contemporary savage".[16]

In Berthet's 'Parisians', Deer, betrothed to Fair-Hair, is abducted by the atavistic Red after the latter had spent the night sheltering from predators in Deer's family's cave. Fair-Hair eventually tracks Red

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"Modern Savage" difference markers, including, for example, deficient reasoning powers and sexual promiscuity.
[15] If the separation of the nonhuman from the human within the human itself can have such devastating effects, this is no less the case, as many have pointed out, for animals – the nonhuman outside the human. See Matthew Calarco (2008, chapter three) and Kelly Oliver (2007) for the equally "lethal and bloody" effects of the anthropological machine on animals – an oversight for which they both criticise Agamben. See also Anat Pick's (2006) review of *The Open*.
[16] A further observation concerning early pf's use of the anthropological machine is that, unlike in Agamben, there are many examples of the machine's effects on nonhuman animals. This is something to which I will return below.

down to a glade where the latter has just killed a horse and is in the process of tearing it to pieces "with his teeth and nails" (52), rather than using a flint knife as would a "worthy ancestor". Red's subhumanity is confirmed at this point when his gorging on horse flesh is described as a "cannibal repast" (52) – as, that is, a member of a group eating another member of the same group; in this case, an animal eating an animal. During the feast, Red's "ardent glances", "rude caresses", and contentment at "the thought of having [Deer] in his power" (53), speak for his intentions. His hunger for food sated, he suddenly "stretched out both hands to seize Deer". Though she manages to evade this first attack, Red very quickly recaptures her. At this point Fair-Hair, who has been watching the scene from the bushes, shoots Red through the throat with an arrow, followed shortly by another one to the chest. Rather than killing him outright, however, Fair-Hair leaves the mortally wounded Red to "an immense number of gray, tawny, speckled animals" who "rushed forward open-mouthed, uttering greedy howls". Though they "took no heed and walked rapidly away", Deer and Fair-Hair hear behind them "the cracking of bones, fierce cries, [and] the sound of an obstinate struggle between foul animals fighting over their prey" (58).

Like other pf heroes, Fair-Hair is quite without precedent in his community and his species – as is Deer, but to a lesser extent. Red's animal ancestry, on the other hand, is plain: in an already Neanderthaloid population, he is by far the most "fierce and brutal" individual. It falls to Fair-Hair, then, to bring this undesirable ancestor under control – or, rather, to eradicate all trace of him, as did Ab with Boarface. Just as Red is about to force himself on Deer, and is therefore threatening to propagate his genetic material, Fair-Hair steps in to avert disaster – both for Deer and for the human line. Effectively untainted by an animal past, this "worthy ancestor" assumes the role of the anthropological machine and pre-emptively excises the already but not quite human from the human lineage. Thus Fair-Hair, like Ab and other of early pf's protagonists, is a biopolitical agent: among the primary responsibilities of these unprecedented individuals is the eugenic management of the humanisation process. But this brings to light certain difficulties, because the power exercised

by Fair-Hair in this scene is sovereign rather than biopolitical. For Michel Foucault, sovereign power was the power of kings to decide the fate of their subjects, to subtract life and property. Biopower, on the other hand, is "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power". From the eighteenth century, he continues, "modern western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species" (2009: 1). Biopower is a modern development, and it involves bringing the processes of life and death (fertility, birth rates etc.) under the control of the state, which is to say that it is about the 'biopolitical' management of populations for their own good and, by extension, for the good of the state. By Foucault's standards, then, the power exercised by Fair-Hair over Red was, as I have said, sovereign rather than biopolitical – partly because there is no society or state in either this or any other pf story. These are in the process of being made by the genre's heroes according to the mechanism of the anthropological machine. Power in pf is exercised with a view to the society that will derive from the exercise of this same power, and this teleological ordering (which is a feature of narrative itself as much as it is feature of this particular genre) changes the nature of the hero's power somewhat, making it simultaneously sovereign and biopolitical. Instead of being directed merely at protecting itself and its own, the power of the pf hero is also directed at, and is directed at protecting, posterity: in saving Deer, Fair-Hair also saves what Foucault calls "the human species" as a whole and, at the same time, allows space for the later emergence of society. In spite of the demonstrative absence of state and society, it is this orientation towards the future and towards modernity that makes pf biopolitical; it allows the anthropological machine to operate and it gives to the actions of the hero a managerial aspect that would otherwise be missing.

Because Red's exclusion from the human line will later allow for the emergence and supremacy of the civilised European human (the two stories published alongside this one go on to describe the next phases of this very process), it is an "inclusive-exclusion" similar, according to Agamben's

analysis, to that of the *homo sacer* in the Roman era and to that of *zoe* in every era.[17] In the

humanised future towards which early pf presses, the subhuman's absence is constitutive. To adapt

Agamben's phrase, in early pf Primitive Man has the peculiar privilege of being that whose exclusion

founds the city of men. And the fact that this city is always already the product of biopolitical

management means that it is possible to unite – not, however, to reconcile – Foucault's and

Agamben's accounts of biopolitics. For Agamben, the anthropological machine and the exclusion of

bare life have been a constituent part of western politics since classical times, whereas for Foucault

the emergence of biopower and biopolitics is very much tied to the advent of modernity. Pf of

course deals with a time far anterior to both classical antiquity and post-Enlightenment modernity,

but its blend of sovereign and biopolitical power – wielded by innately superior individuals – renders

human evolution an entirely managed process, and thus, paradoxically, the emergence into

modernity is itself a product of biopolitical modernity. These are, as it were, the mechanics of

evolutionary colonialism – its structure and operation in early pf. In what remains of this chapter,

however, I aim to offer more detail on the hero's status as a humanist ideal, and on what the genre

as a whole does to our understanding of human evolutionary history because these are the focus of

later chapters.

Evolutionary Colonialism: Great Men and Humanist Heroes

In his analysis of the Neander valley cranium, Thomas Henry Huxley set a precedent for evolutionary

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[17] In palaeoanthropological terms this is no less of an awkward sentence. As was noted above, 'human' and '*Homo*' are synonyms, meaning that Fair-Hair excises the sub-*Homo* from the *Homo* lineage in order to ultimately allow for *Homo*. This demonstrates both the machine's cannibalistic, *Homo*-cidal operation, as well as the semantic tensions mentioned above. On this latter point, the difference that I want to bring out and interrogate resides in the fact that, regardless of palaeoanthropology, it is not quite the same thing to say that Red is subhuman and to say that Red is sub-*Homo*: he is unquestionably a member of the genus, yet he is not quite 'human'. This will be explored in the second half of this chapter.

colonialism. It was noted in the previous chapter that the tools unearthed in and around Amiens in

the 1840s and '50s are likely to be over 400,000 years old. For various reasons (mostly scientific, but

occasionally political) archaeologists are often reluctant to assign particular cultural complexes to

particular species of *Homo*. In one recent, comprehensive account of the lower and middle

Palaeolithic periods, for example, Michael Jochim (2011) never attempts to link any given culture,

nor any given excavation site, to a particular species. Even when archaeologists and palaeontologists

do make such links, they are usually qualified. In Klein and Edgar's *The Dawn of Human Culture* (2002)

– intended for a popular audience – the authors write that

> The first permanent occupants of Europe were late Acheulean hand axe makers, who
> spread from Spain and Italy on the south to southern England on the north about 500,000
> years ago [...] *For the sake of convenience*, we assign this population and its first African and
> European descendants to the species *Homo heidelbergensis* (134, emphasis added)

It was on this basis that I wrote, in the previous chapter, that the Drift tools (which include a great

many late-Acheulean hand axes) were "probably made by *heidelbergensis* and are likely to be

between 400,000 and 500,000 years old".[18] In truth, and as the guarded phrasing suggests, there is

no way of establishing this beyond all doubt, because the tools themselves cannot be satisfactorily

dated, and because there is no way to establish that they were made by *heidelbergensis,* rather than

any other species. However, this is less important for our purposes than it may seem: what matters

is that the Drift tools were not made by our species, *Homo sapiens*.

That tools are proxies for intellectual and/or cultural advancement – typically via increase in brain

volume – is a common assumption of both Victorian and contemporary palaeoanthropology.[19]

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[18] In another recent survey of the field, Toth and Schick are less cautious and state that "The early Acheulean is associated with Homo erectus/ergaster, while the later Acheulean (by ca. 500,000 years ago) is associated with the even larger-brained Homo heidelbergensis" (2007: 1943).

[19] For just a few contemporary examples, see Klein and Edgar (7-8), Toth and Schick (1954), and Tattersall's point that the teardrop shape of late Acheulean handaxes was "new and [more] labor-intensive" than previous technologies: these tools were "clearly made according to a mental template that must have existed in the toolmaker's head before shaping started" (62), something which is more difficult to argue with regard to Oldowan pebble technology.

Specific to the nineteenth century, however, is the notion that cultural advancement is related to, or is even determined by, race; and, further, that both race and cultural advancement are discernible in anatomy – particularly of the head, as in craniology.[20] Indeed, the later implications of such views in the twentieth century are a constitutive part of contemporary archaeologists' reluctance to assign particular tool cultures to particular hominids. When combined with human antiquity and the rude implements of the Drift, this bio-cultural understanding of race engendered the belief that the flint tools being unearthed all over Europe belonged to a primitive race or races of *Homo sapiens.*[21] Today, as I have said, the Drift tools are acknowledged to have been made by another species of the genus *Homo* and, further, Neanderthals are accepted as either a subspecies of *Homo sapiens*, or as a separate species entirely. Notwithstanding these specific differences, however, Neanderthals, *heidelbergensis*, and all other members of *Homo* are described as "human" in modern palaeoanthropology. By different means and with different understandings of the term in mind, then, Victorian and contemporary palaeoanthropologists would agree that the people of the Drift and the man from the Neanderthal were human. The fundamental difference, however, is that for Victorians (following Huxley) the first Neanderthal was sufficiently like a standardised "human" to be considered part of the family, whereas for modern palaeoanthropologists that family is a generic, rather than a specific, category.[22] Based on bipedalism, it belongs to *Homo* rather than *sapiens*.

This juxtaposition of different denotations of the term 'human' is not intended to point out a perceived backwardness in nineteenth-century thought. On the contrary, I would argue that both popularly and within the so-called humanities we operate with a much narrower conception of

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[20] For more on the concept of race in the nineteenth century see, for example, Marks (1995), Smedley and Smedley (2005), Abberley (2011), Fielder (2013). For the role of race in a scientific and medical context, see Ernst and Harris (1999).

[21] For a very early example of this, see Wilde (1861) – that is, Lady Jane Wilde, Oscar's mother, whose husband William was also a noted amateur Palaeolithic archaeologist. See also Stocking (1987) for an account of the "comparative method" of Victorian anthropology, which led to the assumption that Australian Aborigines, for example, were the equivalent of Europe's prehistoric races. This is also what leads Anne McLintock to describe colonial territories as "anachronistic space", a notion developed in Richter (2011) and something to which I will return in chapter five.

[22] 'Family' here should be understood in its more typical sense, rather than as the taxonomic rank between 'order' and 'genus'.

'human' – and all that the term entails – than palaeoanthropologists do. Indeed, the 'human' of 'humanities' is not widely taken to refer to other species of human. In effect, we still have a Victorian understanding of the evolutionary human – of what it means for 'humanness' to have evolved – and we use the terms 'human' or 'man' in the same way, as superlatives. Instead, the intention here is to bring attention to the effects of Victorian racial thought on their conception of 'human' evolution. In short, this was evolutionary colonialism. In this regard, Huxley's ultimate conclusion to *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature*, after he has already determined that the Neander remains are sufficiently human to be human, is worth giving in full:

> In conclusion, I may say, that the fossil remains of Man hitherto discovered do not seem to me to take us appreciably nearer to that lower pithecoid form, by the modification of which he has, probably, become what he is. And considering what is now known of the most ancient Races of men; seeing that they fashioned flint axes and flint knives and bone-skewers, of much the same pattern as those fabricated by the lowest savages at the present day, and that we have every reason to believe the habits and modes of living of such people to have remained the same from the time of the Mammoth and the tichorhine Rhinoceros till now, I do not know that this result is other than might be expected.
> Where, then, must we look for primeval Man? Was the oldest *Homo sapiens* pliocene or miocene, or yet more ancient? In older strata do the fossilized bones of an Ape more anthropoid, or a Man more pithecoid, than any yet known await the researches of some unborn paleontologist?
> Time will show. But, in the meanwhile, if any form of the doctrine of progressive development is correct, we must extend by long epochs the most liberal estimate that has yet been made of the antiquity of Man (183-4).

In order to account for his belief that savage and Drift tools are of a "pattern" (the latter being the "flint axes" and "flint knives" he mentions), as well as for the fact that the Drift tools are clearly very ancient, Huxley pushes *Homo sapiens* back into evolutionary history – in this case, to a time as remote as the Miocene, the most recent Age of which (the Messinian) ended some 5.3 million years ago.[23] There also seems to be an underlying assumption here that only "Man" (that is, *Homo sapiens*) is able to make tools and that, therefore, Man must be very ancient indeed. In any case, the

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[23] Today, on the other hand, the whole genus *Homo* is only thought to have been around for roughly 2.3 million years, with *sapiens* being only about 200,000 years old. It is worth reiterating, however, that Huxley and his peers were without any absolute dating methods.

reluctance, whether circumstantial, intentional, or unconscious, to allow 'humanness' to cross

specific boundaries must necessarily result in evolutionary colonialism, or the tendency, evident

throughout the broad-based discussion on the antiquity of man (a phrase which, in itself, does also

imply stability and persistence through time), to populate the evolutionary history of *Homo* with

sapiens only.[24] In this context, human evolution becomes a matter for a single species only.[25]

Early pf goes further than Huxley does. Where Huxley pushes *Homo sapiens* as a whole back further

and further into evolutionary history, the colonisation of human evolutionary history on show in

early pf is carried out by gifted individuals who undertake to manage the whole process subsequent

to their unexplained arrival. Thus, where Huxley may be said to have colonised the evolutionary

history of *Homo* somewhat inadvertently, in pf it is a much more deliberate enterprise carried out by

lone pioneers. In Andrew Lang's 'Romance of the First Radical' (1880), the first piece of pure pf in

English (Ruddick: 33), Why-Why (the "first radical" of the title) is one such pioneer; a social reformer,

Why-Why has fought against the tyranny of outdated custom over the course of his entire life.

Unlike in other pf stories discussed thus far, there is no single Primitive Man in Lang's 'Romance'.

Instead, because he repeatedly and openly breaks all of the taboos by which they live, the doubly-

inquisitive Why-Why is defined in opposition to his credulous and, to an extent, homogeneous tribe.

Considerably vexed, however, by his many contemptuous assaults on their culture, the tribe

eventually sets out to kill Why-Why and his partner, Verva. Catching the couple off-guard one day,

they kill Verva from a distance with a spear. Despite knowing that he was "trapped and [would be]

taken by his offended tribesmen", Why-Why fights alone for a time. He receives many injuries but

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[24] See Abberley (2011) for a discussion of "species essentialism" in Victorian philology. Incidentally, the "*species essentialism*" Abberley discusses refers mostly to "humans" and "animals".

[25] William King's 1864 designation of the Neanderthal remains as *Homo neanderthalensis* is an obvious exception, but it should be remembered that he very quickly attempted to withdraw this designation on the grounds that the present-day inhabitants of the Andaman Islands were the most "degraded" race of human (and thus of *Homo*) of which it was possible to conceive and that, therefore, the owner of the Neanderthal remains could not possibly be a member of *Homo*. While resiling, King also assumes that consciousness ends after *sapiens* – rather, after its lowest expression – which amounts to a belief that it appeared miraculously on the evolutionary scene; that it emerged and developed within *Homo sapiens* alone, rather than through either other members of *Homo* or through nonhuman animals. King, in other words, is an evolutionary colonialist.

still manages to kill four of the tribe's "chief braves", and to "shatter the head of the chief medicine-man" – an individual who, as a purveyor of irrational dogma, had been one of Why-Why's principal adversaries (1880: 299). Shortly afterwards, Why-Why begins to tire:

> He turned and drew Verva's body beneath the rocky wall, and then he faced his enemies. He threw down shield and club and raised his hands. A light seemed to shine about his face, and his first word had a strange tone that caught the ear and chilled the heart of all who heard him (299)

At this moment, after his courageous last stand and when just about to offer his final words to his misguided tribesman, Why-Why's Christ-like heroism reveals its Carlylean essence.

In *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841), Thomas Carlyle describes the "Great Man" as "a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven" and as a "flowing light-fountain" of "native, original insight, of manhood and heroic nobleness" (1841: 2). The function of such individuals is to shape history, to allow humanity to progress:

> [T]he history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these (1-2).

So when Why-Why turns to face his assailants and, as a "natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven", a light "shines about his face" and a hush descends as he utters the first word of his final proclamation to and against his backward tribe, he reveals himself to be a Great Man, an illuminated and illuminating prophet. His "outraged" tribe, however, fails to perceive his greatness and they kill him by spearing him repeatedly. This may well be seen as an end unfit for a pf protagonist, an individual more likely, as regards inferiors, to kill than be killed. Nevertheless, in death Why-Why is

the instigator of enlightenment: his people later begin to understand what they have lost and set about implementing his prophesied reforms. Like a true Great Man, Why-Why was unappreciated in his own lifetime, but through his words his people are eventually led to a higher level of development. The tribe's social reforms, that is to say, are "the practical realization and embodiment of Thoughts that dwelt" in Why-Why, one of "the Great Men sent into the world".[26]

Over the course of the six lectures which comprise *On Heroes*, Carlyle attributes his particular brand of heroism to pagan gods, to prophets, poets, priests, intellectuals and kings. That the same heroism can be shared by such a diverse group suggests that it has an essential nature, that it is independent of historical context. It was on this basis, in fact, that Herbert Spencer (1874) criticised Carlyle's theory, putting forward instead a social determinist case: "Before [the Great Man] can re-make his society", Spencer argued, "his society must make him" (35). Evolutionary theory, with its stress on interspecies and environmental causality in speciation, added to this a biological and geological determinism, such that Carlyle's notion of individual brilliance as the chief driver of change was rather unfashionable by the mid-1870s, or around five years before the appearance of Lang's 'Romance'. In spite of this, pf protagonists all share the same Carlylean essence: they are all recognisable as Great Men, individual agents of intellectual, technological, moral, and eugenic progress who are inexplicably superior to those around them.[27] Just as much as those of Why-Why, the actions of Fair-Hair (who is also a gifted artist and engraver) and Ab (co-inventor of the bow and arrow, tamer of wolves, and founder of ethics) mark them out as Great Men:[28] they each saved the human lineage from an atavistic brute, meaning that we moderns are the "material result" of their actions. Similarly, in H. G. Wells's *A Story of the Stone Age* (1897) the hero, Ugh-lomi, deposes The Bear in the palaeolithic Thames valley, which means that Victorian London is ultimately "the

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[26] That the tribe was unable to appreciate Why-Why and his ideas while he was alive echoes Carlyle's criticism of his own time as an age that "denies the existence of great men [and] denies the desirableness of great men" (19).

[27] For the most part, this even holds for Deh-Yan, the Master-Girl of Ashton Hilliers's book (1910) of the same name.

[28] After killing his best friend, Oak, over Lightfoot, Ab is wracked with guilt (though none of his peers see anything wrong with killing in itself) and, during his trek into the land of fire, he determines that killing another human is wrong *a priori*.

practical realization and embodiment" of his actions that day.

With the exception of H. G. Wells and, to a lesser extent, Andrew Lang, the authors of the pf narratives discussed here are very infrequently mentioned in the periodical literature of the later decades of the nineteenth century. Further, there is scant reference to any of their pf stories (including those of Lang and Wells). Even when these do appear, there is very little in the way of analysis or extended discussion. This is noteworthy in itself, but it also brings into sharper focus the fact that, few as they are, most of these notices and short reviews support some of the basic points made in this chapter – namely, that the pf hero is inexplicably superior to his peers and is therefore something of a modern imposition on the deep evolutionary past. In a review of Lang's 'Romance of the First Radical', for instance, Grant Allen combines these points when he writes that Why-Why "is more in advance of his age than any single Radical can ever be" (1887: 22). More than a decade later, a reviewer of Waterloo's *Story of Ab* expressed a similar sentiment when he or she pointed out that Waterloo "does not hold, it is clear, with Mr. Buckle's theory, that all progress is the work of the race, not of the individual":[29]

> It is the personality of Ab that counts for so much. We see the genius of this particular person lifting up the whole race. It may be said that he does too much and too quickly; that progress must have been slower, inventions worked out more slowly, and conceptions more gradually evolved. But there is ample justification in the literary necessity; we cannot wait in a story for the slow process which may be historically true ('The Story of Ab by Stanley Waterloo', 25th June 1898: 11)

We can hardly expect these reviewers to frame such points in the terms of colonisation, but it is clear that there was a contemporary awareness that the heroes of these stories were somewhat out of place in their own times. And given the scarcity of contemporary responses to these stories, that

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[29] The reference is to Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862) whose unfinished *History of Civilisation* series argued, in part, that individuals are insignificant in the wider sweep of human progress. A similar point was also made by Jack London when responding to Waterloo's charge that he (London) had plagiarised Waterloo in *Before Adam* (1907): "Why, I wrote my story as a reply to yours because yours was unscientific", London claimed. "You crammed the evolution of a thousand generations into one generation – something at which I revolted from the first time I read your story" (quoted in Ruddick 2009: 46).

most of them express similar ideas lends credence to some of the basic arguments put forward in this chapter.

In any case, while the unaccounted for heroism of early pf's Great Men is Carlylean in nature and effect – in the sense that it is spontaneous, inexplicable, essential and progressive – in practice it is expressed in a different mode. Rather than developing from intuition, or "native, original insight", it instead stems from ratiocination.[30] When persecuted and moments from death, Why-Why indeed becomes an illumined prophet but, as the narrator informs us in the story's opening sentence, his prophecies derive from the application of reason. The First Radical, that is to say, was he who "rebelled against the despotism of unintelligible customs [...], and who was eager to see society organised, off-hand, on what he thought a rational method" (289).[31] The ultimate results, however, are largely the same. It was John Stuart Mill's contention that "the order of human progression in all respects will mainly depend on the order of progression in the intellectual convictions of mankind, that is, on the law of the successive transformations of human opinions" (1987 [1872]: 116).[32] For Mill, in other words, progress happens first in the rational and positivist mind and only later in the material world, as was the case with Why-Why's social reforms. Barring his preference for reason over intuition, Mill's model of progress is thus no different from Carlyle's claim that "all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result [...] of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world". Essential, of mysterious origin, rationalistic, prophetic and world-forming, the heroism of early pf's Great Men thus unites two great strands of Victorian thought, making the heroes themselves already the highest expression of Victorian, and

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[30] Carlyle's thought – and no less the man himself – is notoriously difficult to characterise, though he is more often considered an intellectual in the prophetic than the philosophical vein. Lippincott (1938) wrote that Carlyle had "a mind that was hostile to speculation and that placed reliance upon intuition", and that he "had a domineering temperament and little faith in reason" (52).

[31] Similarly, Waterloo's Ab has the "instinct of devising" (89), and Wells's Ugh-lomi goes by the name of "Ugh the Thinker" (693).

[32] See de Waard (2011) for a recent commentary on this aspect of Mill's thought, and its relation to wider trends in Victorian thought.

indeed western, humanity. They are, in effect, heroes of the humanist tradition. In an evolutionary setting, their heroic-humanist essence, precisely because it is an a-historical, fully transposable essence, is a colonising entity – one which also sets about colonising its own environment. Human evolution is thus recast, not as humanist evolution, but as the gradual awakening of an innate, though latent, humanist essence. Primitive Man was destroyed and surpassed by the humanist ideal – by rational, self-possessed, language-bearing, tool-making and agentive subjects continually striving for progress.[33] In short, by Great Men of the humanist tradition.

While arguing for a "new literary humanism", Andy Mousley points to the shortcomings of the various older versions, which for him and many others arose alongside modernity as "a surrogate form of theology" (2011: 5, original emphasis). For Mousley, all "cocksure versions of humanism as ersatz theology" have made a religion of humanity, and stand accused of valorising reason, self-consciousness, language, agency and morality while ignoring the legion atrocities committed in the name of the 'humanity' and 'civilisation' possessing them (6).[34] From the perspective of Giorgio Agamben's analysis, these are the "lethal and bloody" consequences of the anthropological machine's operation: the manufacture of ideal humanist subjects by the separation of the less from the fully human (*zoe* from *bios*) results in the denial of a political existence to the former, later allowing for its maltreatment. However, this very process rests on the assumption of inherently inferior animality (through the degradation of *zoe*), which is to say that the production of western subjects has "lethal and bloody" consequences for nonhuman animals too. Their lives become essentially meaningless.[35] For Anat Pick, "total control over animal life and death" is the "backbone of contemporary biopolitics", and "the most salient feature of the current mode of production of the human by the anthropological machine" (2006). While it would be an exaggeration to claim that pf

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[33] As regards self-possession, both Ab and his son, Pip, name themselves.
[34] It is interesting to note here the similarities between the religious, anti-evolutionary response to human antiquity (that is, J. W. Dawson's very old but unquestionably *Homo sapiens* Primitive Man) and Mousley's notion of humanism as "ersatz theology". What the pf hero owes to anti-evolutionists like Dawson, it seems, he also owes to humanism.
[35] For an illustrative example, see Richard Norman's case for a "secular humanism" (2005).

heroes have "total control over animal life and death", it is true that, alongside their shepherding of human evolutionary development, the heroes' loudly-celebrated superiority is frequently expressed through violence against animals. In this sense, they are humanist humans to type, as their humanisation takes place at the expense of *zoe* – and everything labelled as *zoe*.

As with all the other pf narratives discussed thus far, H. G. Wells's *A Story of the Stone Age* (1897) focuses on a young couple. Ugh-lomi and Eudena are in exile because they fled from their tribe after defying the will of the leader, Uya, who had been looking at Eudena like Red looked at Deer in 'The Parisians of the Stone Age'. Away from the tribe – which is distinguished "from the wild animals that ranged the country" by "little else" than a "smouldering fire" and extremely primitive tools and clothing (658) – the couple progress through the humanisation process. Their life in exile sees the emergence of their (particularly Ugh-lomi's) heroic-humanist essence, as they become ever more human by the application of reason to various problems – some related to their hostile tribe, others to hostile nonhumans. As one of Wells's contemporary reviewers pointed out a few months before the publication of *A Story of the Stone Age*, this understanding of human evolutionary history (what I have been describing as its colonial interpretation) is inherent in Wells's conception of human evolution: "All the difference between the hero of *Locksley Hall* or even Mr. Wells himself (according to Mr. Wells), and his remote ancestor of the stone age is due to education. It is curious to think that but for the accident of his having been taught the three R's […] Mr. Wells would have been chipping flint arrowheads instead of writing admirable romances" (Nisbet 1897: 842). Indeed, after serendipitously inventing the axe (the first compound weapon) and learning about its potential in a dream, Ugh-lomi often thinks his way through the humanisation process, usually at the expense of animals.[36] In one prominent example, he sits down to think "for quite some time" after managing to fight off Andoo, a curious and hungry cave bear; eventually, he rises like "one whose mind is made

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[36] See Stocking (1987: 155) for something similar with regard to the "rationalistic savage".

up" (678). He has determined to kill Andoo because, "with such callers in the neighbourhood", his and Eudena's cave was "a home no longer" (679). Looking down from a cliff above the bears' cave, Ugh-lomi thinks over his next move: "Eudena had learnt, even when a little girl, that when Ugh-lomi became still like that, jaw-bone on fist, novel things presently began to happen" (680).

On this occasion, "Ugh the Thinker" (693) discovers a way to kill "the greatest of all meat-eaters" (673) from a safe distance, and is now able to depose The Bear, what had been the "the lord of the world as the world went then" (661), but what is now merely a nuisance, a problem to be solved after reflection. In order to achieve a human "neighbourhood" – to turn an environment or locale into a "home" – Ugh-lomi's plan is to roll boulders over the cliff-edge when Andoo and the "she-bear" are in the correct spot (679). At the third attempt the plan works and Andoo's "unspeculative skull" is crushed (682). Hitherto king of the neighbourhood, The Bear has been killed by reason, and the rest of the nonhuman will soon fall prey to the same foe. While struggling to grasp the fact that "the great and wonderful Andoo was killed" (683), a "novel feeling of immanent strange evils came into [the she-bear's] heart" (683): she perceives the emergence of a new empire and the beginning of reason's conquest of nature. Accordingly, after asserting his superiority over the previous dominant force, Ugh-lomi immediately moves on to the less imposing animals found in the Thames valley at this time, bending them to his will. His next target is the horse, and his cunningly-stolen ride on the back of none other than "the Master Horse" (688) marks the beginning of "the terrible slavery that was to come": it foreshadows progress and "the whip and spur and bearing-rein, the clumsy load and the slippery street, the insufficient food, and the knacker's yard" (684).

In similar fashion to Ugh-lomi, Stanley Waterloo's Ab also has a transformative encounter with two bears which leads to the establishment of both his home and his supremacy – the latter in rather emphatic fashion. Startled by the bears while out one day, Ab and Lightfoot each ascend a different tree; Lightfoot has the bow and Ab the arrows and the trees are too far apart to pass either back and

forth. The couple decide to wait, but after a day or two the bears still remain below the trees. Under

Ab's orders, Lightfoot eventually leaps over to his tree with the bow. Now, "equipped again" and

"full of the spirit of fight" (253), Ab quickly shoots the first bear from close range. The bear then runs

off to Ab and Lightfoot's cave to die, blocking the entrance as it does so. After killing the other bear,

which was more difficult and took up all of the remaining arrows, Ab and Lightfoot try to return to

their cave but are prevented from entering by the first bear's dead body. Without weapons and

surrounded by hungry wolves and hyenas, the couple build a semi-circular fire around the mouth of

the cave. Though "it was a long way from tail to head", over the course of a week (their

"honeymoon") they eat their way through the dead bear and "into a safety which would be

permanent". Following this "tunnelling exploit", they finally enter the cave, "one shouting and the

other laughing, one coming again to his fortress and his weapons and his power, and the other to

her hearth and duties" (268-70). As was the case with Ugh-lomi, in order to establish the permanent

safety of a human neighbourhood, Ab must depose what had hitherto been the dominant force. The

rather elaborate and symbolic means by which this is achieved only go to emphasise the

conclusiveness of Ab's triumph, while at the same time signalling The Bear's final defeat and

ultimate degradation.

In early pf, humanisation takes place at the expense of the nonhuman; the latent humanity of the

genre's heroes emerges in proportion to their confiscation of power, authority, autonomy, caves and

neighbourhoods from animals and Primitive Man. While thus being an essentially colonial enterprise,

the humanisation process is the same as that by which the ideal humanist subject is manufactured.

For Cary Wolfe, "*the* fundamental anthropological dogma associated with humanism" is the notion

that "'the human' is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the

biological, and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and

embodiment altogether" (xiv-xv, original emphasis). In early pf the human is "achieved" by

technological violence against animals and the subhuman. Ab's bow and Ugh-lomi's boulders allow

them each to exceed their own bodily limitations, to bring a human-shaped order to their respective regions. Indeed, when Ab is finally reunited with his bow and arrow in the scene with the two bears, the degree of entwinement between him and the weapon is remarkable: "Ab drew back the arrow till the flint head rested close by his out-straining hand and the tough wood of the bow creaked under the thrust of his muscled arm. Then he released the shaft" (258). The other means by which the human is "achieved" in pf is of course by "repressing", through biopolitical management, any suggestion that the human is an evolutionary animal among others. And it is in this sense that the pf hero is doubly colonial: he attains mastery over his immediate domain at the same time as shepherding the process of human evolution towards himself.

Henry Curwen's Zit and Xoe

For my interpretation of early pf as a genre, the most interesting individual text is Henry Curwen's satire, *Zit and Xoe, Their Early Experiences* (1886).[37] This novel, which was serialised over two issues of *Blackwood's Magazine*, covers humanisation and the humanist awakening in their entirety. The story begins with Zit's differentiation from the animal (he is a human born of apes), and ends with he and Xoe establishing a thriving society complete with agriculture, domesticated animals, bronze, musical instruments, water wells and schools. Moreover, it is a first person narrative ostensibly written by Zit himself in a laughably Victorian middle-class idiom, meaning that Zit and his community have literally left prehistory behind. For Ruddick, other than utilitarianism and "Victorian gender stereotypes", Curwen's "satiric targets" in this story are not easy to determine. It is "tempting", he writes, "to read the novel as a comic pastiche of the pf genre", but this is inaccurate

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[37] See 'The Late Mr Curwen and his Works' (October 1892) for a contemporary discussion of Curwen, dating from shortly after his death. The anonymous writer concludes by saying that Curwen "has left behind him, in *Zit and Xoe* and *Lady Bluebeard*, two works of great originality that will not soon be allowed to be forgotten, and, in the rather barren roll of Anglo-Indian literature, he must assuredly take the very highest rank among those who have succeeded in throwing the halo of romance and poetry over life in the East" (257).

because it "precedes the crystallisation of generic clichés" (34).[38] However, in a novel which describes the humanisation process as a whole, I would suggest that Curwen's principal "satiric target" is the telos of his and other pf narratives – the Great Man of the humanist tradition.

Whereas his parents and siblings all have tails, fur and arboreal habits, Zit is tailless, hairless, and bipedal – and an inept climber to boot. He is further unable to "speak one word of the family jargon, nor, to be candid, did [he] ever really try" (458). He says of his early life that "even then" he knew that he "was immeasurably better and cleverer than any of the rest" of his family (457). The only contemporary discussion of *Zit and Xoe* that I have been able to find makes reference to this innate superiority, and along similar lines to the reviews of Lang's and Waterloo's stories mentioned above. According to Michael MacMillan (1892), the "thoughts and emotions" of Zit and Xoe "are such as could not possibly have belonged to beings immediately sprung from quadrumanous parents" (250).[39] Given Zit's superiority, in conjunction with his awareness of it, it comes as no surprise to learn that his relationship with his family is rather strained. One day, after Zit indirectly causes the death (by drowning) of two of his brothers, his father challenges him:

> I never look at you without a shudder. A tailless, hairless, miserable brat, you have covered me with shame among our neighbours; and yet, forsooth, you are far too fine to go our ways. You can twitter like a bulbul and hoot like an owl, and you have no time to learn our simple language. You make use of your thumbs in a way that is peculiarly exasperating to us all, and you twirl them about on every occasion […] You spend hours, your mother tells me, admiring your personal deformities in the very pool in which two of your brothers now lie drowned by your machinations […] You must leave us, my boy. There is a great, rich world

[38] In terms of chronology, *Zit and Xoe* followed Berthet and Lang's stories but preceded those of Waterloo and Wells. However, it did come after Sir Arthur Helps's *Realmah* (1867), a novel which recounts the life of the late-Neolithic Realmah, a physically-disabled philosopher king who, much like his counterparts in the other narratives mentioned thus far, almost single-handedly evolves his people by creating new technologies and helping them to overcome a barbarous enemy. Ruddick makes no mention of *Realmah*, probably because it fails to meet the criterion of being set "exclusively in prehistory" and is therefore not pure pf. It is nevertheless an extremely interesting novel about prehistory, if only because of its generic and technical complexity. It is a story within a story recounted by an amanuensis – who also composed a companion story to Realmah's biography. See Suvin (1982) for the only analysis of *Realmah* I have been able to find – which is also overwhelmingly negative, criticising the novel as irredeemably bourgeois.

[39] Further evidence of this trend can be seen in Arthur Helps's *Realmah* (see footnote 38, above). The amanuensis's account of his master's story also contains critiques of, and digressions from, Realmah's biography by its original parlour audience, particularly the wit Ellesmere. One of Ellesmere's points of critique is that Realmah is much too modern for prehistory.

beyond our narrow limits, waiting apparently for you to conquer it. Perhaps you may succeed, perhaps not" (459).

The father's charges against the son – presumably delivered in the son's own superior language – can be read as the (anthropomorphised) nonhuman's charge against the human.[40] Aside from his physical "deformities", then, Zit is an arrogant, narcissistic, tool-using show-off who is too lazy and self-absorbed to learn the language and customs of others. Wielding what might be called the zoological machine, Zit's father isolates the nonanimal within the animal and defines it as egoistic, anthropocentric and, with the "great, rich world" just "waiting" to be "conquered", inherently imperialistic. More so than its physical "deformities", what marks this nonanimal out as different, and indeed unwelcome, is precisely that which is celebrated in other pf narratives – its tendency toward what Tony Davies describes as "imperial" humanisms (2007: 141).

Following this harangue, Zit is pelted with coconuts by the rest of his family and runs away, never to return. After initial feelings of vulnerability, he quickly begins to feel that the world is his; "and so in truth it was, though I could scarcely realise my supremacy at once" (461) – there would be no story otherwise. Like other pf narratives, the greater portion of *Zit and Xoe* is about Zit's gradual realisation of his own latent "supremacy", usually at the expense of nonhuman animals. After meeting Zit for the first time Xoe provides him with a horse. Her horse long ago volunteered its services. Zit, however, seems to want to take his horse's services: "my blood was tingling with triumph. At last I had found a creature to obey me, to do what I willed and turn as I wanted!" (472). Shortly afterwards, Zit describes how, following arguments with Xoe, he would use "a horrible, big, black bear" with "a sort of sardonic grin" for target practice, after having invented the bow and arrow (477). Like pf's other Great Men, then, Zit's "supremacy" emerges in proportion to his

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[40] Anthropomorphised animals suggesting the unprecedented, uncanny nature of the human are a fairly common feature in early pf narratives. In *The Story of Ab*, there is a general feeling among the animals that the human is both strange and dangerous; its "advent" "somehow affected all animate nature and terrified it" (65). In *A Story of the Stone Age*, too, Andoo describes Ugh-lomi and Eudena to the she-bear after he first encounters them: they are "the most extraordinary beasts"; "I suppose [they are] a sort of monkey gone wrong" (681).

maltreatment of animals and his colonisation of the environment. At the same time, animal cruelty strengthens the distinction between Zit and his nonhuman neighbours, and like Zit's father before them the animals eventually make it clear that Zit and what he calls his "innocent exploits in the hunting-field" are unwelcome. One day, while "enjoying very quietly a little inoffensive pig-sticking", Zit is charged by "a herd of infuriated boars" (621). This presages a concerted effort by all the animals around Zit and Xoe to break down the barricades surrounding the couple's compound and drive them away from the island. As was the case with Zit's father, this rather suggests that the rigid distinction between human and animal is entirely due to human arrogance, stemming from its belief in its own "supremacy"; the distinction was human-made but, in this case, animal-enforced. There is a distinct possibility, however, that Zit's account of the animal rebellion is actually a retrospective acknowledgement of, and an attempt to justify, his mistreatment of the animals, because he reports feeling that he soon began "to think that I had been quite wrong in the cruel thoughtless way I had treated all the animals" (630). And he also acknowledges that "The animals in their way can exist happily enough without us, [b]ut without them we could never do more than exist" (628).

In any case, Zit's cruelty, and the animal response to it, cause Zit and Xoe to fulfil the father's prophesy to the full: after fleeing the island with their baby son, Pip, they become colonialists. In a fit of anger at the impudence of the animals, Xoe says to Zit that

> Once for all, come what may, we must break with our past, if not for our own sakes, for baby's. Those horrible, mean creatures are jealous of him and his beauty and the joy we have in him. What are they to us or we to them? We will go on from island to island through the whole world, till even the very memory of them shall be left so far behind that baby will never hear the faintest echo of it (625-6).

The distinction between human and animal is based on animal cruelty and exploitation; this is what humanisation is. However, in order to finally "break with their past", and thus to become even more human, Zit and Xoe must become the imperialists Zit's father always knew them to be. They must move "from island to island" simultaneously running away from and chasing down the animal – fleeing their origins in it, and finding their supremacy at its expense. Humanisation is thus an ambiguous process. It is simultaneously about strength and weakness, "supremacy" and fear, arrogance and shame.

Conclusion

According to Nicholas Ruddick, "good pf"

> can enable us to confront more directly than any other kind of literature our human nature viewed as the result of an evolved process. Indeed, perhaps pf's highest function as a literary genre is to cast light on human nature in our post-Darwinian age (104).

The great irony of early pf (a genre which emerged as a direct result of the establishment of human antiquity and evolution) is that it is hostile to any notion of the human as an evolved being, and therefore cannot be considered "good" according to Ruddick's criteria. As an attempt to account for the human in developmental terms (that is, as emerging from the non- and the subhuman) early pf is a signal failure; it cannot imagine other humans in anything other than binary terms. Primitive Man and animals, as the not-human, could only ever be victims of inevitable progress. Wielding the anthropological machine and determining that 'the human' begins with them, the heroes guide the evolutionary process towards their humanist selves. In the process, they leave human evolutionary history populated only with "worthy ancestors", and restore to the human the intentional origins it believed itself to possess before the intervention of Darwin and what philosopher and scientist John Herschel described as Darwin's "law of the higgledy-piggledy" (quoted in Vogel Carey 2004). This, in fact, may be the most profitable way to think about early prehistoric fiction – as a post-Darwin salve, rather than a failed attempt to account for humanness in evolutionary terms, or thus as 'bad' pf.[41]

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[41] Writing about five years before the publication of Ruddick's history of the genre, literary Darwinist Joseph Carroll analyses some modern examples of what he calls "Paleolithic fictions" (including William Golding's *The Inheritors*). If these stories "are any good at all", he argues, "they do not portray their characters as possessing sophisticated modern minds. The minds they depict are rudimentary, the social order primitive, and the manners rough […] Good Paleolithic fiction creates a world of harsh conditions in which the characters are dominated by brute necessity, driven by elemental passions, and capable of only inchoate reflection" (2004: 177). From this, it is clear that Carroll would agree with the basic assessment of early pf put forward in this chapter – that it is what Ruddick might describe as "bad pf". However, where Carroll determines the quality of a pf narrative according to the standard of Darwinian theory, I am more interested in the effects that so-called bad pf can have, and has had. This will be one of the principal concerns of the remainder of this thesis. Unlike Carroll, I am not judging early pf against a normative, scientific standard; instead, I argue that culture and cultural productions cannot really be judged in this way, and that 'false' or 'erroneous' responses to Darwin can be influential or impactful regardless of correctness.

In 'Decolonizing Relationships with Nature' (2003), Val Plumwood argues, as others have done, that in the western tradition 'human' and 'nature' are defined in opposition: the true or ideal human is "identified with reason" (52), while nature is viewed as a "rational deficit" (53). Like Agamben, Plumwood further argues that throughout history those thought to be rationally deficient (such as women and the colonised) are considered to be closer to nature and are perceived as "less ideal or more primitive forms of the human" (52). More than this, however, Plumwood unites the multiple effects of the conceptual opposition of human and nature under the term "hegemonic centrism" (54) and posits that within this framework progress is seen as the "progressive overcoming, or control of" the less rational by "the rational sphere of European culture and 'modernity'" (52-3). In the western imagination, the non-, semi- and sub-human demands, even requires, to be made more human; wherever it is found, the "rational deficit" must be overcome. Early pf's Great Men are in the service of hegemonic centrism, and prehistoric fiction itself is a hegemonic centrist genre. The establishment of human antiquity and evolution brought to light a rational deficit in the human past, and the genre's function is to overwrite or otherwise diminish this deficit – hence evolutionary colonialism.

In the final scene of *Zit and Xoe*, which takes place in Zit's writing room, Xoe articulates the hegemonic centrist's shame, and petitions Zit to mask their ancestral "rational deficit" in his writing. The best thing for their children, she claims, would be ignorance of their animal grandparents:

> 'You haven't said anything about our origin, Zit?' she asked, very anxiously. 'You and I are proud, of course, of the way in which we have got on. But the children know nothing of our past, and why should we tell them?' [...]
>   'The children are not like me. They take everything far more seriously. I know all your old stories by heart. I love them just as I love the trees in our garden, because I have watched them grow. But they believe everything as you tell it. They all believe every word of your famous bear-story. Why should we degrade them so terribly with the tale of our mean origin?' [...]
>   'And oh, I do wish you had never written that wretched book!" (all p. 634).

Xoe's request here may serve as a metaphor for the entire genre.[42] Instead of bringing human and animal into closer contact, as per the implications of evolutionary theory, early pf wrote *sapiens* and humanism into the evolutionary history of *Homo*, masking the rational deficit it found there and strengthening, rather than challenging, the human-animal distinction. In doing so it further implied that only Great Men and humanist heroes were "worth looking at" and narrating. The world can only be narrated, that is to say, when it is occupied by the highest expression of European *sapiens* and daubed with its significance, just as the rocks around Zit and Xoe's home are daubed with Zit's silhouette pictures of Xoe, because "The place itself is nothing" (627).

Despite being the most explicit fictional response to the establishment of human antiquity and evolution, early pf effectively dismissed any possibility of humanness having developed at all, and reaffirmed the notion of a transcendent human essence. Notwithstanding its revolutionary subject matter, then, early pf is a fundamentally conservative genre, rendering the evolutionary human in anti-evolutionary terms. At heart, early pf is a response to Darwin and human antiquity. However, because it projects humanists onto prehistory it ultimately shirks the Darwinian challenge. Rather than thinking through the human's status as an evolutionary being among others, it writes over the prehistory of *Homo* and inscribes there a rapacious and exploitative imperialist, all the while strengthening the absolute distinction between "human" and "animal". Humanisation is thus cast as the systematic pursuit, "from island to island", of the rational deficit in human evolutionary history. The human is borne of violence and early pf normalises, naturalises, and ultimately justifies violence against the sub- and nonhuman. It is also true that this evolutionary-colonialist human "founds the

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[42] Zit neither confirms nor denies whether or not he has elided all the details of their "origin", hiding instead behind evasive claims that he would never "put down anything in black and white that is not really true" and that, in any case, "it does not really matter" because no-one but Xoe can read his writing (634). These appear to soothe Xoe for a while, but they only really raise more questions for the reader. For instance, the "famous bear-story" Xoe describes is presumably about the same bear that Zit used for target practice, as this is the only bear in the novel. Zit's claim that he would never write anything that was "not really true" is at odds with Xoe's suggestion that his stories have "grown" over the years, and that this one in particular (assuming it to be the same story) is noteworthy for its embellishment. Given the book and given what it contains, it would appear that Zit ignored his partner's wishes, though we cannot exclude the possibility that we are reading either a censored or an exaggerated version.

city of men", to borrow Agamben's phrase again. Like Zit and Xoe's thriving society at the end of

Curwen's narrative, humanism's bloody pursuit of, and flight from, the rational deficit is the

foundation upon which Victorian, and indeed modern, society is built.

3. George Meredith, Egoism and the 'Purer'

In the hands of the writers of early prehistoric fiction, Primitive Man was a sacrificial figure whose function was to confirm the emergence, and later allow for the development, of what I have called the humanist hero. In early pf, Primitive Man was surpassed by anthropocentric colonialists and expansionist reasoners. More importantly, those who did the surpassing were uncritically celebrated as heroes of the species and as those upon whose endeavours civilisation ultimately rests. In this chapter, I turn to the work of poet and novelist George Meredith, which deals with many of the same themes. However, where the pf writers travelled back in time to visit Primitive Man, and to visit upon him his conquerors, Meredith exposed such conquerors in the Victorian present and ridiculed them as evolutionary relics; as, in spite of their success and/or high standing, the last "vestiges of rawness and grossness to be found among us" (2010 [1879]: 58). If Primitive Man is the least advanced human of which a given writer is prepared or able to conceive, then in Meredith's work pf's Great Men become Primitive Men. Where the writers of early pf saw a progressive evolutionary hero, Meredith saw a regressive and atavistic villain. Moreover, where they saw Great Men – rare by nature – he saw an alarmingly commonplace cast of mind.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to demonstrate that the ideas that are present in pf – and, indeed, in the broader debate about antiquity and evolution – had wide currency, and that they were approached from different perspectives. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the majority of the Meredith works to be discussed below date from 1877 to 1891, meaning that they precede Wells's and Waterloo's pf narratives by at least six years. Indeed, the larger part of Meredith's theory of egoism had been developed by 1879, the same year as Elie Berthet's 'The Parisians of the Stone Age' appeared in English, and one year prior to Andrew Lang's 'Romance of the First Radical' – the first piece of "pure" pf in English. I have no evidence of Meredith having read Berthet (nor Helps's *Realmah* – see notes 38 and 39 of previous chapter) before writing *The Egoist* (1879), which makes

his connection of egoism with human antiquity all the more interesting, because it either had an impact on the pf stories that followed it, or had no impact at all and similar ideas were arrived at independently.[1]

In the first half of this chapter, I will examine some key concepts in Meredith's critical terminology (egoism, society and comedy) and situate them in relation to evolutionary colonialism in Meredith's critique of the Great Man. This will be based on analysis of his poetry, prose and fiction and it will provide the context for a discussion, in the second half of the chapter, of one of his most difficult novels, *One of our Conquerors* (1891).[2] Ultimately, the aim is to bring to light Meredith's account of the disastrous effects that the pf hero, or humanist hero, can have in a modern setting, and to contrast this with the manner in which this same figure is valorised in early pf. With respect to evolutionary colonialism, this chapter builds on the previous one by shifting focus to its implications – to the third layer of the concept, as laid out in the introduction. It focuses on some of the consequences of projecting the kind of narrative found in early pf onto human evolutionary history. In doing so, it seeks to examine what this might mean for the way we understand ourselves as an evolutionary species. In short, Meredith effectively demonstrates that early pf's heroes have not place in the "city of men" they established.[3]

Egoism in Meredith's Work

In 'Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn' (1862), one of his earlier poems, Meredith writes that

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[1] Meredith met Edward Clodd in May 1884 (Clodd 1909: 19). Clodd was a popular science writer (who, in 1895, wrote a book called *The Story of Primitive Man*) and who was friends with both Grant Allen and Andrew Lang at around the same time – see Clodd (1909) and Clodd (1916) for more on this. It is entirely possible, therefore, that Meredith could have been familiar with some works of early pf – again, though, this would have been after the publication of *The Egoist*.
[2] Margaret Harris, the editor of the standard edition of *One of Our Conquerors,* argues that the novel is second only to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* in terms of difficulty (Harris 1975).
[3] Aside from Meredith, this notion is evident in both Joseph Conrad and Arthur Machen – and will be explored in the following chapters. Moreover, in figures such as Ford Madox Ford's Edward Ashburnham (the good soldier in *The Good Soldier*), this same idea of a typical hero figure who is tragically out of place in modernity persists into at least the Edwardian period.

> There is a curtain o'er us.
> For once, good souls, we'll not pretend
> To be aught better than she who bore us,
> And is our only visible friend.
> ...
> She has been slain by the narrow brain,
> But for us who love her she lives again.   (ll. 89-96)[4]

Meredith's writing often has a didactic function which can be characterised as drawing aside the "curtain" and revealing to the "narrow brain" its deep connection to "she who bore us". That is, revealing to the rational, instrumentalising cast of mind common among pf heroes that it is part of a much wider, indeed cosmic, whole that encompasses both nature and society. At a basic level, Meredith's work is thus anti-anthropocentric because it places the human firmly within, rather than above, the wider complex of nature.[5] Jacqueline Banerjee has recently argued that "a sense of man's fundamentally unmediated connection to nature links everything in Meredith's thinking, and leavens and illuminates everything he wrote" (2012: 3). "Man", then, is not a species apart, but is instead united in spirit with all others and, crucially, with nature itself. As regards society, this "fundamentally unmediated connection to nature" manifests itself in Meredith's anti-egoism: all individuals are united in spirit and evolutionary fact, and to pretend otherwise is ridiculous. Indeed, the tendency to place oneself above all others is skewered repeatedly in his comedies.

The spirit lying behind nature – and therefore behind society, too – is progressive but not benevolent evolution. In *Modern Love* (1862) (a sequence of fifty, sixteen-line sonnets and by far Meredith's most celebrated poetic work), nature is she who "the laws of growth most deeply knows", and she "Whose hands bear, here, a seed-bag – there, an urn" (XIII, 6-9). The progressive indifference of nature, "growth" from ashes, is of course an inheritance from Darwinian theory; the individual is of consequence only to the extent that he or she prepares the ground for later

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[4] Unless otherwise stated, all references to Meredith's poetry are taken from the first volume of Bartlett's *Poems of George Meredith* (1978).

[5] Nature, as I will go on to explain, is seen as more of a process than the sum of animals and the so-called natural environment.

generations. Meredith's understanding of nature was thus similar to Alfred Tennyson's famous take

in *In Memoriam* (1849): "So careful of the type she seems, / So careless of the single life"; "of fifty

seeds / She often brings but one to bear" (55, 7-12). However, where Tennyson grieved over

nature's lost care for the individual, Meredith accepted it and sought to apply the new reality to

society. Anything which prevents or slows "growth" is accordingly seen as being in opposition to the

spirit of nature; and since humans and society are judged by the same standard, any trait which acts

as a brake on the forward thrust of society is singled out for criticism and ridicule. This, then, is the

basis of Meredith's critique of egoism – the tendency to place the self above its others, and to

consider these others only in relation to the self; in short, to elevate the individual above the

collective and presume oneself of more consequence than the future. Rather than submitting to the

wider complex of nature-society, the egoist is one who sees and uses nature and other people

principally as means to his or her own ends. The egoist is thus one who attempts (but always fails) to

isolate his- or herself from the greater whole, and one who, from this position of perceived isolation,

assumes their own superiority.

In the poem 'Earth and Man' (1883), egoism appears as Man's "distempered devil of Self" and is

shown to be in opposition to the progressive spirit of nature-society because it represents a failure

to heed nature's evolutionary "call": "Live in thy offspring as I live in mine". For its own sake, the

"devil of Self" sacrifices the future of the species (sections 35 & 38). If only Man the egoist were to

listen to nature's call, he would reach a higher level of advancement or "burst the chrysalis of the

blind". As it is, however, the "glutton for [nature's] fruits", "The fratricide, the thief, the infidel, / The

hoofed and horned" holds sway and, by opposing the spirit of nature, is actively slowing human

development (sections 34-6).[6] In previous Meredith criticism, when its origins are of any interest at

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[6] While it raises some important questions (to which I will return below), the ease with which Meredith's conception of egoism crosses apparent boundaries between society and nature suggests that it is similar to what Val Plumwood means by 'hegemonic centrism' (see previous chapter). Here, for instance, self or egoism is equated with the gluttony of anthropocentrism.

all, egoism is often seen as deriving from the human's animal inheritance. In what is still an influential study, G. M. Trevelyan (1906) described egoism as "the blood of the primitive animal" which still affects human behaviour (162). Later, Richard B. Hudson argued that

> Egoism, as Meredith depicts it in his poems, is a demand of the animal, a holdover from man's brutish past. It is the primitive desire of the animal for self-preservation, refined somewhat now that man is in society. Thus egoism is opposed to the social organization because egoism seeks to preserve the individual at the expense of society as a whole (1948: 166-7).

The animalisation of egoism speaks of the tendency, in discussions of the impact of nineteenth-century science, to ignore or unintentionally elide the establishment of human antiquity in favour of Darwinian evolution.[7] It further ignores the fact that Meredith often figures egoism, not as an animal, but as a monster.[8] The "hoofed and horned" "devil of Self" from 'Earth and Man' is one example, but there are many others. For instance, the speaker of 'The Woods of Westermain' (from the same collection) commands that the "scaly Dragon-fowl, / Who was lord ere light you drank" be called "Self" (iv, 37-8 & 60). While it is clear, then, that egoism, as the majority of Meredith critics agree, is a counter-societal tendency, it is not a "holdover from man's brutish past". In Renate Muendel's curiously Victorian phrase, egoism emerged at "the dawn of man's race" (1986: 128): a human monstrosity, it is associated more with the establishment of human antiquity, with flint tools and evolutionary colonialism, than it is with Darwinian theory.[9]

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[7] Later discussions of Meredith tend not to be too concerned with egoism's origins, preferring to take a psychological over a historicist approach. Thus, Norman Kelvin (1961: 116) compares egoism to Freud's id (which is of course not without its own Darwinian debt), and Richard C. Stevenson describes egoism in Meredith as "that isolating, monological compound of self-delusion, vanity, and hypocrisy" (2004: 22).

[8] For further examples of the critical tendency to analyse Meredith's work in relation to Darwin and evolutionary theory see, for example, Williams (1983), O'Hara (1992), Smith (1995), and Jones (2005). The Williams and O'Hara articles have both been highly influential.

[9] As we saw in the first chapter, it is not really possible in practice to separate these closely intertwined scientific developments. Nevertheless, in Meredith's work egoism's appearance in the world is more closely associated with the historical fact of the establishment of human antiquity than with that of the establishment of Darwinian evolutionism.

Egoism and Antiquity

Unsurprisingly, it is in *The Egoist* (1879) that Meredith most fully explores egoism. "Consider him indulgently", the narrator asks, for "the Egoist is the Son of Himself [and] He is likewise the Father":

> The Egoist is our fountain-head, primeval man: the primitive is born again, the elemental reconstituted. Born again, into new conditions, the primitive may be highly polished of men, and forfeit nothing save the roughness of his original nature. He is not only his own father, he is ours; and he is also our son. We have produced him, he us. Such were we, to such are we returning (2010 [1879]: 423-4)

The egoist's autogenous origins are rather similar to pf's colonising account of the evolutionary history of *Homo*, in which the humanist human is its own parent and therefore its own offspring, too. The ideal is written into the past in order to create the future, which, when it arrives as the exemplary present, becomes genetically unstable, as it were. That the egoist is "born again" into modern conditions, forfeiting "nothing save the roughness of his original nature", also suggests something of the essential nature of the heroism of pf heroes, in the sense that it moves freely between historical, and even prehistoric, periods. Thus, even though in Meredith the egoist is clearly atavistic, such figures still occupy the higher rungs of society: Sir Willoughby Patterne (the egoist in *The Egoist*) is certainly among the most "highly polished of men"; a country squire with the wine cellar to match, he is, as Gillian Beer puts it, "cynosure of the county" (1970: 134). Egoists, in other words, are just as much heroes of the Euro-American tradition as are the protagonists of pf. Given, however, that *The Egoist* appeared before the publication of the majority of the pf stories discussed in the previous chapter, it is worth noting that, in the claim that "We have produced him, he us", there is also an echo of the manner in which Primitive Man – however conceived – was a product of Victorian debate, and that he was produced precisely in order to account for the later emergence of Victorian civilisation. That is, the Victorians produced him, he them. Nevertheless, shortly after this account of the egoist's origins, the narrator invokes an opposing group of poets who take a different view of society, seeing it not as the pinnacle of human achievement but as an effeminising, vigour-

sapping force. For such as these, the egoist is a reminder of "the indestructability of the race, of the ancient energy in removing obstacles to individual growth"; standing "monumentally" against society's tide, he is "a sample of what we would be had we his concentrated power". Clearly, if these poets ever turned to prose they would most likely write pf, telling of how egoists and Great Men, with "the glorious first flint and arrow-head for [a] crest" no less, succeeded in removing all obstacles to their own growth (424-25); and how, in the process and almost by accident, the egoist-as-Great-Man cleared the way for society.[10] These contrarian poets see in the egoist the western ideal which, in prehistoric fiction's fantasy of self-creation, was responsible for guiding towards itself the evolutionary history of *Homo.* Indeed, the only real difference between Meredith's egoist and the pf hero is that, where pf celebrates these figures, Meredith casts them as villains and figures of ridicule – as individuals unfit for society.

Towards the end of the first chapter of Meredith's novel *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) – one of his few commercial and critical successes – there is a fairly lengthy disquisition on the need for "philosophy" in fiction. In brief, this means finding the correct balance between various literary modes, such as realism, naturalism and romance: "the fiction which is the summary of actual Life, the within and without of us, is, prose or verse, plodding or soaring, philosophy's elect handmaiden" (17). This desire to get access to "actual life" – as opposed to the efforts of shallow realism, deterministic naturalism, and naive romance – leads to a warning against the dangers of fiction as such, and one which makes the connection to human antiquity, to pf and to the arguments of the previous chapter, all the more explicit. The opening words belong to Diana Warwick, the novel's protagonist:

> 'So well do we know ourselves, that we one and all determine to know a purer,' says the
> heroine of my columns. Philosophy in fiction tells, among various other matters, of the

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[10] It was a common misconception at this time that the smaller of the tear-drop shaped, late-Acheulean tools were arrow-heads.

perils of this intimate acquaintance with a flattering familiar in the 'purer' – a person who more than ceases to be of use to us after his ideal shall have led up men from their flint and arrowhead caverns to inter-communicative daylight. For when the fictitious creature has performed that service of helping to civilize the world, it becomes the most dangerous of delusions, causing first the individual to despise the mass, and then to join the mass in crushing the individual (19-20)

This "ideal" who is responsible for having "led up men from their flint and arrowhead caverns" into "inter-communicative daylight" is the evolutionary colonialist of early prehistoric fiction, the Great Man credited with bringing order to inhuman, evolutionary chaos and, ultimately, with leading *Homo* towards its destiny as *sapiens*. This is the same figure who took charge of human evolutionary development, guiding the process towards itself – indeed, fathering itself – while at the same time "civilizing the world".[11] Based on the "inclusive-exclusion" of Primitive Man – or the "bare life" of *Homo* – this was of course a violent process. For Meredith, however, "civilizing the world" lacks these violent associations, for the principal signification seems to be the emergence into "inter-communicative daylight" (and this accords well with his understanding and appreciation of society). Meredith is more concerned with the consequences of the ideal's colonisation of human evolutionary history for modernity, that point at which the ideal, this essential humanist hero, "more than ceases to be of use"; in short, when it becomes the egoist. Meredith's civilised world thus has the same origins as the "city of men" instituted by the biopolitical managerialism of early pf's own "purers" – it may, in fact, be the very same city.[12] What is more important for Meredith, though, is to prevent this "fictitious creature" and "most dangerous of delusions" from threatening the city that it helped to establish in the first place. Indeed, in the contrast between the narrator of *The Egoist* and his poet antagonists it is possible to perceive this rather ironic dual function of egoism. As we learn in the 'Prelude' to the novel, in the earlier days of its long history egoism was "valiant", "sober", "socially valuable [and] nationally serviceable" (60). This "early principle of our being" (2010: 424),

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[11] Given the publication date of this novel, and the points raised in note 1 (page 108), it is possible that, by this time, Meredith had encountered some works of pf. As I said there, however, I have found no direct evidence of this. It is perhaps more interesting, though, that Meredith came to similar ideas simultaneously and, at the very least, semi-independently.
[12] As is typical of Meredith, the term "purer" is fairly awkward – it is an adjective masquerading as a noun. Nevertheless, I will continue to use it in the same way here.

credited with having "removed all obstacles" to human development between the cave and "intercommunicative daylight", is ultimately responsible for the institution of society itself, yet it also contains the seeds of society's destruction. Egoism both made and struggles against its own constraint; it "civilized the world" but has now become, in increasingly complex societies like Victorian Britain, "the most dangerous of delusions". An offence to society, egoism therefore must fall prey to Meredithian comedy.[13]

Over the course of the *The Egoist*, Sir Willoughby Patterne's egoism is shown to have two dominant forms, both of which are recognisable from the poetry discussed above. The first is the tendency to consider himself of more consequence than others, to see himself as "cynosure of the county" and the centre of everything. If this can be figured as a kind of expansion of the self outward, then the second form Willoughby's egoism takes is precisely the opposite: like the "armoured" dragon, Self, in 'The Woods of Westermain', he has a strong desire to close himself off, to protect his self from contamination by others and the dirt of the world. Different as these may appear, they are nevertheless closely related, as Donald David Stone demonstrates when distinguishing between the egoist and the individualist in relation to Meredith's novel:

> Enclosed in and burdened by one's self, the egoist finds himself constantly in need of performing, living for the effect he makes on others as proof that, in their eyes, he exists. The individualist, on the other hand, identifies and develops himself in terms of his relationship with others – wife, society, reality (1972: 116-7).

Both the egoist and the individualist are defined by their interactions with others. However, while the individualist is aware of this, the egoist operates under a fantasy of isolation, in spite of the fact

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[13] It is true that, for Meredith, the purer and its civilising exploits are "fictitious" and a "delusion" and that, therefore, it never really "civilized" anything. Ultimately, this also means that the so-called "city of men" doesn't exist. However, much of his work seems to betray an interest in the costs of thinking in this manner and, indeed, that he raises it at all suggests an awareness of the wider influence of stories and ideology, however fictional. One of the things that makes Meredith interesting today is that his work seems to acknowledge the dangers of thinking of the human, and of human society, as things that have emerged from violence and imperial aggression – as things that have been wrested from nature and animal life.

that the "performed" nature of his or her identity implies a fundamental relationship with an audience of some kind. The two forms of egoism thus appear to be mutually reinforcing: Willoughby's inability to recognise that his identity is bound up in what others think of him makes his isolationist fantasy possible; while at the same time, his isolationism seems to lead him outwards in a manner reminiscent of the heroes of early pf.

One of the more chilling illustrations of this egoistic expansionism is to be found in Willoughby's relationship with his Aunts Eleanor and Isabel, who have both been at Patterne Hall with Willoughby since his birth. After an early meeting with these aunts, Clara falls to wondering

> whether inclination or Sir Willoughby had disciplined their individuality out of them and made them his shadows, his echoes. She gazed from them to him, and feared him. But as yet she had not experienced the power in him which could threaten and wrestle to subject the members of his household to the state of satellites. Though she had in fact been giving battle to it for several months, she had held her own too well to perceive definitely the character of the spirit opposing her (127).

Eleanor and Isabel are almost without identity; after living so long with Sir Willoughby they exist only in relation to him, as "satellites". Indeed, their main functions seem to be to offer praise of Willoughby (to Willoughby), and to accede to his every utterance in order to shore up his identity: when looking upon members of his household, if Willoughby does not receive the look he expects or requires he often appears discomfited. For his aunts, the consequence of Willoughby's egoism – rather, his ignorance of his need for their recognition – is the erasure of their own "individuality" and the expansion of his self onto them. And this again highlights the similarities between the egoist and the pf hero: each denies the intrinsic worth of their surroundings, whether natural, animal, or human; as Zit says to Xoe, "the place itself is nothing". The egoist and the pf hero thus project themselves and their concerns onto their environment and essentially colonise it. Those whom Willoughby sees as his "excellent aunts" because they reflect back to him his own idealised vision of himself, are, to everyone else, strangely hollow, eerie "shadows" and "echoes" of Willoughby.

Society and Comedy

In the 'Prelude' to *The Egoist*, a novel in which the action, such as it is, is constrained to a single

country manor, the narrator explains the benefits of dealing with social interactions in the abstract,

or in a kind of purified form. True comedy, he claims, "deals with human nature in the drawing-room

of civilized men and women", a place where there is "no dust of the struggling outer world, no mire,

no violent crashes, to make the correctness of the representation convincing" (55). This then

branches out into a critique of "the realistic method", or the "conscientious transcription of all the

visible, and a repetition of all the audible" – a tendency which is "mainly accountable for our present

branfulness" (56). The over-particularisation of realist fiction and, indeed, of science prevents the

drawing of parallels and lessons; it "obscures the glass it holds to mankind, [and] renders us inexact

in the recognition of our individual countenances: a perilous thing for civilization" (57). In place of

this, the narrator suggests an account abstracted from the empirical particularity of the real world,

an account that, of necessity, is "pointed with examples and types" which will allow us to perceive

our own likeness (57). Willoughby, then, is a "type", an exaggerated figure in whom we are to

recognise ourselves. Precisely because of his allusive rendering, however, Willoughby is also one of

Meredith's most vivid characters – and the same is true for another of Meredith's egoists, the

remarkable Countess de Saldar de Sancorvo in *Evan Harrington* (1861). Meredith's comic characters,

that is to say, tend to be unstable compounds of individual and type. It is on this basis that I want to

proceed in the discussion of Meredith's theory of Comedy and its relation to society.

In 'The Essay on Comedy' (1877), his only piece of sustained literary criticism, Meredith outlines the

very close, even indissoluble, relationship between society and comedy – the latter being a form of

laughter-making distinct from humour, wit, satire, irony, farce etc.[14] Whereas society is "that

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[14] The 'Essay' first appeared in print in *The New Quarterly Magazine* for April 1877, having first been delivered as a talk at

assemblage of minds whereof the Comic Spirit has its origin", comedy is "an interpretation of the general mind" (1903: 82, 85). Because comedy is an "interpretation" of society, or this shared mind, the very perception of the comic – a shared acknowledgement that Willoughby and the Countess are frequently ridiculous – guarantees the existence of society thus conceived. An awareness of the Comic Spirit is therefore "your assurance that many sane and solid minds are with you in what you are experiencing" (90-91). Conversely, failure to perceive the existence of the Comic Spirit is "to deny the existence of a mind of man where minds of men are working in conjunction" – that is, to deny the existence of society (90). As regards the tension between type and individual in Meredith's comic characters, this conception of Comedy and society can be read in two ways. To the extent that Willoughby is a type, his treatment by the Comic Spirit – his fate in the novel – may be seen as an attempt to reconfigure society. Conversely, to the extent that he is an individual character – albeit a fictional one – his treatment may be seen as politically repressive. There can be little doubt that Meredith intended his comedies to be socially useful, but it is nevertheless possible to spot certain negative implications.

Comedy, Meredith explains in the 'Essay', is both separate from and superior to other forms of humour because, in its workings, it is more in line with his views about society and, in its nature, it is intellectual; it is the "laughter of the mind" (95).[15] First, the mechanics of Comedy reveal it to be the least egoistic of all modes of humour. Indeed, in many respects it is the antithesis of egoism. While briefly discussing the middle classes, Meredith writes that

> Humorous writing they will endure, perhaps approve, if it mingles with pathos to shake and elevate the feelings. They approve of satire, because, like the beak of the vulture, it smells of carrion, which they are not. But of Comedy they have a shivering dread, for Comedy

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the London Institution in February of the same year.
[15] When referring to Meredith's own conception of different varieties of humour, these will be capitalised – as in Comedy, Humour, Satire etc.

enfolds them with the wretched host of the world, huddles them with us all in an ignoble assimilation, and cannot be used by any exalted variety as a scourge and a broom. Nay, to be an exalted variety is to come under the calm curious eye of the Comic Spirit, and be probed for what you are (27)

Satire, then, shares certain similarities with egoism: it assumes its own superiority and, from this "exalted" position outside or above society, it sees fit to deride those toiling within it. Note, too, that Satire is animalised: it is somehow less human, less humane, and less civilised.[16] Comedy, on the other hand, is a leveller. As per its close connection to society, it "enfolds" individuals in the collective, reminding them not of their difference or superiority, but of their equality – of the fact that they are part of, and bound to, a larger whole. "You may estimate your capacity for Comic perception", Meredith claims, "by being able to detect the ridicule of them you love, without loving them less: and more by being able to see yourself somewhat ridiculous in dear eyes, and accepting the correction their image of you proposes" (78). Comedy, in short, is a lovingly meliorative way of reminding people of their mutual obligations – both to each other, and to society.[17]

In *On Humour* (2002), Simon Critchley delineates what he calls "true humour" (14), a concept which shares much with Meredith's Comedy. Indeed, in his account of the intellectuality of the wry smile as opposed to the bellowing guffaw, Critchley quotes Meredith's 'Essay' in support (107). Most interestingly, however, Critchley argues that true humour "seeks to criticize the established order or change the situation in which we find ourselves" (11). The "critical task of humour", he goes on to say, is "the lashing of vices which are general and not personal", and which lashing "does not point to a fundamental defect", something which, by its nature, is unchangeable (15). As a type, Willoughby effectively is the "established order": "cynosure of the county" and at the very top of Victorian society, *Sir* Willoughby is representative of the Victorian establishment, and the arrogance

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[16] Wit, too, is described as "warlike" and "entirely pugilistic".

[17] Whether or not Sir Willoughby's treatment can be described as 'loving' is clearly a matter for debate. This is precisely why Stevenson (2004) is correct when, in a discussion of the 'Essay', he warns that "one way in which the experimental Meredith is so interesting is the manner in which he resists, extends beyond, and deconstructs the very categories he himself helps to provide" (17).

with which he conducts himself in love, family and business betrays an appropriate sense of entitlement. This is evident in his courtship – or, rather, in his siege – of Clara Middleton, his reckless treatment of Laetitia Dale and Vernon Whitford, his snubbing of his poorer relation, Lieutenant Crossjay Patterne, one of the "Pauper Patternes" (61), and many other instances beside. If Willoughby is the status quo, albeit in exaggerated form, then subjecting him to the Comic Spirit is a subversive act designed, in Critchley's words, to "change the situation". Further, if the egoist, as I argue, is essentially the same figure as early pf's "purer", then Willoughby is also the western ideal – the domineering, world-beating hero. Meredith's treatment of such a figure may therefore be seen in terms of a critical examination of the assumptions of western culture, one designed, first, to point out just how ridiculous such a figure actually is and, second, to clear the way for a new society which aligns itself with the forward thrust of the evolutionary process on a social, rather than on an individual, basis. The egoist, that is to say, is now unfit for the society for which he is ultimately responsible; in a Darwinian universe – according to Meredith's reading, at any rate – the egoist no longer fits the kind of society which has now become necessary, a society which calls for its members to live for a future in which they themselves have no hope of participating.

If, on the other hand, Willoughby is interpreted as an individual, things look very different; here, Meredithian Comedy can be described as society's enforcer. In a Durkheimian idiom, Meredith in this case seems keen to establish Comedy as a "social fact", as something with a coercive and, often, a punitive function – as something which is external to but controls the individual.[18] In both the 'Essay on Comedy' and in *The Egoist*, Comedy is of course presented as a way of correcting the behaviour of wayward individuals in order to make them fit for society, or to bring them into agreement with the "general mind". In the 'Prelude' to *The Egoist*, for instance, Comedy is described as the best "remedy" for egoism and related ailments: it "proposes the correcting of

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[18] For more on Durkheim and 'social facts', see chapter four of Adams and Sydie (2002). See also Allan (2013: 111).

pretentiousness, of inflation, of dullness, and of the vestiges of rawness and grossness to be found among us". It is "the ultimate civilizer, the polisher, a sweet cook", to be used by the common mind to further entrench its own power over the errant individual (57-58). In this regard, there is little difference between what Meredith is doing and what early pf does to so-called unworthy ancestors. Alongside Durkheimian coercion, that is to say, Meredith uses Comedy as a kind of anthropological machine. Though he is ridiculed rather than destroyed, the aim of the project is to bring Willoughby up to standard. It should be remembered, however, that he is effectively prevented from having children and thereby continuing the bloodline.[19]

Comparing the responses of Meredith and Thomas Hardy to nineteenth-century science's "attack upon personality", Norman Kelvin argues that whereas Hardy struggled with nature's newly-revealed "indifference", Meredith "saw no reason for despair in the idea that the individual is insignificant". In fact, Meredith accepted "the impossibility and *immorality* of regarding any single life as the dramatic journey through time of a uniquely fated personality" (1961: 141, emphasis added). 'The Lark Ascending', the opening poem of *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883), is a celebration of what, for Meredith, is the correct ethical response to evolutionary theory: "self-forgetfulness divine" (l. 114). Rather than a Shelleyan "blithe spirit", Meredith's lark, as John Holmes points out, is "very much of this Earth": it is a "fellow creature" living in "the pastoral, arable, partly wooded landscape that is its typical English habitat" (2009: 173). Meredith honours the lark precisely because it is very much a part of its environment; it is this that makes its song "seraphically free / Of taint of personality" (ll. 93-4) and able to awaken "as it waxes thin, / The best in us to him akin" (ll. 55-6). The lark teaches its spectators to abandon themselves to their own human environment; to a society taking direction from the progressive spirit of nature.

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[19] If Willoughby is again read as a type, the fact that he is an egoist, and therefore essentially the same as early pf's Great Men, the anthropological machine that is wielded in Meredith's comedies becomes rather different from the one outlined in the previous chapter. To the extent that it is being used on its own product, it may be said to be malfunctioning somewhat.

As Kelvin makes clear, Meredith attempted to derive ethics from nature: he took the teachings of evolutionary theory and attempted to apply them to human society. Beyond a certain point in cultural advancement, egoism became for him a highly disruptive force – one that acts against the spirit of nature. Thus, in functional terms, society and Comedy are methods of control. There can be little doubt that Meredith's theory of comedy is benign in its conception. It is on the basis of such a reading that Jacqueline Banerjee claims that "In the more meditative poems, as in the novels as a whole, [Meredith's] aim is to encourage the reader to transcend the self, to reach out towards fellow human beings and upwards towards nature" (91). Nevertheless, history shows that the derivation of social norms and objectives from evolutionary theory and 'natural' laws can result in calamity. It would of course be wrong to criticise Meredith for failing to predict the future, but it is hard to disregard the notion that his marriage of nature and society is naïve.

Alongside its potentially lethal effects, there is also a totalitarian strain in Meredith's taking direction from a nature which, again borrowing Tennyson's phrase, is "So careless of the single life". Again, it seems likely that Meredith's intentions are altruistic, but when he talks about using Comedy as a corrective, and of it being the "first condition of sanity" to "believe that our civilisation is founded on common-sense" (1903: 88), it is hard to ignore the latent political implications. In 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' – an essay in which Meredith is singled out for praise – Oscar Wilde argued that collective ownership of the means of production would lead to ever greater "Individualism" because, their material needs taken care of, people would be enabled to devote themselves to self-improvement and cultivation – to "realising themselves" (1998 [1891]). Though it would be difficult to describe Meredith as a Wildean socialist, his position is closer to Wilde's than it is, for instance, to the eugenicists' totalitarian disregard for the divergent individual. Meredith's treatment of the so-called Woman Question offers a good illustration. Again and again in his novels he takes a proto-feminist stance, advocating greater rights and freedoms for women – in marriage and property, for example – in order that they will be enabled to take a greater role in society. This, as he argues

throughout the 'Essay on Comedy', will lead to an improved society. By making individuals freer, and at the same time increasing their mutual responsibilities, society will be improved; it will be stronger, fairer, more cohesive and, most importantly, it will be orientated towards the future and ever-greater improvements. When done right, society in Meredith's conception is very much the next phase of human evolution – or, at the very least, it is the first step in the next phase of human evolution. Ultimately, then, though there are undertones of totalitarian conformism in Meredith's ideas about society, this is strangely based on a quasi-Wildean individualism geared less towards artistic self-development than to political liberation in a fairer collective. Indeed, Wilde's admiration for Meredith was based on the latter's artistic defiance. Despite repeated and often strident criticism of his style Meredith refused to conform, arguably becoming more difficult and obscure instead. He just "went on intensifying his own personality, and producing his own individual work". "At first none came to him. That did not matter. Then the few came to him. That did not change him. The many have come now. He is still the same. He is an incomparable novelist" (Wilde 1998: 28).[20]

Nevertheless, in the context of this thesis the most interesting thing about Meredith's conception of society is its opposition to an egoism that is recognisable as a cast of mind shared by the evolutionary heroes of early prehistoric fiction. Meredith's efforts to reconcile this opposition (whether nudgingly or oppressively) demonstrate his sensitivity to the dangers of a colonial interpretation of human evolutionary history. At bottom, he is concerned with the emergence of the evolutionary hero figure into the present. Though he is never really explicit about the mechanism by which this may come about, the contrarian poets in *The Egoist* offer a plausible possibility, one that will be examined at length in chapter five. Aggrieved at what they see as society's effeminising effects on "the race", these poets call for a return to an evolutionary hero figure – with prehistoric stone tools on his crest – who should not really be there in the first place. It is at this point that evolutionary colonialism becomes problematic, or "the most dangerous of delusions": having inscribed an aggressive and violent expansionist at the very heart and beginning of the human, it has thereby established this as the first and purest iteration of the human essence, the one offered by political reactionaries as a restorative for an ailing nation. In this light, Meredith's account of the "purer" responsible for "civilising the world" and dragging us from the cave into "intercommunicative daylight" is a refutation of early pf's interpretation of human evolutionary

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[20] Meredith's stylistic recalcitrance had a number of sources, including a distaste for realism and naturalism, and a distrust of easy sentimentality. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to spot the contradictions between his novelistic practice and his ideas about egoism, society and comedy. And, likewise, it could hardly be considered a stretch to label him as an egoist according to his own definition of the term, which rather proves Stevenson's point about Meredith's tendency to disrupt the "categories" he himself creates (see note 17, page 119). See Jones (2005) for a discussion of the critical function of Meredith's "confrontational" style.

history before the fact – though not before these issues were discussed at length in periodicals, newspapers, and magazines. Meredith brings the whole enterprise of narrating human evolutionary history into doubt because he is aware of narrative's tendency to create idealised versions of ourselves. He asks instead that we remember the constructedness of this narrative creation – the "fictitious" and "flattering familiar" in the "purer". Further, while criticising the mechanisms by which the evolutionary "purer" comes into being and comes to be celebrated, Meredith also criticises it on its own terms as a thing apart from these mechanisms: he takes issue with the expansionary humanism which may have been useful once, but has now become a hindrance to societal progress.

One of Our Conquerors

One of our Conquerors charts the downfall of Victor Radnor, an incredibly successful City of London financier – a victor – and the conqueror of the title. In this respect, and with regard to the misery endured by his partner, Nataly, the novel is more tragic than comic. Nevertheless, the incident that precipitates Victor's downfall is a moment of stock comedy: walking across London Bridge in the novel's opening sentence, he is upended by a piece of fruit peel and, on his way to the pavement, bumps the back of his head. Following this, Victor is involved in a minor altercation with some passers-by, of which the subtext is that Victor is not a member of society in the Meredithian sense. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that this incident has had a profound impact on Victor, and bears at least some responsibility for his change in fortunes: "ever since the fall on London Bridge, his heart, influenced in some degree by Nataly's depression perhaps, had been shadowed by doubts of his infallible instinct for success" (1975: 255). In what remains of this chapter, I will examine *One of our Conquerors* in order to bring out its relation to Meredith's theory of Comedy and society, while also using it as an illustration of the effects of evolutionary colonialism, in the form of a rampant purer, on family and society. Ultimately, because Victor is undermined in the very first sentence of the novel, and because his fall has such lasting effects, the novel is about the social impossibility of the purer in a modern, societal setting.

Immediately after the fall, Victor is helped to his feet by various passers-by. After assuring them that he is fit to walk unaided, a downward glance towards his waistcoat "discomposes his outward face":

"'Oh, confound the fellow!' he said, with simple frankness, and was humorously ruffled, having seen

absurd blots of smutty knuckles distributed over the maiden waistcoat" (1-2). In order for the "friendly people about him to share the fun of [his] annoyance" at his newly-dirtied waistcoat, Victor looks back towards them "seeming with the contraction of his brows to frown on the little band of observant Samaritans" (2). However, in the middle of the group

> a man who knew himself honourably unclean, perhaps consequently a bit of a political jewel, hearing one of their number confounded for his pains, and by the wearer of a superfine dashing-white waistcoat, was moved to take notice of the total deficiency of gratitude in this kind of gentleman's look and pocket. If we ask for nothing for helping gentlemen to stand upright on their legs, and get it, we expect civility into the bargain. Moreover, there are reasons in nature why we choose to give sign of a particular surliness when our wealthy superiors would have us think their condescending grins are cordials (2).

Between being helped up and appearing "humorously ruffled", Victor is described as "questioning his familiar behind the waistcoat amazedly, to tell him how such a misadventure could have occurred to him of all men" (1). The hazy distinction between Victor and "his familiar", between the man in the moment and another consciousness somehow detached from that man and that moment, recalls the passage with which this chapter began. Victor, it seems, has an "intimate acquaintance with [his] flattering familiar", his "purer", and is thus an egoist. Indeed, Victor's high self-regard is evident when he asks his purer for an explanation as to how this incident could have happened to "him of all men".

I have given such a full account of this scene because it accords so well with Meredith's theory of Comedy and society, while also giving a fair illustration of the nature of Victor's egoism. According to the prescriptions laid out in 'The Essay on Comedy', self-proclaimed "exalted varieties" are sure to "come under the calm curious eye of the Comic Spirit" (27). A visibly wealthy man in close contact with his purer (and wearing an "ostentatious garment" to boot [3]), Victor, it seems, is being "probed for what he is". This alone suggests that he is not a part of society in the Meredithian sense, which is indeed confirmed by the immediate aftermath of his trial by fruit. Simply put, Victor is unable to perceive his own ridiculousness, the inappropriateness of a stupendously wealthy man

complaining, in jest or otherwise, that, in helping him up, members of "the mob" (3) had sullied his "maiden waistcoat" (2). More than this, however, he is unable to spot the ridiculousness of someone having just slipped on, say, a banana skin attempting to use "condescending grins" as "cordials" – that is, attempting to use humour in such a way as to re-establish his social pre-eminence over the very people who have just helped him to his feet after a fall which, to someone on the other side of the street, would clearly have been hilarious. This, as his antagonist complains, is an unnecessary observance of "punctilio" (3) at a moment when the Comic Spirit has levelled social hierarchies. Because he doesn't get the joke – that he himself *is* the joke – Victor stands outside Meredithian society, making him fair game for the Comic Spirit.

Essentially an archaic human born into modern surroundings for which he is catastrophically unsuited, Victor is fully a Meredithian egoist. His self-belief is such that he has no sensation of a cold, driving wind other than as "an effort of the elements to arouse him", and that he is "among the happiest of human creatures [because] he willed it so, with consent of circumstances" (12). As demonstrated on London Bridge, Victor sees himself, and is often seen by others, as existing outside the normal order of nature-society. According to a friend, in fact, he is able to harness essentially primitive powers, for at least one of his abilities points to "one of the embodied elements, hot from Nature's workshop" (36). Victor thus has all of the qualities admired by the contrarian poets in *The Egoist*: a "sample of what we would be had we his concentrated power" (2010: 424)*,* Victor is, according to his business partner, "terrific and bountiful, but very disturbing" (1975: 201); he is able to force his will upon those around him, the majority of whom are incapable of resistance.

In his youth, Victor married Mrs Burman for her money, even though she was much older than he was. Shortly before they met, Mrs Burman advertised for a female companion and awarded the role to Natalia (Nataly) Dreighton. After Victor arrived and had married Mrs Burman, he and Nataly realised they shared an attraction and ran away together. This was roughly twenty years before the

main action of the novel. Now, Nataly and Victor – who remain unmarried because Mrs Burman refuses a divorce – have a daughter, Nesta Victoria, who is of marriageable age herself yet knows nothing of her parents' secret. Instead of living quietly, out of the glare of public life, Victor, ever the egoist, places himself and his family at the heart of high society, the very place Nataly does not want to be because, purely by being the 'other woman' in the situation, she is in the most danger of becoming a pariah. Colney Durance, the satirical jester hovering just outside Victor's "royal cranium-court" (215), describes this as Victor's "insane itch to be the bobbing cork on the wave of the minute" (237); a tributary source of her "misery", it also evinces Victor's total disregard for Nataly and her fear of obloquy.

The relationship between Victor and Nataly stands as an illustration of the effects of the egoist or purer on those around them, while also demonstrating the extent to which, in order to be, the egoist/purer requires some form of dehumanised other. It is therefore only to be expected that Victor "conquered Nataly and held her subject" (52), which is to say that their relationship is based on her total submission. In this, their union is reminiscent of contemporary conceptions of primitive marriage which, in a discussion of *The Egoist*, Patricia O'Hara characterises as "marriage by force" and as being based on "brutal violence against women" (1992: 4).[21] This is not to suggest that Victor is physically violent towards Nataly; only that their relationship is characterised by his absolute power over her; by the imperial aggression of the purer. At the same time, however, Victor's public success rests entirely on Nataly's private debasement; without this, he could not be 'one of our conquerors' for the simple reason that he would not have conquered anyone. Hers is the "bare life" whose "inclusive exclusion" founds Victor's narrative of social ascendency and supremacy.

Nataly's first appearance in the novel is an exchange between her and Nesta, her daughter, who has

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[21] See also Nicholas Ruddick's 2007 article on "wife-capture" in prehistoric fiction and anthropological discourse.

come to warn her that, instead of the small cottage she desperately wanted for their country weekends, Victor has decided to build the palatial 'Lakelands' – where Nataly will be expected to help him entertain eminent guests with concerts and lavish parties. Immediately following this interaction with Nesta, Nataly

> caught herself languishing at her toilette-glass, as if her beauty were at stake; and shut her eyelids angrily. To be looking in that manner, for a mere suspicion, was too foolish. But Nesta's divinations were target-arrows; they flew to the mark (49).

"To be looking in that manner" is an odd phrase, and seems to suggest that Nataly finds the look on her face unnecessary given that it is currently based on a "mere suspicion" alone. That Nataly is interpreting and policing her own facial expressions demonstrates the extent of Victor's control over her because, to an even greater extent than Willoughby, he "requires" particular facial expressions at particular moments. Even when he is not present, then, Nataly is still held subject. Nataly's self-critique demonstrates the truth of her subsequent claim that "We are distracted, perverted, [and] made strangers to ourselves by a false position", and also why she is then described as having taken "the one first great step of the mad woman" (51). Over the course of the novel, Nataly's suffering intensifies as she increasingly becomes "a stranger to herself"; she suffers a breakdown and eventually dies a broken woman – ironically, just a few hours before Mrs Burman's long-awaited death finally arrives.

Although Nataly is said to have "old-fashioned ideas upon the leading of the sexes" (127), as the novel progresses she becomes ever more aware of her "abasement beneath [Victor's] leadership, a blind subserviency and surrender of her faculties to his greater powers, such as no soul of a breathing body should yield to man". Her self-reproach is that she, "in her worship, had been slave, not helper" (306). Her servitude can often be seen in the control Victor exercises over her face.[22] The

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[22] From the earlier *Modern Love* and *Evan Harrington,* where 'countenance control' is an emotional and political tool, to

ultimate effect of this is similar to that seen in relation to Sir Willoughby's aunts (above), though

they are clearly further gone than Nataly: in effect, Victor writes his own identity over Nataly's.

During one of the many social gatherings organised by Victor at the family home, Nesta

> read her mother's face when Mrs. Victor entered the drawing room to receive the guests.
> She saw a smooth fair surface, of the kind as much required by her father's eyes as
> innocuous air by his nostrils (71).

This particular gathering is comprised of Nataly's close friends, with whom she feels comfortable

because "they liked her for herself" and because "they helped her to feel at home with herself and

be herself" (71). Nevertheless, she clearly still has to be "Mrs Victor", to perform according to her

conqueror's wishes. Similarly, while Victor is first showing Nataly and various others around

Lakelands – a place she detests – she is again compelled to send the "required" looks and "expected

nods to Victor's carriage" (82). Later in this portion of the novel, Victor "perceived resistance" in

Nataly's face, which causes her to "summon her smile and nod" to placate him (89). That Victor

"requires" the correct facial expression in any given situation explains Nataly's self-scrutiny before

the mirror. In any case, that she is rendered unable to give free reign to her face (that she has often

to maintain expressions foreign to her in a particular context) suggests that her own identity is over-

written by Victor's, or by the identity he wants in a partner.

Much current thinking on the face is inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's treatment of "faciality"

which, as glossed by Richard Rushton, amounts to a critique of the belief that "there is an indexical

relation between what is on a face and the feelings or ideas it expresses" (2002: 219).[23] More

recently, William A. Cohen has read faciality slightly differently as "the idea that the human face is

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later novels such as *The Egoist* and *One of our Conquerors*, where the focus shifts from subjective to objective control of the face (that is, from the control of one's own face to the control of another's), the face has a very interesting role in a lot of Meredith's work.

[23] See Deleuze and Guattari (2003 [1988]: 167-91) for their discussion of "faciality".

an index of an expressive, interior essence – that it is a sign of subjective agency and the capacity for communicative interaction" (2009: 86). Whether expressions or the face itself, the underlying idea is the same in each reading: Deleuze and Guattari criticise the notion of there being some kind of "indexical" relationship between external appearance and inner reality. As suggested in note 22 (above), the face in Meredith is more often a barrier than a portal. Whether controlled by its owner (for example, a brilliant, if egoistic, politician and social climber like the Countess in *Evan Harrington*) or by a conqueror, the face prevents individuals from engaging with others in an honest and open manner. Of the two, it is plain that Meredith is not 'guilty' of Rushton's interpretation of the faciality fallacy because the expressions on Nataly's face have effectively been put there by someone else: while the feelings are her own, the expressions belong to Victor and there is thus no "indexical" relation between her face and her feelings. The issue, rather, is that Nataly's forced expressions prevent her from engaging in her own way in any given situation, whatever that may be: she can have no joy in, nor can she abandon herself to, the moment. In contrast to the lark, she is forbidden from forgetting herself and taking full part in the human's natural environment – the social arena. For example, that the expression on Nataly's face when she enters a room full of her own friends is recognised by Nesta as a "required" look suggests that she is prevented from truly taking part in the evening; she is dissociated from the social moment and, as with Willoughby and his aunts, is made a mere echo or reflection of Victor.

In these terms, Cohen's interpretation of faciality (which shares something with Emmanuel Levinas' thinking on the face – see previous chapter) is more interesting because it seems likely that it is fairly close to Meredith's ideal: to the extent that he aims to get people to reach beyond themselves and out towards others, the face-as-barrier has no place in Meredith's thought. In practice, however, the face always prevents full "communicative interaction" in his work – as in the opening scene of this novel (see above) and in *Modern Love*, for example, where the controlled face has a part in the breakdown of the central couple's marriage. Moreover, when taken alongside the particular

progression of Nataly's mental ill-health, Cohen's interpretation of faciality also raises some

interesting questions regarding her status as a human. If indeed Meredith's ideal is that the face be

"a sign of subjective agency and the capacity for communicative interaction" (which, appropriately,

seems to fit rather well with the face's status in early pf), and if Nataly's "abasement" partly results

from the fact that her face is no longer hers alone, then she will never be capable of full

"communicative interaction". Through no real fault of her own, she can never aspire to the ideal, nor

can she ever take full part in society. In effect, she is less human than those around her. Nataly's own

conception of her subjugation under Victor is particularly interesting in this regard:

> [She] beheld herself as the outer world vexedly beholds a creature swung along to the
> doing of things against the better mind [...] She scourged her weakness: and the intimation
> of the truth stood over her, more than ever manifest, that the deficiency affecting her
> character lay in her want of language. A tongue to speak and contend, would have helped
> her to carve a clearer way. But then again, the tongue to speak must be one which could
> reproach, and strike at errors; fence, and continually summon resources to engage the
> electrical vitality of a man like Victor (183)

Historically, language has been seen as one of the most important distinctions between the human

and the animal; it has been one of the "traditional marks of the human" (Calarco 2008: 3), one of the

"last beachheads of [human] uniqueness" (Haraway 2001 [1991]: 293). That Nataly thinks of herself

as being without language thus suggests that, in her "deficiency", she approaches the animal.

Victor's egoistic expansion of his identity onto her therefore not only robs her of her own identify,

but it also dehumanises her ultimately making her unfit for society – particularly for Meredithian

society.

As was the case in early pf, the purer operates in an essentially imperial manner: it expands

outwards and destroys everything with which it comes into contact – either literally, or by robbing

things of their own worth before remoulding them according to its own whims, or in its own image.

It is this that makes it "the most dangerous of delusions" for, like Nataly, everyone around it

becomes mere fodder for its own project of self. At the same time, however, this is also its

weakness: that it needs fodder at all undermines the notion of its glorious isolation. However "dangerous", it is still a "delusion". In Victor's case, his public success is entirely dependent on Nataly's private degradation; without this, he would be nothing. In conversation with Colney Durance, Nataly says of her running away with Victor that

> I should do the same again, on reflection. I do believe it saved him [...] I cannot expect my family to see with my eyes. You know them – my brother and sisters think I have disgraced them; they put no value on my saving him. It sounds childish; it is true. He had fallen into a terrible black mood (114-15)

Nataly gave up everything for Victor – for a depressed and subdued Victor, no less. In order to "save" him she ran away with him, in the process forfeiting any hope of a relationship with her family, of a good standing in society, and of a promising career as an opera singer (231). This act of self-sacrifice formed the foundation of Victor's new, better, and more successful life; without it, he would still have been mouldering in a loveless marriage to Mrs Burman. Moreover, as the events of the novel amply demonstrate, this inverse relationship between Nataly's self-sacrifice and Victor's self-standing persists for the entire time they are together, all the way until Nataly's death. Tellingly, Victor dies within a year of Nataly's passing, following an extended period of grief and illness. As was the case in early pf, the purer is purified, and therefore *is*, only to the extent that that which is deemed less than itself is either marginalised or destroyed. What is different in this case, however, is that, in destroying Nataly, Victor also destroys himself, ultimately revealing just how dependent the purer is on its dehumanised others. In order to be 'Victor Radnor', one of our conquerors, he needed a dehumanised Nataly against which to define himself. Once this support was removed, his towering self collapsed. That the purer requires a dehumanised other against which to purify itself demonstrates again its "delusive" nature. It has no positive strength of its own; without the abjection of its others, it is nothing. Victor thus needs a debased Nataly more than she needs a conqueror: it is clear that she would have been better off without Victor, while he, on the other hand, would have been nothing without her. And ultimately, this seems to be the point: from

whatever angle it is viewed, the purer in society is untenable.

Victor's Creaturely Frailty

Victor's particular delusion is that he is a conqueror, an individual outside the normal order. Aside from Nataly's abjection, another contributing factor to this is his denial of what Cary Wolfe called (above) the "embodiment and embeddedness of the human being": in his failure to perceive that his self and status is built upon Nataly's degradation, Victor remains ignorant of his "embeddedness" within something that far exceeds himself.[24] Similarly, in his self-conception as a man called to action by a bitter wind, he denies his "embodiment". Indeed, Victor has an "intense [...] pride in appearing woundless and scarless, a shining surface, like pure health's, in the sight of men" (124). His identity is thus partly based on a desire to appear less of a body than those around him; it is this that allows him to separate himself from everyone else, for while they are fragile and vulnerable, he is not. Unrestrained by a material body, his ego is thus free to assume gigantic proportions. As has already been noted, however, in the novel's opening sentence Victor falls on London Bridge and bangs his head against the pavement. And, moreover, this leads to cracks in his self-image as a "woundless and scarless" man: "since the day of the fall (never, save in merest glimpses, before that day)", Victor "had taken to look behind him, as though an eye had been knocked in the back of his head" (191-2). Victor is thus injured from the very start, and his downfall is related to a growing realisation of his own vulnerability.

Anat Pick has developed a "creaturely poetics" based on the acknowledgement of the human's status as a "living body – material, temporal, and vulnerable" (2011: 5). The frailty that comes with bodily materiality is of course something that is shared by all living things. For Pick, then, a creaturely

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[24] For a discussion of "embodiment" in relation to *The Egoist*, see O'Toole (2011).

conception of the human can "provide a powerful antidote to anthropocentrism" (6) because it runs counter to the Cartesian underpinnings of humanist thought, which hold that the human is defined by the mind. If we recall that, from his fall onwards, Victor is plagued "by doubts of his infallible instinct for success" (255), it is clear that, throughout the novel, his egoism is being undermined by an emergent understanding of his own "creaturely" status. In *One of our Conquerors*, then, the "purer", the "ideal" responsible for having dragged the species from "flint and arrowhead caverns" and up into "inter-communicative daylight", is revealed to be "fictitious"; its underlying materiality is evident from the very first sentence. A creaturely understanding of ourselves is thus the "antidote" to both anthropocentrism and the latent consequences of the account of the human evident in early pf: in undermining the notion of the purer, a creaturely understanding also undermines the conception of the human, and of human society, as something that has come about in spite of nature and the animal.

Ultimately, by undermining what is essentially the same figure as that valorised in early prehistoric fiction, Meredith brings to light the dangers surrounding the uncritical celebration the so-called humanist hero. For him, it is perhaps defensible to account for the human's emergence from "flint and arrowhead caverns" by reference to the heroic exploits of this "fictitious creature", but after "helping to civilize the world" this same creature becomes a threat to the society for which it is ultimately responsible. Accordingly, it should always be remembered that what is being celebrated in the kind of evolutionary narratives epitomised by early pf is an extremely violent and aggressive cast of mind. Uncritical celebration, moreover, normalises this mind-set and thereby leaves room for its emergence in modern society, which can have catastrophic consequences; it is because the purer is celebrated rather than scorned that Victor is given the opportunity to bend others to his will.[25] Of course, Meredith's leanings towards the comedy of manners means that he is more directly relevant

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[25] It shouldn't go without remark that Victor is a London banker, and that financialised capitalism isn't without its egoistic tendencies. For a famous example, see Milton Friedman's 'The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits', *New York Times Magazine,* September 13, 1970.

to the modern setting, but much of what he says is also relevant when considering the human as evolutionary being: by making the similarities between the evolutionary hero and the modern conqueror so clear, he gives a contemporary perspective on evolutionary colonialism and clears a space for a different interpretation of the evolutionary history of *Homo,* one that is not entirely framed by Val Plumwood's "hegemonic centrism". Meredith thus makes room for an evolutionary conception of the human that is non-anthropocentric and non-imperial, one that is more suited to our posthumanist setting. And he does this almost a century before the posthuman moment ever came about.

4. Arthur Machen and the Parallax View of Human Evolutionary History

Arthur Machen (1863-1947), a Welsh journalist and author in the decadent vein (Ferguson 2002), is best known as a writer of occult stories, like 'The Great God Pan' (1894), which explore the apparently porous boundaries between the everyday and the spiritual or mystical – inclusive of fairies and murderous "little people" of Celtic folklore.[1] He is also credited as being one of the foremost writers in the early years of the genre that has since come to be known as weird fiction, the first phase of which, according to S. T. Joshi (2003), dates from 1880 to 1940. Perhaps appropriate to the name, weird fiction is what China Miéville describes as "generically slippery macabre fiction". At its heart is an "obsession with numinosity under the everyday", an "undermining of the quotidian" (2009: 510). Indeed, though Miéville and others (notably Joshi) do focus on formal peculiarities, it is this effect of disrupting the stability of the mundane that seems to most characterise weird fiction. Thus, in their introduction to *The Weird: A Compendium*, Ann and Jeff VanderMeer write that "The Weird is as much a *sensation* as it is a mode of writing" (2011, original emphasis); it is something that is recognised when it is encountered, but which cannot necessarily be known taxonomically. For Miéville, however, this "sensation" is related to Edmund Burke's account of the sublime. Where for Burke and others the sublime and the beautiful are "mutually exclusive", Miéville argues that the weird (or the Weird) "punctures the supposed membrane separating off the sublime, and allows the swillage of that awe and horror from 'beyond' back into the everyday"; the weird is thus "a radicalized sublime backwash" (2009: 511). Similarly, Joshi declares himself unwilling "to define the weird tale, and venture[s] to assert that any definition of it may be impossible" (2). Although he does enumerate certain "broad divisions" (6), he maintains that weird fiction is less a genre than it is "the consequence of a world view" (1) – that is, what

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[1] For an illuminating account of Machen's occultism and esotericism, in conjunction with a reading of this novella, see Pasi (2007). Another good example is Jones (2009), who looks at Machen's place in a wider Welsh and Irish canon of "horror" writers. See also Willis (1994) for an account of the underlying magical and esoteric structure of *The Three Impostors,* a novel that is often considered fairly chaotic.

makes a story weird is the "world view" of its author. Nevertheless, the weird tale may be "an inherently philosophical mode" because, again, it calls the everyday into question and "compels us to address directly such fundamental issues as the nature of the universe and our place in it". Rather, in line with Joshi's focus on the authorial animus of the weird, "certain authors develop certain types of world views that compel them to write fiction that causes readers to question, revise, or refashion their views of the universe; the result is what we (in retrospect) call weird fiction" (11).

Over the course of this chapter I will rely heavily on the notion that both weird fiction and of course Machen undermine the quotidian. However, whereas for most it is Machen's mysticism, spiritualism and occultism etc. that do the undermining, in the stories to be examined here I am more interested in the connection to the discussion of human antiquity – in the fact that palaeolithic flint tools play an important part in each story. While it is certainly true that the makers of these tools may well be malevolent fairies, I am subsuming these particular stories into the wider debate about human antiquity and evolution. That is, Machen's apparently mystic or occult take on prehistoric stone tools is one perspective among others in the discussion of human antiquity, one more way in which the tools from Brixham, the Somme valley and elsewhere provided a strong material base for a bewildering range of speculative interrogations of the human considered as an antique and evolved being. In short, the makers of the flint tools in these stories can just as easily and profitably be regarded as members of another species of human. Indeed, it is not difficult to discern the influence of contemporary discussions of Primitive Man and savagery in the description of much of their behaviour.

The flints that appear in these stories, like those that were "fabricated" in the "laboratories" of Brixham cavern and the Somme valley, are thus what Austrin and Farnsworth (2005) refer to as "productive hybrids" in the Latourian sense (149). It has been a central contention of this thesis that the palaeolithic flint tools fabricated in 1859 and at various other points over the next sixty years

were, and still are, extremely "productive": their cultural assimilation, or the process of accounting

for, processing, and accepting their status as *Drift* flint *tools*, spawned various new disciplines,

genres, and discourses, all of which were of course hybrids themselves, interacting with what had

come before. In this sense, Machen's stories can be read as fictional re-stagings of the discovery of

human antiquity, with a particular emphasis on its jarring, even weird, impact. At the same time,

these stories are of course themselves part of the wider historical reaction to the discovery of, and

consequent debate about, human antiquity. In the more contextualist approach of this chapter, as

opposed to the generic or intrinsic one of Joshi and Miéville, I join others such as Ferguson (2002),

Aaron Worth (2012) and Kimberley Jackson (2013), all of whom locate Machen in relation to the

scientific climate of the *fin-de-siècle*.[2] Further, in the more explicitly theoretical discussion of the

implications of Machen's fiction for an understanding of the human, I am also following scholars like

Dennis Denisoff (2013), who argues that in 'The Great God Pan' Machen is "playing", in Donna

Haraway's sense, with notions of inter-species being and being as becoming – "a transmutational,

disembodied model of being" (Denisoff 2013: 198).[3]

Focusing on the episodic novel *The Three Impostors*, and on the two short stories 'The Red Hand' and

'The Shining Pyramid' (all from 1895), in this chapter I examine Machen's explorations of the issues

raised by the discovery of human antiquity and evolution. Prehistoric flint tools appear in each of

these stories and they ultimately signify the same thing – the continued existence, usually in the hilly

region in the west of England, of a 'race' of non-*sapiens* hominids. This revelation is often of such

force that it completely undermines the social order. In plain terms, wherever flint tools appear in

Machen's fiction they wreak havoc with the otherwise stable world into which they emerge. In each

case, the havoc begins with the discovery of one of these tools lying on the ground – the fact they

are found on the surface, rather than twenty feet below, points of course to their recent origin. Thus,

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[2] The two approaches are clearly not incompatible. That there are similarities and overlaps between Machen's stories and early pf only really adds to the generic slipperiness which, for Miéville, characterises the weird.
[3] For Haraway's notion of "playing", see *When Species Meet* (2008).

where the writers of early pf populated the evolutionary history of *Homo* with *sapiens* only, Machen did the opposite: he brought other members of the genus *Homo* into the Victorian present. By doing so, I argue, he afforded us a better view, though perhaps one of a different kind – what Slavoj Žižek might describe as a "parallax view" – of the evolutionary history of *Homo*, and of the evolutionary human. Ultimately, Machen allows us to view human antiquity and evolution from within a Žižekian parallax gap between the narrative and non-narrative accounts of *Homo*. In the latter stages of this chapter I will thus combine Žižek's parallax with Paul Ricoeur's account of narrative as "human time" in order to show that, where pf simply assimilated other members of *Homo* into a narrative of the inevitable dominance of *sapiens*, Machen presents other humans without the comforts of narrative, and therefore forces us to face them, and our status as evolved and antique beings, in all their weird alterity.

Prehistoric Flint Tools in Machen's Fiction

In 'The Shining Pyramid' (1895), a man called Vaughan comes to London to visit Dyson, a writer and amateur detective with an interest in the mysterious.[4] Dyson is a recurring character from this period of Machen's career. Although he usually appears alongside his ethnologist friend Charles Phillipps, this is not the case in 'The Shining Pyramid'.[5] Vaughan has made his way to London by train from western England in the hope of persuading Dyson to return with him to investigate a matter which has been causing him some concern. Every morning for the past week or so, he has found a number of stones arranged into patterns at one end of his garden. Each morning the pattern changes. On the first day, there were "twelve little stones neatly arranged in lines, and spaced at

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[4] Each of the three texts to be discussed here appeared in 1895. Rather than referencing them as 1895a/b/c, where there is any doubt or ambiguity as to which one is being referenced I will, for the sake of ease of comprehension, use abbreviated versions of the texts' titles, as in (Pyramid: page).

[5] The frequent appearance of Phillipps in stories which contain prehistoric flint tools is no doubt because Phillipps is something of an expert on stone-age technology. He began as a biologist and only later "dabbled in the more frivolous subjects of palaeontology and ethnology"; now, though, he has a cabinet "stuffed with rude flint implements" (Impostors: 53). Consequently, it often falls to him to identify the tools and to corroborate their authenticity.

equal distances"; the stones were "pointed" and "the points were very carefully directed one way".

The following day, the stones were arranged into "something like the spokes of a wheel, all meeting

at a common centre" with the centre itself "formed by a device which looked like a bowl". Next

came "a pyramid" and then, on the morning of his visit to Dyson, "there was a thing like a half moon"

(Pyramid: 6-8). In the course of his account, Vaughan mentions that at that part of his garden a path

runs on the other side of the wall and that the path is used by children on their way to school. A

child's prank is Dyson's first hypothesis, one he maintains until Vaughan hands him one of the stones,

which "taper[ed] to a point, and [was] about three inches in length":

> Dyson's face blazed up with excitement as he took the thing from Vaughan.
> 'Certainly', he said, after a moment's pause, 'you have some curious neighbours in
> your country [...] Do you know this is a flint arrowhead of vast antiquity, and not only that,
> but an arrowhead of a unique kind? I have seen specimens from all parts of the world, but
> there are features about this thing that are quite peculiar' (9).

At this point, he agrees to return home with Vaughan to investigate.

Prehistoric flint tools like these appear in much of Machen's fiction from this time and, whenever

they do, they tend to be the object of some kind of investigation. In the terms used in chapter one,

in these stories prehistoric tools – what John Law might describe as "durable material forms" – fall in

and out of a number of "patterned networks of heterogeneous materials" and, as such, their

"effects" change repeatedly. When found and recognised as what Dyson calls "flint arrowheads of

vast antiquity", these objects take their place in the wider discussion of the establishment of human

antiquity, taking on all the relevant associations. At the same time, as objects connected to various

crimes, the tools also get swept up into an investigation of some kind. Interestingly, for the larger

portion of the narratives, the tools' "effects" in this other network tend to be more important than

their effects in the wider antiquity debate – that is, their effects are more keenly felt in the

investigation network than they are in the larger antiquity network. In 'The Shining Pyramid', Dyson's

interest is clearly piqued by what he sees as the flints' antiquity, but this is quickly put aside as he

moves on to a pursuit of the meaning behind the strange placement of the tools in Vaughan's

garden. For the majority of the story, that is to say, Dyson investigates "flint signs" more than he

does prehistoric flint tools (Pyramid: 20). These objects have little palaeoanthropological or

archaeological value, and nor do they hold much individual value: they matter only to the extent

that they are arranged alongside others in some kind of symbolic pattern. And this, in a way, is true

in most of the Machen stories in which flint tools appear: after their initial recognition as remarkable

objects in themselves, they very quickly become clues to something else – whether a secret meaning,

as in 'The Shining Pyramid', or a murder mystery, as in 'The Red Hand'. In every case, the

uncanniness of these "flint arrowheads of vast antiquity" is very quickly forgotten and, individually,

they become almost worthless, just another element in a much bigger system of signification.[6]

In this sense, the flint tools in 'The Shining Pyramid' have a kind of exemplar status in Machen's

fiction from this period because it is in this story that their sign status is most clear – literal, even.

Whereas in other stories these objects are tools first (i.e. they are *used* to kill) and only later become

signs (or clues in a murder investigation), in 'The Shining Pyramid' they are signs throughout; they

are *used* as signs from the beginning. For the greater portion of this story and others, the fact that

these objects were the tools of another species of *Homo* is of no interest at all. The wider antiquity

network, in other words, is entirely forgotten; the significance of these tools becomes a purely

sapiens affair, with their ultimate referent becoming *sapiens* society and the need for lawful stability.

In early pf, the entire history of *Homo* is populated with *sapiens* heroes, and the effect is the same as

that being described here: the whole process becomes a matter for *sapiens* alone. Ultimately,

however, Machen's treatment of prehistoric flint tools (and their makers) should be seen in

opposition to this tendency, as the two networks at play here (the investigation and the antiquity

networks) eventually converge with devastating effect for society. This is precisely the case in 'The

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[6] It was a common assumption at this time that the Drift tools were arrow-heads.

Novel of the Black Seal', though it is problematised somewhat by the narrative complexity of this story's containing novel – *The Three Impostors* (1895). In perhaps the most embedded narrative in a novel entirely comprised of embedded narratives, a "primitive stone axe" is found beside the body of an old man "done to death" on a hill in a "desolate and lonely" part of the country (Black Seal: 110).[7] The doctor who took part in the inquest into the man's death later "obtained possession of the stone axe" because he was "so curious as to test its powers". One Sunday when his family and servants were all out, the doctor "made his experiments":

> I found the thing utterly unmanageable. Whether there is some peculiar balance, some nice adjustment of weights, which require incessant practice, or whether an effectual blow can be struck only by a certain trick of the muscles, I do not know; but I assure you that I went into the house with but a sorry opinion of my athletic capacities. It was like an inexperienced man trying 'putting the hammer'; the force exerted seemed to return on oneself, and I found myself hurled backwards with violence, while the axe fell harmless to the ground" (Black Seal: 110-11)

After the official inquest is complete, then, the doctor examines the axe on its own terms – as a "primitive stone axe". Freed from having to occupy a place in a system of clues referring only to *sapiens* society, the axe becomes something of an uncanny object, a tool that cannot be used. Indeed, ashamed with the poor health of his "athletic capacities", the doctor passes the axe on to an experienced woodsman; but he, too, "could do nothing with the stone implement, and missed every stroke most ludicrously" (111). The axe somehow resists all attempts to use, control and understand it. A murder weapon that cannot be wielded by *Homo sapiens*, this "primitive stone axe" thus re-emerges into the wider antiquity and evolution network, whereupon its "effects" change and it becomes a sign of something else entirely.

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[7] I will go on to discuss *The Three Impostors* later in the chapter, but the story of this stone axe is told on at least four narrative layers down. The narrator is telling us the story of Miss Lally's meeting with Phillipps, at which she told him a story (most of which is probably untrue because she is one of the impostors of the title) about the fate of her old boss. Professor Gregg (Lally's old boss) wrote her a letter which she was instructed to open only if he died. In this letter Gregg reports having received another letter from the doctor who had found a prehistoric axe.

Investigating Parallax Gaps

The term 'parallax' describes the perceived change in an object's position when viewed from different angles. Perhaps the readiest example is the apparent displacement of a finger held straight out in front of the face while opening and closing one eye at a time. In a striking re-articulation of his hitherto strictly Hegelian position, Slavoj Žižek has theorised the parallax in *The Parallax View* (2006). The "philosophical twist to be added" to the standard definition is that "the observed difference is not simply 'subjective'"; instead "subject and object are inherently 'mediated,' so that an 'epistemological' shift in the subject's point of view always reflects an 'ontological' shift in the object itself" (17). Accordingly, the various views of a given object are incommensurable; they are discrete subject-object pairings with what Žižek calls "pure difference", or

> a difference which is no longer a difference between two positively existing objects, but a minimal difference which divides one and the same object from itself […]: in contrast to a mere difference between objects, *the pure difference is itself an object*. Another name for the parallax gap is therefore *minimal difference*, a 'pure' difference which cannot be grounded in positive substantial properties (18, original emphasis)

Rather than overcoming apparent difference dialectically, then, Žižek suggests that difference, whether "pure" or "minimal", is real (or Real) and that we should therefore accept and work with it. Indeed, as Fredric Jameson points out, when considering Žižek's account of parallax "it is best to put the emphasis not on the change or shift [of perspective], so much as on the multiplicity of observational sites" for it is "the absolute incommensurability of the resultant descriptions or theories that Žižek is after" (2006: n.p.). However, rather than advocating the very kind of postmodern relativism against which he so often rails, Žižek argues that, though it is forever beyond reach, the Real is in the parallax gap, or the interstices between the numerous perspectives: the Realness of the object, Jodi Dean tells us, "is what generates the multiplicity, the impossibility of its

being encompassed" by any one perspective (Dean 2007: 377).[8]

Machen's 'The Red Hand' (1895) opens with Dyson and Phillipps discussing what appear to be a set of prehistoric flint tools. Phillipps believes, in his expert opinion, that they are "prehistoric fish-hooks", whereas Dyson remains unconvinced (1906: 475). To Phillipps's claim that the flints pass "every test" and are "perfectly genuine" fish-hooks, the other suggests that his friend pay more attention to the present:

> [Y]ou go to work at the wrong end. You neglect the opportunities that confront you and await you, obvious, at every corner; you positively shrink from the chance of encountering primitive man in this whirling and mysterious city (475)

While Phillipps believes that "Primitive man stands dim and very far off across the great bridge of years" (476), Dyson is clearly taken with E. B. Tylor's theory of "survivals" – character traits, like George Meredith's account of egoism, which are supposed to hail from our most primitive forebears. It is this that Dyson perceives in the occasional face in the street, and which arouses feelings of "abhorrence" even though he is unable to give "a reason for the thrill of loathing that stirs within" him (476).[9] As Dyson himself suggests, then, he and Phillipps come at the problem of primitive man from opposite "ends". Goaded, Phillipps agrees to set out with Dyson into the London night to test the latter's theory. Ultimately, their walk leads them to the discovery of what, in Phillipps's opinion, is "a primitive flint knife" (480):

> It was a dark flinty stone, gleaming like obsidian, and shaped to a broad edge something after the manner of an adze. One end was rough, and easily grasped in the hand, and the

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[8] Though I am unable to recall – or find – the details of the broadcast, this brings to mind a thought experiment I encountered in a television documentary about infinity, one designed to elucidate Georg Cantor's proof that some infinities are bigger than others. Take a circle and draw an infinite number of lines emanating from the centre. If you then draw a bigger circle around the original one you will observe gaps between your supposedly infinite number of lines. In this case, as in Žižek's account of parallax, the gaps tell us something more than any number of different perspectives ever could.

[9] This unlocatable sense of horror is of course reminiscent of Utterson's and Enfield's accounts of Edward Hyde in R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

whole thing was hardly five inches long. The edge was thick with blood (480)

Dyson had caught site of the flint in the light of a policeman's lantern: it was lying in a strange lane just a few metres away from the dead body of royal physician, Sir Thomas Vivian, and had evidently been thrust into his neck.

The discovery of the prehistoric flint knife and of Vivian's body, as well as Dyson's subsequent investigation of the case, thus takes place within the epistemological space between Phillipps' and Dyson's competing theories on primitive man's fate – between his ancient death and the potential survival of some of his traits into the present. The larger part of the story, that is to say, takes place inside a Žižekian parallax gap. Have Dyson and Phillipps caught the trace of a person in whom primitive man's supposed blood lust has survived, or is this just a rather more mundane case of Victorian murder (Phillipps's theory is revenge by an angry Italian)?[10] These two interpretations of the same 'object' are of course wildly incommensurate. They are also both wrong, or are only partially correct, and nor is the real answer merely a combination of the two. If Dyson's later investigations may be considered an exploration of the parallax gap between his and Phillipp's theories, the ultimate revelation of the simultaneous co-presence in Victorian Britain of two distinct species of human can likewise be considered the parallax view of human evolutionary history, one which allows for the possibility of a past that both is and isn't past – one that has happened and is happening.

This is also the ultimate signification behind the mysterious placement of the flints in 'The Shining Pyramid': beings with "things like faces and human limbs" (17) were using the flint tools to communicate with each other. These non-*sapiens* hominids, "loathsome forms" with "dusky limbs"

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[10] The symbol of the red hand (the *mano in fica,* or fig hand) painted on the wall beside Vivian's body is, according to Phillipps, an old gesture "used still in Italy" (483). Kimberly Jackson has recently pointed out that the gesture (which is similar to the shape of the hand when playing the 'got your nose' children's game) has had a number of associations, from a representation of female genitalia to "an amulet to ward off the evil eye" (2013: 129-30).

(18), were organising a gathering in the hills at which they were going to sacrifice a young girl who had disappeared some time before Vaughan came to see Dyson in London. Likewise, in 'The Novel of the Black Seal', that the "primitive stone axe" cannot be wielded by *sapiens* but had evidently been used to murder the old man suggests that he was killed by an individual from some other species of *Homo*.[11] In each of these stories, the revelation of the simultaneous existence of another species of human thus comes from within a parallax gap. While in 'The Red Hand' the object being investigated is primitive man's fate, in 'The Novel of the Black Seal' and 'The Shining Pyramid' the parallax gap is formed between two views or interpretations of prehistoric flints: they are viewed as tools in their own right, and as clues to some transgression against society – murder or, as in 'The Shining Pyramid', the potential theft of Vaughan's family heirlooms.

Machen's fiction from this period is often a fiction of parallax: he and Dyson explore the interstices between different views of time, *Homo*, and prehistoric tools, among other things. In each case, the majority of the story is given over to crime and its detection; and this at a time when crime or detective fiction was becoming increasingly popular, thanks to what a character in 'The Novel of the Black Seal' describes as "the inimitable Holmes" (98).[12] To the extent that, as it is unfolding, a detective story allows for a range of hypotheses as to what happened and who committed the crime, it is peculiarly suited to the exploration of parallax gaps. Indeed, it is the detective's job to operate inside these gaps, and ultimately to eradicate them by discovering the one true view of the case. According to John Scaggs, at this time (and until the start of the Second World War) crime fiction was "a particularly powerful ideological tool that consolidated and disseminated patriarchal power, and its voice was the rational, coolly logical voice of the male detective or his male narrator" (20). Come the denouement, that is to say, the parallax gap necessarily collapses as the detective restores

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[11] I say 'suggests' here because the existence of some other species of human is only established circumstantially in this story.
[12] See Leslie-McCarthy (2008) for more on the connection of Machen's mid-1890s fiction, particularly *The Great God Pan* (1894), to the detective genre.

rational order to his society. In contrast, Arthur Machen's detective stories, though no less

patriarchal,[13] prevent "masculine heroism and rationality" from "restoring the social order" (Scaggs:

20).[14] Rather, the social order may well be restored when Dyson solves his various cases, but this is

of little consequence because it has also been exposed as a façade masking a deeper and terrifying

reality, one that defies rational explanation.

It was the easy and complacent assumptions of this social order that caused the prehistoric flints to

be swept up into a purely *sapiens* sign system, and therefore to lose their striking non-*sapiens*

associations. The flimsiness and relative unimportance of such a social order is revealed at the end

of 'The Red Hand': after having spent most of the narrative searching for him, Dyson allows Sir

Thomas Vivian's killer, Selby, to walk free. And the disregard for society shown here is compounded

by the fact that Selby is from the lower classes and spent a number of years in his youth living in

poverty; his victim, meanwhile, was a royal physician. Following his confession, Selby reluctantly

alerts Dyson and Phillipps to the "awful" truth about the existence in the hills of western England of

a species "a little higher than the beasts" and capable of literally unspeakable depravities (Red Hand:

513-14). He caught a glimpse of them in one of their underground caves, having previously found

the flint tool that later became the murder weapon. When Selby has finished, Dyson merely says

"And now […] will you go out?" (514). The "social order", whether restored or not, is as nothing in

the light of what Selby has revealed. Similarly, though this is something to which I will return below,

there is no room for "masculine heroism" in this new reality: towards the end of 'The Shining

Pyramid', when Vaughan and Dyson witness the sacrifice of Annie Trevor by the same non-*sapiens*

hominids, they make no attempt to intervene at all.

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[13] For China Miéville, Machen is a misogynist (2009: 514).
[14] See Clarke (2014) for a revisionist account of the British crime or detective genre in its formative years (1886-1900). The common interpretation of the genre put forward by critics like Scaggs is, according to Clarke's analysis, too narrowly based on Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and a few others. This has lent the whole genre at this time a rather conservative image. In fact, however, the "vast corpus of crime and detective fiction which appeared in the period before, during and after Holmes's popularity was", Clarke argues, "a hugely varied body of work which rehearsed a wide range of moral and formal positions and spoke to many of the issues and anxieties that troubled late Victorian society" (3).

At the end of 'The Red Hand', the parallax gap that was opened at the beginning and encompasses most of the story is not collapsed by some neat solution to the central crime. Selby's crime, in fact, is insignificant; having been entirely framed by parallactic space, its solution is of absolutely no consequence to the story at all. The force of the revelation glimpsed from within the parallax gap in these stories is such that it destroys the legitimacy of the stable and hierarchical social order that the detective genre seeks to uphold. The reason why this revelation is so disruptive, I argue, is because it affords a glimpse of what might be called the parallax view of human evolutionary history – a view caught between narrative and non-narrative interpretations of *Homo* – thereby completely undermining the notion of human development through evolutionary time that is evident in early pf. In other words, Machen's disruption of the detective genre is matched by his disruption of the pf genre as well, and this indeed helps to demonstrate the commonalities between what might be considered two wholly distinct genres.[15] Early pf is all about the establishment of an idealised social order via the exclusion of the "bare life" of *Homo,* while in detective fiction this same social order is defended against the assaults of the irrational, the criminal, the subversive etc. This is no doubt part of the reason why Machen feels so disruptive, so 'weird': he merges two fairly conservative genres and the product challenges some of the most basic assumptions of its constituent parts.

Machen, Time and Narrative

In each of the stories discussed thus far, it may be said that time is a central concern; this is a corollary, in fact, of Machen's focus on prehistoric flint tools and non-*sapiens* hominids. Recently, Machen's treatment of time has received some critical attention. Aaron Worth (2012) introduces the concept of "deep history" (as opposed to deep time) and rightly argues that Machen's use of the

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[15] Aside from Machen himself, the most obvious example of this connection would be Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes stories as well as *The Lost World* (1912). Although the latter isn't strictly a piece of pf according to Ruddick's measure, it is very close.

prehistoric should not been seen in terms of atavism, regression or reversion (as was the case in

George Meredith, for example). Instead of the "survival or return of the pre-cultural" in the present,

what is disturbing about Machen's fiction of this period is that it projects history and culture back

into the deep time revealed by previous developments in evolutionary theory, geology, and

palaeontology:

> His fiction is haunted, in other words, not only by the new abysses of time disclosed by
> science, but by the prospect of a history (as history was coming to be defined in this period),
> or histories, coeval with these […] By imaginatively attributing an impossible antiquity to
> symbolic forms, for instance, he robbed such forms of their differentiating power, their
> comforting status as privileged markers of humanity […] [Machen] figures disconcerting
> continuities precisely where nineteenth-century historiography had begun to insist upon
> divisions, lines of clear demarcation (216-7, original emphasis)

One example of Machen "attributing an impossible antiquity to symbolic forms" can of course be

found in 'The Shining Pyramid', where members of a primitive species of *Homo* use their flint tools as

a form of writing, and to plan a future event, thereby questioning the legitimacy of the literal

meaning of 'prehistory' (time before history or writing) when applied to *Homo*. When taken

alongside their behaviour, which conforms so readily to contemporary notions of extreme savagery,

this troubles the easy distinction between primitive and proper humans which is often encountered

in ethnographical or anthropological works of the period (223). For Worth, then, Machen insists on

the continuity of complex culture over the course of vast stretches of time and, by doing so, brings

the human into ever closer contact with the savage and the animal.

While I agree that Machen's non-*sapiens* hominids are not atavisms, survivals or reversions, Worth's

insistence on continuity takes Machen too close to the linear development narratives of early

prehistoric fiction. Early pf, as we saw in the second chapter, sought continuities between the deep

past and the Victorian present and the result was evolutionary colonialism and narratives of the

inevitable ascendancy and dominance of *sapiens*. All of this is precisely what these particular

Machen stories do not do, and his eerie non-*sapiens* should be seen as directly opposing early pf's

sanitised proto-*sapiens*. Ultimately, this is down to his particular treatment of evolutionary time which, in a recent article, Kimberley Jackson characterises as "ab-historical". The inclusion in Machen's tales of "vanished races and their artefacts" in the Victorian present directly challenges both evolutionary and historical linearity, and this suggests that

> the past is not something that is behind the present, as its precursor and support, as its history, but rather something that challenges and threatens the present from an adjacent position, something one might better call the ab-historical rather than the prehistorical, since it is not to be positioned prior to but within and against the historical. The ab-historical past that Machen invokes is that which cannot be claimed by the present or by history because it remains always past, a past with no future, or a past with no present (2013: 213)

Aside from the notion of the perennial past raised in the final clause, Jackson's "ab-historical" perfectly describes the simultaneous and irreconcilable co-presence of different times and different histories within a single present in Machen's tales. Moreover, in contrast to Worth's account, the "ab-historical" captures something of the impossibility of continuity between these "adjacent" histories which is so important for the so-called parallax view of human evolutionary history.

What Jackson identifies as the ab-historical in Machen's fiction is part of a wider temporal experimentation, which is perhaps epitomised by *The Three Impostors*, the episodic novel mentioned above.[16] The 'main' story of this novel covers a span of time of roughly twenty minutes' length yet the novel as a whole runs to over two hundred pages.[17] The prologue sets out how a

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[16] No doubt due in part to its episodic, modular character, it has often been the case that individual stories from this novel have been separately anthologised, and critically examined quite apart from their context in a wider novel – this is true of 'The Novel of the Black Seal' and 'The Novel of the White Powder', for example. Given the central premise of the novel – that three impostors are telling false stories to Dyson and Phillipps in order to elicit information regarding the whereabouts of the "young man with spectacles" – this approach is quite curious, as it disregards layers of narrative which must necessarily have a bearing on all interpretations. 'The Novel of the Black Seal', as noted earlier, is a story told by Miss Lally to Phillipps on a park bench after she failed to convince him that, after having searched for her brother (the "young man with spectacles") for a considerable time, she just saw him walk by under duress and with some kind of ailment which causes bodily disintegration. Phillipps, ever the scientist, refuses to believe that this is possible, so Lally tries again with another story – that is, 'The Novel of the Black Seal'. For an example of this tendency, see Eckersley (1992) who dissociates 'The Novel of the White Powder' and 'The Novel of the Black Seal' from their original context, though he does acknowledge that this is what he is doing (286, f.n. 9).

[17] There is no direct textual evidence to support this claim. Instead, it is a conservative estimate based on what happens in

woman and two men leave a house by the front door after having carried out some unknown but unpleasant business. After a brief discussion, they leave via the back garden while Dyson and Phillips enter via the front, with Dyson commenting on the effect of the falling light on one of the upstairs window panes: "that very room", he tells Phillipps, "is within all blood and fire" (11). This concludes the prologue and the remainder of the novel is spent coming back to this point: it (nominally) explains, through many nested narratives, how the woman and two men – the three impostors of the title – came to be leaving, and how Dyson and Phillips came to be entering, the house at this particular moment. The novel's final chapter picks up after Dyson's "blood and fire" comment, ultimately proving its prescience: the three impostors have just sacrificed and partly immolated a young man in the room behind that same window. The great bulk of the text is thus a kind of parenthetical insertion into the 'main' story – the story of three people leaving an abandoned Gothic mansion and two people entering it moments later only to find a mutilated corpse – and this parenthetical insertion is itself composed of various other narratives which themselves take the form nested narratives, and so on. Overall, then, the novel is characterised by a recursive temporal and narrative modularity, and the present of the principal narrative is expanded massively; the moment which follows Dyson's "blood and fire" comment is shown to be composed of innumerable chunks of other time. Moreover, to the extent that the prologue is necessarily cryptic so as not to reveal the ending, its sudden interruption leaves a sense of intrigue and anticipation which compounds the effect of an extended present.[18]

It is this notion of an extended present that problematises Jackson's claim that the ab-historical "remains always past, a past with no future, or a past with no present". Instead, Machen's tales

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this scene.

[18] See Paul Ricoeur's account of the "threefold present", or the manner in which the present of subjective experience is given extension in time by being composed of memories of the past and anticipations of the future. See Ricoeur (1990), particularly the first chapter, pp. 5-30.

undermine the whole notion of temporal flow; they trouble the assumption of there being a past, a present and a future at all. Rather than passing, time in these stories often simply *is* – all at once. Indeed, it may be said that, as a whole, Machen's fiction from this period explores the tensions between what are often called subjective and objective time – between time as it is experienced by conscious subjects, as progressing from past through to future, and the measurable time of the universe (of planets and moons and stars etc.).[19] Paradoxically, the more the past and the future – in the form of memories and anticipations – are incorporated into the present, the closer subjective time approaches objective time, or the "the 'block universe' view of time". Mark Currie has opposed this view of time (shared by Kurt Vonnegut's Tralfamadorians and others, most notably theoretical physicists) to "horribly egocentric" subjective time because it (objective time) discounts the possibility of a present, and therefore of a past and a future, as this is merely "a kind of perspectivism which centres any enquiry in the spatial and temporal position of a particular set of persons" (Currie 2007: 15).

The indefinite extensibility of the present in *The Three Impostors* is of course related to the incorporation of the ab-historical in the other stories under discussion (including 'The Novel of the Black Seal', another of the novel's parenthetical insertions), but there is one crucial difference. The interpolated portions of time in *The Three Impostors* take the form of narratives (indeed, this is a novel of narrative abundance),[20] whereas the ab-historical does not; it – rather, the temporal gap between it and the Victorian present – goes un-narrated. In *The Three Impostors* we are presented with the beginning and the end of single story which is crossed by countless other times and narratives. By contrast, in 'The Shining Pyramid' and 'The Red Hand' – and even 'The Novel of the Black Seal' – we are given the beginning and the end of an evolutionary narrative, the middle of

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[19] See Cobley (2006: 16-21) for a discussion of subjective and objective time in relation to Ricoeur's theories of time and narrative.

[20] See Hurley (1996: 153-167) for an examination of the "narrative chaos" of, or the "gratuitous" narrative in, *The Three Impostors*.

which is completely missing. Contra Worth, then, by presenting two distinct species of *Homo* side by side in Victorian Britain, Machen precludes the possibility of continuity between the two in perhaps the most fundamental way: he removes the element of time. Without temporal distance, there can be no progression through time and all of the phases of so-called evolutionary advancement. Put differently, because there is no time between 'us' and 'them', there can be no narrative of 'our' emergence, ascendancy and ultimate dominance. It is clear that these beings are human because they possess the requisite markers – tool-fashioning, tool-use, language and, as Worth points out, symbolic communication. And it is equally clear that they conform to popular notions of savagery and primitiveness. However, because they occupy the same time and space as Dyson and his friends, there is no scope for the narrative assimilation of the primitive or archaic by the modern. Instead, we are forced to acknowledge their existence as wholly distinct from ourselves. Because there is no temporal distance between them, the non-*sapiens* humans, as Jackson makes clear, cannot be "claimed" by the *sapiens* humans: there can be no narrative which accounts for our emergence by their supercedence, for the simple reason that narrative, by definition, requires time. These two species exist in tandem at the turn of the nineteenth century, and this means that there is between them no evolutionary story to be told; equal but different, the two simply *are*, simultaneously.

Machen's mid-1890s fiction thus forces upon us two fundamentally incommensurate accounts of the same concept – human evolutionary history, or the human considered as an antique and evolutionary being. It is the strange absent-presence of the deep time of the human past which makes this possible. The time that separates the *sapiens* and non-*sapiens* humans in these stories, that is to say, both is and is not there. To the extent that the two species are presented side by side, the evolutionary time between them does not exist, meaning that there can be no narrative which joins them together dialectically. A narrative view or understanding of human evolutionary history is therefore structurally impossible in these stories. In a more historical mode, however, we know, and have seen, that Machen's stories occur in a context in which people from all disciplines and none

concerned themselves with thinking through the vast temporal span that existed between themselves and the makers of the palaeolithic flint tools that were being dug up all over Europe. Indeed, the appearance and behaviour of Machen's non-*sapiens* accord with many such accounts of our hypothesised forebears' semi-bestial appearance and lax morals. Inasmuch as Machen's stories are a part of this context, this "patterned network", the time between his *sapiens* and non-*sapiens* humans has an undeniable intertextual presence and can be assumed to exist, in spite of its absence. For example, early pf, with its various accounts of *sapiens*' gradual but inevitable escape from the confines of *Homo*, tells Machen's missing story over and over again. The co-presence of these two opposing views of the same object means that, in these stories, human evolutionary history (the object under observation) falls into a Žižekian parallax gap between its narrative and non-narrative interpretations.

Human and Inhuman Time

In the three-volume *Time and Narrative*, Paul Ricoeur sets out to prove that

> time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience (1990 [1983]: 3)

Of principal concern here is the first part of Ricoeur's thesis, the notion that time is somehow humanised (read 'sapientised') by narrative, and that the 'human' understanding and experience of time is therefore necessarily narrative-based. To the extent that time comes to be emplotted, Ricoeur argues, it becomes "human time" because a plot "'grasps together' and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematizing the intelligible signification attached to the narrative taken as a whole" (Ricoeur 1990: x). In short, plotted narrative brings order to the chaos of time; it is narrative that subjectifies, and thus humanises, objective time. That plotted time is human time can be illustrated by reference to the individual self and its

"narrative identity": 'I' am 'me' because of the narratives that 'I' construct about the things that 'I' have either done or not done, or will or will not do, or about the things that either have or have not, will or will not happen to 'me'. Simply put, then, the self is the product of its own emplotments of time – its own gathering together and organisation of disparate events and happenings into coherent wholes – either in memory or in the anticipation of future events: 'I' am the "intelligible signification" that is "schematized" in the narratives that 'I' construct about 'myself'.[21]

According to Ricoeur's system, narrative is mimetic of human action and there are three stages of mimesis – $Mimesis_1$, $Mimesis_2$, and $Mimesis_3$, which also go by the names of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration, respectively. $Mimesis_1$ is that which we bring to a narrative before we encounter it, and can be understood as a basic knowledge of human action, intentions, and motivations etc. $Mimesis_2$ equates to emplotment, or the gathering together of disparate events and happenings into coherent wholes – it is here that time is humanised. Finally, $Mimesis_3$ describes the effects of narrative, how it can refigure our understanding of the world and our everyday lives. For our purposes, $Mimesis_2$ and $Mimesis_3$ are the most important because it is here that 'we' become 'human' – by bringing objective, evolutionary time to rational order and applying this understanding of ourselves to the world outside the narrative. Indeed, a large portion of this thesis is given over to analysing the consequences of early prehistoric fiction's account of human evolutionary history for our view of ourselves and our relation to the world, to other species of human, and to animals; it is thus given over to the $Mimesis_3$ stage of early pf narratives. Emplotment ($Mimesis_2$) implies some kind of end or goal: there is a reason why certain events are considered more significant than countless others. This implied end is the "intelligible signification" of the whole narrative; in the case of early pf, this is the humanist human, George Meredith's "purer". Narrative is the mechanism by

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[21] It is also about the stories that others tell about me, or other stories in which I appear, and in that sense it is equally a public and, as above, a private construct. See Whitebrook (2014) for more on the public aspect of narrative identity, and for a critique of "narrativity" – or the belief that we have narrative identities and, further, that this is morally desirable – see Strawson (2004).

which we become human, or become that as which we prefer to see ourselves – rational agents and unified selves persisting more or less through time. In Paul Sheehan's phrase, narrative is "human-shaped" and, indeed, human-shaping: it is a "uniquely human way of making order and meaning" from the chaos of life and the world. "Put simply", he writes, "we tell stories about ourselves to give our lives meaning and purpose, and about our kind to maintain the crucial human/inhuman distinction". Narrative thus "plays a fundamental role in defining our humanity and, as it were, keeping us human" (2004: 9-10). This also holds true with respect to the evolutionary history of *Homo.* In early pf, the objective time of our deep past is brought to order, and is thus humanised, by narrative. By telling a story about the evolutionary past of *Homo,* pf removed the menace of objective time; it humanised inhuman time, or sapientised *Homo,* and this could only ever lead to evolutionary colonialism and its autogenous implications. In a Machenesque account of human evolutionary history, on the other hand, inhuman time is never humanised because there is no Mimesis$_2$ stage of the story of *Homo.* The objective time that is configured and humanised in early pf is present in Machen's stories parallactically: the temporal gap between the *sapiens* and non-*sapiens* humans in his stories remains un-narrated, un-configured and, therefore, inhuman. Because this time is un-organised and un-narrated it cannot be claimed and controlled in order to bring about the human purer, and we are left, instead, with what might be called the inhuman human – that which results from a startling juxtaposition with the archaic, rather than from its narrative assimilation in, and through, human time.

The narrative account of human evolutionary history is of course epitomised by early prehistoric fiction, but the non-narrative, juxtaposed account is less obvious and, no doubt due to its 'inhuman' character, difficult to grasp. Ray S. Lineham's *The Street of Human Habitations* (1894), however, offers a novel illustration of the nature of inhuman time from the same period as the Machen stories under discussion. A curious, suburbanised account of human evolutionary history, the book describes an eponymous street, the "rows and dwellings" of which have taken "countless ages to

build" (1) and are representative of the stages of human evolutionary advancement. The street

begins "in the misty light that comes betwixt darkness and dawn, and when the form of man at least

is still dim as he emerges from an eternity of night" (2):

> In the street we are entering you see there on the right a large empty space, and on the left a wide forest of pine, between us and the first dwelling. These you may consider, if you like, the abode of the very earliest specimens of the *genus Homo*. Not much shelter from wind and wet here […] Now let us pass on to No. 1" (4-5, original emphasis)

The inhuman time of "large empty space" and "wide forest" cannot be reduced to order and

assigned a door number; it resists our attempts to know and organise it. That it deserves a place on

the street is clear, but this place somehow comes before the possibility of order. Inhuman time, that

is to say, does belong on the human street, but it paradoxically came before the street itself became

human.[22] Indeed, it may be that the human street was built on top of the inhuman forest and plain,

which suggests that human time, and thus the narrative understanding of the human as an evolved

being, sits precariously above a chaotic and unknowable void. In a similar manner to the way in

which Dyson's various solutions count for nothing when he catches an oblique glimpse of the

parallax view of *Homo,* this inhuman void reveals the impermanence of the neat and ordered

narratives built on top of it. At the same time, however, inhuman human history demands to be

narrated, and thus to be known.[23]

In outlining this 'non-narrative' view of human evolutionary history in Machen's fiction, I do not

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[22] Incidentally, Number 1 Street of Human Habitations is the cave of the "Troglodyte" and, by way of demonstrating just how inhuman is inhuman time, "no part of the street is so dark as that which divides the cave-men from their neolithic children", or Number 2 Street of Human Habitations. The "yawning chasm" between 1 and 2 is a "terrible catalogue" of "annihilation" and various geological "upheavals" and yet, prior to all that *and* the cave-men, there is the numberless abode of the first members of *Homo*.

[23] The connection between chaos and heroism is a fascinating one, even more so when considered in reference to narratives of human evolutionary development. A large part of heroism seems to be about bringing order to chaos – this holds no less for Fair-Hair and prehistoric Paris than it does for Batman and Gotham City – which means that chaos and disorder are needed for heroism to be. With respect to humanisation narratives, then, it seems that the human needs inhuman time, and that we know ourselves only through the heroic and ultimately arbitrary ordering of chaos, or inhuman time.

mean to suggest that he has somehow written non-narrative stories. To be sure, these are most definitely narratives and stories; they are pieces of crime or detective fiction. What I am arguing instead is that, within these stories, Machen allows for the possibility of an interpretation of human evolutionary history that does not rely on narrative. They contain the fact of there being such a thing as human evolutionary history, but this is not presented in the form of a narrative and is entirely enveloped by other stories about crime and its detection. In fact, a narrative understanding of the progression from A to B, archaic to modern, is structurally impossible here because narrative needs time to operate and this is exactly what Machen prevents. These stories contain a full view of human evolutionary history as it was understood in the late-nineteenth century, as something that began with Primitive Man and ended with the Victorian Briton. However, in place of a temporal interpretation of this process (as something that took place over millions of years), Machen presents a more static one in which Primitive Man and Victorian Briton are juxtaposed in exactly the same time and space. By *not* telling the story of human antiquity and evolution but nonetheless making explicit reference to it in this way, Machen's stories foreground the jarring fact of antiquity and evolution as such. An imperfect analogy of what is meant by 'non-narrative' exists on a more personal, individual level: what Machen presents us with as regards human evolutionary history would be roughly equivalent to an autobiography in which I as I currently am (a man of thirty-one) saw, spoke to or interacted with myself as, say, a five year-old child. Rather than 'A...B', as it were, Machen gives us 'AB'. The term 'non-narrative' is therefore attached to the missing but nevertheless real time and events between A and B in Machen's stories, and not to the stories themselves: it is everything that must have happened in getting from the non-*sapiens* humans to Dyson and Phillipps, but which is not narrated, nor therefore brought to order, controlled, nor 'humanised'.

That the time over which the evolutionary history of *Homo* has taken, and is taking, place is un-narrated makes Machen's stories very different from early pf, despite similarities in subject matter. If early pf can be seen as a "Darwinian salve" (see chapter two) because it colonised and therefore,

in Ricoeurean terms, "humanised" the evolutionary history of *Homo* by plotting a rational course from Primitive Man to Victorian Briton, then Machen may be seen as "dehumanising" (that is, de-sapientising) human evolutionary history – or as refusing to humanise it in the first place. Where early pf posits the Victorian Briton as the "intelligible signification" of the whole evolutionary process – as that which was "schematised" throughout – Machen foregrounds the very illegitimacy of this same procedure, while simultaneously restoring to the establishment of human antiquity and evolution its disruptive and, indeed, "inhuman" character. Where, in early pf, human evolutionary history was conquerable, in the sense that it could be safely known, understood and colonised, in Machen time resists emplotment, and the "horrible egocentricity" of subjective or humanised time is replaced with disconcertingly unknowable, objective and "inhuman" time, which restores to non-*sapiens* all their unfamiliarity and alterity.

In Slavoj Žižek's account, the two or more perspectives from which the object is viewed make that same object different from itself. The parallactic object is therefore the one with two or more incommensurable view-interpretations which are nevertheless both true. And it is important to remember here that the point is not to square the two perspectives, to play the role of the fictional detective and restore order. Instead, the point is to keep the parallax gap open and to operate within the disquieting interstices that appear between the mutually exclusive perspectives. As regards human evolutionary history, that is to say, we must maintain both the narrative and the non-narrative perspectives:[24] the human is the product of both human and inhuman time; it is what results from its own stories – rather, from the stories of that which it will become in their telling – as well as un-plottable chaos; it is something that both can and cannot be narrated. In Arthur Machen's fiction, then, the object that is made different from itself is the human - a narrative object given a

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[24] Indeed, if Ricoeur is correct, then the narrative perspective can never be abandoned, for narrative is, in Paul Cobley's phrase, "*the* human relation to time" (2006: 17, emphasis added). The impossibility of wholly abandoning the narrative view can be seen in the fact that, even when it is explicitly not there – that is, even when its presence is logically impossible – the time between Machen's two species of human nonetheless remains.

non-narrative perspective on itself. This is precisely the kind of "structural short circuit" of which

Žižek speaks throughout *The Parallax View*: the nature of parallax is such that it brings the

apparently incompatible, ontologically-distinct together in a paradoxical relation that reveals the

conceptual and ideological structures by which society is organised. Whereas early pf had a

superscriptive function, in that it wrote over and effectively masked inhuman time by means of

narrative, the parallax view offered by Machen reveals that the non-narrative, inhuman perspective

on human evolutionary history is the "symptom" of the narrative one – or that which makes the

narrative interpretation necessary.[25] It is not that Machen replaces the narrative with the non-

narrative account, more that he foregrounds their complex interrelation and, unlike in early pf,

keeps them both in view.

The Parallax View of Homo

As I said above, the narrative view of human evolution has a strange absent-presence in Machen's

stories, and nowhere is this more the case than in the climactic scene of 'The Shining Pyramid'. As a

whole, the story bears striking similarities to some of the early pf stories discussed in chapter two,

particularly Elie Berthet's 'The Parisians of the Stone Age'. In that story, Deer is abducted by Red, the

most primitive specimen of *Homo* in the surrounding area. Upon learning this the following morning,

Fair-Hair sets off in pursuit as a hero would. The climactic scene is of course the one in which, having

tracked Red and Deer to a glade, Fair-Hair, who has been observing from behind the tree line, shoots

Red through the chest with an arrow, effectively preventing him from leaving any progeny.

Variations of this scene appear over and over again in early pf – as, for instance, when Ab kills

Boarface and absorbs the latter's tribe into his own, or when Ugh-lomi kills most of his tribe and

takes leadership of what remains. In each case, the primitive is expunged and the narrative – the

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[25] See the first chapter of Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology* for more on his account of the symptom (2008: 3-55).

conclusion of which is modernity and humanity – is allowed to continue.

'The Shining Pyramid' offers a distorted reflection of this recurring scene. When Vaughan comes to visit Dyson regarding the mysterious flints in his garden, he mentions in passing that a local girl, Annie Trevor, had gone missing about a month beforehand. While Dyson is interested in the details of the case, it is very quickly dropped as a topic of conversation because Vaughan is more concerned with the flints. The two incidents, however, are actually related: by the end, we learn that Annie, the "village beauty" (6), had been abducted by the same non-*sapiens* hominids that had been leaving the flint patterns in Vaughan's garden. Compared to Deer in 'The Parisians of the Stone Age', Annie is abducted off-stage, as it were. The majority of the story, as we have seen, is propelled by Dyson's investigation of the flint tools: a pale shadow of Fair-Hair and the others, it is quite some time before Dyson realises that he is actually pursuing Annie and her captors. And even then, it is only by "mere accident" that he is "put on the right track", and it is only as an intellectual exercise that he continues to follow it, "assuming for theory's sake that the disappearance of Annie Trevor had some connection with the flint signs" (21). When Dyson finally realises what he is doing, he tracks Annie and her captors to a rugged hillside. Whereas Fair-Hair waited in the bushes for the perfect opportunity to strike Red and thereby save both Deer and the *sapiens* lineage, Dyson and Vaughan remain hidden behind some rocks. Lying flat on their stomachs and scarcely daring to breathe, they do nothing but watch while Annie is reduced to ashes in 'the shining pyramid', a sacrificial pyre hinted at by the various patterns into which the flints had been arranged at the beginning.

In Berthet's story, the fateful final meeting of the Great Man and the Primitive Man (albeit one that is repeated over and over again) is the first step of humanisation and it inscribes biopolitical management and the anthropological machine at the very beginning of the story, thereby setting the tone for the remainder. In the parallax view glimpsed in the fiction of Arthur Machen, on the other hand, things are very different: the primitive is not destroyed and therefore humanisation

does not take place at its expense.[26] Indeed, by the standards of early pf, and despite being

juxtaposed against murderous and depraved antagonists, Dyson and Vaughan are themselves

insufficiently 'human'. This is despite the fact that Vaughan is particularly concerned with what is

and what is not human: from behind his rock, he "peered into the quaking mass and saw faintly that

there were things like faces and human limbs, and yet he felt his inmost soul chill with the sure

belief that no fellow soul or human thing stirred in all that tossing and hissing host" (17-18). While

their refusal to act is not altogether admirable, it does raise an interesting prospect for the human,

an object which, in Žižek's terms, has been "divided from itself". If, in early pf, this scene is the

human foundation, the base from which it later went on to rationalise both itself and the wider

world, what are the implications of Machen's parallactic re-staging? What does it mean that there is

no action, no heroism, and no exterminated primitives? Picking up on the principal points from

chapter two, the most important implications of this parallax view of the evolutionary human are

that the human is not 'achieved' by the extirpation of the primitive, and evolutionary colonialism is

structurally impossible.

It will be remembered that, according to Giorgio Agamben, "bare life has the peculiar privilege of

being that whose exclusion founds the city of men". Human society, that is to say, only is to the

extent that the 'subhuman' – the animal, the savage, the criminal etc. – is first excluded. As regards

the narrative account of human evolutionary history, this means that the human ideal is the result of

the gradual removal of the less-than-itself; that it is the product of rational imperialism and

evolutionary colonialism, the retrospective operation of the anthropological machine in, and on,

inhuman time. In Machen's parallax view, however, this procedure is effectively forbidden because

there is no time for the machine to work and, moreover, no time for the modern to impose itself on

the archaic, to colonise its time and space. This much, indeed, is evident in the inaction of Dyson and

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[26] It should be said, too, that in Machen there is a more straightforward meeting of two types of human than we encounter in early pf, where the modern and the archaic ostensibly belong to the same community.

Vaughan while Annie is being sacrificed: the two men don't become more human by destroying

Annie's abductors, and nor do they thus take over the as yet unwritten history of this other species

of *Homo* and guide it towards themselves. At the same time, this also means that, as the culmination

of the implied narrative that is glimpsed in this scene, Dyson, Vaughan and the human are not the

result of the biopolitical management of the evolutionary history of *Homo.* And this whole process,

in fact, becomes less a matter of rational control than of chance – less a matter of narrative than of

inhuman time. That the "bare life" of *Homo* has never been, nor ever can be, excluded – whether

inclusively or otherwise – means that there never was a human, nor ever a "city of men", so

conceived. In preventing the narrative assimilation of *Homo* by *sapiens*, the parallax view offered by

Machen brings *Homo* into the "city of men" – rather, it helps to demonstrate that *Homo* has always

been there, and therefore that early pf's "city of men", like the social order in Machen's stories, was

an illusion from the very beginning.

By uniting two contradictory accounts in a paradoxical relation, the parallax view of human

evolutionary history is potentially a powerful critical perspective because it simultaneously keeps us

in and takes us out of the human narrative; it is a perspective which allows us to critique the

prevailing, narrative view of our origin, while also acknowledging the necessity of narrative itself. It

punctures the narrativistic hubris of early pf, but it does so without claiming priority for the non-

narrative account of *Homo.* Rather as George Meredith attempted to do with Comedy, the parallax

view affords a position from which to critique, but which does not presume to take us out of the

human scene. In other words, at the same time as reducing to rubble the narrative accounts of early

pf, it invites us to reconstruct another story – one which will inevitably have similar faults to the

previous one. However, if Giorgio Agamben is correct, and the human is a ceaselessly-updated

political decision and a matter of perpetual negotiation, then the parallax view can help to guard

against the excesses of narrative, bringing a certain critical awareness to the decision-making

process. If the narrative account of the evolutionary history of *Homo* necessarily leads to human

heroism – the "dangerous delusion" that is Meredith's "purer" – then the parallax view, by simultaneously holding the non-narrative account in paradoxical tension, may well lead to something less imperial, perhaps even posthumanist.

Yes, the human is an evolved, narrative being, but there have been other kinds of human who were emphatically not us – and nor were we the "intelligible signification" implied in their being. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, then, Machen forces us to recognise the uncanniness of the fact of human antiquity and evolution. We, like Dyson and Vaughan, are brought face to face with non-*sapiens* humans in a manner which prevents their easy assimilation into our being. Rather than in deep prehistory, this meeting of modern and archaic humans takes place in the Victorian present, in a parallactic space adjacent to, yet separate from, "the world of human life and customary things". The narrative which unites them is short-circuited, and the beginning and the end are made to stare at each other across the inhuman void between them. Machen forces us to deal with human alterity, with humans – tool-users capable of speech, written communication, and events management – who were not us, nor were us in process. It is significant in this regard that these other humans are not exterminated, but are instead allowed to return to their subterranean mountain home. Rather than making way for *sapiens*, they continue to exist in ab-historical, objective time from where they threaten the sanctity of the human, our sense of our own uniqueness and superiority.

5. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Pf's Dialectic of Evolutionism

In this chapter I want to argue for, and to explore, the connections between prehistoric fiction, adventure or imperial romance, and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). This will of course mean re-crossing some familiar critical ground, but the overriding focus will be on the consequences of my reading of pf for these critical debates, such that the same ground should appear altered.[1] The primary motivation for turning to *Heart of Darkness* is that, to the extent that it describes the attempt by a gifted individual to raise those around him to the next stage of evolutionary or cultural advancement – the two were never so distinct during the period – Conrad's novel is essentially a piece of pf. Kurtz's assumption of the 'civilising' role and the violence by which he carries it out mark him as a pf hero. This interpretation both agrees and disagrees with the critical tradition of reading Kurtz – and, indeed, the whole imperial project in Patrick Brantlinger's case – in terms of degeneration, atavism and the Gothic. Indeed, it sits rather awkwardly between the Gothic interpretation of imperial romance, which is essentially about negotiating with the past, and other, more future-directed interpretations of the "romance revival" (inclusive of imperial romance) which see it as way of negotiating with encroaching modernity. It may well be the case, in other words, that Kurtz has slipped the bonds of civilisation and reverted to a more primitive state, but it is a reversion to (an admittedly extreme version of) the rapacity of the pf hero rather than to some vaguely animalistic, non-constructed, perhaps even generic form of primitiveness common to all human groups. It is a reversion, that is, to the product of evolutionary colonialism, to what might be called an implanted primitiveness. Kurtz's is a very Euro-American, violent, world-shaping kind of primitivism; it is different from the Congolese kind which, though "frenzied", is actually presented as largely ineffective – as "incomprehensible frenzy" (105) and as "pent-up and mysterious frenzy" (141). In short, in the Congo of the text if not of the historical period, there never was, and nor could

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[1] A number of scholars have examined Conrad's relation to the imperial or adventure romance. Among the most famous are Jameson (2002 [1981]), Brantlinger (1988), and especially White (1995 [1993]) and Dryden (2000).

there ever be, an African Kurtz.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno argue that enlightenment, conceived of as a gradually increasing domination of nature, ends in barbarism and mythic thinking, or that which enlightenment sought to supplant in the first place. Shouldering a large portion of the blame is the dominance of what they refer to as "instrumental reason" – reason that is directed only towards the successful and efficient completion of some task, but which takes no notice of the wider rationality or value of that task in or to the pursuit of objective 'truth'. Pursuing science or technological advance for little more than their own sakes – because that is reason enough – is, or can be, fundamentally irrational in the sense that the ultimate rationality of the necessarily small-scale, desired end is left unexamined or taken for granted.[2] A broadly similar argument can also be made as regards Kurtz and prehistoric fiction. While rationalising the development of the human through narrative, early pf neglected to examine the ultimate viability and consequences of such a project – namely, the character of the human which must eventually result, a creature whose history has been colonised by a particular ideal and is being driven towards the realisation of that same ideal. Kurtz and his atrocities, I argue, reveal the underlying logic of pf's narrative interpretation of human evolutionary history, or the dialectic of pf's evolutionism: Kurtz is at once the essential pf hero and the eventual outcome of that particular version of *Homo*'s evolutionary past as it arrives in historical time – albeit a historical time that is rendered as prehistoric, as we shall see. If the egoist for George Meredith is the evolutionary "purer" brought into contemporary society, Kurtz is the evolutionary purer let loose in the colonial setting.

Although I will develop this basic argument over the course of the chapter, it is worthwhile tackling

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[2] This is not too dissimilar to Christine Ferguson's argument that the decadent movement was the logical outcome of positivist, Victorian science (2002), in that the art evinced the same tendency toward uselessness that allowed science to progress, as opposed to stagnating. In this formulation, positivist science (and artistic decadence) accords well with Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis of "instrumental reason".

one particular objection that has been levelled at Horkheimer and Adorno's dialectic. For both

Steven Vogel (1996) and more recently William Leiss (2007), the dialectic of enlightenment ends in a

critical *cul-de-sac* in the sense that, according to Vogel, it offers no perspective outside of

enlightenment on the basis of which critique could stand: "Its fatality is built in from the start […] It

seems to be the human condition; no escape, historically or conceptually, is possible" (67-8). For

Leiss, the problem is again that Horkheimer and Adorno's argument rests on a constant (the human

condition or so-called human nature) which, contra Marxian theories of historical development, lies

"entirely outside of history" and is presented as an enduring and "essential feature of the species in

all of its manifestations over time": "Perhaps all one can say in response is, if this diagnosis is correct,

there is certainly no cure, so we might as well get on with our lives" (2007: n.p.). In making his case,

Leiss cites a very interesting passage from Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason*:

> If one were to speak of a disease affecting reason, this disease should be understood not as
> having stricken reason at some historical moment, but as being inseparable from the nature
> of reason in civilization as we have known it so far. The disease of reason is that reason was
> born from man's urge to dominate nature, and the 'recovery' depends on insight into the
> nature of the original disease, not on a cure of the latest symptoms. The true critique of
> reason will necessarily uncover the deepest layers of civilization and explore its earliest
> history. From the time when reason became the instrument for domination of human and
> extra-human nature by man - that is to say, from its very beginnings - it has been frustrated
> in its own intention of discovering the truth [...] One might say that the collective madness
> that ranges today, from the concentration camps to the seemingly most harmless mass-
> culture reactions, was already present in germ in primitive objectivization, in the first man's
> calculating contemplation of the world as a prey (Horkheimer 1947: 176)

While it may not take the dialectic of enlightenment out of the *cul-de-sac* into which Vogel and Leiss

argue it was always inevitably heading, the notion of evolutionary colonialism discussed at various

points throughout this thesis does offer a new perspective, both on the original argument and on

Leiss's and Vogel's critiques. Leiss seems less concerned about the nature of the "constant" than he

does with the fact that there is a constant at all. For me, however, what Horkheimer is here

presenting as enduring human nature is likely to be a construction; an aggressive and expansionist

reasoner, his "first man" brings to mind the heroes of prehistoric fiction, individuals who very much

do use reason to "dominate nature", becoming ever more 'human' at the same time. There is of course no way to get at the 'true' nature of the "first man", which means that, rather than a constant, it will always be a construct, and it therefore re-enters the historical and societal process. Rather than seeking the true nature, then, the task is instead to understand and examine the extent to which the construct, when viewed in evolutionary terms, is skewed in one direction or another.

Before detailing some of the commonalities between prehistoric fiction and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in the first half of this chapter I will outline the notion of an implanted European primitiveness, developing it in relation to the critical reception of the romance revival. This account of a constructed 'human nature' (which is European only) will clear a space in Victorian modernity for the particular nature of Kurtz's primitiveness, which will be the focus of the second half of the chapter. A further, much broader aim is simply to bring out the connections between pf, implanted primitiveness, and the so-called romance revival – inclusive of its critical reception. The imperial romance or adventure novel represents the immediate context of Conrad's own adventure tales, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* among them. These works are, as Fredric Jameson famously put it, "schizophrenic"; they occupy a place somewhere between the mass-market adventure fiction they followed and the more elitist modernism they preceded. Indeed, this schizophrenic tension between past and future literary moments is mirrored in the nature of Kurtz's primitivism: while it is a reversion to the past, it is a reversion to an implanted past which was, from the beginning, a very future-orientated cast of mind. In any case, by filling what are, for me, gaps in the critical discussion of imperial adventure fiction, I hope to bring out the centrality of contemporary conceptions of the prehistoric to the genre's notions of heroism, and to its broader imperial aims.

A Skewed European Primitiveness

At the turn of the twentieth century, when the romance revival was in full swing and after all the pf

narratives discussed in this thesis had been published, there can often be seen in newspaper and magazine articles a concern with an originary, European primitiveness. These articles are often about soldiering and the military and much use is made of the Boer War, the Boers' military prowess often being held in high regard. Away from the effeminising tendencies of civilisation, they were thought to be closer than the British to the original European primitiveness; this was what made them such effective fighters, and ultimately what enabled them to give the British such a scare.[3] However, as descendants of earlier European settlers, the Boers do not possess what might be called the savage form of primitiveness, which is where the distinction between European and non-European primitivenesses becomes most clear. Two articles from the 2nd June 1900 edition of the *Leeds Mercury* offer a particularly striking example of the distinction between savage and European primitiveness. In the first, 'The Fighting Instinct in Man', an anonymous soldier describes how, as a charge against the enemy progresses (given the date, this is again presumably the Boer War), he becomes more and more primitive, to the extent that the battle's conclusion entails him "returning […] from the Pliocene period to 1900 A. D." (1). The article is worth quoting at length:

> as our men dropped around us, as we were – some of us – bespattered with blood, the rage of war burned up fiercely within me. I felt as though something had burst in my brain. The blood rushed to my face. I knew I was physically stronger than I had ever been before […] In such situations men throw off the human mask, and assume the animal. This is atavism, and this, and only this, explains the common, yet none the less terribly suggestive, phrase, the horrors of war [...] All men are human, and in war all men are animals. They have gone back on their development for thousands of years. Then comes the final charge - the intoxication of slaughter - the delirium of blood! We hear the groans of the wounded, the appeals of our own friends, the agonising screams of those in frightful tortures. We heed them not. We trample the dead and wounded under our feet. We even, perhaps, laugh deliriously, and push forward, butchering as we go. Is it true that we are sorry if we kill a man? Believe it not! We are glad! And the more we slaughter the more deliriously mad with devilish joy do we feel […] Pity, and mercy, and civilisation - where are they? Where are they when we bury a bayonet in a man's heart, or split a man to the chin? But to this delirium of slaughter comes the reaction. We are struck down ourselves, or the victory is won. And happy for the man who falls (if he be mortally wounded) if he die at once: for in that case he passes in a state of the greatest happiness which he has ever known. Primitive men (it is admitted) enjoyed their few gross pleasures as we of these latter times cannot enjoy. And the man

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[3] For examples of this tendency, see Russell (1900) and Pollock (1905a and 1905b).

who falls blood-besmeared and butchering, is, to all intents and purposes, a primitive man (1)

A number of pages later there is another article, 'Hunting the Guanaco', this time about the Ona people (also known as the Selk'nam) of Tierra del Fuego, and though they are accorded a certain amount of romantic respect, when compared to this primitive soldier they are presented as essentially feckless. According to the author, at this point in their history, when their traditional source of food and clothing (the guanaco, a kind of llama) has been driven away by the arrival of sheep-farming settlers, the Ona have just two options: to 'steal' sheep "in the face of Winchester rifles" (9), or to follow the dwindling guanaco and retreat to "the barren interior mountains, where life is a hard struggle against storms and barrenness and perennial snows" (9). This picture of a people falling victim to progress is missing some important details, however. As Anne Chapman has recently documented, by this time the Selk'nam had been subjected to "outright genocide" for roughly fifteen years, as both they and the guanaco had been actively hunted to clear the way for the sheep farms. Moreover, they had suffered terribly from European diseases, against which they had no immunity. "During those years (approximately 1884-1900), the Selk'nam population, possibly 3,000 individuals, fell to about 500 […] Thus the Selk'nam ceased to exist as a viable culture with a prospect for the future" (2010: 543-44).

To the extent that, for a Victorian audience, the Selk'nam and other savage peoples represent an earlier phase of human evolutionary development, when read in conjunction, these two articles (which were again printed in the same newspaper on the same day) reveal the differences between British/European and non-British/non-European primitiveness at this time. For the soldier, his return to the "primitive man" of the "Pliocene period" meant the emergence, or re-emergence, of a "devilish" and bloodthirsty killer who cared nothing for friend or foe but, laughing "deliriously", only for "victory" and the "blood-besmeared" joy of battle. As regards the Selk'nam, on the other hand, their primitiveness is the cause of, and the justification for, their disappearance: it is what leads to

their meek retreat to the interior, to their vulnerability to disease and rifles and, ultimately, to their annihilation. [4] Knowing himself "physically stronger than [he] had ever been before", the soldier was impervious to the bullets and shells flying all around him, but the weak Selk'nam were not: had their primitiveness been of the same order as his, the Winchesters would have been powerless to stop them, for it is the rage of western primitiveness and a "tremendous striving to reach the foe" which alone "spell success". [5]

Following early pf and the wider debate about human antiquity and evolution, any European's metaphoric return to the Pliocene – any stripping away of the encrustations of civilisation – can be dressed as a re-emergence into an unbridled yet agentive aggression entirely distinct from, and of course superior to, the passive vulnerability of the Selk'nam. [6] It is this distinction, essentially between 'our' goal-directed primitiveness and 'their' static primitiveness, that demonstrates the effects of evolutionary colonialism: as Lang reminds us in the prelude to his 'Romance of the First Radical', there has yet to emerge a Radical in savage society. [7] European primitiveness is world-forming, colonial, and, to paraphrase Meredith, overcomes all obstacles to its growth, while non-European primitiveness merely wallows in anticipation of its destruction – often, of course, at the hands of its non-European counterpart. The assumption of a dynamic European primitiveness is, then, a consequence of evolutionary colonialism: by populating (European) human evolutionary

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[4] At various points, the article partakes of what Patrick Brantlinger calls "extinction discourse". This is particularly so when, as I suggest here, the Selk'nam are presented as being condemned by their own primitiveness, as this demonstrates evidence of two tropes identified by Brantlinger: the trope of the "self-exterminating savage" and that of "proleptic elegy" (the latter being a kind of mourning in anticipation of a people's destruction and annihilation). See Brantlinger (2003) for a much fuller exposition of his thesis.

[5] It is worth noting here the title of the first article, 'The Fighting Instinct in Man': the unity implied in the singular 'Man' is in pointed contrast to the absolutely distinct forms primitiveness – or primitive instinct – of the British soldier and the Selk'nam.

[6] This return to the Pliocene is another example of the slippage between historic and prehistoric time, and is something to which I will return in the second half of the chapter.

[7] Of the various forms of primitiveness touched upon thus far, Stevenson's Hyde, in his propensity for violence and his disregard for his victims, bears the closest resemblance to the soldier. However, Hyde's violent fury (as when, unprovoked, he bludgeons Sir Danvers Carew to death with a cane) is aimless; it doesn't tend towards a goal – whether victory or evolutionary progression. One possible explanation for this is that, as a distillation of the purely anti-societal or anti-civilisational within Jekyll, Hyde lacks the essence of the esteemed Briton and is therefore without this progressive drive to 'victory', however defined.

history with aggressive and expansionist Great Men, early pf and other forms of writing fostered and fed the belief that ours was an essentially and unstoppably progressive kind of primitiveness. As regards Horkheimer and Adorno's conception of 'human nature' and the "first man", they too are progressive and domineering and nothing at all like the Selk'nam. Even if this were explained by the fact that the Selk'nam were seen as subhuman (and therefore not of 'human nature'), this would still prove the partiality and constructedness of so-called human nature.

Thus, when figured as a retreat from civilisation – as in imperial adventure fiction – any journey into colonial space necessarily meant a meeting between two assumed primitivenesses, one aggressive and expansionist and the other passive and ineffective and therefore somehow deserving of its maltreatment. The following section will discuss some of the nuances of the various primitivenesses on show in the novels of the romance revival – or at least in their critical reception – before going on to suggest that, in the case of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, it is in the space between these that Kurtz and pf's implanted primitiveness are to be found.

The Primitivenesses of the Romance Revival

According to Fredric Jameson's famous analysis of the "schizophrenic" nature of *Lord Jim* (1900), the transition from the "intricate" account of the *Patna* incident into the rather more straightforward story of Jim's adventures in Patusan marks a "shift between two distinct cultural spaces, that of 'high' culture and that of mass culture" (2002 [1981]: 195). The text's schizophrenia, that is to say, derives from a sharp internal distinction between what would become modernism and what had been known, since the 1880s, as the romance novel.[8] The "light literature" of Jim's childhood, the adventure fiction to which *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness* are related, was part of a shift away from

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[8] There is a strong critical tradition of viewing the apparent distinction between so-called high and low art, modernism and romance, as what Andreas Huyssen (1986) referred to as "the great divide". See Hammond (2006) for a recent re-evaluation of this tendency.

the domestic realist novel towards a more popular, demotic kind of fiction which focused less on character than it did on incident – hence Jim's swashbuckling daydreams (Conrad 1968 [1900]: 6). As Christine Ferguson makes clear, romances were among "the most popular literary form[s] of the *fin-de-siècle*" and were "the best-selling novels of the period" (2006: 54).

There is a clear yet unacknowledged connection between what Nicholas Daly (2000) terms the "romance revival" and prehistoric fiction. The two share the same historical and cultural moment, they are both frequently marked by colonial themes or elements, and they both deal with prehistoric time, however it is constructed.[9] Further, Andrew Lang was common to both; a vocal supporter of the romance over the realist novel, he also wrote the first pure pf story in English – 'The Romance of the First Radical' (1880). Ultimately, it is the inclusion of early pf in the critical discussion of the romance revival, inclusive of *Heart of Darkness,* that will help to reveal the consequences of evolutionary colonialism because, as with the above account of the Selk'nam and the berserker soldier, it is in the colonial setting that a distinction between different forms of primitiveness (European and non-European) becomes most apparent. First, though, it will be well to set out some of the ways in which pf and romance fiction may be said to be related.

An essay very often cited in discussions of the romance revival is Andrew Lang's 'Realism and Romance' (1887), in which he sets out why he prefers romance to realism, though he denounces what he sees as the all too prevalent tendency to deride one while celebrating the other. For him, there is ample room for both because fiction is "a shield with two sides", one the "study of manners and of character", the other the "description of adventure" (684). Nevertheless, he does raise a few complaints against realism, one of which comes from an implicit gendering of the two sides of his shield – manly romance and effeminate realism. The latter of the two, when it gives intimate access

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[9] I will return to this issue of historic time being rendered prehistoric in the discussion of *Heart of Darkness.*

to the inner lives of women, is capable of making "one feel uncomfortable in the reading", and of making one feel "intrusive and unmanly" (688). From this base Lang then proceeds to set out the long manly credentials of romance narrative, connecting it as he does to the "ancestral barbarism of our natures", to the "savages under our white skins", and to the "natural man within [him], the survival of some blue-painted Briton or of some gipsy" (689). Romance, it seems, is for some ancient, deeply buried part of our nature, while realism is for "*Homo Calvus*" (693), the bald-headed, toothless "Coming Man" (689).

The idea that romance appeals to something "under" or "within", that it is capable of uncovering and stimulating something that is deeply buried, is echoed in two other frequently cited essays in this field – Robert Louis Stevenson's 'A Gossip on Romance' (1882) and 'A Humble Remonstrance' (1884). For Stevenson, romance is about what Meredith in 'The Lark Ascending' calls "self-forgetfulness divine". However, where this was for Meredith a submission to society – or at least an acknowledgement of a wider imbrication – for Stevenson it is an escape from the constraints of personality, which itself seems to be viewed as a product of society and civilisation. Romance, then, is about peeling back the layers of one's own personality, being "rapt clean out of ourselves" and becoming fully immersed in the events of a story such that we become "incapable of sleep or of continuous thought" (1999a: 52).[10] The ideal heroes of romance should thus be bland "puppets", complete with wooden faces and "bellies filled with bran" (1999a: 59): character is not important, as it is only "incident that woos us out of our reserve" (1999a: 61). Once wooed, "we forget the characters; then we push the hero aside; then we plunge into the tale in our own person and bathe in fresh experience" (1999a: 61). Again, Stevenson's focus is on something deep within, on something visceral which must been drawn "out of" (repeated twice) "ourselves" if "we" (whomever

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[10] On a few separate occasions, Stevenson singles out Meredith's experiments with romance – in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) and *Rhoda Fleming* (1865) – for high praise.

or whatever remains after the operation) are to properly experience romance.[11] As with Lang, that which has to be taken "out of ourselves" is encoded as something primitive that existed before personality. This is more explicitly stated in 'A Humble Remonstrance', where Stevenson writes that the adventure novel "appeals to certain almost sensual and quite illogical tendencies in man" (1999b: 86). It is this relation to a submerged primitiveness that, in the first instance, connects the romance revival to early prehistoric fiction.

For both Lang and Stevenson, romance is notable for the effect it has on its readers, and this effect is created by an almost exclusive focus on "incident", the "description of adventure" – although quite how successful Stevenson was in this regard is a matter for debate. As compared to 'realism' – a term broad enough at this time to encompass what we would call the naturalism of Thomas Hardy or Emile Zola as well as the high realism of George Eliot, and everything in between – romance is thus more functional. However thrilling, it is essentially a tool to be used to chip away the encrustations of effeminate civilisation and reveal a long-entombed, manly, primitive, and therefore more authentic, self. What is interesting about Lang and Stevenson in particular is that they each had a hand in defining the nature of this primitive self – that is, the primitive self that is somehow freed in romance. In Stevenson's example, it is tempting to compare romance fiction, in terms of function, to Dr Jekyll's potion (the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* being published two years after 'A Humble Remonstrance') and to suggest that the ideal product of romance, when consumed by a reader, is a figure rather like Edward Hyde – that which remains after the various layers of personality and culture, civilisation even, have been dissolved. For Lang, on the other hand, things are slightly more complicated, especially when his 'Romance of the First Radical' is taken into consideration. A Carlylean hero and evolutionary colonialist, Why-Why was sent into human evolutionary history precisely to steer 'our' progress *away from* the "ancestral barbarism" of the

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[11] There is a circular motion here: good romance brings us out of ourselves, which is the only state in which we can properly enjoy good romance. Thus it somehow creates the conditions for its own success and appreciation; it is both cause and effect

"natural man" that Lang celebrates in the essay. Put differently, the kind of primitiveness stirred by good romance bears more than passing resemblance to the primitiveness that is either destroyed or reformed out of existence in prehistoric fiction's civilising mission. In Lang's case, the sub-human people against whom Why-Why is defined are noted for their credulity in the face of medicine men and witch doctors, as well as for their slavish submission to tribal custom. To the extent that the ideal reader of romance is one who excavates his or her self in order that they can be led along, unthinkingly, by the narrator and by the events of the story, their connection to Why-Why's credulous neighbours is clear.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to attempt a definitive analysis of the precise relation between the various primitivenesses on show in early prehistoric fiction and the novels of the romance revival. Nevertheless, it is worth briefly setting out some possibilities. That romance seems, in one reading, to cater openly to the kind of primitiveness targeted for removal in pf's humanisation process is an intriguing discrepancy. For example, if it can be said that pf is about the individuals who either escape or conquer primitiveness (or both), then it might also be the case that romance is the story of pf's maligned primitiveness(es), and that the two genres are actually two halves of the same larger whole, one that navigates the implications of human antiquity and evolution. Equally, though, they might both be seen as vehicles for the containment of European primitiveness. For pf, this is a fairly straightforward claim but, in inviting the reader to become primitive and to give him- or herself over to the story and therefore to a narrator, romance may also be said to be about the safe channelling of what E. B. Tyler referred to as evolutionary "survivals". Of course, the very fact that romance caters to "survivals" at all, the fact that it is able to bring out the "natural man within", demonstrates, as do the Arthur Machen stories discussed in the previous chapter, that the humanisation process described by Lang and others in early pf is fantasy. Ultimately, then, romance and early pf may be part of the same wider rush to marginalise the insufficiently human within the human – in spite of Lang's and Stevenson's claims for its potentially liberating effects.

Although the possible implications of pf's and romance's distinction between various kinds of primitiveness are interesting and seem to warrant further investigation, what is most important for my purposes is that there is a distinction between primitivenesses at all – that is, a distinction between, on the one hand, the evolutionary primitivenesses of the pf hero and the reader of romance and, on the other, the contemporary primitiveness of various "savage" peoples. Perhaps the most important consequence of the notion of evolutionary colonialism is that primitiveness cannot be a singular phenomenon.[12] As with Why-Why and his tribe, there must instead be at least two distinct forms – the one implanted in the evolutionary-colonial act, and the one that it replaces. According to John Miller's analysis (2012a), quite apart from their supposed effects on readers, imperial romances often stage a meeting between the submerged primitiveness of their protagonists and the primitiveness of the savages these individuals encounter in the context of what is often considered a primal landscape. This is what Miller describes as such texts' "insistence" on "creating distance from and returning to and embracing a savage selfhood", the combination of which "comprises a restless movement simultaneously away from and back into animality" (166). That is, in their warnings against the dangers of degeneration at home (both from inner-city squalor and the effeminising tendencies of upper-class indolence, or of civilisation more generally), these texts proclaim the restorative benefits of manly adventure in the imperial setting. Leaving behind the degenerating or "transforming bodies of the urban poor" and aiming for "a re-entry into a truly wild ecology" (166), the heroes of these novels flee what can only be described as one manifestation of this unitary "savage selfhood" at home in search of another manifestation of the same selfhood in the colonial space.

This notion of a singular "savage selfhood" around which imperial romance pivots is highly problematic as regards evolutionary colonialism because it is said to encompass everything from the

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[12] See Manias (2015) for what he calls the "problematic construction of 'Palaeolithic Man'" at this time.

urban poor at home to savages in the colonial sphere, while also covering the re-invigorated hero and his reclamation of a "primal evolutionary inheritance", which itself consists of a Heideggerian "dwelling" in a primal landscape in combination with an "enthusiasm for violence beyond scientific or dietary necessity" (166).[13] The picture is further complicated if Lang's and Stevenson's claims are included because the "savage selfhood" must also incorporate the deeply-submerged primitiveness of the reader. The issue is not with the substance of Miller's argument; as he demonstrates, each of these elements is at play in many examples of the imperial romance – as indeed many of them are in prehistoric fiction. Rather, it is the unity of the "savage selfhood" that is problematic, the notion that these various forms of primitiveness can be unified in a single concept. Given that pf and romance circle many of the same issues, it seems more likely that, in combination, they negotiate between various grades and shades of primitiveness which necessarily exist in a hierarchical relation.

The Primitivenesses of the Critical Reception of the Romance Revival

Among the most influential accounts of late nineteenth-century romance literature is Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness* (1988), the book in which he set the parameters for the so-called imperial Gothic, a cultural mood with a range of more particular expressions. Imperial Gothic texts are preoccupied with "the ease with which civilization can revert to barbarism or savagery" and, further, with "the weakening of Britain's imperial hegemony" (229-30). Of imperial Gothic's three main themes ("individual regression or going native; an invasion of civilization by the forces of barbarism or demonism; and the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world" [230]), the first two are about negotiating the relation of the present to the past, about the "regression" of the present towards a primitive past.[14] This is of course what makes it

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[13] For an illuminating account of "dwelling", see chapter six of Garrard (2004, pp. 108-135).
[14] As can be seen from note 4, above, as regards *Heart of Darkness* Brantlinger's third theme is also about the relation of the past and the present. In attempting to leave historic time for what he considers to be prehistoric time, Kurtz is moving

Gothic in the first place. In contrast, other approaches to the romance revival focus more, like

Fredric Jameson, on the future, on how these texts influenced emergent literary, cultural and social

trends.[15] Nicholas Daly, for example, is critical of "the invention of a Gothic tradition" in the late

nineteenth century (2000: 15) and, rather than what he would call allegories of anxiety, he argues

instead that the novels of the romance revival are "allegories of the future" (35). In place of the

Gothic interpretation, Daly argues that the romance revival was a narrative negotiation of increasing

modernity. He reads Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), for example, as a story about how a group of

professional men overcome a common problem. The novel thus negotiates increasing

professionalisation, as well as the emergence of a bourgeois culture of ever-narrower expertise –

which later finds a literary expression in the allusive and opaque style of modernism. The critical

focus thus shifts from Dracula to the team of men who subdue him. While Dracula is still

representative of anxiety, the anxiety itself is not as open-ended as it would be were it read in

Gothic terms: Dracula is defeated, the anxiety he represents is resolved through narrative, and the

novel leads on to the future. Interestingly, however, for Daly Dracula represents egoism. "Part of the

novel's ideological programme", he writes, "is the abnegation of simple self-interest", which is "a

vice of the generation/social formation that is displaced by the new professionals" (41). Daly's

reading of the novel, that is to say, frames it as a Meredithian defence of society (albeit by narrative

means) against a Dracula cast as the "ultimate egoist, or ego-maniac" (42).[16]

Here, then, it seems that Daly and Brantlinger are effectively making the same point. Whether the

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into a sphere in which heroism – the heroism of the pf hero – is possible.

[15] The fundamental difference between these two broad trends is one of historiography; it concerns the degree to which individual critics accept the reality of the so-called "great divide" between popular and modernist literature. For me, the idea of a hard and fast break between literatures of the same time and place is deeply suspect. What is more significant here, though, is that both perspectives often rely in some way on a very similar notion of primitiveness.

[16] The narrative element of this is intriguing inasmuch as it is anti-Meredithian, even while the wider project of defending society is itself Meredithian. Meredith's style is often so difficult that it almost entirely halts narrative progression and, if narrative is "human-shaped" and human-shaping, then his disrupted narrative prevents the inadvertent creation of the "purer"; it leads to disrupted humans, as it were.

romance revival is principally about coming to terms with the past or with the future, in each case

the novels of this moment circulate around one form or another of primitiveness; each one's

particular form of primitiveness is likewise a threat to society and civilisation. In Brantlinger's reading,

primitiveness is something that has returned from the past, whereas in Daly's it is something that

must be left behind in moving towards the future. Ultimately, in the name of stability and/or

progress, primitiveness needs to be either controlled, as in Brantlinger, or expunged, as in Daly – the

same dichotomy that is evident when romance and pf are taken together, as in Andrew Lang's

example. Turning finally to *Heart of Darkness*, then, it is between Daly's and Brantlinger's accounts –

rather, in yet another example of parallactic space, between the backward- and forward-looking

accounts – of the romance revival that my reading of Kurtz is located. Conrad's novel is about the

emergence into the present of an implanted past that is very much geared – maniacally so – towards

the future.

Heart of Darkness is haunted by the Victorian conception of the evolutionary human and of how it

supposedly brought about the (Victorian) present, which was itself dominated by Empire – where

the same, or at least a similar, story was being played out. Rather than being haunted by some

generic or stable notion of human primitiveness, that is to say, Conrad's novel is haunted by its own

society's construction and conceptualisation of the European evolutionary human. Kurtz, like

Dracula in Daly's reading, is a rampant egoist after the Meredithian fashion: while his "soul was

mad", his "intelligence was perfectly clear – concentrated, it is true, upon himself with horrible

intensity, yet clear" (144). Like the berserker soldier from the earlier part of this chapter, however,

he is striving towards a goal; like the pf hero, he is attempting to engineer the future. He has, in his

own words, "immense plans" (143) for bringing civilisational advance to the backward "wilderness"

of the Congo and to its "savage" inhabitants. To the extent, then, that Kurtz is, as Brantlinger argues,

an evolutionary "backslider" and "white savage" (1988: 39), he has slid back to something very

similar to the future-orientated heroism of the pf hero, which is to say that his particular form of

savagery is a product of evolutionary colonialism; he is a reasoning egoist and Meredithian "purer", effectively an evolutionary hero turned "most dangerous of delusions" in a contemporary, historical (as opposed to prehistoric) setting. *Heart of Darkness* is not about the threat of civilisation slipping backwards, but instead concerns the ultimate logic and trajectory of a civilisation that is founded on the biopolitical exploits of evolutionary heroes. In short, it is about the dialectic of early pf's evolutionism and the atrocious implications of evolutionary colonialism and a berserker European primitiveness.

Time, Space, and Atrocity; *Heart of Darkness* as Prehistoric Fiction and Kurtz as a Pf Hero

Having established in a general sense that Kurtz's primitiveness is far closer to that of the pf hero and the berserker soldier than it is to that of the hapless Selk'nam, and that it is therefore a product of evolutionary colonialism, the remainder of this chapter will be given over to an analysis of the various commonalities shared by Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the examples of early prehistoric fiction which have been the focus of a large part of this thesis. Broadly, then, the discussion will therefore shift from the source and nature of Kurtz's primitiveness to the character and location of its expression. Following this, the final section of the chapter will return to pf's dialectic of evolutionism, setting out the ultimate consequences of the pf account of human evolutionary history. To the extent that there is a tension here between Kurtz as essence and trajectory, it should be remembered that he is both an implanted pf hero and the ultimate result of the pf account of human evolutionary history. He is the evolutionary ideal guiding the process of human development towards itself.

In 'An Image of Africa' (1977) Chinua Achebe famously described Joseph Conrad as "a bloody racist" (788), and criticised him for painting Africa in *Heart of Darkness* as "a place where a man's vaunted

intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (783), and as a place

reduced to mere background "for the breakup of one petty European mind" (788). It is difficult to

disagree with Achebe's basic claim that Africans in the novel are dehumanised and that Africa itself

is therefore effectively devoid of human interest, even though the novel does also contain some

famous denunciations of the imperial project – as least, that is, of the non-British imperial project.

Indeed, the spirit of Achebe's critique forms the basis of my analysis of *Heart of Darkness*, though

the discussion of whether or not Conrad was a racist falls outside its remit. Instead, what is

important for my purposes is the observation that Africa in *Heart of Darkness* is presented as

"triumphantly bestial", that it is equivalent, in Marlow's words, to "a prehistoric earth" and that its

human population are equivalent to "prehistoric men" (105). The claim that there is a degree of

affinity between Conrad's novel and much of prehistoric fiction, in fact, is based on the

contemporary assumption, widely held, that non-Europeans occupied developmental rungs

equivalent to far earlier stages of European biocultural evolution. This of course meant that they

were seen as being temporally adrift in the Victorian present. The "colonial journey into the virgin

interior", Anne McClintock writes, is repeatedly "figured as proceeding forward in geographical

space but backward in historical time", and this is no less the case for *Heart of Darkness* (1995: 30,

66). The spatio-temporal indeterminacy this assumption accords to colonial places is neatly captured

in McClintock's notion of "anachronistic space". Rather like Kimberley Jackson's account of the

"abhistorical" in Arthur Machen's fiction (see previous chapter), the inhabitation of anachronistic

space by non-Europeans takes them outside of history and progress. They become instead

temporally – and thus developmentally – static, occupying "a permanently anterior time within the

geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans, atavistic, irrational, bereft of

human agency - the living embodiment of the archaic 'primitive'" (McClintock: 30). The connection

between early pf and *Heart of Darkness*, then, rests on Conrad's (or Marlow's or the frame narrator's)

presentation of Africa as anachronistic and "permanently anterior": for the novel to be considered in

relation to pf at all, it has to take place, in some sense, in the evolutionary past.

In this, however, there is an obvious danger of accepting the racist assumptions that made it possible, in the nineteenth century, to consider the Congo as being somehow outside normal time. Clearly, this is not the intention here. Rather, the argument is that, in the text, the Congo is *represented* as anachronistic space – as being stuck in a prior evolutionary time – and that this has important implications for any reading of Kurtz and his crimes. It is this, in fact, that allows us to view Kurtz, both on his own and Marlow's terms, as a pf hero – as, apparently, an innately superior being committing violent atrocities in the name of progress and civilisation. It is important to note, however, that while the pf heroes discussed in chapter two were guilty of evolutionary colonialism, Kurtz is not. True, Marlow's representation of Africa as an anachronistic space certainly does allow Kurtz's actions to be interpreted as such; however, this would also be to accept the notion that Africa actually is, or was, anachronistic, and that Africans actually are, or were, representatives of an earlier phase of human evolutionary development. While Kurtz is definitely a colonialist, then, he is not an evolutionary colonialist; it is more that his brand of colonialism – a particularly violent expression of the civilising mission – seems to be underpinned by the same assumptions as evolutionary colonialism, and is certainly framed in a similar way.[17] The point is therefore to try and understand how his peculiar form of colonialism is related, in various ways, to the evolutionary colonialism of early pf's heroes. I am thus less interested in locating evolutionary colonialism in *Heart of Darkness* than I am in locating and analysing the *effects* of evolutionary colonialism (from pf and elsewhere) on our understanding of Kurtz and his atrocities. In short, rather than re-enacting the evolutionary colonialism of early pf, Kurtz and his crimes can be seen, in part, as a consequence of early pf's misreading of the deep time of human evolutionary history, of the narrative interpretation of that history.

One important difference between *Heart of Darkness* and early pf is the narrating situation, and this

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[17] This is certainly not to say that evolutionary colonialism came first, and somehow supplied the intellectual support for colonialism proper; but only that, following the establishment of human antiquity and evolution, these two forms of colonialism fed each other in interesting ways.

has a bearing on the nature of time in the novel. With the exception of Henry Curwen's *Zit and Xoe*, the pf narratives examined in chapter two have omniscient, third-person narrators who tell stories of events that apparently took place many thousands or hundreds of thousands of years ago. Marlow, in contrast, is a first-person narrator who has a role in the story he is telling, which is to say that he occupies the same time and space as Kurtz. Curwen's novel is the most like *Heart of Darkness* in this regard: Zit is a first person narrator who tells the story of his own life, and can therefore safely be said to have occupied the same time and space as himself. Nevertheless, Marlow is again different in that, rather than himself and his own life, his principal object of interest is Kurtz.[18] The fact that Marlow is of the same time and space as his object is important, and impacts upon the manner in which Kurtz seems to exceed pf heroes in violence and atrocity. In many ways, Conrad's novel may be viewed as a slowed-down pf narrative, as a more granular exploration of the hero's milieu. Where pf is overwhelmingly concerned with rapid progress through time, *Heart of Darkness* is a more ponderous or, as it were, spatial examination of the hero's deeds and misdeeds.

In his operations as investigator and narrator Marlow is effectively slowing time down, or rather he is slowing the speed at which time can be represented, and is thereby changing its quality. Despite all such claims that he and the "pilgrims" from the Company were "wanderers on a prehistoric earth" (105), by piecing together and documenting Kurtz's story from various witnesses Marlow is historicising what he apparently considers to be prehistoric time, an undifferentiated form of time which by definition must go un-narrated. Kurtz's is a documented story, complete with facts and figures from people like the accountant of the Outer Station who abstracts Kurtz's actions in order that they can be better represented as "correct entries" in a ledger (84). Historical time, by its nature, is more circumscribed than prehistoric time; there is simply more detail, more information to be

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[18] It could equally be argued that Marlow is the principal object of the anonymous frame narrator, but for the sake of ease I will continue to refer to Marlow as the narrator. Incidentally, the frame narrator seems to see in Marlow's attempt to focus solely on Kurtz "the weakness of many tellers of tales who seem so often unaware of what their audience would best like to hear".

taken into consideration and therefore to slow the pace at which the time can be traversed in either fictional or historical narrative – less anachronistic space than spatial temporality, as it were. It might be said that pf narrators do precisely the same thing. Marlow, however, is different in that he is a first-hand witness rather than someone with an unexplained knowledge of the lives of individuals who lived hundreds of thousands of years ago. Though the operations of the two groups are largely the same, the difference is that Marlow historicises what he sees as prehistoric time, whereas a pf narrator is only able to chronicle or romanticise it. The quality of the time that results is very different in each case: one renders Kurtz in heroic tones, the other criminal. In any case, the assumption that it takes the presence and activities of a European (whether Kurtz or Marlow, or indeed any of the thousands of other employees of the Company) to make history out of otherwise undifferentiated time is highly questionable, and rather proves the veracity of Achebe's objections. Even while implicitly requiring history to begin with a white European, though, Marlow's investigation nevertheless undermines the whole notion that the Congo is somehow outside the main run of world time.[19] At any rate, viewing *Heart of Darkness* in its relation to prehistoric fiction leads to the interpretation that Marlow is following in the wake of the pf hero, that his account of Kurtz's actions can be seen as something like a contemporary, critical examination of the pf hero's civilising mission and the methods he employs.

Kurtz's Innate Superiority and the Civilising Mission; or Humanisation and Biopolitics

A gifted writer and painter, by far the most effective ivory collector in the region, and possessing an

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[19] See Barrows (2011) for a recent examination of the influence of the 1884 Prime Meridian Conference on colonial administration. Barrows argues that the standardisation of world time – the principal outcome of the conference – facilitated more efficient control by the European powers over their colonies. Interestingly, the Prime Meridian Conference took place at roughly the same time (October 1884) as the Berlin Conference on West Africa, the famous conference at which the "scramble for Africa" was codified as international policy.

ability to bend people to his will, Kurtz is categorically superior to those around him, both African and European alike. "Whatever he was", says Marlow,

> he was not common. He had the power to charm or frighten rudimentary souls into an aggravated witch-dance in his honour; he could also fill the small souls of the pilgrims with bitter misgivings: he had one devoted friend at least, and he had conquered one soul in the world that was neither rudimentary nor tainted with self-seeking. No; I can't forget him (124)

Just as the pf hero is always already the highest expression of European humanity, Kurtz is hailed by everyone as a "universal genius" (95, 152) set for a glittering career. Indeed, Marlow's remark on "the lofty frontal bone of Mr Kurtz" (121) recalls the manner in which the superiority of Fair-Hair and Ab was similarly marked on their heads and faces.[20] According to the accountant of the Outer Station, Kurtz is "a very remarkable person" and will go "very far" in the Company (84, 85). Similarly, for the aristocratic brickmaker of the Central Station, Kurtz is "a prodigy", "an emissary of pity and science and progress" and a "special being" who also happens to be getting in the way of his own ambitions to manage ivory stations and climb up the ranks of the Company (92).

The scene in which Marlow talks with the brickmaker is itself quite interesting in this regard because their shared inability to get their work done stands in marked contrast to the unrelenting "efficiency" of Kurtz at his work – at least, that is, until he falls ill. With his steamboat broken down and stuck in the "primeval mud" of the Central Station, Marlow falls into conversation with the brickmaker (94). In this "primeval forest", the vegetation "was like a rioting invasion of soundless life, a rolling wave

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[20] The connection between advancement and the head and face is also evident in *Lord Jim*, in the contrast between the expressionless but highly communicative face of the French Lieutenant and Jim's inability to control his facial expressions. Indeed, following, to some extent, Charles Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), and in contrast to early pf, there is a strain in nineteenth-century thought that equates greater wisdom and civilisation with a less demonstrative face. Aside from *Lord Jim*, this same idea is to be found in Edward Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871) – where the faces of the super-evolved subterranean humans, the Vril-ya, are mostly expressionless and are often described as resembling marble statues. It is also present in H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898), in which the 'more evolved' Martians have no face and therefore no expressions. Jack London's novel *Adventure* (1911) also contains a chapter entitled 'A Discourse on Manners', in which the British protagonist David Sheldon, addressing his two less-civilised, American listeners, extols the virtues of keeping expressions off one's face as much as possible. Finally, in his notion of 'countenance control' as a political tool, similar ideas are evident in George Meredith.

of plants, piled up, crested, ready to topple over the creek, to sweep every little man of us out of his little existence" (94, 98). Faced with this environment, it is only really Kurtz who has been able to carry out his work to any kind of standard. In spite of Marlow's evident antipathy for the brickmaker, they are both in a similar position: the brickmaker isn't making bricks, and the steamboat captain isn't captaining a steamboat. The problem for the brickmaker is a lack of "adequate tools" and "intelligent men", in combination with a general "physical impossibility in the way" (95-6). For his part, Marlow needs rivets to fix his steamboat; despite their abundance "down at the coast", in the "immensity" of the interior "there wasn't one rivet to be found where it was wanted" (96). Thus, while Marlow and the brickmaker have been halted by physical impossibilities and the "rioting" wilderness, Kurtz is rioting in the wilderness and "send[ing] in as much ivory as all the other [agents] put together" (84). Rather than being slowed or stopped by this challenging, "primeval" environment, Kurtz pushes at the boundary between it and himself, expanding his self outward at its expense. There is, at least for a time, no "physical impossibility" that can prevent this "gifted creature" (120) from carrying out his work.

Kurtz's innate superiority finds expression in his work, in his growing control over animals and the environment; he "raided the country" and, as the Company's most effective ivory agent, he presumably killed a large number of elephants as well (131).[21] His superiority is further evident in his attempt to bring those around him to a higher level of development. Following his oft-quoted claim in the opening scene of the novel that, in the Roman era, Britain was "one of the dark places of the earth" (67), Marlow distinguishes between the activities of the Romans in Britain and those of Europeans in Africa and elsewhere. For their part, the Romans "were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more". They were simply "conquerors, and for that you want only brute force" (69). What makes contemporary Europeans different (and,

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[21] It is interesting to note that Kurtz also seems to have mastery over what is referred to as "fossil" ivory. The only criterion for this designation is that it be dug up, which to say that it doesn't have to have been, say, mammoth ivory. Still, the suggestion that Kurtz dominates both present and past is noteworthy in the context of this thesis.

presumably, what also makes them genuine "colonists") is "efficiency, the devotion to efficiency" and, more importantly, the civilising mission, the "idea" lying behind their actions (69).

The ideology of the civilising mission provided, at least for a time, the intellectual underpinnings of British colonial expansion, or the "idea" behind it.[22] A politically liberal philosophy, it is often associated with the writings of the great liberal theorist, John Stuart Mill.[23] Broadly, in Mill's work the civilising mission was a justification for imperialism – rather, imperialism was justified by the supposed inability of non-Euro-American peoples to govern themselves according to the rule of law, as opposed to custom or family bonds etc. According to Jahn, this assumption was based on Mill's philosophy of history, which held that "the history of humankind is essentially a history of cultural [or] civilisational development" (601). However, rather than passing inevitably through the successive phases of this development, peoples and nations are often unable to progress without being helped or compelled to do so by outside agencies. Some phases of human development, that is to say, require more advanced societies to provide what Duncan Bell terms "a combination of incentives and coercion" (2007: 13).

In the case of King Leopold II of Belgium's brutal reign over the Congo Free State, which of course provides the historical backdrop for *Heart of Darkness*, the civilising mission ended in horror. This vast territory was, until 1908, Leopold's "personal fief, free of oversight from the Belgian parliament" (Jones 2011: 70) because they initially refused to provide the funds for its acquisition, though they later took it over following international outrage as news of the atrocities committed there became public. Instead, Leopold had gained possession of this land through diplomatic and political manoeuvring, as well as the prior positioning of the International African Association. Free from

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[22] See Bell (2007) for more on how the civilising mission played a lesser role in British foreign policy as the century wore on. However, it is clear from texts like Rudyard Kipling's 'White Man's Burden' (1899) that the notion of bringing civilisational advance to the dark places of the world remained a powerful one until at least the turn of the century. Further, as Beate Jahn (2005) makes clear, Mill's liberalism is still highly influential today.

[23] In the brief discussion of Mill's philosophy that follows, I owe much to Jahn (2005, particularly pp. 601-04).

oversight and under the banner of the civilising mission, in bringing light to this dark place Leopold's

regime extracted "Ivory, gold, rubber and an array of minerals [...] along with millions of lives"

(Eichstaedt 2011: 1). In pursuing what Marlow would describe as "efficiency", it also made a

commodity of the severed hands of native Congolese, which were used to cover the shortfall in

rubber quotas. Although the figure is disputed, Adam Hochschild argues that around ten million

Congolese people were killed under Leopold's rule (1999: 233).

This, then, is the kind of environment in which Kurtz is operating, and it is in the ideology of the

civilising mission that the connection between evolutionary colonialism and colonialism proper is

clearest. The close relation between Kurtz's activities in "anachronistic space" and early prehistoric

fiction's biopolitical management of human evolutionary history is most evident in the mechanics of

the so-called civilising mission. What early pf's heroes did to their more primitive neighbours in the

name of evolutionary development, Kurtz is doing to contemporary Africans in the name of progress,

what Marlow's aunt describes as "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" (76).

"[E]quipped with moral ideas of some sort", Kurtz came to the Congo seeking to bring the savages to

a higher level of evolutionary or cultural development (99). However, where the pf hero performs

his civilising role unknowingly – that is, was said to have performed it after the fact by a narrator –

Kurtz self-consciously adopted it. Indeed, it is his stated mission – at least it was, prior to or shortly

after his arrival. Thus the pamphlet he wrote for the International Society for the Suppression of

Savage Customs, which was to serve "for its future guidance", is an "eloquent" and "beautiful"

expression of the civilising mission (123). In Marlow's account, Kurtz had argued that "we whites"

could, "by the simple exercise of our will", "exert a power for good practically unbounded" (123). In

another snippet, the manager of the Central Station and his uncle complain of Kurtz's belief that

"Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course,

but also for *humanising*, improving, instructing" (102, emphasis added).

In certain crucial respects, *Heart of Darkness* is very similar to the examples of prehistoric fiction discussed over the course of this thesis. The construction of the Congo as "anachronistic space" means that, on its own terms, the novel appears to take place in the evolutionary past, while as regards essence, function, methods, and purpose Kurtz is very similar to pf heroes like Ab and Ugh-lomi.[24] A categorically superior individual who attempts, while operating in what is effectively human evolutionary history, to "humanise" and "improve" his apparently inferior neighbours, Kurtz is a Great Man of the pf tradition. And his methods are similarly violent. Indeed, the marginalia he "scrawled" on his pamphlet – "Exterminate the brutes!" (124) – reveals the shared and deeply violent subtext of his own and early pf's attempts to bring progress and civilisation; this is humanisation via the anthropological machine. The name of the society for which Kurtz wrote the pamphlet is particularly interesting in this light because, in its suggestion of progress via the "suppression of savage customs", it does recall the operation of Agamben's machine (see chapter two) and thus seems to foreshadow the horrors of Kurtz's ivory-gathering activities. As in the case of Leopold's wider regime, Kurtz's personal civilising mission, what he calls "my plans" and "my ideas" (138), ends in depraved violence – as with, for example, the human heads on stakes outside his compound.

Perhaps the principal difference between Kurtz on the one hand and the pf heroes on the other is that the latter group, along with their partners, were lone pioneers. In contrast, Kurtz has a massive colonial administration behind him, which is itself backed by a powerful, Europe-wide ideology: as Marlow says, "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (123). Nevertheless, it seems that Kurtz is actively trying to distance himself from this larger setup. This, in fact, is what happens when Marlow hears of an incident that somehow allows him to see and understand Kurtz "for the first time". Three hundred miles into his journey back to the Central Station with a large load of ivory,

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[24] See Dryden (2015) for a recent examination of the relationship between Wells and Conrad at the turn of the century.

Kurtz "turns his back suddenly on the headquarters, on relief, on thoughts of home" and "sets his face towards the depths of the wilderness, towards his empty and desolate station" (101). In doing so, he becomes more like a lone pioneer of early pf, a figure operating in a chaotic "wilderness" and attempting, with considerable success, to bend it to his will: "as a rule Kurtz wandered alone, far in the depths of the forest" and, "To speak plainly, he raided the country" (131).

At the same time, this means that Kurtz is attempting to bring history to prehistory, or to bring anachronistic space into the present. This is what the civilising mission amounts to. In trying to distance himself from the Company and become something of a lone pioneer in the anachronistic "wilderness", Kurtz is effectively trying to escape the history that he and the Company, by their presence and their actions, have apparently brought to what they had considered to be prehistoric time.[25] However, this flight from history back towards prehistory necessarily entails a future attempt to bring history to the newly-discovered prehistory. Again, this is what the civilising mission is all about. Kurtz seeks space (in the form of prehistoric time) for his heroic deeds, meanwhile his heroic deeds, by their very nature, are an attempt to historicise prehistory. Kurtz always seeks to operate in prehistoric time, even while his aim is to bring history – in the form of progress and civilizational advance. There is thus a grim inevitability at the heart of Kurtz's and, by extension, early pf's project of biopolitically managing the course of human development: in each case, progress is defined as historicising prehistory by heroic means, whereupon it degenerates into a relentless pursuit of 'prehistory' or, which is the same thing, a ceaseless invasion of "anachronistic space". Ultimately, the project seems to lead ineluctably to atrocity, not least because anachronism and prehistory are entirely relative concepts.

[25] Following Patrick Brantlinger, this idea is also related to one of the three principal themes of imperial Gothic – the belief that there is no longer any scope for heroism in the modern world.

Conclusion

In Patrick Brantlinger's analysis, Kurtz can be charged with "going native" and by doing so, Brantlinger argues, he "betrays the civilising ideals with which supposedly he set out from Europe" (1988: 261). To the extent, however, that they are comparable to the "civilising ideals" evinced in early prehistoric fiction, those Kurtz seems to have brought with him to the "anachronistic" Congo were always already ferociously violent. In pf, these same ideals amount to nothing less than the eugenic management of the evolutionary development of *Homo,* often finding particular expression in the removal of the apparently subhuman from the human line. In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz's maniacal search for prehistoric time to which he can then bring history follows a similar pattern. Indeed, if the pf model is the one by which Great Men get progress done, it is hardly surprising that Kurtz, the "grimy fragment of another world, the forerunner of change, of conquest, of trade, of massacres, of blessings", should operate in a similar manner (147). Rather than betraying seemingly lofty ideals, then, Kurtz has carried the pf model of the "civilising mission" to its logical conclusion. He and his atrocities are the logical conclusion.

In an aside to his listeners aboard the *Nellie*, Marlow says of Kurtz that he had "taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land":

> 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 warning voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion? These little things make all the great difference (122)

In anachronistic space – rather, in what is construed as anachronistic space – the implanted primitiveness that results from evolutionary colonialism is free from the restraining influence of "public opinion" and the policeman, or the law. Thus "untrammelled" in "the first ages", the

evolutionary primitiveness of the pf hero, which is marked by the aggressive application of reason to the problem of progress, what Marlow describes as "the devotion to efficiency", is free to emerge and set to work. Kurtz has not gone native as Brantlinger would have it – in the sense that he has slipped the bonds of civilisation and is now behaving like the Congolese. Instead, he has "gone native" in the sense that he is now behaving like the exemplary European his peers always knew him to be – the evolutionary ideal responsible for European civilisation as such.

This argument of course has many implications for the discussion about the racism or anti-racism of Conrad's novel. For example, it brings into doubt claims along the lines of Brantlinger's that "Evil, in short, *is* African in Conrad's story; if it is also European, that is because some white men in the heart of darkness behave like Africans" (1988: 262, original emphasis). As discussed above in relation to Chinua Achebe's critique, it would be foolish to deny that there are racist elements in *Heart of Darkness;* in some of its details, Kurtz's primitiveness does share something with that of the native Africans in the text. In essence rather than representation, however, his primitiveness is European and it reveals the cultural impact of the establishment of human antiquity and evolution, and ultimately of accounts of (European) human evolutionary history along lines similar to those of early pf. Kurtz has no African counterpart, nor could he, as the Congolese are capable only of ineffective "frenzy" – despite their best efforts, they are unable to repel the advance of Marlow's steamer (105). They are closer to the Selk'nam than they are to the berserker soldier, the pf hero and, ultimately, to Kurtz himself. While western primitiveness is violent and world-forming, savage primitiveness is static and ineffective; an inheritance from the pf hero, 'ours' tends towards improvement, whereas 'theirs' tends nowhere.

In the essay 'Niggers' (1925 [1899]), in which he lambastes Britain's inflated sense of its own greatness and the ideology that supports it, R. B. Cunninghame Graham distinguishes, with arch irony, between the imperial essence of the British and the apparent haplessness of all other 'races',

including Africans, for example, who are "such a kind of men that they are hardly to be held as men at all" (176).[26] Thus, to the extent that the British think of themselves as the race "perhaps intended, from the beginning, to rule mankind" (171), the ultimate result is a colonial ideology: "Their land is ours, their cattle and their fields, their houses ours; their arms, their poor utensils, and everything they have; their women, too" (176).[27] Although his principal frame of reference is the biblical rather than the evolutionary creation story (the "Stone Age" is mentioned, however), the distinction Cunninghame Graham makes between British primitiveness – or that which was there "from the beginning" – and "hardly"-human African primitiveness is the same as the one I have been making over the course of this chapter. In *Heart of Darkness,* the differences between the assumed primitivenesses of Kurtz, on the one hand, and of the native Congolese on the other play out according to the pattern set out by Cunninghame Graham. This is particularly noteworthy given that, at this time (the turn of the century), Conrad and Cunninghame Graham were frequent correspondents, with the latter's radical politics providing Conrad with considerable intellectual stimulation.[28]

This is the dialectic of early pf's evolutionism. While rationalising and narrating the newly-revealed deep time of (European) human evolutionary history, early prehistoric fiction neglected to look at the consequences for the human that would ultimately result. Thus Kurtz is exactly what is to be expected; atrocity is at the very heart, and is the logical outcome, of pf's account of the human and its development. When *sapiens* heroism enters historical time, it becomes, as George Meredith said, "the most dangerous of delusions". Nevertheless, it should be remembered that Kurtz ultimately failed. Rather than finding history in Kurtz's wake, it is noteworthy that Marlow, as was mentioned above, only ever seems to find prehistory – which he then goes on to chart and historicise. Following

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[26] Although Africans are the "archetype", in fact the British lump all other races together "as niggers, being convinced that their chief quality is their difference from ourselves" (174).
[27] Thanks to Richard Niland for pointing me towards this essay.
[28] Conrad's letters to Cunninghame Graham are collected in Conrad (1969).

the trail of "beacons on the road towards better things" – that is, following Kurtz up the river Congo, moving through the space that he has apparently historicised – Marlow finds only darkness, and continues to consider himself a "wanderer on a prehistoric earth". Moreover, in spite of his "weirdly voracious aspect", which made it seem "as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him" (136), Kurtz falls ill and ultimately dies. The pf purer, it seems, is ultimately untenable; its voracity masks its misplaced arrogance.

Conclusion

In 1891 the Dutch palaeontologist, Eugène Dubois, discovered the remains of what he called

Pithecanthropus erectus (the upright ape-man, now known as *Homo erectus*) in Trinil, Java. A few

years later, Dubois began touring the learned societies of Europe in the hope of getting his discovery

– rather his own interpretation of his discovery – accepted as fact.[1] He had mixed success, both in

front of his scientific peers and the popular press. For some, in the words of one article in *The*

Standard newspaper, this was "an event of the first importance to the scientific world", being no less

than the discovery of the missing link itself ('The Story of a Missing Link', 15th June 1896). Others,

however, took the same view as a *Glasgow Herald* article from a year before; that Dubois' find was

"indubitably of immense antiquity" but "considerable doubt" had been "thrown on its discoverer's

conclusions as to its precise nature" as the "so-called Missing Link between man and his 'poor

relations' of the tree-tops" ('Thursday, December 19, 1895', n. p.). No matter what their position on

the question of the missing link, others still were largely uninterested. It seems that, at the end of

the century whose "master dogma" was "the doctrine of evolution" ('Character Sketch: The

Nineteenth Century', December 1900: 536), some people were bored by all talk of what *The Times*

referred to as "our old friend the missing link" ('The Daily Work of the British Association', 19th

September 1896: 7). As another author reflected, Dubois' discovery "fell upon a generation" that

"had lost the heated curiosity in the origin of man so prevalent two or three decades ago", though

they personally were in little doubt about Dubois' achievement: he had drawn a line which "marks

the point where the ape ceases and man commences" ('One of a Past Generation' by 'An Anatomist',

12tt December 1895).

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[1] For more on this, and for an account of Dubois's interesting life, see Shipman (2002).

Among those convinced of the significance of what Dubois had achieved was natural history photographer Gambier Bolton, for whom the discovery marked the culmination of a process started by Linnaeus.[2] For the general public, Bolton contends, apes and monkeys are "creatures generally hideous in appearance, with painfully human-like hands and feet", and a host of "weird" facial or bodily features. In short, they are "a hopeless jumble of the very worst description" (1900: 59). With taxonomic reason, however, "the Scientist" has been able to reduce "this state of chaos to one of perfect order, easily to be understood" by any interested individual (59-60). The article later concludes with Bolton's claim that, thanks to the efforts of Dubois, science has gained the final victory: "the term 'The Missing Link' has been shown to be quite obsolete, and the much more appropriate one, 'The Last Link,' has taken its place", with "the chain between Man and the other mammals being thus completed" (67). For Bolton, the so-called missing link had been a threatening gap in knowledge because it left unexplained the "painfully human-like" characteristics of apes and monkeys; while it was missing, the "chaos" of human-simian resemblance was without explanation or meaning. The discovery of "The Last Link" thus marks the completion of a system of knowledge.

The photographs that accompany Bolton's article are noteworthy for their museum- and zoo-like quality (see Appendix, p. 4-5): there are caged and stuffed apes; chimpanzee, Australian, Melanesian, and European skulls arranged in a linear display; skeletons of a gorilla and a man standing side by side; and a photograph of a living Australian woman bearing the caption "Lowest type of human being (female). From the Perth Museum, W. Australia" (59). Into this progressive, visual account of human evolutionary history is slotted a line drawing of the assumed shape and size of the skull of *Pithecanthropus erectus* – only the skull cap, a tooth and a thigh bone had been unearthed. As Harriet Ritvo has pointed out, in Victorian Britain "captive wild animals" were "simultaneous

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[2] Bolton's photographs, which seem mostly to be of either caged or stuffed animals, now sell for many thousands of pounds at international auctions because he was among the first natural history photographers. See 'Bonhams' (2014) for a photograph of a caged lion entitled 'Majesty', which sold for £7950 in late April 2014.

emblems of human mastery over the natural world and of English dominion over remote territories" (1987: 205). In his photographs, Bolton displays colonised people alongside captive or dead animals and thereby literalises the analogy described by Ritvo. What is of equal note here, however, is the fact that *Pithecanthropus erectus* is also included in the same 'display': "human mastery" over the earth and its inhabitants also extends to the evolutionary history of *Homo*. For Bolton, the "Last Link" filled a threatening gap in systematic knowledge, and thus brought the chaotic "jumble" of human evolutionary history under control, rendering it known and predictable. Just over a decade later, at the 1911 Coronation Exhibition which marked the accession of King George V to the throne, there was a similar case. According to one report, "casts of all the celebrated skulls of our prehistoric ancestors, such as the Neanderthal and Pithecanthropus", were displayed next to or near the menagerie, where big cats, bears, camels, wolves, kangaroos, and a couple of clothed chimpanzees were "scenically housed" in front of "spacious perspectives painted on their walls" ('Coronation Exhibition', 16th May 1911: 7). Like the exotic and dangerous animals, the evolutionary history of *Homo* (or, at least, its only known representatives) had been captured, tamed and catalogued.

Interestingly, Bolton's article appeared just three years after the publication of H. G. Wells's 'A Story of the Stone Age' and Stanley Waterloo's *Story of Ab*. One of the principal effects of early prehistoric fiction, I have argued, was to bring an unruly and hitherto unknown human past to order, and this is essentially the same thing that Bolton is celebrating in his essay. By this time, it seems, the evolutionary history of *Homo* had been fairly conclusively conquered; and Victorian *sapiens'* place at the end, and as the culmination, of that history was similarly assured. Of course, the means employed in each case are very different. As a natural history photographer, for example, Bolton demonstrates a far keener interest in precise taxonomic order than is evident in the early pf texts discussed throughout this thesis. Nevertheless, the ultimate effect is the same. While Dubois' discovery of *Pithecanthropus erectus*, the "last link" in the "chain", brought rational and conclusive

order to what Bolton saw as the evolutionary progression from monkey to Man, the early pf stories discussed throughout this thesis similarly imposed a 'human' order on the evolutionary history of *Homo*. Like Zit's silhouette paintings of Xoe on the rocks surrounding their compound, they imposed 'human' significance on something that was otherwise seen as being devoid of meaning. Where Bolton's newly-completed system in some sense accounted for the time between himself and his compatriots on the one hand, and the tool-makers of Palaeolithic Brixham and the Somme on the other, early pf filled the same stretch of time with narrative. According to Paul Ricoeur's analysis, they brought it under control and rendered it 'human' – to the extent that $Mimesis_1$ (prefiguration) is based on prior knowledge and experience of 'human' behaviour and motivations, it can only refer to *Homo sapiens* for the simple reason that we do not have any knowledge or experience of the behaviour and motivations of other species of human. Even on this most fundamental of levels, then, early pf – and narrative in general – must necessarily have a rather skewed relation to the evolutionary history of *Homo,* and thus to other forms of human being. To the extent that that time is narrated, we are always liable to be left with a *sapiens* account of *Homo* and of our own emergence; it tends inevitably towards evolutionary colonialism. On the other hand, where that time is left untouched by narrative, as it is in the Arthur Machen stories discussed here, we are offered a glimpse of the fundamental alterity of other forms of humanness irreducible to our own.

In its historical context, early pf is a crystallisation – and, indeed, something of a literalisation – of the themes and ideas that arose in the wider antiquity and evolution debate. In this sense, it is also a crystallisation of the nineteenth-century response to the establishment of human antiquity and evolution. As I argued in chapters one and two, early pf combines both the pro- and anti-evolution responses to antiquity – two completely different rationalisations of the establishment of deep human time, one seeking to avoid the possibility of significant human variation over the course of that time, the other seeking to prove and embrace it. (Incidentally, this is just one of the benefits of

examining the nineteenth-century human origins debate, inclusive of early pf, via the perspective antiquity: it allows us to better grasp the influence of those theories and ideas that were raised at the time, but which did not belong to the eventual victors – the evolutionists). From the anti-evolution response to antiquity, early pf got the rather miraculous appearance of inherently superior beings in prehistory, while from the pro-evolution response it got the taxonomic sorting and grading of human types seen in Grant Allen and elsewhere. The result, as we have seen, was the colonisation of human evolutionary history by innately superior beings bent on sorting worthy from unworthy ancestors. If, when applied to the evolutionary history of *Homo*, narrative itself tends inexorably towards evolutionary colonialism, then, in the shape of its heroes, early pf took this a step further by making the process explicit. Although I have been fairly critical of the genre here, there is a sense in which this literalisation of evolutionary colonialism is actually more honest. When examined carefully, the colonial subtext of the narrative account of human evolutionary development can only ever mean the kind of biopolitical management undertaken by the heroes of early pf: when we take over the story of our own emergence, we are effectively telling a story about how the narrated 'we' got rid of everything that didn't quite meet the level of the narrating 'we'. This is the logical outcome of the self-creation fantasy that is the narrative account of human evolution. Further, as I have tried to show, this is a fundamentally violent conception of our emergence and development because it entails the extirpation of other species of human. In any case, the combination of the 'human'-shaping nature of narrative and its literalisation in the pf hero always implied the bloody dialectic of pf's evolutionism

Even before four of the five pf stories listed in chapter two were published, George Meredith had already begun articulating the dangers of the heroic interpretation of human evolutionary history for contemporary society. This is interesting in itself, for it seems to confirm the findings of the historical research conducted as part of this thesis – namely, that these and similar ideas were prevalent at

the time and that they were being articulated in a number of ways. Broadly, there are two elements to Meredith's critique. First, in his poetry, and in novels like *The Egoist* and *Diana of the Crossways*, he explored what he considered to be the bases of egoism, which he associated less with the human's animal inheritance than with its own flint-chipping past. For Meredith, egoism derived from "primeval man", a figure to whom he assigned the "first flint and arrow-head for [a] crest". In similar fashion to early pf, in Meredith's account egoism was ultimately responsible for the establishment of society itself, only now it actively threatened the future of that same society. The second element of Meredith's critique is an extension of the first, in that he warns of the dangers of uncritically celebrating these society-founding evolutionary heroes. These are what he refers to as "purers", the idealised heroes of narrative accounts of human evolutionary development. In combination, these two elements amount to a warning against the dangers of evolutionary colonialism. When we forget that we have accounted for our own emergence by means of heroic narrative, we also forget that the resultant image of our past is a fiction and a product of narrative in the Ricoeurian sense given above. Similarly, we also forget that these heroes are actually expansionist egoists. Thus, when, like the contrarian poets in *The Egoist,* we clamour for a return to the forceful heroism of the evolutionary past, we are invoking the purer, the product of evolutionary colonialism.

In Meredith's case, he was very much interested in the effects of evolutionary colonialism on the domestic front: it is high society figures like Sir Willoughby Patterne and Victor Radnor that he most associates with egoism and the purer. To the extent that the future direction of society is primarily determined by such individuals, it is almost certainly going to be out of step with the new insights of evolutionary theory. While Meredith focused on the domestic sphere, though, in *Heart of Darkness* Joseph Conrad explored the consequences of evolutionary colonialism for the colonial sphere. However, whereas Meredith actually appears to have theorised something very similar to evolutionary colonialism, and appears to have intentionally pursued its implications, Conrad's

treatment of the same issue appears to have been more circumstantial. Given the tension between

historic and prehistoric time in *Heart of Darkness*, and given Kurtz's civilising mission and his innate

superiority, Conrad's novel is a pf narrative almost by default – though it is possible that Conrad had

been exposed to H. G. Wells's 'A Story of the Stone Age' because they were friendly at this time. In

any case, it is Marlow's and Kurtz's movement back and forth between historic and prehistoric time

that exposes the violence lying at the heart of the narrative account of human evolutionary history,

not to mention the violence at the heart of the imperial project itself. Between them, Marlow and

Kurtz effectively historicise what they appear to perceive as prehistoric time, and they thus reveal

the atrocity that early pf chronicled, romanticised, and masked. More than this, however, Conrad's

novel also reveals the dialectic of pf's evolutionism and the ultimate implications of evolutionary

colonialism, something that is only hinted at in Meredith. There are two related aspects to this. First,

given a heroic, narrative interpretation of human evolutionary history, any chipping away of the

layers of apparently effemininsing society implies a return to an assumed evolutionary past, to the

product of evolutionary colonialism. Thus, when Kurtz frees himself from the restraints of civilisation,

he becomes a pf hero; he reverts to the hero's violent, expansionist ways rather than to, say, the

passive habits of the doomed Selk'nam. Secondly, *Heart of Darkness* also reveals the ultimate

trajectory of early pf's biopolitical management of the process of human evolutionary development:

brought into the present, it inevitably implied atrocities like those committed by Kurtz and the

Company.

To the extent that evolutionary colonialism is at least in part a product of the narrative

interpretation of human evolutionary history in itself, then the only way of avoiding it is to refuse to

narrate *Homo*'s passage through time. And this, I argued in chapter four, is precisely what happens

in some of Arthur Machen's short fiction from the *fin-de-siècle.* Like Meredith before him, Machen

seems to have been interested in the potent symbolism of palaeolithic stone tools. The stories

discussed in chapter four demonstrate the ease with which these tools and the very notion of human antiquity itself can be – and were – appropriated into discourses that relate solely to *sapiens,* thus negating the force of what was actually revealed by the establishment of human antiquity and evolution – namely, the fact that the newly-revealed, deep human past was occupied by other species of human, likely with very different ways of being human. In stories like 'The Red Hand' and 'The Shining Pyramid', this realisation is made within a Žižekian parallax gap between the narrative and non-narrative accounts of the history of *Homo.* As such, according to Žižek it implies a change both in the perceiving subject (Dyson and ourselves) and in the object perceived (human evolutionary history). Thus, these stories allow for the possibility of a radically altered interpretation of that same evolutionary history and, consequently, for a radically altered understanding of ourselves as an evolutionary species among others – others both within and outwith the genus *Homo*. In 'The Shining Pyramid', this new interpretation of ourselves was as one species of human among others; and the process of human evolution implied in this and other stories was also lacking the eugenic removal of supposedly inferior species – that is, the other humans in Machen's tales are allowed to live in their own portion of time, without the threat of becoming *sapiens* via the methods of Kurtz and the pf heroes.

The theoretical concerns of this thesis have been focused on the implications of the pf or narrative account of human evolutionary history for our self-conception as an evolutionary species among others, particularly at a time when the relation between human and animal, and human and nature, is one of the most pressing questions of critical discourse. In order to have any hope of properly realigning the human relation to the nonhuman, it is also necessary – perhaps even first necessary – to grasp the full signification of the term 'human' and to accept the expansion of the corresponding category that necessarily follows. As long as 'human' is used to refer only to ourselves, *Homo sapiens*, we fail to acknowledge the full implications of Darwinian evolutionary theory and, indeed, of the

continuous 'human' occupation of deep time. That is to say that we fail to grasp the fundamental

point that 'humanness' has taken many forms, that it is a generic rather than a specific quality, or set

of qualities. Further, it is surely unhealthy to have a simultaneously genocidal and autogenous

understanding of our evolutionary selves, and to consider ourselves as having attained the office of

the human at the expense of the subhuman. It seems clear to me that in the 'humanities' we have

been less open to the full implications of the notion of human evolution. The impact of the

Darwinian shock on Victorian and early-twentieth-century culture has been ably registered but, in

many cases, we have yet to let the same shock reshape our own thought and practice. It is hoped

that the notion of evolutionary colonialism developed over the course of this thesis can help to

address this and related issues.

Quite apart from these theoretical concerns, though, I have sought to bring a greater awareness of

the establishment of human antiquity to Victorian literary studies. As I said in the introduction to the

thesis, this very significant development in Victorian science and thought has received a lot of

attention from historians of science, and from scholars like Chris Manias who assess its impact on

international politics and on competing national identities in Europe. However, the mutual

implications of literature and human antiquity (or what antiquity does for literature and what

literature does for antiquity) have yet to be fully examined. I have tried to give an account of the

impact that the establishment of human antiquity had on literary texts of the nineteenth century,

and also of the impact of literature on our understanding of human antiquity – looking primarily at

how narrative might fundamentally affect our understanding of human evolutionary history.

However, more work is needed in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of the effects the literary

imagination has had, and will continue to have, on the way we perceive ourselves in evolutionary

terms. Moving in to the twentieth century, the impact of the establishment of human antiquity on

modernism remains to be examined. As I have said, significant palaeoanthropological discoveries

continued to be made well beyond the 1920s – indeed, they continue to be made today. One promising avenue for future research might be the underlying union of the philosophical egoism of writers like Wyndham Lewis and Dora Marsden and the magical thinking of others like W. B. Yeats. Though the early-twentieth-century vogue for egoism is closely connected to the translation of Max Stirner's *The Ego and its Own* (1844), it is also true that the turn-of-the-century British understanding of egoism was filtered through Meredith's analysis and is therefore traceable to the establishment of human antiquity. Similarly, in essays like 'Magic' (1901), Yeats considers magical thinking as having been proper to so-called primitive humans. Thus, what are often seen as two opposing strands of modernism actually share a common origin in the response to the establishment of human antiquity and evolution. Indeed, these two strands of modernist art and thought might equally be evidence of evolutionary colonialism, in that the two camps each argue for a reversion to a different kind of primitiveness – one clearly belonging to the pf hero, the other belonging (or, rather, assigned) to non-European peoples who were thought to be more in tune with nature, animals and the environment.[3] This would also seem to add further weight to the recent critical trend of insisting on the close interrelation of popular literature (i.e. early pf) and modernist literature at the turn of the century. In any case, as I hope to have demonstrated, the under-studied establishment of the antiquity of man opens up a number of new areas for future research, both inside and outside Victorian studies. And it further promises to take theoretical discussions surrounding the nature of 'the human' in new and interesting directions.

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[3] Besides Yeats, another good example of an attempted retrieval of this non-pf-hero primitiveness can be found in Henry Gilbert's essay, 'In the Open' (1901), where the retrieval of the "true spirit of the open" (i.e. commune with nature) leads to the claim that "the primitive man is waking" (41).

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Appendix
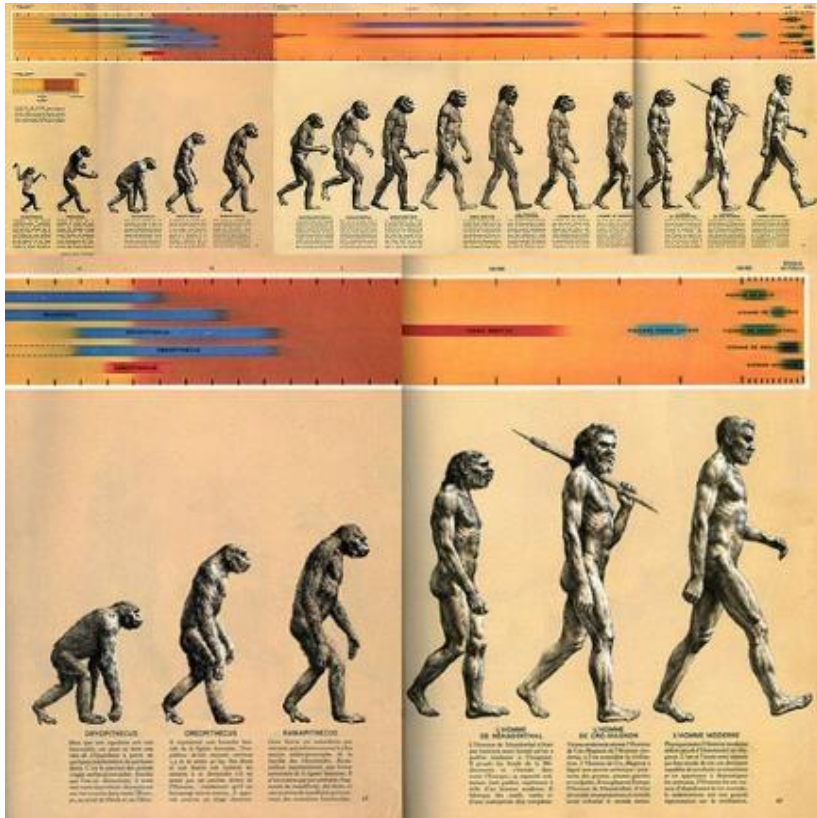
Rudolph Zallinger's 'The March of Progress' (1965), an illustration for F. Clark Howell's *Early Man* (1965).

The illustration folded out of the book. The top third of this reproduction shows the illustration in full, while the bottom two thirds show it in its folded state.
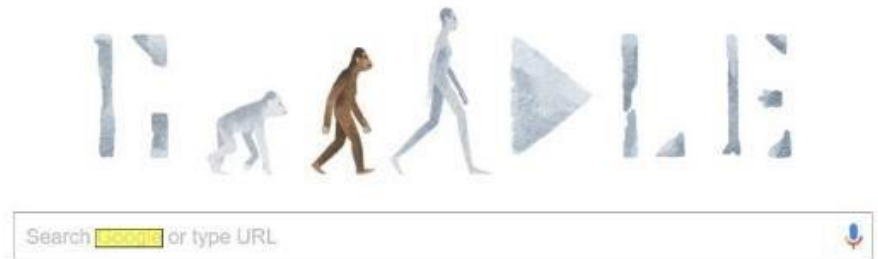

A screenshot of a Google 'Doodle' (27th November 2015) occasioned by the forty-first anniversary of the discovery of 'Lucy', a young female of the species *Australopithecus afarensis*.
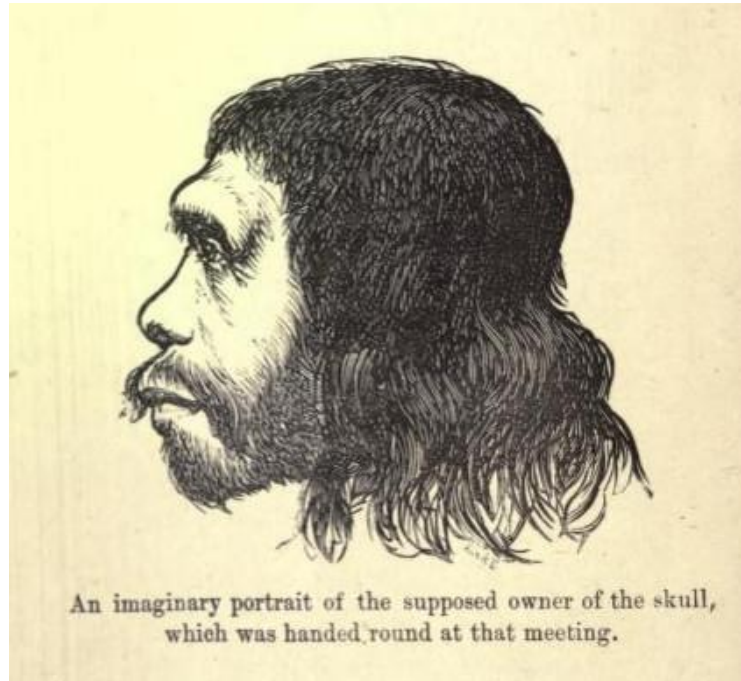
An imaginary portrait of the supposed owner of the skull, which was handed round at that meeting.

Copy of Hermann Schaaffhausen's reconstruction of the living head of the man from the Neanderthal, an image circulated by Schaaffhausen at the 1880 BAAS meeting in Swansea. As cited by the Reverend Bourchier Wrey Savile (1885: 2).
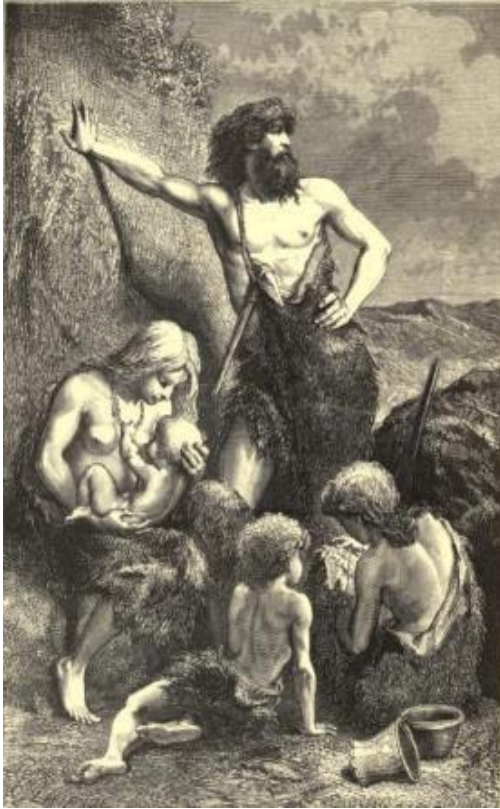
'A Family of the Stone Age'; frontispiece to Louis Figuier's *Primitive Man* (1870).

'Man in the Great Bear and Mammoth Epoch' (Figuier 1870: 52). This image was later used by Elie Berthet as the frontispiece to his *Prehistoric World* (1876) – discussed chapter two.
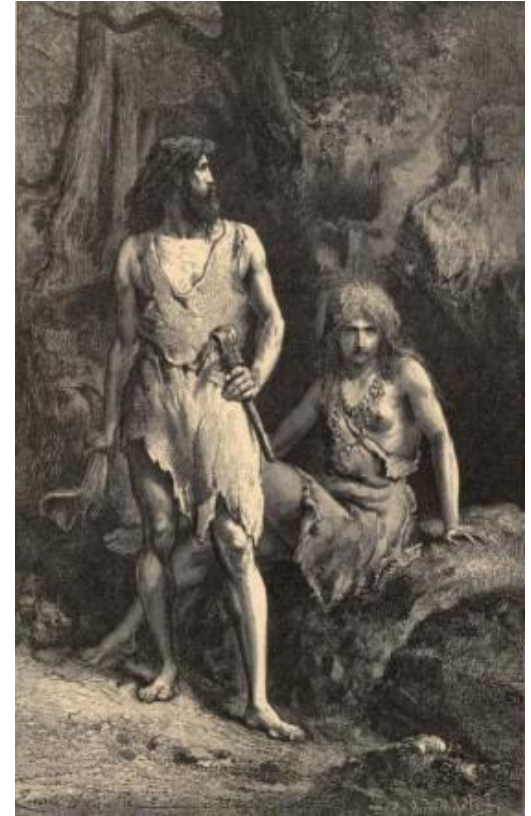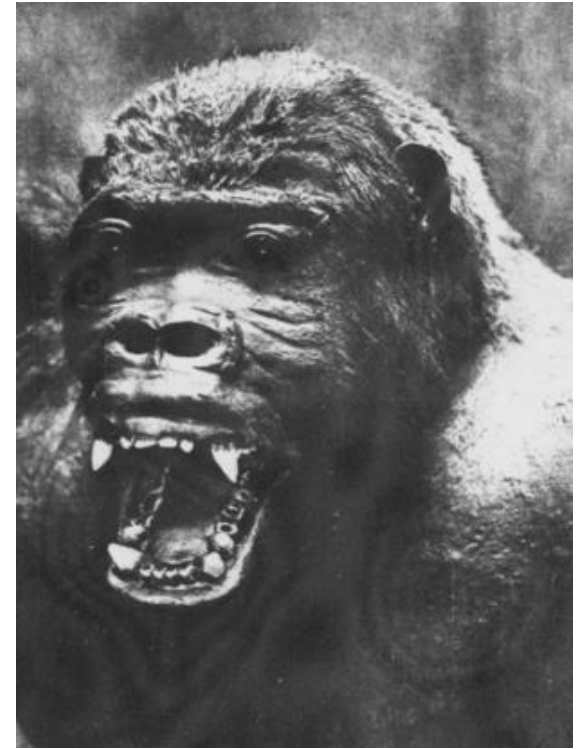

'Man of the Reindeer Epoch' (Figuier: 86)

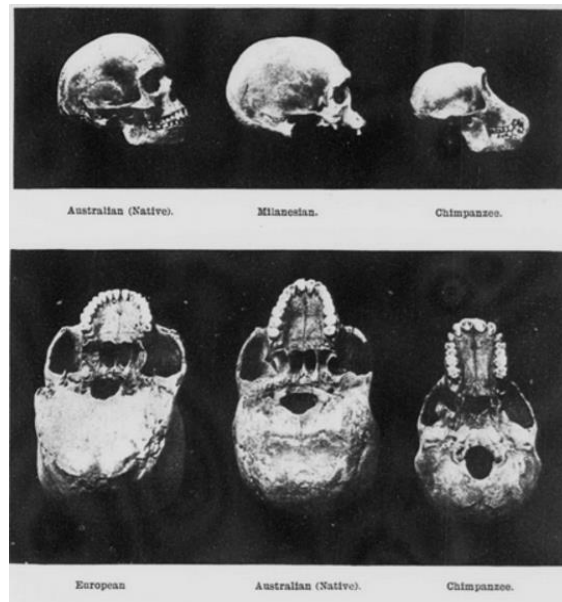'Skeletons of Man and Gorilla'
(Bolton 1900: 57).

'Lowest type of human being (Female.) From
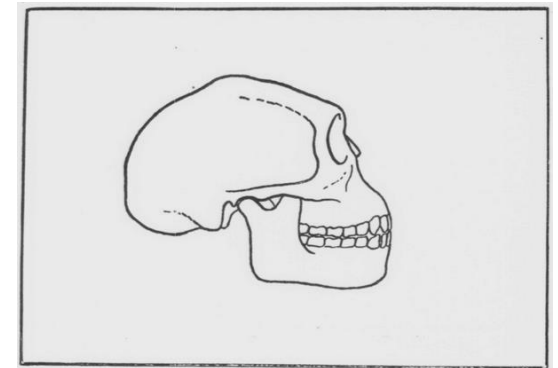the Perth Museum, W. Australia' (Bolton: 59)

'Gorilla' (Bolton: 60)

‘ "Sally" ’ (Bolton: 62). Both in the
caption and in the text, Sally's name is
always presented in quotation mark.

Various human and ape skulls (Bolton: 63)

'Skull of "The Last Link" (restored)' (Bolton: 63)