PROJECT MUSE®

“The Infernal Machine”: *Imperial America and John Sayles’s A Moment in the Sun*

Richard Black

Studies in American Naturalism, Volume 9, Number 1, Summer 2014,
pp. 79-102 (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/san.2014.0007>

➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/556036>

“The Infernal Machine”

Imperial America and John Sayles’s A Moment in the Sun

Richard Black, *Northwest Missouri State University*

When production work ceased in Hollywood during the writers’ strike of 2007, the iconoclastic writer and filmmaker John Sayles turned his attention to a project that culminated in his 2011 novel, *A Moment in the Sun*, a text which complements his two previous novels, two short-story collections and some twenty-one directorial credits. Common to both his fiction and his films, according to Mark Bould, is an aesthetic that “draw[s] upon and develop[s] the tradition of American naturalist fiction” (4). And *A Moment in the Sun* quite specifically acknowledges Sayles’s deep debt to American literary naturalism.¹

The novel dramatizes American social history in the years 1898–1903 and centers on a cast of primary characters, all of whom are “twisted from the ordinary, wrenched out from the quiet, uneventful round of everyday life, and flung into the throes of a vast and terrible drama” revolving around the turn-of-the-century emergence of the American empire (Norris, “Zola” 274). They include Hod Brackenridge, a miner turned tramp; several African American natives of Wilmington, North Carolina, and two brothers who hail from the patrician, southern Manigault family. Their stories are told through a panoramic lens that encompasses the closed American frontier, the theaters of the Spanish-American War (beginning in Cuba and then extensively in the Philippines), the post-Reconstruction South and the 1898 race riot and coup d’état in Wilmington, and, finally, the urban-industrial centers of the American imperial metropolis. In relating their stories, the novel employs a complex interdiscursivity, alluding to works of fiction, history, newspapers, photographs, political cartoons, and early motion pictures, and an interweaving of narrative modes, moving from realism to melodrama, burlesque, and Dos Passos-like “Newsreel” collages of documentary data. The scale of the nov-

el achieves epic proportions, in both form and content, and thereby reflects Donald Pizer's observation that "American naturalists have sought to depict American life with a grandiosity of sweep and largeness of meaning which has made the modern American naturalistic novel our epic literature" (*Twentieth-Century* 8).

As Bould points out, Sayles's "fiction . . . is concerned, like his films, with the intensive mapping of an extensive social reality," wherein "Events are always connected to each other through networks of social and economic relationships, or, more accurately, are part of the same socio-economic fabric" (15, 6). More specifically, *A Moment in the Sun* depicts "a world in which social and economic systems operate with the impervious tenacity of a machine," and Sayles portrays turn-of-the-century America as "an infernal machine" driven by hegemonic social and economic systems including capitalism and economic imperialism, racialism, and technological spectacle, all of which serve to construct fixed class, race, and gender identities (Meadowsong 32–33). The novel's argument, in relation to its characters, thus reflects Mark Seltzer's dictum that in naturalist, turn-of-the-century American culture "*bodies and persons are things that can be made*" (152).

"Gold Fever:" Capital, Labor, War

Hod Brackenridge's story spans the Alaskan gold fields, the mines of Montana and Colorado, the boxing ring, and the battleground of the Philippines. For Hod, as is common with many of Sayles's protagonists according to Bould, is that "Across all these differentiated territories, in all their environmental and socio-cultural specificities, can be traced the flows of capital" (7). Subject to the forces of capital and the anxieties over organized labor, Sayles describes Hod and his disenfranchised comrades as "homeless, desperate men . . . blown about the world like cinders from a locomotive stack" (286).

Capital shapes Hod from early childhood, as indicated in a flashback chapter entitled "Salvation" that relates the exploitation of his homesteader father, Esam Brackenridge, by the railroad-banking corporate axis. Esam is a victim of the larger destruction of the Homestead system, which, as Henry Nash Smith writes in *Virgin Land*, was destroyed "by the land speculator and the railroad monopolist . . . [the] expressions of the larger forces at work in American society after the Civil War—the machine, the devices of corporation finance, and the power of big business" (191). Hod recalls how "it was the railroad advertising lured [his father] out West," where he settled in Kansas and "put a crop of sod corn in and waited for

the railroad to make his own land worth something" (111). Because of the corruption that resulted in locating the railhead in a different town, however, that land was never worth anything, until finally "It had been the banks and their tight money that drove his old man off the farm" (109). As Daniel J. Mrozowski argues in his analysis of Norris's *The Octopus*, the railroad corporation poses to the novelist problems of representation, and Sayles suggests similar difficulties in representing this opaque and powerful force of corporate control (162). Sayles writes, "It wasn't the fellas who worked on the road . . . and it wasn't the trains themselves." Rather, Esam and the other busted homesteaders believe "It was something big and dark and far off that was crushing them down, something that sent orders out that fixed the prices against you" (112).

The farm's foreclosure is the first instance of capital alienating Hod and forcing him into exile. As a young man and "barely off the farm," he finds work in Butte, Montana, as a copper miner for the Amalgamated Copper Company until the 1893 economic collapse further determines his experience. In the massive economic failure of the 1890s, an event which "expressed the fundamental flaws of an economy based on unregulated capital markets and entrepreneurial frenzy," Jackson Lears identifies the same forces as those that wrecked the Homestead system (174). Amalgamated, also known as the Anaconda Company, was just such an unregulated capital entity; it was initially subsidized by William Randolph Hearst before merging with John J. Rockefeller's Standard Oil to create one of the largest trusts at the turn of the century. And Lears also places blame for the collapse on the banking establishment, President Grover Cleveland and fiscal conservatives, and their repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act based on an erroneous belief that "the source of the collapse was the unstable currency created by the monetization of silver" (175). The result for Hod and other common laborers is that first "the Gold Trust had their way and repealed the Sherman Act, then Amalgamated tossed Hod and hundreds more like him out of their pits" (107).

In an effort to combat these corporate and governmental actions, Hod enlists in Hogan's Army, a regional offshoot of the Commonweal of Christ movement, and Jacob Coxey's "army," the first national protest movement against unemployment. The populist aggregation of indebted farmers and unemployed laborers becomes a humanistic and representatively American union, consisting of "miners and teamsters and railroad men, tillers of wheat and builders of bridges, Northerners and Southerners and men born, like Hod, in the far West" (109). For Hod, Hogan's Army is the means by which he may seek, as Pizer writes, "a new basis for man's

sense of his own dignity and importance" ("Is American Literary Naturalism Dead?" 13). Hod believes that "there must be some good men" in the halls of power, and that "if only they could bring the truth to Washington, truth in the flesh of a hundred thousand working men from every corner of the land, it would put the greenback boys on the run and there would be work and bread and pride enough to go around" (109-10). However, just travelling to Washington proves problematic. Blackballed not only by the mines but also by the corporate railroad, Hogan's Army resorts to commandeering a Northern Pacific train to travel the thousands of miles to Washington, and Sayles describes their progress eastward with the ambiguous image of a "Wild train coming." For the protesters, the "wild train" is a small but significant counterforce against the "big and dark and not so far off" forces of capital "crushing down on them" (112). For the privileged classes, however, Coxey's Army and like reform movements, embodied by the "wild train" metaphor, "seemed a portent of proletarian revolution," which alarmed men of property into seeking the aid of several institutions to suppress the movement (Lears 182). The character of William Hogan, the army's "General," articulates such suppressive collusion between the government, the railroad, the military, and the press to a group of sympathizers in Livingston, Montana: "We're not tramps and we're not cranks and we're not revolutionists. . . . We're just an army of honest toilers gone to tell the government what's right and what's wrong. . . . Our politicians are supposed to do that, but somehow the message gets lost on the trip. . . . The Northern Pacific won't carry us cause they don't want the truth to be known. The newspapers make fun of us, make us out as deadbeats cause it helps them sell papers" (113). As the Chicago *Herald* editorialized about the historical Commonweal of Christ movement, "The air seems to breed cranks and the demon of destruction is abroad on the land" (qtd. in Schwantes 3).

As the train progresses eastward, Hogan's Army is met by a succession of supportive crowds until federal troops stop and surround the train in Forsyth, Montana, where the majority of the protesters surrender peacefully. In Sayles's treatment, Hogan feels "betrayed by the [American] flag that hung from the bulkhead wall" and tells the sergeant guarding him that "you are bound to serve the United States government and its citizens, not the Railroad Trust" (119). While popular sentiment was overwhelmingly in support of Hogan's Army, the government, in tandem with capital, worked in mutual interaction to suppress efforts at class and economic reform. Ultimately, the free silver platform underlying the platform

of agricultural and labor reformers is defeated by “sound money” men and their “almost religious attachment to the gold standard” (Lears 149).

The 1896 discovery of gold in Alaska relieved pressure on the money supply of the 1890s, and gold becomes the next form of capital to shape Hod’s experience. Following the disbanding of Hogan’s Army and his migration to the Yukon gold fields, Hod’s trajectory follows that of Jack London, another participant in the Commonweal of Christ movement. As London writes in *The Call of the Wild*’s opening paragraph, “Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland” (53). When Sayles’s novel opens, Hod is aboard a steamship in the “press of the hungry, goldstruck mass of [men]” (5). Regarding the Yukon invasion, Seltzer argues that the “twin principles of gold and the machine are the economic principles that put bodies in motion across the landscape of the great white male North. . . . The delivery of men here indicates something more than transportation technologies. . . . It registers as well . . . the anti-biological and technological making of men and the replacement of the mother by the machine” (167). Significant to Seltzer’s point, while Esam Brackenridge appears in the novel, Hod’s mother is not mentioned once. Functioning in her place are surrogate machines such as the railroad, the steel cages of the Montana and Colorado mine shafts, and, here, the steamship *Utopia* that delivers Hod and the stampedeers into Dyea, the staging ground of the Yukon gold fields.

Hod and the other prospectors hope to find in the Yukon “the last place on earth the game aint been rigged yet,” as one miner says (6). However, the mining towns of Dyea and Skaguay operate in the same fashion as the railroad and mining trusts that crushed Hod and drove him to “gathe[r] all his life’s toil into one stake and chas[e] after gold” (11). Rather than an open frontier characterized by the myth of rugged individualism, Hod instead encounters “systems of measurement and standardization, and the disciplines of the machine process” (Seltzer 154). First, a detachment of Canadian Mounties guards the Chilkoot Pass into the gold fields and operates a weigh station regulating passage thereto; they mandate “a full ton of provisions. . . . Couple ounces shy and them red-jacketed sonsabitches’ll turn you back,” as Hod is told (6). Ascending the near vertical path up the Chilkoot Pass known as the “Golden Stairs,” Hod and the line of prospectors resemble a mechanical pulley conveying the required provisions to the summit: “The blasting cold air and the hazardous footing and the weight on Hod’s back drives all thought away, his whole

life tunneling down to the bend of the knees of the man in front of him, left, now right, now left, thigh muscles knotting as he follows in step" (11). While the Mounties at the summit embody the processes of regulation and standardization, the practices below operate in *laissez-faire* fashion, wherein men sell "Good clean rocks, ten cent a pound" for prospectors to roll in bedding for the weigh station and where an egg costs "five dollars" (10, 8). Passing busted prospectors on the Chilkoot, Hod feels his odds for a strike improve and is momentarily hopeful; however, the "toil of trace and trail" is a zero-sum game, which is illustrated by the theft of Hod's gear, the theft treated with indifference by the other prospectors and the mounted police. As in London's tales of the Yukon, "the difference between what counts as an agent and what doesn't is the difference between eating and being eaten" (Seltzer 167).

Frustrated again in this final attempt to assert agency, Hod is recruited by the historical Skaguay entrepreneur Jeff "Soapy" Smith and his henchman, the fictional and patrician southern planter-cum-pro prospector, Niles Manigault. Although not operated from a "far-off" locus of power, Smith's empire is part of the same socio-economic fabric as the Northern Pacific; both are cast as "big and dark" monopolistic social institutions committed to the ruthless exploitation of desperate and isolated individuals. In a lengthy passage of free indirect discourse, Hod outlines the scope and intricacy of Smith's socio-economic and institutional stranglehold:

They are always doing somebody, Jeff Smith and his crew. Doing the wide-eyed gold pilgrims coming in with their store-bought equipment and the scurvy-gummed sourdoughs coming out with the year's cleanup in their pokes. . . . The drinks are always on the house for the Deputy Marshal and an unofficial pharmacy operates over the bar and there are always helpful directions for stampedeers to "honest" merchants and hot deals that won't last more than a day. . . . There is spoiled flour topped off with the good stuff and sold out the back door, interests in sure-thing claims obtained from departing sourdoughs whose mothers have just died. . . . And always . . . there is the casual poker game [where one can be taught] the secrets of the Martingale system, where you double your bet with each play and are, therefore, given the immutable laws of mathematics, assured of victory. (96-97)

In Sayles's treatment, Skaguay illustrates Mary Lawlor's claim that "in the naturalist mode the West was pictured as a limited and often limiting geographical space that lacked the psychological and ideological colorings of a truly open frontier and cast regional identity as the product of 'material' forces rather than of individualistic enterprise" (2). Smith's

socio-economic machine reconfigures Hod as a patsy, known by the nom-de-guerre "McGinty," for Smith's fixed boxing matches. Explaining the significance of the alias, Smith relates his acquisition of a statue of a pre-historic man: "For the price of one nickel the curious were allowed to take a brief look. We named it McGinty" (39). Hod's new identity is solely manufactured to secure profit for Smith and to "absorb a certain amount of punishment. . . . And, if able, to deal some out" (36).

When Hod deviates from this mandate and kills an opponent in the ring, he is once again displaced by the forces of capital. Blamed for the lost money from the fixed fight, where "aint none of [the bets] on *you*," Hod flees from a lynch mob and onto another steamer bound for the mainland (99). Thus is he back tramping on the road, returning again to the mines, this time in Leadville, Colorado, where, in an analogous image to the prospectors packed into the steamship, he works alongside "men crammed in steel cages" (213). As Lee Clark Mitchell argues, such repetitive patterns and images raise our awareness of "being enslaved to a world we have not created" (20–21). Furthermore, when word spreads through the boomtown about Hod's unionist past in Montana, he is blackballed from work and labeled an "Agitator" (213, 220). Having come full circle, from the mines to failed attempts to gain agency via Hogan's Army and the myth of the frontier individualist, Hod enlists with the 1st Colorado Volunteers, an outfit created by the jingoistic fervor following the explosion of the *U.S.S. Maine*, where he is again reconstructed as "one little part of four hundred rifle-toting, cadence-shouting men" (286). The imperial military becomes the endgame for Hod and, by extension, disenfranchised labor, for those who are "light in the pocket and blackballed from the mines" (241).

In advance of the conflicts in Cuba and the Philippines, economists like David A. Wells theorized that "the disastrous frequency of business crashes," and the resultant unemployment and class conflict of the 1890s, "could be traced to industrial overproduction" (Lears 201). The solution was simple: opening new markets abroad to accommodate the production surplus. Henry Cabot Lodge agreed, and further emphasized the danger posed by disgruntled labor: "We must have new markets . . . unless we would be visited by declines in wages and by great industrial disturbances of which signs have not been lacking" (qtd. in Lears 201). Arguments followed to open the markets of Latin America and especially Asia at the end of the rifle barrel and the bayonet point, and the yellow press often positioned military engagement as a method to neutralize threats of class war-

fare feared by Lodge and posed by men like Hod. In the aptly titled “Kindling” chapter, Sayles alludes to the yellow press’ propagandistic political cartoons, which promised such benefits to be manufactured through war:

In the drawing there are a half-dozen young men standing aimlessly, many with their hands in their pockets, as if in line for a free lunch. They are placed, however, on a ramp leading into the maw of a huge iron pot atop a roaring fire.

The pot is labeled CUBA.

A leather-aproned Hephaestus-as-blacksmith grins down into the brew, steam curling around his large, boyish face—unmistakably a caricature of the Chief—as he pumps a large hand-bellows to excite the flames. A chute extends from the base of the pot, and marching out on it is a neat row of identical, uniformed soldiers with rifles on their shoulders.

THE CRUCIBLE OF WAR

—reads the caption, and the Cartoonist is hard-pressed to say whether the whole effect is critical or laudatory. The soldiers look manly and forthright, a vast improvement over the loafers they had once been. (105)

The cartoon portrays imperial war as an ameliorator amongst disaffected laborers—the “free lunch” crowd such as Hod Brackenridge—which will funnel the discontented into the army to provide “a foreign alternative to class war at home” (Lears 211). And, in the wake of the closed American frontier, exemplified by the social machinery operating even in the far-flung Yukon, the cartoon suggests that imperial war will regenerate white American men by subjecting them to an environment of combat and conflict, thereby stimulating an atavistic reversion to their instinctual Anglo-Saxon selves.

“Smoked Yankees” and “Slaves to our bodies”:

Race, Gender, and the Machine

Ronald T. Takaki, in his analysis of race and culture in nineteenth-century America, examines the oppression of blacks, Indians, Mexicans, and Asians, with a special emphasis upon technology’s role in their subjugation. And the figure of the Indian is especially relevant to this nexus of technology and race. Takaki explains that the railroad accomplished several feats toward the subjugation of the Indian: it facilitated increased white settlement of the West, it provided logistical and strategic support for the U.S. military, and it expedited the destruction of the buffalo by providing an efficient pipeline to Eastern markets. All of these developments

prompted the question posed by a writer for *The Nation* in 1867: “What shall we do with the Indian?” (qtd. in Takaki 174–75).

Takaki suggests there were two possible answers: extermination or subjection to the “the law and habits of industry.” One of the proponents of the latter solution was Francis Amasa Walker, whom Takaki compares to Twain’s Hank Morgan in his dedication to “the employment of technology and science to control nature and direct society” (175, 181). In 1871 Walker was appointed as commissioner of Indian Affairs whereby he proposed a reservation system, which would “enable the federal government to extend over Indians a ‘rigid reformatory discipline. . . . Based on ‘the principle of separation and seclusion.’” The argument followed that “the reservation would do more than merely maintain Indians: It would train and reform them” (Takaki 186). More specifically, the system would function like one of Morgan’s man factories: through seclusion and processes of assimilation, the Indians would be baptized anew into the American social machine and be prepared to “eventually enter capitalist and technological society” (Takaki 191).

Such social engineering reflects the experiences of Hod’s tramping companion, an Ojibwe from Wisconsin named Big Ten. Big Ten tells Hod about his experience in a Walker-esque reform machine, which aimed to educate Indians “to act civilized enough not to make the white people nervous” (174). To this end, a Catholic missionary sends Big Ten to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, whose motto, he relates, is “*To save the man . . . you got to kill the Indin*” (175).² The first process is a haircut, followed by the forced wearing of “these soldier-looking uniforms.” Then the children—Mohawk, Crow, Sioux, Blackfeet and Ojibwe—are placed “in a room where none of the other three boys talked your language” in an effort to force communication in English (175). The school’s assimilationist methods of forced language, dress, and appearance to reform the Indians into eventual industrial workers reflect the machine culture’s “rewriting of the natural and the natural body in the idiom of scientific management, systems of measurement and standardization, and the disciplines of the machine process” (Seltzer 154).

If Big Ten’s entrance into capitalist and technological America is involuntary, competing motivations of race pride and class mobility drive Junior Lunceford and Royal Scott, two young African Americans from Wilmington, North Carolina, to enlist in the U.S. Army in an effort to “seiz[e] war abroad as an opportunity to claim citizenship in an imperial nation” (Kaplan 18). What they find instead are racist and segregationist practices common to the whole social body being replicated within the

military institution. The result is their social and mechanical construction as "Smoked Yankees," the moniker for African-American soldiers in the turn-of-the-century imperial wars. Junior and Royal first appear in the text at Fort Missoula, Montana, enlisting in the colored 25th Infantry. As they're told, the Army "already got all their suits and they only want them what fits *in* them," revealing the mechanistic interchangeability of bodies. (24). Later, in one of the letters to his father, Junior reveals that the 25th is "*part of a specially chosen unit testing a novel mode of military transport*": the Infantry Bicycle Corps. Junior further relays in his letter that "*The bicycle requires neither water, food, nor rest, 'General Miles has written, and at times it appears that the same qualities are expected from the colored soldier*" (70). Other members of the regiment are more forthright in their opinion of the military's technological experiment. One soldier repeatedly suggests "*that the bicycle experiment is a ruse designed to humiliate the colored soldier rather than an opportunity for him to stand out from the pack*" (71). As Junior acknowledges, the 25th only becomes the Infantry Bicycle Corps because the white cavalry soldiers rejected the offer, the result being that "*the colored troops . . . are saddled with whatever duties our paler brethren-in-arms abhor*" (69).

These disparate duties extend from the training ground to the battlefield itself, such as unloading the equipment from the invasion vessels on the beaches of Cuba, about which Junior complains, "I don't see any of the white soldiers unloading cargo" (293). As Amy Kaplan observes, within the Army of the period "black and white male bodies had different symbolic resonance, a different signifying function in the political landscape" (142). As embodied by Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders at San Juan Hill, the white bodies signified a mythic regenerated masculinity; whereas for the black soldiers, racist invocations of biological determinism "allowed them to be assigned the most loathsome duties, but also positioned them ideologically . . . as a buffer between the white soldiers and the contagious environment" (142). Specifically, the all-black 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry regiments were christened the "Immune Regiments," due to the Lamarckian argument that because they were "physically closer to the terrain [and] more like 'natives' than like white Americans," they would be impervious to tropical diseases (Kaplan 142). While mobilizing for Cuba, Junior tells his father that "We've been the first called, I believe . . . because they think we're immune" (145). The novel reconstructs the 25th regiment's historical role as physical and ideological bulwark on the battlefield and exposes the substitution of this racist construct for biological fact; for after the battles at

San Juan and El Caney, Royal becomes seriously ill: "Guess I'm not one of them Immunes," he says (331). In brief moments of consciousness, he realizes that his whole career with the army has been to create just such a buffer, that the recruitment, training, and judgment of his peers are "just parts of an intricate, implacable process meant to bring a sharp-nosed, shrieking bit of metal and his own forehead to the same spot at the same instant" (334).

Women's bodies in the novel are likewise constructed in relation to American capitalist and technological society, signifying either as a "spectacle of desire" or as "the grotesque female body" (Campbell 235). The first identity appears in an early chapter appropriately titled "Commerce." After his first fight for Jeff Smith and Niles Manigault, Hod is informed that his hundred dollars' wage will be paid "in trade" by the prostitute, Addie Lee, thereby reflecting the implication of "the [female] body in the processes of capitalism" (Campbell 232). Furthermore, Addie Lee's body is portrayed not merely as a spectacle of desire for the miners, or as a commodity to be bought and sold, but it actually becomes a currency of exchange, suggested by the gold powder strewn throughout her hair and her evening ritual to pan "her washwater for gold dust" (68). As emblemized by Addie Lee, the figure of the prostitute represents the "mixed logic of physical capital: utterly artifactual and utterly physical at once, capital with a human face" (Seltzer 66).

The second figure is illustrated by Jessie Luncford, Junior's piano prodigy sister. She is infatuated with, and eventually becomes the lover of, Royal Scott, who is far beneath her social class in black Wilmington. Like Crane's Maggie, Jessie is largely conditioned by the sentimental romances mistaken for "transcendental realism" she devours: works by Charlotte Brame, Metta Victor, and Laura Jean Libbey. Even though the novels portray white heroines, when reading these fictions Jessie "imagines herself in the position of the heroines and by the end of the tale Nell Lestrangle or Poor Minnie Taylor of Little Rosebud are no longer so pale" (152). Jessie actually shares much in common with the first heroine, the protagonist in Rhoda Broughton's 1867 novel, *Cometh Up a Flower*, who is torn between duty to her family and her own sexual passion for a soldier. Jessie learns from these novels and the stories and lectures communicated to her by her servant and mother that "there is but one great adventure open to women"—romance and marriage—"And that hers has begun" with the penniless Royal Scott (153). Jessie experiences the *romance* with Royal, by whom she is impregnated; however, her *marriage* is to a different man due to the imposition of her father's pieties regarding class and respectability.

After the Lunceford family's forced exile from Wilmington in the aftermath of the coup d'état, Jessie's sub-plot transitions from melodrama to naturalism, as her life in New York City is characterized by her dual roles of laborer and mother-to-be. Within these urban conditions, Jessie's body becomes doubly mechanical and grotesque. First, Jessie joins other female laborers in "a wagon full of women, colored and white, loaded like sacks of grain" (531). The women are employed in a factory manufacturing statuettes of soldiers, wherein "Jessie tries to become an automaton, to drive complaint from her head and to make her motions as efficient and mechanical as possible" (537). Yet when Jessie's water breaks on the stairs of her tenement building and her father is forced to deliver the premature child, her body takes on a different, yet related signification. As Donna M. Campbell writes about the violent and involuntary struggle of childbirth, "the process of labor renders the body an inhuman machine driven by forces that the mind can't control" (235). Thus in the labor scene Jessie becomes a different kind of automaton; her body is described as a kind of hydraulic system, wherein force that is applied at one point is transmitted to another point: "Jessie is huffing now, balling handfuls of the bed-sheet in her fists, pushing down hard enough with her feet that her buttocks raise off the bed from time to time" (668). Jessie's double identity in the city thereby reinforces what Campbell describes as "the connection between industrial production and human reproduction," and the effect is that Jessie has reconfigured her body within capitalist and mechanized American culture (235).

"Pan American": The Spectacular Empire

Subtly positioned at the center of the novel's action is the figure of the imperial metropolis. This setting is where the social and economic forces, their "practices, institutions and relationships" most keenly "exist not in isolation from one another, but in actual, dramatic, mutual and dynamic interaction" (Bould 6). In other words, the metropolis is the site where anxieties over class, race and gender, and the emergent technologies of spectacle all emanate, converge, and are broadcast outward across the continent and the nascent empire. The Yellow Kid, a peddler for William Randolph Hearst's jingoistic New York *Journal*, regards New York City as "the center of the whole friggin works," "the center of America" (190, 207). Harry Manigault, technocrat, aspiring filmmaker, and brother to Niles Manigault, sees in New York "a machine with too many parts" and finds himself at a loss "to decipher the intermeshing rhythm of its gears, the design, if any, of its incessant motion and counter-motion"

(538). However, the imperial machine is best signified not by the actuality of New York City but rather by a manufactured aesthetic representation; namely, the 1901 Buffalo World's Fair.

As Robert W. Rydell states, "World's fairs performed a hegemonic function precisely because they propagated the ideas and values of the country's political, financial, corporate, and intellectual leaders" (3). Corporate rail, lumber, banking, coal, and agriculture interests comprised the board of directors of Pax 1901, as the Buffalo exposition came to be known, and its president was John M. Milburn, "an eminent attorney, trustee of Columbia and Barnard colleges, director of American Express Company, and a board member of Chase National Bank" (Rydell 129–30). Despite the egalitarian propaganda published in the *Pan-American Herald*, the fair's official publication, that stated how "eleven thousand people, including 'millionaires' and 'laborers in the most humble position in life' had subscribed to exposition stock," Rydell asserts that this fair, like its predecessors, "resembled a corporate autarchy" (129). Consequently, the group overseeing the fair constructed imperialist America in their own image as "the proper interpretation of social and political reality" (Rydell 3). This manufactured social reality is reflected in Sayles's presentation of the fair's "site map," which functions not only as a literal guide to the fair's layout but also as a symbolic mapping of its cultural vision. The map charts the constituent elements of the American corporate machine: "Mines, Railroads, Manufacturing, Agriculture and Government, Standard Oil, Quaker Oats," presided over by the crowning achievement of the fair, the phallic "massive Electric Tower that dominates the fairgrounds," an emblem of technological virility and supremacy (800). And moving throughout the fairgrounds is the character of Leon Czolgosz, William McKinley's assassin, who muses, "If the monster is Capital . . . then this is its lair" (800). He later assesses the commercial displays of the fair as "Idolatry . . . the Pantheon of false gods," and its visitors, "poor, deluded sleepwalkers [who] have come to worship them" (807). Etymologically, Czolgosz is quite correct in his assessment. As Rydell reveals, "The term 'fair' derives from the Latin *feria*, 'holy day'" (3). The fair thus functions as the site of ritual and symbolic worship of American capitalism; and, as with other religions, one of its precepts is the belief in expansion.

Near the conclusion of *The Octopus*, the capitalist Cedarquist has some parting words for Presley: "We'll carry our wheat into Asia yet. The Anglo-Saxon started from there at the beginning of everything and it's manifest destiny that he must circle the globe and fetch up where he began his march. . . . Tell the men of the East to look out for the men of the West.

The irrepressible Yank is knocking at the doors of their temples and he will want to sell 'em carpet-sweepers for their harems and electric light plants for their temple shrines" (Norris 648–49). In this passage, Cedarquist voices the twinned racial and economic underpinnings of American expansionism common to the era and championed by Norris himself. Musing on Admiral Dewey's engagement of Manila, Norris writes in "The Frontier Gone at Last" that "the Anglo-Saxon in his course of empire had circled the globe and brought new civilization to the old civilization, and reached the starting point of history, the place from which the migrations began" (qtd. in McElrath and Crisler 31).

After the war, the Chief of the Bureau of Foreign Commerce identified the Spanish-American War as "an incident of a general movement of expansion which had its roots in the changed environment of an industrial capacity far beyond our domestic powers of consumption" (qtd. in Zinn 306). In his treatment of this economic aspect of the imperial wars, Sayles satirizes its rationale through a vaudevillian dialogue between two Irishmen in New York. Manila has fallen, and O'Malley and Gilhooley debate America's future in the Philippines. Gilhooley explains, "It's markets we want, Pat," though the motivation is lost on O'Malley who misunderstands the neo-colonial paradigm, proclaiming that he has no use for exotic goods from Manila. Gilhooley explains further: "We're not to buy from *thim* . . . They're to buy from *us*. As well as the Chinamen and the Japanese and the whole gang of yella monkeys as they've got over there. Providin a positive outflow of resarces and a ginerous influx of the auld roly-poly" (499). Gilhooley's explanation of the solution to surplus American resources also ironically recalls the argument Cedarquist presents to Presley and Magnus Derrick:

The great word of this nineteenth century has been Production. The great word of the twentieth century will be—listen to me, you youngsters—Markets. As a market for our production—or let me take a concrete example—as a market for our Wheat, Europe is played out. . . . We, however, have gone on producing wheat at a tremendous rate. The result is over-production. . . . The remedy is not in the curtailing of our wheat areas, but in this, we must have new markets, greater markets. . . . We must march with the course of empire, not against it. (Norris, *The Octopus* 306)

Furthermore, Gilhooley parrots the typical organicist arguments for imperialism, arguing that "It's all part iv a natural progression—first you had the concept of immynint domain, then it was mannyfist destiny, and now we've got binivilint assimilation, which leads, inivtably, to cappytalism"

(500). O'Malley remains unconvinced, opining that the installation of capitalism "seems like a great deal iv bother to go to . . . to sell a few chape suits," which ostensibly would plant the seed for higher orders of evolution. Gilhooley simply replies, "Tis the white man's burthen" (503).

The ironic dissonance between peddling cheap suits and the ostensible civilizing mission of imperial expansion illustrates how "The equation of markets and progress defined consumer demand as the engine of human improvement, indeed of civilization itself" (Lears 202). However, market economies were not the only signifier of progress presented at the World's Fair. As Rydell reports, the Fair also displayed an "updated synthesis of progress and white supremacy" (4). Whereas the 1893 Chicago World's Fair was famously named the "White City," Pax 1901 took on the identity of the "Rainbow City." Rydell writes that these "rainbow colors linked to displays with ethnological messages produced an unforgettable image of American progress" (136). These ethnologies were represented by a set of manufactured "Village" displays reflecting those populations subordinated by white America in the nineteenth century. They included a Filipino Village, a Mexican Village, an African Village, a Cuban Village, an Indian Congress (where Geronimo was displayed as a side-show exhibit), and across the street from "Darkest Africa," an Old Plantation Village. The villages' representations emphasized the inferiority of the non-white cultures and their reliance on "American tutelage in managing their future," thereby justifying the necessity to "maintai[n] and exten[d] America's colonial empire" (Rydell 143, 139).

Sayles depicts the Fair's colonial exhibits as pure spectacle, their geographies overshadowed by a pyrotechnic celebration occurring "directly above the Tower of multi-hued lightning over the Rainbow City from the black sky" (810). Thus while Harry regards the display as a celebration of "prosperity," "victory," and the herald of "this glorious new century," he also "wonders if they are watching in the Filipino Village and the Indian Congress and in the red-dirt courtyard of the Old Plantation, wonders what those dusky, vanquished peoples feel as they gaze upon this majesty" (811). Harry's double-consciousness reflects the idea that "progress was synonymous with America's material growth and economic expansion, which in turn was predicated on the subordination of nonwhite people" (Rydell 4). Meanwhile, his brother Niles schemes to use imperial war to replicate the model of military conquest, subordination and "progress" in the Philippines, arguing that because of his heritage—"We understand how to operate a plantation"—he will succeed in exploiting "an underdeveloped land" and "a soon-to-be advantageous labor situation" (659).

By all accounts, the Electric Tower was the literal and figurative apex of the Fair. Again invoking spiritual diction, a reporter for *American Architect and Building News* opined that "The Electric Tower is the climax. . . . It is the altar at the head of the aisle of increasing brilliance, spread with the cloth of white and illumined by golden candles" (qtd. in Rydell 136). The color symbolism, in contrast to the colonial villages, is readily apparent. Furthermore, the Tower functions as the symbolic monolith of American technological superiority; the Fair's ideological messages and representations of reality are transmitted outward, to the nation and beyond its shores, via this emblematic antenna. In Sayles's treatment, its power is located in the technologies of the nascent mass media, including the yellow press and the emerging film industry, and the technologies of destruction.

One of Sayles's recurring techniques is to reproduce these technologies within the text itself and to emphasize their interrelationship, illustrating Zena Meadowsong's claim that "the naturalist novel reproduces the operations of a mechanism it cannot both escape and expose" (34). Referring to *Maggie* and *The House of Mirth*, she reveals how each narrative "calls attention to the mechanical conditions of the aesthetic object—and to the mechanical conditions of the narrative (as aesthetic object) itself" (34). Sayles reveals a similar reflexivity in reproducing the mechanical in his narrative, at times in a fashion reminiscent of Dos Passos's "Newsreel" segments. In a brief chapter outlining the techniques of the yellow press entitled "The Daily Outrage," the narrator states that "The art of it lies in what first strikes the eye, and what that in turn stimulates in the mind of the reader." Furthermore, the headline must communicate "only the most vital, most incendiary of the words" (85). In this way, Sayles reproduces within the narrative-as-artifice one of the artificial methods by which the taste of empire was stimulated by the millionaire press:

CONJECTURE THAT WARSHIP
MAINE BLOWN TO PIECES BY
ENEMY'S SECRET
INFERNAL MACHINE (86)

Alongside newspaper headlines manufactured to enrage, the novel exposes the representation of racial Others as they are ethnologically depicted at the Buffalo Fair. Sayles presents several chapters involving a character working for Hearst's *Journal*, known simply as the Cartoonist, whose generic name indicates the generic racialism common within the news industry's presentation of the war and its subordinated native populations.

Bonnie Miller argues that American cartoonists of the era “communicated through a shared language of stock images,” which included the same “visual codings of gender, race, and sexuality” (58). Early in the American involvement in the Philippines, the Cartoonist finds that depicting “The wily Filipino is a bit of a problem,” and his cartoon makes use of “the same peon’s rags he has used for the Mexicans the Chief hates so much and more recently for the noble Cuban *insurrectos*.” Furthermore, “Even the shade of skin he has left relatively unaltered, a delicate cross-hatching to give shape to the exposed areas and suggest something between white and negroid” (517). Whereas Cuba was often initially coded as white in the cartoons, signifying its worthiness of American “rescue,” the racial diversity in the thousands of islands that make up the Philippines seems to confound the Cartoonist, and the portrayal of a mixed-race Filipino grants him some merit for American “liberation.” However, as the American mission transitions into occupation and then counter-insurgency against Filipino rebels, the mixed-race figure disappears in another aptly named chapter—“Devolution”—wherein the Cartoonist believes that “Cross-hatching won’t do it. To set off the white of the bone in the nose, the white of the rolling cannibal eyes, the hanging shell beads and stiff fronds of thatch around the waist, you need pure black, midnight black, so much ink that it soaks through the pad to stain the desk beneath” (701). As Miller reveals, such “devolution” also occurred in cartoon portrayals of Cuba as American policy shifted from liberation to occupation. This shift, she writes, “went hand in hand with blackening and infantilizing the Cuban, visually marking the retreat from the mission to free Cuba” (68). The Filipino is likewise infantilized by the Cartoonist, who sets him against a burly Uncle Sam, “sleeves rolled up, arms crossed, balefully staring down at the wretched, threatening Filipino, who comes only to his shins. AMERICA’S PROBLEM CHILD” (702). By resisting the American forces with armed conflict, the “unruly” Filipino thus joins but is also distinguished from the other, “peaceable” colonial conquests who are likewise infantilized: the “humble Cuban Peasant, brim of his straw hat turned back to reveal an honest if uncomplicated face, building a sand castle with the ripe-breasted, silken-haired Hawaiian Girl” (702).

These cartoons express the anxieties about the “possibilities of indefinite possession” of foreign territories, which “raised disturbing questions of long-term racial amalgamation” (Miller 68). And this ambivalent attitude regarding annexation and incorporation of foreign states into the American nation reflects what Kaplan has termed the “Anarchy of Empire.” She argues that “The pursuit of imperial desire risked absorbing

aliens into the domestic sphere, and the resulting racial and cultural intermixing threatened ultimately to make the United States internally foreign to itself" (6). The perceived threat of American racial and cultural transformation resulting from the conquests abroad is thus reenacted in what she calls "the assault on Reconstruction at home" (18).

To counter this ostensible threat, the same techniques developed by Hearst, Pulitzer, and the other magnates of the national press are adopted throughout the text's geography at the local level, most notably by the *Messenger* newspaper in Wilmington, North Carolina. In a community where African Americans control the city government, the ruling white elite characters feel humiliated by their perceived failure to "hold onto our heritage, to our custom of living," and they institute a campaign to create their own "Daily Outrage" by stoking the specter of rampant rape and miscegenation in the local press to instigate a coup d'état against the black politicians (47). Within this intrigue, Sayles again formally reproduces the interrelated machines employed toward this goal: the printing press and weaponry. Drew Milsap, the typesetter for the *Messenger*, is called by his editor "an extension of this wonderful machine," the Linotype printing press where Milsap takes some pride in its motto, "*Here we scribe truth in hot lead*" (225). In titling the chapter "Erratum," Sayles exposes the paper's motto and its racist propaganda such as "NEW OUTRAGE IN EAGLE ROCK" and "NEGRO DOMINATION: HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?" (225, 227). When Milsap questions the veracity of the stories, recalling that he had read the same story a month earlier in a Raleigh newspaper, he is told by the editor, the historical Thomas Clawson, that "we have a public duty to fulfill. We mustn't let mere facts stand in the way of larger truths" (229). These "truths," of course, reflect the white anxieties prompted by the majority African American government of Wilmington. Despite efforts at instituting literacy tests at the polls and enforcing grandfather clauses, the white elite conclude that a "revolution" is their only recourse to reassert their dominion; consequently, they manufacture the facts of sexual assault performed upon white women. When the historical Alex Manly, editor of the African-American *Wilmington Daily Record*, publishes an editorial with a differing account of sexual relations between the races, Clawson drafts a counter-editorial: "A Negro Defamer of the White Women—of the *Christian* White Women of North Carolina. . . . Attempted Assault by Black Brutes" and orders its reprinting in every issue leading up to Election Day, November 10, 1898, the day of the Wilmington Race Riot (353).

Clawson's order to Milsap for the printers to "hold onto the slugs" used

to create this headline indicates the ideological affiliation between the machineries of weaponry and the media (354). Commenting on the Linotype printer, Milsap feels “that there is God in the machine, in the active interplay of slides and matrices, of wheels and pulleys and discs and shafts and springs and ejectors, of hot lead and cold steel” (412). Milsap is naïve and quick to attribute mystical qualities to the machines he operates, and although he observes the social mechanism manufacturing the Wilmington coup and recognizes the “active interplay” between the “daily headlines of [racial] outrage, the editor’s meetings with important men, the cartoons reprinted from Raleigh, even the arsenal he stumbled upon the other day in the storage room—cases of shining new Winchesters and Colt pistols”—he is unable to realize his own complicity as “the man who feeds the machine” (355–56). Thus the figurative and ideological weaponry of the editorials and the cartoons act in tandem with the technologies of destruction: both machines consist of “springs and ejectors” and “hot lead and cold steel.”

Given his long career as a filmmaker, Sayles understandably investigates the sociopolitical role of early cinema alongside the yellow press and the developments in weaponry. Of the motion picture camera, “It is not so different in principle from the Gatling gun,” says Harry Manigault, now producing war films alongside the historical Edwin S. Porter and William Paley for the Thomas Edison Company (564). Similarly to Milsap, the technocrat Harry is naïve to the weapon-like power of the camera, believing that “one device makes itself repeatedly vulnerable while the other deals out lead with precision” (564). Conversely, Kaplan explains that the motion pictures developed simultaneously with late nineteenth-century imperial expansion and that motion picture “cameras are not just tools of perception but also of destruction”; therefore, “Films about the Spanish-American War can be seen as part of the arsenal of the new American empire” (150–51).

Film then likewise functions in the novel as the newest and perhaps ultimate ideological machine constructing the characters according to typologies of race, gender, and class. As with the cartoons, Kaplan reports that in these early narrative films “Blackness on the screen was a mobile signifier, transferable to a variety of different colonized groups, [which] had the effect of making them generically interchangeable and thus unreal.” For instance, she reports that African Americans were hired to play Spanish soldiers in a film about the battle of San Juan Hill, wherein “the threat of armed black men . . . is evoked and ridiculed by costuming them as Spanish,” which in turn evokes further associations with “Spanish coward-

ice" (160). Sayles introduces a similar film—*Advance of Kansas Volunteers at Caloocan*—in a recreation of Colonel Frederick Funston's Kansas Volunteers operating in the Philippine theatre. On a New Jersey soundstage appears Jubal Scott, a survivor of the Wilmington riot and the brother of Royal, now serving in the Philippines. Jubal relates, "The white boys can play the fool cause the camera pointed elsewhere, looking right down the line of all the colored being Filipinos" (661). When the cameras roll, and the white soldiers charge the line of "Filipinos," the white violence that was an actuality in Wilmington is transformed into spectacle although the supremacist ideology is the same. In the riot, Jubal encounters a mob with "pistols out," and when "more white men with rifles arrive . . . Jubal is running, running with the rest" (478). Thus Jubal's panic and flight in the film when the actor playing Colonel Funston approaches him with drawn pistol. Jubal "hops up and lights out for the trees," which is not an act of "inspired" improvisation as the director believes, or a source of racialized slapstick for the white audience—"People laughing in the theater when he run off"—but it is an instinctual response to the meaning of very real violence and terror (663, 891). As Jubal describes the white coup d'état in Wilmington, before he emigrated to New York, "They got soldiers marching in lines. . . . They got a whole army out there killing people" (485).

In placing the New York *Journal*-peddling Yellow Kid at a screening of another film—*The American Soldier in Love and War*, a Biograph production set in the Philippines that also used African American actors to portray the Filipinos—Sayles further examines the mass media's complicity in propagating the economic, racial, and gendered ideologies driving the war. The Biograph Company's catalog describes the film thus: "The first scene shows the young American officer parting with his sweetheart and starting for the Philippines. The second shows the regiment leaving its post to embark on a transport—then comes a fight in the brush, then the wounding of the young officer; his capture and rescue by a Filipino girl, and finally his meeting the sweetheart and her father in the Filipino hut, where he has been nursed back to life" (qtd. in Kaplan 155). While accurately reproducing the film's narrative, Sayles also filters it through the Yellow Kid's subjective experience:

So they run off the screen and drums start pounding at the back of the Hall and on the screen this bunch of darkies run in wearing skirts made of palm leafs and nothing else only a couple got a bone in their nose, waving their spears and swords and the soldier boy uses his last shot to plug one of them dead and then they're all over the guy, grabbing his rifle and one stabs him with a sword and they got him down on his back

and start to do the googoo dance while the biggest darky stands over him with a spear ready to finish him off. . . . It don't even help when this doll wearing not much more than the darkies runs in and throws herself on top of the soldier. . . . When their smoke clears somehow there's the looker from back home kneeling by the wounded soldier boy and the pals have got the drop on the native doll. Only then the wounded guy does a lot of palavering and pointing and finally the girl from home falls wise and gives the doll her necklace as thanks for saving his bacon and the soldiers lay off of her. She seems pretty gaga about the necklace, clutching it to her melons and falling on her knees in front of the white girl. The looker from home and the soldier grab hands then . . . and the Yellow Kid can't take no more. (890–91)

As Kaplan argues, *The American Soldier in Love and War* “frames a foreign war in part through gender and racial anxieties at home” (159). The soldier, of course, represents the promise of regenerated white masculine supremacy through the subjugation of a primitive society. In their roles as rescuer and nurturer, both the Filipina woman and the white woman “represent the desire to serve as the desire for subjugation” (Kaplan 158). The emphasis on the necklace, aside from its erotic appeal for the Yellow Kid, reinforces the economic rationale for the conquest of the Philippines, as the American commodity becomes a symbol of worship, bringing the Filipina to her knees in a sign of subservience to the civilizing American forces, which will plant the requisite seeds of desire for a market economy. In this way, as Kaplan reads the scene, “the white woman gives beads to the Filipina as a sign of gratitude but also bondage” (159). Finally, Kaplan suggests that this film “might be viewed as an instrument for putting the white New Woman under control by showing her the model of willing submissive native women” (159).

A third film summarized in the narrative imagines the execution of Leon Czolgosz at Auburn Prison, a character who believes that his assassination of William McKinley will be the final thrust to stop the capitalist machine and bring “blessed release” (811). In the chapter “Variety Arts,” the 1901 Edwin S. Porter–produced film entitled *The Execution of Czolgosz with Panorama of Auburn Prison* joins *The American Soldier in Love and War* and *Advance of Kansas Volunteers at Caloocan* in a triple-feature. In presenting the three films in rapid succession—“It goes by so fast and then they are in Auburn”—Sayles reflects the mechanism of cinema itself (891). As Harry explains,

The movement, of course, is an illusion. Inside the Beast there are cylinders that move in concert with other cylinders, celluloid coated with

chemicals cranked on a spool and held in its groove by a claw mechanism, and passed, hopefully at a consistent rate, in front of an aperture that allows a finite flash of light to hit it before being wound back into darkness. The image borne by that light and captured in the chemicals is only a photograph, as still as any other. But rolled in succession with the other photographs caught on the strip of film, the human eye is fooled—(564)

For the audience, their eye is likewise fooled into believing a coherent ideological narrative, linking, as we have seen, anxieties over race, gender, and now class into a manufactured reality. The spectacle of film prompts laughter, visceral thrills, and especially violent indignation from the audience when the figure of Czolgosz is introduced: “‘Murderer!’ hollers somebody else, standing up from his seat and pointing, and for a moment it is so real Jubal thinks maybe they will rush the screen and hang the man themselves” (892). The scene shifts to Czolgosz strapped into the electric chair, and “when they make sparks crackle up on both sides of the screen . . . people cheer” (892). The audience’s reaction illustrates Seltzer’s claim about turn-of-the-century America’s “fascination with pure and immediate and violent action—with the pure performative that instantly connects conception, communication, and execution,” which, he says, is indicated by “the rapid adoption of the electric chair and the ‘deadly current’ as the socially acceptable form of legal execution in the 1880s” (11).

A chapter titled “Alternating Current” appropriately concludes the novel. And through its allusion to one final historical film Sayles suggests the damage wrought by this “infernal machine,” as well as the implications for the nation moving forward. The title refers to a type of current wherein the flow of electricity repeatedly reverses direction; in closing his novel with this chapter and image, Sayles ironizes the novel’s title by issuing a summative interrogation of national progress, the ostensible product of the cultural machine dramatized and critiqued throughout the course of the narrative. Alternating current was used to execute Topsy, a circus elephant, on January 4, 1903, at Coney Island’s Luna Park. Having killed three of her trainers in three years, the last of whom fed Topsy a lit cigarette as part of an act, Topsy was deemed a threat to humanity. Her execution was witnessed by fifteen hundred spectators; additionally, Thomas Edison had a cameraman on hand that filmed the electrocution, a film seen by audiences throughout the United States, which afforded all Americans the opportunity to literally “go see the elephant.” In the novel, working for Edison, Harry Manigault captures the execution on camera, and as the throngs leave the site of Topsy’s execution, having “seen what they

came for," the display becomes a figurative and national case of "seeing the elephant," of American experience and transformation purchased at great moral cost. For Harry, the psychic toll on humanity exerted by the literal and social machinery dramatized in the novel becomes a concluding song lyric that "won't leave his head": *You absent-minded beggar / Be you city-sport or jay / If you want to see the Elephant / You must pay, pay, pay!* (955).

Complementing "Alternating Current" is a brief, opening "Frontispiece" depicting Uncle Sam and Lady Liberty "standing side by side on the shore" and facing west. Above their heads and "dominating the page is a question mark" (3). Sayles's *A Moment in the Sun* begins to fill in this vista by dramatizing the diverse events and material and mechanical conditions that constructed an imperial national character. And by "affixing its beam" upon this crucial and often whitewashed historical period, the novel also gives the epoch its own "moment in the sun" by holding it up for our contemporary examination and by challenging us to consider what force this new American "infernal machine" will exert on the next century and on "the strain and stress of the world" (Kaplan 212).

NOTES

1. An extensive bibliography, provided by McSweeney's, the book's publisher, identifies the primary and secondary sources Sayles researched during the novel's composition, which include several canonical American literary naturalists: Jack London, Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Kate Chopin and Charles W. Chesnutt. See the full bibliography at <<http://www.mcsweeneys.net/books/amomentinthesun/bonus/bibliography>>.

2. A paraphrase by Big Ten. The Carlisle school's actual motto was, "To civilize the Indian, get him into civilization. To keep him civilized, let him stay."

WORKS CITED

- Bould, Mark. *The Cinema of John Sayles: Lone Star*. London: Wallflower P, 2009.
- Campbell, Donna M. "Women Writers and Naturalism." *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Keith Newlin. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. 223–40.
- Kaplan, Amy. *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.
- Lawlor, Mary. *Recalling the Wild: Naturalism and the Closing of the American West*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers UP, 2000.
- Lears, Jackson. *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877–1920*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.
- London, Jack. *The Call of the Wild*. Claremont, Canada: Broadview P, 2010.

- Meadowsong, Zena. "Romancing the Machine: American Naturalism in Transatlantic Context." *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Keith Newlin. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. 21–36.
- McElrath, Jr., Joseph R. and Jesse S. Crisler. *Frank Norris: A Life*. Chicago: Illinois UP, 2006.
- Miller, Bonnie. "The Image-Makers' Arsenal in an Age of War and Empire, 1898–1899: A Cartoon Essay, Featuring the Work of Charles Bartholomew (of the *Minneapolis Journal*) and Albert Wilbur Steele (of the *Denver Post*)." *Journal of American Studies* 45 (2011): 53–75.
- Mitchell, Lee Clark. *Determined Fictions: American Literary Naturalism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989.
- Mrozowski, Daniel J. "How to Kill a Corporation: Frank Norris's *The Octopus* and the Embodiment of American Business." *Studies in American Naturalism* 6 (2011): 161–84.
- Norris, Frank. *The Octopus: A Story of California*. New York: Penguin, 1994.
- . "Zola as a Romantic Writer." *McTeague*. Ed. Donald Pizer. New York: Norton, 1997. 273–74.
- Pizer, Donald. "Is American Literary Naturalism Dead?: A Further Inquiry." *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Knoxville: Tennessee UP, 2003. 390–404.
- . *Twentieth-Century Literary Naturalism: An Interpretation*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1982.
- Rydell, Robert W. *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1987.
- Sayles, John. *A Moment in the Sun*. San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2011.
- Schwantes, Carlos A. *Coxey's Army: An American Odyssey*. Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1985.
- Seltzer, Mark. *Bodies and Machines*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1950.
- Takaki, Ronald. *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2005.