



Who Lives at the South Pole?:

The Imposition of Identity on Antarctica in Three Nineteenth-Century Texts

By

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A thesis submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

August 2011

St. John's Newfoundland

Abstract

This thesis analyzes fictional constructions of the Antarctic during the nineteenth century by focusing on the representative texts *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838) by Edgar Allan Poe, and *An Antarctic Mystery* (1897) by Jules Verne. I have chosen these works because they are canonical, and their representations of the Antarctic therefore carry significant cultural resonance. Postcolonial and ecocritical thought help frame my treatment of them. The scholarship of critics like Said, Boehmer, Loomba, Huggan, Tiffin, and Plumwood coalesce in this thesis to provide a hybrid lens for examining processes by which non-human nature is othered. This perspective is invaluable in unpacking how discursive constructions of Antarctica by authors like Coleridge, Poe and Verne confer placehood on the region.

Antarctica's remoteness and inhospitableness kept all but a handful of people from reaching its shores in the nineteenth century. This limited its ability to be constructed socially as a place, but in turn also inspired the literary imagination to create identities for it. Despite the limits on a socially constructed placehood for Antarctica during this period, I contend that the region is granted various identities through its representations in literature. Most prevalent among these is a tendency to figure the Antarctic as a mutable and ambivalent space. The literary figurations of Coleridge, Poe, and Verne are indicative of how the Imperialistic West conceived of Antarctica before it began to claim or assert control over its landscape.

Acknowledgements

My most heartfelt thanks goes to my supervisor, Fiona Polack, whose steady hand, critical eye, and humanity have guided me on this journey. Very special thanks go to Brad Clissold, Danine Farquharson, Andrew Loman, and Donna Walsh, whose ongoing support, advice, and occasional kicks in my complacency have made me who and what I am academically. Much appreciation to Chris Lockett, Jen Lokash, and anyone else who read and reread my SSHRC and thesis proposals, as well as to Mark Cumming for being my copy editor for this thesis. A big thank you to Memorial's English Department, and especially to Brenda Smith, Maureen Battcock, and Tracy Hedd in the department office for all their help over the years.

Thanks to the School of Graduate Studies at Memorial University, as well as the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada, for providing me with much-needed funding over the last two years – it helped. A lot.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my family, but especially my parents for their 28+ years (thus far) of unwavering love and support, and to my parents-in-law for believing me. Much thanks to my two best friends, Grubbie and Brad, who are far more brilliant than I could hope to be, but who have always made me strive to their level, and to my Masters cohorts, especially Alice, Margaret, Maggie, and Pete, for some of the best times.

Finally, this work is dedicated to my wife, Sam, and our son, Connor, who are my greatest strengths, my inspiration, and my reason for everything.

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Introduction – The Placing of Antarctica through Literary Representations

In Edgar Allan Poe's novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, the eponymous hero describes for his readers the unlikely discovery of a pseudo-tropical region south of the Antarctic ice barrier, noting that he and his fellow travellers "had been gradually leaving behind [them] the severest regions of ice; this, however little it may be in accordance with the generally received notions respecting the Antarctic, was a fact experience could not permit [them] to deny" (170). In this statement, Pym metafictionally describes Poe's text for what it is – the invention and imposition of an imagined reality that runs counter to conventional nineteenth-century knowledge regarding the southern polar region. By acknowledging the disparity between popular nineteenth-century conceptions of the Antarctic and the fantastical portrayal of the region, Pym's statement illustrates the nineteenth-century use of the Antarctic as a frontier of uncertainty. As *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* exemplifies, in this period the idea of Antarctica is extraordinarily amenable to literary reimagination.

This thesis will analyze fictional constructions of the Antarctic during the nineteenth century¹ by focusing on three representative texts by the canonical literary figures Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, and Jules Verne. By examining how Antarctica's placehood is created in those texts through the ascription of identities to the

¹ My temporal definition of this period reflects the long-established convention of including early Romantic texts, such as those of Coleridge and Wordsworth, within the rubric of the "long" nineteenth-century.

region south of the 60th Southern parallel,² I will demonstrate how values attributed to it reflect and comment on their antecedents in Western cultures. The three primary fictional works I will be examining are Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), and Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery* (1897). I have chosen these works over others³ of the period because they are the most canonical, and their representations of the Antarctic therefore carry significant cultural resonance, but also because they represent three separate states in what critic Johan Wijkmark indicates is a transition "from a fantastic to a realistic mode of Antarctic representation" (87). In Wijkmark's formulation, *The Ancient Mariner* was written before the transition and hence represents the fantastic mode, Pym "fit[s] in neither of these categories, however, but can rather be said to take a liminal position" (87), and *An Antarctic Mystery* comes decidedly after and, thus, represents the complete shift to the realistic mode of representation. My analyses of these three works are therefore meant to comprise a fairly representative survey of nineteenth-century Antarctic literature.

² Article VI of The Antarctic Treaty (1959) formalized the boundaries of the region as being "the area south of 60° South Latitude" (5).

³ There are, of course, other important nineteenth-century fictional works that feature an Antarctic setting, including James Fenimore Cooper's *The Monikies* (1835) and *The Sea Lions: The Lost Sealers* (1849), as well as James De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888). Both *The Monikies* and *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* are furthermore representative of the Antarctic utopian subgenre (Leane "Romancing" 147). The popularity of Antarctica as a site for nineteenth-century literary utopias was largely due to the fact that "it was the only continent still unexplored by Europeans during that period" (166), and its traditional conception as "the underside of the world...[seem] itself even more than other antipodean locations to utopias that turned customs and mores on their heads" (166) and invited satirical commentary of European society. Though this utopian motif is not a focus of this thesis since none of the primary texts examined herein can properly be considered utopian, it is nevertheless a significant current in other texts featuring Antarctica during the period.

Antarctic studies is a relatively new field in English literature; according to eminent Antarctic literature scholar Elizabeth Leane's comprehensive bibliography⁴ of "scholarly articles and books, written in or translated into English, [that deal] with the Antarctica within a cultural or literary studies framework," the earliest scholarship dedicated to examining Antarctica as the subject of cultural and literary inquiry dates back only to 1955 ("Representations"). There has been a boom in the production of Antarctic literature scholarship since the early nineties, with roughly eighty-five percent of the critical works in Leane's bibliography having been written since 1990, and fifty-three percent since 2000 alone. Given that the broad umbrella of cultural studies encompasses a massive area crossing multiple disciplines, not all of the works listed in the bibliography are relevant to the subject of this thesis, which is to explore the nature of Antarctic placehood and how it is constituted by, and helps to constitute, the identities and cultures of other nations. There have been a few studies, however, whose attempts to discover "a pattern of influence between fact and fiction, expedition narrative[s] and fictional narrative[s]" concerning the region (Glasberg, "Imagination" 2-3) at least partially speak to the type of reading I am interested in conducting. Of particular relevance is the work of critics William Lenz and Elena Glasberg, both of whom have examined the literary use of Antarctica as a means of exploring "How...acts of exploration, especially Antarctic exploration, contribute[d] to [American] cultural self-definition and self-determination" (Lenz xxvii), and Johan Wijkmark, whose article on

⁴ As Leane herself indicates, this bibliography "does not include papers containing scientific, economic, environmental or political analysis of Antarctica or Antarctic issues" ("Representations"). Additionally, in reference to the body Antarctic literature mentioned above, Leane's bibliography lists 17 works of fiction published in the nineteenth century, plus Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, which I include in this period's texts.

Pym examines how "Poe's literary strategy is indicative of a larger historical development in early 19th-century America, when Cook's Antarctic assessment was challenged in order to make [Antarctica] productive again, both for literary speculation and economic expansion" (85). Perhaps the most significant contribution to the line of inquiry I am seeking to follow has been offered by Leane, who is the only other scholar who has yet considered that the Antarctic itself could be the subject of identity creation through literature. This project will therefore extend upon Leane's identification of the Antarctic as a place defined by "its lack of stability, its changeability, [and] its boundary breaching" ("Locating" 236). It will focus especially on how that mutability is exploited within nineteenth-century Western literature, and what identities emerge from the resultant renderings.

Since, as Glasberg indicates, "fictions of Antarctica are not shaped by what it is but only by what it comes to figure for those encountering it" ("Imagination" 6), the constructions of the Antarctic in Coleridge's, Poe's, and Verne's respective texts are more a reflection of elements such as each writer's own style and national cultural identity, as well as the pervasive Imperial discourse⁵ of the time, than any specific knowledge of the region in the nineteenth century. This point is further supported by the fact that at the end of the period Antarctica "was [still] a continent-sized blank space

⁵ As Sara Mills indicates in *Discourse*, "The term 'discourse' has become common currency in a variety of disciplines...so much so that it is frequently left undefined, as if its usage was simply common knowledge" (1). This demonstrates the need to clarify which context of the word is being evoked in any given situation. To that end, when I refer to "discourse" in this thesis I consider it as "not a disembodied collection of statements, but groupings of utterances or sentences, statements which are enacted within a social context, which are determined by that social context and which contribute to the way that social context continues its existence" (10). I believe this definition is the most conducive for examining the idea of "Imperial discourse" in this context since the ideology of Imperialism is socially enacted, but also reproduced and reinforced through culture and, specifically in this case, literature (as the tangible product of culture).

that...had not even begun to be inscribed by explorers and mapped by geographers" (Leane, "Locating" 226). The epistemological uncertainty about Antarctica's boundaries and environment allowed these authors a great degree of latitude and creative license. Consequently, in considering their literary texts a series of questions become important: How do Western cultures impose subjective meanings on Antarctica? What role does Imperialism and its discourses play in the imposition of those meanings, and how is this reflected in the genres, themes, and tropes of each work? What is the significance of the fictionalized landscapes, human populations, and non-human populations the works present, and how do they help to generate identities?

1.1 Placehood

Ideas underpinning the contemporary division between space and place began to take form in the 1950s and 60s with a movement among geographers toward "re-styl[ing] geography as a positivist spatial science [that sought] to construct theory or 'spatial laws' on the basis of statistical analysis" (Hubbard and Kitchin 5). This "Quantitative Revolution" (5) led to the conception of space as "a surface on which the relationships between (measurable) things were played out" (5). However, with the advent of behavioural psychology in the 1970s came another reformulation of spatial studies, led by such scholars as urban spatial expert Kevin Lynch (Gold 293) and analytical behavioural geographer Reg Golledge (Kitchin 185), that conceived of space as being "inherently caught up in social relations, both socially produced and consumed" (Hubbard and Kitchin 5). This new line of thinking "held to the tenets of positivist inquiry, [but] replac[ed] concepts of absolute distance with notions of subjective distance" (5). These

ideas crystallized with Neo-Marxist and Existentialist philosopher Henri Lefebvre (Shields 279), whose argument that "geographical space is fundamentally social" (281) is supported by his trisection of spatiality into a balance of the "perceived space" of "everyday life and commonsensical perception" (281), the "conceived space" of "cartographers, urban planners, or property speculators" (281), and the "lived space" of "the imagination which has been kept alive and accessible by the arts and literature" (281). The interrelationship between these kinds of space "implies that absolute space cannot exist because, at the moment it is colonised [sic] through social activity, it becomes relativised and historicised space" (Hubbard and Kitchin 5-6). As a result of Lefebvre's reconception of spatiality, "place emerges as a particular form of space, one that is created through acts of naming as well as the distinctive activities and imaginings associated with particular social spaces" (6).

The concept of placehood is at the heart of this thesis. In Lefebvre's conception, though the identity of a place is at least partially the result of the physical characteristics of its space, including its geography and ecology,⁶ it is also "defined by (and constructed in terms of) the lived experiences of people" (Hubbard and Kitchin 6). As Pamela Gilbert further explains, it is created from:

The particularities of a named space experienced as unified, with clear boundaries, characteristics and a history...[and] often asserted as charged with meaning against the abstraction of modern space. Place could be

⁶ Though spatial studies generally conceives of place as being socially constructed through human interactions with landscapes, as I will demonstrate later in this introduction, ecocritical conceptions of non-human agency question the necessity of that interaction in place creation.

claimed as home, as related to the construction of identity and values.

(103)

However, this notion of placehood becomes complicated when applied to the nineteenth-century Antarctic; though the region was certainly named, neither its boundaries nor its physical characteristics were known with any great degree of certainty, and the only recorded history of the place was external to it in the accounts of explorers who sought to penetrate the high austral latitudes. These complications are due in part to the fact that Antarctica has no indigenous human population. If, as anthropologists Setha Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga contend, "places are socially constructed by the people who live in them and know them" (15), then by its very nature the Antarctic's capacity for placehood was extremely limited in the nineteenth century.

Because the possibility of constructing an internally derived⁷ conception of place for the Antarctic was so restricted in this period, whatever identities were created for the region were externally ascribed. Indeed, there seem to be three specific factors of significance that contribute to this external locus of placehood – Antarctica's mythological construction, its value as a destination for nautical explorers, and its literary representation. In light of the externally derived values that become ascribed to Antarctica, this thesis will also challenge the widely held notion that "cultural constructions of environment can only be understood by talking to natives about landscapes" (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 16) by showing that there are cultural

⁷ I use the phrases "internally derived" and "externally derived" in this thesis to connote identities that are respectively created from within a physical environment by the people who dwell there and those which are imposed from an external locus (such as from various Western cultures).

constructions of the Antarctic from the nineteenth century despite the fact that it had no native human population to conceive of its placehood.

The first of the factors contributing to the external creation of Antarctic identity arises from a number of myths concerning the region. In her work "Locating the Thing: The Antarctic as Alien Space in John W. Campbell's 'Who Goes There?'," Leane succinctly summarizes this mythological history by demonstrating its representational evolution from the Ancient Greek's conception of it as a hole in the heavens through which souls emerged reborn after death (230) to the post-Renaissance reformulation of the Antarctic as being a hole in the earth through which the world's waters emerged after emptying into a complementary vortex in the Arctic (230). This idea of vortices at the poles also gave rise to Kircher's analogy of the world as a human body, which brought with it associations of the Antarctic to "the sphincter of the Earth...or, extrapolating the Greek notion of a southern hole for the return of souls, a birth canal" (230). These mythological constructions of Antarctica coincide with the geographical notion that "place is involved with *embodiment*" (Hubbard and Kitchin 6) and help to form the basis on which the region is conceived; in fact the idea of the region as the world's birth canal figures significantly in my readings of both Poe's and Verne's literary representations.

In a more general sense, mythological constructions of the Antarctic also created "two dichotomies concerning the southern continent that persisted until James Cook crossed the Antarctic circle in the eighteenth century" (Wilson 145) but which could still be gleaned in later Imperialistic discourses. First, the southern hemisphere was construed as "the dark other, the alien planet – the antihuman, the monstrous" (145) – and thus was conceived in terms of its opposition to the known northern world. Second, as not all

conceptions of the southern hemisphere were negative, a dichotomy emerged "between positive and negative interpretations of the southern zone" (146). Opposing conjectures that envisioned the south as alternatively a wasteland and a paradise emerged (146), laying the foundation for ambivalent and uncanny representations of the region.

Though no one had actually sighted the Antarctic mainland until Smith stumbled upon its most northerly tip around 1820 (Fogg 22), the question of its existence made the continent a destination for explorers. In the same way that "Places...are actually constituted by the movements to, from and around them," Antarctic placehood is created through the value European adventurers ascribed to it as a destination (Lee and Ingold 76). In journeying to the Antarctic and helping define its physical boundaries, explorers contributed to a growing discourse about the location. Further, as Low and Lawrence-Zuniga highlight, "landscape [develops] from and [involves] a tension between idealized and imagined settings [called] 'background' against which the 'foreground' of everyday, real, ordinary life is cast" (16). These two cultural critics further claim that this "foreground actuality is to background potentiality, as place is to space" (16), which suggests that placehood is just as much about the physicality of a location as the process by which it becomes a place (how the potentiality is actualized or constructed).

Finally, and most significantly for the purpose of this thesis, literary representations of the Antarctic help to create its placehood. This is in part because "stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world" (Saïd xiii), but also because "nations themselves are narrations" (xiii). While the Antarctic is not a nation, and was even less amenable to being considered so in the nineteenth century, it nevertheless is a cultural construction; the only real difference

between the Antarctic and any other region of the world is that identity is almost entirely externally derived given that it has no indigenous human population to “[imbue its] physical environment with social meaning” (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 16). Instead, “The great emptiness signified by the blank space on the [geographic] map becomes the site of narrative colonization” (Spurr 94-95) by authors who seek to inscribe their “own name onto the unknown [by w]riting...[to illuminate] the darkness with the light of [their] own countenance” (163-64). In their portrayals of Antarctica, literary works reflect their authors’ cultures, discourses, and national identities. This is, fundamentally, a form of cultural Imperialism by which Antarctica is appropriated and infused with desired meanings.

1.2 Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism

Postcolonial and ecocritical theories are especially important to my exploration of the literary creation of Antarctic placehood through the infusion of those meanings. The marriage of these two perspectives is a fairly intuitive one given that land is “frequently portrayed in colonial justifications as unused, underused, or empty,” as fodder for the Eurocentric Imperial power to seize and cultivate (Plumwood 503). Even animals are othered by Imperial discourse’s tendency to treat “non-human *difference* as inferiority, and [understand] both non-human agency and value in hegemonic terms that deny and subordinate them to a hyperbolized human agency” (504). Through the work of such contemporary scholars as Richard Grove (2004), Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2010), and Val Plumwood (2004), I situate my project within the realm of this hybrid perspective and expose the primary fictional texts I am examining to the critical

opportunities it presents.

Since the field of postcolonial studies is complex, any attempt to tackle its intricacies must begin by defining its most foundational terms, namely Imperialism, colonialism, and postcolonialism.⁸ In their work *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, prominent postcolonial scholars Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin define Imperialism as referring to "the formation of empire" (122), noting that "it has been an aspect of all periods of history in which one nation has extended its domination over one or several neighbouring nations" (122). This conception is a more generalized version of that offered by Edward Said in his landmark postcolonial text *Culture and Imperialism* in which he defines Imperialism as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory" (Said 8). As both Said and Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin are apt to point out in their respective texts, this idea is very closely tied to the notion of colonialism, or "the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (8), which is "almost always a consequence of Imperialism" (8). Colonialism is hence a practice that resulted from the larger ideology of Imperialism. Said's other foundational work, *Orientalism*, is credited with "re-order[ing] the study of colonialism" (Loomba 43) by discursively "examin[ing] how the formal study of the 'Orient'...consolidated certain ways of seeing and thinking which in turn contributed to the functioning of colonial power" (43-44). The deep roots and cultural influence of colonial discourse are often reproduced in what may be called colonial (or colonialist) literature, a subgenre of the literary canon that "exhibit[s] a tinge

⁸ As should become obvious, though these terms have general senses in which they may be used, my use of them is within the specific context of nineteenth-century European empires.

of local colonial colour, or feature[s] colonial motifs" (Boehmer 2), but which may also include "literature written in [the metropolitan centre] as well as in the rest of [an] empire" (2).

While Imperialism and colonialism, thus defined, are relatively straightforward concepts, postcolonialism is a much more tangled term. This is partially due to the fact that the word "postcolonial" itself is a problematic label for the period following the collapse of European empires "because it implies an 'aftermath' in two senses – temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting" (Lomba 7). While the first of these has evoked some contestation by critics on the academic grounds that "Formal decolonization has spanned three centuries" (7) and thus the beginning of the postcolonial period cannot be nailed down to any specific moment or event, the second issue resonates on a practical level in that "the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased" (7) and so continue to have social, cultural, political, and economic consequences for people around the world despite decolonization. The temporal ground on which the word "postcolonial" is contested by theorists may be fairly easily dismissed using Elleke Boehmer's differentiation between its hyphenated and non-hyphenated versions – for Boehmer, the latter of these (post-colonial) refers specifically to "the post-Second World War era" (3) and thus connotes the temporal period which saw the dismantling of European empires, leaving the former (postcolonial) to refer to the field of study related to "the effects of colonization on cultures and societies" (Ashcroft et al. 186).

The ideological ground on which the word postcolonialism has been scrutinized is much more difficult to negotiate because of the lingering social, cultural, political, and economic effects of European colonialism globally. As postcolonial and racial studies

critic Ania Loomba is apt to point out, in the time since decolonization a country "may be both postcolonial [sic] (in the sense of being formally independent) and neo-colonial⁹ (in the sense of remaining economically and/or culturally dependent) at the same time" (7). The current relevance of postcolonial studies is due to the persistence of neo-colonial forces in the formally decolonized world. Though the aim of my work is partially to apply postcolonial frameworks to discuss the creation of Antarctic identity in nineteenth-century literature, because the continent was not the subject of colonization during that period it has been largely overlooked as a potential subject of postcolonial enquiry. This point is articulated in geopolitical expert Klaus Dodds' article "Post-colonial Antarctica: an emerging engagement" where Dodds not only identifies that "Antarctica, thus far, has not attracted a great deal of attention from post-colonial scholars" (59), but also calls for further "post-colonial and ontological investigation of Antarctica's representation in Imperial and post-Imperial terms" (69). Though the thrust of his advocacy is mainly directed at the geopolitical field, his point is still relevant to cultural studies, which has shared¹⁰ in the general under-representation of postcolonial frameworks in Antarctic studies.

Dodds provides both reasons for why the Antarctic has been largely overlooked in

⁹ This term is "widely used to refer to any and all forms of control of the ex-colonies" (Ashcroft et al. 163).

¹⁰ Dodds particularly notes cultural geographer Christy Collis and the aforementioned Elena Glasberg as two cultural scholars who have utilized postcolonial theory in their examinations of Antarctica (61), though in slightly different ways than I do. Collis's "Mawson's Hut: Emptying Post-Colonial Antarctica" delves into "Why and how discoveries of Imperial spatial emptiness and conquest are played out and affixed to Mawson's hut" (23), an important icon in "Australian Antarctic spatiality" (22), and Glasberg's "Refusing History at the End of the Earth: Ursula Le Guin's 'Big Sur' and the 2000-01 Women's Antarctic crossing" examines how feminist and postcolonialist perspectives "tension between complicity and resistance... retemporaliz[es] historical critiques" (100) and presents opportunities for historically revisionist narratives in what Said would call a contrapuntal reading.

this manner, as well as justifications for the need to conduct such analyses. He claims that the region's:

lack of indigenous human population alongside a harsh climate and remote location may [have] unwittingly contribute[d] further to a view either that Antarctica does not present a particularly complex or interesting case of the 'colonial condition' or that terms such as 'decolonisation' [sic] have no intellectual purchase there. (60)

Ironically, as Dodds identifies, it is Antarctica's lack of an indigenous human population that should also make it such a striking subject for postcolonialism, since "In the absence of [such a population], Antarctica immediately creates a rather difficult context for any discussion of colonialism and or post-colonialism" (61). The region therefore thwarts mainstream postcolonial readings because "the question of a colonised [sic] population engaged in anti-colonial resistance or Third World nationalisms does not arise" (61). Given this unique situation, the type of analysis of Antarctic representations I am interested in conducting begs innovation, or at least rethinking, of the way that postcolonial theory is applied to literature.

Postcolonial readings of literary theory identify a number of motifs that have emerged out of the anxieties of the colonial world, two of the most common of which are othering and ambivalence. In this thesis I examine the use of these motifs and how they help to construct Antarctic placehood, particularly through gender¹¹ and the

¹¹ Just as colonial discourse is known for its subtexts that produce and reinforce racial divisions, so too did it "[lead] to the development of certain types of roles for women and men" (Mills, *Gender* 54). In fact, "it seems that the [nineteenth-century] empire was coded as a place where extreme forms of masculine behavior were expected" (55) and that this masculinization was even "accepted as common sense" (55).

environment.¹² The first of these tropes, otherness, is one of the most quintessential concerns of postcoloniality. As Loomba identifies, "The individuation of subjects that took place in Europe was denied colonised [sic] people" (52). This denial of subjectivity results in the characterization of the colonized subject "as 'other' through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view" (Ashcroft et al. 169). The formulation of the self/other dichotomy has been principally influenced by Freudian theory's "division between instinctive and reflective human beings [that] has informed the practice of ethnopsychology wherein cultural difference is pathologised and psychic growth understood in terms of cultural/racial difference" (Loomba 138), which was used, for example, to "describe and pathologise Africans in general in order to then define the European as inherently different" (138). The division of self/other is hence innately related to dichotomies like culture/nature and civilization/primitive since they all refer to the same psychoanalytical antecedent that posits the separation of the cultivated European from his¹³ primitive origins. Furthering the Freudian connotations of otherness in postcoloniality, Lacanian theory also distinguishes between the small 'o' other, which

Conversely, "female bodies symbolize the conquered land" (Loomba 153) in colonial discourse, which effectively creates a dichotomy between the colonizing male and colonized female. As I demonstrate in my chapters on *Pym* and *An Antarctic Mystery*, this construction dovetails with the mythological conception of the Antarctic as a female body. The conflation of masculine and feminine forces in these works underscores both colonial ambivalence and the mutability of Antarctic identity.

¹² I will elucidate the specific relationship between the postcolonial and the environment later in this introduction.

¹³ Though the word "his" is intended to be used here simply as a general pronoun, it is important to note that the discourse of nineteenth-century Imperialism conceived of the colonizing powers in terms of a masculine subject, which is particularly relevant to arguments I make in my chapters on Poe and Verne.

"designates the other who resembles the self" (Ashcroft et al. 170) and can be used to "refer to the colonized others that are marginalized by Imperial discourse" (170), and the capital 'O' Other, "in whose gaze the subject gains identity" (170) and which both "provides the terms in which the colonized subject gains a sense of his or her identity as somehow 'other,' dependent...[and becomes] the ideological framework in which the colonized subject may come to understand the world" (170-71).

The process of othering, a term coined by cornerstone postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak for the way "by which Imperial discourse creates its 'others'" (Ashcroft et al. 171), is pivotal to my examination of how Antarctic identity is created in Coleridge's, Poe's, and Verne's texts. According to Lacan's division between the O/other, Spivak's conception holds that "othering is a dialectical process because the colonizing *Other* is established at the same time as its colonized *others* are produced as subjects" (171). This distinction describes the very process by which Antarctic identity is created from the external locus (Other) of Western society through literature – in colonizing¹⁴ the Antarctic with their fictional gaze, writers like Coleridge, Poe, and Verne construct its (small 'o') otherhood in terms of what the Western world is not, while simultaneously performing the same operation in a converse direction by using the "blankness" of Antarctica to negatively define the Western Other, which in turn reaffirms that the "Other is crucial to the subject because the subject exists in its gaze" (170). The two, in effect, become mutually constitutive.

¹⁴ My use of the term "colonizing" in this context requires some elaboration – the Antarctic was of course not literally colonized, however I believe that its exploitation as a background in literature (and a remarkably pliable one at that) constitutes a form of cultural colonization in which external values are imposed on its space. This is, effectually, one of my core arguments.

Ambivalence, another common motif in postcolonial literature, also has its roots in psychoanalysis. Initially conceived of as the fluctuation in desires "between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite" (Ashcroft et al. 12) or the "simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action" (12), the idea of ambivalence has been adapted for use in postcolonial theory by one of the discipline's founding theorists, Homi Bhabha. Bhabha noted that since the relationship between colonizer and colonized is characterized by "the complex mix of attraction and repulsion...[that] relationship is ambivalent because the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer" (12). The ambivalence that exists between these two groups is then a consequence of "the failure of colonial discourses to produce stable and fixed identities [for them]" (Loomba 105). Bhabha's specific notion of ambivalence in the context of postcoloniality is interestingly problematized with regards to the Antarctic since it has no indigenous people to be colonized; the ambivalent relationship that exists between colonizer and colonized therefore crumbles with half of the equation missing. I suggest, however, that in the absence of a native people to colonize, the idea of the place itself becomes the subject of literary colonization in the works of Coleridge, Poe, and Verne. I therefore extend Bhabha's specific use of the term in order to compensate for the unique circumstance of Antarctica.

The ambivalence of Imperial discourse is most readily demonstrated in its construction of various dichotomies that place the culture, identity, and values of Western societies in direct opposition to those of other regions in the world. Fundamentally, an empire's tendency to construct the rest of the world as being other, or diametrically opposed, to itself is the result of the fact that the creation of "local and national identities

depend on excluded others" (Heise 42). This is ironic, however, because they also frequently "rely on but often deny their own hybrid mixtures with other places and cultures" (42). In fact, the irony of this situation is indicative of much more deeply-rooted contradictions that pervade Imperial discourse, not the least of which is the supposed marriage between Imperialism and rationality. Though "Empirical science...[was] consistently allied with the forces of Western empire" (Baker 11), Imperial discourse's claim to the high ground of rationality is undercut by the fact that nineteenth-century European empires frequently employed double standards in their treatment of indigenous peoples and the environment as a means of justifying their own superiority, while at the same time reducing these "others" to the background as secondary concerns. This manifests in many ways, including the:

colonizing class['s insistence] on their radical difference from the colonized as a way of legitimizing their own position in the colonial community...[while] at the same time [insisting], paradoxically, on the colonized people's essential identity with them – both as preparation for the domestication of the colonized and as a moral and philosophical precondition for the civilizing mission. (Spurr 7)

Empires therefore sought "to dominate by inclusion rather than by confrontation which recognizes the independent identity of the Other" (32). This is an example both of Imperialism's essential division between self and other, and also the inherent ambivalence of this separation. This ambivalent view of colonized peoples as "alternatively essential to and destructive of the colonial order" is paralleled in Imperialism's simultaneous "idealization of nature and of man in his natural state...[and]

subordination of nature to human use and improvement" (122, 159). Indeed, as Said explains:

the authority of the observer, and of European geographical centrality, is buttressed by cultural discourses relating and confining the non-European to a secondary racial, cultural, and ontological status. Yet this secondariness is, paradoxically, essential to the primariness of the European. (70)

In this way, postcolonialism's and ecocriticism's agenda of exposing the contradictory nature of Imperial discourse's attitudes toward natives and wilderness makes it an apt theoretical frame for discussing Antarctic identity since the "Mythological and literary traditions surrounding Antarctica have often constructed the continent in terms of the breaching of inner and outer space" (Leane, "Locating" 230). In this sense, the conflation of contradictory opposites in Imperial discourse intuitively coincides with the thematic conflation of inner and outer spaces in Antarctic representations.

The ambivalences that exist within Imperialist dichotomies, like self/other, civilization/nature, and rational/irrational, are the ground on which I approach my primary texts. *The Ancient Mariner*, *Pym*, and *An Antarctic Mystery* all deal with anxieties surrounding ambivalence, though these coalesce in different ways. In *Ancient Mariner*, literary Romanticism's "complicity with, and its resistance to, the colonialist discourses of...Britain" is projected in the text's ambivalent tone toward Imperialism (Fulford and Kitson 12). Alternatively, in *Pym*, Poe's preoccupation with the Gothic leads to depictions of abject horror and the uncanny, which generate terror through the conflation of the familiar with the unfamiliar (Horner 250). This is also punctuated by

Pym's close narratological ties to the underworld journey archetype of classical mythology, which principally figures an underworld that sparks "an implicit contrast with [the living] world," and also clouds the division between the living and the dead (Edmonds 2). Finally, *An Antarctic Mystery* blurs both the separation between what Tuan calls the homeplace and alien space by conflating the cozy domestic with the forbidding foreign (139-40), as well as the continuity established in Poe's *Pym*. The prevalence of these contradictions and ambivalences within the primary texts I address indicates the appropriateness of reading them through a postcolonial perspective. Indeed, the recurrence of such ambivalences evoke Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity, which conceives of the "transformational value of change [as lying] in the rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are *neither the One... nor the Other... but something else besides*, which contests the terms and territories of both" (2388). Under the aegis of this concept, the conflation of boundaries and opposites facilitates the creation of Antarctic identity by constructing it as neither wholly the product of familiar Western culture nor the alien Antarctic environment, but as a synthesized hybrid of the two. I contend that the "in-betweenness" that characterizes Bhabha's notions of ambivalence and hybridity, and indeed which forms of the concentration of contemporary postcolonial discourse (Boehmer 242), is the means by which boundaries and distinctions are conflated to allow external values to be imposed on Antarctic placehood in the primary texts I examine.

In accordance with the hybridized placehood created for Antarctica, ecocriticism arrives as a complement to the postcolonial lens that shifts the focus away from the treatment of indigenous peoples in colonial literature toward an examination of the treatment of the whole of nature by Imperial powers. As Huggan and Tiffin explain:

Postcolonial studies has come to understand environmental issues not only as central to the projects of European conquest and global domination, but also as inherent in the ideologies of Imperialism and racism on which those projects historically – and persistently – depend. (6)

Imperialism, hence, categorically denies the agency of the non-human in favour of its own anthropocentric discourse. In fact, “Within many cultures – and not just Western ones – anthropocentrism has long been naturalized. The absolute prioritization of one’s own species’ interests over those of a silent majority is still regarded as being ‘only natural’” (5). To a great extent, this dismissal of non-human nature belies the modern history of humanity’s interaction with it.

But what exactly is ecocriticism? In his text *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrard draws from the work of various scholars in the field to explicate the term. Perhaps the most straightforward is Cheryl Glotfelty’s conception of it as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” that provides an “earth-centered approach to literary studies” (Glotfelty xix). Following Richard Kerridge’s formulation of the term as seeking answers to the “environmental crisis” (Garrard 4), Garrard also notes that “the emphasis on the moral and political orientation of the ecocritic and the broad specification of the field of study are essential” (4) to its purpose and methodology.

As a field of study, ecocriticism has its origins in environmentalism’s “crucial contributions to modern politics and culture” (Garrard 2). It has subsequently been compared to Feminist and Marxist discourses for its “avowedly political mode of analysis” and its marriage between its core subject (in this case, the environment) and social concerns (3). Scholarship in this area characteristically began with:

an exclusive interest in Romantic poetry, wilderness narrative and nature writing, but in the last few years [it] has turned towards a more general cultural ecocriticism, with studies of popular scientific writing, film, TV, art, architecture and other cultural artefacts such as theme parks, zoos and shopping malls. (4)

Reflecting the field's broadening horizons, "ecocritical theorists have become more transnational" (Roos and Hunt 5) in scope. This trend runs concurrent to a move by postcolonialists toward recognizing that "the reality of environmentalist imperatives [is] among other political issues in postcolonial nations" (5). As a result, there has been a "growing body of excellent scholarship...creating a dialogue between ecocritical and postcolonial theory" (5).

The interest Antarctic literature presents for both postcolonial and ecocritical studies lies in the fact that since Antarctica has no indigenous human population to dissent from or resist appropriations of its place, such acts of "literary colonization" are justified by the Western belief that nature "stands for an empty space in the discourse, ready to be charged with any one of a number of values" (Spurr 168). Ironically, though this literary reflection of Imperialist attitudes accordingly "treats nature as radically Other, and humans as emphatically separated from nature and animals," at the same time it establishes the "blankness" of nature as a necessary condition for the Imperial justification of its appropriation (Plumwood 504). This mirrors the way that "colonized peoples are seen, quite accurately, as alternatively essential to and destructive of the colonial order" in other colonialist fiction (Spurr 122). Nature's presumed blankness is, however, only a cultural blankness. As Ouderkirk expounds:

culture is different from other processes we currently call 'natural' or 'wild,' but we have to acknowledge that culture is an evolutionary emergent. Its difference is that it requires additional concepts for understanding it, concepts that are necessary for and that are inappropriately applied to understanding the rest of nature. (282)

From this arises a pivotal distinction: because placehood is a cultural construct, nature, as separate from culture, would seem to be excluded from its creation. While this is true in principle, when considering the creation of placehood through literary representations it is important to note that the depiction of nature in those representations is *also* a form of cultural construction.¹⁵ By extension then, authors such as Coleridge, Poe, and Verne do not use nature itself in creating Antarctic identity, but the cultural construction of nature. A ready example of this is the Albatross in *The Ancient Mariner*; though the bird in the poem is evoked from the real-world idea of an albatross, the symbolic resonance it carries in the poem, and indeed the English canon, clearly indicates that it is a cultural construction. This appropriation of nature for cultural ends is simply another means by which authors exploit its "cultural blankness" by infusing it with externally derived values.

Though "Throughout western intellectual history, civilization has consistently been constructed by or against the wild, savage, and animalistic" (Huggan and Tiffin 134), ecocriticism seeks to remedy this erroneous Imperialistic conception of the

¹⁵ As Garrard indicates, "The excessively culturist implications of [the word] 'construction' are not easily avoided by a substitution [with] terms...[like] 'shaping', 'elaboration' or 'inflection'" (10), but such words are the best available that help to "describe the complex transformations and negotiations between nature and culture, or between real and imagined versions of nature" (10).

relationship between them. As Plumwood asserts, while:

It is usually now acknowledged that in the process of Eurocentric colonization, the lands of the colonized and the non-human populations who inhabit those lands were often plundered and damaged, as an indirect result of the colonization of the people....What we are less accustomed to acknowledging is the idea that the concept of colonization can be applied directly to non-human nature itself. (503)

This broadening of the postcolonial scope to address the whole of nature rather than just human actors is also conducive to the examination of Antarctic literary representations. The extension of my theoretical frame into the realm of ecocriticism is hence desirable since nature, in the form of landscape and animals, is a common unifying aspect found in the constructions of the Antarctic in *The Ancient Mariner*, *Pym*, and *An Antarctic Mystery*.

Max Oelschlaeger's concept of wilderness as something that "is essential in revealing to us what it means to be *civilized* human beings" (8) brings to the fore the civilization/nature dichotomy that I seek to examine. In his work *The Idea of Wilderness*, Oelschlaeger indicates the need for scholars to re-examine the nineteenth-century Western belief that "European culture was the crowning human achievement, providing a yardstick by which cultures in other times and places might be judged" (6-7). Instead, Oelschlaeger advocates for a new theoretical lens which recognizes that "experience of the wilderness as an 'other' is necessary to any grounded understanding of human beingness and articulation of individual identity" (8-9). The need for this reconception is echoed by the fact that the:

Eurocentric form of anthropocentrism draws upon, and parallels, Eurocentric Imperialism in its logical structure. It tends to see the human sphere as beyond or outside the sphere of 'nature,' construes ethics as confined to the human (allowing the non-human sphere to be treated instrumentally), treats non-human *difference* as inferiority, and understands both non-human agency and value in hegemonic terms that deny and subordinate them to a hyperbolized human agency. (Plumwood 504)

Since Imperial discourse's "construction of non-humans as 'Others' involves both distorted ways of seeing sameness, continuity or commonality with the colonized 'Other,' and distorted ways of seeing their difference or independence" (504), Oelschlaeger is advocating recognition of that sameness, continuity, or commonality in order to affirm "wild nature as a *source* of human existence" and embrace human "affinities with the primitive while acknowledging differences" (Oelschlaeger 1, 7). In this thesis, Oelschlaeger's framework is particularly useful for examining the tension between the natural and human worlds, as well as the agency of the Albatross in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, and the conflation of domestic and wild spaces in Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery*.

Animals form a specific subdivision of non-human nature in the primary texts I consider, and represent a further area of overlap between postcolonial theory and ecocriticism. The animals in these texts reflect the dichotomy of civilization/wilderness that is inherent to Imperial discourse; they are simultaneously *classified* as being either domesticated or wild, but also *exploited* in the name of exploration and survival. The

treatment of animals by the human characters of these primary texts is therefore an extension of the Imperial belief that anything natural is “merely a valuable resource” to be used for the ends of civilization (Oelschlaeger 4). Of particular interest here is the idea of animal agency, or how Imperial discourse others animals to such a degree that they are merely commoditized or fetishized, and thus “rarely seen as independent actors” (Huggan and Tiffin 191).

1.3 Itineraries

Chapter 2 of this thesis will discuss how Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* constructs Antarctic placehood. Through an examination of the tensions between the natural, supernatural, and human elements of the poem, this chapter will demonstrate how the poem embodies the Romantic Movement’s ambivalent attitudes toward Imperialism, culture, and nature, which parallels similar dichotomies in Imperial discourse. The Mariner himself arises as the central liminal figure that exists in a perpetual state of being “in-between,” thereby personifying both the work’s thematic blurring of divisions and motif of boundary breaching common to Antarctic representations.

Chapter 3 will explore how placehood is created through the Gothic genre and the underworld journey narrative archetype in Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. The Gothic’s preoccupation with abject horror and the uncanny colludes with the underworld journey’s pervasive theme of liminality in this work to present the act of Antarctic exploration, and indeed Imperialism at large, as a process of conflating boundaries. In this way, the liminality resulting from this conflation

effectively allows Poe to lend the Antarctic identity by charging it with external cultural value that is specifically American. The Gothic is related to the postcolonial through their “shared interest in challenging post-enlightenment notions of rationality” (Smith and Hughes 1). Furthermore, the fact that “both landscape and people (indigenous or otherwise) are seen [and portrayed] as uncanny” (5-6) within colonial fiction provides a further link between the two and allows for a ready application of postcolonial theory to *Pym*’s Gothic elements.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will examine how identity is created for the Antarctic in Jules Verne’s *An Antarctic Mystery* through intertextuality. As a sequel of *Pym*, this work not only calls into question the identities that are created in Poe’s text, but in doing so also revisits how Poe constructed Antarctic placehood. In setting up an explicit contrast between his work and its predecessor, Verne thereby marks a movement away from conceiving of the Antarctic as a culturally Imperialistic reflection of specific national identities toward its twentieth-century reconfiguration as a place defined by its neutrality and global cultural convergence and cooperation – as the embodiment of cultural intertextuality itself.

Finally, chapter 5 will address trends in the evolution of Antarctic placehood as I have described it here. This progression can be linked to the treatment of enclosure¹⁶ in Coleridge’s, Poe’s, and Verne’s texts, since the change in the nature of this theme from being an oppressive foreign force to being a cozy domestic one also corresponds to the progression in Antarctic identity construction from being an unknown and alien place that

¹⁶ In this context, I take enclosure to simply mean “an area that is surrounded by a barrier” (Stevenson, “enclosure”).

is set up in opposition to the familiar Western setting to being a physically and culturally familiar one. This larger transformation in how Antarctica is figured in literature is a macroscopic embodiment of how each of these separate works generates Antarctic identity from ambivalent forces and the conflation of boundaries and dichotomies.

Chapter 2 – All Between and All Around: Ambivalence in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*

The period following James Cook's circumnavigation of the world in high austral latitudes in 1772-73 marks an important time in Antarctic exploration history. On one hand, Cook's voyage conclusively dispelled the notion of a temperate Terra Australis Incognita, a long-held geographic myth of an unknown large southern land mass "stretching from Chile to Australia," thereby opening the Western imagination to re-envision all kinds of new potentialities for the Antarctic region (Siskind 12). According to Wijkmark:

The fictional development of the Antarctic theme closely follows A trajectory from unknown to known, reacting to a relatively well-defined series of historical events...[beginning] with a statement of [John Cleves] Symmes in 1818 that beyond the ice barrier that thwarted Cook's progress there was a huge hole-in-the-pole that opened up to the interior earth. The historical transformation of the Antarctic can be said to end with the publication of the narrative of the U.S. Exploring Expedition in 1845, making the Antarctic known to the American public for the first time. (86)

Prior to the publication of the Wilkes expedition's details, "Antarctica was still just a hypothesis [and] speculative fiction [was free to explore] its imaginative potential" (86).

Of the four major fictional works¹⁷ featuring Antarctica that were published between 1770 and 1845, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is perhaps the most celebrated; this poem's fantastic tale embodies the type of Antarctic reimagining that was occurring across Western culture at the time.

As Coleridge's most popular poem (Kooy 45), *The Ancient Mariner* remains a seminal selection in anthologies of Romantic and English poetry (Shaffer 6), even in translation. As McGann indicates, however, "Though [this poem was] well known to readers in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, no early consensus about the meaning or the value of [it] was reached" (35). Early reception of the poem saw its critics divided into two factions – those who "valued the poem for its ability to keep 'the mind in a placid state of wonderment'" (Lamb qtd. in McGann 36), and those who rebuked it for its extravagance (McGann 36). Though the poem "was recognized to have an intellectual or allegorical import [during Coleridge's lifetime]" (37), it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that "critics first began to develop explicitly symbolic and allegorical interpretations" (37). McGann notes that:

Those mid-Victorian readings established the hermeneutic models which have dominated the subsequent history of the poem's interpretations. Though details and emphases have changed and shifted, and though the commentaries have become more extended, the fundamental interpretative approach has not altered significantly since that time. (37)

¹⁷ The other three being Adam Seaborn's *Synzonian: A Voyage of Discovery* (1820), printed under the pseudonym "Captain Adam Seaborn" (Stam and Stam 125), James Fenimore Cooper's *The Monksies* (1835), and Edgar Allen Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838).

This "fundamental interpretive approach" (37) to the poem relies on two basic assumptions, first that Coleridge intended "his poem to be read symbolically or allegorically" (37), and second that the poem itself relies on a "Christian-symbolic schema" (37). A considerable number of contemporary scholars still primarily espouse historical-based or author-centered methods¹⁸ of examination that draw upon the greater current "access to materials (manuscripts, letters, notebooks, marginalia) [that were] unavailable, for the most part, to nineteenth-century critics" (Haven 360) as a means of opening up new avenues of inquiry. The fact that the majority of "modern interpretations [of *The Ancient Mariner*] represent variant rather than alternative versions of nineteenth-century commentaries" (Haven paraphrased in McGann 38) perhaps suggests the need to move toward other approaches of reading the text.

My examination of *The Ancient Mariner* will avail of postcolonial and ecocritical lenses¹⁹ principally because the creation of reflective identities for the Antarctic in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* hinges on the poem's construction of a

¹⁸ While it must be recognized that "our dominant interpretive tradition [regarding *The Ancient Mariner*] has been licensed and underwritten by Coleridge himself" (McGann 38) and his own hermeneutic models, this interpretation of *The Ancient Mariner* will, as much as possible, focus on close readings and applications of theory at the expense of what could be considered the "traditional" historical and biographical modes of reading the text.

¹⁹ Though there have been both postcolonial and ecocritical examinations of *The Ancient Mariner*, there have been no attempts to marry these perspectives in an analysis of the work. Postcolonial readings of the text include William Empson's "The Ancient Mariner," which suggests a parallel between the Albatross and ill-treated native peoples (305), and J. R. Ebbatson's "Coleridge's Mariner and the Rights of Man," which notes that "The Mariner, as explorer, is the autonomously guilty actor [for having killed the Albatross]; but the population of Europe was overwhelmingly implicated in the deed and its consequences" (180). As for ecocriticism, only Peter Heymans's "Reading the Animal: An Ecocritical Approach to the Discourse of the Sublime in 'The Ancient Mariner'" provides and overtly ecocritical reading of the text, though Coleridge's importance to the development of ecocriticism as field has been noted by scholars such as Lawrence Coupe in his edited compilation *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, and David Sandner in his "'Habituated to the Vast': Ecocriticism, the Sense of Wonder, and the Wilderness of the Stars."

dichotomy between the (human) forces of Imperialism and the (non-human) forces of nature. While Imperialist discourse, which "naturalizes the process of domination [and] finds a natural justification for the conquest of nature and of primitive peoples" (Spurr 156), is at the root of the ship's purpose and the crew's actions in *Ancient Mariner*, it also creates ambivalence surrounding the sailors' relationship with nature. This ambivalence is most clearly demonstrated in the Mariner's murder of the Albatross, which is the core of the poem's allegorical significance. In a further move in the poem, the supernatural arrives to triangulate both the natural and human realms in this text, and seeks to restore order in the wake of their impotence to properly atone for the murder of the Albatross. This text can therefore be taken as a reflection of ambivalent Romantic attitudes concerning Imperialist discourse itself; through its presentation of multiple, often contradictory stances regarding the colonial mission, the poem "articulates resistance to, and/or anxiety about, cultural Imperialism, even as [it] also, in other areas, remains complicit with it" (Fulford and Kitson 5).

2.1 Nature and Imperialism

Nature is one of the greatest sources of contradiction in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, mainly because of the ambivalent relationship between humans and non-humans in Imperial discourse. On one hand, Imperialism "treats nature as radically Other, and humans as emphatically separated from nature and animals" (Plumwood 504). This attitude is rooted in the facts that in the eighteenth century "the vast majority of

people in...Britain continued to swear by Christianity's²⁰ anthropocentric taxonomy, which set man thoroughly apart from other animals and endowed him with quasi-divine status" (Heymans 19), and that "the progressive urbanization of British society...resulted in a more detached and scientific outlook on the natural world" (23). Yet, as scholars such as Plumwood (2004), Ouderkirk (2002), and Oelschlaeger (1991) have indicated, "experience of the wilderness as an 'other' is necessary to any grounded understanding of human beingness and [the] articulation of individual identity" (Oelschlaeger 8-9). Though culture and nature are therefore Others of one another, they are also mutually constitutive.

As a significant part of their colonial agenda, European powers sought out virginal lands through nautical exploration for the "intertwined" (Finney 90) purposes of "scientific discovery, of national aggrandizement, and of commercial and military advantage" (90). Accordingly, the accounts of such endeavours served to "tame" or rationalize the exotic regions of the world through the "[authoritative lens] of the European observer – [the] traveller, merchant, scholar, historian, [and] novelist" (Said 69). Since the purpose of the voyage in *The Ancient Mariner* can be assumed to have been motivated by similar Imperialist justifications to rationalize and exploit the distant regions of the world, the language used by the Mariner to describe the Antarctic should

²⁰ Though I will occasionally allude to Christian overtones and symbolism in this poem, at this time it is important to mark a distinction between the cultural construction of Christianity as a religion and the more general sense in which I use the "Divine." Though the Christian associations with the term are inevitable, I only intend it as anything "of or like God or a god" (Stevenson); the Divine, as it exists in this poem, is quite separate from the cultural construction that Christianity has built around it, though the Mariner's perspective as narrator often conflates the two. The Divine is beyond culture, though it does inevitably lead the errant Mariner back to his own Christian cultural values. When referring to the Divine in reference to the Mariner, I may also refer to it as the "Christian God" since that is the way in which the Mariner culturally conceives of the Divine.

reflect the perceived Imperialistic value of the Antarctic. Revealingly, though, the Mariner chooses to describe Antarctic space as desolate and hence of no apparent commercial or strategic value to a conquering Imperial power:

And through the drifts and snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken –
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound! (Coleridge 55-62)

Interestingly, these two four-line stanzas have more consistent intra-line rhyme schemes than the surrounding stanzas, with the first and third lines in each being formed by two rhyming half-lines. The stanzas directly preceding and following these two do demonstrate a similar internal rhyme scheme, but only in one of either the first or third lines, not both. The fact that the above stanzas both consistently use rhyming half-lines in their first and third lines makes them stand out from the surrounding stanzas. This privileging serves to highlight the significance of the Antarctic setting, of which these eight lines provide the first description in the poem.

The diction of these lines creates an unwelcoming tone amidst a scene of stark desolation. Most obviously, the word “dismal” and the repetition of the negative “nor” paint a picture of absence in collusion with the omnipresent ice that is both “all between”

and "all around." The fact that the word "ice" is repeated four times in three lines, and is described as being both "between" and "around" suggests that it is literally everywhere, not only around spaces but also between them. The depiction of ice as ubiquitous presents an undifferentiated environment, a limbo with no landmarks against which the ship may navigate. The additional "crack[ing]," "growl[ing]," "roar[ing]," and "howl[ing]" of the omnipresent ice further creates a scene that is ironically claustrophobic despite its extreme vastness.

In this instance, nature, in the form of the imposing ice, is figured as an opposing force to the ship and her human crew, yet this construction of the relationship between humanity and nature as adversarial is quickly undermined. Contrary to Stallknecht's insistence that "certainly Coleridge had a sense of the ridiculous which would have withheld him from writing a phantasy [sic] of some six hundred lines on the danger of cruelty to animals" (560), there is evidence to suggest that the poem addresses the ambivalence that exists in Imperialist attitudes toward the environment by making the entire poem an allegory for the need for human civilization to live in harmony with nature. While this reading runs generally counter to the fact that "Most contemporary critics see [the poem] as morally unintelligible" (Dilworth 501), and specifically counter to popular critical assertion that "the shooting of the Albatross [must be interpreted] as the symbol of reason's conquest over feeling" (564), it is in keeping with Romanticism's "fascination or even obsession with the pre- and anti-modern ([i.e.] nature...)" (Makdisi 10), and its call for the "communion between man and nature, especially animate nature" (Dilworth 526).

Despite assertions that "Coleridge very likely wrote the earlier stanzas [of the *Ancient Mariner*] without any didactic purpose" (Stallknecht 564), the positioning of the Albatross as a symbol for the need for harmony between civilized humanity and untamed nature is cohesive from the point when the Albatross is introduced. Though present from the introduction of the Albatross, this allegorical interpretation of the poem is best summarized near the end of the poem with the oft-quoted stanzas:

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all. (Coleridge 610-17)

In this passage, the Mariner appeals to Christian values and extends the golden rule of "love thy neighbour as thyself" to all of God's creations. Though this succinct articulation of the poem's eco-friendly theme appears at the very end of the poem, it is merely the last in a long line of imagery and allusions that establish and develop it throughout.

The first element that contributes to the creation of this theme is the use of diction that reflects reverence for nature and its forces. When describing the "Storm-Blast" (Coleridge 41) that blew the ship toward the South Pole, the Mariner claims "he / was

tyrannous and strong" (41-42). The main things of note here are that the "Storm-Blast" is capitalized as though it were a proper noun, and further anthropomorphized with the use of the pronoun "he." This literal personification of nature is indicative of the ascription of identity to Antarctica in this text, specifically its identity as a natural place; if people inherently have individual identities, then by extending personhood to a force of nature one is also giving it an identity, or at least the potential for one. Furthermore, the accordance of reverence to the Storm-Blast, as reflected in its capitalization and human pronoun reference, and also through its particular description as being "tyrannous and strong" (42), helps to form the basis of *The Ancient Mariner's* allegory for respecting and living in harmony with nature in this poem.

By far the most obvious element that allegorizes humanity's Imperialistic relationship with nature in the poem is the symbol of the Albatross. As John Livingston Lowes indicates in his *The Road to Xanadu*, the shooting of the Albatross is the structural focal point of *The Ancient Mariner*, "bind[ing] inseparably together the three structural principles of the poem: the voyage, and the supernatural machinery, and the unfolding cycle of the deed's results" (201). While there have been many subsequent interpretations of the Albatross's symbolic significance in the scholarship devoted to *The Ancient Mariner*, ranging from associating the bird with various members of Coleridge's family²¹ (Lau 82) to its murder being representative of original sin (Stoll 216), some

²¹ Indeed, as Beth Lau notes, "the killing of the albatross in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* has been interpreted as a matricide, a patricide, and a fratricide" (82) because of its various symbolic associations to protection, God, and the tale of Cain and Abel, respectively. Lau further expounds that "Critics [have] frequently relate[d] the poem's depiction of troubled family relationships to Coleridge's own conflicted feelings toward his mother, his younger brother Frank, and his older brother [and father figure] George" (82).

critics have dismissed the possibility of an ecocritical reading of the bird by presenting the proposition in a *reductio ad ridiculum* manner (225). Nevertheless, as scholar Eric Wilson suggests in his assertion that the Mariner's murder of the Albatross is motivated by the fact that "the bird's nature challenges his anthropocentric desires" (171), there is sufficient textual and critical evidence to support such a reading of the Albatross as the central symbol in this work's allegorization of the need for humanity to peacefully coexist with nature.

The bird is initially a good omen to the Mariner's crew. Its very presence causes the claustrophobic ice to "split with a thunder-fit" (Coleridge 69), thus allowing their "helmsman [to steer them] through" (70) to open water by "offer[ing] an orienting difference" (Wilson 170) amid the undifferentiated glacial background. As an agent of the natural world, the Albatross's interaction with and deliverance of the Mariner's crew causes it to become a symbol of the potentially symbiotic relationship that could exist between human beings and nature. It is only when the Mariner shoots the Albatross, the emissary of that symbiosis, that things begin to fall apart. By the Mariner's own admission, he had:

done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, [he] had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow. (Coleridge 91-94)

In this passage, the Mariner's destruction of the Albatross foreshadows not only the crew's untimely end, but also the end of humankind's peaceful relationship with nature in the poem. This foreshadowing is soon realized when "the sails [drop] down" (107) from

utter lack of wind, leaving the crew stranded and powerless amid "The silence of the sea" (110). The good fortune heralded by the company of the Albatross, which is the key to the poem's "espous[ing of] morals that condemn selfish ambition and advocate a loving, harmonious co-existence with people and other living things" (Lau 78), is reversed after the bird's destruction.

The reversal of the crew's good luck as a result of the unprovoked slaying of the Albatross is the linchpin of this poem's allegorical meaning since it invokes dire consequences from the natural, as well as supernatural, worlds. However, *The Ancient Mariner's* message regarding the wisdom of living in harmony with nature also contains a specific warning concerning the treatment of nature within an Imperialistic context. This warning has its basis in the idea tendered by some historians that "the colonial experience was not only highly destructive in environmental terms, but that its very destructiveness had its roots in ideologically 'imperialist' attitudes toward the environment" (Grove 500). Indeed, though critics such as Empson and Ebbatson have identified that "the guilt of the Mariner [for killing the Albatross] is the [colonial] guilt of the European powers in their treatment of newly discovered peoples" (Ebbatson 176), they fail to take the extra step and apply that guilt to the collateral destruction of the environment. The poem's Antarctic setting exposes this fact by taking the colonized human element out of the equation; with no indigenous humans to Other, non-human nature presents the next best target over which to assert Imperial dominance. The Mariner's act of killing the Albatross therefore reflects not only the desire of the Imperialist to dominate over the wilderness, which was "viewed almost exclusively as a natural resource to be exploited" (Oelschlaeger 4) and accordingly treated as Other to

human culture (Ouderkirk 282), but also the senselessness of that attitude. The Mariner never provides a justification for killing the bird, he simply asserts that "With [his] cross-bow / [he] shot the Albatross" (Coleridge 81-82) without further comment. The fact that he uses an implement of technology – the tangible product of his culture – to facilitate its murder indicates the triumph of the cultivated over the wild.

This reading of the Albatross's significance is directly supported by Peter Heymans's explanation of Coleridge's personal philosophy regarding the environment, which maintained that there is a "tension between the independent value of every organism (biodiversity) and its mutually dependent relationship with the rest of the earth's ecosystem (biological unity)" (17). Heymans further notes that "The Mariner's alienating encounter with an indifferent, even antagonistic natural world paradoxically gives him a profound insight into the kinship between human and non-human animals" (17) and links the poem's moral dimension to Coleridge's creation of an ecological sublime. The specific form the sublime takes in *The Ancient Mariner*, he argues, is a hybridization of Immanuel Kant's conception of it as "temporarily unbalancing the equilibrium between the self and other, and ultimately an uplifting synthesis that aggrandizes the ego" (18) and Edmund Burke's notion of it as the mitigation of "uniformly negative sensation[s to] turn [them] into...much more morally ambiguous experience[s]" (18). The Mariner's tribulations with the natural and the supernatural worlds, which are caused by his murder of the Albatross, are hence the sublime processes through which he comes to realize the need for harmonious relations with nature.

The Albatross remains a potent allegorical symbol even after its death. In an attempt to single out the Mariner as the chief agent of its destruction and thereby absolve

themselves of guilt in its death, the Mariner's crew "[hang] the Albatross / About [his] neck" (Coleridge 141-42). Perhaps the most telling aspect of the description of the crew burdening the Mariner with the dead Albatross is the fact that he remarks that the bird is used "Instead of the cross" (141). This allusion to the Christian cross can be interpreted in two very different ways, hinging on the interpretation of "Instead." First, the word may be taken to mean to completely replace with an opposite. The use of the Albatross in the place of the cross is meant to indicate that the crew are performing a form of excommunication of the Mariner from Christian values because of his uncharitable slaying of another fellow "Christian soul" (65),²² which effectively causes "The image of the dead Albatross hanging around the Mariner's neck [to] powerfully [convey] a situation or unwanted, horrifying connection to another being" (Lau 84). Though the blood of the pious bird would certainly have stained the Mariner's soul, the crew use it as a tangible symbol of that staining, but also to mark him as being different from the rest of them by having the Albatross and not a cross about his neck. In this way, the "substitution [of] the dead albatross [instead of the cross] becomes a symbol of despair" (Reid 51). Second, the Albatross's carcass being placed upon the Mariner's neck may be interpreted as being "in the stead" of the cross, in the sense that it is meant as a symbol with parallel referential meaning. In this interpretation, the Albatross's physical husk retains the symbolic value of the cross as a burden, one that the Mariner must carry alone.

²² Further to my previous distinction between the cultural construct of Christianity as a religion and the more general idea of the Divine, the Mariner's description of the Albatross as a "Christian" (Coleridge 65) bird can be simply construed as a means by which he grants it equivalence to human agency, since the Christian version of God privileges humanity over animals with the gift of free will. Essentially, by associating the Albatross with a cultural identity, the Mariner elevates it to the level of humanity since "culture is different from other processes we currently call 'natural' or 'wild'" (Oudekirk 282) because it is "more than the sum of [its] parts" (284).

Arguably, even within the greater frame of the poem where the Mariner is recounting his tale to the Wedding Guest presumably long after it actually occurred, the Albatross is still around his neck, but in a purely metaphorical sense – it is the burden that he must continue to take with him on his wider travels and which motivates his “agony [to return] / ...till [his] ghastly tale is told” (Coleridge 683-84).

The cross as a potent symbol within Western culture can therefore be read in this light as a means of commenting on the ambivalent place of nature within Imperialistic discourse. If the Albatross – a symbol of nature – is presented as replacing the cross as both an opposite and a metonym, then nature is simultaneously constructed as being in opposition but also equivalent to culture. At first this seems paradoxical, but when examined in light of the fact that Romantic texts often reveal “the instabilities, ambiguities and contradictions at the heart of colonialism’s discourses” (Fulford and Kitson 11), the dual use of the word “Instead” (Coleridge 141) is indicative of not only the ambivalence surrounding Imperialism and nature, but also how that ambivalence is foregrounded as a key concern in the poem. Indeed, in her work “Romantic Ambivalence in *Frankenstein* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*,” Beth Lau explores many facets of the poem, including the fact that it ironically “espouses morals that condemn selfish ambition and advocate a loving, harmonious co-existence with people and other living things” (78) through the Mariner “assert[ing] his dominance over the animal kingdom and reject[ing] a proffered relationship when he kills the friendly albatross” (78). *The Ancient Mariner’s* eco-friendly moral is hence created from the ambivalent depiction of the Antarctic as simultaneously a natural space and the object of Imperialism.

In light of ambivalent Romantic attitudes surrounding Imperialism and wild nature, the poem's use of the Albatross as allegory in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is an example of how "The concept of landscape is productive in accounting for the social construction of place by imbuing the physical environment with social meaning" (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 16). In this case, the physical environment in question is the uncharted Antarctic, which becomes the site of *The Ancient Mariner's* allegorical commentary on the Imperialistic treatment of nature through the Mariner's narration. However, nature is in turn depicted in a wider sense in opposition to the supernatural elements within the *Ancient Mariner*. The interaction of nature with the supernatural in this work also creates a series of very tangled relationships that must be unpacked in order for the ambivalent portrayal of Imperialist discourse in this text to be fully realized.

2.2 The Supernatural, Vengeance, and Justice

The supernatural can be understood as anything "attributed to some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature" (Stevenson, "Supernatural"). This definition suggests the supernatural is separate from the natural, which is a very significant point from a postcolonial perspective. *The Ancient Mariner* has two particular supernatural elements that serve to forward the poem's allegorical meaning: the invisible Spirit and evocations of the Divine. The first of these is evoked by the Mariner's murder of the Albatross. Shortly after the Albatross is shot and killed, the crew begin to experience a number of unsettling events, such as the dying of the breeze (Coleridge 107), the sea becoming deathly silent (110), and "slimy things [crawling] with legs /

Upon the slimy sea" (125-26). The more fantastic of these happenings are finally explained by the fact that:

some [of the crew] in dreams assured were

Of the Spirit that plagued [them] so:

Nine fathom deep he had followed [them]

From the land of mist and snow, (131-34)

The invisible Spirit's vindictive actions are later explained as being motivated by the fact that "He loved the bird that loved the man / Who shot him with his bow" (404-05); the Spirit therefore doggedly pursues the ship and its crew in order to exact revenge for the death of its beloved Albatross. This marks an important distinction that Lowes overlooks in his famous critique of the poem, *The Road to Xanadu*; Lowes maintains that "the 'moral' of the poem, *outside the poem*, will not hold water" (274), and specifically that the judicial imbalance of killing two hundred of the Mariner's crew for the murder of a single Albatross is "the *reductio ad absurdum* of everything" (276). Though he notes that the acts of the spirit are motivated by revenge (208), he confuses *vengeance* with *justice* and presumes that the inherent imbalance between crime and punishment indicates a fundamental lack of a moral center to the poem because of its hyperbole. Even this imbalance is tempered by the Divine "turn[ing] it into penance, [which] makes a significant difference" (Dilworth 525) in its interpretation.

Interestingly, it is not primarily the natural world that punishes the crew for the senseless death of the benevolent Albatross, but the supernatural world. Nature does react to the murder of the bird by "[dropping down] the breeze" (Coleridge 107) in order to strand the crew in the middle of the ocean, but that is the extent of its ability to seek

retribution. By contrast, the Spirit pursues vengeance by exposing the crew, and especially the Mariner, to supernatural horrors. Among those witnessed is the phantom ship captained by personifications of Death and Life-in-Death, who "[cast] dice" (196) between them for the lives of the crew. All but the Mariner are spared further terror and instead "[drop] down one by one" (219) as "lifeless lump[s]" (218). The more sinister punishment is reserved for the Mariner, however, who is the sole witness to the deaths of the "Four times fifty men" (216) that were his crewmates. He is further reminded of his sin that brought about their doom since "every soul, [as] it passed [him] by, / [was] Like the whizz of [his] cross-bow" (222-23). The Mariner is then made to endure the "curse in [the] dead m[e]n's eye[s]" (260) as they stare at him for a week while he is forced to continue living in guilt and terror.

The Mariner is eventually released from the Spirit's vengeful wrath when "A spring of love gush[es] from his heart" (Coleridge 284) as he witnesses the beauty in the water snakes surrounding the ship. Not only does this moment mark the point at which the Mariner begins to rediscover his Christian cultural values, as indicated by the fact that he then "blesse[s] them unaware" (285, my emphasis), but since the water snakes are animals the Mariner's blessing also indicates his movement back toward living in harmony with nature. Dilworth argues that this blessing passage is formally privileged by a nine-fold spatial pattern of "concentric pairings of images or events" (500). As if in recognition that the horrific punishment has at that very moment completed its purpose, from

[the Mariner's] neck so free

The Albatross fell off, and sank

like lead into the sea (289-91)

Though the Spirit itself does not depart for its southern home until somewhat later, it is at this point that its quest for vengeance gives way to Divine justice, the second supernatural force that seeks to enforce consequences on the Mariner for killing the Albatross. Unlike the Spirit, the Divine and its agents do not overtly torture the Mariner any further, but rather assist in delivering him safely back to civilization. However, as penance for his sin of killing the "Christian" (65) Albatross, the Mariner is henceforth occasionally compelled by "a woful [sic] agony" (579) to repeat his tale to one needing to hear it (582-90), thus making the Mariner himself a living cautionary tale.

From the perspective of Imperialist discourse, the untamed regions of the world are lawless, thus providing a justification for the Eurocentric colonial mission; however, this poem attempts to undermine that belief by asserting that even those lands outside the dominion of humankind are governed on a supernatural level by the Divine. So while the Spirit in the poem may certainly be described as a manifestation of the uncivilized or lawless primitive drive for revenge, the fact that the Spirit defers its revenge in favour of Divine justice signifies that the elements of the Divine that assume control provide an umbrella under which all of creation lies, human, animal, and Spirit alike. Indeed, Dilworth's groundbreaking elucidation of newly discovered formal patterns of concentric imagery pairings in *The Ancient Mariner* further suggests the communion of humans and animals together in the Divine. According to Dilworth, the fifth such pairing centered around the Mariner's blessing of the water snakes consists of:

the two references in the poem to vespers. Early in the voyage, the

Albatross perched on 'mast or shroud...for vespers nine' (line 76) – that is,

for nine evenings. At the end of the poem, 'the little vesper bell...biddeth'
the Mariner 'to prayer' (lines 595-96). (508)

As Dilworth notes, this "impl[ies] that communion between men and animals is equivalent to or has affinity with social prayer in church – vespers being the Catholic communal evening prayer" (508). This interpretation of these structurally linked passages not only effectively marries the human and non-human realms within the Divine, but also reinforces my reading of the poem as an allegory for the need for humans and nature to harmoniously coexist. Both of these points are further supported by the fact that the same reading can be taken from what Dilworth considers to be the center of this structural phenomenon, the Mariner's blessing of the water snakes (500). Broken down into its constituent parts, this act shares the exact same components triangulating the former set of symbols – humankind (the Mariner), the Divine (the blessing), and animals (the water snakes). That this act, which also signifies the beginning of the Mariner's redemption, should be the epicenter of such a concerted formal strategy indicates its centrality to the poem's symbolic and allegorical meaning (503).

A key point of distinction of this reading lies in the human and non-human realms being united in the *Divine*, not *Christianity*, which is a particular cultural interpretation of the Divine. Though the Mariner often conflates the two in this poem, they are fundamentally different. Indeed, the Christian world view frequently colluded with the ideology of Imperialism in establishing an "anthropocentric taxonomy [that] set man thoroughly apart from other animals and endowed him with quasi-divine status" (Heymans 19). In this way, if the Divine were conceived as being strictly the Christian God, the reading of the poem as an allegory for the need for harmony between humans

and nature would be undercut by Christianity's notion of humanity's absolute supremacy over nature. When interpreted outside of the cultural construction of Christianity, the Divine transcends the need to create such taxonomies in the first place since, as the Mariner claims,

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all. (Coleridge 614-17)

Despite the Mariner's use of Christian language to describe the Divine, the poem's depiction of its successful re-establishment of balance between the natural, supernatural, and human worlds indicates its egalitarian position with regards to each of those realms and hence dismisses the Mariner's specific Christian conception of it.

2.3 Liminality and *The Ancient Mariner*

Some of the supernatural elements of *The Ancient Mariner* exhibit ambivalence in their liminality. This is primarily demonstrated in the personification of the "Nightmar[ish] Life-in-Death" (Coleridge 193), who casts dice with Death for the fates of the Mariner and his crew. The very name "Life-in-Death" is itself contradictory since life and death are fundamentally opposing states of being. Life-in-Death wins the Mariner (197) and decides his fate by drawing him into the ambivalent state of being between Life and Death. In a very literal interpretation, the Mariner could be equated with the "in" in "Life-in-Death" as he henceforth occupies the liminal space between life and death in his

tale. The placement of the Mariner within that space privileges him and thereby creates a further dichotomy of "in" versus "out." This is yet another division that gets blurred since the character of the Mariner is simultaneously within the poem's inner tale and outside of it in the larger frame as well. In fact, the context of the larger frame (a wedding) underscores the poem's supernatural elements since the wedding is a religious ritual and, thus, a cultural association to the Divine. That the Mariner feels compelled to share his story with a guest at the wedding hence reinforces the presence of the supernatural and provides a further instance of liminality in the fact that his "blessing [by the divine]... is really a cursing" (Stoll 215), his salvation merely another form of punishment. Indeed, as Adnan Mahmutovic indicates, as a result of the Mariner being "won" by Life-in-Death he "is alive and fully interacting with the worldly (and otherworldly) things [in the poem's larger frame], but still detached from them. He has no place, and is not in a limbo" (101). Though his occasional need to deliver his tale is certainly the most apparent aspect of his ongoing penance, the more understated and sinister aspect of it is the half-life he is forced to lead as a result. Extrapolating from Mahmutovic, this belies the poem's uncanny nature since the beneficent Divine being "Who made and loveth all" (Coleridge 617) is shown to be less overtly forgiving.

The "in-betweenness" of the Mariner in this instance is symptomatic of *The Ancient Mariner's* broader theme of liminality. This theme resonates in the larger poem's exploration of the ambivalences that exist between Imperialism and nature, and the natural world (of which humans a part) and the supernatural world. As the central figure of this work, the Mariner himself is also a liminal character, existing simultaneously between life and death, between his own everyday, Imperialist reality and

a supernatural fantasy. Liminality is the very crux that allows the poem to reflect its Romantic ambivalence toward Imperialism, nature, and culture in this work since the very definition of ambivalence as the “state of having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone” (Stevenson, “Ambivalence”) indicates that such attitudes cross divisive lines by their very nature. A character like the Mariner who exists in the “in-between” spaces in a work is therefore well-situated to observe and comment on the ambivalence of themes and attitudes within that text.

Though there is nothing inherently Imperialistic about the Antarctic, just as there is nothing inherently Imperialistic about any place, *The Ancient Mariner*’s depiction of it resonates with Imperial discourse. As has been demonstrated, however, the poem does not convey either a wholly celebratory or critical attitude toward the force of Imperialism, but rather reflects the ambivalent attitudes that Romantics held regarding it. The Antarctic is therefore simultaneously described in Imperialistic language and discounted as a worthy Imperial object; it is a natural place that is at the same time rendered the Other of, but equivalent to, the cultured, human world.

Chapter 3 – The Uncanny Underworld: Conflating Opposites in Poe's *Arthur*

Gordon Pym

In Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, Gothic elements play an important role in creating the idea of Antarctica. Though Poe's *Pym* arguably "resisted (and resists to this day) genre classification" (Glasberg, "Imagination" 90), it belongs at least in part to the Gothic genre due to its "images and incidents of horror and fantastic mystery appropriate to the most heightened Gothicism" (Zanger 276). Similar to the preceding one, this chapter will examine aspects of the supernatural and the natural as they are presented in Poe's *Pym* and elucidate not only how the work's gothic elements, especially those which conflate boundaries, help place the Antarctic, but also how they coincide with a postcolonial reading of the text. Like Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, Poe's book demonstrates ambivalence toward Imperial discourse. The "in-between" aspects of *Pym* are highlighted in the tension between its fantastic and realistic elements. This coincides with its placement as a "liminal" text in what Wijkmark identifies as the transition of Antarctic representations "from a fantastic to a realistic mode...[that] occurred in perfect synchronicity with the empirical discovery of the continent" (87). Central to my examination is a reading of Poe's *Pym* as an underworld journey narrative; the similarities between *Pym* and this narrative archetype are not only structural, but also thematic given their common postcolonial and Gothic influences, especially with respect to their creation of ambivalent and uncanny elements. The anxieties that emerge out of these forces in Poe's *Pym* are a reflection of how the Antarctic is constructed in Western, specifically American, cultural terms.

Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym* is the tale of the eponymous character's foray, against the will of his family, into maritime adventures. These lead him first to be caught up in the incident of mutiny and cannibalism on the brig *Grampus*, and later aboard the *Jane Guy* to discover and become marooned in a temperate Antarctic region. After affecting an escape with his comrade Dirk Peters from the island of Tsalal, which is populated by a murderous and deceitful fictional indigenous people, the tale ends abruptly and enigmatically with the appearance of a towering white figure. The initial reception of Poe's *Pym* was dubious at best since "reviewers were unsure whether to read the book as realistic fiction in the manner of Daniel Defoe, or to interpret it as a hoax" (Fisher, *Introduction* 114). In the face of fierce criticism over the work, even Poe himself later admitted that it was a "very silly book" (Carringer 515). In spite of uncertain critical reception, the novel inspired two sequels – Jules Verne's "explicit sequel to *Arthur Gordon Pym*" (Jones 58), *Le Sphinx de Glace* ("The Sphinx of the Icefields," 1897), which was translated into English under the new name *An Antarctic Mystery* in 1898 (Schnabel 139), and Charles Romyn Duke's "fictional completion of [*Pym*]" (Khouri 172), *A Strange Discovery* (1899). There have also been a number of other works created that draw from Poe's *Pym*, including H. P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness*, Rudy Rucker's *The Hollow Earth*, and Mat Johnson's *Pym*, though these texts cannot be considered true sequels of the original. It was not until the mid-twentieth century that *Pym* came to be considered by academic critics as "one of Poe's most significant achievements, if one that is not entirely forthright in meaning" (Fisher, *Introduction* 87-88). Interest in the realm of *Pym* scholarship has grown steadily over the past few

decades (Ketterer 263), though criticism of Poe's text has oscillated between being positive and negative (263).

3.1 The Gothic

As a genre, the Gothic emerged out of the Romantic period's preoccupation with how "the complexity of human experience could not be explained by inhuman rationalism" (Smith 2). Indeed, Romanticists such as "Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and Byron at various times used the Gothic to explore, at different levels of explicitness, the role that the apparently irrational could play in critiquing quasi-rationalistic accounts of experience" (2). One of the most pivotal aspects of the Gothic genre is the relationship between terror and the sublime. Terror in the form of "Transgressive, frightening feelings...[was considered to be] the most powerful [emotion] that people are subject to and therefore the most sublime" (2). Related to terror, and also a frequent element in Gothic literature, is the idea of the uncanny, or the terror that is generated when something familiar becomes unfamiliar and is made "frightening precisely because it is *not* known and *not* familiar" (Horner 250). This idea was specifically developed by Freud; as Andrew Smith notes:

For Freud the uncanny, or *unheimlich*, exists in opposition to the *heimlich*, or 'homely'. The *unheimlich* 'is undoubtedly related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror', whereas *heimlich* refers to domesticity and security. However, these terms are prone to slipping into each other. (13)

The uncanny is therefore important within Gothic literature because of its connection to that which "arouses dread or horror" (13), but also because "feelings of uncanniness may represent...anxieties which are revealed in disturbing ways" (14). The uncanny itself is also derived from Freud's observation that the inherent male fear of castration stems from the perception that "there is something uncanny about the female genital organs" (Horner 251) even though "this *unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *heim* (home) of all human beings" (Freud qtd. in Horner 251). Through the uncanny, then, the Gothic is simultaneously tied to bodily metaphors, as well as processes of othering, defamiliarization, conflation, and ambivalence.

In this way, the Gothic and the postcolonial share a common ground since, like writing about colonial phenomena, "Gothic tales, their contradictions, ambiguities and ambivalences provide a dense and complex blend of assertion and doubt, acceptance and defiance, and truth and falsity [that provides] a space in which key elements of the dominant culture become debated, affirmed and questioned" (Smith and Hughes 3). In fact, as Smith and Hughes point out:

An historical examination of the Gothic and accounts of postcolonialism indicate the presence of a shared interest in challenging post-enlightenment notions of rationality. In the Gothic, as in Romanticism in general, this challenge was developed through an exploration of the feelings, desires and passions which compromised the Enlightenment project of rationally calibrating all forms of knowledge and behaviours. The Gothic gives a particular added emphasis to this through its seeming

celebration of the irrational, the outlawed and the socially and culturally dispossessed (1)

Most importantly for my purpose, however, is the fact that "both landscape and people (indigenous or otherwise) are seen [and portrayed] as uncanny" (5-6) within Gothic literature; they are "beyond the possibilities of explanation in European terms" (Warwick 108). The Antarctic region is indeed depicted as uncanny in Poe's *Pym*, in part as a result of the fictitious indigenous people Poe imagines for it, as well as its sexualized alien terrain.

As a writer, Edgar Allan Poe's "name is inextricably entwined with literary Gothicism" (Fisher, "Poe" 67). Though Gothic elements pervade Poe's oeuvre, his main "achievement was to describe, by Gothic means, states of consciousness that picture modern man's distress in his search for values" (Mooney 262). This is in keeping with the narrative of Poe's *Pym* as its eponymous protagonist falls into an archetypal underworld journey through the vast Antarctic on his quest for the pole. Integral to this journey is the idea of the uncanny. In *Pym*, as elsewhere in Poe's oeuvre, the uncanny is linked to the way that "Poe subtly manipulates Gothic conventions in theme and form to symbolize the dangers that lurk when the potentially creative, nurturing, and sexual female principle in the self is repressed by the ill-informed, fearful, and thus destructively aggressive male principle" (Fisher, "Poe" 71-72). In a move that "anticipate[s] Freudian interests in inner conflicts" (Riggio 515), Poe commonly exploits tensions and anxieties surrounding the male/female dichotomy in order to generate the uncanny. This evocation of the uncanny is also present in Poe's *Pym*, and in fact fits well with the archetype of the "typical Poe narrator, [who is] a self-centred, emotionally over-wrought and anxiety-

ridden character" (Fisher, "Poe" 71). These factors underlie Pym's entire underworld journey through the Antarctic and are responsible for both the psychological terror that it generates and the specific figuration of place that emerges.

The Tsalal natives are not only a source of the uncanny in *Pym*, but are also one of the text's most striking aspects since they constitute a purely fictitious society. The very act of their conception in the imagination presents them as representations of the uncanny, the conflation of the familiar with the unfamiliar; the familiar fact that the Antarctic has "no indigenous human presence" (Cornelius 9) because of its "extremely harsh conditions" (9) is made unfamiliar by the creation of the Tsalal people amidst an equally fictitious Antarctic setting. These details defamiliarize Pym's readers from the widely accepted facts concerning the makeup of the Antarctic in favour of this fictional representation. What emerges, then, is a blurring of the familiar and the unfamiliar, the *heimlich* with the *unheimlich*. Such a "conflation of opposites...enables a Gothic collapse between living/dead, human/non-human, and self/other" (Smith and Hughes 3), which contributes to the reading of this text as an underworld journey narrative.

3.2 Underworlds

The supernatural is primarily evoked in this text through Pym's many journeys to literal and figurative underworlds. The horrors associated with such a trip through the underworld, particularly an Antarctic one, invoke Gothicism's focus on terror and the uncanny. Since "The stories people tell about the journey to the other world [or underworld], the realm of the dead, thus reveal their assumptions about the world in which they, as the living, dwell" (Edmonds 3), by figuring the Antarctic as an underworld

to the rest of the earth, and specifically to Western civilization, *Pym* causes it to reflect Western culture by means of negation and inversion.

The equation of the Antarctic with the underworld has a long history. The naming of this region by the Ancient Greeks and Romans betrays its negative conception in relation to the rest of the world by the fact that it is "designated the opposite ('anti') of 'arktikos,' the northern pole" (Glasberg, "Imagination" 19). Elizabeth Leane expounds upon the symbolism of the Antarctic's negative position relative to the Eurocentric north by demonstrating that:

where the Arctic sits on 'top' of the world in traditional cartography, in close proximity to Europe, Asia, and North America, the Antarctic clings to the underside of the Earth, remote and, until the early nineteenth century, unseen. Correspondingly, while the two polar regions share some of the same mythologies (for example, vortices at the poles), it is Antarctica that is associated with horror and is designated as the site of the world's birth canal or anus. ("Locating" 235-36)

In keeping with bodily metaphors in the context of underworld mythology, one of the traditional archetypes of journeys to the underworld is the "initiatory passage through a *vagina dentata*, or the dangerous descent into a cave or crevice assimilated to the mouth or the uterus of Mother Earth" (Mircea Eliade, qtd. in Lee 24-25). This is the type of journey that *Pym* embarks on when he descends into the Antarctic with the *Jane Guy* and her crew – he is literally travelling into the underside of the world, but that movement also shares commonalities with underworld journey motifs from classical mythology.

Any underworld journey brings with it "an implicit contrast with this world; for the strange, the unfamiliar, the other can only be explained in terms that are familiar, even if only by a negation of those terms" (Edmonds 2). This definition of the underworld as one of inversion, negation, and defamiliarization is important not only because it establishes it as a negative image of the living world, but also because it provides a natural link to the idea of the uncanny, which is an important element with Gothic literature due to its ability to incite or evoke dread or horror (Smith 13). As will become clear, the uncanny is also pivotal to Pym's ultimate escape from the Antarctic underworld.

Pym is buried alive twice in the book: once when he is hidden below-decks on the *Grampus*, and again when the Tsalal natives try to kill the *Jane Guy*'s crew by causing an avalanche in the ravine pass. Both events situate him in literal underworlds and are associated with not only darkness and death, but also with orientation since Pym is "beneath" or positioned "under" in both cases. Both instances also bear the distinctive markings of Poe's fiction since "Most key moments of action in Poe's oeuvre] conspicuously involve severely restrictive enclosures" (Carringer 508). The repetition of this motif of Pym being buried alive draws attention to the larger underworld narrative taking place in this work – Pym's literal and metaphorical journey through the Antarctic underworld. Coinciding with the fact that "In Poe's oeuvre], the psychic life of the character produces events that harmonize metaphysically with the setting and the general atmosphere" (Mooney 261), this text's Antarctic setting, as the literal underside of the world, is meant to parallel Pym's metaphorical underworld journey.

Like other classical underworld journeys that Radcliffe G. Edmonds maps in *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes, and the "Orphic" Gold Tablets*, Pym's journey through the Antarctic underworld can be shown to fit into van Gennep's schema of the *rite of passage*, a "three-part transition consisting of separation, liminality, and reaggregation" (18); not only does Pym "[separate] himself from the world of the living, [he also] goes through a liminal period in the realm of the dead, and is finally brought back into the normal world as a new person" (18) changed by his experiences in the underworld. Though this archetypal mapping certainly describes the structural flow of Pym's journey, it is in comparing Poe's narrative to the plot motifs of classical underworld journeys that the most striking parallels can be made. First, Pym the *Jane Guy*, and her crew overcome a series of obstacles to get to the Antarctic, which parallels the fact that "Among the most common obstacles in Greek myths of the journey to the underworld are barriers to prevent one from entering the realm of the dead" (22). As Edmonds indicates:

Often a geographic barrier separates the world of the living from the realm of the dead. The underworld is far away, to the east or to the west, upon high or down below. While the barrier may simply be a large physical distance between the realms, bodies of water frequently appear as barriers. (22)

So too is the *Jane Guy*'s journey to the Antarctic complicated by a number of obstacles. She traverses a body of water to reach her destination, and the distance is extreme, especially considering the fact that she hails from Liverpool (Poe 107). The fact that the boat becomes "completely hemmed in by...ice" (Poe 125) evokes another physical

barrier, one which Pym and the crew ultimately surmount by "forc[ing] a passage through the smaller flakes into some open water beyond" (125).

Poe's *Pym* also shares the underworld journey narrative archetype's convention that "The realm of the dead is often characterized by darkness and shadows that make it easy for the traveler to lose the way" and that the "powers that hold sway in the underworld also present an obstacle for the traveler" (Edmonds 22, 22-23). In Poe's *Pym* both of these factors are represented by the inhabitants of Tsalal Island, whose "complexion [is] a jet black" (Poe 131), which is reflected physically in the unerringly black features of their native island and the "extraordinarily dark" (131) sea that surrounds it, and symbolically in their deeply deceptive and treacherous nature. The Tsalal natives trick the *Jane Guy*'s crew into believing them friends, only to strike at an opportune moment in which they appropriately, though unknowingly, seal Pym in a literal underworld of interconnected caverns. They are simultaneously the darkness that misleads, and the rulers of the underworld who present obstacles.

If the journey to the Antarctic is the separation portion of van Gennep's schema of the rite of passage, and Pym's time in the Antarctic is the liminal portion, then the reaggregation portion of his rite must occur upon his leaving the region. However, Poe's *Pym* seemingly ends without providing the explicit closure of Pym's ultimate escape – the reader is only made aware that Pym *does* escape by his preface to the novel written after the fact. The question of *how* he does so remains unresolved between the ending and the preface. One can, however, view Pym's encounter with the white figure at the very end of the tale as a sort of reaggregation, which, if it is not his escape, may be construed as the moment of his enlightenment. To illustrate this point, the mythological

construction of the Antarctic as a bodily metaphor for the *vagina dentata* must first be explored. If the Antarctic is figured as a vagina, then from a psychoanalytical perspective it makes sense that it would evoke associations with the uncanny. With this in mind, Pym's encounter with the white figure can be seen as a moment when the *unheimlich* and the *heimlich* meet. Indeed, at the conclusion of the novel Arthur Pym and Dirk Peters, along with the Tsalal captive Nu-Nu, are confronted with "a chasm [that] threw itself open to receive them" (Poe 175), but this is immediately overridden by the fact that "there arose in [their] pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men" (175). In this one moment then there is both an opening chasm (a vagina) and a rising figure (a phallus) together – the *unheimlich* and the *heimlich* conflated in the same space. Though from a narrative perspective there is little closure to this ending, the metaphorical convergence of the *unheimlich* and the *heimlich* is a moment of inversion which, in the context of an underworld journey, could actually indicate the return to the living world from the realm of the dead. Pym's escape from the underworld is therefore signified by this conflation of the vaginal chasm with the phallic white figure, whose appearance Fisher correctly identifies as heralding the "culmination of young Pym's quest for selfhood and maturity" ("Poe" 72). However, Fisher's interpretation of the *figure* instead of the chasm as "a feminine presence essential to the complete development and maturity of the self" (72) is puzzling since the diction Poe uses to describe each – the "receiv[ing]" chasm and the "ar[ising]" figure – clearly establishes the chasm as symbolic of a vaginal opening and the figure as phallic.

3.3 Postcoloniality, the Feminized Antarctic, and the Uncanny

Pym's journey through the underworld resonates on a postcolonial level as well. The mythological construction of the Antarctic as a vagina is indicative of this work's pervasive Imperial discourse since "from the beginning of the colonial period (and beyond), female bodies symbolize the conquered land" (Loomba 153). There is therefore an equation of the feminine with the explored and conquered, as well as a converse equation of the masculine with Imperial exploration and conquest. Like other remote regions, the Antarctic's appeal as a place to be explored is intimately connected with these gendered terms, though that connection is intensified given its mythological association with female genitalia. As an unexplored wilderness it is considered *virginal*, an erotic metaphor which equates its exploration with sexual appeal. As Leane illustrates, however, the conception of the Antarctic as "virginal" is also "peculiarly (and paradoxically) aligned with...the maternal body" ("Locating" 234), which is the very source of the anxieties associated with the uncanny that the region inspires. This interpretation is in keeping with Lee's conception of Pym's underworld motif as a "sort of difficult birth process through [which]...Pym finally emerges reborn" (25), which mirrors the fact that in classical mythology the underworld's "binary opposition between life and death is mediated by a journey between the realms of life and death, and the living individual overcomes death and comes to new life through this journey" (Edmonds 19).

A metaphor of penetration can also be discerned from the fact that the *Jane Guy* must first "force a passage through the smaller flakes [of ice] into some open water beyond" (Poe 125) in order to begin exploring the region. Indeed, this forced entry could

be construed as a form of violation, or at the very least the breaking of the hymen. In any case, the sexualized symbolism of the Imperialistic explorers thrusting forth into the virgin, unexplored Antarctic, which in this case also proves to be quite lush and plentiful – fertile, even – with plants and animals for consumption, clearly links the act of exploration to masculinity and male potency, while the explored and exploited are feminized. One may even argue that, since the Antarctic is figured as both virginally and maternally female (Leane, "Locating" 234), the *Jane Guy*'s penetration of the region causes it to be both at once, and that which is gestated during the crew's time there is Pym's enlightenment, which is then delivered at the very end of the narrative when he encounters the shrouded figure.

Another way in which Pym's journey through the underworld is related to the postcolonial lies in the fact that, as stated earlier, any depiction of the underworld brings with it "an implicit contrast with [the real] world; for the strange, the unfamiliar, the other can only be explained in terms that are familiar, even if only by a negation of those terms" (Edmonds 2). This symbolic use of underworlds provides a clear parallel to the "rhetorical strategy of negation by which Western writing conceives of the Other as absence, emptiness, nothingness, or death" (Spurr 92). Indeed, in "Structuralist terms, the [underworld journey] tale expresses the bipolar opposition between life and death, as well as the mediation between them" (Edmonds 18), which adds yet another dichotomy (that of life/death) to the already long list of dichotomies generated from Imperialism's penchant for othering.

Not only then are the indigenous people of Tsalal stereotypically other²³ to their white Euro-American counterparts from a postcolonial perspective, but they are symbolically the “dead” others to the “living” protagonists when read through the motifs of the underworld narrative. This otherhood is problematized, however, when these “dead” kill the “living” members of the *Jane Guy*’s crew who are journeying through their realm – through their death, the living come to mirror the Tsalal natives’ status as symbolically dead, and in the process evoke the uncanny. As Smith and Hughes indicate:

This conflation of opposites...enables a Gothic collapse between living/dead, human/non-human, and self/other. This model of collapse also underpins the process in which the colonizing subject is displaced in its confrontation with racial otherness, an otherness that is both strange, distanced and exotic, and yet the site upon which racial, psychological, and sexual anxieties are projected. In effect difference and distance become erased. (3)

In killing members of the *Jane Guy*’s crew, the Tsalal natives make them their equals in two senses – first, because the crew members’ literal deaths mimic the Tsalal natives’ being symbolically dead as dwellers of the underworld, and second, because on a fundamental ontological level death is the ultimate equalizer of all human beings: regardless of race, everyone dies. This conflation of life and death can be examined using Julia Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory of the abject, which Leane uses to describe how “the disturbing spatial characteristics of Antarctic are displaced onto the alien Thing

²³ As Wijkmark notes, *Pyow*’s representation of the Tsalal natives “as vicious brutes, despite its comic-book one-dimensionality, is a fairly conventional depiction of South-Sea islanders of this period, only transplanted to a tropical island in the Antarctic” (99).

found embedded in the ice [in John W. Campbell's short story "Who Goes There?"]" ("Locating" 225). As Leane identifies, the abject "threatens boundaries between inner and outer spaces, between subject and object, and between life and death" (230). One of the ways in which this may occur is through the use of Yi-Fu Tuan's conception of *alien space* as something that "both frighten[s] and attract[s] the polar explorer] by th[e] prospect of unity with an immense other" (Leane, "Locating" 229-30). The death of the *Jane Guy*'s crew at the hands of the Tsalal natives by means of an avalanche in Poe's *Pym* therefore presents a form of abject terror as it kills the Western explorer characters by entombing them within the earth, at once unifying them both with the Antarctic landscape and with death. The dualism of this unification is very appropriate given that the Antarctic is figured as an underworld in this work.

3.4 The American Underworld

The figuring of Antarctica as an underworld also coincides with how it is used in Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym* to reflect the Western world. Not only is this in the spirit of underworld narratives, in which descriptions of the underworld itself are meant to evoke "an implicit contrast with [the familiar] world" (Edmonds 2), but by making the Antarctic a cultural mirror for parts of Western society, Poe is causing it to critically reflect Western cultural identity. In particular, Poe continues an already-existent analogy between the Antarctic and America through Pym's underworld journey in this work.

As William Lenz indicates in *The Poetics of the Antarctic: A Study in Nineteenth-Century American Cultural Perceptions*, many nineteenth-century Americans believed that "exploration was a cultural activity that connected historical with mythical

conceptions of nation and self" (xxi). Given the fact that the Antarctic was the largest remaining uncharted realm in the world, it is therefore little wonder that the Wilkes Expedition, which has been described as a "parallel or alternative text" (Glasberg, "Imagination" 95) to Poe's *Pym*, became a profound locus for American cultural identity by:

Encourag[ing] Americans to reconceive of [their] nation's role in the world order; [stimulating] global thinking; [offering] an immediate focus for feelings of patriotism; [confirming] and codif[y]ing national values; and [allowing] individuals to participate imaginatively in the communal and officially sanctioned cultural activity of exploration (Lenz xxvii-xxviii)

Indeed, Wilkes embarked on his expedition along with "seven scientists and two artists [with the aim] to conduct an extremely broad scientific program" (Headland 149) in the southern oceans. Among the expedition's most hailed cartographical successes is its "discover[y] and charting [of] a series of landfalls and 'appearances of land'" (149) along a 1500-mile stretch of Antarctic coastline that "provided [the first] proof of the existence of a great south polar continent, [which Wilkes] was astute enough to recognize as fact and to maintain in the face of formidable opinion to the contrary" (Bertrand 188).

Perhaps the great allure of the Antarctic within American culture can be explained by the fact that "The unruly proliferation of Antarctic imaginings... in part coincide[d] with the extension of the western frontier" (Glasberg, "Imagination" 51), thereby making it "a parallel case for the idea of Antarctica" (51). With this parallel established, the Wilkes Expedition's journey into the Antarctic not only became a "cultural synecdoche

for the larger process of American exploration" (Lenz xxvi), but also came to be considered an American "exploration of origins, an exploration of national character, an exploration of self, of future personal and national dreams. To succeed was to confirm the mythic status of American pursuits" (xxviii) and hence to confirm the American belief in manifest destiny. As Gitelman notes, "Wilkes and his companions were groping for a sense of national identity as surely as they were scouring the South Pacific for land" (351). On a world scale, the Wilkes Expedition was conducted at the same time as two other benchmark Antarctic expeditions – one led by France and the other by Britain (Bertrand 159). The concurrence of this American expedition with those of two of the world's greatest contemporary powers could only serve to legitimize and solidify the American stake in global exploration.

In the epilogue, Poe overtly references Wilkes' "governmental expedition [that was then] preparing for the Southern Ocean" (Poe 176) and figures it as a "parallel or alternative text (or fellow explorer)" (Glasberg, "Imagination" 95) to his own tale (and character). The choice to do so was likely prompted by a desire to tap into the cultural popularity of Wilkes' mission at its start, which, as previously indicated, was widely built up as a celebration of American spirit and cultural identity. In attempting to capitalize on the nationalistic sentiments embodied by the Wilkes Expedition, Poe therefore marries American national identity to Antarctic exploration in *Pym*. This metonymic relationship is in keeping with the concurrent cultural perception of Antarctica as America's "'sister' continent [that] evokes similar national anxieties and dreams" (Glasberg, "Imagination" 52). The fact that *Pym* emerged out of this cultural atmosphere signifies the need to read *Pym*'s rendering of the Antarctic region as a reflection of American culture and identity.

If Antarctica is "in a sense a double of the North American continent" (Glasberg, "Imagination" 52) that "evokes similar national anxieties and dreams" (52), what is the significance of Pym's own personal quest for the pole? Since this work as a whole "explores the quest motif characteristic of exploration narratives...and identifies the national quest with the exploration of the Antarctic" (Lenz 41), Pym's personal journey through the Antarctic can be viewed as a microcosmic version of that grander narrative. On an individual level, "to explore *out there* is also to explore *within*, to probe the meaning of the self and community within an alien nature" (Lenz xxii), which is seemingly what Pym does. Not only does this quotation embody the relationship between the individual (Pym), his nation (America), and the larger world, it also betrays the Imperialistic view of nature as something foreign or "alien." Nature, then, is not merely alien to the individual and community, but it is located "*out there*" as opposed to "*within*" a singular person or "in civilized society." This division of "out there"/ "within" also resonates in other dichotomies, such as culture/nature, familiar/alien, civilized/primitive, living/dead, and male/female, which are all at play in Poe's *Pym*, especially in the descriptions of the Antarctic region and its inhabitants. Pym's quest for the pole is, then, on one level symbolic of the greater American national endeavour to join the ranks of Antarctic exploration missions, and on a related discursive level is steeped in romanticized Imperialism.

The representation of the Antarctic is culturally tied to America in Poe's *Pym*, but what if, instead of being its "sister continent" as Lenz and Glasberg have suggested, it is actually America's underworld counterpart? As the underworld of America, the Antarctic reflects American culture and identity, but through negation, inversion, and

absence, which positions it as a background upon which to present critical perspectives of America. A way of interpreting this is through the gendered construction of the Antarctic and America as female and male respectively. The Antarctic, with its mythic associations to both the virginal and maternal female body (Leane, "Locating" 234) is the natural other to, but complement of, the Imperially "male" America. Indeed, if Pym's personal "quest for the pole" is a microcosm of the grand narrative of American exploration, then steeping that narrative in a gendered perspective makes sense given that Pym's own journey through the Antarctic underworld, and specifically his encounters with the uncanny, have had gendered connotations. At their most basic, the associations of America and Antarctica with male and female forces are simply ways of characterizing them in terms of positive and negative, presence and absence. From a postcolonial perspective, this translates into the view that America, as a part of the Eurocentric Western world, is cultured or already written upon, whereas the Antarctic, despite the fictional human population that *Pym* gives it, is conceived of as being essentially devoid of culture or blank. Though the Imperial narrative conventionally has the positive trumping the negative through conquest and assimilation, in Poe's *Pym* this conquest does not occur. In fact, as previously indicated, the ending of this work seems to conflate the male and female, the positive and negative, signifying perhaps that the two are mutually constitutive and symbiotic rather than diametrically opposed. This interpretation is in keeping with the idea that it is precisely the Antarctic's blankness, the potentiality of its space (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 16), that makes it an appropriate setting on which to project American culture and identity. Though at the time *Pym* was written America itself still had a frontier that essentially embodied the same symbolism

of absence/potentiality, that space was domestic, it was *already* American or in the process of *becoming* American. The Antarctic, however, had the virtue of being far-enough removed geographically from the United States that it could be Othered at the same time that it is used as a metonym for America. It is simultaneously constructed as a symbol for America, yet not America; as America's underworld, the Antarctic is designed to evoke "an implicit contrast" (Edmonds 2) to it. This conflation of American identity with conceptions of the Antarctic brings with it the uncanny, which may be used to provide a critical perspective of America itself.

3.5 Endings

Pym also evokes the uncanny by conflating the supernatural and the natural and thus straddling the boundary between the "fantastic and realistic mode[s] of Antarctic representation" (Wijkmark 87). The most salient instance of this is in the ambiguity of the work's ending. The text's enigmatic conclusion presents the question of whether the "great white figure emerging from the mists [is] real or supernatural," a question which has plagued audiences and critics alike since the work's release (Zanger 276). As Zanger indicates, there are a number of ways of attempting to resolve the question of whether or not the apparition of the white figure at the end of *Pym* is real, including by explaining it as one among a series of the work's "horrific and supernatural occurrences [that are] the products of rational machines and rational intentions" (277), as merely the stuff of dreams (277), or as the fancies of an "untrustworthy first person narrator whose madness or addiction or extended suffering functions as a rational explanation for an otherwise irrational narrative" (278). Zanger rejects all of these explanations, as well as Kent

Llungquist's further suggestion that "the details of Pym's adventure [are linked] to some mythic structure which would provide a kind of privileged validation of the text" (279), yet as I have demonstrated there are certainly grounds for considering the appearance of the white figure as a completion of the classical underworld journey archetype. In fact, the explanation that the appearance of the white figure completes an underworld journey narrative, as opposed to the Titanic myth proposed by Llungquist (279), answers the question of whether the figure is real or supernatural – it is *both* and *neither* in that it conflates the two just as it conflates the male and female, the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich*. The figure represents the uncanny precisely because it conflates these opposing forces, just as its apparition makes a potent ending to this work precisely because it "resembles in its employment...an emotional climax whose intensity is so powerful that the reader customarily fails to ask 'what happens next?' or even 'what conceivably could happen next?'" (278). Indeed, it is appropriate that the conflation of the natural (or real) with the supernatural in the appearance of the white figure causes Poe's *Pym* to end "with the [same] potential of indeterminacy" (Lenz 43) that characterizes all fictional representations of the Antarctic that I examine in this thesis.

Though it is therefore a tool exploited by Western writers to formulate the Antarctic in whatever way is convenient for their themes, the region's potentiality of space (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 16) is also the source of the anxieties it generates; as a fictional setting, its qualities of being "remote, antipodean, and uninhabited" (Leane, "Locating" 226) lead to the possibility that "almost anything could be hidden in its unexplored regions" (226), making it a fertile metaphoric ground for exploring anything from the margins of the world to the terror that exists within the human psyche. Edgar

Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* in fact brings together those very forces – the macroscopic quest to chart the farthest reaches of the earth and the microscopic exploration of “terror where it originate[s] and function[s]; in the mind” (Fisher, “Poe” 67) – through its combination of Imperialistic sentiment with elements of the Gothic genre. With regards to the creation of identity for the Antarctic, this work’s ready postcolonial interpretation and pervasive Gothic aspects therefore make it a particularly interesting case since “The connection between the Gothic and the postcolonial...brings together highly useful overlaps that afford new approaches for understanding cultural production” (Sugars and Turcotte xvi).

Chief among the strategies used to develop Antarctic identity are the postcolonial and the Gothic’s respective preoccupations with ambivalence and the uncanny, which themselves are related. The reason ambivalence and the uncanny are such effective tools for constructing Antarctic identity is rooted in its inherent lack of cultural identity. By conflating boundaries and distinctions, whether geographic or symbolic, these tools effectively “lend” the Antarctic identities by charging it with external values, specifically by depicting it as a reflection of America. The use of ambivalence and the uncanny is hence the process by which the borders between spaces are traversed in order for that infusion of meaning to take place. While not unique to Poe’s *Pym*, this phenomenon is particularly prevalent in the work given its convenient situation as a work of Gothic fiction with specific postcolonial resonances.

Chapter 4 – The Amplified Antarctic: Overwriting Placehood in Verne's *An*

Antarctic Mystery

Jules Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery (the Sphinx of the Ice Fields)* is a work preoccupied with identity. Almost all of the central characters in the text have anxieties associated with their selfhood, the most common of which are questions of veracity. The repeated use of the work's cast of characters to draw the reader's attention to problems surrounding selfhood suggests that *An Antarctic Mystery* can be read as a text about Antarctic placehood, its forms and mutability. Since this work is a sequel to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, by its very nature it revisits and calls into question the identities that are created in *Pym*, and also the figuration of Antarctica in Poe's text. I suggest that the recurring emphasis on identity issues in *An Antarctic Mystery* is indicative of the way that this text overwrites Poe's *Pym*, and furthermore that this process of revisionism also extends to the portrayal of the Antarctic in these two works. Indeed, from a conjoint postcolonial/ecocritical perspective this text's recurring motif of erasure and revision signifies the reclamation of the Antarctic landscape by nature, and a corresponding shift away from conceiving of its environment in terms of its apparent value for human exploitation. What emerges out of this text is a movement away from both Coleridge's fantastic portrayal of the region and Poe's imposition of American identity on it toward a more realistic and objective conception of its placehood. This is accomplished both through Verne's intertextual evocation and hypertextual amplification of aspects of Poe's text as well as through shifts in genre and authorial style between Poe's *Pym* and Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery*.

Originally published in French as *Les Sphinx des Glaces* ("The Sphinx of the Icefields") in 1897, *An Antarctic Mystery* was first translated into English in 1898 (Schnabel 139). Despite this very early translation, "Modern English-language scholarship on Verne [only] began in 1965 with the pioneering work of Walter James Miller" (Evans *English* 9). As Evans indicates, Vernian scholarship "has come a long way since, and some of the very best studies in the past couple of decades have been Anglo-American in origin" (139), resulting in "a veritable renaissance of interest in [Verne]" (140). Even with this renewed interest in Verne, however, scholarly treatment of *An Antarctic Mystery* has lagged in comparison to the attention given to his other texts. Critical scrutiny that has been accorded to this work has mainly centered around its intertextual links with other aspects of Verne's own oeuvre, as well as direct comparisons to its literary predecessor, Poe's *Pym*.²⁴

Verne was a great "borrower" of ideas, both narrative and scientific. His debt to other authors, including Dumas, Defoe, and especially Poe (Meakin 600), is a widely acknowledged fact, as is his "insistence on avoiding the metaphysical and the supernatural, his adherence to known science" (Hartwell vi), which is the result of his positivistic world view. The particular influence of Poe on Verne's oeuvre is most clearly demonstrated in *An Antarctic Mystery*, which is just as much an acknowledgement of Verne's debt to Poe as it is an attempt to overwrite him. There have been several attempts to comment on the intertextual relationship between Poe's *Pym* and Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery*, including Evans's "Literary Intertexts in Jules Verne's 'Voyage

²⁴ In addition to the works cited above, see David Meakin's "Like Poles Attracting: Intertextual Magnetism in Poe, Verne, and Graecq."

Extraordinaires',” which explores how Verne “broaden[ed his] own literary authoritativeness by identifying his novels more closely with those of the canonical literature(s) of his time” (171); Schnabel’s “*Le Sphinx des Glaces* (1897): On the Track of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket,” which examines elements common to both *An Antarctic Mystery* and *Pym* while showing how the disparity in their representation between the two works indicate differences in their respective authors’ styles and discourses; and, most significantly, Meakin’s “Like Poles Attracting: Intertextual Magnetism in Poe, Verne, and Gracq,” which rigorously highlights various ways in which Verne “transforms and interacts with Poe’s text” (600). While these critical works have laid the foundation for a discussion of the intertextual relationship between *An Antarctic Mystery* and *Pym*, they have all fallen far short of examining how Antarctic identity is affected by the interaction between these two works, focusing instead strictly on the relationship between texts.

4.1 Intertextuality, Hypertextuality, and Amplification

Verne’s *An Antarctic Mystery* compounds the existing frame of Poe’s *Pym* by presenting it as an intertext within his own narrative. The plot of *An Antarctic Mystery* begins in August of 1839 – approximately two years after the original publication of Poe’s *Pym*. As the narrator Mr. Jeorling indicates, Poe’s text physically exists in the continuity of this work and is considered, as it was in the world of the reader, to be little more than a tale of “romance” (Verne 14), or a “fictional story in verse or prose that relates improbable adventures of idealized characters in some remote or enchanted setting” (Baldick). However, as Captain Len Guy contends and is ultimately proven

correct, Mr. Jeorling's belief in the commonly held truth that Poe's *Pym* is fictitious is in fact incorrect. By postulating that *Pym* is a factual account in the continuity of this work, then, *An Antarctic Mystery* reinfuses Poe's ruse with new life.

As the very basis of Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery*, Poe's *Pym* is a potent example of the interaction of an intertext with its framing text. Before proceeding, it is necessary to elaborate on the idea of intertextuality. This term generally refers to the fact that every text is essentially a "mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Orr 21). Texts are then "made up of ...all the different discourses, ways of speaking and saying, institutionally sanctioned structures and systems which make up what we call culture. In this sense, the text is not an individual, isolated object but, rather, a compilation of cultural textuality" (Allen 35-36). Authors therefore "do not create their texts from their own, original minds, but rather compile them from pre-existent texts" (35), thus actually making each individual work a "permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text" (35).

However, to describe the relationship between *Pym* and *An Antarctic Mystery* as simply one of intertextual allusion, or "the actual presence of one text within another" (Allen 101), is still vague and insufficient due to the extensively and intimately intertwined nature of their plots within a common continuity. Instead, the notion of hypertextuality more clearly delineates the relationship between these two works. First coined by Gerard Genette as a means of "particularly refer[ing] to forms of literature which are intentionally inter-textual" (Allen 108), this term encompasses "any relationship uniting text B ([called] the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A ([called] the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (Genette,

qtd. in Allen 107-08). In the particular case examined here, Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery* would be the hypertext of Edgar Allen Poe's hypotext, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. The main advantage of following Genette's framework is that he has already extensively studied and systematically defined the "manner[s] in which hypertextual transpositions are made of specific hypotexts. Texts can be transformed by processes of self-expurgation, excision, reduction, [and] amplification" (109, my emphasis). It is the last of these processes – amplification – that Verne uses to extend upon Poe's *Pym* in order to create his sequel. Indeed, the process by which Verne exploits absences of detail in *Pym* is a form of hypertextual amplification, which can further be broken down into the sub-processes of "extension, contamination and expansion" (Allen 110). Verne exploits the *potential* continuity of the hypotext and fills in the *gaps* in the details in that text with other plausible ideas, thus extending the continuity of the hypotext to fit the needs of his own hypertext/sequel. Though Meakin goes so far as to identify *Pym* as the hypotext of *An Antarctic Mystery* (600), he does not explore the idea that Verne amplifies certain details (or gaps in details) of *Pym* in order to overwrite its continuity. This particular type of intertextual revisionism, made possible by exploitable gaps in the hypotext, therefore dovetails with Leane's formulation of Antarctic placehood as being derived from its "lack of stability, its changeability, [and] its boundary breeching" ("Locating" 236), inextricably linking intertextuality to the construction of the region's identity in *An Antarctic Mystery*.

4.2 Issues of Character Identity

The anxieties surrounding identity in *An Antarctic Mystery* come as a result of Verne's hypertextual amplification of aspects of *Pym*, specifically in his depiction of four characters – Mr. Jeorling, Len Guy, Dirk Peters, and Martin Holt. By far the most prominent of these characters is the narrator, Mr. Jeorling. Jeorling's selfhood is problematic for the reader mainly because it gets conflated with the identities of others, specifically Arthur Gordon Pym and Captain Len Guy. The first of these identity fusions, between Jeorling and Pym, occurs gradually over the course of the novel. In the beginning, Jeorling is figured as "a man of science and a sceptic, who initially contrives to reject Pym's tale as mere fiction" (Meakin 603). However, as the narrative progresses Jeorling becomes increasingly swayed by the mounting circumstantial evidence of not only the truth of the account relayed in *Pym*, but also the plausibility that other members of the *Jane Guy*'s crew survived the ordeal on Tsalal. In fact, Jeorling "insidiously set[s] up the reader to accept Poe as an authority, a purveyor of truths and insights" (Meakin 603), even if those truths and insights are limited by *Pym*'s first person perspective.

Once he admits the possibility that Poe's *Pym* may not be the fictional "romance" (Verne 14) that he and the general public first took it as, Jeorling begins reading and rereading the text for evidence that corroborates the facts presented by Len Guy and which is further suggested by the discovery of *Jane Guy* survivor, Patterson, on an ice floe. The more Jeorling revisits the text of *Pym* the more he becomes immersed in it, and eventually he begins to take on Pym's preoccupation with "attempt[ing] to solve th[e] question of [the] polar continent" (139). Indeed, Jeorling's role on the ship as a passenger with the Captain's ear directly parallels Pym's situation on the *Jane Guy*, and

he performs the same narratological function as Pym by being the advocate for venturing into the Antarctic region. In this role, he even goes so far as to entice the crew by offering "Two thousand dollars [to] be shared among [them] for every degree [they] make beyond the eighty-fourth parallel" (97). This massive financial commitment is a testament to Jeorling's Pym-like monomania concerning the Antarctic region. Despite their obvious parallels, "Jeorling is not quite Pym, [just as] Verne is not quite Poe" (Meakin 606), but the connections between them certainly invites an intertextual analysis.

The conflation of Jeorling's identity with Pym's begs a question central to both *An Antarctic Mystery* and Poe's *Pym* – who is Arthur Gordon Pym? His character, as it is manifested in both Jeorling and Pym himself, is portrayed differently in these respective works. Whereas in Poe's text Pym wilfully eschews familial ties at great personal expense in order to go to sea (Poe 14), one of the most pivotal drives for the plot in *An Antarctic Mystery* is his relationship with Dirk Peters, which is figured as one of father and son (Verne 101). Another quirk of Verne's *Mystery* is that, save for the discovery of Pym's cadaver, Pym himself is physically absent in the work. However, since Jeorling, Guy, and Peters refer to him and his account so frequently, Pym exists in it as a sort of omnipresent spectre. This is embodied in Jeorling's gradual process of becoming Pym-like, which could be construed as a sort of possession by Pym's spirit. This evocation of Pym's spirit (in a metaphorical sense) can be used as an analogy to summarize what Verne is doing in *An Antarctic Mystery*. This text attempts to encapsulate the essence of *Pym* without being *Pym*, just as Jeorling carries Pym's narrating legacy without being Pym himself. The construction of both text and character as "Pym, but not Pym" is the

key to understanding the revisionist process by which Verne makes a sequel of Poe's work.

Another instance of character conflation in this text lies in the blending of Jeorling and Len Guy with respect to the question of the *Halbrame's* Captaincy. In another direct parallel to Pym, Jeorling eventually "take[s] on, even usurp[s], the Captain's consuming obsession with the quest" (Meakin 603), which is surprising given that of all the work's main characters Jeorling has the least personal motivation to find and rescue the marooned crew members of the *Jane Guy*. That he even goes so far as to offer enormous sums of money to the *Halbrame's* crew as a financial incentive for their cooperation with the aims of the Antarctic quest is uncommonly generous given Jeorling's inherent lack of personal investment. Interestingly, the offering of this incentive comes at a moment when a significant portion of the crew are on the verge of mutinying against Len Guy's authority to take them beyond the strictures of their original employment agreement, which would "not...take them farther beyond the icebergs than Tsalal Island" (Verne 96). Jeorling references the fact that:

to exact the obedience of these ill-disposed men, and under such conditions to risk the unknown Antarctic waters, would have been an act of temerity – or, rather, an act of madness – that would have brought about some catastrophe. (96)

The mutinous sentiment exhibited by the majority of the crew is, however, placated by Jeorling's economic incentive. Significantly, it is not Len Guy who authoritatively resolves the situation, but Jeorling, and the means by which he does it are not rooted in the chain of command, but in legality and economics. The crew are legally right to insist

that the voyage not take them beyond Tsalal Island, so the Captain's hands are tied. Jeorling effectively circumvents the clash between legality and shipboard authority by rewriting the terms of the original agreement. In a way, he buys the position of authority on the ship since Guy is now indebted to him for resolving the situation in the Captain's favour. From this point on, the question of the *Halbrane's* captaincy is complicated by Guy's indebtedness to Jeorling.

Dirk Peters, another character that has anxieties surrounding his identity, is a holdover from *An Antarctic Mystery's* predecessor, though for more than half the book Peters operates under the assumed name "Hunt." Surprisingly, it is not Peters but the narrating Jeorling who provides an explanation for his adopting this pseudonym:

Now, why had Dirk Peters hidden himself in the Falklands under the name of Hunt?...No doubt because he feared that his name would inspire horror. Was it not the name of one who had shared in the horrible scenes of the [*Grampus*], who had killed Parker, the sailor, who had fed upon the man's flesh, and quenched his thirst in the man's blood? To induce him to reveal his name he must needs be assured that the [*Halbrane*] would attempt to discover and rescue Arthur Pym! (Verne 94)

Peters later adds, however, that while Jeorling's interpretation is basically correct, his change in name also stems from the more personal reason that he "would not bear [his] own name any longer – on account of the affair of the [*Grampus*]" (108). In spite of his change in name, "Verne gives Peters essentially the same character traits delineated by Poe, but without making him appear grotesque as Poe does" (Schnabel 143). By choosing to scale down Peters' physical characteristics from "a kind of anthropoid ape

with Herculean strength" (143) to "a man of short stature...[whose] whole frame denoted exceptional strength" (Verne 54), Verne makes him less monstrous and more human, a choice mirrored in Verne's reformulation of Pym and Peters' relationship as that of father and son (101).

Three particularly compelling issues are associated with Dirk Peters' identity: that he is a native-American/European "half-breed" (Verne 28); that he assumes a fake name; and that, as a result of their "many dangers shared" (Verne 101), he becomes a father figure to Pym. The first of these identity issues situates him as a liminal figure in Verne's work. As the son of both "an [American] Indian woman of the tribe of Upsarokas" (Poe 38) and a "fur-trader [father]" (38) of European descent, Peters straddles the worlds of both the colonized and colonizers, being simultaneously "Indian and nonIndian [sic], animal and human, violent and kind" (Wilson 202). In *Pym*, this has particular significance with regards to the association Poe attempts to draw between the American frontier and the Antarctic; Peters represents the half-tame, half-savage border of the frontier, the line between rational civilization and irrational nature, between the known and the foreign. Peters takes on a similar role in *An Antarctic Mystery*, and even uproots himself from his home in Illinois to live near the margins of the chartered world in the Falklands on the off chance of that he might be able to rescue his beloved Pym (Verne 93-95). Aboard the *Halbrane*, he is consistently othered by or set apart from his shipmates and is repeatedly referred to as the "half-breed" rather than either Hunt or Peters. His "half-breed" status sets him apart racially from the rest of the crew, but more importantly it sets him apart metafictionally – he is the only main character common to both *Pym* and *An Antarctic Mystery*. Peters is both Poe's and Verne's invention,

simultaneously existing in the unaltered hypotext and the revised hypertext more or less unchanged. In this way, Peters' identity as a "half-breed" helps to anchor the intertextual connection between these two works.

Peters' adoption of a fake name is one example of the recurring motif of disguised identities in this work, which also includes the revelations that Len Guy is the brother of Captain William Guy of the *Jane Guy* in Poe's *Pym*, and that the cannibalized sailor Parker was actually a man named Ned Holt, who furthermore turns out to be the brother of *Halbrane* crew member Martin Holt. All of these false and disguised identities fatefully converge on the decks of the *Halbrane* and serendipitously lead to both the quest to find and rescue Pym and any other survivors of the *Jane Guy*, as well as its complications. The plot of *An Antarctic Mystery* is therefore driven by identity; it is motivated and complicated by familial links between the characters in Verne's narrative and those of Poe's, and by the dramatically-timed revelations of those true identities and relationships.

4.3 Domesticity and the Maternal Body

Like the other familial links in this work, Verne's depiction of Peters' and Pym's relationship as analogous to that of father and son (Verne 101) is a driving force in the plot. Not only do these family ties intertextually bridge *Pym* and *An Antarctic Mystery*, they also point toward a theme of domesticity in this work. As anything "relating to the running of a home or to family relations" (Stevenson, "Domestic"), tropes of domesticity serve to contrast how Poe and Verne respectively treat enclosure; whereas enclosure is:

a terrifying obsession in Poe, for ever [sic] reworking the dread of being entombed alive, [it is] typically cosy and domestic in Verne (the cave fitted out with goodies from the ship; the comforting presence of Endicott's stove on the iceberg; the cramped canoe becomes a 'home' and a birthday is celebrated on it). (Meakin 608)

This transformation of enclosures from terrifying to welcoming domestic spaces can also be read in light of the fact that Antarctica has traditionally been, as previously indicated, "peculiarly (and paradoxically) aligned not only with the "virginal," yet-to-be-conquered female body but also with the maternal body" (Leane, "Locating" 234). Unlike in *Pym*, where Poe chooses to invoke both of these associations and, indeed, to conflate them in order to create a sense of abject terror through the uncanny, Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery*, through its portrayal of enclosed spaces as domestic and "cosy," evokes only the singular association of the Antarctic with the maternal female body. These relatively comfortable enclosures can therefore be construed as womblike, standing in stark contrast to the anxiety and uncanny terror generated by enclosures in *Pym*.

The transformation of enclosures from terrifying, claustrophobic spaces to welcoming, even maternal, domestic spaces is supported by the textual details of *An Antarctic Mystery*. First, as previously mentioned, the enclosures that shelter the work's characters are womblike because of their construction as "cosy," domestic spaces. Since the very word "domestic" implies links to the household and to family (Stevenson, "Domestic"), these enclosed spaces effectively become microcosmic versions of the crews' home. Even Tsalal Island can be construed as a womblike place given that it is enclosed on all sides by water and accords Guy and his remaining crew a relatively

comfortable existence for eleven years. As William Guy notes, the island was abandoned by the natives following an incident in which Pym's dog, Tiger, went mad and "caused the greater part of the Tsalal islanders [to take] flight" (Verne 163) in fear. Indeed, as Guy describes, life on the island after the departure of the natives was:

On the whole...more endurable than might have been supposed. The natural products of an extremely fertile soil and the presence of a certain number of domestic animals secured them against want of food; they had to make out the best shelter for themselves they could contrive, and wait for an opportunity of getting away from the island with as much patience as might be granted them. (164)

In this passage, the crew's "wait[ing] for an opportunity of getting away from the island" (164) can be likened to the period of gestation during which the fetus grows to maturity. Even the route of their escape, which took them "between the two halves of a continent, one on the east, the other on the west" (146), geographically resembles a sort of birth canal through which they are born(e) to safety.

Though in the narrative it is the *Jane Guy* and the *Halbrane's* crew members that are safely conveyed out of the Antarctic region, or the maternal body, what is actually created by this birthing process is an Antarctic identity that is differentiated from, not conflated with, the identities of Western nations. Yi-Fu Tuan's "Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics" provides a useful nomenclature for describing both crews' habitation in the Antarctic. Tuan envisages the world in terms of three separate spaces – the *homeplace*, a "protected – [and] at least partially enclosed – space" (139), the *homespace*, the familiar area immediately surrounding the homeplace, and *alien space*,

the unfamiliar area outside the homespace that "is normally perceived as threatening" (140). In *An Antarctic Mystery*, even the homeplaces that are created by the crews in the region are only temporary pockets of familiarity and comfort that, once vacated, cease to hold any remaining domestic value and are immediately swallowed back up by the ever-encroaching alien space of Antarctica. In the sense that once they have left the region behind there are no homeplaces left there, the Antarctic is physically rid of any external impositions and becomes, from a Western perspective, wholly comprised of alien space. Even the geographical knowledge that is gleaned from the survivors' time spent there is infinitesimal when compared with the projected "vast[ness of the A]ntarctic region" (Verne 146). This is not to suggest, however, that the region has regained its cultural "blankness" since the survivors take with them their own construction of the place, but rather that the evidence of their cultural inscription on the land itself has been tempered and that the region is once again free of Western human presence, which is the engine driving the creation of externally derived values for it.

4.4 Toward an Objective Antarctic

The idea of the domestic is also particularly relevant from a postcolonial perspective since "under the aegis of its centrality, the word 'home' accrues 'extremely potent resources' in relation to the foreign that counters it" (Baker 4, referencing Said). Again, the discourse of Imperialism sets the familiar Western metropolis or home in opposition to the foreign landscape, distant and strange, with the former being implied to be a more desirable place than the latter. With the crew's permanent departure from the domestic pockets that are created amidst the Antarctic landscape, *An Antarctic Mystery*

allows the full realization of the rigid home/foreign dichotomy and the re-establishment of its conceptual Otherness to Western civilization.

Unlike Poe, who uses the Antarctic to reflect American culture and identity and thus conflates the two, Verne re-establishes its Otherness to the rest of the world by purposely disassociating it from any particular nation, or even with the Imperial drive to explore. The fact that the narrative of this work is essentially "search and rescue" rather than "claim and conquer" supports this reading, as does the conspicuous absence of the Tsalal natives from Poe's *Pym*, who are mentioned in *An Antarctic Mystery* but never seen. Even the earthquake which lays waste to Tsalal Island effectually erases all traces of human habitation there, just as the mammoth iceberg on which the *Halbrane* runs aground would eventually melt, leaving no traces of the ship or its crew. These happenings are revisions designed to wipe the Antarctic clean of any evidence of imposed meaning, yet by virtue of the revisionist nature of this text, what was written over can never be fully destroyed. As a result, no matter how clean the Antarctic slate is wiped in this or any other work, the meanings that are already linked to it through other fiction and non-fiction texts still resonate; it is impossible to rescind them completely. The tropes of erasure and revision in *An Antarctic Mystery* instead indicate what Wijkmark claims is a "shift from a fantastic to a realistic mode of Antarctic representation [that] occurred in perfect synchronicity with the empirical discovery of the continent" (87); this text's revisionist overtones mark a movement towards constructing the region as neutral place which, if not completely free from past associations with other cultures, at least becomes primarily concerned with "the interests of science and the progress of all mankind" ("The Antarctic Treaty" 2).

The Antarctic is refigured as a place of Otherness in this text through the process by which it writes over *Pym* through hypertextual amplification; Verne essentially overwrites the identities ascribed to the place in Poe's work by exploiting the silences or gaps that are present in the narrative of *Pym*. Verne further moves toward an Antarctic identity of Otherness by depicting events in the narrative, such as "Tsalal Island [being] laid [to] waste from coast to coast by an earthquake" (Verne 166) which erases all evidence of long-term human habitation from the Antarctic landscape. Shifting away from Poe's emphasis on subjective reality, which is symptomatic of his Gothic bent as well as his American cultural influence, Verne creates an objective focus that is derived from his positivistic emphasis on rationality, science, and empiricism, which collude to classify his oeuvre as part of the "Hard Science Fiction" genre, a subdivision under the umbrella of science fiction that "uses either established or carefully extrapolated science as its backbone" (Steele, qtd. in Nicholls 542). This directly corresponds to Verne's noted style of confining the subject matter of his works to "known scientific fact, [and] limited extrapolation based only upon accurate knowledge" (Hartwell vii), therefore contributing to an objective portrayal of the Antarctic in this work that is once again separated from the identities of other nations.

Indeed, Verne attempts to justify *Pym*'s flights of fancy in the vein of nineteenth-century Realism, which holds empirical science as "one of [its] central influences" (Baker 11), by "correcting Poe, sorting out plot threads, tying up loose ends, accounting for seeming inconsistencies in *Pym* and substituting a scientific marvel for the fateful, inconclusive finale of the incomplete Poe work" (Hartwell viii). As a result, Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery* not only makes an intriguing case of intertextuality and textual

framing, but also is an experiment in revisionism that resonates to the very core of Antarctic identity. Like other authors who figure the Antarctic in their works, Verne exploits the region's potentiality of space (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 16) to spin an entertaining story, but he does so in a way that reflects his own commitment to depicting only ideas that are scientifically proven or plausible (Hartwell vii). In fact, Verne's "banish[ment of] the supernatural from his world" (Slusser 321) marks a key distinction between his works and those of Coleridge and Poe; whereas Coleridge relies heavily on the fantastic and Poe "twists natural laws to suit his fictional needs" (Evans 179), Verne retains his fidelity to portraying only that which accords, or is a reasonable extension of, his contemporary natural science.

Verne even goes so far as to directly debunk Poe's predilection for the fantastic by demonstrating how such seemingly inexplicable events are the result of observable external phenomena. For instance, Jeorling's dream sequences, which at first seem to reflect a form of precognition, are explained as rooted in both actual occurrences and the psychologically "haunting influence [of Poe's *Pym*] under which [Jeorling's] brain was beginning to labour" (Verne 77). The first of these sequences has Jeorling seemingly dreaming of hearing a voice that whispers "Pym...Pym...Poor Pym!...Poor Pym must never be forgotten" (77). At first, Jeorling dismisses this as simply "an extremely vivid dream due to some cerebral cause" (77). The whispering voice of the dream is later revealed to be Hunt's/Peters', who was directly above Jeorling's cabin at the helm (77) while he was dreaming. Though the incident does foreshadow events in the narrative, it is by no means a supernatural premonition since its meaning and cause are fully and rationally explained at a later point. The second dream, which is even more fantastic in

its content, is also simply the result of Jeorling's "constant reading of Edgar Poe's works, and reading them in th[e] place in which his heroes delighted, [that] exercised an influence over [him] which [he] did not fully realize" (118). In this dream, Jeorling imagines questioning an anthropomorphized Sphinx regarding Pym, only to finally witness Pym "arise before [his] astonished eyes...flaunting the ensign of the United States" (119). Though this partially foreshadows Jeorling's solution of the Antarctic "Sphinx's" riddle that finally explains the method of Pym's death, it also cannot be interpreted as a supernatural premonition of things to come because the details of Jeorling's dream barely resemble what occurs in the ensuing narrative – Len Guy does not reverse course, he and Peters are not forced to secretly make away with one of the *Halbrane's* boats in search of Pym, and their eventual discovery of Pym's mortal remains is anything but the triumphant description of him as the "fierce guardian of the south pole, [who] flaunt[s] the ensign of the United States" (119). In fact, the only aspect of Jeorling's dream that is in the least bit accurate is that the Sphinx "discloses the secrets of these mysterious regions to [him]" (119), but even then it is Jeorling's own logical interpretation of empirical observations that leads him to solve the riddle of the Sphinx. In setting up this dream only to have it fail to accurately foreshadow events later in the narrative, Verne debunks the supernatural belief in the premonitory powers of dreams and instead figuring them as reflections of the dreamer's present psychic state, which is supported by Jeorling's increasing obsession with Poe's works and the fate of Pym.

The explanation provided for both the mysterious currents that pulled Pym and Peters toward the pole at the end of *Pym* and the monolithic white figure whose sighting heralds the abrupt ending of the *Pym* text is another major instance of Verne amplifying

aspects of Poe's text to forward his rational and empirical agenda. These happenings in *Pym* are explained near the end of *An Antarctic Mystery* when the remaining crew of the *Halbrane* and the rescued castaways encounter the form found at the very end of *Pym*, though in this case instead of being the figure of a man the structure is described as being "a great mound, singularly shaped, [from which] the mist had just rolled off its head, leaving it to stand out and confront [them]" (Verne 170). This towering mound had hitherto been shrouded both literally in mist and figuratively in mystery, and was therefore considered, based on the information presented in Poe's *Pym*, as "a sphinx...seated at the pole of the world, and from whom Edgar Poe could only wrest its secrets" (Verne 170). The crew's attention is attracted away from the awesomeness of the structure, however, by "phenomena still more strange than the mysterious earth from upon which the mist-curtain had been raised so suddenly" (Verne 170), for shortly thereafter "all articles on board the boat that were made of iron or steel...took flight after a similar fashion in the same direction, while the boat, quickening its course, brought up against the beach" (170). The existence of the sphinx and the occurrence of strange happenings described in *Pym* had until now been dismissed by the narrating Mr. Jeorling as merely "the hallucinations of Arthur Pym" (170), yet the present situation causes him to exclaim to the contrary that "These were physical facts which [they] had just witnessed, and not imaginary [phenomena]!" (170). Further clues to the nature of these phenomena are found among the wreckage of one of the *Halbrane's* boats that had also been completely stripped of its metal. To explain these occurrences, the crew turn to logic and construct a dialogue by posing questions such as "What could be the meaning of this?" (171) and "how is the state the boat is in to be explained?" (171). These probing

questions are designed to facilitate an ordered enquiry into the cause of these observed events by providing a framework dictated by a reasoned analysis into causation.

This ordered examination finally concludes with Mr. Jeorling formulating "an hypothesis which explained these astonishing phenomena" (Verne 171) that the crew had just witnessed; the mound is therefore explained to be "a loadstone! that is it! [It was a] magnet with prodigious power of attraction!" (171). This inference gives further insight into the disparity between the fates of the commandeered boat of the *Halbrane* and the craft used by the remaining crew by the fact that:

Under the influence of that [colossal] magnet the iron bands of the [Halbrane]'s boat had been torn out and projected as though by the action of a catapult. This was the occult force that had irresistibly attracted everything made of iron on the [crew's] Paracuta. And the boat itself would have shared the fate of the [Halbrane]'s boat had a single bit of metal been employed in its construction. (171)

This explanation describes the forces that the crew witnesses in close proximity to the loadstone. Mr. Jeorling subsequently surmises that this structure must draw a "formidable accumulation of electric fluid" (172) derived from the "immense quantities of electricity not completely exhausted by [the world's] storms" (172), which is the probable cause of "the northern and southern auroras" (172). The crew's reasoned inquiry into the nature of this phenomenon is therefore brought to an end when they "regard [Mr. Jeorling's] explanation as conclusive, in presence of the physical facts of which [they] were actual witnesses" (173).

These differences between Poe and Verne can be attributed to genre – whereas Poe's brand of Gothic literature "explore[s] terror where it originate[s] and function[s]: in the mind" (Fisher, "Poe" 67), Verne, who, along with H.G. Wells, is "generally thought of as one of the [two] founding fathers of science fiction" (Clute 1275), and who is arguably the singular founder of the Hard Science Fiction subgenre, looks to empiricism of the external world and uses "technical detail[s] and scientific fact[s]...[as his] guiding principle[s]" (Hartwell vii). When comparing Coleridge and Poe to Verne, then, an explicit contrast arises between the fantastic and the rational, the internal and the external. Contrary to Slusser's claim that "What Verne runs aground on in Poe is the fantastic itself – the phenomenon that cannot be interpreted in terms of a monistic or positivistic line of reasoning because it is by nature double and fundamentally contradictory, ineffable" (322), I contend that Verne makes great strides toward revising Poe's supernatural fantasy by providing reasonable, rational explanations for events and phenomena that are depicted as supernatural or otherwise inexplicable or unknowable in *Pym*. Indeed, Verne's objective focus dispels many of the epistemological uncertainties that are created in *Pym* as a result of Poe's emphasis on subjective terror, which itself can be construed as an opposing force to reason.

The movement away from the subjective in Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* toward the objective in Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery* therefore parallels each author's treatment of the supernatural and further signifies the fundamental differences between their constituent genres. More importantly, this transition from the subjective to the objective parallels the movement of constructions of the Antarctic from being a place whose identity is contingent on the imposition of external values in Poe's

text toward being depicted as separate from such external identities in Verne's. Poe's emphasis on internalized reality, on the subjective definition of identity and place, is overwritten by Verne, who helps in the construction of the Antarctic as the neutral, though not blank, place that it becomes formally recognized as in the twentieth century. This act of revision is accompanied by acts of overwriting in-text, such as the earthquake burying the evidence of human meddling in the Antarctic and the positivistic reinterpretation of the fantastic elements in *Pym*. The differences in constructions of the Antarctic in *Pym* and *An Antarctic Mystery* despite the strong intertextual relationship between these two texts suggests that the region's placehood is truly defined by its "mosaic of [constructions]" (Orr 21) and the fact that it is "not an individual, isolated object but, rather, a compilation of cultural textuality" (Allen 35-36). Such a perspective is in keeping with the Antarctic Treaty's construction of the region as a place for international cooperation, though it interestingly recognizes previous sovereign claims to chunks of the continent at the same time that it tears down those imaginary boundaries in "the interests of science and the progress of all mankind" ("The Antarctic Treaty" 2). Though it can be said that every nation is the result of cultural textuality, the Antarctic is a particularly interesting case owing to the fact that cultural constructions of its placehood in the nineteenth century are entirely externally ascribed.

The Progression of Antarctic Placehood: A Conclusion

Many factors helped to shape Antarctic identity in the nineteenth century, including its previous mythological constructions, the accounts of explorers like Cook and Wilkes, and the various literary imaginings of the place. This thesis has principally sought to explore the latter of these, though it is obvious that the literary construction of Antarctic placehood has been greatly influenced by real-world beliefs and knowledge about the region. In this sense, my analysis generally accords with Glasberg's assertion that "The interplay of Antarctic fact and fancy leads to the...[axiom] that Antarctica is an intertextual construction, a place that is not a place, but a matter of textuality" ("Imagination" 5). Indeed, it would certainly appear that, especially in the nineteenth century, the idea of Antarctica is derived more from the pastiche of representations, both fictional and non-fictional, that emerge for it than any purely empirical assessment of the place.

Questions of placehood have been central to this thesis. As demonstrated, the criticism surrounding ideas of spatiality seems to agree that human knowledge of an area is necessary to transform space into place and "[imbue] the physical environment with social meaning" (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 16). This is especially true within the pervasive Imperial discourse of the nineteenth century, which conceived of nature as "stand[ing] for an empty space in the discourse, ready to be charged with any one of a number of values" (Spurr 168). Leane's identification of Antarctica as being defined by its "lack of stability, its changeability, [and] its boundary breaching" ("Locating" 236) is the result of the fact that its "empty" space grants it the "read[iness] to be charged" (Spurr

68) with external values. It is ironic, however, that while the remoteness and inhospitableness of the Antarctic region kept all but a handful of people from reaching its shores in the nineteenth century, thus limiting its ability to be constructed socially as a place, those same characteristics that preserved its potentiality of space also inspired the literary imagination to create identities for it. Despite the limits on a socially constructed placehood for Antarctica emerging during this period, I contend that the region is granted various identities through its representations in literature, which rely on the exploitation of its mutability. The constructions of its identity by Coleridge, Poe, and Verne are indicative of how the Imperialistic West began to conceive of Antarctica before they were ever able to claim or assert control over its landscape, mirroring Said's claim that issues of territorial ownership "were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative" (xiii).

When considered chronologically, there is a progression in how the Antarctic is depicted in the canonical *Ancient Mariner* (1798), *Pym* (1838), and *An Antarctic Mystery* (1897) from being a fantastic realm toward being a place within the scope of rational science. Though this evolution can partially be attributed to differences in their respective literary movements and genres, it is also rooted in the fact that as the nineteenth century wore on the non-fictional construction of the Antarctic came into sharper focus. I suggest that there is an inverse relationship between the degree of empirical knowledge of the region and the remaining potentiality for writers to exploit in their fictionalizations. This is clearly demonstrated when these primary texts are viewed on a continuum. Though the *Ancient Mariner* overtly evokes the supernatural and marries it to the Antarctic, *Pym* moves toward a slightly more believable representation

which, while it still drawn upon the fantastic, does not construct the region as a dwelling for spirits, nor depict any kind of divine intervention. Finally, *An Antarctic Mystery* overwrites the fantastic elements of *Pym* and rationalizes the region by seeking scientific explanations for extraordinary phenomena. This progression from a fantastic to a rational Antarctica coincides with the development of the trope of enclosure across these works; whereas in Coleridge's and Poe's texts enclosure is designed to create a sense of claustrophobia and to inspire terror, in Verne's work it provides an air of domestic comfort. In these texts, the Antarctic moves from being an unknown and alien place that is set up in opposition to the familiar Western setting to being a physically and culturally familiar place, which parallels growing Western cultural familiarity with it in the nineteenth century. Ironically, Coleridge's and Poe's constructions of Antarctica as a forbidding and alien other to the safe and known West made the region more familiar to their cultures.

Common to all of these works is a delicate balance between humans and non-human nature. This is unsurprising given the Antarctic's situation at the time as a frontier between the rationalized (i.e. human) world and virginal nature. This relationship can also be steeped in gendered terms since "from the beginning of the colonial period (and beyond), female bodies symbolize the conquered land" (Loomba 153), which positions the Imperialist as the phallic, penetrating male force. This association has interesting resonances in these texts. The *Ancient Mariner*, which allegorically calls for communion between humankind and nature, also warns against the dangers of Imperialism since the Mariner's instrumental treatment of nature via the Albatross evokes a set of dire consequences for himself and his crew. In *Pym*, the mythic construction of the Antarctic

as a vagina further feminizes the region and supports the reading of that text as an underworld journey narrative. The ultimate conflation of the masculine and feminine at the very end of *Pym* also echoes the ecocritical theme that humans and non-human nature are mutually constitutive and that "wilderness is [therefore] essential in revealing to us what it means to be *civilized* human beings" (Oelschlaeger 8). In contrast to both of those texts, Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery* figures the Antarctic as a maternal body and a place of comfort. This parallels the movement in this work toward depicting enclosure as cozy or womblike, and as such focuses on the feminized Antarctic as a source of comfort rather than as an adversary to masculinized Imperialism. These associations of femininity and nature with Antarctica not only serve to set it apart as other to the masculine, Imperialist human protagonists in these texts, but in doing so become integrated with Antarctic identity.

Despite the fact that in the nineteenth century the Antarctic had no human population to create cultural meaning for its space, it was given an identity and made a place by those who explored it firsthand, as well as by those who were inspired by its potentiality to write in fictional details where maps and charts displayed only a hole in human knowledge. As a setting for fictional works, its allure was in its indeterminacy and hence its ability to become whatever the author needed it to be. In this sense, Antarctica was the ultimate other to the known world. However, the act of literarily claiming the region is also, in a way, reminiscent of the pervading nineteenth-century discourse of Imperialism. True to its "lack of stability, its changeability, [and] its boundary breaching" (Leane, "Locating" 236), Antarctica's value as a literary place therefore lies in its ability to simultaneously represent both the culture of the Imperial

power and its diametrically opposed other.

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