REVERSE IMPERIALISM:
INVASION NARRATIVES IN ENGLISH TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY FICTION

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I

In *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad famously describes the colonisation of Central Africa as a "fantastic invasion" (Conrad 1995: 44, 58, 95), undertaken by heavily armed but fever-stricken hunters for ivory who are ultimately powerless against the unconquerable wilderness of the Dark Continent. To Conrad's narrator-protagonist, the jungle and its denizens appear to be awaiting patiently the "passing away" (44, 58) of the incursion, taking "a terrible vengeance" (95) on all those who, like Kurtz, are bold enough to expose themselves to the regressive temptations of savagery. The phrase "fantastic invasion" appears three times throughout the narrative, once in each section, thus indicating the consistency of the theme in Marlow's travelogue.

It is a different invasion story, however, that opens the book. Before Marlow begins his impressionistic account of colonial Africa, he relates a parallel tale set in an earlier time and in a different place. The invaders of this story are the ancient Romans, and the invaded territory is the area now occupied by London. In the anonymous first narrator's patriotic meditations which precede Marlow's story, the capital of the British Empire is envisioned as the origin of a "sacred fire" (17) that generations of explorers, traders, and conquerors have carried into the world. Innumerable bearers of the "torch" (17), the first narrator ponders, have disseminated the light of this fire to the four corners of the earth – and all their journeys have started *here*, on the Thames, the waterway connecting the imperial centre with an ever-growing periphery. In stark contrast, Marlow's narrative casts London as one of the formerly "dark places of the earth" (18) which owes its current position as an imperial centre to the fact that it once represented the periphery of a powerful empire itself. In what can be described in cinematographic language as a superposition, Conrad projects the image of the Congo onto that of the Thames, transforming the London area of "nineteen hundred years ago" (18) into an historical equivalent of the regions known to contemporary readers as "Darkest Africa."[1] Marlow evokes a fictitious Roman commander, in whom "the

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[1] After Henry Morton Stanley had described Central Africa as the "Dark Continent" in his second best-seller, *Through the Dark Continent*, in 1878, he went on to identify the Congo region as "Darkest Africa" – a region blacker than black, as it were. See Stanley's popular account of the "Emin Pasha Relief Expedition," which had just ended when Conrad came to the Congo in 1890: Stanley 1890. For a reconstruction of the "genealogy" of the myth of the Dark Continent, see Brantlinger 1986.

savagery, the utter savagery" (19) of primitive Britain causes the same ambivalent response that Marlow himself felt in the Congolese jungle, a mixture of attraction and repulsion described – in Conrad's characteristic diction – as "[t]he fascination of the abomination" (20).

The effect achieved through this narrative doubling is one of defamiliarisation. Intentionally disrupting the conventional narrative of the Briton as conqueror, Marlow awakens his listeners from their self-indulgent musings, disturbing them – as well as Conrad's contemporary readers – by conjuring up the converse scenario of a conquered Britain. By transferring Britain's role as the world's leading imperial power to a literary *alter ego*, Marlow makes visible in others (the long-fallen empire of Rome) the current situation of the national self. In doing so, he simultaneously points to the precariousness of England's dominant position: in his story, the light of the torch of civilisation invoked by the first narrator – in a metaphor suggesting permanence and continuity over the ages – is reduced to a mere "flicker" (19), a transient moment. As Marlow reminds his listeners, the history of British civilisation is brief in comparison to the long evolution of mankind: "darkness was here yesterday" (19), and it may not be gone forever. For remnants of Britain's primitive history – which was ended abruptly and by force – can always resurface, as Marlow later repeatedly implies, in words prefiguring the pessimistic outlook of Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*: "The mind of man is capable of anything – because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future" (63).[2] If the human psyche retains traces of all, even the remotest, stages of development, Marlow reasons, then it will always be susceptible to relapses into "savagery."

The opening frame story of *Heart of Darkness* is conventionally read as the expression of a more general fin-de-siècle malaise concerning the evanescence of civilisation.[3] It may be argued, however, that "Marlow at the same time alludes in his prologue to widespread fears over the potential extinction of Britain by military force" and that he "thus not only posits a metaphysical principle, but rhetorically exploits a pressing concern that exercised the minds of many during this period" (Matin 1997-98: 253f.). Although Conrad's multi-layered use of the invasion scenario is highly idiosyncratic, the scenario itself is by no means a literary innovation on his part. It plays upon a common theme in turn-of-the-century fiction. Short stories and novels employ-

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[2]   The corresponding passages in Freud's 1930 study read: "In the realm of the mind [...], what is primitive is [...] commonly preserved alongside of the transformed version which has arisen from it"; "[...] in mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish – everything is somehow preserved and [...] in suitable circumstances (when, for instance, regression goes back far enough) it can once more be brought to light" (Freud 1961: 68f.) As far as I see, Tim Youngs is the only critic to have pointed out this parallel; see Youngs 1988: 201, 203. For a more detailed discussion of Conrad's concept of psychic atavism and the Freudian analogy, see Frank 2006: 189-196.

[3]   Ian Watt's influential study *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, for instance, interprets Marlow's concept of "darkness" as constituting "the primary and all-encompassing reality of the universe" (Watt 1979: 250).

ing the theme usually transform London into the site of various kinds of invasion, casting the English in the role of the defeated and the colonised, and not always ending with a successful liberation of the British Isles. The frequency of works incorporating such a scenario – albeit for different purposes and to different degrees – corroborates the observation made by historian John MacKenzie that "the record of the Victorian period was not one of repeated imperial triumphalism" (MacKenzie 2001: 253). "On the contrary," MacKenzie writes, "the Victorian psyche gave far more prominence to failures and the reverses which were most likely to be depicted in Victorian art" (253). Even if I would hesitate to draw any general conclusions about the state of the collective "psyche" of Victorian England, the example of *Heart of Darkness* – and many other, lesser known works – certainly is a strong indication that "[a]lthough the Victorians seemed to develop a high degree of conviction in their right to expand and rule others, reassuring themselves that they were transporting a beacon of civilisation around the world, they remained morally anxious in the present and apprehensive of the future" (253).

Against this background, the present essay argues that the narrativisation of empire was more discontinuous, ambivalent, and polyphonic than a widespread, monolithic conception of "imperial discourse" would seem to suggest. It starts from the premise that, because literary modes shape imperial discourse in specific ways, it is worth paying close attention to the formal and thematic particularities of each mode – as well as to the discursive consequences that they entail. I shall begin by giving a short theoretical outline of my approach by focusing, first, on the concept of imperial discourse and, then, on that of the literary mode. The remainder of the essay will be dedicated to a reading of texts of various genres using the mode of the invasion narrative.

II

For the last thirty years, to analyse literary works from the age of imperialism has mostly meant to consider them as part of an all-encompassing discourse, along with non-literary, political or scientific texts. In 1978, Edward Said was the first to invoke "Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse" in a study of imperial literature, asserting that "without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient" (Said 1995: 3). Said's aim was to show that Western writing about the Orient cannot be considered independently of colonial activities in the areas concerned, or, more generally speaking, that discursive practices are inextricably linked to non-discursive ones. Although Said never explained what exactly his understanding of "Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse" was,[4] his methodological credo

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[4]   For a critical discussion of Said's use of the Foucauldian concept of discourse see Frank 2004.

proved particularly influential. In the years after the publication of *Orientalism*, many critics followed its example in emphasising the power/knowledge nexus that ties literature to imperialism, extending the scope of Said's concept of discourse by applying it to colonialism at large. The consensus in the most cited and anthologised studies of the 1980s seems to be that, as "an ensemble of linguistically-based practices unified by their common deployment in the management of colonial relationships" (Hulme 1986: 2), colonial discourse served to legitimise European supremacy and rule.[5] In 1991 two collections of essays juxtaposing "colonial discourse" and "post(-)colonial theory" in their titles appeared,[6] indicating that colonial discourse (rather than colonial literature, colonial ideology, or colonialism *tout court*) had become the principal object of the newly institutionalised discipline of postcolonial studies.

Despite the great heterogeneity of postcolonial studies today, it is safe to say that discourse analysis in the Foucault-via-Said tradition has remained one of the dominant approaches – if not *the* dominant approach – in the field. The concept of "discourse" has itself generated a prolific academic discourse, opening a whole new area of research and changing the way we perceive and critically discuss literature of the colonial era. At the same time, however, it has also introduced new constraints and limitations. One of the more unfortunate legacies of Said's groundbreaking study is a certain tendency to universalise. The concept of "colonial discourse" can be used to refer to all colonial powers and to all historical periods, regardless of *who* speaks *when* (and *where*) *about whom* (and *to whom*), in *what mode* of discourse etc. One of the most fervent criticisms of *Orientalism* has been voiced by Dennis Porter:

> [U]nlike Foucault, who posits not a continuous discourse over time but epistemological breaks between different periods, Said asserts the unified character of Western discourse on the Orient over some two millennia […]. He is thus led to claim a continuity of representation between the Greece of Alexander the Great and the United States of President Jimmy Carter, a claim that seems to make nonsense of history. (Porter 1994: 151)

This is a caricature, of course; yet it is certainly accurate to state that for Said, discourse appears to be essentially static. In what comes closest to a definition of the concept in his study, Said explains that Orientalist discourse constitutes itself out of "preexisting units of information," or "*idées reçues*," which are handed down from text to text, author to author, period to period, producing an uninterrupted "tradition" (Said 1995: 94). Said's model of discourse is deterministic. Although his declared aim is to do justice to every author's individual contribution to Orientalism,[7] he is also con-

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5   For the sake of brevity, I will only mention two particularly influential essays of the early and mid-1980s, both of which argue that the principal purpose of "colonial discourse" is to legitimise colonial expansion and rule: Bhabha 1983: 198; JanMohamed 1986: 81.

6   Williams and Chrisman 1994; Barker, Hulme and Iversen 1994.

7   In a much-cited passage of his introduction, Said explains that "unlike Foucault […], I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism" (Said 1995: 23).

vinced that "so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that [...] *no one* writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism" (3; emphasis added). Such passages suggest that Orientalism is a hermetically sealed system endlessly – and inescapably – perpetuating the same stereotypes. Misleadingly, Said employs the term "tradition" synonymously with "what Michel Foucault calls a discourse" (3), disregarding the fact that Foucault's intention in introducing his theory of discourse was precisely to challenge existing concepts based on the notion of continuity – including that of tradition.[8] In *The Order of Things*, Foucault repeatedly interrupts his argument to meditate on "the fact that within the space of a few years a culture sometimes ceases to think as it had been thinking up till then and begins to think other things in a new way" (Foucault 1994: 50).[9] The concept of discontinuity here implied is not without problems, however. While dramatising epistemological breaks *between* different periods, Foucault seems to imply that *within* each period every member of a given culture "thinks the same things in the same way." Instead of concluding that Foucault's theory is superior to Said's (as Porter seems to do) I would therefore argue that both have significant shortcomings and need to be complemented.

Two points, I think, are especially pressing. Firstly, and most importantly, the notion of discontinuity needs to be extended from the level of diachrony to that of synchrony. Even within individual periods, the vast body of texts related to imperialism constitutes not one homogeneous discourse, but a plurality of (sometimes conflicting) contemporary discourses, sub-discourses, and modes of discourse. Secondly, more attention needs to be given to the multiple factors – other than the discursive "limitations on thought" mentioned by Said – that impacted the production of colonial discourse. It is my contention that in the course of the postcolonial turn, literary studies have perhaps too readily abandoned alternative paradigms, theories, and approaches in favour of a general reconceptualisation of "literature" as "discourse" – something that the present volume, in focusing on imperial literature as "stories of Empire," sets out to rectify. The following sections use this opportunity to demonstrate the often-overlooked significance of literary modes in the shaping of colonial discourse. In my analysis of English turn-of-the-century novels, I shall argue that their narratives of reverse imperialism constitute a counter-discourse to contemporary imperialist narratives of progress and that this fact can be partly explained by the interplay between discourse and genre.

Problematically, however, Said does not tell us where in Foucault he found the claim "that in general the individual text or author counts for very little" (23).

[8]   See Foucault 1982: 21ff.

[9]   See also Foucault 1994: 217ff.

III

Before the invasion narratives of the turn of the century can be approached as a specific literary mode, it is necessary to differentiate the concept of "mode" from other understandings of genre. I borrow the term from Fredric Jameson's 1975 essay "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre," which later appeared, in a slightly modified and extended form, in his seminal monograph *The Political Unconscious*. Surveying the dominant traditions of genre theory of its time – the one associated with the name of Northrop Frye, the other with that of Vladimir Propp – Jameson's essay distinguishes two schools of generic criticism, "the *semantic* and the structural or *syntactic* approaches respectively" (Jameson 1975: 136). Whereas the latter defines genre as a "*fixed form*" and engages in "the building of a model" (137), the former gives an "account of the *meaning* of the genre" (136). When perceived as fixed forms, genres seem to be essentially continuous, which is why the syntactic approach is synchronic in orientation, reducing genre to its basic formal organisation. By contrast, the semantic approach is diachronic. Concentrating on central themes – as, in the case of romance, the antagonism of good and evil – it necessarily has to take into account the shifting social belief systems echoed in the texts' various treatments of these themes. Because it links the literary form to the social structure from which it emerged and thus makes possible a "genuinely *historical* account" (142) of genre, the semantic approach is compatible with Jameson's own project of a dialectical genre theory; it deals with genre in terms of a *mode*, that is, "a formal possibility which can be revived and renewed" (142).

In the present context, what is most crucial to Jameson's definition of "mode" is the observation that genre history is marked by what may be termed discontinuity within continuity: every time structural features recur within texts employing the same mode, they relate to different historical frameworks and consequently produce divergent meanings. Of course, this observation is in itself not entirely new. A similar point was made by Mikhail Bakhtin in his writings on the theory of the novel, which were still largely unknown to Western readers when Jameson composed his essay. In a chapter added to the 1963 re-edition of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin states that genres preserve "undying elements," but that these "elements are preserved […] only thanks to their constant renewal, which is to say their contemporization" (Bakhtin 1984: 106). Bakhtin goes on: "A genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously. Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre" (106). Both in the re-edition of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and in a 1973 footnote to "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin describes this dialectics of preservation and renewal in terms of "genre memory."[10] He writes: "A genre lives in the present, but always *remembers* its past" (106), later adding that the carrier of this memory is not the author – who has only limited knowledge of the genre

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[10]   The felicitous term is Morson and Emerson's. See Morson and Emerson 1990.

she or he writes in – but the generic tradition itself, as it is consciously or unconsciously evoked by the individual text.[11] Bakthin here has in mind a long-term memory – his example being Dostoevsky's participation in (and renewal of) the "serio-comical" traditions of Socratic dialogue and Menippean satire (see 106-121) – but the concept of genre memory may also be applied to more short-term forms of intertextuality. In both cases, the memory metaphor seems apt, since memory – like literary modes – both retains and renews.

Despite these obvious parallels, there are also crucial differences between Bakhtin and Jameson's respective approaches: although Bakhtin emphasises the constant reinvention of literary genres, he nevertheless seems to presuppose the relative homogeneity of generic traditions. For him, the function of genre memory is to ensure the unity of these traditions.[12] By contrast, even if Jameson does not make this point explicit, his essay allows for a conceptualisation of the mode as a formal possibility which may be realised in any kind of literary text – and which is therefore not limited to one (fixed) genre. Seen from this perspective, the relationship between individual text and genre appears as "a sort of participation without belonging – a taking part in without being part of, without having membership in a set," as Jacques Derrida phrases it (Derrida 1980: 59). While in literary writing, there is no "outside of genre," any text may freely choose between various available modes, only momentarily participating in a particular generic tradition, without being fully absorbed and appropriated by it. Genres, then, are syncretistic, since every mode may assume different generic forms. In the following, my point will be precisely that invasion fantasies appear not only in texts that may be generically classified as "invasion stories," but also in works of other – mixed – genres. In point of fact, they even occur in places where we would least expect them, such as the imperial romances of Henry Rider Haggard.

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[11]   Having asserted that Dostoevsky's novels are part of the great "chain" of texts that constitute the tradition of Menippean satire, Bakhtin asks: "Does this mean that Dostoevsky proceeded *directly* and *consciously* from the ancient menippea? Of course not. […] Speaking somewhat paradoxically, one could say that it was not Dostoevsky's subjective memory, but the objective memory of the very genre in which he worked, that preserved the peculiar features of the ancient menippea" (Bakhtin 1984: 121; Bakhtin's emphasis). In "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin makes a very similar point: "Cultural and literary traditions (including the most ancient) are preserved and continue to live not in the individual subjective memory of a single individual and not in some kind of collective 'psyche', but rather in the objective forms that culture itself assumes […], and in this sense, they are inter-subjective and inter-individual (and consequently social); from there they enter literary works, sometimes almost completely bypassing the subjective individual memory of their creators" (Bakhtin 1981: 249, n. 17).

[12]   After Bakhtin has explained that "[a] genre lives in the present, but always *remembers* its past, its beginning," he adds: "Genre is a representative of creative memory in the process of literary development. Precisely for this reason genre is capable of guaranteeing the *unity* and *uninterrupted continuity* of this development" (Bakhtin 1984: 106; Bakhtin's emphases).

IV

In the course of the postcolonial turn, no other literary genre has been linked so closely to imperialism as the adventure story. Martin Green's pioneering study on the subject even went so far as to identify adventure as the "energizing myth of empire" (Green 1980: xi), adding that the adventure tradition starting with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719 had "charged England's will with the energy to go out into the world and explore, conquer, and rule" (3). According to this approach, literature – in the form of a genre especially popular in the late Victorian period – helped to establish a particular attitude, or disposition, which can be described as the "spirit of adventure," or, as German critic Michael Nerlich put it in an earlier study, "adventure-ideology" (Nerlich 1987).[13] Green's contention is that the seemingly apolitical and escapist adventure tales of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries not only ideologically biased their readers (as pro-imperialist propaganda in disguise), but literally mobilised them, turning "dreams of adventure" into "deeds of empire," as the title of his study suggests. The late-Victorian variety of this colonial adventure-ideology is perhaps most succinctly expressed in *Allan Quatermain*, the 1887 sequel to Haggard's phenomenal best-seller *King Solomon's Mines*, where the author has his protagonist declare:

> […] that is what Englishmen are, adventurers to the backbone; and all our magnificent muster-roll of colonies, each of which will in time become a great nation, testify to the extraordinary value of the spirit of adventure which at first sight looks like a mild form of lunacy. 'Adventurer' – he who goes out to meet whatever may come. […] I am proud of the title, because it implies a brave heart and a trust in Providence. (Haggard 1995: 94)

By making these reflections of his first-person narrator part of a chapter entitled "Into the Unknown," Haggard explicitly links the motif of the quest – in this case: the quest for a "mysterious white race" (93) reported to live in the uncharted interior of sub-Saharan Africa – with the acquisition of colonies, portraying the business of empire-building as a boyish game of adventure and exploration. The expansion of the British Empire, it would seem, is merely the chance consequence of a disinterested "spirit of adventure." As a group of prototypical male Britons, accompanied by an inept Frenchman, travel into unmapped territory, the protagonists demonstrate their superiority over the indigenous population by meeting and overcoming natural obstacles, fighting and vanquishing fierce natives, and winning the affection of beautiful and exotic women.

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13   The German original of Nerlich's study fappeared in 1977. Its topic is the transition from the original knight-courtly adventure-ideology, which found expression in the *quête de l'aventure* of medieval romance, to the early modern epoch of bourgeois glorification of adventure beginning with the Merchant Adventurers and their redefinition of "adventure" in capitalist terms. Green's study sets in at the exact point where Nerlich's ends, introducing a third type of "adventure-ideology" which may be termed "colonial adventure-ideology."

Whereas *Allan Quatermain* thus unequivocally follows the conventional narrative pattern of colonial adventure, the novel *She*, published one year earlier, counters this familiar pattern with an alternative scenario. In *She*, which is not part of the Quatermain cycle, Haggard replaces his familiar cast while maintaining a sub-Saharan setting. Once again, Englishmen – this time, a Cambridge scholar and his adoptive son – travel into the unknown. There, they meet Ayesha, the two-thousand-year-old queen of a Central African tribe, who speaks admiringly of England as "an empire as that of Rome" (Haggard 1991: 254), only to add that Queen Victoria could be "overthrown" – to the great "dismay" of her English listeners (255):

> The terrible *She* had evidently made up her mind to go to England, and it made me absolutely shudder to think what would be the result of her arrival there. What her powers were I knew, and I could not doubt but that she would exercise them to the full. […] She would, if necessary, […] blast her way to any end she set before her, and as she could not die, and for aught I knew could not even be killed, what was there to stop her? 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. (256)

In Haggard's novel, the scenario of a superior power invading England to take command of the British Empire remains a frightening possibility. Ayesha, or "She-who-must-be-obeyed," never sets foot on English soil; instead, she dies after having immersed herself a second time in the flames that once endowed her with immortality. Yet even as a mere fantasy, the passage quoted here has a disturbing effect: it transforms the typical adventure-as-expansion structure of the macro-narrative – English adventurers setting out to explore and symbolically conquer unknown territory – into an invasion fantasy. Using a term coined by Stephen Arata, this micro-narrative may be described as a tale of "reverse colonization" (Arata 1996). Such narratives invert the pattern of British imperial expansion while mirroring its central motifs: "the colonizer finds himself in the position of the colonized, the exploiter is exploited, the victimizer victimized" (108).

It is crucial to note that if Haggard's Ayesha is cast as the exotic counterpart to Queen Victoria, she does not simply represent the "other," but rather a distorted version of the self. In the role of the foreign ruler of the Empire, she takes British imperialism to a new extreme. This uncanny parallel shows the limitations of Arata's metaphor of "reverse colonization": Ayesha certainly does appear as an invading force – leading to an inversion of roles in the Empire – but her intention is not to colonise Britain; rather, she wishes to partake in (and to take over) British imperialism. In the following, I will therefore use the term "invasion" (in its broader sense, not restricted to military conquest) rather than "reverse colonization" to characterise fiction making use of the mode here discussed.

V

If Rider Haggard "assisted in the propagation of imperial ideas," as Wendy Katz asserts, and if he "created […] an image of the world with the British in control" (Katz 1987: 4) – a view that has been contested in more recent studies[14] – then it is all the more striking that an alternative scenario, undercutting the imperialist stance of adventure fiction, has crept into his novel *She*. Haggard's 1887 romance can serve to illustrate the syncretism of genres mentioned earlier in this essay: although a colonial adventure, it also uses a different mode – that of the invasion story. This mode was popularised in 1871, when *Blackwood's Magazine* printed a short story recounting the supposed invasion of Britain by the German army (Chesney 1997). The anonymously published tale was written by Lieut.-Col. George Tomkyns Chesney, who had fought for the British during the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58 and who would later become a Member of Parliament for Oxford (see Clarke 1997a: ix). Speaking as an expert in military affairs, Chesney intended his narrative as a warning to his contemporaries, more precisely: as an exhortation to preparedness. Although the story is supposed to be told from the point of view of the future – the first-person narrator looks back on the present fifty years after the events described (see Chesney 1997: 3) – the narrative is an immediate reaction to recent political developments in Europe. The basic premise of the tale is that, following Prussia's victories over Denmark, Austria and France, England could become the next enemy of the newly founded German Empire.

In Chesney's story, England declares war, precipitately, after the *Reich* has annexed Holland and Denmark. This turns out to be a fatal mistake, since it fails to take into account the strategic and technological superiority of the German army. The old-fashioned gentlemanliness of the members of the British navy – who, "gallant as ever," try to "close with the enemy" (10) – proves fatal vis-à-vis the cold-blooded strategy of the German marine, which sheers off and leaves behind deadly torpedoes. With their advanced weaponry the Germans embody a new type of "anonymous" warfare based on modern industrial technology, a type of warfare that Britain is not (yet) ready for. After having destroyed the enemy fleet, the German marine sinks every ship that crosses its path with the intention of cutting Britain off from information. Consequently, the invasion assumes the character of a surprise attack. By feigning a landing in the east, the Germans draw the British army to the wrong part of the island, and thus gain time to concentrate their forces in the south. The first-person narrator is one of several hundred volunteers who join the army after the outbreak of war and who subsequently get involved in the decisive battle at Dorking. Lacking trained soldiers, rifles and an appropriate defence strategy, the British are completely unprepared for the fight and consequently lose the war within only a couple of days.

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[14]   Andrea White argues that, within the tradition of colonial adventure, Haggard's African romances mark the transition from "a discourse that created and confirmed stereotypes supportive of British imperial ventures abroad, to one subversive of those endeavors, such as [Joseph] Conrad's was to become" (White 1993: 82).

The narrator's detailed report of the fierce and ultimately futile battle of Dorking is framed – very effectively – by contrasting descriptions of the glories of pre-war England and the nation's tragic demise in the aftermath of the war. Forced to pay a ransom to its conquerors, the narrator tells his "grandchildren" (48) on the final pages of his report, the British government was obliged to raise taxes. As a result, pauperism increased. Chesney goes on by conjuring up a nightmarish vision of imperial destruction and loss:

> And what was there left to us to live for? Stripped of our colonies; Canada and the West Indies gone to America; Australia forced to separate; India lost for ever [sic], after the English there had all been destroyed, vainly trying to hold the country when cut off from aid by their countrymen; Gibraltar and Malta ceded to the new naval Power [i.e., Germany]; Ireland independent and in perpetual anarchy and revolution. (46)

The French too, the narrator reminds his listeners, were humiliatingly defeated by the Prussian army. Yet their case was "different," since the "war could not take away their rich soil," whereas the prosperity of England solely "rested on foreign trade and financial credit" (46f.). It is this fact that George Chesney stresses most in his fictional forecast of war. What makes England particularly vulnerable in his eyes is the country's economic dependence on other nations. Since the wealth of England stems from global trade, Chesney argues, trade within and without the British Empire must be secured at all costs. For Great Britain's position as the world's largest economic power is a precarious one: Great Britain also has to become the world's greatest military power if it wishes to preserve its dominant position.

The moral of the tale – which is made more than explicit – is that a great empire needs a large military. For not only do the regular army and the fleet have to be omnipresent in the world (to check anti-colonial uprisings and other disturbances), they also have to be able to defend the homeland. Because England's energy and attention is increasingly drawn to the colonial periphery, the centre becomes ever more susceptible to attacks. In its current size, Chesney is telling his compatriots, the British army can no longer secure Britain's position as the world's leading economic power. "To hear men talk in those days," his narrator comments, "you would have thought that […] trade came to us because we lived in a foggy little island set in a boisterous sea" (47). This "shortsighted recklessness" (47), Chesney is convinced, must end before it is too late. In order to awaken his compatriots from their careless complacency, he presents them with a worst-case scenario: the conquest of England by German-speaking barbarians who, though lacking manners and sophistication, can permit themselves to treat their more refined enemy condescendingly. After the defeat at Dorking, the narrator overhears a conversation between German soldiers in the dining-room of his friend Travers' occupied villa:

> "*Sind wackere Soldaten, diese Englischen* [sic] *Freiwilligen*," said a broad-shouldered brute, stuffing a great hunch of beef into his mouth with a silver fork, an implement I should think he

must have been using for the first time in his life. "*Ja, ja*," replied a comrade, who was lolling back in his chair with a pair of dirty legs on the table, and one of poor Travers's best cigars in his mouth, "*Sie so gut laufen können* [sic]." "*Ja wohl*," responded the first speaker, "*aber sind nicht eben so schnell wie die Französischen* [sic] *Mohloten*." (43)

Although Chesney's story describes an invasion of England by a Western European industrial nation rather than a colonial people, the horror scenario presented in *The Battle of Dorking* clearly reveals anxieties about the future of the British Empire. For one thing, Chesney explicitly addresses the danger that Britain may lose its grip on its colonies. The colonial and economic expansion of Great Britain, he suggests, necessitate military reform (more precisely, the introduction of conscription), because in its over-extension, the Empire has become vulnerable to attacks. On a more sub-textual level, the image of a foreign army conquering England with the help of superior weapons mirrors England's own colonial wars, the Germans paradoxically reflecting both, the conquered "savages" and the conquering British – a double mirror image of the Empire.

VI

As I. F. Clarke, the leading expert on the topic, has shown, Chesney was by no means the first to write future-war fiction. Stories about imaginary battles can already be found in literature surrounding the French declaration of war on Britain in 1793 (see Clarke 1997b: 34ff.), and there is even a mid-seventeenth-century antecedent.[15] Yet it was only after the publication of *The Battle of Dorking* that the war-to-come story emerged as a specific literary form. "Between 1871 and 1914," Clarke writes, "it was unusual to find a single year without some tale of future warfare appearing in some European country" (Clarke 1966: 44), a fact that he illustrates by listing several dozen future-war stories published during that period – stories bearing titles like *The Siege of London* (1871), *The Channel Tunnel; or, England's Ruin* (1876), *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1881), and, perhaps most threateningly, *Plus D'Angleterre* (No More England, 1887).[16] By focusing on works that closely follow the pattern estab-lished by Chesney – in dealing with either invasions of the home country or uprisings in the imperial periphery (leading to the loss of colonies) – Clarke describes war-to-come fiction in terms of a fixed form. While there can be no doubt that the vast corpus of future-war stories may legitimately be said to constitute a genre in its own right, much can be gained from a consideration of the invasion narrative as a *mode*. As the following examples demonstrate, invasion narratives do not only appear in works emu-

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[15]   This little-known precursor of later future-war fiction is Francis Cheynell's 1644 fantasy *Aulicius his Dream of the Kings Sudden Coming to London* [sic], which describes a nightmare of King Charles' triumph over Oliver Cromwell during the English Civil War. See Clarke 1997c: 387.

[16]   See Clarke 1966: 227ff.

lating the "Chesney formula of defeat and disaster" (38), but also in fiction that is not primarily concerned with the possibility of (and lack of preparedness for) war.

Among the writers who used Chesney's story as a direct model – although to very different effect – was H. G. Wells, whose pioneering science-fiction novel *The War of the Worlds* of 1898 has superficially much in common with *The Battle of Dorking*. Wells, too, uses a first-person narrator who was an eyewitness to the events described. Like Chesney's volunteer, Wells's civilian, a philosopher, tells his story from the vantage point of the future, although in his case only six – and not fifty – years have passed since the invasion. Once again, the invasion begins in a small Surrey town (Woking taking the place of Dorking); and once again, the plot has an episodic structure, following the narrator from Surrey to London (Chesney's narrator travels in the opposite direction). In both texts, the account of the narrator's personal encounters with the enemy are interspersed with descriptions of the reactions of the general public in London as well as with quotes from newspaper reports.

As obvious as the parallels on the level of form are those on the level of content. Both works describe how a ruthless enemy makes a devastating attack on British soil and how the helplessly inferior British army cannot stop the enemy's advance towards London. It should be noted, however, that the technological prowess of Wells' Martians – who possess all-destroying "heat-rays," make use of chemical warfare, and even start the construction of flying machines – far exceeds that of their Teutonic counterparts in *The Battle of Dorking*. By taking the theme of technological progress several steps further, Wells shifts the main emphasis from the description of the war itself to the question of its evolutionary preconditions. Wells makes it very clear that, as outlandish as they may appear, the Martians represent mankind's evolutionary future.[17] Men, he writes, "are just in the beginning of the evolution that the Martians have worked out" (Wells 2005: 129). At first, this looks like a great disadvantage: lagging far behind the aliens in terms of technological achievement, the humans fight an uneven battle. But then, just when the Martians have turned England into a post-apocalyptic wasteland, the narrator suddenly discovers them "*dead!* – slain by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared; […] slain, after all man's devices had failed by the humblest things that God, in his wisdom, has put upon this earth" (129).

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[17]   Because mechanical appliances have superseded their limbs, the Martians are physiologically reduced to an enormous head resting on rudimentary tentacles. As Gordon Haight has pointed out, this depiction of the Martians closely resembles Wells' portrait of "man in the year million" in his 1893 essay of the same title. Wells' essay, which first appeared in the *Pall Mall Budget*, purports to be a review of "a great unwritten volume" by a certain Professor Holzkopf of Weissnichtwo University. According to this fictive German authority, man will greatly change in the further course of his evolution. While most of his organs will partly or wholly disappear, because mechanical devices will do their work, the brain and eyes will grow in size – and so will the hand, "the teacher and agent of the brain." H. G. Wells, "The Man of the Year Million," in *Pall Mall Budget*, November 16, 1893, pp. 1796-1797; quoted in Haight 1958: 323f.

If the principal message of future-war fiction is the imperative "Act now before it is too late" (Clarke 1997c: 387), then Wells leads this convention *ad absurdum*. For, in terms of technological development, mankind *cannot* possibly prepare itself for an invasion of the kind described in the novel, while, in terms of biological evolution, it *is* already prepared – thanks to the work of "natural selection" (Wells 2005: 168). Shortly before the human race is defeated in a Darwinist struggle for existence (as the less highly developed race), it is saved by the mere fact that it is better adapted to its environment. The Martians eventually die, like the "red weed" that they brought with them, because they have not acquired "resisting-power" against earthly bacteria (145, 168). At this decisive point, the scientific rationalism of Wells's narrator – which, earlier in the novel, is sharply contrasted with the impotent religiosity of the raving curate – briefly gives way to religious sentiment. Falling into the kind of biblical rhetoric that was ridiculed in previous chapters, he now "for a moment" believes in the possibility of a godly intervention (169). Wells ultimately leaves it open as to who (or what) is to be considered as the saviour of mankind, though the passage praising God as the "wise" creator of microbes strongly suggests that Wells here means to be ironic.

As I. F. Clarke has pointed out, the title of Wells' novel has more than one meaning. It simultaneously refers to three different kinds of warfare, which may be characterised as follows: colonial warfare, evolutionary warfare, and scientific warfare (Clarke 1966: 94f.). Of these three kinds of warfare, the first two are most relevant with regard to the present investigation. They are also closely connected, since imperial expansion was frequently legitimised as following the "natural" law of survival of the fittest. Whereas in *The Battle of Dorking*, the German invasion is launched after an official declaration of war (by England), Wells' Martians attack out of the blue. The "war" that follows is obviously not a conflict over political and economic power as in *The Battle of Dorking*, but first looks like a war of extinction – the Martians indiscriminately destroying every object and person that crosses their path – until it is revealed that the space invaders have actually come to earth to *feed* on humans by direct injection of human blood. The first chapter suggests that the Martians were attracted to Earth due to "secular cooling" on their own planet, changes in the atmosphere that – so Wells' narrator tells us – happen on every inhabited planet when it reaches a state of "exhaustion" (Wells 2005: 8). Sharing our conviction that "life is an incessant struggle for existence," the Martians felt that they had the right to take possession of the sunnier and more fertile planet Earth, a planet inhabited by an "alien and lowly" species (8). In other words: the Martians followed the same kind of social-Darwinist logic that can be found in much late nineteenth-century imperial discourse. Condemning the Martians' cold-blooded logic, the narrator concludes, would therefore mean to condemn ourselves:

> And before we judge of them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its own inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human like-

ness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit? (9)

As in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the effect achieved by this opening commentary is one of defamiliarisation: The British colonisers in Tasmania and elsewhere are equated with alien invaders, whose attitudes and actions turn out to be distorted mirror images of the national self. As I. F. Clarke observes, "Wells stood colonial expansion on its head," offering an "ironical inversion of nineteenth-century imperialism" (Clarke 1966: 95). Stephen Arata even goes so far as to argue that "[t]he fear aroused by the spectacle of England laid waste by alien invasion is coupled with, and oddly augmented by, a strong suspicion that the devastation may, after all, be deserved, that it may be a form of punishment for the nation's destructive imperial practices" (Arata 1996: 109). Upon closer examination, however, the above-quoted passage proves to be as ambivalent as the earlier reference to God. Instead of morally condemning the "destruction" that it describes it could also be said to accept the survival of the fittest as a regrettable but ultimately unavoidable fact. In the same way, the reference to the Tasmanian's "human likeness" – which recalls Marlow's "suspicion," in *Heart of Darkness*, that the Africans are "not inhuman" (Conrad 1995: 62) – may be interpreted as either mocking or affirming imperialist attitudes. What is certain, by contrast, is that the passage refers to one of the darkest chapters in imperial history and that this fact alone undermines, from the start, any glorification of either imperialism itself or of England as the world's leading imperial nation.

<div align="center">VII</div>

As the example of *The War of the Worlds* shows, invasion fantasies bring to light uncertainties, doubts, and anxieties that are usually suppressed by imperial discourse. This is not to say that fictional works containing such fantasies are entirely subversive, let alone that they consciously and explicitly denounce imperialism as such. Although they usually work against the grain of the more common narrative of expansion and progress – and in this sense may be said to be counter-discursive – invasion narratives are often quite compatible with other aspects of imperial ideology. Even a novel as sceptical as *Heart of Darkness* relies to some extent on national and racial stereotypes. Arthur Conan Doyle's second Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Sign of Four* (Doyle 2003), is a more obvious case in point. In Doyle's 1890 detective story, the city of London is invaded in various literal and metaphorical ways, as Joseph McLaughlin has persuasively argued (see McLaughlin 2000). The different invading forces identified in the novel are Oriental culture (as embodied by the "Indianised" Englishman Thaddeus Sholto and his similarly "Indianised" home), the colonial convict Jonathan Small, as well as, most notably, the pygmy Tonga, a fierce "cannibal" from the Andaman Islands. Ironically, even though Holmes' own individual body is itself invaded by the

drug cocaine, the amateur detective still feels responsible for keeping the collective body of the city free from intrusions. Once his mission is accomplished, he again succumbs to the pleasures of intoxication.

In a similar vein, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* plays upon feelings of xenophobia by implying that immigrants to London literally and metaphorically bring disease into a formerly intact social organism. R. J. Dingley has noted that *Dracula* – which appeared in 1897, a few months before *The War of the Worlds* was serialised in *Pearson's Magazine* – has several points in common with Wells' novel (see Dingley 1991). It can only be speculated whether Wells' idea of an outlandish, superhuman invader feeding upon human blood was directly suggested by Stoker's book or whether this analogy is a literary-historical coincidence. In any case, both novels motivate the invasion of England in strikingly similar ways. Like the Martians, the "undead" Count is driven by a shortage of means of subsistence in his home-country, and he, too, legitimises the exploitation of England's resources by a sense of racial superiority (see 16f.). Because they have descended from "many brave races," Dracula tells Harker in the opening section of the novel, "[w]e Szekelys have a right to be proud" (Stoker 1996: 28). Continued racial blending, he goes on to assert, has rendered his own race superior to those which have undergone less mixing. Moreover, Dracula's race is by nature a "conquering" (29) one, using its dominance to subjugate weaker races in the perpetual struggle for existence. (The Darwinian theme is clearly present in Stoker's novel, even if it remains more implicit than in *The War of the Worlds*.) A similar explanation of the Count's behaviour is later brought forward by other protagonists, although Mina Harker and Van Helsing consider the Count's innate urge to conquer as his decisive weakness, since it enables them to see through his invasion strategy. As Mina Harker tells her male fellow-conspirators while they plan their final assault on Dracula:

> The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and *qua* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind. Thus, in a difficulty he has to seek resource in habit. His past is a clue, and the one page of it that we know – and that from his own lips – tells that once before […] he went back to his own country from the land he had tried to invade, and thence, without losing purpose, prepared himself for a new effort. He came again better equipped for his work, and won. So he came to London to invade a new land. He was beaten, and when all hope of success was lost, and his existence in danger, he fled back over the sea to his home. Just as formerly he had fled back over the Danube from Turkey Land. (342)

The Count may possess supernatural physical powers and abilities, but his mental faculties are limited. So much so, as a matter of fact, that he can be identified as a degenerate on the basis of the pseudo-scientific typologies of Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau.[18] The fact that Dracula's actions are biologically determined makes them

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18   The first Italian edition of Cesare Lombroso's *Criminal Man* appeared in 1876; the original
      German edition of Max Nordau's *Degeneration* followed in 1892 and 1893. The most recent

easy to predict. What eventually saves mankind, then, is the biological deficiency of its antagonist – another correspondence between Stoker's novel and *The War of the Worlds*.

Although the invasion scenario of *Dracula* is really closer to the Gothic tradition than to *The Battle of Dorking* – echoing, in particular, Mary Shelley's vision of "a race of devils […] who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror"[19] – it shows one striking parallel with Chesney's text: Dracula, too, gathers his forces in a small town in the coastal regions of England before he makes his "attack" on London (even if Stoker shifts the more common south-eastern setting[20] to Whitby in Yorkshire, northern England). When, in the passage just cited, Mina Harker refers to Dracula's coming to London as an "invasion," she harks back to her husband's earlier realisation that he has – unwittingly – assisted the vampire in his "transfer to London, where, perhaps for centuries to come, he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless" (Stoker 1997: 51).[21] Strangely enough, the characters' unanimous suspicion that Dracula has the intention of founding a colony of vampires is never positively confirmed in the novel. Even when the Count scatters the wooden boxes containing his native soil "over London" (261), it remains unclear whether he does so to systematically spread vampirism in the city (especially because he initially feeds on just one woman, Lucy Westenra). The situation in *Dracula* undoubtedly is one of "reverse imperialism," insofar as the Count invades England to exploit its "natural resources," but this is as far as the analogy goes. For Dracula does not overtly "colonise" the Victorian metropolis (by creating a settlement of vampires, culturally converting the native British, etc.). Instead, his

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English-language editions of these works are: Lombroso 2006; Nordau 1993. For a detailed discussion of these and other turn-of-the-century theories of degeneration, see Pick 1989, which also refers to *Dracula*. On Stoker's use of Lombroso's theory, see Fontana 1988.

[19] The quote is from Victor Frankenstein's justification of his refusal to create a female companion for his monster – against his earlier promise: "Even if they [i.e. the monster and his female companion] were to leave Europe, and inhabit the deserts of the new world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the dæmon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror" (Shelley 1998: 138). It is certainly no coincidence that, of all places, Victor's monster specifically chooses "the vast wilds of South America" (120) for his retreat from human civilisation. If he and his offspring were really to invade civilisation (as Victor predicts), his invasion would thus start from the region which symbolises the advent of modern colonialism – another striking example of the reverse-imperialism scenario.

[20] See the map depicting the "Geography of 'invasion literature' (1871-1906)" in Moretti 1999: 139, fig. 66.

[21] The image of the blood-thirsty vampire roaming through London becomes a leitmotif in the novel. "That fearful Count was coming to London, with its teeming millions" (Stoker 1997: 179), Mina later writes in her journal; and shortly afterwards she remarks to Van Helsing: "[W]hat an awful thing if that man, that monster, be really in London!" (187)

invasion is followed by a covert *infiltration* of the city. To achieve this aim, the Transylvanian nobleman makes meticulous preparations. Before he moves into his London domicile, he strives to acquire as much knowledge about "England and English life and customs and manners" (19) as possible, so that he will not be identified as a "stranger" (20) on the street. By impersonating an Englishman,[22] Dracula can more easily and effectively pursue his ends.

All in all, then, two basic narrative patterns can be distinguished in the various examples discussed in this essay. Literary works making use of the mode of the invasion narrative either present the scenario of a (rapid) conquest of Great Britain – an "invasion" in the true, military sense of the word – or they describe the (slow) infiltration of British society by forces threatening the social, cultural, or racial status quo – an "invasion" in the broader, figurative sense of the word. In the first case, the invasion takes the form of an incursion from without, as in *The Battle of Dorking* or *The War of the Worlds*, whereas in the second case, it can alternatively take the form of a subversion from within. *Dracula* combines both narrative patterns: after having "invaded" London, the vampire begins his carefully planned infiltration. The subversion-from-within scenario is perhaps most evident in *The Secret Agent* – to name one last example – which envisions a London that is already deeply infiltrated by foreign conspirators. "The evil is already here," the Russian ambassador Mr Vladimir complains at the beginning of the narrative, emphasising that any exhortation to preparedness – the traditional purpose of invasion literature – would come too late: "We don't want prevention – we want cure" (Conrad 2004: 19). However, the novel then goes on to identify Vladimir himself as the greatest "evil." After all, it is *he* who instigates the terrorist attack on the Greenwich Observatory, and not the ineffectual anarchists and revolutionaries he claims to combat. Along the same line, the man whose mission it becomes to "cure" English society of its ailment is said to have "arrived in London (like the influenza) from the Continent" (5). As this phrasing suggests, the half-French secret agent Verloc is part of the very disease he sets out to eradicate. In its ironic treatment of the invasion theme, Conrad's 1907 novel – which is, significantly, dedicated to H. G. Wells, "the historian of the ages to come" (2) – gives a new twist to the mode of the reverse-imperialism narrative, adding a heretofore unknown complexity to the form.

VIII

It may be objected that the definition of the invasion narrative outlined in the previous section is too comprehensive. Is it not necessary to distinguish "invasion fantasies" from other contemporary sub-genres like "imperial Gothic," "Wellsian science fiction," and "spy stories," as Patrick Brantlinger does (Brantlinger 1988: 236)? And

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[22]   On this topic, see Arata 1996.

should we not follow Stephen Arata in separating "narratives of reverse colonization" from both Chesneyean "invasion-scare novels" and "dynamite novels" such as *The Secret Agent*, by arguing that the latter deal with threats posed by other industrial nations and the urban underclass, while reverse-colonisation narratives of the type found in *She*, *The Sign of Four*, and *Dracula* are "obsessed with the spectacle of the primitive and the atavistic" (Arata 1996: 111)?[23] The answer to these questions depends on the methodological approach taken. As was said earlier in this essay, literary genres may be conceived as either "fixed forms" or "modes," and it is my contention that the invasion narrative is best understood as a versatile transgeneric mode. Brantlinger himself points out that all the sub-genres distinguished in his study overlap in that they "betray anxieties" characteristic of late-Victorian imperialism (Brantlinger 1988: 236). In addition to these thematic intersections, one may also refer to formal ones: despite all other differences, texts as diverse as *The War of the Worlds* and *Dracula* partly share the same narrative structure – and, thus, the same "genre memory," which they concretise and (re-)contextualise in radically different ways.

The various correspondences between the works discussed in this essay are, of course, related to the specific historical framework in which the mode of the invasion narrative emerged. According to a common reading, the rise of reverse-colonisation stories in late-Victorian fiction is connected to a general mood shift during which the fervent imperialism of earlier Victorianism, fuelled by social Darwinism, was increasingly superseded by a more pessimistic outlook. Reverse-colonisation narratives, Arata argues, are both, the product of geopolitical fears – anxieties concerning the increasing fragility of the British imperial dominion – as well as a response to what he describes (perhaps somewhat vaguely) as "cultural guilt": "In the marauding, invasive Other, British culture sees its own imperial practices mirrored back in monstrous forms" (Arata 1996: 108). As Brantlinger's discussion of "imperial Gothic" suggests (and the example of *Heart of Darkness* confirms), reverse colonisation may also take the form of a relapse into barbarism. In this case, invasion stories express "anxieties about the ease with which civilization can revert to barbarism or savagery," by depicting "British progress transformed into British backsliding" (Brantlinger 1988: 229).

It follows from the above that the function of the invasion story cannot be reduced to the legitimisation of imperial expansion, as a universalist approach to "imperial discourse" in the tradition of Edward Said would have it. On the contrary, the invasion-of-London scenario calls into question the very legitimacy of imperial conquest and rule. By casting the British in the unaccustomed role of the colonised, invasion narratives gave contemporary readers a new perspective on their much-narrativised Empire (no matter if some authors only chose the mode because of its great sensationalism, in the mere hope of capitalising on the success of *The Battle of*

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[23] For a more detailed attempt to differentiate between "dynamite, invasion-scare, reverse colonization, and espionage [narratives]," see Wisnicki 2008: 143.

Dorking). As I hope to have shown, imperial discourse is decisively shaped by the literary mode(s) employed in the text: different modes conceive of imperialism in markedly different ways; and in their totality, the divergent "stories of Empire" constitute a polyphonic assembly of oftentimes conflicting and contradictory voices.

By way of conclusion, the vogue of invasion narratives in the late nineteenth century may be interpreted as the symptom of a cultural crisis, or, phrased more cautiously, as the – possibly erroneous – diagnosis of such a crisis by contemporary authors. From a more long-term perspective, this fact may help to explain why the mode went through two revivals in its further history: in the American alien-invasion films of the 1950s, which use the narrative pattern of Wells' *The War of the World* to allegorise the Red Scare and the threat of nuclear warfare, as well as in another wave of invasion films shortly preceding and following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Whenever a great power has to focus its energy and attention on its periphery, the centre is felt to be vulnerable: this is the premise underlying George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking*, which is apparently still valid today – even if most viewers of blockbusters like Roland Emmerich's *Independence Day* (1996) are probably unaware of the genre memory, dating back to Victorian times, that these recent films evoke.

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