Imperial Media

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2. Indeed, an early episode in which the protagonist’s sister, conceptualizing his penis as a telegraph key, transforms it into a fetish object (22), would seem not unfairly emblematic of the novel’s own treatment of old media.
3. In his official report, Serge makes sure that the reader does not miss this point:
   Many attacks on communications . . . seem to be carried out in areas of no military import, and with little practical end. The inconvenience caused to the overall machinery of empire by the interruption of the chain of orders between (for example) a country club and its caterers is negligible. From a symbolic point of view, however. . . . (250)
Serge does not finish the last sentence (the latter ellipses are in the original), but he hardly needs to.
4. This is as plausible a candidate as any, perhaps, for a defining moment containing en germe the potentialities of our own age—which is only to show, in another way, the abiding presence and relevance today of Victorian and post-Victorian ways of thinking.
5. The telegraph was, of course, well established by the later nineteenth century, by which time the most salient development, as I will show in chapter two, was the spread of the submarine networks. The ear-oriented technologies of the telephone and the phonograph were developed in the 1870s; the eye-oriented technologies associated with cinema, meanwhile, were following a rather precisely parallel path. Wireless emerged in the late nineties, immediately capturing the imagination of the public, as well as writers including Kipling, whose eerie, eponymous tale of the new technology wonderfully evokes its spookier aspects. (For recent discussions of “Wireless” see Beer, “Wireless,” as well as Menke, Telegraphic Realism.)
7. I adapt the idea of “conceptual integration” from Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. See their The Way We Think, as well as Turner’s The Literary Mind. I may here note that
elsewhere in this book my thinking about the relationship between these two symbiotically related systems has been informed, I hope for the most part unobtrusively, by work in this field. At times my analyses of particular texts invoke the tools and vocabulary of this theoretical tradition; more broadly, I have found it productive, in conceptualizing my project as a whole, to think in terms of a sustained, creative encounter or interchange, at the cultural level, between two ideational fields.

8. Menke writes of “Victorian studies’ turn to media” in the years straddling the turn of the twenty-first century (Telegraphic Realism, 255).

9. See Otis, Networking; Kreilkamp, “A Voice Without a Body”; Picker, Victorian Soundscapes; Menke, Telegraphic Realism. (For a study of cultural responses to communications technology during the Modernist period, see Goble, Beautiful Circuits.)

10. Menke’s indispensable Telegraphic Realism is a salient case in point, reserving as it does its most substantive engagement with empire for the final two pages of its “Coda,” in the brief discussion of Cranford that closes the book. Another important study (by Nicholas Daly) of the “sometimes literal” (Daly, Literature, Technology, and Modernity, 1) collision of literature and technology in the modern age, while focusing primarily on the (British and American) domestic fronts, makes a stimulating detour into the colonial world, devoting a chapter to a reading of Kipling’s “Mrs Bathurst,” which convincingly argues for the existence of “a special resonance” (ibid., 60) between the Boer War and the cinematograph at the turn of the twentieth century. Then, too, there is Dracula: famously adduced by Stephen Arata (in 1990) as a particularly striking example of late-Victorian fears of “reverse colonization,” and discussed for its treatment of media by Jennifer Wicke (in 1992), Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel has since been subject to analyses (by Thomas Richards, Laura Otis, and Chris Keep) which combine in various ways these two thematic foci. I do not discuss the novel in depth here, both for this reason (it has been much discussed already) and because it is in fact in many respects a somewhat unconventional or unusual representative of the corpus of texts I want to explore here, which are in the main set in, or in any event more unequivocally concerned with, Britain’s actual colonial possessions.

11. This formulation, adopted from a phrase by communications scholar James Carey, becomes a keynote in work by figures like Otis and Menke: “If the telegraph became a thing for the Victorians to think with, one of the main topics they used it to think about was thinking itself” (Menke, Telegraphic Realism, 135).

12. Haggard wrote in his journal: “I commented on the fact that he had wide fame and was known as ‘the great Mr. Kipling,’ which should be a consolation to him. He thrust the idea away with a gesture of disgust. ‘What is it worth—what is it all worth?’ he answered. Moreover he went on to show that anything any of us did well was no credit to us: that it came from somewhere else: ‘We are only telephone wires.’ As example he instanced (I think) ‘Recessional’ in his own case and She in mine. ‘You didn’t write She you know,’ he said, ‘something wrote it through you!’ or some such words” (Green, Rudyard Kipling, 10).

CHAPTER ONE


2. Albeit with the inclusion of a nauseating scene featuring vats of rendered fat meant to provide ocular proof of a defilement traditionally contested in British accounts.

4. It is, of course, as evidence of this durability rather than as an “authentic” example that I have chosen a twenty-first-century movie to introduce this Victorian trope—real Victorian examples will follow in due course.


6. In a passage whose penchant for hyperbolic antithesis would not have disgraced Macaulay himself, Seeley asserts: “The colonies and India are in opposite extremes. Whatever political maxims are most applicable to the one, are most inapplicable to the other. In the colonies everything is brand-new. There you have the most progressive race put in the circumstances most favorable to progress. There you have no past and an unbounded future. Government and institutions are all ultra-English. All is liberty, industry, invention, innovation, and as yet tranquility. Now if this alone were Greater Britain, it would be homogeneous, all of a piece; and, vast and boundless as the territory is, we might come to understand its affairs. But there is at the same time another Greater Britain, surpassing this in population though not in territory, and it is everything which this is not. India is all past and, I may almost say, has no future” (Seeley, The Expansion of England, 204).

7. A contemporary history of the laying of the transatlantic cable is Field’s History of the Atlantic Telegraph to the Return of the Expedition of 1865. For a recent, popular history see Gordon’s A Thread Across the Ocean.


9. In her Children’s History of India, M. B. Synge depicts Dalhousie as a hero-martyr perishing virtually in the act of reterritorializing India by the construction of communications networks: “A colossal worker, he sought to bind together the scattered parts by telegraph and railway” as well as canal, dying soon after “when his physical strength failed to bear the burden” (quoted in Carter and Harlow, Archives of Empire, 548).

10. The blood-colored jacket of the first American edition, upon which a red-turbaned Indian glares with red-eyed menace, gives a fair indication of the writing within.

11. “The film is a textbook example of the Lacanian thesis on how the subject’s truth is constituted by the discourse of the Other: the narratrice gradually puts all the pieces together and (re)constructs the events, realizing that she was unknowingly the central piece of an intricate plot—in short, she finds her truth outside herself, in the intersubjective network whose effects elude her grasp” (Žižek, Enjoy Your Symptom!, 151–52).

12. “What, then, is the Matrix? Simply what Lacan called the ‘big Other,’ the virtual symbolic order, the network that structures reality for us. This dimension of the ‘big Other’ is that of the constitutive alienation of the subject in the symbolic order: the big Other pulls the strings; the subject doesn’t speak, he ‘is spoken’ by the symbolic structure” (Žižek, The Parallax View, 312). The quotation also appears, virtually verbatim, in Žižek’s essay “The Matrix: Or, the Two Sides of Perversion,” in The Matrix and Philosophy, 244.

13. While we have all read strained attempts to force literary texts to fit into such paradigms, I must confess that the treatment of the Indian network in nineteenth-century British accounts may be one of those cases leading one grudgingly to suspect that the Lacanians might be on to something.

14. Sir Charles Crosthwaite’s phrase, made the title of Jan Morris’s chapter on the rebellion in Heaven’s Command: An Imperial Progress (238–248).

15. Tracy, for his part, hedges his own bets in a footnote: “This statement is made on the
authority of Holmes’s ‘History of the Indian Mutiny,’ Cave-Browne’s ‘The Punjab & Delhi,’ and ‘The Punjab Mutiny Report,’ though it is claimed that William Brendish, who is still living, was on duty at the Delhi Telegraph Office throughout the night of May 10th” (Tracy, *The Red Year*, 46).

16. An event Rujub had unwittingly foretold by calling forth a kind of cinematic, magic-lantern vision during his act.

17. A scenario rather reminiscent of the vampire hunters’ use of Mina in the roughly contemporaneous *Dracula*, a novel which (again) Chris Keep, Laura Otis, and Jennifer Wicke have all considered in relation to developments in information technology.

18. An interesting anticipation, perhaps, of “All India Radio,” the telepathic corps forming the central conceit of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*.


20. Insofar as my reading of Kipling’s fiction suggests its profound inflection by the Mutiny, it must also acknowledge that his “engagement,” in Don Randall’s words, “with the emotionally fraught issues of the Mutiny topic is, for the most part, oblique, allusive, and allegorical” (Randall, “Post-Mutiny Allegories of Empire,” 98). In his essay on *The Jungle Books*, in which he discerns “post-Mutiny allegories of empire,” Randall writes: “Unlike so many of his predecessors and contemporaries—Meadows Taylor, G. A. Henty, Flora Annie Steel, among others—Kipling never produced what one might properly call a mutiny tale.’ Given, however, Kipling’s status as the popularly acclaimed ‘bard’ of the Indian empire, his silence upon the topic seems strange indeed. . . . Making an abundantly documented case, [Patrick Brantlinger] establishes the 1857 revolt as an emotionally charged, key referent of later-nineteenth-century imperial mythmaking and ideology. To accept, then, the main thrust of Brantlinger’s argument is to recognize that the Mutiny constitutes, for Kipling, an *unavoidable* topic. The question is not if but rather where and how he addressed it” (ibid., 97).

21. Another figure that might be mentioned here, though no willing servant of Empire, is the leprous “Silver Man” from “The Mark of the Beast.” The formless, or half-formed, body of this uncanny “creature” is incapable of articulate speech or determinate gesture; nonetheless it positively radiates inchoate and vaguely meaningful expression. Strictly speaking, the leper is of course “de-formed” by disease, but the figure is depicted as more “pre-formed,” embryonic; one is reminded of the etymological provenance of “information,” precisely the quantity that his shapeless body cannot produce. The Indian emanates only repeated, cryptic “mewings”; similarly, his body transmits nonverbal, wavelike signals rather recalling Kristeva’s “pulsions”: “though the Silver Man had no face, you could see horrible feelings passing through the slab that took its place, exactly as waves of heat play across red-hot iron—gun-barrels for instance” (Kipling, *Life’s Handicap*, 188), this last phrase referring to the hastily improvised inquisition the protagonists assemble in order to force speech from the figure. But utterance, when it comes, like the unnameable tortures the Englishmen inflict, literally cannot be represented. His subsequent hieratic gesture, however, proves efficacious as a performative, as the victim of his curse is cured. The tale thus provides a horrible but eloquent image of the Indian as an uncanny and presymbolic signifying body, the agent of a grotesquely somatic (infantile or bestial) semiosis enjoined (here, at heated gunpoint) to produce information.

22. During a recent Google search for “Macaulay” and “Indian” I inadvertently typed “f” instead of “d” and was immediately prompted to click on the phrase “macaulay’s [sic] infamous statement”—which, out of curiosity, I did, only to learn that there is still some disagreement about *which* statement in the Minute this phrase should refer to.
23. In the article version of Homi Bhabha’s “Of Mimicry and Man,” later incorporated into The Location of Culture, “infamous” is actually made part of the title of Macaulay’s Minute, through a (Freudian?) typographic error: “The absurd extravagance of Macaulay’s Infamous Minute (1835) . . . [etc.]” (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 127).

24. I adopt here the mode of expression characteristic of conceptual metaphor theory. See Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors We Live By.

25. It is his aged gull’s ignorance of “the lightning-post” (Kipling, Plain Tales from the Hills, 114) that assures the deception’s lasting success. Sylvia Pamboukian discusses the deceptive use of the telegraph in this story in considering the theme of science and fraudulence in Kipling, arguing that “[i]n Kipling’s stories, modern technologies, such as the automobile and the telegraph, both act as conduits for supernatural phenomena and participate in frauds which fool gullible bystanders into believing in the supernatural. For example, in ‘The Dreitarbund’ (1887) and ‘In the House of Suddhoo’ (1886), women and Indians are conned by the skillful use of the telegraph into believing that another person has magical abilities. Conversely, in ‘By Word of Mouth’ (1887), a telegraph may have been used to carry a message from beyond the grave. In ‘Wireless’ (1902) an experimental radio may have been magically co-opted by poetic spirits trying to communicate with a like-minded scientist. While in the former two stories women and Indians are gullible figures, easily manipulated by charlatans who exploit the telegraph’s potential, the white men in the latter two stories are equally confused by the telegraph and the radio, as are we as readers. We are unable to distinguish between deception, coincidence and legitimate supernatural phenomena. Taken together, these stories probe the nature of gullibility in the modern world: they ask whether gullibility is inherently a part of the modern condition since technology diminishes our ability to distinguish confidently between the legitimate and the fraudulent” (Pamboukian, “Science, Magic and Fraud in the Short Stories of Rudyard Kipling,” 430).

26. It is tempting, indeed, to consider the youthful episode as a kind of primal scene or formative event in Kipling’s career, one which may have contributed to the proliferation in his work of the Indian information worker—a symptomatic figure, perhaps, whose obsessional replication may have been a kind of imaginative attempt to exorcise the anxiety-making specter of posthuman union with the native.

27. The telegraph influenced Hemingway in his drive to “pare his prose to the bone” (Carey, Communication as Culture, 14). (Of course, Kipling’s own narrative voice could demonstrate a similar plainness.)

28. That “telegraphese” might be the natural language of power is implied by a minor Kipling poem, which argues that power may inhere in the unspoken, or at least that the language of the dominant tends towards the radically laconic. Contrasting the linguistic predilections, and putatively the essential natures, of “the Celt” and “the English,” Kipling concludes, referring to the latter: “In telegraphic sentences, half swallowed at the ends, / They hint a matter’s inwardness—and there the matter ends. / And while the Celt is talking from Valencia to Kirkwall, / The English—ah, the English!—don’t say anything at all!” (Kipling, Actions and Reactions, 240).

CHAPTER TWO

1. In his Telegraphic Realism, Menke also invokes Bakhtin, proposing to read the telegraph “as a chronotope for realist fiction” itself (95, emphasis original), aligning the technology, and its associations of boundless connectivity, with the generic ambitions of writers
like George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Henry James. But other chronotopes could be discerned or constructed from the media ecologies of the nineteenth century. If the connective wire could figure the mimetic project of the realist novel, a range of media, I want to show, helped to underpin later-Victorian figurations of an imperial system whose rapid growth and evolution presented significant problems of collective conceptualization.

2. “[S]ome of the most spectacular engineering triumphs of the Victorians, most notably the ocean-traversing steamship and especially the submarine telegraph, precipitated a fundamental restructuring of imperial political thought” (Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 526).

3. The idea, as Bell puts it, “that the world had shrunk to a manageable size” (ibid., 528).

4. Useful studies of Innis and his work include Carey, “Harold Adams Innis and Marshall McLuhan”; Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind*; and Watson, *Marginal Man*. The influence of Innis on modern thought is greater than his relative obscurity might indicate, largely owing to his influence on McLuhan.

5. A brief rehearsal of the Mahdist rebellion, which I believe constitutes one important subtext within Corelli’s novel especially, may be helpful: In the early 1880s Muhammad Ahmad, a holy man calling himself the Mahdi (“Expected One” or “Guided One”), defied the British power in Egypt at the head of an army of dervishes. After the annihilation of an Egyptian force under General William Hicks in 1883, the popular and charismatic Charles “Chinese” Gordon was sent to Khartoum, ostensibly to supervise the withdrawal of Egyptian forces from the Sudan. Once in place, however, Gordon unilaterally changed course, announcing his intention to resist the Mahdists, who besieged Khartoum in March 1884. In January of the following year the city was taken and Gordon killed, giving rise to widespread grief back home for the Christian “martyr,” as well as popular anger directed at the Prime Minister, who was perceived as having callously abandoned Gordon to his fate. Victoria, as outraged as any of her subjects, allowed a “furious telegram” excoriating Gladstone to be transmitted *en clair* (Trench, *The Road to Khartoum*, 293) (see also note 16).

6. I have especially in mind “the familiar textbook triumvirate of mid-Victorian imperialist ideology” (John Gross’s phrase, quoted in Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the Uses of History*, 97): Seeley’s *The Expansion of England*, discussed above (1882); James Anthony Froude’s *Oceana: or England and Her Colonies* (1886); and Sir Charles Dilke’s *Problems of Greater Britain* (1890).

7. Any account of such technologies, particularly the phonograph, must be indebted to the work of Lisa Gitelman, who considers “mechanized inscription as integral . . . to the climate of representation that emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century and has dominated the twentieth” (Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines*, 2). For other important recent work on the phonograph and its cultural impact see John Picker’s *Victorian Soundscapes*, as well as Ivan Kreilkamp’s essay, “A Voice without a Body: The Phonographic Logic of Heart of Darkness.”

8. On Haggard’s relationship to the imperial romance, see Katz, *Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire*, and Chrisman, *Rereading the Imperial Romance*.

9. See Galvan, “Christians, Infidels, and Women’s Channeling in the Writings of Marie Corelli” and *The Sympathetic Medium*.


11. Corelli’s own considerable dislike of Gladstone and his politics was miraculously, if only temporarily, transmuted to grateful adulation by a pair of personal visits (“The Grand Old Man came again,” she exulted to a friend) (Masters, *Now Barabbas Was a Rotter*, 88).
12. Despite his anti-imperialist principles, of course, in 1882 Gladstone “executed one of
the great U-turns of Victorian foreign policy” (Ferguson, Empire, 233), occupying Egypt.

13. The phrase is Bernard S. Finn’s. See Finn, Submarine Telegraphy.

14. Which incidentally makes a hash of the novel’s own chronology: Gordon’s death is,
in effect, exploited as both a past and a future event.

15. As he opines in a letter to a correspondent in Mauritius, the recipient of much daft
speculation in a similar vein: “Now here is an interesting point. Our Lord is a man, as a Man
He must be in some definite place. Where is He? He rose and ascended from Mt Olives. He
descends (Zach. xiv) on Mt Olives. Where is He now? He is in the true Temple above the
Altar, just over Jerusalem. You are at Port Louis, I am here, A is at Cape of Good Hope, B is
in America. All prayer must pass by and through Him. He is above Jerusalem where Stephen
last saw Him, all our prayers ascend by and through Jerusalem as per sketch” (quoted in
Trench, The Road to Khartoum, 185). Gordon’s biographer describes (though unfortunately
does not reproduce) the accompanying sketch, as “show[ing] the Temple as a sort of celestial
telephone-exchange, with one line going up to heaven, others radiating out to Mauritius, the
Cape and the United States” (ibid.). Clearly Corelli’s “big idea” did not emerge from a con-
ceptual vacuum.

16. This would certainly be appropriate: from start to finish, the public narrative of
Gordon’s ordeal in Khartoum unfolded in close relation to information systems, from his
obsessive telegraphing (“Gordon inundates us with telegrams without giving us any sat-
isfactory intelligence; Wolseley complained”) (D. Green, Three Empires on the Nile, 188)
to his sudden telegraphic isolation (as the Khartoum cable to Cairo was cut by Mahdist
forces) and the eventual publication of his telegrams. And his death, again, sent an enraged
Victoria to her own private telegraph office, to vent over the web: “Casting grammar and
security to the winds, she communicated her fury to Gladstone, Hartington, and Granville
in unciphered telegrams, sharing her thoughts with every telegraph operator between the
Isle of Wight and their destinations. ‘These news from Khartoum are frightful, and to think
that all this might have been prevented and many precious lives saved by earlier action is
too frightful’” (ibid., 198–99).

17. If there is anything to this identification, the Heliobas novels would also stand in an
interestingly contrapuntal relationship to Corelli’s satirical roman à clef The Silver Domino,
in which she would lambaste, among other enemies, the Prime Minister, whom she once
again loathed.

18. Aronson, Victoria and Disraeli. As Richard Aldous puts it: “[Theirs] was in many
ways an attachment of courtly love . . . an intense and powerful friendship” (The Lion and
the Unicorn, 247–49).

19. See Weintraub, Disraeli, 454; Hibbert, Disraeli, 314.

20. See Pearson, Disraeli, 224, 250.

21. “Disraeli,” writes Wohl, “had frequently been represented over the course of his long
career as conjurer or wizard and it was an image that indicated considerable admiration
for his political tenacity as well as criticism of his want of that most Victorian characteris-
tic, moral earnestness. Now, in the emotional climate of the Eastern Question, the image
of wizard was employed to suggest how Christian England had mysteriously come under
the influence of a Jew. . . . One explanation was that Disraeli had bewitched the nation
and so mesmerized it that normal political values were now suspended” (Wohl, ‘Ben JuJu,’
114). Adding that “[t]he images of wizard and conjurer take on a special import for they
played on misconceptions of Jewish Kabalistic magic and its supposed obsession with
supernatural, occult, and even necromantic practices” (ibid., 114), Wohl cites a number of
contemporaneous examples of Disraeli’s associations with wizardry:
The Spectator drew its readers’ attentions to the Prime Minister, “This great Isra
elite magician [who] appears and with his wand transforms the whole political
horizon.” Disraeli has “a half-belief in the cabalistic sorcery, with all its wild
spiritual machinery . . . .” (ibid., 114)

In its obituary the Spectator argued that he “displayed the genius of a political
magician in making English nobles, and English squires, and English merchants
prostrate themselves before the image of the policy which he had set up.” . . .
A letter by Horrocks Cocks, published in the Nonconformist (10 April 1878),
argued that “the Jewish Premier” in his antagonism to Russia was driven as
much by Semitic as patriotic urges, for he shared “all the instincts, passions,
prejudices, and antipathies of his race,” and Cocks continued, just as Esther
had conquered at the court of a real emperor, so “Benjamin—but not by his
beauty—has become a great conjurer in the court of a nominal Empress, Vic-
toria.” (ibid., 133)

22. “You are a Chaldean?” I inquired.
   ‘Exactly so. I am descended from one of those “wise men of the East” (and,
by the way, there were more than three, and they were not all kings), who, being
wide awake, happened to notice the birth-star of Christ on the horizon before
the rest of the world’s inhabitants had so much as rubbed their sleepy eyes. The
Chaldeans have been always quick of observation from time immemorial.”
(Corelli, Romance, 74)

23. Heliobas is “a man . . . in whose veins runs the blood of the Chaldean kings—earnest
and thoughtful Orientals, who were far wiser in their generation perhaps than we, with all
our boasted progress, are in ours” (ibid., 221).

24. Niall Ferguson paints a portrait of Victoria at Osborne, on the Isle of Wight, which
strikingly suggests both her eager interest in, and her “virtual” relation to, the empire: “In
one of the more obscure corners of Osborne House is a clue to why the Queen felt in closer
touch with her Empire as she grew older. It was not considered worthy of preservation
when the house was given to the nation in 1902, but downstairs in the Household Wing was
the Queen’s telegraph office. By the 1870s messages from India could reach here in a matter
of hours; and the Queen read them attentively” (Ferguson, Empire, 167–68).

25. The epithet used by Jan Morris in Heaven’s Command: An Imperial Progress (490–513).

26. Viewed as a contribution to the cultural construction and circulation of Victoria’s
public image, Corelli’s fiction must also be considered in the context of what John Plunkett
has shown to be a “media making of the monarchy” without historical precedent. As Plun-
kett (whose study focuses on the period 1837–1870) notes, in the nineteenth century “[t]he
royal image was constantly available on a diverse assortment of media, ranging from engrav-
ings and magic lantern shows to street ballads and photographs’ (Plunkett, Queen Victoria,
2–3), with the popular press playing an especially crucial role in “the cultural production of
Victoria” (ibid., 7).

27. For a discussion of these and other (often contradictory) accounts of this ancient

28. “Nearly all the bodies,” reports Holly, “so masterly was the art with which they had
been treated, were as perfect as on the day of death thousands of years before. Nothing came
to injure them in the deep silence of the living rock: they were beyond the reach of heat and
cold and damp, and the aromatic drugs with which they had been saturated were evidently
practically everlasting in their effect” (Haggard, She, 184).
29. As she asks Holly: "[H]ow comest thou to speak Arabic? It is my own dear tongue, for Arabian am I by my birth. . . . Yet dost thou not speak it as we used to speak. Thy talk doth lack the music of the sweet tongue of the tribes of Hamyar which I was wont to hear. Some of the words too seemed changed, even as among these Amahagger, who have debased and defiled its purity, so that I must speak with them in what is to me another tongue" (ibid., 146). And again: "Ah, thou canst speak the Latin tongue, too! It hath a strange ring in my ears after all these days, and it seems to me that thy accent does not fall as the Romans put it" (ibid., 147). Later Holly complains that Ayesha “speak[s] in Greek, which . . . I found . . . rather difficult to follow, chiefly because of the change in the fall of the accent. Ayesha, of course, talked with the accent of her contemporaries, whereas we have only tradition and the modern accent to guide us as to the exact pronunciation . . ." (ibid., 175).

30. Some thirty years later, Haggard wrote a novel, *When the World Shook* (1918), which reads in many respects like a (much-inferior) rehearsal of *She*, and in which cinematography (the medium being well established by this time) explicitly features. In it a trio of Britishers are shipwrecked on an uncharted South Pacific island inhabited by a prototypical Haggard lost race, “a wonderfully handsome people, tall and straight with regularly shaped features and nothing of the negro about them” (Haggard, *When the World Shook*, 65). Also according to authorial formula, in the island’s interior the Englishmen discover, and inadvertently rouse from a quarter-million-years’ slumber, the last two representatives of a god-like white race. One of the pair of sleepers, the beautiful Lady Yva (loved, as it emerges, by the narrator in another incarnation), proceeds to show the Englishmen scenes from the deep-historical heyday of her imperial people, by means of a “cinematograph show” (ibid., 204), causing the moralizing clergyman Bastin to muse:

I have heard a great deal of these moving-picture shows which are becoming so popular, but have always avoided attending them because their influence on the young is supposed to be doubtful, and a priest must set a good example to his congregation. Now I see that they can have a distinct educational value, even if it is presented in the form of romance. (ibid., 197)

I mention the later, derivative work because it suggests the existence of a kind of conceptual template in which moving pictures are, in fact, reliably constellated with a more or less fixed set of other narrative elements, particularly the trope of the indefinite preservation of life. Another I would adduce is the gargantuan, subterranean “top” (ibid., 320) which features in the later novel’s (world-shaking) climax. Described as a “gigantic wheel of fire” (ibid., 321) radiating phosphorescent, colored light rather than heat, this “monstrous, flaming gyroscope” (ibid., 323) is clearly a reincarnation of the great, flaming wheel of life from *She* (to be discussed presently).


32. Including Ottomar Anschütz, among others. See Frizot, *Avant le Cinématographe*.

33. The idea that Haggard may have been engaged in a kind of literary co-discovery or -invention of cinema is a notion I myself find intriguing, but it is certainly not a necessary one for my reading: the novelist had, to be sure, a wide range of existing visual media to draw upon at this moment in history.

34. One recent popular account of Muybridge and his work is entitled *The Man Who Stopped Time* (Clegg).
35. For these and other devices see particularly Rossell, Living Pictures; Ceram, Archaeology of the Cinema; Kittler, Optical Media; and Mannoni, The Great Art of Light and Shadow.

36. Tom Gunning notes that "[a]n alternative to the myth of cinema's sudden invention at the end of the nineteenth century by certain men of genius has often been to de-historicize cinema entirely, to situate its origins in pre-history, with analogies to cinema found not only in traditional shadow plays, but buried within the depths of humanity's most archaic origins, locating cinema's ancestors in the attempt to capture motion in cave paintings, the succession of images in Egyptian tombs, or in the shadows cast on the walls of Plato's cave" (Introduction, The Great Art of Light and Shadow, xxi). Writing essentially at the very moment of film's invention, Haggard already seems to probe ancient history, if not prehistory, in search of avatars of the cinema.

37. The conceit that they are confronted with, or actually inside, a giant optical device is reinforced by lines like this: "I rubbed my eyes, thinking that I was the victim of some hallucination, or that the refraction from the intense light produced an optical delusion" (Haggard, She, 292–93).

38. Not that the zoetrope was the only moving-picture machine of the age to which one might look for resemblances to Haggard's primal wheel. Indeed, in his The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema, Laurent Mannoni discusses another popular device from this period which went by the name "Wheel of Life"—a contraption whose slotted, phenakistoscopic discs allowed a kinetic sequence to be projected onto a screen, first developed in 1869 by the Scotsman Thomas Ross. "The Ross Wheel of Life," writes Mannoni, "quickly became one of the most popular parts of a lantern show" (233). (Mannoni's description of the mammoth "Lampadoscope" makes it, too, sound worthy of comparison with Haggard's device: this was a projecting lantern comprising "a large vertical iron wheel which moved by means of an intermittent mechanical system. The assembly must have been fairly enormous" [ibid., 232].) But I am finally interested less in identifying Haggard's ponderous wheel of life with any one, particular optical device than in situating his fiction in the context of an emergent culture of the cinematic.

39. A mere three years later Arthur Machen would out-Haggard Haggard in "The Great God Pan" (1890), a novella culminating in its own femme fatale's rapid slide down the evolutionary ladder: "Then I saw the body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being" (Machen, Tales of Horror and the Supernatural, 110–11).

40. His book of photographs, Animal Locomotion: An Electro-Photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Animal Movements (1887), the culmination of over a decade of work, appeared at roughly the same time as She; further books would appear later, including Animals in Motion (1899) and The Human Figure in Motion (1901).

41. An adumbration, perhaps, of the shifting sands of Erskine Childers's Riddle of the Sands (1915).

42. “[T]hou shalt rule this England," Ayesha blithely informs Leo, waving impatiently aside the horrified response ("But we have a queen already"): "It is naught, it is naught... she can be overthrown" (Haggard, She, 254–55). Soon after, Holly muses: "In the end she would, I had little doubt, assume absolute rule over the British dominions, and probably over the whole earth, and, though I was sure that she would speedily make ours the most glorious and prosperous empire that the world has ever seen, it would be at the cost of a terrible sacrifice of life" (ibid., 256).

43. See also David, Rule Britannia, 157–201.
CHAPTER THREE

1. Wells, *The Outline of History*, I.155. In this case I quote from the original (1920) edition. (Wells later altered the wording.) Subsequent quotations, however, are from the expanded edition of the *Outline* (1922).

2. Wells’s analysis here also well illustrates Christopher Bush’s claim, in his recent study of Chinese writing systems in the modernist imagination, that any given Western conception of the “ideograph” is really “at once a figure of Chinese writing and a figure of a relationship to China” (Bush, *Ideographic Modernism*, xviii).

3. Although, as the work of Laura Otis has shown, such conceptual cross-mappings were by no means always perceived as paradoxical.

4. Wells’s evolving conceptualization of “means of communication”—to use his own designation—was fairly elastic. It could refer, of course, to existing as well as possible technologies of both information exchange and transport—trains as well as telegraphs, airships as well as radios. But one cannot read works like *The Time Machine* and *The First Men in the Moon* without being struck by something of the sense of wildly expanded possibility they exude with respect to the question of what might constitute “means of communication” in the future. The new radio was merely one concrete embodiment of a transformed understanding of the relationship between and among a whole host of natural energies, as the electromagnetic theory of Maxwell, with its postulation of a continuum linking electricity, magnetism, and visible light, as well as other, more mysterious, waveforms, found spectacular realization during this period not only in the experiments of Marconi and others but in Röntgen’s similarly well-publicized discovery of X-rays in 1895.

5. For an account of the heliograph’s use in the war, see Harris, “Wire at War,” n.p.

6. In the latter it was used on both sides: the speaker of Kipling’s poem “Chant-Pagan” is an “English Irregular” who describes standing on “Kopje on kop to the sun,” watching “Our ‘elios winkin’ like fun” (Harris, “Wire at War,” n.p.).

7. The phrase is Arata’s; Asimov calls it simply “poetic justice” (Asimov, “Afterword,” 214).

8. A scene vividly rendered in an illustration from the novel’s original serialization in *Cosmopolitan*, which depicts a line of Martian tripods towering over parallel lines of demolished railway track, a shattered telegraph pole gripped in the extended pincer of the foremost invader. Thomas Richards writes of the paranoid fantasy of the archive of the other, on display in fiction like Erskine Childers’s *The Riddle of the Sands*. Beside this trope one might place the Victorian fantasy of the preternaturally powerful (telepathic or telegraphic) network of the other; fears of “native telegraphy,” in one form or another, were a commonplace in imperial fiction. To the Martians, of course, the Britons are the natives.

9. Later, the narrator’s brother, fleeing London (first on bicycle, then on foot, then leading a chaise), watches “two trains running slowly one after the other without signal or order—trains swarming with people” (the figure of the “swarm” is a favorite Wellesian trope, one seldom carrying positive associations). The sense of a lack of “order” is reinforced by the inference that the overcrowded trains “must have filled outside London,” since chaos in the metropolis has “rendered the central termini impossible”; the gravelly damaged railway network thus suggests nothing so much as a decapitated organism (Wells, *War*, 103).

10. By way of contrast: roughly contemporaneous invasion fiction like Louis Tracy’s *The Final War* tended to dwell with pride on the contributions made by subject peoples in India and elsewhere to the salvation of the imperial homeland.

12. “The undersea cable,” writes Armand Mattelart, “was one of the clearest illustrations of Victorian hegemony” (*Networking*, 11). See, too, the discussion of submarine telegraphy in the previous chapter.

13. Much as Wells’s expansionist Martians (or in the later text, Britons) are the paradigmatic embodiment of a space-biased culture, his Selenites are the perfect incarnation of a time-biased one; their emphasis on history and continuity is embodied in their internalized media of storage, mnemonic practices, and oral traditions and mirrored by their definite territorial limits and lack of expansionist ambitions. It is worth noting that a culture with no writing, and privileging oral and mnemonic practices, would surely have had, then as now, associations with non-Western, “traditional” cultures.

14. Many of whom, as Headrick notes, preferred to think in terms of “ocean railways” (the equally space-oriented steamships) when it came to Africa (*The Tentacles of Progress*, 49–50).

15. “And how will the New Republic treat the inferior races? How will it deal with the black? how will it deal with the yellow man? how will it tackle that alleged termite in the woodwork, the Jew?” (Wells, *Anticipations*, 177).

16. Recall the contrasting language used in “The Electric Telegraph” to characterize the (Anglo-American) transatlantic cable and the wire to India, respectively.

17. The referent in the original sentence is realism, but the charge’s applicability to media is assumed, precisely for the purpose of the comparison.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

1. Jeremy Campbell’s *Grammatical Man* and Everett M. Rogers’s *A History of Communication Study* contain accounts of Shannon’s and Wiener’s work in the context of WWII; for biographies of Turing and Wiener see *Alan Turing: The Enigma* by Andrew Hodges and *Dark Hero of the Cybernetic Age* by Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, respectively.

2. For a thorough account of WWI as information war see Kahn, *The Codebreakers*, 266–300.

3. There are in fact three possibilities floated within the story—the chief may be living but absent, living but present, or dead—but Pienaar resolves these into a single, stark either-or: there is a chief living within the kraal or there is not; this is, in essence, a figuration of information reduced to its minimal unit.

4. “[Octavian’s] malady,” Buchan writes, “seems to have been a nervous stomachic disorder to which he was always subject, and which became acute in times of stress” (*Augustus*, 77). It is difficult not to detect a substantial measure of self-identification in his admiration for the herculean feats performed by “[t]his pallid, dyspeptic young man” (ibid., 78).

5. He brings his “passion for order” and immense “capacity for reconstruction” (ibid., 69) to the task, a substantial part of which involves the creation of networks of communication and transport as well as the planned dissemination of cultural code-systems among the populace.

6. He is “a mixture of Rosebery and Balfour,” in the words of biographer Janet Adam Smith, who reads the novel as a *roman à clef* (Smith, *John Buchan*, 136).

7. Displaying a familiar brand of racism-inflected admiration, the intelligence officer Arcoll remarks, “If he had been white he might have been a second Napoleon” (*Prester John*, 77); his recent application of a similar epithet—“a sort of black Napoleon”—to Shaka Zulu...
(ibid., 72) serves conceptually to link the two figures, and their threats to the empire, in the reader's mind.

8. In her critique of the "conceptualization . . . [of] information and materiality as distinct entities," N. Katherine Hayles coins the phrase "the Platonic backhand," meaning the mental stratagem by which one first "infer[s] from the world's noisy multiplicity a simplified abstraction," then speciously "constitute[s] the abstraction as the originary form from which the world's multiplicity derives" (Hayles, How We Became Posthuman, 12).

9. It was Hitchcock, of course, who popularized the term—soon after filming his version of The 39 Steps, based on Buchan's novel.

10. Buchan's best-known character, Hannay was brought into being with the Great War: a former South African mining engineer who emerges as Britain's best, if not only, hope as it faces a succession of dire threats to its imperial hegemony. Hannay protects the integrity, often the very survival, of the empire against villains chiefly German in the thrillers The Thirty-Nine Steps (1915), Greenmantle (1916), Mr Standfast (1919), and The Three Hostages (1924), all set during the war and its immediate aftermath. The novelist would bring Hannay back for one final adventure in The Island of Sheep (1936).

11. In fact, the Germans mean to deploy their secret weapon in the Middle East, rather than Africa.

12. Buchan in fact refers to it twice: "I'm hanged," says Sandy Arbuthnot, "if I can imagine what card the Germans have got up their sleeve. It might be . . . a jewel like Solomon's necklace in Abyssinia. You never know what will start off a Jehad!" (Greenmantle, 26). In her study of "the fiction of intrigue" Yumna Siddiqi also notes this intertextual connection: "These novels suggest that imperial hegemony is threatened by disgruntled colonial subjects who have grand empire-building schemes of their own—in Prester John, a pan-African empire, and in Greenmantle, a pan-Islamic jihad that can be exploited by imperialist Germany" (Anxieties of Empire and the Fiction of Intrigue, 13).

13. In Mr Standfast, for instance, Hannay must confiscate a bag of "yellowish powder" which "prove[s] to be full of anthrax germs" (Buchan, Mr Standfast, 192–93).

14. Indeed, one can imagine the Barthes of Système de la Mode parsing "Greenmantle" into a "syntagmatic" chain along the lines of "tunic-girdle-turban": like Solomon's necklace, a pure string of symbols.

15. The phrase, meaning "[s]ay nothing—especially in circumstances where saying the wrong thing may get you into trouble . . . probably derives from the German word stumm meaning silent." http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/215700.html.

16. Later Stumm sneers at him, "I never liked the look of you. You babbled too much, like all your damned Americans" (Buchan, Greenmantle, 207).

17. For a discussion of the telegraph-bell see Clayton, "The Voice in the Machine."

18. With which disease he threatens to infect the British laboring classes; in Mr Standfast the reader encounters once more the threat of a more or less inchoate mass being shaped by a symbol or meme into a dangerous unity.

19. Or rather, the role of "honourable gentleman" (Buchan, Mr Standfast, 268) is, according to Hannay, simply one of the many Ivery has perfected: "He could play all parts well because he could believe in himself in them all" (ibid.).

20. One must however assume that even Blenkiron, though a representative of a democratic nation, does not intend here to open the door to the more radical suggestion that all class roles might be performative in nature.

21. Ivery's description of the Railway is an attempt to "scare" (ibid.) Hannay, and it succeeds, causing the captive hero to ruminate obsessively in his solitude: "I saw . . . an inn in
a snowy valley . . . a solitary girl, that smiling devil . . . and then the unknown terror of the Underground Railway” (ibid., 242).

22. Of which Blenkiron, in this respect Ivery’s true counterpart, says: “Flies don’t settle on it to any considerable extent. It’s got a mighty fine mesh, but there’s one hole in that mesh, and it’s our job to mend it” (ibid., 43). Buchan had established Blenkiron as supplement to Britain’s state information system in Greenmantle (“But so soon as I crossed the Danube I set about opening up my lines of communication, and I hadn’t been two days in this metropolis [Constantinople] before I had got my telephone exchange buzzing” [ibid., 154]). In Mr Standfast a good deal of the true war takes place offstage, a battle of secret networks. (Blenkiron tells the defeated Ivery: “I’ve been watching your Underground Railway for quite a time. I’ve had my men on the job, and I reckon most of the lines are now closed for repairs. All but the trunk line into France. That I’m keeping open, for soon there’s going to be some traffic on it” [Buchan, Mr Standfast, 279].)

23. In this latter respect Medina to some extent recalls Laputa, rather than the German agents of the previous Hannay novels.

24. James explicitly links anxieties of imperial fragility with the development of the paranoid trope of world conspiracy to be found in contemporaneous fiction: “The search for a common source for all the problems facing Britain and the empire was reflected in the thrillers of John Buchan and ‘Sapper.’ Both relied on their audience’s willingness to accept a world in which secret intrigues flourished and a handful of determined men could seriously devise schemes to overthrow governments or destabilise whole societies. . . . That the readers of such fiction believed that the basic structure of their country and empire was so brittle suggests a flagging confidence in both” (James, Rise and Fall, 374).

25. The multisensory assault on the Medinas’ victims—between the two of them they deploy visual, auditory, and even olfactory stimuli—suggests the tremendous power of propaganda campaigns in the media ecologies of the modern age.

26. See I. F. Clarke’s Voices Prophesying War for a discussion of Chesney and the future-war genre.

27. This connection is made clear in the following exchange between Medina and his mother:

   “Dominick, be careful. I would rather you confined yourself to our old knowledge. I fear these new things from the East.”
   He laughed. “They are as old as ours—older. And all knowledge is one.”
   (Buchan, Three Hostages, 113)

28. In the event Kharama, in a rehearsal of the plot of Greenmantle, turns out to be Sandy Arbuthnot in disguise, the real magician having died before. But until this eleventh-hour revelation the reader is made to understand the grave threat posed by this figure.

29. Which is not to say that the Hannay novels are entirely devoid of traditionally agonistic scenes: Hannay’s boxing match with Stumm comes to mind, as does his showdown with Medina in the Scottish Highlands.

30. I cannot resist mentioning one more such meeting: in The Three Hostages, Hannay bumps into the German engineer Gaudian, first introduced in Greenmantle, the moment he arrives in an obscure fishing village in Norway: “I could have shouted with amazement,” he says, “at the chance which had brought us two together again” (146).

31. I mean to invoke here Claude Shannon’s celebrated association of information with the measurement of uncertainty, as expressed in his mathematical theory of communica-
tion. (For an account of the relationship between the two concepts in information science see Von Baeyer, 69–80.)

32. The source is not given in the text, but the quotation can be found in an 1858 letter to Richard Buckley Litchfield, included in the 1882 biography The Life of James Clerk Maxwell: with a Selection from his Correspondence (Campbell and Garnett, The Life of James Clerk Maxwell, 306).

33. Lord Kelvin, “[l]ecturing to an evening crowd at the Royal Institution,” used “tubes of liquid dyed two different colors” (Gleick, The Information, 276).