

## chapter four

# Artificial Humans and the Construction of Race

If this study has succeeded at all in demonstrating how early science fiction articulates the structures of knowledge and power provided by colonialism, then it also will have indicated along the way—for example, in the discussion of lost-race fiction or of London’s “The Red One”—that some of the racism endemic to colonialist discourses is woven into the texture of science fiction. The interdependence and permeability between the fictional narratives and the social discourses and circumstances in which they circulate makes the presence of racism in early science fiction inevitable. In focusing on that presence more directly in this chapter, however, I do not mean to draw up a catalogue of notoriously racist works, nor to describe in greater detail the more or less casual contamination of the fiction by the ideological spirit of the age. Instead, I want to ask how science fiction handles the discourse of race and its attendant contradictions in one of science fiction’s most prominent motifs, the construction of the artificial human.

The prominence during the period from the 1870s to the 1930s of a scientific discourse about race and of powerful, widespread racist ideologies has much to do with colonialism. Historians of modern racist theories usually locate their origins in the colonial slave trade and the massive use of African slaves in colonial agriculture, practices that differed from classical European and earlier African slavery in that the slaves bore the mark of their inferiority permanently and “naturally” on their skins. But as Nancy Stepan remarks at the outset of her study of the idea of race in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the puzzle is why “just as the battle against slavery was being won by abolitionists, the war against racism in European thought was being lost” (1). The growing virulence of racism after British

abolition and American emancipation implies that the concept of race played an ongoing ideological and political role that caused it to outlast its affiliation with slavery in America, in dealing with the effects of the Civil War and in relation to national expansion into the American West, and in Britain, in colonial and imperial management.

Nor did the paradigm shift in early-twentieth-century anthropology—away from accounts of savage societies that integrated them into a universal developmental history, and towards an attempt to understand instead their radical cultural difference—have much immediate effect on undermining racist theories. Although the mitochondrial DNA studies that today show that “there is more genetic variability in one tribe of East African chimpanzees than in the entire human species” (Graves 9) were the eventual outcome of the neo-Darwinian synthesis of evolutionary theory and genetics that began to take shape in the first decades of the twentieth century, the first fruits of the rediscovery of genetics included the eugenicist projects of involuntary sterilization that affected tens of thousands of the racially, mentally, and socially “unfit” in the United States and elsewhere. The Nazi holocaust was unparalleled in its ferocity and its grimly bureaucratic thoroughness, but its quasi-scientific rationalization of its project was far from an isolated phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, it would be difficult to name a concept that troubles the boundaries between science and ideology more stubbornly from the mid-nineteenth century to the Second World War than race. By the same token, no discursive nexus more powerfully interweaves colonialism, scientific discourse, and science fiction than racism, for one of the best reasons to emphasize the importance of evolutionary theory and anthropology to the emergence of science fiction is that early science fiction, at its best, often explores the challenges that those scientific discourses posed to established notions of what was natural and what was human. As the reading of time-travel narratives offered in the previous chapter begins to indicate, the opposition between biological determination and cultural construction is as central to much science fiction as it is to anthropology itself. Pursuing the implications of this reading further will involve spending some time at the *locus classicus* of the problem of nature versus culture in Wells’s novel, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. But Moreau’s colony, while it is one of Wells’s most powerful fictional achievements, is also an unusually striking articulation of an often-repeated pattern that can be discerned, not only in *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds*, but also in the fiction of Mary Shelley, J. MacMillan Brown, Olaf Stapledon, and many others. I want to argue, in what follows, that such repetition is based not

just on literary imitation, but also on the anonymous, “mythic” operation of the concept of race.

### Frankenstein’s Monster Meets the Missing Link

The classic and most influential example of the plot of constructing an artificial human being is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Currently one of the most frequently reprinted and critically discussed novels of the early nineteenth century, *Frankenstein* enjoys a canonical status in literary studies comparable to that of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) or Sir Walter Scott’s *Waverly* (1814). A great deal of the critical discussion of *Frankenstein* has concerned its treatment of gender, or what one influential essay calls Victor Frankenstein’s “circumvention of the maternal” (Homans). In fact, it has become a kind of nodal point connecting biblical, classical, Miltonic, and popular versions of the story of the fabrication of human life by a male creator. Moreover, Shelley’s novel both connects these widely diverse texts and marks a crucial break between the earlier and the post-Shelleyan ones, because Shelley’s fable alters the relation between the natural and the paternal that is central to the most culturally authoritative earlier versions. Once the divine male fabrication of human life in *Genesis* and *Paradise Lost* becomes an all-too-human, and sexually perverse, accomplishment in the workshop of Victor Frankenstein, the boundary between nature and culture thereafter remains one of the main stakes in its interpretation. The many stage, cinematic, and literary adaptations and offshoots of Shelley’s novel, for example, sometimes reassert the primacy of “natural” reproduction by turning Frankenstein’s act into a self-destructive attempt to transgress fatally determined boundaries, and at other times make it increasingly difficult to untangle the “natural”-born human from the manmade one (Rieder, “Patriarchal Fantasy”).

What is important for our present purpose is the considerable common ground shared by the dynamics of gender and of racial identification. Both gender and racial identity turn on the crucial pivot that articulates biological determination and cultural construction. Both involve the expression of identity in anatomy, on the one hand, and the performance of identity according to culturally and historically variable scripts, on the other. Race, like gender, poses the dual questions of the boundary that separates nature from artifice and of the limits of human control over one’s place and destiny in the world. Particularly in the milieu of the late nineteenth century, when, as has been mentioned earlier, *Frankenstein*

was released from restrictive copyright and sold many times more copies than it had in the rest of the century till then, the novel's difficult articulation of biological determination and cultural construction may well have invoked ideas of race in a way that might have surprised Shelley.

*Frankenstein* has a certain amount of explicit colonial content—Robert Walton's exploratory voyage in quest of the North pole, in the context of which Frankenstein's creature is first recognized as "a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island" (24)<sup>2</sup>; the ambitions of Victor Frankenstein's friend Henry Clerval, who wants to become an Orientalist and make his career in the colonies; the entire incident of the Turkish girl Safie's engagement to Felix DeLacey; and, not least of all, the inclusion of Volney's *The Ruins of Empire* (1791) in the eclectic reading list that provides Frankenstein's creature his education in human affairs. But Shelley poses the problem of nature versus culture most directly in the autobiographical narrative of Frankenstein's creature that occupies the center of the novel. The creature begins as an uncorrupted, benevolently inclined natural man, who only turns murderous when he is rejected and attacked by every human who sees him. This progression serves the polemical function of arguing that criminality is not inherent, but rather is produced by political injustice, along lines that derive from the rationalist philosophy of Shelley's father, William Godwin's, *Political Justice* (1793). Within this context, the "strange multiplicity of sensations" (102) that form the creature's first memories are meant to be those of a Lockean *tabula rasa*, an empty slate ready for the world to write upon it.

In the context of the romance revival of the late nineteenth century, however, the creature's early confusion and wonder at the world would look less like individual psychology than racial, anthropological difference:

Soon a gentle light stole over the heavens, and gave me a sensation of pleasure. I started up, and beheld a radiant form rise among the trees.\* [Shelley's note: "The moon."] I gazed with a kind of wonder. It moved slowly, but it enlightened my path; and I again went out in search of berries. (103)

Both the spontaneous animism with which the creature identifies the "radiant form" of the moon as gentle and pleasure-giving, and his food-gathering and simple diet, mark him as a primitive, still residing in the embrace of "the great breast of Nature," as Haggard might have said (*Allan Quatermain* 421). Later, after learning about the "manners, governments, and religions of the different nations of the earth" by listening to Felix DeLacey reading Volney's *Ruins of Empire* to Safie, where he hears

of “the slothful Asiatics; of the stupendous genius and mental activity of the Grecians; . . . [and] of the discovery of the American hemisphere, and [weeps] with Safie over the hapless fate of its original inhabitants,” the creature wishes “that I had forever remained in my native wood” (119–20). Thus, although the dominant vocabulary of the creature’s account is that of Lockean empiricism, the typological vocabulary assigned to Asiatics and Greeks introduces him to a set of distinctions that hover ambiguously between national and racial, or cultural and natural, ones. More importantly, the creature’s sympathetic identification with indigenous Americans offers a way of reading the opposition between his original, innocent savagery and the civilization he tries to enter through the portal of the DeLacey cottage that would tend to make the creature’s narrative resonate, not just with the sentimental atmosphere of the romance revival, but also with anthropological and evolutionary discourses about the origins and development of humankind and European civilization. This last possibility is one that, for obvious reasons, Shelley’s novel can only evoke and not explore, but the influence of *Frankenstein* in the early 1890s strongly suggests that the theme of the artificially constructed human did indeed evoke such evolutionary anthropological meditations in that milieu.

Consider two novels that anticipate some aspects of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*: J. Compton Rickett’s *The Quickening of Caliban: A Modern Story of Evolution* (1893) and Frank Challice Constable’s *The Curse of Intellect* (1895). In both novels, the place occupied by Frankenstein’s creature in the passage just cited is given to a primitive, quasi-human *specimen* from Africa. Both can help us to further understand the questions about racial identity, evolutionary theory, and the workings of culture that Wells would make central to the plot of the artificial human.

In Rickett’s *The Quickening of Caliban*, the Caliban character, Forest Bokrie, plays the part of the Missing Link in a carnival show, whose agent describes him as “a brownie who was caught young and brought up by the mission fellows. . . . The doctors, who have seen him, say that he is a bit unfinished; not got comfortably through his evolution” (21). Another, better-educated character describes Bokrie in terms typical of “scientific racism” at the time, noting his “retreating facial angle. He has a somewhat long muzzle, like a dog’s jaw. His eyes are large and brown, with a big animal’s unconscious stare in them” (71). The major spokesman for science in the novel’s prolonged debate between religion and science, Professor Racer, thinks that Bokrie “is a sort of Marble Faun and Frankenstein rolled into one” (90). Racer’s interest in Bokrie has to do with the polygenist hypothesis, a position held by many respected and authoritative evolutionary an-

thropologists at the time, that “the evolution of mankind was not from a single stock, [and therefore] that it is quite possible there may be still men on earth who have not yet passed through the rudimentary stage” in which humans acquired “a share in the spirit life” (66). Eventually Racer, anticipating Dr. Moreau’s methods, tries to provide Bokrie with a soul through hypnosis, prompting an accusation from the Miranda character that Racer is putting himself in the place of God. Racer replies that this is exactly right, because the civilized morality encapsulated in religious teaching is no more than a kind of hypnotic machinery (219). The crux of this novel’s handling of the debate between nature and culture, in fact, is Racer’s claim that “we are only automata, the best of us” (40). The novel is more complex, and more intelligently critical about racism, than this snippet of description has indicated, but it involves the construction of an artificial human only in the abstract, philosophical sense in which individual identities and cultural differences are products of scientific and ideological labor. Rickett does, however, explicitly and carefully insert Forest Bokrie into a scheme that both implies how Frankenstein’s creature might be read in racial and evolutionary terms and constructs a version of the invasively manipulative scientist that resembles Wells’s Dr. Moreau.

Constable’s *The Curse of Intellect* is both more clearly indebted to Frankenstein and a more direct precursor of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. It concerns a man named Reuben Power who brings into London society an ape whom he has taught to dress and speak like a human being, and who, in the mode of *Frankenstein*, eventually murders his keeper. The central portion of the book, the ape’s narrative, clearly is modeled upon the autobiography of Frankenstein’s creature. However, Power’s Beast, unlike Frankenstein’s creature but like Rickett’s Bokrie, is a member of a precivilized African community. His transformation into an artificial human coincides with being cruelly separated from his kind by Power’s civilizing project. The Beast begins:

I remember vaguely, and as a former life, the time before Reuben Power found and took me away. A life in the forest, of perfect health and virgin strength, with many of my kind; a life taking no thought for the morrow, a life above thought; free from the conscious restraint of any law, the daily sufficient food gained by daily labour; a life of perfect, of pure happiness—instinctive happiness from reasonable life and the unaffected intercourse of living creatures. . . . Then, looking back, comes a long sad time of some horrible striving—a striving of something in me, yet foreign to my instinct, to conquer nature. In all that time there stand out clearly but two things—a man and a whip. (95–96)

Self-consciousness is a disaster for Power's Beast, just as it is for Frankenstein's creature. But in Shelley, the creature's horrified reaction to his reflection in a pool of water is a calculated reversal of Eve's narcissistic response to her reflection in *Paradise Lost*, and the creature's reading of Frankenstein's notebooks detailing the process of his creation leads him to the conclusion that he is a "filthy type" of Adam (114, 130). In contrast to Shelley's Miltonic context, the terrain where Constable places the Beast's narrative is that of Andrew Lang's and H. Rider Haggard's romance revival, the same terrain that would later become the territory of Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes* (1917). Here the Beast's coming into self-consciousness is nonetheless a Fall from quasi-Edenic, primal harmony with his fellow apes into "horrible striving . . . to conquer nature." Any hint of the Darwinian struggle for existence has been displaced entirely into the realm of a counter-instinctual human culture whose emblem is the whip that enforces the "conscious restraint" of law itself.

The goal of Reuben Power, the man with the whip, is actually alienation of a different sort. His project is explicitly an anthropological one, an attempt to answer the question "What is man?" It is almost as if Constable were intentionally enacting the reversal of positions within the framework of the colonial gaze that I earlier proposed as a paradigm for science fiction itself, as he asks the imaginary, exotic other to look back at the civilized, technologically dominant, invasive scientist and reveal, not the Beast's own truth, but the invader's: "We want a new standpoint of criticism. Man cannot criticise himself, it is impossible. . . . I should like to know from some independent source what I really am, what my fellows really are" (15–16). Constable may be taking his inspiration from Darwin himself here, who in *The Descent of Man* (1871) argues that previous naturalists have greatly overemphasized humankind's difference from other mammals: "If man had not been his own classifier, he would never have thought of founding a separate order for his own reception" (191). But Constable portrays Power's attempt to overcome such limitations as a failure.

Indeed, the conclusion the Beast draws from his experience, and with which he concludes his autobiography, is that no "independent source" of understanding is available in the natural world:

All I have written is before me, and I see, true as is the miserable state of the human beast, I have myself written from no truly independent standpoint. I have failed to accomplish what Power wished, expected from me. I am a monkey, and my clothing of hair, though from God, determines my judgment of all existence as certainly as the robes of a duke from Stultz, the rags of a beggar from the gutter, even as surely as the

liver of a philosopher, determine their views of life and their fellows. No creature of God can see, can write truth: whatever the standpoint, the outlook is distorted and falsified by the glamour and deception of social circumstance. (155–56)

In an apparent contradiction of the Beast's earlier insistence upon the chasm separating ape life from human culture, he here erases the opposition between nature and culture by equating the limitations imposed by "the glamour and deception of social circumstance" with those of the monkey's anatomy. Perhaps this collapse of the distinction between nature and culture within the realm of human or quasi-human endeavor is a corollary to understanding human culture itself, in its entirety, as a violation of nature, in which the perversion of "conscious restraint" turns out to yield a wholly illusory version of autonomy from natural determination. Unfortunately, the Beast's equation of social and anatomical "clothing" also conforms all too well with a racist understanding of cultural difference and social inequality as the inevitable expressions of biological structures. In contrast to the entirely explicit debates on racial identity in *The Quickening of Caliban*, it seems that in *The Curse of Intellect* the threads of racist ideology become entangled with the nostalgic sentimentalism of the Beast's recollection of his animal life and the determinist cynicism of his final position accidentally but also inevitably, because the construction of the quasi-human Beast takes place, not in a laboratory, but in the contact zone formed by the European scientist's invasion of the African native's community.

### The Island of Dr. Moreau

Although racial ideology inevitably is broached in *The Curse of Intellect*, the dominant note of the Beast's narrative and the clearest satirical intention of the entire novel remains its deflation of Power's intellectual pride. Intellectual pride is certainly one of the dominant characteristics of that more famous man with a whip, Wells's Dr. Moreau, as well. But the relevance of his pride to colonial ideology is more direct than in *The Curse of Intellect*, for where Power performs his experiment on a single individual whom he detaches from his natural community, Moreau's experimental subjects become members of a new and bizarre community that is itself of more interest than any individual within it. The scientific colony where Moreau performs his sadistic experiments is thus comprised of two quite different settings: the "House of Pain," the compound where Moreau re-



lently pursues his project; and the village of the Beast People nearby. The Beast People's physical reconstruction in the compound only begins to suggest what the cultural assimilation enacted in their ritual chanting of the Law (where the refrain, "Are we not Men?" pointedly alludes to the motto of the British abolition movement, "Am I not a man and a brother?" [38]) drives home forcefully: a sustained and deliberate resemblance of Moreau's experimental subjects to colonial ones.<sup>3</sup>

One of the challenges in interpreting *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is to assess the significance of this allegorical strategy with respect to the relation of nature and culture worked out literally and explicitly in the scientific plot, where the ultimate failure of Moreau's experiments, his inability to keep the Beast People from reverting to their original animality, would seem to assert a basic, inviolable boundary. Ultimately, their bodies are their destinies, and can only be manipulated so far, and no further, by the devices of culture. The way this natural order reasserts itself is a conclusive chastisement of Moreau's intellectual pride. But when taken as an element of the novel's colonial metaphor, where the boundaries between nature and culture and between animal and human are held in tension with the boundaries between civilization and savagery or between the colonizer and the colonized, its significance becomes more complex.

Although Moreau's subjects are animals, his inquiry into the plasticity of living forms certainly implies a related inquiry into the natural and proper shape of the human. In his essay, "Human Evolution, an Artificial Process," Wells proclaims that *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is about the process of civilization—the formation of "the artificial man, the highly plastic creature of tradition, suggestion, and reasoned thought." In this context, "what we call Morality becomes the padding of suggested emotional habits necessary to keep the round Paleolithic savage in the square hole of the civilised state." Readings of *Moreau* predominantly have followed Wells's lead in interpreting the formation of the Beast People as a metaphor for the conflict between "natural man, . . . the culminating ape" and the demands of "civilisation" (*Early Writings* 217). But Wells's fable is not so abstract in its terms that it resists a more pointed historical reading. Robert Philmus, in his variorum edition of *Moreau*, comments that the early manuscript draft of the novel, because it "describes the Beast People in terms suggestive of colonized races" and "by reason of its continual emphasis on the strict hierarchical division between Moreau and company," strengthens the case that *Moreau*, like *The War of the Worlds*, is intended as a satire on the colonial enterprise (xxiii).<sup>4</sup> More recently, critics increasingly have emphasized the topical references in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*

to contemporary racial ideology, connecting the novel to ideas about hybridity, miscegenation, and degeneration as well as to the scientific debate rehearsed in *The Quickenings of Caliban* between monogenist and polygenist theories of the origins of racial difference (Brody 130–69; and Christensen).

In order to weigh the satirical and topical dimensions of the colonial metaphor in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, we need to look carefully at the generic relation the novel creates between its colonial metaphor and its science fiction premise. What kind of an allegory or analogy has Wells invented in Moreau's project? I think Philmus is right on the mark when he says that "Wells 'darwinizes' the Yahoos and Houyhnhnms" of *Gulliver's Travels* (xxvii). Wells also darwinizes Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, transposing Shelley's biblical allusions to a racialized evolutionary discourse when Moreau, in the central chapter "Doctor Moreau Explains," tells Prendick that he "moulded" his first man from a gorilla, producing "a fair specimen of the negroid type," and then "rested from work for some days" (49–50). This is not just a satirical thrust at Christian theology, however. What is crucial is rather Moreau's self-recognition, his conviction of his own godlike freedom to pursue his experiment "just the way it led [him]" (48). I propose that Moreau's colony is neither a vehicle for a satirical attack on any particular colony, nor merely a parody of the biblical Eden. Instead, the features of Moreau's colony—the facts that it is presided over by a man whose whiteness Wells emphasizes at every opportunity; that this white man irresponsibly and callously tortures his subjects into a pathetic semblance of his own rational, civilized ways; that the entire process is underwritten by the obvious, physiological gap between his own humanity and their animalism; and that the mutilated subjects both rebel against their transformation and inhabit an elaborate ritual apparatus for justifying it and accepting its results—all add up to something that, like Bletts-worthy's delusionary island, is both phantasmagoric and a clarification of reality at the same time.

Let me repeat, then, the thesis about *The Island of Dr. Moreau* that I proposed in the introductory chapter. It is not so much a distorted, metaphorical representation of colonialism as it is a literalization of the racist ideological fantasy that guides much colonial practice: We know very well that non-whites are human beings, but we behave under the assumption that they are grotesque parodies of humankind. Moreau's practice actually unfolds the ideological terms in reverse: He knows very well that his experimental subjects are *not* humans, but by laboriously transforming them into grotesque parodies of humankind, he arrives—without

any apparent intention of doing so—at the role of colonial master. Generically, this is more like Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony” than Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, because it is a bizarre enactment of the logic of racism rather than an extended metaphor for any actual social or historical situation. Moreau is, as Žižek puts it, “the *mise en scene of the fantasy which is at work in the production of social reality itself*” (36, Žižek’s emphasis).

The perspective of Wells’s Gulliver-like narrator, Prendick, is crucial. Before we know any details of Moreau’s project, Prendick’s perspective already has entangled the reader in the discourse of scientific racism. Prendick’s account of his first encounter with one of the Beast People associates the “misshapen man” with the animalistic traits attributed to non-whites by the theorists of race in nineteenth-century physical anthropology: “He . . . had peculiarly thick, coarse black hair. . . . The facial part projected, forming something dimly suggestive of a muzzle, and the huge half-open mouth showed as big white teeth as I had ever seen in a human mouth” (8). The retreating facial angle and prominent lower jaw were among the favorite physiological marks that racial theorists used to illustrate the proximity between apes and non-white races, as many a diagram from nineteenth-century treatises on race can attest (see for example the diagrams from Robert Knox’s *The Races of Men* [1869], John Jeffries’s *The Natural History of the Human Races* [1869], and Alexander Winchell’s *Preadamites* [1888] reproduced in Graves, 67 and 72; and Fichman, 116). The psychometrician Francis Galton, Darwin’s cousin and the inventor of the term “eugenics,” found the same overlapping of animal and human traits in his studies of intelligence, claiming that the average Australian aborigine was only a little more intelligent than the very smartest kind of dog (see the comparative table from Galton’s *Hereditary Genius* [1892] reproduced by Graves, 95). Thus, while the revulsion Prendick feels before “the grotesque ugliness of this black-faced creature” is a mark of its monstrosity (one could compare Prendick’s reaction to that inspired by the physiognomy of Frankenstein’s creature, for example, or to the instinctive repulsion all spectators feel in the presence of the bestial Mr. Hyde in Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* [1886]), it is at least as important that the uncanny sense of familiarity the figure inspires by its disturbing mixture of humanity and animalism evokes the vocabulary of racism.

More telling than this initial association that Prendick establishes between the Beast People and racialized humans, however, are the reversals of understanding Prendick goes through in the course of the novel. Using a narrative strategy that he already had employed in *The Time Machine*, Wells first draws the reader into Prendick’s initial interpretation of

Moreau's project—that the scientist is turning humans into animals—then overturns this theory with Moreau's explanation that he actually is trying to turn animals into humans. According to Prendick's initial suspicion, then, Moreau resembles a colonial tyrant brutalizing his subjects, while according to Moreau's explanation, he is more like a missionary, a scientific prophet of progress, selflessly pursuing the task set him by his high calling. But rather than settling the allegory into a final shape, this strategy sets up another pair of reversible perspectives. The Beast People, who initially appear as grotesquely racialized others, become, in the Swiftian device of the novel's conclusion, a way of seeing Wells's readers, the inhabitants of London. In the terms Wells uses in "Human Evolution, an Artificial Process," the monstrous artificial man of the scientific colony now stands for the round Paleolithic savage in the square hole of contemporary European civilization. At the same time, the Beast People's quasi-racial ugliness also looks more and more like a disavowed self-recognition. The racialized other becomes the estranged self.

Both of these reversals of perspective are presented by Prendick as if they are progressive revelations in which falsehood gives way to truth, but the strength of Wells's narrative does not lie in unmasking falsehood. It lies in exposing the patterns and motives of misrecognition. No doubt Wells meant for us to draw from *Moreau* the lesson that humans are really animals, as his remark about the "culminating ape" says they are, but it is more to the point that Wells grasps and exposes an ideological attitude, in the relation between Moreau and the Beast People, that makes what appears to be irresponsible cruelty from one perspective look like the pursuit of a noble enterprise from another. The *mise-en-scène* of racist ideology in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* has more to do with the social relationship of Moreau to the Beast People, with the understanding, or lack of it, Moreau's position allows him to have of them, than with any sort of biological truth about human beings.

Wells's remark about the round savage in the square hole of civilization, in fact, employs an opposition between civilization and savagery that his fiction exposes as something just as unstable and collapsible as the one between animals and humans. The savagery of civilized humans in the novel is obvious enough, not just in Moreau's scientific sadism or in the affinity that Moreau's assistant, Montgomery, professes for the companionship of the Beast People, but also in the drunken cruelty of the captain of the *Ipecacuanha* who maroons Prendick, or in the cannibalism sequence "In the Dingey of the *Lady Vain*" in the opening chapter. If Prendick finds himself threatened with death on several occasions by his sup-

posedly civilized companions acting like animals, the balancing threat from the Beast People is that of finding himself unwillingly dragged into their community, a threat most forcefully dramatized in the scene where he is forced to join them in chanting their Law and its refrain. In the aftermath of Moreau's death, Prendick manages with difficulty to keep himself apart from the Beast People by inheriting Moreau's whip and perpetuating a set of quasi-religious lies about Moreau's power and immortality, but he finds himself at last equalized with them by "the imperious voices of hunger and thirst" (77). This final collapse of the hierarchical difference between civilization and savagery into the monotony of the struggle for existence is no surprise at all, but rather culminates the coherent development of a pervasive theme.

Wells himself holds onto the opposition between savagery and civilization only by reliance on what he calls the "acquired factor," the accumulated effect of tradition and education upon the members of a civilized society. In his essay on "Morals and Civilisation," published in February 1897, he writes, "If, in a night, this artificial, this impalpable mental factor of every human being in the world could be destroyed, the day thereafter would dawn, indeed, upon our cities, our railways, our mighty weapons of warfare, and on our factories and machinery, but it would dawn no more upon a civilised world" (*Early Writings* 221). The way that savagery constantly threatens to intrude itself back into civilization in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, like the scenario of a degenerate post-human society in *The Time Machine*, expresses Wells's antipathy toward a certain Social Darwinian version of the ideology of progress. Here is how Mike Hawkins describes the logical contradiction within the ideology of progress that Wells is attacking: "moral progress and the triumph of civilisation . . . could be shown to be the work of natural laws such as the struggle for existence," but "the complete realisation of these ideals implied a future state in which the laws of nature were no longer applicable to humans" (108). But Wells is only following the lead of a powerful bunch of Social Darwinian thinkers, including Alfred Russel Wallace, Charles Darwin, and Thomas Huxley, when he holds that natural selection is indeed effectively suspended for the members of a civilized society (Wallace 20; Darwin 168; Huxley 81). Wells's emphasis invariably lies on the fragility of this achievement, and his own ideology of progress in his later writings stresses both the difficulty and the necessity of supplanting the workings of mere natural process with rational social planning.

But the crux of racist ideology is not the opposition between civilization and savagery. It is rather the way scientific racism confuses cultural and

natural phenomena. As Joseph Graves demonstrates repeatedly and persuasively, the fundamental error of scientific racism is that of mistaking a relationship for a substance, a cultural construction for a biological necessity, the posture of a slave for an expression of anatomy. Thus the crux of the racist ideological fantasy worked out in Moreau's project is Moreau's identification of his pitilessness as the way of nature itself. Although Moreau himself shows no signs of guilt, this identification is essentially an apologetic strategy that absolves him from responsibility for the atrocities he has produced. This is perhaps where Moreau's project dovetails most tellingly with racial ideology. Even the monogenist Darwin sees the extermination of "savage races" as an inevitable result of natural selection at a social level: "At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races" (Darwin 201; cf. Wallace 21, quoted in chapter five). The racial other of polygenist theory remains, as in monogenist versions of evolutionary anthropology, an anachronistic remnant of the civilized observer's past, but one rendered static, trapped in a body that determines its inferiority, not a case of arrested development but rather an evolutionary dead end. The consequent ease of disavowing responsibility for the sometimes-catastrophic consequences of contact between civilized and savage cultures is, in retrospect, one of the most alarming features of colonialism's ideologies. Wells's portrait of Moreau's arrogant, irresponsible, and messianic employment of science is not just about science. Moreau's position as a white colonial master also embodies in horrific form the logic of racial ideology.<sup>5</sup>

### Hybrids and Cyborgs

At one point in *The Descent of Man*, Darwin demonstrates the superficiality and consequent imprecision and untrustworthiness of racial categorization by pointing out that those who practice it divide humanity into as few as two races and as many as sixty-three (226). Perhaps if racism really were about scientific explanation, rather than science often merely being one more venue for explaining away racist practices, Darwin's argument would have had a far greater impact than it did. The apologetic function of the concept of race does not depend on precise categorization, however, but simply on division itself. As long as race naturalizes the division between civilization and savagery, its essential work is done. The troublingly savage behavior of civilized nations can henceforth be written off as an expression of natural law, when it comes to enslaving and extermin-

nating inferior races, or degeneration, when racial discourse slides over into biologically determinist ways of understanding the presence within civilized societies of imbecility, criminality, pauperism, and other ways of proving oneself unfit for the survival of the fittest.

In the science fiction motif of the artificial human, the function of division is likewise paramount. There is first of all the tightly bound pair of the scientific genius and his monstrous creation, from Victor Frankenstein and his nameless fabrication to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Reuben Power and his Beast, and Dr. Moreau and his Beast People. Victor Frankenstein and his creature often have been interpreted as divided expressions of a single individual, and Jekyll and Hyde are explicitly so. But for all of these couples, within the horizon of expectations prevailing in the 1880s and 1890s, the ideologically powerful opposition of civilization and savagery is a clear-cut structuring principle governing the division of the scientist's aspirations from their ironic results. A similar governing principle appears to pertain to artificial or altered human beings throughout early science fiction, who tend to diverge or be forced in two directions away from normal human anatomy—one towards animals and the other towards machines. The logic that binds together these two groups is certainly that of evolutionary progress and degeneration. If the first, animalistic group obviously resembles the racialized, degenerate, savage other of colonialist ideology, doesn't the second stand forth in contrast as the product of the "acquired factor," the civilized human insulated from the vicissitudes of natural selection? And isn't the cyborg inevitably, therefore, also a racialized figure? I propose that one of the most striking ways early science fiction handles the discourse of race is in these two repetitive, complementary figures of anatomical distortion, the hybrid and the cyborg.

A survey of the hybrid-cyborg pair has to begin with the three great early novels of H. G. Wells that already have played such an important part in this analysis of colonialism and the emergence of science fiction, *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, and *The War of the Worlds*. Wells's Martians are the prototypical cyborgs of early science fiction. Their combination of prosthetic supplementation and organic atrophy is one of the most influential, widely imitated inventions in the field. Alongside the Martian colonizers, the colonized humans find themselves relegated to the status of animals, not just in the many analogical comparisons of the Martian invasion to humans' unthinking destruction of animal lives and habitats, but literally, in their role as livestock feeding the Martians' thirst for blood, and as domestic pets for the triumphant conquerors, in the projected future imagined by the man on Putney Hill. *The Time Ma-*

*chine* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* each anticipate different aspects of the relationship of the Martian cyborgs to the animal-like humans. The Eloi serve as cattle for the machine-tending Morlocks, and the narrator's identification with the Eloi plays against his carnivorous likeness to the Morlocks with quite similar critical effect to the play of identification and revulsion inspired by the Martians in *The War of the Worlds*. In *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Moreau's arrogance and his lack of any sense of moral responsibility for the results of his experiments anticipate the soulless calculation with which the Martians destroy human lives. Moreau is no cyborg—his only prostheses are the scalpel and the whip—but his alienation of intellect from emotion and his instrumentalization of bodies earns him a place in the cyborg's genealogy. And once again, in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, the play of identification and revulsion around the white colonial master and his beast-like subjects lies at the crux of Wells's satire.

Repetition of the cyborg-hybrid pair in other early science fiction is so widespread and prevalent that it cannot be attributed solely to the influence of H. G. Wells. Instead, it takes on the anonymous character of a collective fantasy. I want to propose that racial ideology provides the point of departure for the pattern of repetition that constitutes the generic convention, or in other words, that the hybrid-cyborg pair is a hyperbolic extrapolation of racial division. This does not mean that cyborgs represent white people and hybrids represent non-whites, but rather that the exaggerated separation between the anatomies and the evolutionary status of the two figures plays upon the imaginary differences produced by racist ideology to buttress racist practices. One finds the pattern worked out in a revealing way, for example, and without any apparent debt to Wells, in J. MacMillan Brown's *Riallano*, *The Archipelago of Exiles* and *Limanora*, *The Island of Progress*. There the Limanoran scientists seek to purge humans of their inherited animal ancestry, and Limanoran society carefully insulates itself from the archipelago of exiles, which is dominated by the sub-human or pre-human traits of its inhabitants, so as to leave the Limanorans free to develop a post-human anatomy in their utopian center. One might argue that Brown's explicit antiracism provides evidence against the dependence of this pattern on racist ideology. The counterargument, however, is that the Limanorans' political arrangement takes the shape it does precisely because their eugenicist project cannot be disentangled from its intimacy with the mythic "solution" of racial division. Brown's example thus also serves as a reminder of the way that racist ideology overlaps with, borrows from, and in turn contaminates Social Darwinian ideas about class and criminality.



The hybrid-cyborg pair appears in monumental form in the careers of two of the greatest writers of science fiction in the 1920s and 1930s, Olaf Stapledon and the Czech Karel Čapek, who is certainly worth mentioning here because of his contribution, despite his not having written in English, of the word “robot” to the language. The hybrid counterparts to the cyborg robots of Čapek’s *R.U.R.* (1921) are the salamander-like creatures who take over the world in his devastating satire on colonialism and racism, *War with the Newts* (1937).<sup>6</sup> Stapledon’s great hybrid is the humanly intelligent dog who is the title character of *Sirius: A Fantasy of Love and Discord* (1944), where Stapledon explores, among other things, the ways that human anatomy has dictated and limited our cultural and philosophical assumptions. Stapledon’s cyborg demands to be given more space here, however, because it is such a good example of the way the cerebral hypertrophy, organic atrophy, and prosthetic supplementation Wells invented in *The War of the Worlds* was elaborated upon in the inter-war period.

In Book XI of *Last and First Men*, titled “Man Remakes Himself,” Stapledon describes the making of the first of the “great brains”:

A human ovum had been carefully selected, fertilized in the laboratory, and largely reorganized by artificial means. By inhibiting the growth of the embryo’s body, and the lower organs of the brain itself, and at the same time greatly stimulating the growth of the cerebral hemispheres, the dauntless experimenters succeeded at last in creating an organism which consisted of a brain twelve feet across, and a body most of which was reduced to a mere vestige upon the under-surface of the brain. (157)

The brain has to be supplied with an artificial circulatory and digestive apparatus in order to keep it alive, and its sensory equipment blends the natural and the artificial, so that, for instance, “the retina could be applied to any of a great diversity of optical instruments” (158). Eventually the scientists succeed in making a master brain that is apparently immortal, its artificial cranium grown to “a roomy turret of ferro-concrete some forty feet in diameter.” It can no longer be called an organism but rather has become a “strange half-natural, half-artificial system, . . . [a] preposterous factory of mind” (159).

The anatomy of Stapledon’s great brain partakes of a pattern that is repeated many times in American pulp science fiction. Anyone who does even casual reading in this milieu certainly will run across example after example. In G. Peyton Wertenbaker’s “The Coming of the Ice,” the first original story to appear in *Amazing* (June 1926), the time-traveling narrator

describes the men he encounters in the future: “Strange men, these creatures of the hundredth century, men with huge brains and tiny shriveled bodies, atrophied limbs, and slow ponderous movements on their little conveyances” (Ashley 1:63). Francis Flagg’s “The Machine Man of Ardathia,” first published in *Amazing Stories* in November 1927, is a visitor from thirty thousand years in the future, putting him as far from the present as the present is from the early neolithic. He appears to the narrator encased in a cylinder, and “seemed to be a caricature of a man—or a child. . . . The head was very large and hairless; it had bulging brows, and no ears. . . . Its legs hung down, skinny, flabby; and the arms were more like short tentacles” (Ashley 1:70). Edmond Hamilton’s “The Man Who Evolved,” from *Wonder Stories* of April 1931, is a scientist who speeds up the process of evolution artificially, and becomes “a huge hairless head fully a yard in diameter, supported on tiny legs, the arms having dwindled to mere hands that projected just below the head” (Hamilton 28–29). Travelers into the far future in Clifford Simak’s “The World of the Red Sun” in the December 1931 *Wonder Stories*, find it ruled over by a dictator named Golan-Kirt, who, “Hanging in the air, suspended without visible means of support, was a gigantic brain, approximately two feet in diameter. . . [with] two tiny, pig-like, lidless, close-set eyes and a curving beak which hung directly below the frontal portion of the brain, resting in what was apparently an atrophied face” (Asimov 214). And so on.

Not only do all of these imaginary beings share a similar anatomy, they also all seem to be acting out something like the same script. Stapledon’s great brains, for whom “instinctive tenderness and instinctive group-feeling were not possible” because they are “without the bowels of mercy,” eventually demand the extermination of all “useless animals,” create a race of human slaves whom they control telepathically, and engage in genocidal warfare with the rest of humankind (160–66). Wertebaker’s future beings “put to death all the perverts, the criminals, and the insane, ridding the world of the scum for which they had no more need. . . . I was kept on exhibition as an archaic survival” (Ashley 1:63). Hamilton’s evolved man announces his intention to “master without a struggle this man-swarmed planet,” and when the narrator objects, adds, “You think it terrible that I should rule your race! I will not rule them, I will *own* them and this planet as you might own a farm and animals” (30, Hamilton’s emphasis). Golan-Kirt, a scientist who has attained near immortality by altering his anatomy, has enslaved mankind with his hypnotic powers and convinced them he “came out of the Cosmos to rule over the world” (Asimov 208). In Laurence Manning’s “Master of the Brain,” from *Wonder Stories*,

April 1933, the narrator wonders when the mechanical brain that controls all of society will realize that “the Brain did not really *need* human beings at all! . . . When it had evolved sufficient automatic devices to care for its own needs, would it destroy these servants of flesh and blood and live its own cold metallic life in solitary grandeur upon a lifeless world?” (Manning 56, Manning’s emphasis)

What connects this anatomy and script with one another? Clearly, these figures embody ideas about progress, technology, and evolution, but above all they embody the ambivalence and contradictions that cluster around those ideas. The cyborgs stand for the dominant half of a number of hierarchical binary oppositions: the future as against the past, the mind as against the body, civilization as against savagery, the human as against the animal, the master as against the slave. But they also destabilize these hierarchies, because the anatomical enhancement of their brains and prosthetic supplementation of their senses that gives them their power is simultaneously a mutilation of their bodies. Thus another, less straightforwardly hierarchical opposition, the one between nature and culture, is at work undermining the quasi-natural determinism that connects their anatomies and their scripts by instead implying that they—and perhaps the entire set of hierarchical oppositions they seem to embody—represent a horrific divorce of culture from nature.

The way that the nature-culture opposition suspends the figure of the cyborg amidst the ideological contradictions and ambivalence surrounding notions of progress gets worked out in exemplary fashion in Hamilton’s “The Man Who Evolved.” The relationship between the ambition of the scientist Pollard and the effects of his cosmic-ray machine is tellingly ambiguous. As Pollard explains it to the two observers of his experiment, the machine speeds up the process of evolution, so that he steps into it a man of the present and emerges as a man of the future. On his second emergence from the machine, hairless and with an immense head and brain, he tells the two onlookers: “You see a man a hundred million years ahead of you in development. And I must confess that you appear to me as two brutish, hairy cave-men would appear to you” (27). When the observers plead with him to stop the experiment because of what seem to them its alarming effects, he answers their appeal to friendship with a threat to kill them: “I am millions of years past such irrational emotions as friendship. The only emotion you awake in me is contempt for your crudity. Turn on the rays!” (28) A reader might well ask whether the machine is really speeding up an inevitable natural process, or instead reproducing a logic that is Pollard’s, or that of Pollard’s theories, and not nature’s at all.

The machine's effects thus can be taken either as a kind of time travel or as the embodiment, not just of Pollard's ambition, but of an ideology of the progress of civilization that imagines that the dominance of the technologically advanced cyborg over the animal-like humans of the present must inevitably take the "natural" form of chattel slavery: "I will not rule them, I will *own* them and this planet as you might own a farm and animals."

The merging of organism and machine in the figure of the cyborg thus resonates both with a Social Darwinian interpretation of industrial capitalism and with a Marxist critique of it. Andrew Carnegie, in an essay titled "Wealth" (1889), carries out a typical Social Darwinian conflation of the dynamics of competition in the capitalist market with inexorable natural processes:

We assemble thousands of operatives in the factory, in the mine . . . to whom the employer is little better than a myth. All intercourse between them is at an end. . . . Under the law of competition, the employer of thousands is forced into the strictest economies, among which the rates paid to labor figure prominently, and often there is friction between the employer and the employed, between capital and labor, between rich and poor. . . . But, whether the law [of competition] be benign or not, we must say of it, as we say of the change in the conditions of men to which we have referred: It is here; we cannot evade it; no substitutes for it have been found; and while the law may sometimes be hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. (98)

If Carnegie apologizes for the strict economies of a dominant social class here, he also would seem to anticipate an imaginary set of practices in the way his arrangement of alienated factory workers, distant and impersonal employers, rational economic calculation, and the law of natural selection resembles the science fiction figure of the emotionless brain, ruling over its atavistic organic servants, enacting the natural and inevitable result of evolutionary "progress." But the stunting of emotional affect in the figure of the cyborg might be connected just as plausibly to the phenomenon Marx calls the fetishism of commodities, the tendency for a capitalist economy's elaborate social division of labor and far-flung web of commodity exchange to make relationships between people take on the fantastic form of relationships between things (163–65). Georg Lukács called the resulting appearance—that socially constructed arrangements were natural, inevitable ones—"reification," and considered it an endemic feature of bourgeois ideology (*History and Class Consciousness* 83–110).

The separation between the brains and their subjects is never simply

that of class position, however. Science fiction stories about these hyper-cerebral future beings never lack the anachronism of their immediate interaction with some more or less contemporary version of homo sapiens, so that the brains' subjects are not merely the past but *their own* past. Thus, the figure inevitably refers to colonial situations, racial ideology, and the discourse of racial division. What marks the great brains as racialized figures? It is not merely the domination they exercise over their human subjects or the appeal to a hierarchical and progressive version of evolution they invariably use to justify it. The entanglement of the fictional motif with the discourse of racism comes into focus when we describe the contradictions attendant upon the combination of their anatomies with a social script. That script first identifies, or confuses, the cyborgs' anatomical distortion with the technological achievements of an advanced industrial society, but then, when putting this "acquired factor" into action to enslave a supposedly barbarian, anatomically inferior "race," explains the same set of differences as the very work of nature. What especially enters this contradiction into the register of the myth of race is the rendering of the brains' mercilessness as the actual bodily absence of "the bowels of mercy." That they cannot feel their own mutilation as anything except another sign of their superiority dramatizes the way the deterministic discourse of race serves as a kind of self-justifying, anesthetizing hallucination. But at the same time, their physically determined inability to feel mercy—a spectacular display of anatomy as destiny—seems to exonerate them from moral responsibility for participating in that rationalization of cruelty, enslavement, eugenic purification, and even genocide. In a peculiar reversal, racism itself becomes an expression of anatomy.

### The Onlookers

The anonymous, mythic quality of the figure of the hypertrophied brain is finally most evident, perhaps, in the way the contradiction between its critical and spectacular effects adheres to manifestations of racial ideology throughout early science fiction. For, although the figure of the cyborg is undoubtedly an estrangement of the imaginary, ideological superiority of white, imperial masters over non-whites, its critical, decentering potential in relation to the construction of race nonetheless cohabits, time and again, with explicitly brutalizing, crudely stereotypical depictions of non-white characters. The intimacy shared in early science fiction by critical metaphor and uncritical spectacle may well reflect a dichotomy that is en-

demio to modern mass culture in general, as Fredric Jameson argues in “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture,” or it may register the unevenness of science fiction’s production and reception across a social field characterized at one pole by the interests of commercial profit and at the other by those of cultural prestige, as Pierre Bourdieu’s analyses of cultural production would suggest. If this book has been at all accurate in its analysis, such a pattern also has to do with the ambivalence of colonial ideology insinuating itself into the fabric of science fiction’s fascination with the new and the strange. Let me conclude this discussion of the motif of the artificial human by looking at an aspect of it that self-reflexively portrays this ambivalence.

The coming to life of artificial beings or the catastrophic transformation of familiar beings into new hybrid or cyborg forms often takes place in a laboratory equipped not only with scientific apparatus but also with one or more spectators. Sometimes a dialogue between the scientist and the spectators articulates opposite reactions to the experiment, as in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* or “The Man Who Evolved.” Sometimes the reactions of the spectators display an array of perspectives. One of the best examples of this strategy is the well-known, often imitated, and often parodied creation sequence in the Universal Studios *Frankenstein* of 1931 that ends with Henry Von Frankenstein gibbering, “It’s alive! Alive!” What easily can be forgotten about Colin Clive’s scenery-chewing performance as Dr. Frankenstein is that he puts the whole show on for three spectators interior to the drama—his fiancée Elizabeth, his friend Victor Clerval, and his ex-colleague Dr. Waldmann, each of whom definitely has a very different take on the events; respectively, concerned sympathy, jealous mistrust, and scientific curiosity. Frankenstein’s scientific success at bringing an artificial human to life is framed immediately not only by his own hysterical identification with it but also by Waldmann’s diametrically opposed critical detachment, and the sexual dynamics of his achievement likewise are framed by the opposing viewpoints of his lover and his rival. Thus the unnamed monster comes into the world in a setting that almost schematically maps out the intellectual and emotional compass points of ambivalence, and the portrayal of racial ideology that emerges so explicitly in the film’s conclusion, when the monster ends up being burned to death by a mob gathered around an enormous burning cross, has been prepared for and even subjected to a kind of critical dissection in the creation scene’s display of attitudes toward Frankenstein’s project.

The lab scene is also one of a rather small group of subjects that dominates Gernsback-era cover art (e.g., spaceships, future urban landscapes,

extraterrestrial landscapes and beings, humanoid machines, etc.). Some of these lab scenes make the onlookers' ambivalence their main subject, for instance the cover of the August 1926 issue of *Amazing*, where the detached, corpse-like head's glassy gaze is met, on the one hand, by the sinister calculation of the onlooker whose color matches that of the cyborg, and, on the other, is blocked defensively by the upflung hand of the one who retains his fleshly hue (fig. 4). But let us finish with the charmingly odd illustration that graces the cover of *Science Wonder Stories*, October 1929 (fig. 5). This scene is dominated by a confrontation in the foreground between two helmeted figures. On the right, and clearly in charge, sits a scientist who manipulates a control board in front of him (presumably him, not her, given the figure's masterful position in this institutional context, though its gender is impossible to determine), meanwhile turning toward the other figure as though to observe the results of whatever he is trying to do. On the left sits the apparent subject of the experiment, one capable only of display, not of gazing back at the experimenter. The dinosaur that appears on the screen of this figure's helmet no doubt resides deep in the subject's psyche, since the story being illustrated is "Into the Subconscious" by Ray Avery Meyer.<sup>7</sup> Altogether the two figures display a fairly muted but unmistakable cyborg-hybrid relationship, the experimenter tending towards identification with the machinery in which they are enveloped, the subject marked as part animal in a particularly striking display of evolutionary regression. Not surprisingly, then, the two figures are racialized as well, one wearing a white suit beneath the brass helmet and displaying white hands on the control panel, the other rather underdressed and looking a bit greenish. But who do we find in the background, witnessing from a distance this bizarre acting out of the colonial gaze? On the right, looking knowingly on, seems to be Sigmund Freud, or at least a close relative of his. On the left, looking quite startled, is his naïve counterpart, who apparently did not at all expect an extinct predator to be lurking inside the subject's head. Thus the onlookers grasp the exotic human being put on display in the foreground according to the ambivalent alternatives dictated by colonial ideology, as scientific data and as sensational anachronism.

The entire illustration is too whimsical and funny for it to sustain any belaboring of the colonial history and racial ideology that nonetheless loom through it, but it is precisely that whimsical containment of its thematic potential that we might take as its emblematic value for the genre of science fiction. One cannot really read the genre well by identifying exclusively with the knowing, serious gaze of the Freud figure any more

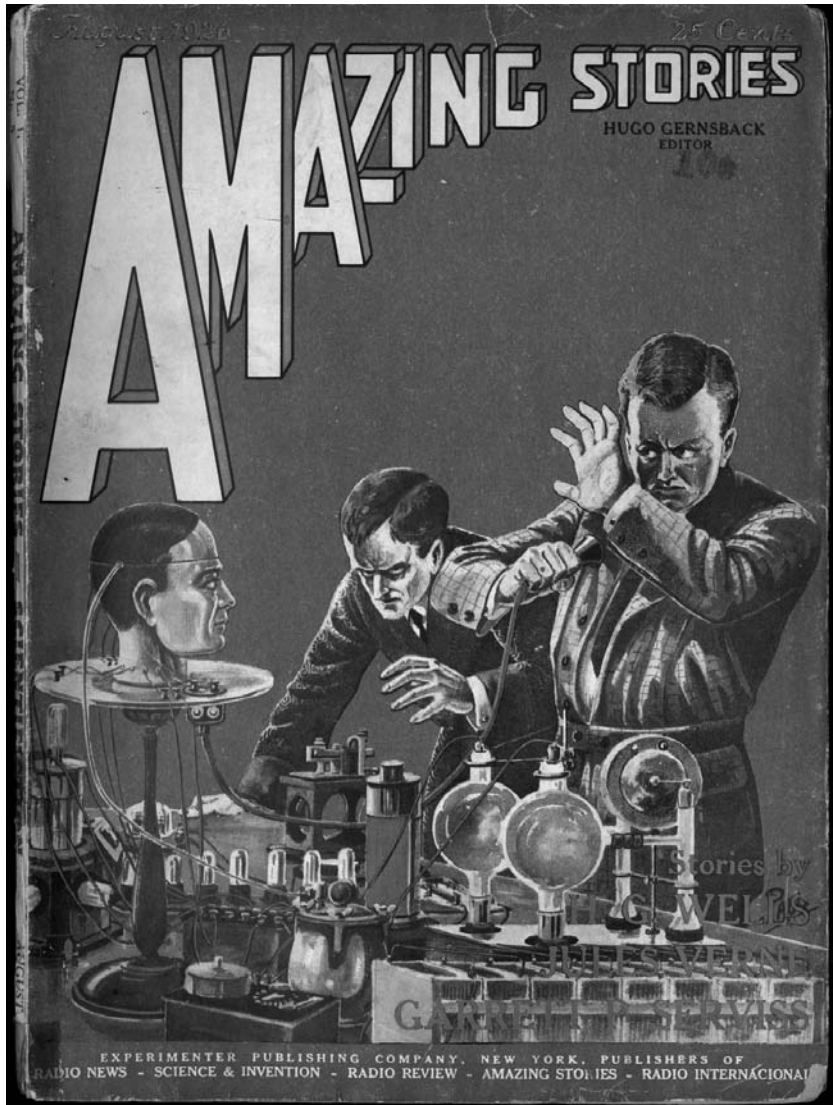


FIGURE 4. Frank R. Paul, front cover illustration, *Amazing Stories*, August 1926. Courtesy of Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University. Used with permission of The Frank R. Paul Estate.



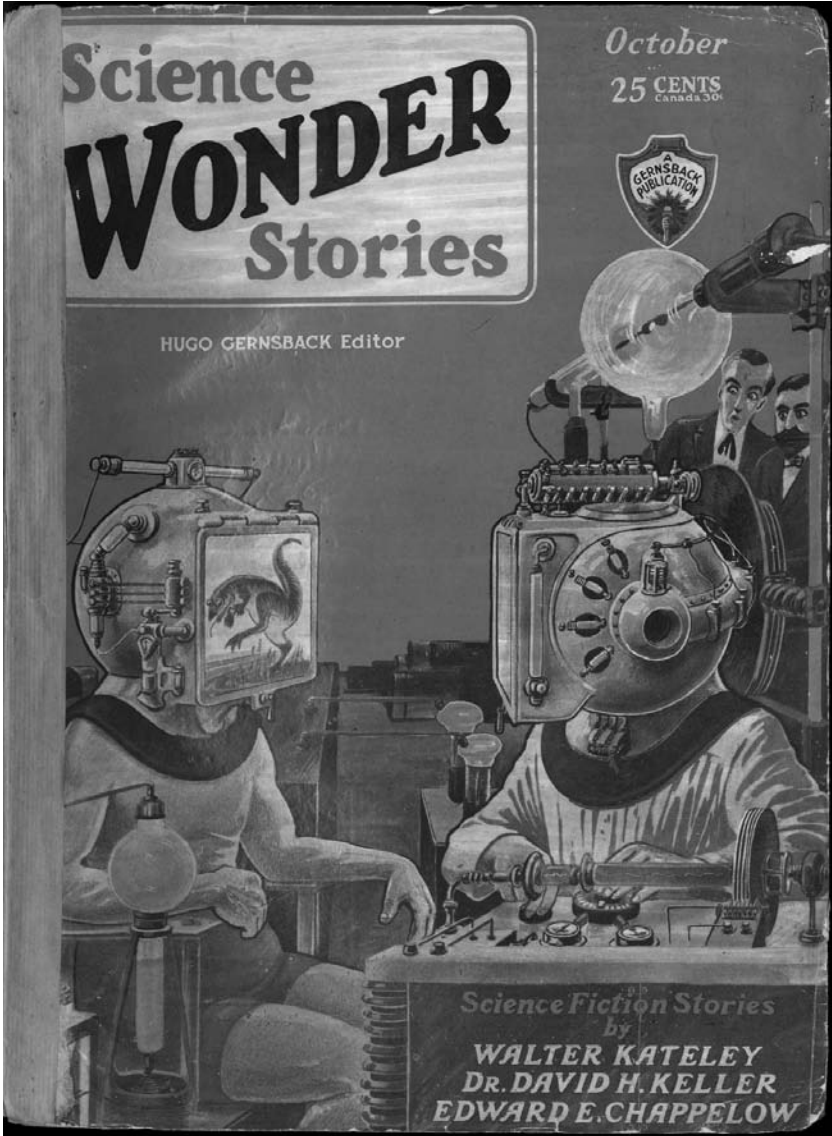


FIGURE 5. Frank R. Paul, front cover illustration, *Science Wonder Stories*, October 1929. Courtesy of Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University. Used with permission of The Frank R. Paul Estate.

than with the wide-eyed wonder of his counterpart, nor can the genre be limited to the conventions of interpretation being used by one or the other. Instead, one needs to attempt to understand the social architecture that dictates the various positions distributed across this imaginary laboratory. If the foreground articulates a scientific but systematically uneven production and distribution of knowledge and power, while the background articulates an ideologically polarized reception of those products, yet the difference between the two perspectives pictured in the background does not reproduce the power differential enacted in the foreground, for the spectators both resemble the gazing scientist rather than the exotic. In fact, the two spectators look like colleagues, so that the lesson the one seems to be absorbing remains potentially available to the other as well. Their reactions are perhaps not so much contradictory as sequential. For if all of this maps out the reception of colonial and imperial practices by the homeland audience—not as deliberate allegory, but in the ideological and epistemological framework the artist brings to visibility—it nonetheless remains a scene of spectacular pleasures, without which its critical potential would remain forever mute.