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Shades of an urban frontier : historical resonances in the cities of Black and Anglophone SF

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SHADES OF AN URBAN FRONTIER: HISTORICAL RESONANCES IN THE CITIES OF BLACK AND ANGLOPHONE SF

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D THESIS

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To my dear friends and family, and of course Mr. Aberg (the Elder).

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to compare the portrayal of cities in science fiction by African American authors to the portrayal of cities in science fiction by Anglo-European authors and determine the connection between the emergent similarities and dissimilarities and the urban history of each ethnic group. Two city typologies were used to provide a common basis for comparison: the 'imperial cities' at the center of sf empires and the 'ghost cities' or 'dead cities' wherein the metropolis has undergone collapse, desolation and mass depopulation. The study found that all the urban sf narratives shared a focus on interrogating crises of political and environmental sustainability in urban history, but that the dead cities of black sf authors also tended to focus on crises unique to African American urban history—in particular, that of neighborhood dereliction and disintegration at the hands of racially targeted urban redevelopment policies, and that of the role of imperialism and black anti-imperial politics in shaping neighborhood formation in urban African American communities.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Cities have a paradoxical relationship with science fiction literature. On the one hand, critics like Brian Aldiss have called sf a 'literature of cities', citing them as the dominant context for speculative fiction. On the other, critics like Gary Wolfe have noted how sf has an "anti-urban frontier mentality" and how sf narratives involving cities often tend to view them as a trap from which the protagonist must escape. This relationship is even more complex in sf works by African American authors, as contemporary African American fiction in general takes the city as the dominant social context for black life and has turned to interrogate "issues of urban community" in the post-Civil Rights era.

This dissertation explores the connections between the heterogeneous urban histories of Anglo-European and African American sf authors and the cities they construct. It does so by comparing the portrayal of cities by each group and relating the commonalities and contrasts that emerge from these portrayals to the differences and similarities between African American urban history and Anglo-European urban history. To provide a common ground for comparison, two city typologies are focused on: the 'imperial city' that reigns at the heart of sf's many empires, and the empty metropolis of the 'dead city' or 'ghost city'. The study finds that these narratives all interrogate crises of political and environmental sustainability in urban history, but that the focus of these crises often diverge along the axis of race, with an especially large concentration on the crises related to racially targeted urban renewal programs present in black sf's dead cities and on crises related to black anti-imperialist politics in its imperial cities.

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> They had forgotten much, but they did not know it. They were as perfectly fitted to their environment as it was to them— for both had been designed together. What was beyond the walls of the city was no concern of theirs; it was something that had been shut out of their minds. Diaspar was all that existed, all that they needed, all that they could imagine. It mattered nothing to them that Man had once possessed the stars. Yet sometimes the ancient myths rose up to haunt them, and they stirred uneasily as they remembered the legends of the Empire, when Diaspar was young and drew its life-blood from the commerce of many suns. They did not wish to bring back the old days, for they were content in their eternal autumn. The glories of the Empire belonged to the past, and could remain there— for they remembered how the Empire had met its end, and at the thought of the Invaders the chill of space itself came seeping into their bones.
>
> —Arthur C. Clarke, The City and The Stars, Prologue

Cities are inherently paradoxical entities, with the sweep of urbanity dialectically bringing together seemingly contradictory elements and qualities. They are sites where static order is dynamically transformed, where constructs are reconstructed, where the nature of humanity is epitomized through the technological alienation of its natural origins in agricultural production. Science fiction could be (and has been) argued to constitute the city's natural literary idiom; the rhetorical and structural devices native to sf give the genre a unique flexibility that allows for the creative narrative articulation of the most essential urban antinomies. Furthermore, the tropes and conventions that provide this flexibility arise out of technoscientific knowledge produced by urbanized societies; this is largely what Brian Aldiss means when he rightly labels sf a "literature of cities," and why urban sociologist Henri Lefebvre declares in his seminal work The Urban Revolution that "the planetary nature of the urban phenomenon…appeared in science fiction novels before they were revealed to our understanding."[1] (Lefebvre 113)

However, scholars like Madhu Dubey remind us that there is another "literature of

cities," if we understand the term more simply as a literature written by a people of the city; for with astonishing swiftness the past 150 years has seen the urbanization of African, African American and Afro-diasporic men and women reach full maturity, and since the 1970s or so a majority of them have come to live in the city. It is little wonder that this demographic transformation has largely correlated with both a surge of black contributions to the sf genre in addition to a general turn in black literature and criticism towards "issues of urban community." (Dubey 5)

This project explores connections between the history of black urbanization and narratives of science fictional cities penned by black authors. By necessity, its calculus is differential, not linear: it begins by identifying and evaluating the dynamics of certain city types in an archive of Anglophone science fiction, proceeds to compare these dynamics to those that appear in works of black sf involving the same urban typology, and then delineates the important historical resonances that emerge from their thematic and stylistic divergences and convergences. This path is marked by more than a few complex conundrums—the most cardinal being the paradoxical nature of sf's relationship with the city itself.

The excerpt above from Arthur C. Clarke's 1956 work of speculative urban futurity, The City and the Stars, captures the (radically contingent) essence of this relationship. Sf's very foundations are in the city; and yet, those foundations simultaneously define themselves *against* urbanity. Clarke's city of Diaspar exemplifies how urbanity negates the chaotic forces of the natural environment: its walls—a feature not only of so many sf cities but also of so many ancient metropolises—separates and protects it from these forces, and within the space of these walls technological knowledge is applied to create an entirely constructed social order. As sf critic Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. points out, this human-made environment, subsisting entirely on

the energies of technological innovation and mastery, is the social condition on which science fictional writing is predicated. "Sf emerged as a genre and a mode of awareness when people felt that they had successfully constructed what Marx, following Hegel, called *second nature*, the creation by human labor and technology of a humanly constructed world," he notes in The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction. "This second nature…built havens in the human image. The cost was having to deal with the unforeseen struggles of species self-construction." Clarke's city demonstrates how the sf imaginary uses this oasis of technological mastery within a wilderness commanded by natural forces to create soaring flights of extrapolative and speculative fancy: The symbolic foundation of the city-space legitimates the capacity of the narrative's future version of humanity to carry out the advanced technoscientific projects that constitute the story's mythos, such as the use of space as a new arena for commercial production.

At the same time, Clarke's description of Diaspar articulates how the city constrains the ability of humanity to engage in new acts of discovery and the further development of its technological mastery; because it is "all that they needed, all that they could imagine"—the limit of the technoscientific imagination—humanity can only stagnate in its further attempts to revolutionize the material basis for social reproduction by restricting itself to the spaces of urbanity. In his discussion of the stature of cities within sf writing undertaken in his critical work The Known and the Unknown: The Iconography of Science Fiction, sf scholar Gary Wolfe points out that this limitation is anathema to the animating energies of the genre. "A strong case could be made that science fiction exhibits the antiurban tendency of the frontier mentality," he notes, and thus "the movement of many science-fiction narratives is to escape the city and re-establish some sort of cosmology based on the idea of expansion," (Wolfe 88).

His commentary indicates the structural properties of narratives of sf cities and the way

they are able to resolve this seemingly intractable paradox. Fundamentally, these stories are driven by the interplay between three spaces: the second nature of the cityscape and its accumulated (but stagnant) technological knowledge, the unincorporated wilderness beyond the reach of urbanity, and the heterotopic territory that connects the two—the frontier. Diaspar's citizens are enclosed in an "eternal autumn" of technosocial stagnation within the first; the key to overcoming this stagnation lies in the expansion of their technological mastery into the unknown spaces of the second; and this expansion can only be affected by passing through the perils and challenges of the third. For this reason, the focal point of action in narratives of the sf city is in the frontier, and the "escape from the city" takes the form of a "re-establishment of the frontier"—the recreation of new territory to conquer within the already-conquered space of the city. The science fictional hero or heroine is, fundamentally, a frontiersman or frontierswoman—they seek out frontier spaces to conquer using technoscientific knowledge and reasoning, and their conquest incorporates the heretofore unknown potentialities of *terra incognita* into the totality of technologically-constructed civilization that the city-space embodies. While the walls of cities like Diaspar are the most ancient of metaphors used to delineate this structure, innumerable other metaphors may take their place. An underground city might deploy the divide between the world above ground and the world below to replace its walls; a derelict city might confine second nature to the tiny island of known space circumscribing its protagonist and treat the rest of the empty metropolis as a frontier; an imperial city might treat the empire's periphery as the frontier and locate second nature's dominion at the metropole; and so on.

While *prima facie* such a frontier mentality might be interpreted as having its roots in the relatively egalitarian ideal of the pilgrim staking out a dwelling in new, uncharted territory

against the wild forces of nature—a metanarrative that forms the basis for the classic 'Turner thesis" of American frontierism—Clarke's description suggests that the ideological and material basis of the sf city's spatial interplay can be conceived as rooted instead in the more hierarchical model of the colonial empire.[2] This is where the project at hand begins its inquiry: with an analysis of the sf cities that serve as the metropoles for imperial expansion into the periphery. As will become clear, the imperial city embodies the expansionary aspect of sf's 'frontier mentality' within the context of the metropolis. This project's analysis traces this impulse back to sf's roots in the culture of the European project of colonial imperialism, a project grounded in the space of the imperial city. Reflecting in its form the nature of the empire as a whole, narratives of this kind of city are driven by what I term the 'paradox of growth.' In its simplest form, this paradox consists of a conflict between the empire's constant need to expand and the fact that its expansion engineers the conditions for its collapse—with the latter calamity serving to create the conditions for the expansion of another empire and in turn ultimately making the structure of imperial growth highly cyclical in nature.

In its second section, the project delineates the ways the imperial cities created by black authors comment and signify on the unique position black men and women inhabited in colonial cultures. Despite some notable exceptions, this position was usually one of exploitation and subjugation; behind the adventures of the white colonial explorer stood the appropriated wealth, labor, life and culture of black ethnic groups. Caught up in a long and harrowing battle against this appropriation, their stories of the imperial city articulate an anti- or counter-colonial tradition in which the paradox of growth is transformed from a dilemma over the expansion of the empire into a dilemma over how to create through expansionary means a political entity large and powerful enough to successfully overthrow colonial imperialism without ultimately having it

become the predatory imperial power it sets out to vanquish. Within this dilemma the project's inquiry identifies significant connections between black sf's imperial cities and a long history of black anti-colonial politics supported by the urban organs of the black press.

The implosion of the empire provides the conceptual context for the project's second half. For no other kind of city better captures the spirit of socioeconomic collapse than the second urban typology explored herein—the "dead city" in which the crowds of urban life have been stripped away and only a ghost metropolis remains. Forming the subject of the third chapter, the central tension of these phantom municipalities is the same that one could say animates the era following the fall of the empire and its imperial capital: the conflict between the tendency of the derelict city to signify and cultivate the beginning of a renewal of urban civilization from the ruins of its prior form, and its tendency to herald the final, apocalyptic decay and death of urbanity as a way of life.

The project's fourth section in turn identifies how the unique characteristics of the dead cities of black sf authors articulate a history of the struggles of black urban communities with neighborhood dereliction and their relationship to programs of urban renewal and redevelopment. Unlike many of the dead cities of their white contemporaries, those conceived by black sf authors reflect upon a long-running history of racial displacement caused by such programs—one intimately tied to the story of the various migrations that resulted in the urbanization of the black population in both the New World and (to a lesser degree) on the other side of the Atlantic.

This analytical exploration concludes by following form into function. Through an intertwined reading of two texts that constitute science fictional pastiches of many different

urban forms—British author China Mieville's recent work of speculative detective fiction The City & The City and critically acclaimed African American author Colson Whitehead's debut novel The Intuitionist—it seeks to draw all its observations together and re-establish a frontier of critical inquiry ripe for conquest by sojourning frontiersmen and frontierswomen of the scholarly world. That conquest may or may not ever come to fruition—but as sf literature itself demonstrates, the act of identifying a new frontier alone advances both common and scholarly understandings of science fictional writing, and so the project laid out here can be said to constitute a substantive contribution to both the literary-critical tradition of sf and to black literary studies.

[1]Aldiss elaborates that "SF is a city literature" that "thrives in developed countries. It's the magic brewed, not in the high street, but in side streets, in high-rise apartments, in hotel rooms, in offices, in airport lounges. It is predominantly an urban literature, written from within that love-hate relationship we have for our big cities." (Aldiss)

[2]Broadly, the thesis claims that the American frontier helped cultivate a unique social psychology distinct from its European predecessors that enabled the American form of democracy. It is most clearly laid out in "The Significance of of the Frontier in American History", a chapter from his larger work The Frontier in American History.

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Chapter I: Empire Through Two Ends of A Looking Glass, Part I—Anglophone SF's Cycle of Imperial Cities

> In the empire of technoscience every area of concern is examined scientifically…But the concerns carry ancient baggage that science does not secure.
>
> -Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr.

> Look back over the past, with its changing empires that rose and fell, and you can foresee the future, too.
>
> -Marcus Aurelius

> A great empire, like a great cake, is most easily diminished at the edges.
>
> -Benjamin Franklin

Perhaps no kind of city better captures the Janus-like role urbanity plays in science fiction literature as both a prison constraining sf heroes' and heroines' efforts to conquer new territory and master the frontier and a necessary precondition for such pioneering journeys than the capital of a great sf empire. For the nature of these metropolises is not only paradoxically underpinned by the "anti-urban frontier mentality" Gary Wolfe identifies as characteristic of stories of science fictional cities and science fiction literature in general, but also represents and comments upon the historical foundations of this mentality. Like the sf hero or heroine, these municipalities operate according to an expansionary ethos that constantly pushes them to extend the horizon of their authority over nature into new territories. And in doing so, their future histories reflect upon and channel the context that provided the social and material basis for the development of this ethos: the advent and spread of European colonial culture.

To understand the significant divergence between the historical resonances operating within the imperial metropoles of Anglophone sf authors and those nested in the imperial cities imagined by black sf authors, however, the project at hand must tread a path defined by Derridaean borders. In this chapter, it will identify the general characteristics, narrative roles and historical significance of these urban centers in an archive of Anglophone sf; this will set the

terms for the following chapter's analysis of their counterparts in black sf texts, whose differences (and thus *differance*) collectively articulate a contrasting *anti-* or *counter-*colonial tradition that channels a distinctive history of black anti-imperialist politics.

Genealogies of Empire: Science Fiction and the Colonial Tradition

To say the imperial cities of Anglophone sf arise primarily from a colonial tradition is to say they and the empires they represent are informed by the ideological premises and cultural dispositions that underpinned the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century European projects of global colonization and imperial expansion, most important among them being the notion of 'manifest destiny' and all it entails. Some of them, of course, critique this project—but even these critiques are made from the perspective of colonial culture, and accept aspects of that culture to create a basis for their criticism. Indeed, only the recognition of such an implicit acceptance can render coherent analyses that claim, as Patricia Kerslake does in her book Science Fiction and Empire, that the works of authors like H.G. Wells and George T. Chesney "which appear to accept imperialism, are, rather, anti-imperial propaganda but worded so cleverly that it is only through irony and satire that the narrative's intent becomes visible." (Kerslake 26) This by no means makes them inauthentic or diminishes, in itself, the quality (or lack thereof) of their critique; but it nonetheless means their epistemic position is quite different from that of most of the authors of black sf's empires.

Anglophone sf's roots in colonial culture have been confirmed and investigated by many sf critics. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. argues in The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction that sf emerged out of modern colonial adventure tales to "make legible to modernizing societies their transformation from colonial expansion to global imperial power predicated on technological hegemony." (Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. 218) In "Empire," his parsimoniously titled contribution to

The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction, he identifies the rise of sf with the rise of a globalized imperial regime of technoscience that "depends on the residues of political power of its imperialist predecessors." (Bould et al. 363) John Rieder's look at the same subject in Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction traces the genre's roots to the formation and consolidation of European colonial powers almost 500 years ago:

> In the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, Europeans greatly expanded the extent and the kinds of contacts they had with the non-European world. Between the time of Cyrano and that of H. G. Wells, those contacts enveloped the world in a Europe-centered system of commerce and political power. Europeans mapped the non-European world, settled colonies in it, mined it and farmed it, bought and sold some of its inhabitants, and ruled over many others. In the process of all of this, they also developed a scientific discourse about culture and mankind. Its understanding of human evolution and the relation between culture and technology played a strong part in the works of Wells and his contemporaries that later came to be called science fiction. (Rieder 2)

The colonial project extends well beyond the days of Cyrano de Bergerac, H.G. Wells and the 'Age of Discovery', of course. De Witt Douglas Kilgore's work Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space documents how it persisted through the World Wars and into the age of spaceflight, all the while leaving science fictional entanglements in its path. Kilgore argues that the continual production of space odysseys to supplant the terrestrially bound odysseys of earlier "colonial adventure tales" marks the "renewal of the geographic tradition of imperialism and utopianism in an imagined and actual space frontier," a tradition that "extends the nineteenth-century notion that conquest and empire are the logical modus operandi of any progressive civilization." (Kilgore 11) As one can see, common to their analyses (and those of many other scholars) is the link between science fiction's aesthetic properties and its heritage; though it is first and foremost a set of storytelling conventions, concepts, themes, styles, and (most importantly) texts one cannot separate this from the colonialist paradigm from which it emerged. This notion is what inhabits claims by critics like Kerslake that "SF…connects the

imperial empires of our past with the potential neo-empires of our future." (Kerslake 3)

To understand this heritage of colonial expansionism, however, one must first comprehend the mechanics of the form of the imperial city in the broader archive of Anglophone sf. This will hence be the focus of the investigation to follow: it shall broadly identify the general narrative functions of the sf imperial city, and then survey the various forms it takes by identifying a fundamental antinomy that organizes narratives of sf empires and their capitals, adumbrated above by that perceptive philosopher-king Marcus Aurelius—what I term here "the paradox of growth."

Peripheriam et Municipium: City, Frontier and Empire

To provide an analytical context for this investigation, it helps to turn to the insights of Gary Wolfe in his own work on sf's imperial cities in The Known and the Unknown: The Iconography of Science Fiction for some preliminary observations about how they are positioned in sf narratives. Perhaps the most prescient commentary he provides can be seen in his introduction to the urban typology:

> Galactic empires, decadent post-holocaust societies, future dictatorships, and alien civilizations often have one element in common: they are centered around a closely guarded imperial city that symbolizes the values and attitudes of the society as a whole. (Wolfe 105)

Wolfe points out two essential facts here: one, that the form of the imperial city symbolizes the nature of the empire that it anchors; two, that the imperial city is located at the center of the empire and not in the periphery. The first observation is of course reversible, and so establishes an analytical principle critical to the present discussion: namely, that the character, form and state of the empire will be reflected in the character, form and state of its capital city—and vice versa. The second observation provides the basis for understanding the role of the frontier in

structuring the paradox of growth—which in turn structures the imperial city.

For in stories of sf's imperial capitals, the tripartite logic of city/frontier/*terra incognita* is mapped onto the spatial and narrative logic of empire; the three interrelated categories consistently align with the categories "imperial metropole/periphery/extra-imperial space". More concretely, sf empires are generally defined by the nature of the imperial center's relationship with its hinterlands and with the wildernesses and/or competing polities beyond. This relationship is in turn mediated by the contradictory effects of the expansion of the imperial frontier.

But to fully understand the dynamics of these concepts, one must first see how they relate to the basic narrative functions of the imperial city in sf literature. Once these have been more closely investigated, the nature of the paradox of growth can be grasped, as well as the crucial role the sf frontier plays in it

Munus Imperialis Urbe: Functions of the Imperial City

Political economists who have attempted to understand and study imperial cities still debate their exact nature. Elizabeth M. Brumfiel opens up her contribution to the anthology Early State Economics with the simple declaration that "The character of imperial cities is not well understood." (Brumfiel 147) Scholars split, she notes, over whether they are primarily "a clustering of ruling elites and their servants drawn together to facilitate elite rule and governance" or are similar to most other cities in being "economic centers where the concentration of human labor and production facilities promotes the efficient manufacture and distribution of goods." (Brumfiel 147) Fortunately, authors of science fiction are only marginally bound by historical facticity, and so need not choose one or the other. Accordingly,

their imperial cities mix the functions implied by both conceptualizations together. And while the triad of roles identified here is not exhaustive, it nonetheless captures most of the narrative work the sf imperial city does in stories where it plays a significant part.

Officium I: Curia Imperatorius Spectativa--the City of Governance

To utter the word '*curia'* is to invoke an ancient relationship between the concrete built structures of human civilization and the abstract but equally powerful social structures that organize it. The word not only refers to a ruling body upon which the social authority of the state has been conferred; it also refers to the specific buildings where such rulers convene. (OECD) The original *curia* was said to be a temple built in the time of Romulus (753-717 BC) after a peace agreement between the Romans and the Sabines. (Patterson 218) When Julius Caesar sought to transform a 500-year old Roman Republic into an empire under his rule in 44 BC, he built the *Curia Julia* in the city of Rome to house a senate he had just enlarged from six hundred to nine hundred members (the extra three hundred being conspicuously populated by friends and allies). (Claridge 70) Over a millennium later, after the Norman Conquest of England, William the Conqueror planted the heart of his new empire in what would eventually be known as the Palace of Westminster, where future Kings would convene the *Curia Regis*, the predecessor of the British parliament. (Morris 772)

In literature, worlds are summoned by words; in science fiction this summoning is a particularly powerful act, as the genre relies heavily on what Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. refers to as 'the logical-cognitive energies of world-building' to construct its oft-unfamiliar (and according to Darko Suvin, necessarily defamiliarizing) environments. Perhaps more than in any other form of literature, in sf narratives the built environment is inseparable from the social environment it creates and is created by; and this is nowhere more evident than in the imperial city, where sf

authors construct their own *curia* (in both senses of the term) to fulfill the most important function of the empire's urban core—governing the realm.

First and foremost, the capital of the empire serves as the administrative and political nerve center of the imperial polity. It is where the political elites of the imperium gather to govern and facilitate the extraction of tribute from the hinterlands, and they rarely deign to do it anywhere but in great edifices of statescraft. This may mean structures borrowed from antiquity—palaces, temples, castles and so forth—as it does in Arrakeen, the imperial capital of Frank Herbert's desert planet of Arrakis in Dune, where the Grand Palace that overlooks the metropolis "could cover ten of the Imperium's cities under one roof," (Herbert 'Road to Dune' 136). However, authors may also choose to merge these ancient icons of imperial governance with images of the bureaucracy of modern states. William Gibson and Bruce Sterling do this in their descriptions of the administrative buildings of the imperial city of mid-nineteenth century London in the novel that gave birth to 'steampunk', The Difference Engine. Their text's historical *novum* establishes the grounds for their amalgamation: Victorian Britain has developed steam-powered information and communication technology almost a century-and-a-half before the appearance of their silicon-based analogues in our own timeline.[1] The headquarters of the British empire channels both classical signs of imperial political dominance—the legacy of the *Curia Regis*—and imagery of the infrastructure of the modern surveillance state:

> The Central Statistics Bureau, vaguely pyramidal in form and excessively Egyptianate in its ornamental detail, squatted solidly in the governmental heart of Westminster, its uppermost stories slanting to a limestone apex. For the sake of increased space, the building's lower section was swollen out-of-true, like some great stone turnip. Its walls, pierced by towering smokestacks, supported a scattered forest of spinning ventilators, their vanes annoyingly hawk-winged. The whole vast pile was riddled top to bottom with thick black telegraph-lines, as though individual streams of the Empire's information had bored through solid stone. A dense growth of wiring swooped down, from conduits and brackets, to telegraph-poles crowded thick as the rigging in a busy harbor. (Sterling and

Gibson 145)

Sterling and Gibson gracefully fold a metaphor for the modern source of imperial power and governance—information technology, represented by the building's "dense wiring" of telegraph lines— into a symbol of Britain's naval technologies, ("telegraph poles thick as the rigging in a busy harbor") an older source of imperial power and governance. It is then wrapped up in a metaphor for industrial dominance (the "towering smokestacks" supporting "a scattered forest of spinning ventilators") and united under an image of ancient imperial dominance. (the edifice is "vaguely pyramidal in form and excessively Egyptianite in its ornamental detail") Even the structure's name merges words that invoke administration ("Bureau" and, with a nod to government census-taking, "Statistics") with ones that invoke the Central authority of the empire. These architectural expressions of the machinery of the imperial state often tell us about the relationship of its center of governance to the hinterlands. The details of The Difference Engine's Central Statistics Bureau indicate that control over the periphery is exerted as much through extensive surveillance and information gathering as it is through systematic violence or the social leverage of debt.

In contrast, the most important administrative building of New Crobuzon—the Londonesque imperial city of China Mieville's novels Perdido Street Station, The Scar and The Iron Council—tells us that control over the imperium's industrial infrastructure is what asserts the city's authority over its frontier. "The city's five railway lines emerged from its mouths, or perhaps they congregated there, perhaps their motion was inward and they coiled together like a rat-king's tails and knotted and made the edifice that housed them, Perdido Street Station. A ganglion of railroad." (Mieville 416) Mieville's choice of metaphor is hardly haphazard; 'ganglion' refers to the part of the brain that anchors the human nervous system, and Perdido

Street Station is the central political nervous system of New Crobuzon's empire from which a sprawling network of railway neurons emerges. Once again, it is a *curia* in both senses of the word, as is evident in the municipality's political structure: the reins of power lie not in the hands of a Holy Imperator of Rome or a British Monarch, but in the grasp of the robber-baron who owns the city's railroad, Weather Wrightby. Mieville makes reference to a republican era in the city's history, where it operated under the guidance of a democratically elected city Parliament, but notes that Wrightby has turned the enforcers of Parliamentary law into the New Crobuzon Militia, which serves as his private army and the fascistic police force of the city. Of course, his railway system is not limited solely to the transport of political representatives and envoys to and from the capital—it is also crucial to another narrative role the metropolis at the center of the kingdom plays.

Officium II: Medium Magnum Commercium—the Imperial City as the Nexus of Commerce

Like the functions of any complex object, those of the imperial city are deeply intertwined. An empire's political elite and administrative centers are powerless without commercial activity, and the empire cannot grow if its resource base does not also grow. Almost by necessity, then, another major purpose of the imperial city is to act as a center for commerce. Typically, this commerce forms a circuit of sorts. The imperial center extracts resources from the hinterlands; its artisans and merchants use these resources to produce finished goods; finally, these goods are sold back to the provincials of the periphery. Such a circuit is part of what necessitates the growth of the empire: the more resources its populace demands, the more new territory it must acquire to provide them. Likewise, this circuit also creates the conditions for imperial collapse. When the empire gets so large it can no longer maintain stability in its hinterlands, the circuit is cut, it loses the ability to efficiently gather and allocate resources, and it

inevitably implodes under its own weight.

Hence nearly all of sf's imperial cities bear the signs of large-scale commercial exchange. The capital city of the later episodes in the future history of Jerry Pournelle's 'CoDominium Empire', Sparta City, brims with the imagery of commerce when it first comes into view:

> The hook-shaped peninsula that held Sparta City on its tip came into view; off to the east across Constitution Bay was the vast marshland of the Eurotas Delta, squares of reclaimed cropland visible along its edges. The shuttle made banking turns to shed energy and descend. Most of the city was on a thumb-shaped piece of land that jutted out into the water. Owensford could make out docks at either side of the thumb's base, the characteristic low squares and domes of a fusion plant in the gigawatt range, factory districts more extensive than on most planets. Lots of green, tree-lined streets and gardens, parks, villas and estates along the shores south of the city proper. Very few tall buildings, which was typical even of capital cities off-Earth; an entire planet with barely three million people was rarely crowded. Ships at the docks, everything from schooners and trawlers to surprisingly modern-looking steel-hulled diesels. And a big section on the western side reserved for shuttles, buoys on the water marking out their landing paths. There were two more at the docks; a big walled compound topped a hill nearby, with the CoDominium flag at the guardhouse by the entrance. (Pournelle Go Tell the Spartans 14)

Though it is specifically described as a modestly-sized metropolis, Sparta City nonetheless represents the imperial circuit of commerce. The 'reclaimed cropland' expresses its extractive relationship with the hinterlands, and the "vast marshland" circumscribes it with the frontier. The "extensive factory districts" and "domes of a fusion plant in the gigawatt range" signify that it is a center for the production of finished goods, and the schooners, trawlers and "surprisingly modern-looking steel-hulled diesels" that make up the busy traffic of the city's harbor convey that it is selling and transporting a constant supply of goods back to the periphery.

The city's role as a commercial center is also often delineated negatively. Some challenge issuing into the frontier from the unknown wilderness might disrupt its trade, at which point its crucial role in maintaining the circuit of commerce between center and periphery becomes clear. A reader of Iron Council unfamiliar with prior narratives of New Crobuzon

might not realize the city's importance in this sense until Mieville reveals disruptions in its importation and exportation of goods:

> As the long recession had bitten, years before, merchant ships from New Crobuzon had started returning to dock reporting piratical manoeuvres against them, sudden brigandry from unknown ships. The city's exploration and its trade were under attack. History was marked by New Crobuzon's oscillations between autarky and engagement, but never, its wounded captains said, had its emergence into mercantilism been so punished, so unexpectedly. After centuries of uncertainty and strange relations, the city had made understandings with the Witchocracy, and the passage of New Crobuzon ships through the Firewater Straits had been unhindered. So a sea-route was open to the grasslands and islands, the legendary places on the far side of the continent. Ships came back and said they had been to Maru'ahm. They sailed for years and brought back jewelled cakes from thousands of miles away, from the crocodile double-city called The Brothers. And then the piracy had begun, hard, and New Crobuzon came slowly to understand that it was being attacked.
>
> It was still distant, abstract: battles at sea thousands of miles off. But it had escalated. It had featured more and more in the speeches of ministers. The city's new mercantilism was unrewarded; markets did not open for its exports; the war blocked its sources of uncommon commodities. Ships went and did not come back. New Crobuzon's boarded-up plants did not reopen, and others closed, and the signs on their doors grew mildew that mocked their proclamations of "temporary suspension of industry." The city was stagnant; it slumped and slummed. Survivors began to come home. (Mieville 84)

New Crobuzon's troubles help to establish the relationships that make up the circuit of commerce by unveiling the consequences of disrupting that circuit. Without an influx of commodities and raw materials from the hinterlands, the artisans of the city do not have the resources necessary to produce finished goods, and industry declines; factories suspend operations or shut down, and "temporary suspension of industry" edges on into permanence. Likewise, without secure trading routes, these goods cannot be exported back to the periphery, ("markets did not open for its exports") and the circuit of commerce becomes a feedback loop of "stagnation", "slumping" and "slumming." However, Mieville's little nugget of New Crobuzonian history also confirms that though this disruption manifests at the urban center, it begins with upheaval in the frontier—usually owing to some challenge (like pirates) springing

forth from *terra incognita*.

Yet this challenge need not always be limited to interlopers like barbarian hordes or pirates. In fact, oftentimes such interlopers are merely a spark that lights the fuse on a pre-existing powder-keg of social tension between the provincials of the hinterlands and the elites stationed in the capital. Both New Crobuzon and Sparta City fall victim to this sort of dialectical insurrection. They lose control of their territories at the hands of an alliance between invaders from without and malcontent citizens from within, exposing weaknesses in their social organization in the process. Sparta City's Achilles heel proves to be the growth of a population of deported 'involuntary colonists' and convicts offloaded onto Sparta by the CoDominium government as part of a program to fight overcrowding on the 'welfare islands' maintained by the latter. Denied the privileges of full Spartan Citizens, they come to resent their better-off peers and are attracted to a 'Liberation Movement' led by a group of plundering vandals called the 'Helots' and their rebel leader Skida "Skilly" Thibodeau.

In similar fashion, New Crobuzon's political leadership sees its control over its territory slip when the impoverished, recession-bitten working classes of the city ally themselves with the eponymous 'Iron Council', a group of dissidents made up of former laborers for Wrightby's Transcontinental Railroad Trust. Having staged a miniature worker's revolution and hijacked one of Wrightby's trains, the Iron Council plans to return to the city to defy him and the City Militia. As they grow closer and word of their mission spreads, the city's population grows more restless with revolutionary fervor, leading up to the climactic battle between the rogue 'train-city' of the Iron Council, rebels within New Crobuzon and the City Militia's defense forces that occupies the novel's final chapters. As with the Helots, the Council is more a trigger for imperial upheaval than the singular cause of it. In both cases, however, it is the disruption of the

commercial function of the imperial city both as a product and producer of discontent among the population that puts the ingredients for sociopolitical conflagration into a particularly combustible arrangement.

Officium III: Imperium Centrum—The City that Polices the Frontier

Both the ability of the political elite to govern and extract tribute and the ability of the center of the empire to facilitate a flow of goods to and from the hinterlands require stability. If the political leadership cannot maintain stability throughout the imperium, trade becomes unreliable and growth impossible. Thus the first two main functions of the imperial city imply the third: the capital serves to police, stabilize and assert imperial authority over the frontier.

As such, it is a city replete with military technology, buildings dedicated to military purposes, and displays of military power. In Sparta City, the "big walled compound…with the CoDominium flag" on display tells us that such power rests in and moves outward from the metropolis. The same message is delivered by Mieville's city when one learns that "Recruitment to the New Crobuzon Navy was intensified" to re-assert its authority over its piracy-plagued maritime trade routes. (Mieville 85) Commemorative monuments can work to send the same message, as one can see when one of The Difference Engine's protagonists, Sybil Gerard, travels

> Up Knightsbridge and past Hyde Park Corner to the Napoleon Arch, a gift from Louis Napoleon to commemorate the Anglo-French Entente. The great iron arch, with its lavish skeleton of struts and bolting, supported a large population of winged cupids and draperied ladies with torches. A handsome monument, Mallory thought, and in the latest taste. Its elegant solidity seemed to deny that there had ever been a trace of discord between Great Britain and her staunchest ally, Imperial France. Perhaps, thought Mallory wryly, the "misunderstandings" of the Napoleonic Wars could be blamed on the tyrant Wellington. (Gibson and Sterling 172)

The arch communicates London's importance to the policing of imperial territory (where else would a rival emperor put a "gift" symbolizing peace but at the source of their former

adversary's military power?) as well as the history of this policing power. Napoleon's friendly donation tells us about the shifts in the supremacy of this power over time; it informs us that the Britain of Gibson and Sterling's alternate universe was not always all-powerful and did not gain all its power from industrial dominance, but instead has risen to its current state by subduing and standing on the neck of formidable challengers to its authority.

As with its status as a center of trade, the imperial city's status as the center for the projection of imperial authority may also be conveyed through negation. The destabilizing sociopolitical effect of New Crobuzon's tangle with the Iron Council and Sparta City's reckoning with the Helots' Non-Citizen Liberation Movement provide strong exemplars, but the message may be communicated more quietly as well. Graffiti is one such quiet instrument of communication: when widespread discontent beset Rome, London, Athens and many other municipalities of empire, one could often find its first public expressions in the doggerel scrawled on city walls by political agitators and malcontents. In Sparta City, the nascent challenges to the policing power of the empire are openly articulated by the slogan 'HELOTS RULE OK', which is at first left at the sites of the Helots' raids on farms in the periphery but soon begins to appear on the edifices of the city as their insurrection gains steam. Similarly, when Ori—a New Crobuzonian political rebel with revolutionary Marxist instincts and one of Mieville's principle protagonists— scoffs at the thought of an uprising fomented by the Iron Council, a fellow political dissident named Madeleina di Farja retorts, "Haven't you seen the graffiti?...All over. Along with all them coils and spirals you're wearing. IC You. Iron Council, You. It's coming back, and even just knowing that's a godsdamned inspiration." (Mieville 393) Such meaningful bits of street art negatively circumscribe the imperial city's policing authority by drawing attention to the political oppression necessitating the anonymity they provide their

authors. When city-dwellers began to mark Rome's walls with 'Rendite nos Germanicum' ('Give us back Germanicus') in the early years of the first century AD to protest the reign of its second emperor, Tiberius Claudius Nero, and mourn the death of his more favored brother, the implication was clear: make such a public challenge to the empire's authority within the imperial city without the cloak of anonymity and you'll soon find yourself at the mercy of its legions.

Asticus Paradoxum: Imperial Urbanity and the Contradictions of Growth

These various roles tell us how the imperial city works; but they do not tell us *why* it works. What is the dramatic tension that drives narratives in which it plays a prominent part? How does the imperial city justify its narrative presence?

Carl Abbot comes close to the answer in his work Frontiers Past and Future: Science Fiction and the American West when he speculates over the discursive possibilities provided by analysis of the relationships between the frontier and sf empires. He notes that an "interesting discussion could address the idea of imperial fortunes and cycles of civilization in stories of multi-planet empires and galactic civilizations that decay at the core and face challenges from their hinterlands and frontiers." (Abbot 2)

One may come to understand the key tension that drives narratives of the imperial city by having that "interesting discussion," but without necessarily limiting it to the empires of space opera. Here it is argued that this tension is found in the contradictions that surround the process of imperial expansion. While these contradictions can manifest themselves in a number of complex ways, the paradox that generates them can actually be put very simply: The empire must grow to sustain itself; but the bigger it gets, the more fragile it becomes. At some point, it must collapse. And the collapse of one empire creates the conditions for the growth of another.

Or, simpler still: The expansion of the empire establishes the conditions for its collapse, and its collapse establishes the conditions for the expansion of a new empire.

How does the sf frontier and the 'frontier mentality' figure into this antinomy? The answer lies in the heterotopic character of frontier-spaces. As mentioned before in the discussion of the imperial city's narrative roles, the integrity of the imperium depends on the ability of its leaders to maintain stability within it; without stability, there can be no assertion of mastery by the hegemon over its domain, and hence no extraction of resources from newly acquired territories to sustain the empire. However, the frontier's heterotopic nature means this assertion of mastery is not uniform; it weakens as one migrates outward from the total mastery of the city towards the untamed space of *terra incognita*. For example, it is easier for the authorities of New Crobuzon to control the metropolitan area where they are stationed than it is for them to control goings on in the frontier, where disruptive elements like pirates can make for instability. Although the city's naval forces have enough difficulties with controlling their piratical challengers to hurt industrial production at the center, much of Iron Council is concerned with political agitation within the city proper due to its *excessive* degree of control over the populous, which must be maintained through a ruthlessly repressive regime violently imposed by the City Militia. Similar principles lie behind an observation by an enemy of Poul Anderson's empire of the 'Polesotechnic League' that his secret plan for rebellion—with its leaders concealed as members of a mining expedition—will work because of its remote location in the periphery, since "a written-off operation that was never much more than marginal, out on an extreme frontier, is not worth the League's worrying about," (Anderson Esau 117) or rather, as the implication goes, is too difficult for the League to mobilize a defense for. The larger the frontier of the empire grows, the less effectively the imperial authorities—anchored in the imperial

city—can maintain stability within the empire's limits. Inevitably, they eventually become incapable of policing the borders of their imperium, and it collapses. This may happen in any number of ways, but nearly all take place in the frontier. Peripheral territories may rebel and secede; other empires with greater power and solidarity might invade and annex whatever spaces they can defend and control; imperial representatives—prefects, dukes, ambassadors, and so forth—may go rogue and decide to start an empire of their own in the hinterlands; popular uprisings by disgruntled provincials may upend imperial authority; piracy may grow rampant and cause industries at the metropole to stagnate; and many other possibilities, often drawn directly from the histories of the collapse of our own world's great empires.

The result of this paradox is that the sf empire and the urban landscape that reflects it are driven by the mechanics of a cycle of expansion and collapse. While the expansionary phase allows authors to articulate their empire, its subsequent collapse performs the re-establishment of the frontier that is the defining event of nearly every sf narrative in which a city is prominently featured. Wolfe identified its basic contours when he observed that "the movement of many science-fiction narratives is to escape the city and re-establish some sort of cosmology based on the idea of expansion," (Wolfe 88). But the symbolic link between the imperial city and the empire means that when the imperial city is "escaped", destroyed, or dramatically transcended the empire is as well. However, the expansionary impulse of sf goes deeper than any one city: it is constantly creating new empires, which assume new imperial capitals. And in order for one empire to gain power, another must relinquish some of theirs. The result is an ongoing Cycle of Empires that constructs different types of imperial cities, each defined by their place within the evolution from imperial woe to weal and back again.

To find a comprehensive template from which to construct this cycle, many sf authors

appropriate the histories of real empires to create the futures of their own; hence one may look to the cycle's historical instantiations in actual imperial cities to further contextualize the analysis of the fictional rise and fall of sf imperia. In observing the paradox of growth's influence on some of the most prominent sf empires and the cities that anchor them, one may gain a deeper understanding of the imperial metropolis that will allow for a detailed meditation on the unique attributes it possesses in black sf, and how those attributes can be related to the urban history of both ancient and modern empires.

Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces in Imperial Evolution

Wolfe's observations are worth repeating: the imperial city is positioned at the center of the empire, and its form reflects the form of the empire. It is the centrifuge that anchors the imperium in second nature and incarnates its might (or lack thereof) in the architecture of urbanity. As such, as the empire grows and its expansion gains momentum, its power accumulates at the center; and as a corollary, when the empire begins to decline and collapse, power scatters and falls away from the center. The upshot of this interplay between the centrifugal and centripetal forces of imperial growth is that an empire on the rise will usually be marked by a centralized organization and a strong central authority, while a collapsing empire will be marked by a decentralization of space and authority. And as the empire goes, so goes the imperial city: the capital of an empire rising towards its prime will tend to be marked by centralization and large displays of imperial authority, while the capital of an empire that is falling apart will likely have a decentralized organization and more modest expressions of imperial authority.

Of course, within a single narrative this kind of spatial evolution might be difficult (but far from impossible) to observe and confirm. Here is where the ambitiousness of many classic sf

empires comes in handy: their authors seek to construct imperial histories of the future as intricate as the imperial histories of the past they often borrow from, and on multiple occasions use extensive story cycles to do so. This means that in several instances one may actually be able to observe a 'cycle of imperial cities' within the same universe, allowing them to see this process of urban reorganization and probe its implications. Hence this inquiry begins its interrogation of the paradox of growth's role in narratives of the sf imperial city by turning to two of the best-known sf empires not accompanied by a John Williams soundtrack: the 'Galactic Empire' of Isaac Asimov's Foundation series and the 'Polesotechnic League' and 'Terran Empire' of Poul Anderson's Technic Civilization saga. Each author plotted and ultimately narrated an extensive history of the rise and fall (and rise) of their imperium, producing a cyclical trail of imperial cities one may follow and observe—accordingly, I will discuss these cities more in terms of their place within the chronology of the authors' future histories than in the exact order they were written, though when necessary I will acknowledge implications of the latter on the former.

Cyclus Imperia, Stage I: From the Glory of Rome to the Fall

To write his Foundation saga, Asimov appropriated the history of the most inescapable eidolon of the imperial metropolis: Rome, the city through which all of Western history passes. Pressed to explain the process of writing the series' first installments, Asimov once simply declared that "I took over the aura of the Roman Empire and wrote it very large." (Asimov Conversations 23)

The model of Rome, like that of Babylon, embodies the idea of an all-encompassing city—of a metropolis at the center of the world/galaxy/universe that holds sway (albeit ever-weakening) over a vast and consequently most often heterogeneous multiplicity of regions. This

imperial configuration requires what the Roman Empire possessed at its peak: robust institutions that work to unify diverse groups of people, an effective and well-maintained commercial, informational and military infrastructure, and skilled leaders to keep rebellious hinterlands in order and pacify the restlessness of the citizenry. Hence stories of cities conforming to the Roman model are typically stories of the fate of empires at the height of their power; like the first episodes of the Foundation saga, they often begin at the apogee of the imperium's growth cycle, showing us what the glory of Rome looks like just before (to paraphrase Keats) the center gives out and things fall apart.

In the eponymous first novel of the Foundation series alone the reader encounters two imperial cities connected by a cycle of expansion and implosion: the capital of the First Galactic Empire, Trantor, and the de facto capital of its successor, Terminus City.[2] When they encounter Trantor, the First Intergalactic Empire is at the apex of its influence, but is also on the verge of overextending itself and beginning its descent into collapse. Its destruction, in turn, makes the creation of Terminus City and a new imperial order possible. This is not a matter of morality, integrity or culture in Asimov's world but a matter of mechanical and mathematical law; this is the significance of Asimov's fictional science of 'psychohistory'. Psychohistory subjects historical phenomena to mathematical reasoning, parsing out universal laws of motion within human social evolution that allow the recurring hero-scientist of the series, Hari Seldon, to accurately predict the future through mathematical calculation. His initial prediction that the empire will collapse—a prediction that induces the imperial authorities to banish him from Trantor like a heretic prophet to the remote planet of Terminus—therefore indicates that the cyclical rise and fall of the imperium is part of an essential algorithm by which the universe functions, not just a product of the incidental idiosyncrasies, anxieties and mistakes of a single

society. This is reflected in the imperial center, and so it is unsurprising that Seldon's first description of Trantor—proffered in a comment to his compatriot Gaal Dornick—places it within the context of the paradox of growth:

> "As Trantor becomes more specialized, it becomes more vulnerable, less able to defend itself. Further, as it becomes more and more the administrative center of Empire, it becomes a greater prize. As the Imperial succession becomes more and more uncertain, and the feuds among the great families more rampant, social responsibility disappears." (Asimov Foundation 18)

His analysis reminds us that this dilemma is hardly new; it was identified over a century and a half before the first Foundation story was ever written by the author of Asimov's source material, Edward Gibbon, in his landmark treatise The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. "I wanted to do a story on the analogy of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," Asimov states of his most famous series, "but on the much larger scale of the galaxy." (Conversations 23) Gibbon's text postulated that Rome was a victim of the paradox of growth, as the prosperity and power it attained sapped its populace of the civic virtue necessary to sustain the empire. The inevitable result was overextension and collapse. With its first volume published in the same year a group of rebellious North Americans signed a document declaring their independence from the empire of King George and a fellow named Adam Smith published a theorization of the new socioeconomic paradigm of industrial capitalism entitled The Wealth of Nations, Gibbon's book also attests to the lingering influence of colonial culture in science fiction classics of the twentieth and twenty-first century. He writes, "A nation of Romans was gradually formed in the provinces, by the double expedient of introducing colonies, and of admitting the most faithful and deserving of the provincials to the freedom of Rome," (Gibbon 9). However, though this method of growth allowed Rome to secure an empire of unparalleled size and stature, it is also what stood at the heart of the kingdom's foundering:

> "It was scarcely possible that the eyes of contemporaries should discover in the public felicity the latent causes of decay and corruption. This long peace, and the uniform government of the Romans, introduced a slow and secret poison into the vitals of the empire. The minds of men were gradually reduced to the same level, the fire of genius was extinguished, and even the military spirit evaporated. " (Gibbon 194)

As Asimov's model for the fall of his own imperium, Gibbon's commentary reaffirms the prior observation that when an empire is in its prime it will tend towards the concentration of authority at the center—towards "uniform government"—while its decline will bring the dispersion and deconcentration of imperial power.

In fact, the Roman Republic out of which the Empire itself evolved was the product of a rebellion against the concentration of power at the center, having arisen with the overthrow of the ancient Roman monarchs around 509 BC. While Roman society remained hierarchical, this republican arrangement spread out the power of the political elite, loosening their control over the territory under the city's dominion. This more diffuse power structure perhaps made the kingdom more democratic but it also placed the well-being of Rome in the hands of unstable political alliances. The inevitable result was civil war, and after two centuries the Republic was scattered, confused, and tearing itself apart.[3]

A year after publishing the first Foundation novel, Asimov worked this prelude to Roman imperial hegemony into Trantorian history in his book The Currents of Space. In a glimpse at a map of the early Republic, the text reveals that "The Trantorian Republic had been a mere five worlds, five hundred years" (Asimov Currents 81) before the opening events of Foundation. Abel, one of the main protagonists of The Currents of Space, provides the reader with a view of the fractured structure of authority and heightening internal tensions that threaten to unravel the pre-imperial *polis* and prevent it from reaching any kind of cohesive political equilibrium:

> Always, everywhere, there was this preoccupation with single worlds that prevented, over and over again, any intelligent concentration upon the problem of Galactic unity. Certainly social injustices existed here and there. Certainly they seemed sometimes impossible to stomach. But who could imagine that such injustice could be solved on any scale less than Galactic? First, there must be an end to war and national rivalry and only then could one turn to the internal miseries that, after all, had external conflict as their chief cause. (Asimov Currents 82)

Abel's misgivings are similar to what one might imagine the misgivings of some of the inhabitants of the late Roman Republic to be. While seeing the value in democratic rule and its dispersed structure of political authority, he also sees it as a source of instability, and is willing to cede more power to an executive authority in exchange for peace and security. This is precisely the situation Julius Caesar and his equally famous adopted heir Octavian "Augustus" Caesar found the Roman Republic in when they arrived on history's stage, and precisely the justification they used to turn it into an empire.

However, both Caesars had an easier task than Asimov presents the Trantorian Republic with. They were able to gather favor with the Roman citizenry through both military success and acts of strategic benevolence, such as paying off the debts of soldiers, plebeians and patricians to buy their support. But they had an advantage of scale. To rule the lands of the Mediterranean is one thing—to rule an entire galaxy is a far more complex undertaking. Perhaps that is why when Asimov constructed his own Caesar, he felt compelled to make him a robot. In his Robot series, he posits a future in which the government of humanity has been ceded entirely to automata; people are entirely too fallible and irrational to run the supermassive interstellar dynasties to come, so the logic goes. R. Daneel Olivaw, the most frequently recurring character in the saga of the Galactic Empire, can be seen as an application of this principle to the contours of the Julio-Claudian dynasty that oversaw Rome's metamorphosis from *civitas popularis* to *status imperialis*. First introduced in Asimov's Caves of Steel, he is the first robot to ever be

constructed that is indistinguishable from a human. He is also the character used to link the Robot and Foundation universes in Asimov's 1985 crossover novel Robots and Empire. At the end of the latter tale, the reader learns that Olivaw develops a precursor to psychohistory that allows him to manipulate the entirety of galactic civilization. Asimov implies that it is then his clandestine psychological and sociopolitical methods of control that guide the expansion of Trantor from Republic to Empire. Of course, the savvy cyborg conveniently avoids the fate of Julius Caesar during this endeavor, mimicking instead the longevity and success of his protégé. Perhaps this is the result of his heeding the methodological lessons of the latter's reign: Augustus's success in creating the Roman Empire stemmed largely from his ability to maintain the façade of republican government while concentrating power entirely in his hands. Olivaw's success consists of the same behind-the-scenes maneuverings, with the transformation of Trantor from Republic into Imperium apparently taking place somewhat quietly and without large-scale revolt or unrest.

While a brief period of instability followed the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, this transformation serves as the prelude that deposits the reader at Gibbon and Asimov's starting point: the golden age of the empire. For the latter, this means the beginning of the original Foundation novel; for the former, the beginning of the Nerva-Antonine Dynasty. Both portray their respective eras as the height of imperial civilization. Asimov speaks of the Galactic Empire as representing the "almost contemptuously final conquest of the world," while Gibbon opines

> If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman Empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom. The armies were restrained by the firm but gentle hand of four successive emperors, whose characters and authority commanded respect. The forms of the civil administration were carefully preserved by Nerva, Trajan,

> Hadrian and the Antonines, who delighted in the image of liberty, and were pleased with considering themselves as the accountable ministers of the laws. Such princes deserved the honour of restoring the republic, had the Romans of their days been capable of enjoying a rational freedom. (Gibbon 17)

However, as one can already detect in the final line of Gibbon's extolling of the virtues of the 'Five Good Emperors' and as learned earlier from the ominous predictions of Hari Seldon, this peak of imperial glory—with power again gathered at the center and wielded from the top-down—hides in its grandeur the beginnings of imperial ruin.

And in a world organized around a powerful hegemon, where power accretes at the metropole, imperial cities that follow the model of Rome like Trantor represent the might of their imperium the way the Romans did—through sheer size and grandiosity. Titanic monuments like the Colosseum were built to commemorate and project the supremacy of Roman rule as well as demonstrate its technological superiority. Likewise, Trantor's elephantine proportions allow Asimov to communicate the supremacy of the First Galactic Empire:

> "Its urbanization, progressing steadily, had finally reached the ultimate. All the land surface of Trantor, 75,000,000 square miles in extent, was a single city. The population, at its height, was well in excess of forty billions. This enormous population was devoted almost entirely to the administrative necessities of Empire, and found themselves all too few for the complications of the task." (Asimov Foundation 2)

The last line of this passage alone illustrates the narrative strategy at work. The outsized dimensions of Trantor, Asimov implies, are merely representative of an empire of far greater size. In addition, the city itself is also highly centrally planned—a trend Asimov describes as correspondent with the empire's ascent to supremacy in the very first line of Foundation, which begins mid-sentence (or perhaps, in an homage to the epics of antiquity, *en media res*) under the heading 'Trantor':

> …at the beginning of the thirteenth millennium, this tendency reached its climax. As the

> center of the Imperial Government for unbroken hundreds of generations and located, as it was, toward the central regions of the Galaxy among the most densely populated and industrially advanced worlds of the system, it could scarcely help being the densest and richest clot of humanity the Race had ever seen. (Asimov Foundation 1)

Not satisfied with a general description of this centralized cyclopean city, he also treats the reader to unfathomably large airports and subterranean architecture. Of the 'Debarkation Building' where visitors to Trantor arrive he remarks "[it] was tremendous. The roof was almost lost in the heights. Gaal could almost imagine that clouds could form beneath its immensity. He could see no opposite wall; just men and desks and converging floor till it faded out in haze." (Asimov Foundation 8) Not long after, a local Trantorian named Jerril reveals that not only does the city cover the surface of an entire planet, but it "is tunneled over a mile down. It's like an iceberg. Nine-tenths of it is out of sight. It even works itself out a few miles into the sub-ocean soil at the shorelines." (Asimov Foundation 14) Asimov puts the reader in the shoes of a spectator, to express through the massive size and ostentatious grandeur of the city and its architecture a message that the imperial capital is, as Dornick puts it, "the center of all the Galaxy and the kernel of the human race…the mightiest deed of man; the complete and almost contemptuously final conquest of the world." (Asimov Foundation 13)

Asimov and many other classic sf authors privilege these vistas of the external form of their imperial capitals, where a healthy empire's power is projected through 'bigness'. However, as a tour through the rooms of many a royal palace and/or estate in our own world makes evident, this is not the only way to use architecture to carry out such a projection. The shape, size and character of the interior spaces of the "city at the center of the world/galaxy/universe" can assert the supremacy of the polity it anchors in equally robust ways. For example, when Frank Herbert introduces us to Arrakeen in the first Dune novel he notes from an external, bird's-eye perspective that it is "a smaller city" than its megalopolitan rival, Carthag. However,

he dedicates only a few brief moments to this outside view; the real introduction to Arrakeen happens inside its 'Great Hall' through the eyes of the character of Lady Jessica, the concubine of a noble lord, Duke Leto Atreides I, who like the reader is also catching her first view of the capital. Herbert demonstrates through her awestruck observations how the internal extravagance of the Hall communicates the supremacy and strength of the empire. She notes of its architecture that

> "Some architect had reached far back into history for these buttressed walls and dark hangings, she thought. The arched ceiling stood two stories above her with great crossbeams she felt sure had been shipped here to Arrakis across space at monstrous cost. No planet of this system grew trees to make such beams— unless the beams were imitation wood." (Herbert Dune 57)

While the dimensions of the room are hardly Trantorian in size, the imperium's power is nonetheless projected through the prominent display of exorbitantly expensive building materials and the bombastic traditionalism of the royal chamber. Portraits of the Royal Line serve this purpose, too, particularly when they come from painters of great repute: "Jessica turned away, faced the painting of Leto's father. It had been done by the famous artist, Albe, during the Old Duke's middle years." (Herbert 58) However, in these enclosed environs nothing can substitute for the open display of wealth in its unadulterated forms. In Dune, however, this form is not precious metals, gemstones, or currency, but the most scarce and most highly demanded commodity and medium of exchange on his desert planet outside of the fictional material of 'spice': water. Immediately after hearing the sound of a poor Arrakeen citizen peddling a modest amount of it outside, Lady Jessica's servant informs her that "you've no need to interest yourself in such as they. The cistern here holds fifty thousand liters and it's always kept full." (Herbert locations 59) Contrary to conventional expectations, when one ponders this scene in terms of the concepts of supply and demand and the way they (supposedly) determine prices, this

display proves even more intimidating than some grand collection of the aforementioned materials more familiar to people as markers of opulence. There are few resources in higher demand than water, as by biological necessity it must be consumed at a constant and rapid rate to ensure everyday survival; dramatically limiting its global supply amidst a large population of human (or human-like) beings, as Herbert does, implies an absurdly high price. More disturbing than that, however, is the implication that no matter how high this price gets, even the poorest of people must pay it—or perish. This fact alone makes the great cistern a more powerful display of imperial status than any collection of gold, diamonds, or highly valued paper currency one might assemble in a 'Great Hall' of the capital.

Still, even writers with an eye for interior science fictional decoration like Herbert cannot resist the allure of monumental vistas. Twenty years after writing Dune, he combines the two perspectives in his description of Arrakeen in 1985's The Road to Dune:

> Your walking tour of Arrakis must include this approach across the dunes to the Grand Palace at Arrakeen. From a distance, the dimensions of this construction are deceptive ... The largest man-made structure ever built, the Grand Palace could cover more than ten of the Imperium's most populous cities under one roof, a fact that becomes more apparent when you learn Atreides attendants and their families, housed spaciously in the Palace Annex, number some thirty-five million souls ... When you walk into the Grand Reception Hall of the Palace at Arrakeen, be prepared to feel dwarfed before an immensity never before conceived. A statue of St. Alia Atreides, shown as "The Soother of Pains," stands twenty-two meters tall but is one of the smallest adornments in the hall. Two hundred such statues could be stacked one atop the other against the entrance pillars and still fall short of the doorway's capitol arch, which itself is almost a thousand meters below the first beams upholding the lower roof. (Herbert Eye 194)

While not quite as gargantuan as Trantor's architectural spectacles, Herbert channels the same Roman 'bigness' to re-emphasize the import and power of his imperial city. Of course, this description denotes a healthy city and thus a relatively healthy empire; an empire in decline would produce a far less thriving scene.

And decline is inevitable: as Asimov's First Galactic Empire loses its capacity to maintain its frontier, by the second episode of the first Foundation novel, The Encyclopedists, secessions at the periphery cause it to fray into a scattering of polities consisting of a weakened imperial center based on Trantor and four kingdoms who have declared independence and cut themselves off from the capital. But the fall of one empire sets the conditions for the rise of a new one. Its seeds are planted by Seldon on Terminus, which becomes the site of Terminus City. As learned from a pre-recorded message from Seldon himself, the city will one day be the capital of a powerful new imperium—the Foundation. But according to its first mayor Salvor Hardin, when it is initially built it is merely a vulnerable city-state in a world with no one prevailing authority in place:

> "When communications with the central regions of the old Empire broke down, we found ourselves a world of scientists concentrated in a single city, possessing no industries, and surrounded by newly created kingdoms, hostile and largely barbarous. We were a tiny island of nuclear power in this ocean of barbarism, and an infinitely valuable prize." (Asimov Foundation 90)

The commercial and architectural gigantism and density of Trantor is gone along with the concentered structure of the empire; in the decentered, feudalistic world after its collapse the imperial-city-to-be is small, its resources and population sparse, its power limited.

But the cycle must continue, and this state of affairs cannot last. Thus the last two episodes of the first book in Asimov's long cosmic drama—The Traders and The Merchant Princes—unfold against the backdrop of an increasingly powerful Foundation that is leveraging its technological edge over its neighbors into a new dominium. No longer small and peripheral, Terminus City is now a large metropolis and the heart of an imperial power on the rise; this is in turn represented by a centrally-organized form, as communicated by the gathering of its energy resources in a "huge, cubiform, windowless affair that dominated the center of the city."

(Asimov Foundation 214) By the beginning of the second novel in the series, Foundation and Empire, the ascent is nearly complete. "At the end of two hundred years," Asimov declares, "the Foundation was the most powerful state in the Galaxy." (Asimov Foundation and Empire 2)

Of course, in cyclical motion past is prologue: by the latter half of Foundation and Empire, the Foundation finds itself declining in a fashion similar to its predecessor and ultimately falling to 'The Mule', a villainous ruler of a rival kingdom. The concentered architecture of power falls apart in turn. Asimov completes the technological metaphor most vividly in the moments when his protagonists first discover Terminus City has succumbed to invasion, conflating the unraveling of its political supremacy with a literal loss of power throughout the city. Standing in the great 'Time Vault' where they receive preprogrammed messages from Hari Seldon—by now a nigh-mythical figure consulted like an oracle—one member of the narrative's cast of characters fearfully declares that "…something has stopped all nuclear power in the Time Vault.". Moments later Asimov expands the signs of crisis outward, noting that "The outer noise of a gathering crowd was evident," just before another character rushes into the Vault to inform us in appropriately panicked fashion that "not a vehicle is running in the city, not a communication line to the outside is open. The Tenth Fleet is reported defeated and the Mule's ships are outside the atmosphere." (Asimov Foundation and Empire 164) Finally, in the last panoramic glimpses of Terminus City, the fall of the Foundation is expressed through the sight of its conqueror parading around his own imperial architecture against the backdrop of what was once a majestic image of the capital's sheer size and technological prowess: "The attacking general sped down the empty main street of Terminus City in a foreign-made ground car that ran where a whole city of atomic cars still stood useless." (Asimov Foundaton and Empire 165) The transformation is thence complete: the power once collected at

the center and concretized in the massive, monolith-like warehouse containing the Foundation's energy sources dissipates, its influence driven out by a new hegemon defined by a new, 'foreign-made' icon of supremacy. Rome is sacked, the Vandals have defaced the monuments signifying its former glory, and the plebes and patricians not annihilated in the invasion are in retreat. Imperium and imperial metropolis alike are overthrown, "escaped", transcended, and destroyed as Asimov's space opera affirms that form follows function in the cycle of empire. Looking back over the rise, decline and collapse that culminates in the Mule's triumph it becomes clear that the establishment of Trantor and Terminus City match the rise of their respective empires, their stagnation the ageing and ossification of those imperia, their succumbing to conquerors and/or crisis the collapse of said dynasties, and their interconnected history the repetition of the cycle.

Cyclus Imperia, Stage 2: From Free Imperial Cities to a New Hegemony

What kind of imperial city emerges from the ruins of a great empire? What does the world look like after history (past or future) has arrived at the nadir of the decline? And what other ways can the imperial city be organized if not the Trantorian way? Once again, a glance at the fate of the Romans is instructive. As its ability to effectively police its frontier disintegrated, the unitary authority once anchored in the metropolis at the heart of the Roman Empire devolved into feudalism. Peripheral territories thrust off the imperial yoke and claimed independence from the once unassailable dominion of Rome. Collapsing under its own weight, the Empire was sundered into two political entities—respectively, the Eastern and Western Roman Empire—which in turn underwent further decentralization. By the Carolingian Age, the 'Holy Roman Empire' was an empire in name only; the emperor's power was highly limited, and the remnants of the Western imperium dissolved into a network of semi-independent territories maintained by

a hierarchical system of lord-vassal obligations. (Ganshof) (Cook and Broadhead) During this time, many cities became entirely self-governing political entities exercising a large degree of autonomy over sizeable territories. While they were still technically subordinate to the imperator of the Holy Roman Empire, the extremely constricted nature of the emperor's authority meant they exercised *de facto* sovereignty over their domain. These were the *urbs imperialis libera* or 'Free Imperial Cities'.[4] (Lee 256)

These municipal models occupy the end of the spectrum of imperial urban organization opposite that of the expansive and highly centered Roman model. They are products of worlds where power is scattered and rarefied, a condition that often leads to anarchic sociopolitical landscapes. And just as Asimov created his Foundation saga by appropriating the history of Rome and clothing it in the colorful garments of space opera, other sf writers have harnessed the history of the West after the decline of Rome, when the Free Imperial Cities achieved new levels of autonomy within the shattered remnants of the empire, to construct their own cycles of interstellar imperialism.

One of the best known of these speculative histories comes from the powerful intellect of an author who once resolutely claimed he had "A distrust of large, encompassing systems"—a conviction showing up in his creation of a saga whose earliest narratives begin with a universe in which the advent of interstellar travel has caused forms of unipolar power and authority to come apart rather than accelerating the formation of a consolidated galactic empire as with Asimov. (Anderson Locus Interview 1)

It was with these conditions that, in the words of Brian Stableford, the astoundingly prolific sf scribe Poul Anderson "reconfigured the Asimovian empire as a 'Polesotechnic

League'." (Stableford 21) Anderson articulates this new imperial form in one of his earliest works, the 1956 short story Margin of Profit, where the reader also meets his famous swashbuckling interstellar capitalist Nicholas van Rijn. In Anderson's universe, interstellar travel (enabled through the invention of 'hyperdrive') undermines the ability of terrestrially-bounded states to maintain control over their citizenry at the center. The narrator notifies us that "[anti-]Gravitics led to the hyperdrive, which opened a galaxy to exploitation," but that it

> "also provided a safety valve. A citizen who found his government oppressive could often emigrate elsewhere, an exodus— the Breakup, as it came to be called— that planted liberty on a number of worlds. Their influence in turn loosened bonds upon the mother planet. Interstellar distances being what they are, and intelligent races having their separate ideas of culture, there was no political union of them." (Anderson Margin of Profit 77)

The story hence begins at the nadir of imperial hegemony, not its peak; here the empires of yore have declined and fragmented in similar fashion to the Roman imperium, with the constant secession of peripheral territories undermining the basis for imperial power and with no polity big and powerful enough amidst the politically fragmented landscape to step in as hegemon.

As the very first glimpse of a small, undeveloped Terminus City in the early stages of the Foundation cycle indicates, while this situation allows smaller polities and their capital cities to attain an increased degree of autonomy, it also puts them in a vulnerable position. Without the military might of a hegemon protecting them, they are open to the depredations of larger and better-equipped organizations. To mitigate this risk, the many cities and territories of Anderson's universe seek recourse to the same strategy that both the city-states of Ancient Greece (the anarchic precursors to Roman civilization) and the Free Imperial Cities of the Holy Roman Empire (its anarchic successor) used to protect themselves: confederation. When the ancient Greek city-states were threatened by the expansionary military campaigns of the Persian Empire,

they formed the Delian League. While each member kept their sovereignty, they all mutually agreed to come to each other's economic and military aid so as to provide for their security without relinquishing territorial independence. (Meiggs 42) Similarly, to better fend off piracy and secure their shared trading routes, the major market towns and Free Imperial Cities that anchored the merchant guilds of the Late Middle Ages confederated into the Hanseatic League. As in the Greek arrangement, each member's sovereignty remained sacrosanct, but came under the aegis of a common agreement not only to militarily protect each other but also to trade more freely amongst one another. Such arrangements allowed these dispersed collections of municipal kingdoms to retain some of the security provided by the concentrated military and economic might of an imperial power without establishing any kind of unilateral hegemony. (Lee 257)

Anderson's introduction to the Polesotechnic League in Margin of Profit describes its formation as the outcome of a similar process. Just as the confederated cities of classical antiquity and the Middle Ages fostered a robust system of trade by banding together, so the galaxy-traversing merchants of the Technic universe potentiate the vitality of interstellar commerce through cooperation:

> Under such conditions, an exuberant capitalism was bound to arise. It was also bound to find mutual interests, form alliances, and negotiate spheres of influence. The powerful companies might be in competition, but their magnates had the wit to see that, overriding this, they shared a need to cooperate in many activities, arbitrate disputes among themselves, and present a united front to the demands of the state— any state. Governments were limited to a few planetary systems at most; they could do little to control their cosmopolitan merchants. One by one, through bribery, coercion, or sheer despair, they gave up the struggle. Selfishness is a potent force. Governments, officially dedicated to altruism, remained divided. The Polesotechnic League became a loose kind of supergovernment, sprawling from Canopus to Deneb, drawing its membership and employees from perhaps a thousand species. It was a horizontal society, cutting across political and cultural boundaries. It set its own policies, made its own treaties, established its own bases, fought its own battles . . . and for a time, in the course of milking the Milky Way, did more to spread a truly universal civilization and enforce a solid Pax than

all the diplomats in known history. (Anderson Margin of Profit 78)

The unfolding of this speculative future parallels the development of the Hanseatic and Delian League. They arose during eras where "uniform government" had either balkanized and declined or had yet to be established. Each member retained their independence and so retained a level of mercantile competition amongst themselves; however, this competition was tempered by a shared "need to cooperate in many activities, arbitrate disputes among themselves, and present a united front" against military threats. It is thus hardly shocking that the early stories of Anderson's League feature capital cities that resemble the Free Imperial Cities in both form and history.

To see this resemblance with clarity, one need only compare perhaps the most influential member of the Hanseatic League, the Free Imperial City of Cologne, to the Andersonian metropolis of Aesca, the capital of a territory named Larsum located on the fictional planet of Ivanhoe. Anderson's tale of how Aesca and Larsum come to be a part of the Polesotechnic League, chronicled in 1963's The Three-Cornered Wheel, is a science-fictional mirror-image of the history of Cologne's development into a Free Imperial City and then later into an important member of the Hanseatic League.[5]

Like others of its kind, Cologne has long been more than just a city; throughout its history it has been the heart of an important territory of considerable size, and the capital of what started as the Roman province of Germana Inferior before it broke away from the imperium and took on various other nomenclatures. As such, it has its own history of exchanges between its metropole and its periphery. The first glimpse of Aesca communicates that it shares a similar arrangement:

"He reached the highroad and started toward the city. There was considerable traffic,

> food and raw materials coming from the hinterlands, handmade goods going back. Professional porters trotted under loads too heavy for Schuster even to think about. Fastigas dragged travois with vast bumping and clatter. A provincial Warden and his bodyguard galloped through, horns hooting, and the commoners jumped aside for their lives." (Anderson Three-Cornered Wheel ch.3)

This vista positions the city as the commercial centrifuge of its own empire, small as the latter may be. Key to its economy and its character is the relationship it bears to its 'hinterlands': like a larger imperial capital, it draws in resources from the territory surrounding it and sells the goods and services its artisans and merchants create from those resources back to the periphery. And as the reaction of the commoners to their Warden illustrates, city officials hold powers akin to the nobility of larger empires.

Yet a Free Imperial City is distinguished by more than just the possession of its own territory. It is also defined by its considerable independence from a larger imperial authority; and in most cases, attaining this independence entails considerable conflict between the city and the privileged wielders of that authority. A spurned League embassy in Aesca exemplifies an architectural expression of this inter-imperial tension, as one can see when it is revealed that members of the League

> …landed, made contact, learned the language and a little bit of the folkways, then asked permission to erect a large building which none but visitors like themselves would be able to enter. The request was grudgingly granted, less because of the metals offered in payment than because the Consecrates feared trouble if they refused. Even so, they demanded that the construction be well away from the capital; evidently they wanted to minimize the number of Larsans who might be contaminated by foreign ideas. (Anderson, Three-Cornered Wheel Ch.1)

However, both Aesca and Cologne's history also bare this conflictual line of development out. Before Cologne became a self-governing Free City of the Holy Roman Empire, it was ruled by the wealth and power of the Roman clergy. The city became a bishop's see during the fourth century, and an archbishopric was established in the late eighth century. By the tenth, the

Emperor of Rome had bestowed the powers and privileges of secular nobility on the territory's church officials by appointing his brother Bruno—already a bishop—as heir to its dukedom. For its part, Aesca greets the reader while still laboring under the yoke of a religious nobility. As noted by the protagonist David Falkayn—protégé of Nicholas van Rijn—Larsum is controlled by a class of "priest-scribe-poet-artist-engineer-scientist Consecrates" whose base of operations is located in the capital. This arrangement manifests itself in the structure of the city:

> The Trammina River cut straight through town, oily with the refuse of a hundred thousand inhabitants. The bridges were arcs of a circle, soaring in stone to the island in the middle of the water. (Falkayn had relayed from Rebo the information that you were allowed to use up to one third of the sacred figure for an important purpose.) That island was entirely covered by the enormous step-sided pyramid of the Sanctuary. Buildings clustered on the lower terraces, graceful white structures with colonnaded porticos, where the Consecrates lived and worked. The upper pyramid held only staircases, leading to the top. There the Eternal Fire roared forth, vivid yellow tossing against the dusky-green sky. Obviously natural gas was being piped from some nearby well; but the citadel was impressive in every respect. Except for what it cost those poor devils of peasants in forced labor and taxes…and what it's still costing them in liberty. (Anderson Three-Cornered Wheel Ch.3)

The location and layout of 'The Sanctuary' confirms the status of the clergy as the ruling elite—to it flows the river around which the town is built, an arrangement signifying that the fruits of commerce in the realm go first and foremost to the priesthood. This is especially so in the context of Larsan society, which has not developed modern forms of transportation due to a religious ban on the use of the wheel; this bestows upon the sign of the river the significance it held in the era before the automobile, when it was the main artery of trade and the reason so many of the world's oldest and most famous cities began on the banks of the Nile, the Thames, the Euphrates, the Mississippi, and so on. The separation of the Sanctuary from the rest of the city via bridges communicates the elite status and aloof nature of the religious nobility, as does Anderson's mention of the use of "forced labor and taxes" to maintain the monument.

Interestingly enough, Cologne Cathedral—the massive church that long functioned as the administrative center for the Archbishopric when it controlled the city—stands on the bank of the Rhine opposite a large bridge, and for hundreds of years dwarfed everything else occupying the municipality's skyline. In case the nuances of the architectural representation of power prove too aloof themselves in communicating the position of the clergy to the reader, however, Anderson also has his protagonist articulate the situation more explicitly to a rogue priest: "Consecrates as a whole possess large estates, manufactories, and other property. Title is vested in the Sanctuary. Now you know very well that the Sanctuary is neither a person nor a family. Yet for purposes of ownership, you act as if it were." (Anderson Three-Cornered Wheel Ch.3) And as with the laity and city officials of Cologne who found themselves in conflict with the religious representatives that ruled over them, Anderson's rogue clergyman notes—referring back to the city official presented to us in the reader's first view of the metropolis—that "the Wardens have chafed at the Consecrate bridle."

His statement gestures to further parallels. To gain their independence from Roman authority, the citizenry of Cologne had to undermine the power of the religious nobility. The will to carry out such a rebellion was cultivated by souring relations between the Archbishopric and an emboldened populace and political leadership. Likewise, The Three-Sided Wheel chronicles how Falkayn's introduction of new ideas and technologies—specifically, modern mathematics and the wheel—into Larsan society throws the religious leadership of the Consecrates into crisis. Aesca and Larsum's rise to Free Imperial status is confirmed when they finally join the Polesotechnic League against the wishes of the Consecrates. "Now," the heroic rogue priest says to Falkayn at the end of the tale, "our ships will come to you." (Anderson Three-Cornered Wheel Ch.7)

The city also re-confirms the trend Wolfe's commentary presaged—a decentered imperium will be reflected in a decentered imperial city, and vice versa. When Falkayn tops a hill overlooking the capital in anticipation of a skirmish with the Consecrates, Anderson notes that "To him the city was only a blot athwart the river's metal gleam." (Anderson Three-Cornered Wheel Ch.7) His companion Rebo subsequently describes it as marked by "kilometers of fields and orchards." (Anderson Three-Cornered Wheel Ch.7) Together they describe a metropolis that stands in stark contrast to the density, grandiosity and centrally-planned nature of Trantor.

While these smaller, more homogenous kingdoms and their attendant municipalities enjoy some advantages over their larger, Rome-inspired brethren that may contribute to their longevity—and to the flexibility of their league—none can escape the pressure of the expansionist imperative. The empire must grow, the cycle must continue, and so this confederated arrangement cannot last. For as a polity grows, so does its power—but only up to a point. In the long run, power is finite; there is only so much to go around. Eventually, for one political entity to gain influence, another must relinquish some of its own. Over time, this inevitably creates power imbalances. Ultimately, as the winners consolidate their control over the losers, coalitions founded on ideas of the equal sharing of power—like the leagues of cities enumerated above or even to some degree the Roman Republic—disintegrate into a more absolutist arrangement.

Though Anderson might be accused of idealizing his League of Merchants, he cannot be accused of ignoring this eventuality or the forces that create it. While works like Margin of Profit (1956), How to be Ethnic in One Easy Lesson (1973) and The Three-Cornered Wheel (1963) chronicle a powerful and resilient Polesotechnic League, later works in the Technic

civilization's history like Esau, (1970) Hiding Place, (1961) Mirkheim (1977) and Lodestar (1973) take place against a backdrop of one that has ossified into a squabbling series of ruthless cartels. Mirkheim in particular elaborates on how the inevitable accumulation of power by differing factions of the League begin to fracture its solidarity:

> Private enterprise, ranging over greater reaches of space than any government, frequently where no effective government whatsoever existed, and soon becoming richer than any state, took over most of the Technic economy. The companies formed the Polesotechnic League as an association for mutual help and, to a degree, mutual discipline. The Pax Mercatoria spread among the stars. *When did it go bad?* Did it succumb to the vices of its very virtues? Often having to serve as their own magistrates, legislators, naval commanders, and being in any case usually rambunctious, acquisitive individualists with gigantic egos, the great merchants of the League began more and more to live like ancient kings. Abuses grew ever more common: coercion, venality, reckless exploitation. The sheer scale of operations and overwhelming rate of information flow made it apparently impossible to cope with much of this. *No, wait. The League might have brought itself back under control just the same— had not the attempt at control created two mighty factions which as the years went on grew ever more unlike.* There were the Home Companies, whose businesses were principally within the Solar System: Global Cybernetics, General Atomistics, Unity Communications, Terran Synthetics, Planetary Biologicals. Their relationship with the dominant unions— United Technicians, Service Industries Workers, the Commonwealth Scientific Association— grew steadily closer. And there were the Seven In Space: Galactic Developments, XT Systems, Interstar Transport, Sanchez Engineering, Stellar Metals, Timebinders Insurance, Abdallah Enterprises— the corporate titans among the other suns. The rest, such as Solar Spice & Liquors, remained precariously unallied, openly competitive. Most were essentially one-man or one-family fiefs. Does any future lie in them? Aren't they mere fossils of an earlier, freer age? Oh, Nick, my poor devil . . . . (Anderson Mirkheim 39)

The scattered distribution of power that allowed for the Free Imperial Cities of the League to thrive is now concentrated into three centrally organized entities—all due to the paradoxical effects of their successful growth, which pushes them to "succumb to the vices of their very virtues." Once again, the time of trouble is marked by a frontier too large to police, with the "sheer scale of operations" and the "overwhelming rate of information flow" making maintaining control over it an impossible task. At least two cities help Anderson articulate this narrative of the League's decline. One of these is Starfall, the capital of David Falkayn's homeworld,

Hermes; the other is the unnamed capital city of Babur, a nation that goes to war with the League over the ownership rights to the titular planet Mirkheim and its highly valuable store of 'supermetals.' Each can be read as a negative mirror-image of the other. Their occupation of different sides of the eventual war between Babur and the League signifies that they are the urban expression of the conditions that fracture the power structure of confederations of smaller imperia. An ownership claim over a planet of supermetals is the spark that ignites the collapse of the organization, but the sheer dissimilarity between the powers provides the kindling. Starfall and the League embody the opulence, luxury and conspicuous consumption of the upper crust of a capitalist society:

> A thousand colors flared and jumped, voices resounded, flesh jostled flesh through the streets of the pleasure district. There were those who sought quieter recreation. Among places for them was the roof garden of Gondwana House. At the starboard edge of a leading pontoon, it offered a sweeping overlook of the ocean city on one side, of the ocean itself on another. By day the waters were often crowded with boats, but usually after dark you saw only the running lights of a few patrolling fish herders and, in tropical climes, pumpships urging minerals up from the bottom to keep the plankton beds nourished. They resembled fireflies that had wandered far from land… Still below the horizon, Maia, sun of Hermes, made the tops of steeples and towers in Starfall shine as if gilded. When it rose out of Daybreak Bay, its light struck westward over the Palomino River and straight along Olympic Avenue to Pilgrim Hill. There the brightness lost itself among trees, gardens, and buildings, the gray stone mass of the Old Keep, the fluid lines and many-paned walls of the New Keep, the austere erectness of Signal Station. A beam went past an upper balcony on the New Keep, through the French doors beyond, and across the bed of Sandra Tamarin-Asmundsen. (Anderson Mirkheim 23)

It is in this colorful setting that the protagonists of Mirkheim are introduced, David Falkayn among them. Anderson's description paints Starfall as a luxurious commercial and cultural center of activity—as well as the policeman of its territory, as evinced by the presence of not one but two 'Keeps' for military defense—but one that evokes priciness as well. It seems unlikely one could fit into the landscape of 'steeples and towers', French doors atop newly-built fortresses, pontoons and bounteous parks and gardens unless one commands a sizeable bank

account. (like, say, Nicholas van Rijn or David Falkayn) More importantly, it provides a stark contrast to the capital city of Babur:

> A city appeared on the shore. Because it could not grow tall, it spread wide, kilometers of domes, cubes, pyramids in murky colors. In what seemed to be a new section, buildings were aerodynamically designed to withstand winds stronger than would ever blow across Earth. Wheeled and tracked vehicles passed among them, aircraft above— but remarkably little traffic for a community this size. The city went below the curve of the world (Rise of the Terran Empire, Mirkheim, 65)

Squat, austere, colored in murk, ever under the pressure of a merciless environment, and possessing little of the bustle, bawd and frivolity of the more hedonistic—but also more colorful and joyous—society of Starfall, the Baburite capital is a cultural counterpoint to the Hermetian one. Nonetheless, the ability of the Baburites to build a large city on a planet defined by harsh environmental conditions implies technological and political power. Indeed, it is not hard to see in this binary of metropoles the clash between Athens and Sparta that destroyed the Delian League. Athens was a city marked both by high culture and architecture and the rowdiness characteristic of a direct democracy, which provides an egalitarian political structure but also cedes authority to the masses. This made it prone to a messiness that mixed the regality and elitism of the patrician class with the profane and hearty ways of low society. Sparta, on the other hand, was an austere and militaristic society of citizen-soldiers and their slaves, the helots. (the term hence suiting the rhetoric of Pournelle's Non-Citizen Liberation Movement) Power was vested in military leaders, making the machinery of state highly efficient but also less democratic. Art and culture was devoted almost entirely to the glorification of military prowess, and the city-state's leaders were so paranoid that they kept few written records and produced few works of philosophy or literature. Over time, each polity grew to dominate the League, until each's attempts to rise to hegemon sparked the Peloponnesian War and destroyed the political confederation altogether.

So it is with the Polesotechnic League, which is devastated by the Baburite War and dissolved not long after. But the cycle of Imperial Cities moves on relentlessly—as is made clear in The Star Plunderer, the fall of the League prompts the rise of the Terran Empire. Anderson's subsequent stories of the empire—most involving his James Bond-like imperial agent Dominic Flandry—not only demonstrate the inexorability of the paradox of growth, but also once again validate the cyclical nature of the concentration and deconcentration of authority and space that defines it. When the multipolar power structure of the Delian League fell apart, it was transmuted over time into the unipolar power structure of the Roman Empire. When the empire fell, it devolved into the dispersive, quasi-anarchic feudal regime; feudalism, in turn, came to an end with the rise of the top-down organization of European nationalist entities like imperial Napoleonic France and, after handing Napoleon defeat, the British Empire. Anderson provides us with a view of the process moving in a trajectory opposite that of Asimov. Asimov begins with his Empire as a unitary authority commanding a vast expanse of galaxies and planets as well as a diversity of cultures, articulated in the spectacle of Trantorian enormity and uniformity; Anderson, on the other hand, begins in a universe where the concentration of power at the core has frayed into the Polesotechnic League and a loose array of Free Imperial Cities united only by an acceptance—and very often a reluctant acceptance at that—of the League's 'exuberant capitalism' and free trade policies. These cities are not only diverse, but also far smaller and less centrally-planned than Trantor. As the Terran empire rises to power, however, and unipolar authority is re-established, the imperial capital of Archopolis soon becomes a mirror image of Trantor. Indeed, it is so gargantuan in comparison to the cities that populate the narratives taking place during the reign of the League that Anderson duly registers the reader's own shock through the experience of an awestruck protagonist, Banner, who draws a comparison

between Starfall and Archopolis in the Flandry novel A Stone in Heaven:

> Banner had not seen Terra since she graduated at the age of twenty-one…Childhood on Dayan, among the red-gold Tammuz Mountains, followed by girlhood as a Navy brat in the strange outposts where her father got stationed, had not prepared her for any gigapolis. Nor had her infrequent later visits to provincial communities. Starfall, the biggest, now seemed like a village, nearly as intimate and unterrifying as Bethyaakov, her birthplace. She had made acquaintances in the ship. A man among them had told her a number of helpful facts, such as the names of hotels she could afford in the capital. He offered to escort her around as well, but his kindnesses were too obviously in aid of getting her into bed, and she resented that. Only one of her few affairs had been a matter of real love, but none had been casual. Thus she found herself more alone, more daunted among a million people and a thousand towers, than ever in a wildwood or the barrenness of a moon. Maybe those numbers, million, thousand, were wrong. It felt as if she could see that many from the groundside terminal, but she was dazed. She did know that they went on beyond sight, multiplied over and over around the curve of the planet. Archopolis was merely a nexus; no matter if the globe had blue oceans and green open spaces— some huge, being property of nobility— it was a single city. (Anderson Stone in Heaven 64)

Anderson's mention of Starfall is no small detail; his description here conveys that history has passed through the days of the Delian League into the Roman Empire, from a regime of power where there is almost no single prevailing authority to one commanded by a gargantuan imperial metropole. More modest and less centrally organized proportions have once again been foregone in favor of the projection of authority through Roman 'bigness' and uniformity. The imperium once embodied in a diverse multiplicity of metropolises has been consolidated into a 'single city' by the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the paradox of growth. Yet even here, the isolation Banner feels amidst the millions of people and "thousands of towers" in the capital portends future difficulties for the empire in maintaining its spatial and cultural solidarity.

While one might label Anderson's Technic Civilization as the most prominent speculative timeline using the 'Free Imperial' model, the visions of other writers also vie for the title. Perhaps most notable among them is James Blish's 'Earthman' history, chronicled in a

series of novels gathered together as one volume in 1962 under the title Cities in Flight. Blish based the series on the works of historian-philosopher Oswald Spengler, who conceived of all historical societies as defined by a constant growth cycle that moved from anarchy to absolutism and back.

Blish begins in much the same place Anderson begins, with the discovery of spaceflight. The very first episode of his series portrays this discovery as taking place just as the Earthbound empire of the 'Bureaucratic State'—formed from the union of the U.S. with the U.S.S.R.—is reaching its fullest extent. Sure enough, by the second installment, A Life for the Stars, the Bureaucratic State has stagnated into a state of "permanent depression", and it collapses as spaceflight technology gives way to an exodus from earth that compounds the downturn. Using a device called a 'spindizzy', entire cities launch into space and sail off to become itinerant providers of industrial support to extraplanetary colonies, and from the ashes of the Twenty-first century's Roman Empire free cities are born. Channeling the image of the peripatetic victims of the Dust Bowl during the Great Depression made famous by Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath, Blish dubs his roaming merchant metropolises the 'Okies'.

What makes them free *imperial* cities, however, is the 'Vegan Tyranny'. The Vegan Tyranny is a pre-existing intergalactic empire so lacking in power and infrastructure that it remains unknown to interstellar colonists until the free cities begin their migration. When the Earthman culture finally bumps into the Vegans, however, the latter claim the former as subjects. Once again, confederation is the mechanism used to deal with military threats. The scattered colonial cultures finance a navy, and join with the free cities to wage war on the Tyranny. And once again, power imbalances soon beset the federation, and a new Caesar becomes inevitable:

> The capital world of the Tyranny, Vega II, was invested in 2413 by a number of armed cities, including the Interstellar Master Traders, whose task it was to destroy the many orbital forts surrounding the planet, and by the Third Colonial Navy under Admiral Alois Hrunta, who was charged with occupying Vega II in the event of its surrender. Instead, Admiral Hrunta scorched the planet completely, and led the Third Navy off into an uncharted quadrant with the intention of founding his own interstellar empire. (Blish 164)

The rest of Blish's narrative reconstitutes the feudal anarchy that also served as the historical model for the Polesotechnic League and the early stages of the Technic Civilization. Like the free imperial cities, the Okies remain self-governing and independent, but must navigate a world where multiple authorities strive to proclaim themselves imperator over the Earthman culture. This includes the remnants of Earth authorities, the Hruntan Empire during its prime, the balkanized remains of the Hruntan Empire after its fall, and renegade free cities as well. The resultant power structure is a multipolar contrast to the monolithic central-planning of the Bureaucratic State. As a result of this structure, Blish's series contains no cities resembling Trantor; the free cities are described as resembling the cities of Earth the reader is familiar with, and both the Vegan and Hruntan empire are so poorly run that their capitals are both described as rundown and depopulated, if heavily armed. Hence between Blish and Anderson's imperial cosmology and Asimov's Galactic Empire, one can glimpse forms of empire and imperial capitals as diverse as the multitudes of empires and imperial cities gracing the annals of Western history—each caught in an ouroborous-like process of engineering their own collapse by abiding by the growth imperative.

Without a doubt, the various narrative roles these imperial metropolises play and the manner in which the paradox of growth shapes them extend beyond the creations of Anglophone sf authors. As will become clear in the next chapter, they appear and play a part in the creative works of black sf authors as well; what will become equally clear, however, is that what encompasses the stylistic and historical commonalities of black and white imperial cities—

science fiction's roots in colonial culture—is simultaneously what articulates significant stylistic and historical differences between them. The view of city, empire and science fiction that comes into focus when one peers through the looking glass of colonial culture is enlightening indeed; but to understand it fully it is essential to remember that two observers sharing a common lens may each see very different images should their gaze come from very different perspectives.

[1]In sf parlance, a 'novum' refers to the main 'deviation' from our own reality around which a science fictional narrative is organized; for further reference see Suvin, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr.'s discussion of the term in The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction, and Bloch for the original context of the word.

[2]The original Foundation novel is actually a collection of stories published in Astounding Science Fiction Magazine from 1942-1944, rewritten, compiled and then published as a one-volume 'fix up' in 1951.

[3]Information on the Roman Republic for this chapter came primarily from Flower 2004 and 2009.

[4]For the history of the devolution of the Roman Empire into the feudal order and the development of the free imperial cities, I draw primarily from Ganshof, Le Goff, Cook and Broadhead and Lee's article on the constitution of the Holy Roman Empire.

[5]Much of the information concerning the history of Cologne used here is compiled from articles offered by the city itself on its website. (see works cited) I will assume the authority of its municipal government will suffice to address the proper scholarly doubts over the veracity and authenticity of information pulled from online sources not backed by an authoritative governmental, academic or educational institution.

Chapter II: Empire Through Two Ends of a Looking Glass, Part II—The Counter-Imperial Imperial Cities of Black SF

> "This kingdom is divided into many provinces or districts: in one of the most remote and fertile of which, called Eboe, I was born , in the year 1745…The distance of this province from the capital of Benin and the Sea Coast must be very considerable; for I had never heard of white men or Europeans, nor of the sea: and our subjection to the king of Benin was little more than nominal."
>
> -Olaudah Equiano, The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano

To understand the imperial cities of black sf in relation to those discussed in the previous chapter the critic must endeavor to travel through the looking glass. Most significantly, they must grasp colonial culture from an entirely different perspective, expanding their understanding beyond the paradigm inhabited by writers and critics like Edward Gibbon or Isaac Asimov to the world inhabited by those like Olaudah Equiano. Emerging from the values and precedents of white colonial society, Anglophone sf took the expansionist ethos of imperialism and transformed it over time into what Gary Wolfe refers to as its "consensus cosmology", consisting of "some optimistic principle of plenitude, with the consensual belief that all the knowable universe can serve as an arena for humanity's infinite appropriation, and the validation of that process of appropriation." (Wolfe 88) As mentioned earlier, this ethos inhabits even those texts critiquing colonialism itself, as in the works of Wells and Chesney identified as 'anti-imperial propaganda' by Kerslake.

How is one to comprehend the differing perspective of black men and women within this colonial culture? As is often the case, recasting the inquiry in terms of power proves particularly helpful in rendering their situation legible: what were the power relations that positioned African and Afro-diasporic men and women within colonial culture?

Many great intellects of black letters have probed this question, from Equiano to Franz

Fanon to Henry Louis Gates, Jr. And one broad conclusion that they reach about colonial society's attitudes towards the sons and daughters of Africa is the same conclusion the nameless protagonist of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man reaches about the way the most powerful Anglophone characters in the novel think about him: "I was simply a material, a natural resource to be used." (Ellison 508)

For most of their history, this was the defining power relation between colonial societies and the people of Africa. Africa itself was conceptualized largely as a wilderness of unclaimed resources there for the empire's taking; its dark-skinned peoples were predominantly seen as merely an extension of this, as 'capital goods' lacking rationality and culture. The ancient empires and large, technologically advanced civilizations native to the continent were assumed to have arisen from the influence of white ethnic groups, and the texts and iconography of history produced by colonial cultures worked to legitimize this notion. Even the great Cleopatra, a high-profile symbol of and attestation to highly developed civilization in Africa, appears in many colonial-era paintings as an ivory-skinned Anglo-European woman whose features mirror her famed lover Marc Antony. (it is unclear just how dark Cleopatra's pallor actually was and how many phenotypes native to black Subsaharan and East African ethnic groups she exhibited given her ancestry—but she almost certainly had darker skin than the average Anglo-European woman of colonial times, a fact rarely reflected in colonial art) Under such a mentality, colonial expansion formed a parasitic relationship with the well-being of African and Afro-diasporic peoples; to get ahead, the great Anglo-European empires had to rely more and more on unpaid labor appropriated from black slaves and cheap land and materials appropriated from Africa. Even when the slave trade was finally abolished, European colonials often refused to afford native and diasporic African peoples equal treatment, leaving underdeveloped economies and

middle classes in their wake when the postcolonial era saw their prior principalities and overseas territories finally attain independence. In the end, the logic of colonization ultimately meant that augmenting the fortunes of the imperium meant diminishing the fortunes of black men and women. (Mbembe 35)

Perhaps for this reason above all, whereas Anglophone sf's empires tend to define themselves as part of the expansionary colonial project and its 'Manifest Destiny' mentality—even though some may do so subversively for the purpose of critiquing it—the empires of black sf have historically tended to define themselves in opposition to the colonial project, with their roots planted firmly in anticolonial political discourse. As a result, the paradox of growth takes on an added significance—a "repetition with a black difference" to use Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s language—in their stories of the imperial city. Rather than being driven by a dilemma over how to deal with the collapse of the empire being generated from the conditions of its expansion, these stories are driven by a dilemma over how one can create an political entity powerful enough to overthrow colonial imperialism without having it become in the course of its own expansion the same predatory colonial empire it sets out to defeat. This conundrum in turn reflects long-standing debates in black anticolonial political discourse over methods of resisting imperialism—debates supported and sustained in the black neighborhoods of American cities by a vibrant black press and urban political culture.

Sutton Griggs's Empire-within-Empire and the Birth of American Colonialism

The first of black sf's imperial cities is perhaps the most vivid example of the way they define themselves through the negation of colonial culture, as it was conceived at precisely the same time the United States first threatened to become a colonial empire. For about a century after it won its independence, the young nation showed little imperial ambition; while the

empires of Europe expanded in the nineteenth century, it assumed a more isolationist ethos focused on consolidating control over its own continent.

Shortly before the dawn of the twentieth century, however, the country reached a turning point. On February 15, 1898, an explosion in Havana Harbor sank the U.S.S. Maine, with major newspapers and much of the U.S. public laying the blame on Spanish sabotage. Spain at the time was busy trying to stabilize a civil war in Cuba and protect the last vestiges of its once vast empire, earning the ire of a US public that saw the rebellion in Cuba against a colonial power as reflective of their own rebellion against the British. By April, President William McKinley and the US Congress had declared war on the Spanish and mobilized troops and ships for battle in both a Pacific and Caribbean theater. Success would mean indefinite control over Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippine Islands and temporary control over Cuba—and so when the U.S. declared victory only a little over three months later, it looked as if it was on its way to becoming the expansionist colonial power it had once fought to be free of. (Herring 56) However, though this was the nation's first postbellum reckoning with an imperialist ethos, it had significant precursors: John Calhoun had remarked warily of the establishment of Texas that it might become "the real Empire…of the country" combining "the ambition of Rome and the avarice of Carthage." (Chakkalakal 34) Similarly, in a tract titled How to Conquer Texas, Before Texas Conquers Us , Edward Everett Hale—who published the work anonymously—claimed Texas possessed "an empire and a history of her own" that bespoke a capacity to "become the real Empire" of North America. (Chakkalakal 34) Nonetheless, the conflict with Spain made such anxieties truly international in scope.

A year before the Havana Harbor disaster, the precocious son of Allen Griggs—a freed Georgia slave who founded Texas's first black newspaper—had married a woman named Emma

J. Williams from Portsmouth in a Berkley, Virginia church. With his attainment of a doctor of divinity seventeen years faster than his father and secured his own congregation to preach to at a mere twenty-five years of age, he faced an exceedingly bright future. Yet despite all this, he found himself consistently bothered by a certain disillusionment. Having a muse that could sing in Baptist oratory and write in the diction of scholarly exegesis with equal proficiency, it was not long before he was stirred to express his misgivings through the printed word as his father had sought to do:

> "Governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed," rang through my young soul and thoroughly committed me to the principle that men have a right to voice in the government that exercises authority over them. As I grew in years, I saw this principle was being violated with reference to the American Negro. It finally occurred to me that a statement of our case in book form would accomplish good for our cause," (Coleman 19)

He began his undertaking in 1898, precisely when the country's imperial aspirations seemed to be reaching critical mass. In 1899, just as the American empire was being born, a book entitled Imperium in Imperio , or 'Empire within Empire', erected black sf's first imperial city. It chronicles the lives of two characters—Belton Piedmont and Bernard Belgrave—as they become entangled in the rise to power of 'The Imperium', a shadow government consisting solely of black Americans that eventually manages to conquer the Southern United States and establish an empire of, by and exclusively for black men and women.

The form of Griggs's imperial city is an affirmation of the tendency of black sf's empires to position themselves against colonial society, but just as importantly it illustrates the vastly different perspective from which they arise. The attribute that perhaps communicates this most clearly is the city's fundamentally clandestine nature. If there is one quality the Foundation, the Galactic Empire, the Polesotechnic League, the Terran Empire, the CoDominium, the Spartan

Empire, Weather Wrightby's New Crobuzonian imperium and their kindred spirits universally lack, it is secrecy and invisibility. Each polity exists in a prominent position entirely out in the open, and they sustain themselves partially through this visibility and its impact on trade. But for black men and women in the Southern United States during, before and well after Griggs's time, to openly defy the colonial principle of white supremacy was often to invite violence upon oneself. As federal troops withdrew in the late nineteenth century to signal the end of Reconstruction, lynching in the former confederate states reached an all-time high. To the mind of a son of slavery like Griggs, the upshot was clear: if black Americans were to resist the depredations of white supremacists and remain alive, stealth was essential—and if a black empire was to rise up and overthrow white-led oppression, it would need to work from the shadows until it possessed the capability to defend against its foes.

Hence rather than a great metropolis of ostentatious grandeur, the Imperium's capital is hidden beneath the quotidian scenery of Waco, Texas. As Griggs describes the architecture of its administrative function, he continually repeats the motif of concealing symbols for black oppression within symbols for American power and patriotism:

> The proceedings of the Anglo-Saxons have been told to the world in minute detail, but the secret deliberations of the Imperium are herein disclosed for the first time. The exterior of the Capitol at Waco was decorated with American flags, and red, white and blue bunting. Passers-by commented on the patriotism of Jefferson College. But, enveloped in this decoration there was cloth of the color of mourning. The huge weeping willows stood, one on each side of the speaker's desk. To the right of the desk, there was a group of women in widow's weeds, sitting on an elevated platform. There were fifty of these, their husbands having been made the victims of mobs since the first day of January just gone…To the left of the speaker's desk, there were huddled one hundred children whose garments were in tatters and whose looks bespoke lives of hardship. These were the offsprings robbed of their parents by the brutish cruelty of unthinking mobs…Postmaster Cook, while alive, was a member of the Imperium and his seat was now empty and draped in mourning. In the seat was a golden casket containing his heart, which had been raked from the burning embers on the morning following the night of the

> murderous assault. It was amid such surrounding as these that the already aroused and determined members of the Congress assembled. (Griggs ch.17)

The arrangement of signs that marks the imperial city here articulates the notion that colonial oppression is not just the work of political and mercantile elites, but is built into the very machinery and symbolism of the colonial state and the ideological dispositions of white colonial culture. Thence the colors of patriotism for white colonial society secretly hide "cloth the colour of mourning" within them, and the power wielded by a political representative like the Speaker of the House only exists by producing countless "women in widow's weeds" and destitute, abused and exploited children in the subaltern population. This strategy of hiding criticism of white colonial society beneath its accepted symbols of exceptionalism attests to an implied need for secrecy as much as it acts as a display for the "Imperium's ability to reorganize racial hierarchies and the space that blacks occupy relative to whites," as Tess Chakkalakal has argued in her own study of Griggs's novel's relationship with imperialism.

Griggs's empire is not guided by the tactics of brute force and ideals of 'Manifest Destiny'. It is guided instead by the tactics and ideals expressed by Paul Laurence Dunbar in his famous poem <u>We Wear the Mask</u>:

> We wear the mask that grins and lies,
> It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,--
> This debt we pay to human guile;
> With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
> And mouth with myriad subtleties.
>
> Why should the world be overwise,
> In counting all our tears and sighs?
> Nay, let them only see us, while
> We wear the mask.
>
> We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
> To thee from tortured souls arise.
> We sing, but oh the clay is vile

Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!

This strategy of feigning submissiveness to conquer through furtive subterfuge and sabotage stands in polar opposition to the prescribed methods and nationalist fervor of the swarming battalions of redcoats at the height of British supremacy, the armies of Louis Napoleon, or—in the most germane example—the throngs of confederate soldiers during the Civil War entranced by an (eminently manufactured) image of 'doomed chivalry' at the Battle of the Alamo. And in this way Griggs expresses the constraints black men and women faced living within colonial society—constraints that inevitably extend to the imaginative act of constructing a speculative empire.

But the anticolonial roots of Griggs's black empire run deeper than the imagery of the capital. When the time finally comes for the Imperium to make its move, it brings the theme of turning the structures of colonial power against themselves to a new level. This time, it is the expansionary war with Spain and the uprising in Cuba that are co-opted for sabotage. "At length an insurrection broke out in Cuba, and the whole Imperium watched this struggle with keenest interest, as the Cubans were in a large measure negroes," the narrator declares. (Griggs Ch.17) After a brief summary of the sinking of the *USS Maine* and the uproar that incites the United States to war, he goes on to paint an image in which the affairs of state in Washington are carried out in parallel to the administrative proceedings in the Imperial City—except that in the former's case, such proceedings are aimed at arranging an expansionary war of colonial domination, while the latter's are aimed at using said war to subdue and overthrow the budding American empire and a racially oppressive social order:

"The Congress of the Imperium was called and assembled in special session at the

> Capitol building just outside of Waco. The session began on the morning of April—the same day on which the Congress of the United States had under consideration the resolutions, the adoption of which meant war with Spain. These two congresses on this same day had under consideration questions of vital import to civilization..." (Griggs Ch.17)

Here is where Belton and Bernard emerge as figures embodying the dilemma over tactics of resistance. Bernard appears before the Imperium's congress to argue that it is time to make war. The white men of the nation will never allow them to be free, he suggests, and so they must mobilize to destroy and then recreate society as they know it. His suggestion finds much support among the members of the Imperium's Congress; however, Belton then takes the floor to suggest another course of action—the empire should entreat white society to bestow them equal rights and representation, and if they refuse the Imperium should foster an emigration of the black men and women of the United States to Texas where they can establish a separate and exclusively black nation, reflecting the black separatist rhetoric of Griggs's day. The oratorical sequence sets the tactical dilemma in stark terms: peaceful secession or violent insurrection?

In the end, the Imperium's choice brings the anticolonial mindset of black sf's empires to the forefront: they decide to attack and overthrow the US government as it is distracted with its colonial project in the war against Spain, sacking a naval base in Galveston, Texas with the help of foreign allies. Belton, who calls such a plan "treason", is executed by a determined Bernard. The narrator's brief eulogy makes it fairly obvious where Griggs's sympathies lie, declaring "When he fell, the spirit of conservatism in the Negro race, fell with him. He was the last of that peculiar type of Negro heroes that could so fondly kiss the smiting hand." (Griggs ch.19)

Or, rather, this eulogy cleverly manages to give off the momentary impression that the author's allegiances are with Bernard. The imperial city sends another message. Rather than the center for a proud black nation, the tone of the text suddenly describes it as a rather horrifying

place where ideological deviation is silenced with violence. It chillingly inverts the imagery of an educational institution, designed to cultivate freedom of thought, into the domain of the executioner. "In one part of the campus there was a high knoll surrounded on all sides by trees. This knoll had been selected as the spot for the execution," goes the last description of Waco's landscape, which mourns the deed that is about to be done:

> In the early morn while the grass yet glittered with pearls of water, and as the birds began to chirp, Belton was led forth to die. Little did those birds know that they were chirping the funeral march of the world's noblest hero. Little did they dream that they were chanting his requiem. (Griggs ch.19)

Griggs is leading his readers into the heart of the tactical conundrum; as visions of Waco fade out, the text is bookended by the lamentation of the Imperium's former secretary of state, Berl Trout, over the subsequent actions of both Belgrave and the empire which he once served. Griggs's supposed condemnation of Belton's conservatism is suddenly coupled with a condemnation of Bernard's extremism:

> With Belton gone and this man [Bernard] at our head, our well-organized, thoroughly equipped Imperium was a serious menace to the peace of the world. A chance spark might at any time cause a conflagration, which, unchecked, would spread destruction, devastation and death all around… I felt that beneath the South a mine had been dug and filled with dynamite, and that lighted fuses were lying around in careless profusion, where any irresponsible hand might reach them and ignite the dynamite. I fancied that I saw a man do this very thing in a sudden fit of uncontrollable rage. There was a dull roar as of distant rumbling thunder. Suddenly there was a terrific explosion and houses, fences, trees, pavement stones, and all things on earth were hurled high into the air to come back a mass of ruins such as man never before had seen. The only sound to be heard was a universal groan; those who had not been killed were too badly wounded to cry out…Such were the thoughts that passed through my mind. I was determined to remove the possibility of such a catastrophe. I decided to prove traitor and reveal the existence of the Imperium that it might be broken up or watched. My deed may appear to be the act of a vile wretch, but it is done in the name of humanity. Long ere you shall have come to this line, I shall have met the fate of a traitor. I die for mankind, for humanity, for civilization. (Griggs Ch.20)

With this passage, Griggs summons a refiguration of the paradox of growth: the same growth that allows the Imperium to become powerful enough to accomplish its goals also causes it to

foresake those goals. It is not so much a collapse of the empire *per se* as a collapse of the empire's original program, and the transmutation of its rebellion against imperialist violence into a replication of an imperialist regime. Already one can see the precarious moral questions at work. Is it truly fair to call this transformation a replication of imperialism? Or is that merely a privilege allotted to those who are not subject to imperial oppression, and perhaps even a strategy used to keep the subaltern in a perpetually submissive state?

This predicament sets a precedent for black sf empires to come. However, the historical debate it reflects most certainly predates Griggs's work. In the mid-1800s, Martin Delany—whose Blake: Or, the Huts of America is in fact arguably the first work of black sf—preached an emigrationist approach to dealing with white oppression of black men and women. He was joined by advocates like Edward Blyden, who claimed this emigration should be towards an African homeland. Neither thought it could be done without violence, and endorsed violent methods as acceptable for the cause. (Lawson 73) Booker T. Washington, on the other hand, proposed that American blacks accommodate white racism and avoid agitating for equal rights and representation, which according to him would come eventually given a consistent focus in the black community on economic development. W.E.B. Dubois, meanwhile, placed his faith in the 'talented tenth' of the black population and a liberal arts education—not Washington's recommended focus on the trades—as the eventual liberators of the race, even when he began to develop his notions of Pan-Africanism. The clash over method would outlive them all: the same year the sun set on Dubois's long and accomplished life, the first English translation of Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth was published, circulating his argument that violent resistance to colonial oppression was not only warranted but oftentimes necessary all over the world. A year later, many would credit the contrasting program of peaceful civil disobedience

advocated by Martin Luther King, Jr. with clearing the way for Lyndon Johnson's signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Obviously, the dilemma was far from resolved.

George Schuyler's Satiric Pan-African Imperialism

When Griggs published Imperium in Imperio, black anticolonial political discourse (and arguably the American Empire as well) was still inchoate. Nonetheless, his work revealed a nascent impulse to see colonial domination of African and Afro-diasporic peoples abroad as the workings of the same Leviathan of racial oppression that sought to drag African Americans down into the murky fathoms of slavery, disfranchisement, Jim Crow, and sharecropping debt peonage. In the first decades of the twentieth century, his sentiment flowed into Northern and Midwestern American cities on a river of wayfaring black men and women undertaking the first of two Great Migrations. There, in the fertile intellectual soil of the metropolis, a new set of black political leaders and the growth of black print media began to cultivate a more cohesive anticolonial message. During his time as editor of The Crisis, W.E.B. Dubois began to consistently preach an approach to black politics that conceived of domestic racial struggles as interconnected with racial oppression by colonial powers abroad. Carter Woodson's Journal of Negro History did the same. Dubois's efforts gave birth to the Pan-African Congress movement, which sought

> "to challenge the excesses of colonial rule, to establish intellectually the existence of a bond between Africans and persons of Arica descent in the diaspora, and to demonstrate the importance of Pan-African unity for building an emancipatory movement." (Von Eschen 9)

Still, while Pan-African intellectuals held gatherings of the Congress in 1900, 1919, 1921 and 1927, it took the anticolonial polemics of Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association to bring the philosophy to the masses. At the height of his influence, Garvey's

writings and activism fostered an atmosphere of international black solidarity that made Jim Crow and colonialism in Africa and the Caribbean into an integrated nexus of racial oppression that effected blacks of all nationalities.

Not everyone was convinced by Garvey's ideological program, however, and the black press produced critics and contrarians to go with its Pan-Africanist advocates. During the 1920s, one could find some of the more acid-tongued of Garvey's detractors nestled in the pages of publications like The Messenger. Aside from producing editorials consistently arguing Garvey was an egomaniacal charlatan using racial antagonism to aggrandize and enrich himself, The Messenger also produced a column entitled "Shafts and Darts: A Page of Calumny and Satire", written by an unrelentingly acerbic black satirist named George Schuyler. (Ferguson 89)

Schuyler's criticism of Garvey went beyond deriding his personal foibles and controversies. Sometimes in the formal diction of an op-ed and sometimes in the language of sardonic parody, Schuyler charged (as did several other critics such as Messenger editors A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen) that Garvey's prescribed tactics, like those employed by Bernard Belgrave as leader of The Imperium, merely ended up replicating those of Western imperialism. To him, the Garveyite philosophy was not productive advocacy for racial equality, but counterproductive 'race chauvinism.'

In 1924, Schuyler left The Messenger and took his talents to The Pittsburgh Courier. His most famous contribution to the newspaper is his editorial critiquing Alaine Locke's concept of the 'New Negro Renaissance', "The Negro-Art Hokum." Less famous is his later accomplishment: the building of black sf's next imperial city. From 1936 to 1938, Schuyler published a series of interconnected science fictional narratives in the Courier under the title The

Black Internationale; they would eventually be compiled into the novel Black Empire. True to this chapter's thesis, it is a text suffused with anticolonial politics—but true to Schuylerian form, its anticolonial criticism is directed as much at leaders of black anti-imperialist political movements as it is at leaders of white colonial domination. The imperial city and the empire it represents skewers black separatist politics and political leaders by portraying them as quixotic and hypocritical purveyors of misguided, violent extremism.

Black Empire's narrative follows the exploits of one Dr. Henry Belsidus, a black scientist with imperial ambitions, through the eyes of reporter Carl Slater of the Harlem Blade. Adopting Garveyite rhetoric and deploying advanced technologies pulled right from pulp sf, Belsidus successfully engineers the creation of an African empire that conquers the white world. In the process of doing so, Schuyler sardonically rearticulates Griggs's dilemma and presses it into the form of the capital city of Belsidus's empire, Kakata.

The location of Kakata alone exemplifies the novel's satirical method. It is situated near Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, and due East of Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone and the historic Eastern terminus of the 'triangle' of the Transatlantic Slave Trade that ran from London to West Africa to North America.

One could very well think of Liberia as the 'Jerusalem' of black separatist politics during and sometime after Reconstruction, known as a black haven grown from ideals of black separatism and established against the resistance of the West's colonial powers. Starting in 1820, an organization going by the name of the American Colonization Society helped facilitate the relocation of freed slaves from the U.S. to Liberian soil; a century later Garvey would adopt the same idea in his visions of black liberation, echoing the sentiments of figures like Blyden.

To secure their freedom, he proposed, blacks all over the world should flock to Liberia and cultivate a homeland meant specifically for the black race. His attempts to develop the country for this purpose, starting in 1920, enraged European colonial powers enough to force him to shut down his Liberian operation by the middle of the decade. (Eyerman 36)

Kakata's location lampoons Garvey's dream of an African homeland by portraying the task of defending and operating such a polity while refusing to trade with majority-white nations as nigh impossible. When a nonplussed Carl Slater first hears of the site of the capital and exclaims "At Kakata, sir?...Why, that's nearly 50 miles back in the bush, sir," (Schuyler 107) the deviously savvy Belsidus replies,

> "Exactly, Slater, exactly. That's where the new capital is to be. Monrovia is too close to the sea, too close to the white man. We must get back where we'll have time to prepare in case we are attacked, where we can only be attacked by an expeditionary force and not blasted out by the big guns of battleships." (Schuyler Black Empire107)

Though he is ultimately able to defend the city, Belsidus only manages to do so through the use of improbably advanced technologies culled from the stylings of pulp sf, a *deus ex machina* which merely serves to portray the Garveyite enterprise as even more unfeasible than before. For Schuyler's dilemma applies not just to Monrovia and Freetown but to any port city in Africa: each presents an opportunity for would-be invaders to attack using the powerful naval technology showcased during the First World War. The sheer number of cities one would need to defend alone would make the task of maintaining any semblance of national security impossibly large and complex; attempting to do so without importing resources from abroad would only exponentially multiply the already absurd monumentality of the task. This theme is returned to again in a passage that places it in the context of the paradox of growth, with its first line drenching the modifier "almost" in bleak irony:

> "It seemed a tremendous program, almost an impossible one. Here was a continent, almost wholly agricultural, with several hundred diverse nations speaking a half thousand languages. The European nations, whose colonies we had taken in the recent short campaign of blood and terror, were now locked in a fight to the death which our agents had instigated. But how long would that war last? And when it was over, would the victors ignore Africa? Would they let us go ahead and grow powerful before they attacked us? If they attacked, how could we hope to hold off their mighty battle fleets and their swarms of airplanes? Our technical staff was driving ahead feverishly to prepare for the inevitable struggle, but our progress was maddeningly slow. Here in a few months we had conquered a whole world and in a few short months we might lose it." (Schuyler Black Empire 146)

It is not enough to overthrow the enemy; one must then keep the empire afloat and secure. Slater's expression of fear reiterates Schuyler's critique: even if the old empire is replaced by a new one erected in the name of anti-imperialism, it will only survive by undertaking an imperialist program of its own to gather the resources it requires to sustain itself. The militance of Belsidus (and, Schuyler implies, Garvey) will only cause him to betray his anti-imperialist principles on the path to reaching his goal. Indeed, the tactics the passage describes Belsidus as using to establish his empire already bespeak an imperialist ethos.

But it is not merely the political program of the Garveyite Liberian dream that Kakata lampoons; it also parodies and needles the political leaders behind it. The imperial city's governmental architecture provides a particularly acerbic example:

> "The new capitol of Liberia was a two-story, mission-style building of concrete blocks with stucco finish, built around a huge central garden in the center of which was a large cement and tile swimming pool with the latest equipment. Green and yellow chairs and tables shaded by colorful parasols surrounded the pool. And at the end of the garden was a small bandstand, screened by palms. Gorgeous tropical flowers, freshly transplanted, fringed the garden with a riot of color and filled with exotic perfume. Certainly Kakata had never seen its like before…As one entered the building, corridors ran to the right and left with offices on each side. Immediately in front was a double staircase curving up to the second floor. Here were the great dining hall where moving pictures could also be shown, the conference room where the staff met, the ballroom and an elaborate apartment for Dr. Belsidus. Around the entire building on both floors extended a wide balcony." (Schuyler Black Empire 114)

Far from an edifice conveying the serious business of governance, the empire's nerve-center seems more of a resort for its bureaucratic elite, with its supreme leader Belsidus giving himself the most extravagant accommodations of all. It is once again not too difficult to see Garvey in the crosshairs here; one of the most frequent criticisms levelled against him was that he used ethno-political rabble-rousing to aggrandize and enrich himself. A criticism of his use of money earmarked for political activism to construct the luxurious ships of the *Black Star Line* and the eventual financial ruin that followed their creation can be seen reflected in the dedication of much of Kakata's central government complex to the pampering of its empire's fearless leader.

Perhaps the most incisive instance of this sort of criticism, however, appears in a later elaboration on the governmental functions of the capital. As discussed earlier, the imperial city houses the political elites of the imperium. In the process it can also act as a space where those political elites interact with the political leaders of other empires—whether to secure their allegiance, negotiate a ceasefire, or tend to any number of other affairs of state. Often such powerful guests must be entertained and doted upon to facilitate a cooperative atmosphere for politicking. Schuyler uses such an occasion to further flesh out the irony of Belsidus's use of anticolonial black separatist rhetoric to carry out a program of colonial domination and conquest. Slater's description of a gathering of powerful African chiefs at the capital once again reverberates with bitter sarcasm just below the textual surface:

> "The most auspicious occasion, of course, was the conference of the Paramount Chiefs at Kakata…It was well carried out. In accordance with Farley's directions, each chief had brought a colourful retinue of warriors, wives, court attendants and other functionaries. Some of the warriors had old flintlocks but most of them were armed with spears, bows and arrows…The conference was held in one of the great palaver kitchens…Dr. Belsidus was determined to make a good impression on these native kings and their warriors because he realized their allegiance was essential. His huge throne was at the far end of the palaver kitchen on a dais…" (Schuyler Black Empire 109)

The scenery again conveys Belsidus as most concerned with his own aggrandizement, with his throne dwarfing the seats of the supposed guests of honor. What's more, it becomes apparent from the almost cartoonish primitivism that characterizes the 'Paramount Chiefs' and their entourages that the campaign of the Black Empire is reinforcing stereotypes of Africans as culturally backwards—something partially responsible for and symptomatic of the race prejudice that is ostensibly what the empire is supposed to be fighting against. But if these are less direct indications that Belsidus's imperium has become the oppressive imperial power it was meant to fight, his speech to the Paramount Chiefs makes it indubitable. Though it opens with an appeal to the anticolonial ethos—"Great Kings! No longer must you bear oppression and fear the floggers,"—Belsidus then disavows it by reciting the selfsame calls for conquest, genocide and racial supremacy that characterized the worst aims of colonial powers, all in unabashedly egomaniacal terms:

> "For you are the brothers of one who is greater than the white man. White man makes guns, I make guns. White man makes bullets, I make bullets. White man makes hut that runs along the road, I make hut that runs along the road. White man has big palaver kitchen that floats across the sea. I also have big floating palaver kitchen. White man rich, I am also rich…I must be strong and you must be strong. I will send wise men to train your men to shoot the guns that buzz like great bees…I will give your warriors clothes like the white man and huts to sleep in at night…You will follow me into the English country and into the French country. Together we shall run the white man into the sea. All the land for six months' journey to the north, east and south shall be ours. We shall not fight, kill and enslave black men…But those who oppose us shall die. (Schuyler Black Empire 111)

Once again lingering in Belsidus's spurious rhetoric is the implication that militant separatism perpetuates the colonial program. Rather than seeking to uplift oppressed black men and women, Belsidus demeans them by making white colonial culture the measuring stick of their self-worth: what matters is not freedom from discrimination, spiritual fulfillment or social well-being but whether they have the same material possessions as white men. The final lines of his

speech, of course, is one of the most overt expressions of Schuyler's critique—Belsidus nakedly justifies the violent conquest and oppression of another race by citing white colonial society's violent conquest and oppression of another race.

While this incendiary satirical horseplay certainly cuts against several of the popular black political movements of its day, from a broader perspective it also serves to reaffirm the anticolonial roots of black sf's empires, and the consistent refiguration of the paradox of growth as a dilemma over anti-imperial tactics. Schuyler's criticism attacks the colonial enterprise, but in an unconventional fashion that makes no caveats concerning the relative position of the denizens of the empire; violence on the part of those struggling to liberate themselves from a colonial oppressor is no different from violence on the part of the oppressors themselves. Such attacks echo the radical (and, to his critics, unrefined or unreasonable) anti-essentialist arguments expressed in his other works, as in his assertion in "The Negro Art Hokum" that "the Africamerican is subject to the same economic and social forces that mold the actions and thoughts of the white Americans. He is not living in a different world as some whites and a few Negroes would have us believe." (Schuyler in Gates et al. 1222) Yet in many ways, the harsher Schuyler's black empire portrays those who fall prey to the mistake of thinking *their* violence is justified, the more it serves to re-emphasize the difficulty of resolving the underlying impasse. The worse Belsidus's hypocrisy becomes, the more it begs the question, "If peaceful protest fails, and no manner of violence can ever be justified, what other alternative is there aside from submission to the empire?" It is telling that Schuyler never really manages to articulate an answer, coming dangerously close to a kind of satirical nihilism in the process, as in his epigraph for the series:

> "I have been greatly amused by the public enthusiasm for 'The Black Internationale,'

> which is hokum and hack work of the purest vein. I deliberately set out to crowd as much race chauvinism and sheer improbability into it as my fertile imagination could conjure. The result vindicates my low opinion of the human race." (Schuyler Black Empire 260)

A more charitable reading of the 'Sage of Sugar Hill's' critical excesses, however, might portray them as self-consciously assuming the role of a necessary ingredient to the success of any political movement: the contrarian provocateur. For without the constructive antagonism of iconoclasts, sound foundations for political advocacy run the risk of ossifying into dogma. The contrarian's threat to a political movement's solidarity helps to prevent this from happening by forcing its advocates to continually re-evaluate and in turn re-strengthen their guiding methods and ideas, keeping the movement's foundations resilient and dynamic rather than static and fragile. In the same way Schuyler might be seen as an Aristophanes of the Harlem Renaissance and of black anti-imperialist politics—though the ancient playwright's satire surreptitiously helped to enrich Platonic philosophy, it was interpreted and denounced as 'slander' by Plato himself.[1]

Postwar Anti-colonialism and the Undersea Frontier of Walter Wiggins, Jr.

Despite Schuylerian criticism of Pan African aspirations, the world wars brought anticolonialism and black civil rights together into a more cohesive ideological movement supported by the growing and increasingly influential black press. But as with everything else it touched, the rise of the Cold War transformed black anticolonial politics. The stage was set in 1946, when Winston Churchill called for an anti-Soviet Anglo-American alliance in his famous 'Iron Curtain' speech. While many Americans disagreed with his prescribed approach, "condemnation by African Americans was distinguished by its emphasis on the implications for imperialism and colonialism." (Von Eschen 97) To many black men and women in the U.S., Churchill's prescribed policy was a program to reinforce a foundering Western imperialism that

was still in the process of subjugating black men and women across the globe. A letter from the Council of African Affairs sent to President Truman insists Churchill's policy aimed to "preserve the British imperialistic system with the help of American troops and military power," (Von Eschen 97). An editorial in the *Afro-American* declared that Churchill's proposed alliance would guarantee a "continuation of imperialism and eventually plunge us into a war with Russia on the other side." And the *Washington Defender* consistently preached cooperation with, not against, the Soviet Union.

As an alternative, many black political critics and leaders bent their hopes toward the formation of the United Nations as a way to hasten the end of imperialism and colonial subjugation. Intellectuals involved in the black press' support of anticolonial politics like T. P. Lochard envisioned it as caught up in the same battle for democratic rule and sociopolitical freedom as black victims of colonial oppression everywhere, as indicated by his commentary on the organization's founding summit:

> "The World Security Conference in San Francisco has but one meaning to the Negro people—that is, how far democratic principles shall be stretched to embrace the rights of our brothers in the colonies and to what extent the American Negro's own security at home shall be guaranteed." (Lochard in Von Eschen 78)

These sentiments arose at a time when many of the strides made in the integration of American labor suddenly became imperiled as white soldiers returning from the war replaced African American workers with no seniority and black veterans had difficulty securing employment in a now more-crowded marketplace that still consistently discriminated against them.

One of these black soldiers was Walter Wiggins, Jr. A native of Rocky Mount, North Carolina with a hobby for modeling inventive maritime devices, Wiggins served as a Private First Class for the 92nd Division in Italy during World War II. Returning home to a world of

unstable employment prospects and continued international tensions, he eventually worked his interests into a little-known sf novel entitled Dreams in the Reality of the Undersea Craft that contains black sf's next empire. He published his vision in 1954, as the nation approached the tenth anniversary of the end of the second Great War.

His narrative is eminently idiosyncratic, mixing autobiography with science fiction, surrealism and social criticism. It is a fictionalized account of Wiggins's return from war, in which he experiences a series of dreams that sweep him from his seat on the train taking him back to his home to a futuristic, utopian city at the bottom of the ocean. While its significance is at first mysterious, over the course of the narrative it becomes clear that it is in fact the capital of a future world-spanning empire.

But this empire is a cooperative of sorts, formed through voluntary coordination between several different imperial powers that have declared a truce—not unlike what one might imagine an 'imperial' version of the United Nations to be. Lochard's sentiment reappears in the imperial city's future history, which begins with a disastrous and chaotic World War III, followed by a global détente:

> "After that great long war came to an end, the survivors banded into one great body which included all nationalities of the world. They united to build a new world. What you have seen here [in the city] so far are the results of their long, hard years of work and study. They have found out these things for themselves as they worked along together…They knew that in order to achieve this goal they would have to eliminate segregation, discrimination and hate. They cleansed their minds and their hearts of this cruel disease, hatred, and abolished it. Then they put their minds and hearts together for the accomplishment of what they have now." (Wiggins 72)

With his underwater capital city, Wiggins retains the structure of an empire but strips it of its imperial ambitions; just as importantly, this imperium is predicated specifically on the elimination of "segregation, discrimination and hate." To some extent, this was the anticolonial

promise of the U.N.—after a great battle between each other exhausted their taste for more warmaking, the former colonial powers of the West decided to "band into one great body which included all nationalities of the world" so as to prevent further conflicts between them.

Wiggins's empire is distinct from its forebears in that its anticolonial impulses are expressed not through a divergent model of separatism but a convergent model of universal cosmopolitanism. This is most evident in his first encounter with the people of the city, in which

> "One of the things Walter noticed about these people—something that had him confused—was that he couldn't quite understand or determine their nationality…it seemed to Walter that all of the nationalities of the world had come together into one—one great nation of people." (Wiggins 43)

It is not difficult to see these features of the imperial city's denizens as expressing the anxieties prevalent in appraisals of the U.N.'s progress in carrying out its dream of international cooperation by figures involved in black anticolonial politics. Numerous black intellectuals recognized that one of the largest challenges the organization faced was the negotiation over the issue of sovereignty. Their criticism often echoed that of historian Paul Gordon Lauren, who wrote of the state of the U.N. not long after it ratified its charter,

> "The majority of states remained unwilling to sacrifice elements of their sovereignty for the sake of human rights by authorizing the international community to intervene in their own domestic jurisidiction and internal affairs…Human rights and racial nondiscrimination thus foundered, once again, on the rock of national sovereignty." (Lauren in Eschen 82)

Wiggins's universal, pan-cultural imperium can be seen as a utopian response to these anxieties, solving through speculation the conundrum over the breadth of the U.N.'s peace-keeping powers. This conundrum found ample expression in print media, as represented by an argument presented in a 1946 New York Times editorial that claims "as long as the United Nations is not a world government representing all the people of the world directly, but rather an organization of

states represented by their respective governments, it behooves every member state to respect the domestic jurisdiction of every other state." (Von Eschen 86) Should the U.N. collapse over internal jurisdictional struggles, the hopes of anticolonial political advocates would go up in flames along with any help it may provide in local struggles against Jim Crow; Wiggins preserves these hopes by creating a collaboration of former empires with no internal political divisions. This may account, along with his interest in maritime technology, for his decision to use the terrestrially-bound frontier of the sea rather than the frontier of space so popular in the sf of the 1950's as the context for his imperial city; while the expansion of civilization into boundless, rarefied space may exacerbate the separateness of differing political jurisdictions, the Earthbound, inward expansion of civilization into the depths of the ocean might require more coordination between different political entities and a smoothing over of their divisions.

Yet it is in the utopian character of Wiggins's empire and the cultural homogeny of his capital that the age-old riddle reappears. Though it appears outwardly pacifistic when first encountered, the history of the imperial city indicates that its universalism does not come about peacefully; it is only able to emerge after a period of exhaustive, all-encompassing violence. In fact, according to the logic of this history, should one travel back in time to the era before the city was built their only hope of stopping the violence of colonial imperialism would be to incite *more* violence—something which contradicts the notion of 'abolishing hatred' as a foundational principle of the new social order to follow. That Wiggins glosses over this contradictory state of affairs only serves to reassert its importance and the frustrating tenacity of the paradox. It would not be too long before black sf's next empire would probe the question that lies ominously beneath his global imperium and its undersea capital: if the price for securing peace is war, how does one peacefully dismantle the war machine once it has served its purpose?

Sam Delany, Postwar Imperialism and the Military-Industrial Complex

Though hopes remained high and support broad for the United Nations in the early postwar era, as the Cold War wore on black anticolonial politics underwent seismic changes. Fears of a repeat of the racial violence and oppression that followed the return of black soldiers to the homeland after World War I caused many influential black leaders and intellectuals to acquiesce to the Truman doctrine's proposed policy of a global war on Communism. Anticolonial rhetoric became anti-communist rhetoric; the fight for Civil Rights and racial equality came to be portrayed as necessary parts of the fight against the spread of Communism's influence. (Von Eschen 154) Even Martin Luther King, Jr. followed this course, as illustrated in the rhetoric used in speeches like that given at a 1963 rally in a Birmingham church: "The United States is concerned about its image…Mr. Kennedy is battling for the minds and the hearts of Men in Africa and Asia…and they aren't gonna respect the U.S. of America if she deprives men and women of their basic rights because of the color of their skin." (King in Von Eschen 186)

Furthermore, at the end of the McCarthy era the great anti-imperialist critics of the 1940s—Du Bois, Paul Robeson, and William Alphaeus Hunton, Jr.—lost their voice within American politics. Hence by the 1960s, anticolonialism and anti-imperialism had been relegated to the margins of black American politics. Distanced from the earlier generation of advocates, younger activists had to re-invent anticolonial discourse. In some cases this created movements that smacked of the militance of earlier black separatist versions of the anti-imperialist cause, as with the Black Panthers; in other cases, advocates attempted to march a middle road, as with Malcolm X's coordination with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Community on an internationalist civil rights platform just before his death. (Von Eschen 187)

This new atmosphere provided fertile soil for the cultivation of critiques of the colonial

project that appealed not only to the 'moral compass' of the American public but also to its economic self-interest. Of course, the various programs of political advocacy for civil rights have throughout American history usually appealed to both in some degree—but usually their rhetorical appeals still outwardly treated 'economics' and 'politics' as separate (if interrelated) categories. This certainly made sense given the political and intellectual culture of the United States and the West more generally, where Adam Smith's idea of the economy as a secular machine whose functioning was disrupted by politics and government intervention informed the development of political economy far more than Marx's notion of economics as inherently political in nature.

However, such a categorical bifurcation never really convinced Sam Delany. Indeed, as shall be made clear in this project's fourth chapter, the Harlem-born writer has been a frequent critic of this dualism as part of what allows for the institutionalization of racism and the pathologizing of African American poverty. It forms the basis of arguments that the problems faced by various minority communities are a product of flaws in "culture" and not material circumstance, arguments that received renewed support in the 1960s with the arrival of the Moynihan report in 1965. But as Delany once said in an interview with Takayuki Tatsumi, "…a study of a culture that is not also a study of the material history of that culture is no study at all," (Delany Silent Interviews 204).

Delany links this dualistic model directly to colonial imperialism, and its role in the development of the social sciences. He continues in the Tatsumi interview,

> "… 'anthropology' began as that subject one had to read in the British university system if, indeed, one was destined to go off and work in a colonial country…Anthropology—the study of the 'pure', 'uncontaminated' 'culture' of an 'ahistorical' people—was…the study of all those aspects of the society one needed to communicate with it, to manipulate

> it, and to control it, along with the systematic suppression of all the elements that might lead one to respect it, to grant that people an equal political status, to comprehend and respond to their sovereign rights and desires—a suppression of what might lead your ordinary Englishman to a view of an autonomous people struggling with the same problems as the rest of the world and deserving of political integrity." (Delany Silent Interviews 204)

It was in this spirit that Delany introduced into his work a 'structural' critique of imperialism that wove politics and economics (and consequently, befitting the spirit of the New Wave, 'hard' and 'soft' science) into one inseparable materialist social fabric. This critique is articulated most potently in the imperial city of a richly layered work whose other aspects will also figure prominently in chapters to come: 1970's The Fall of the Towers, an expanded omnibus edition of three earlier, shorter novels (Captives of the Flame, The Towers of Toron, and Out of the Dead City) written in the sixties. However, Delany has other notable engagements with imperialism in which he elaborates on his critique, including the 1966 novella Empire Star and the graphic novel Empire, with the former also featuring an imperial city of sorts.

While original, Delany's criticism nonetheless arises from some fairly well-known precedents. Indeed, its critical object was given a fitting name by a decorated Korean War hero and a sitting president when in 1961 Dwight Eisenhower ended his final televised address from the oval office by warning the US to "guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military–industrial complex." (Eisenhower 1)

Both Eisenhower and Delany's critique 'creiterate' the same contradictory growth process Griggs saw the US face at the end of the nineteenth century. Their viewpoint stresses that the United States was once again in danger of becoming the enemy it sought to defeat: caught in a permanent wartime economy where military ventures and conquests functioned to prop up industrial production, they feared the country would eventually only be able to sustain

itself by taking up a colonial program of subduing territories inhabited by African, Afro-diasporic and Asian peoples and appropriating their resources to feed the needs of the metropole's military engine.

Fall of the Towers maps out this criticism through the imperial city of Toron, capital of the Toromon empire and the location where the bulk of the novel's action takes place. The metropolis itself is a product of the self-destructive inevitabilities of the imperial growth cycle, having been built along with its empire in the shadow of a nuclear holocaust resulting from war between two prior (unnamed and only briefly mentioned) empires. This also visualizes, as many sf stories of the Cold War era did, the fears that accompanied the development of the international dynamic of nuclear stalemate and mutually assured destruction between superpowers, which left the threat of global doomsday hanging over the heads of people the world over like a modern sword of Gideon.

While Delany's narrative communicates clearly that Toron is suffering from severe problems, it also portrays the city and its empire as having grown large and powerful through the marriage of arms and industry. As such, the centrifugal forces of imperial growth are at work, a fact communicated in a bird's-eye description of the city:

> "…the island city of Toron is laid out in concentric circles. In the centre along colonnaded streets are the Royal Palace and the towering mansions of the wealthy merchants and industrialists. Buildings stare wide windowed at one another, many of the windows composed of layers of stained glass rotated across one another by hidden machinery. Brass or marbled balconies lip the upper stories. Leisurely people dressed in bright colours wander along the streets.
>
> The outer ring is the water-front, the pier, wharves, pub-lic buildings and warehouses. Clinging just inside is the section knows as the Devil's Pot, a ravelled webbing of nar-row streets where furious grey alley cats stalk wharf rats through over-turned garbage. Living here is the vast labouring population of Toron, and the less vast but vicious under-world of the city, many of them in the roving gangs of malis that

ranged inward from the island's rim.

> Between the inner and outer rings is a section of indistinct apartments, rooming houses, and even occasional private dwellings, for clerks and craftsmen, salesmen and secretaries; doctors, engineers, lawyers and supervisors: those who had worked hard enough and had been lucky enough to rise out of the confusion of the Pot, and those too weak to cling to the centre who had been flung from the whirling hub." (Delany 84)

The city's "concentric circles" conform to the logic of these forces of momentum and growth discussed in the previous chapter. At the very center are the rich and influential, the political elites and the wealthiest of the wealthy living in monuments to their own power. At the opposite end of the spectrum and on the outer edge of the city, closer to *terra incognita*, are the hinterlands of the "vast laboring population" relegated to the "vicious underworld of the city". Between is the middle class of "clerks and craftsmen, salesmen and secretaries; doctors, engineers, lawyers and supervisors", wealthy and powerful enough to stay out of the underworld but lacking sufficient means and influence to "cling to the center." Thus while its problems are legion, Delany begins with the empire in its prime—and shows us some of the structures that black sf holds in common with Anglophone sf in the construction of its imperial cities. But just like Asimov in Foundation, Delany presents us with this powerful vision so that he may articulate his thematic concerns through its decline and destruction.

To understand his message fully, a brief overview is in order. The story of Fall of the Towers concerns the machinations of a disembodied superhuman intelligence called the Lord of the Flames who seeks to make war against our universe; to prepare for battle, he inhabits the minds of Toromon's leaders and manipulates them into manufacturing perpetual warfare against a fictional opponent. The façade is maintained by a computer in a nearby abandoned city named Telphar—which will be discussed further in the context of the 'Dead City'—where Toromon's citizens are captured and kept in simulated dream-states to keep the mass delusion of war

coherent.

The overall narrative arch is already an articulation of the mechanics of the military-industrial complex. The Lord of the Flames may be seen as an embodied form of the whole complex itself. It controls not only the computer at Telphar and the minds of the empire's citizens, but the actions of Toromon's leaders—and thereby the economy of Toron itself. It has no ultimate goal beyond creating more conflict and war and assimilating more people into its plan. It is *thanatos*, Freud's death drive, incarnate and renders inseparable the political and economic aspects of the war effort. And tellingly, its methods of ideological and material assimilation, violence and conflict mimic (on a cosmic scale) those of colonial expansion. But Delany hints that it can only make its gambit feasible by keeping the population sedate—things like mass joblessness and starvation might awaken Toron's citizens to its designs and derail the operation. Sharp critical minds—such as that possessed by Geryn, one of the novel's malcontented political rebel-saboteurs or 'malis'—also pose a danger, for in Delany's works it is the critic who questions the dogma of the day that proves uncontrollable by ideological manipulation. Hence he provides the reader a glimpse of the truth while engaged in discussion with another protagonist, Tel, at a bar in the city, in a passage that also clearly lays out the commercial function of the imperial capital:

> Geryn whirled. 'You don't understand!' He whipped one hand through his shocked hair. 'What are we fighting? We don't know. It's something unnamable on the other side of the radiation barrier. Why are we fighting?'
> 'Because - ' began a bored voice at the bar.
> 'Because,' interrupted Geryn, now pointing at Tel's face, 'we have to fight. Toromon has got into a situation where its excesses must be channelled towards something external. Our science has outrun our economics. Our laws have become stricter, and we say it is to stop the rising lawlessness. But it is to supply workers for the mines that the laws tighten, workers who will dig more tetron, that more citizens shall be jobless, and must therefore become lawless to survive. Ten years ago, before the aquariums, fish was five times its present price. There was perhaps four per cent unemploy-ment in Toron. Today the prices

> of fish are a fifth of what they were, yet unemployment has reached twenty per cent of the city's populace. A quarter of our people starve. More arrive every day. What will we do with them? We will use them to fight a war. The University turns out scientists whose science we cannot use lest it put more people out of work. What will we do with them? We will use them to fight a war. Eventually the mines will flood us with tetron, too much for even the aquariums and the hydroponic gardens. It will be used for the war.' (Delany 43)

Geryn's theory more or less reiterates the vision of what an escalating military-industrial complex looks like. The state of perpetual war begins with an economic shock—in the U.S., one could argue it was the Great Depression. Toromon faces a similar depression of sorts; the price of commodities like fish has undergone heavy deflation just as the prices of commodities plummeted following the U.S. stock market crash of 1929. Falling prices means falling profits for companies producing such commodities; falling profits means that these companies must cut costs to stay afloat by firing workers. These workers then have less money (or, worse, none whatsoever) to spend on commodities, aggravating the deflation, which thereby aggravates the unemployment, on and on into a deadly downward spiral. In Toron, the problem is made even worse due to productivity gains from technological innovations, which mean companies need less workers to produce the same amount of commodities—and thus hire less, once again compounding the rise in unemployment and the overall deflationary trend.[2] With unemployment so high, people starve and turn to crime—a state of affairs that threatens political stability.

The answer to the deflationary spiral is war—war rapidly increases the demand for commodities, raising prices, and puts otherwise unemployed people and unused industrial capacity to work on military-related projects. The starving and jobless are now enlisted as soldiers for combat; factories that shut down or produced less to cut costs now reopen and produce artillery, combat vehicles, combat supplies, and so on, putting people who would otherwise be unemployed back to work on the assembly lines. Meanwhile, the people who have

turned to crime can now be deployed as cheap labor to extract and refine resources necessary to keep the war machine afloat as part of their prison sentences: Toron's main energy source is the fictional mineral of Tetron, and as Geryn points out the continual tightening of Toromon's laws is meant to keep the supply of convicts to work the mines high. (or as Delany puts it earlier in the novel, "A Great Empire has a great crime rate." (Delany 23)) As he also points out, it is the use of these convicts that perpetuate the cycle—they create an excess supply of Tetron, which keeps up the deflationary pressure the war operation is meant to counteract. Of course, the populace neither notices nor complains, because they are always and everywhere entranced by fear; fear that focuses their minds solely on defeating the "enemy beyond the barrier."

Commentary like Geryn's illustrate how the military-industrial complex is particularly suited to the imperial city's design, as it is in itself an instantiation of the paradox of growth—one that defined the sixties and arguably still defines the economies of the West in many ways. War is both what allows the empire to expand and what establishes the conditions for its collapse—a collapse which is thereby used as justification for further war to facilitate expansion and a repeat of the cycle. Delany points out that the mechanics of this paradox lend themselves to methods of ideological control—something exemplified in the muting of criticism of government military ventures in the black anticolonial politics of the era. Many prominent leaders and critics like Walter White of the NAACP and the editor and publisher of The Defender, John H. Sengstacke, justified this muting on the grounds that opposing the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan amounted to supporting Communism—and in McCarthy's America, such support delegitimized them in the public eye and exposed them to the aggressions of government censors. (Von Eschen 108) However, Delany's anticolonial impulses are too strong to join in this image-conscious restraint. He uses Toron's predicament to articulate a

rejection of such notions as short-sighted, as in the objection by the Duchess of Petra—an imperial official bent on ending the war against the wishes of her fellow leaders— to a charge of treason by the main character of the novel, (and son of an important fishing magnate) Jon Koshar:

> "Are you serious?" She asked. "You call this treason, keeping those idiots from destroying themselves, eating themselves up in a war with a nameless enemy…Have you any idea what state the economy is in? Your own father is responsible for a good bit of it, yet it's got to the point that if he closed down his aquariums the panic he caused would equal the destruction their being open already causes. The empire is snowballing towards chaos and its going to take it out in war. You call trying to prevent it treason?" (Delany 55)

Koshar's reply is simply that he does not want to go back to prison—that is, to slave labor in the Tetron mining facilities—by antagonizing government officials. And so in this way the very structure of the interlocking governmental, commercial and military functions of the imperial city cultivate the paradox of growth in the form of the military-industrial complex and the ideological control it provides.

This sort of control also plays a part in Delany's other, more brief engagements with imperialism. Perhaps most prominent among them is the 1966 novella Empire Star, intended as a companion to his work Babel-13. In it, his protagonist Comet Jo is charged with delivering a message to the mysterious 'Empire Star' by survivors of a crashed spaceship. As he journeys, he encounters (among other things) a race called 'The Lll', who the Empire has enslaved for their fantastical building skills. The Empire 'protects' the Lll by creating "the sadness of the Lll", a phenomenon that causes anyone who owns an Lll to experience a deep grief, with the intensity multiplying exponentially with each new acquired slave. While the book never features an imperial city *per se*, it is implied that the Lll are what the Empire uses to build its cities. This implies a process of colonial domination that utilizes a form of ideological assimilation similar to

the war propaganda machine run by Telphar's supercomputer and kept running by the Lord of the Flames. The Lll are made subservient by the self-defeating psychology of their own sadness, and the sadness they cause others to feel helps the empire suppress two threats: those who might want to free the Lll know they would suffer paralytic grief during the process, inducing them to overlook the mass exploitation going on, and those who might want to rebel against the empire are blocked from using the Lll en masse to do so for the same reason.

Yet in all of Delany's work, as in nearly all of sf's empires, there is ultimately only a temporary provision of control. The paradox of growth is a paradox of stability: stability during expansion creates the instability of collapse, and vice versa. There is ultimately only the illusion of control in an endogenously unstable system—moments where the world seems malleable and predictable that nonetheless inevitably become the prelude to periods of chaos where nothing acts predictably.

So in the end, as ever, the center cannot hold. Communism and the Soviet Empire collapsed under the weight of the military-industrial complex by the end of the 1980s; the US Empire looked ascendant until the first decade of the new millennium, when stability was summarily thrown out the window. And so Toromon, too, inevitably implodes. The supercomputer in Telphar orchestrating its perpetual war machine malfunctions and launches an attack on the capital, obliterating the architecture of the social order. "Smoke fell like silver scales through the shell of the royal palace of Toron. The stumps of the city's towers jammed at the sky. People still huddled in the streets, but many had already started to make their way to the shore," (Delany 431) the reader is told in their last look at the city, as power scatters back outward from the center.

As befits a cycle, this ending both creates new history and follows prior historical arcs. The paradox of growth and the military-industrial complex 'creiterate' the dilemma inhabiting the anticolonialism of Griggs, Schuyler, Wiggins and others. If one begins a war to combat colonialism and its most enduring effect—the poverty of the colonized—how does one prevent the war machine from becoming an agent of colonialism itself? Indeed, how does one dismantle the war-machine without exacerbating that poverty? Even the philosophically adept Delany has difficulty finding a way past the impasse, opting in the end for the non-solution of having the empire blow itself up altogether.

The Neocolonial City-Ship of Octavia Butler

The sixties and seventies marked a transition from a world defined by colonial empires to a world defined by the remnants of empire and the postcolony. Most colonial holdings in Africa and the Caribbean gained independence, and the only polities resembling the vast empires of yore were the U.S. and the Soviet Union. In this context, what remained of black anticolonial politics after the Civil Rights Movement came to a close was channeled into grappling with the legacy of colonialism and identifying neocolonial phenomena. (Young 18)(Chatterjee)

For a time, the Cold War stalemate between the United States and the Soviet Union may have simplified this political and analytical task. In the early 1980s, the tectonics of imperial power seemed fairly straightforward: the world was a bifurcated Pangaea of empire, with a single Eurasian plate of Soviet (state) Communism pressing against a single Western plate of Euro-American capitalism along the fault line of nuclear weapons, political ideology and global influence. The postcolony and new forms of colonialism could be thought of in terms of this binary framework.

By the late 1980s, however, the Eurasian plate had been subducted beneath its Western rival and the resultant earthquake drastically rearranged the global structure of colonial power. Skyrocketing unemployment and political-economic unrest struck the USSR and the Soviet Empire collapsed and disintegrated. If wintry Moscow and the barren Russian steppes became the face of an imperium meeting its doom, however, sun-baked Silicon Valley and the dry, temperate landscape of California became symbols of an ascendant capitalist empire. Likewise, if the dreary contrition of an embattled Mikhail Gorbachev became a representation of Soviet defeat and the end of communism, the disarming optimism of a popular-former-governor-of-California-turned-president named Ronald Reagan was anointed as a representation of a triumphant neoliberal capitalism. As the American economy boomed in the latter half of the 1980s and the mid-to-late 1990s, optimists declared that the end of history had arrived; the world was a 'global village' and imperialism was dead.

South of the former capital of Reaganomics' empire in Sacramento, however, a shy Pasadena native watched this global shake-up with skepticism. She was perceiving what many critics to follow would perceive: that while the form of empire was changing, imperialism was alive and well. In the Cold War era, it had revolved around a coalition of large oil companies, armament contractors, OPEC, and both US and European governments. The military-industrial complex had consistently produced rising oil prices, generating huge profits for oil companies and petrostates. Ever in preparation for the next war, these corporate and government organs spent most of the proceeds on buying weaponry, enriching arms contractors and making the Middle East the world's largest market for imported arms—as well as a perpetual battle ground. It was an enriching arrangement for the largest and most powerful of these entities, with the assets of the biggest oil companies and weapons contractors accounting for 14 percent of world

market capitalization by 1981. (Bichler and Nitzan 393)

By the mid-1980s and after the fall of Communism, however, this coalition began to unravel. The postcolonies were one major reason why. Many developing countries began to shift from import substitution to export-led growth; soon enough, foreign investors began to reclassify them as 'emerging markets' ripe for investment. Neoliberalism's ascendancy aided them by opening the door for large privatization initiatives and removing the remaining postwar capital controls. Finally, revolutions in information technology concentrated power in the hands of tech companies, 'Too Big to Fail' firms in the financial sector and large multinational corporate entities, sending the stock market soaring and giving corporate mergers and acquisitions regular shots of adrenaline. This gave way to a new form of colonial domination, pioneered by such dominant capital organizations as the IMF. Such organizations developed an expansionist program that utilized the newly globalized capital markets and deployed the rhetoric of 'aid' and 'peace-keeping' to control colonial outposts. In one of many examples, throughout the 1980s and 1990s the IMF made massive loans to financially strapped postcolonies in Africa (and after the fall of Communism, the states that emerged from the disintegration of the Soviet empire) under a program of proposed 'assistance' and 'aid' to developing nations; however, in return for this aid they demanded that these states restructure their government according to the IMF's neoliberal philosophy of welfare state retrenchment, fiscal austerity and trade liberalization. This in turn allowed it and other dominant capital organizations to sweep in and lay claim to the rich stores of natural resources in these countries and consolidate political and social control over them by becoming creditors to massive debts. They discovered that one need not necessarily gather and deploy military armaments to colonize new lands; in the age of global finance, leveraging their material deprivation into lop-sided debt obligations worked just as

effectively. (Onimode 1-30)

As this new paradigm was on the rise, Octavia Butler—the Pasadena skeptic—began writing a series of novels that would critically re-examine the legacy of colonialism and shine a light on its newer, subtler incarnations. It took the form of her Xenogenesis trilogy, (now going by the title Lilith's Brood) whose first installment was published in 1987. Acknowledging its political roots, Butler once claimed in an interview with Larry McCaffrey and Jim McMenamin that

> "I tell people that Ronald Reagan inspired Xenogenesis—and that it was the only thing he inspired in me that I actually approve of. When his first term was beginning, his people were talking about a 'winnable' nuclear war, a 'limited' nuclear war, the idea that more and more nuclear 'weapons' would make us safer. That's when I began to think about human beings having the two conflicting characteristics of intelligence and a tendency toward hierarchical behavior—and that hierarchical behavior is too much in charge, too self-sustaining. The aliens in the Xenogenesis series say the humans have no way out, that they're programmed to self-destruct. The humans say, 'That's none of your business and probably not true.' The construct character says that, whether the humans are self-destructive or not, they should be allowed to follow their own particular destiny." (Butler Conversations 23)

Her statement gestures toward the trilogy's representation and criticism of new forms of colonial domination, as well as the connections it draws between these and older methods and their roots in the Californian pioneering of neoliberal policies. It tells the story of an encounter between a depleted and desperate human race weathering life on an Earth devastated by a nuclear holocaust and the Oankali, a far more technologically advanced race of interstellar colonists who swoop up the survivors onto their living spaceship.

After observing humanity's remnants on their ship for approximately two and a half centuries, the Oankali decide (as Butler mentions above) that humans have an irreparable flaw—they are highly intelligent, but also highly hierarchical in their thinking. This 'human

contradiction' induces the Oankali to prohibit the remaining humans from reproducing—with each other, that is. The space-faring race *is* willing to allow humans to mate and reproduce with other Oankali, since the latter are able to manipulate the genetic material of beings they breed with. This allows them to remove genetic 'flaws' from races they integrate into their species, and create new lifeforms from newly acquired genes. Humanity thence finds itself in a predicament: breed their race out of existence or watch their kind slowly die out from a refusal to reproduce under the Oankali's conditions?

Various aspects of this mythology allow Butler to merge the colonialism of the past with the neocolonialism that came to prominence during her lifetime. Chief among them is the nature of the Oankali themselves; while they are clearly engaged in a kind of imperialism, it takes an ambiguous form that reflects the ambiguity of the late capitalist incarnations of empire. Rather than affecting colonization through direct, violent appropriation, the Oankali clothe their colonial appropriation in the rhetoric of 'aid' and 'peacekeeping.' And in many ways, the clothes fit—when they take the remnants of humanity onto their ship, they do not physically abuse them. Indeed, during the two-and-a-half centuries of observation, they provide food, shelter and even some companionship to the impoverished survivors of nuclear doomsday. The first novel of the trilogy, Dawn, consistently reinforces this ambiguous relationship; its protagonist, a black Californian named Lilith Iyapo, begins the episode with a hostile attitude towards her captors but over the course of the narrative comes to assimilate into Oankali culture. Eventually, she mates with an Oankali named Nikanj, and attempts to persuade other humans to follow her example—only to realize she has alienated her race when her recruits violently turn against her in the novel's final sections.

While *prima facie* this looks like a brutish reaction to a legitimate offer of help to the

human survivors, various subtexts tell us things are not quite so simple. For the Oankali are indeed engaged in a colonial project; however, rather than open military aggression, the Oankali expand their empire through ideological assimilation and the aggressive export of their culture to groups beset by material deprivation. As in many of Butler's stories, this socioeconomic and ideological process has a biological analogue: the Oankali's ability to assimilate the humans of Earth using their special gene-manipulating abilities. By enacting a prohibition on human reproduction, they can leverage this ability to portray themselves as 'saving' those they colonize from their own self-destructive tendencies. This allows them to disguise methods of material, cultural and ideological control in the language and rhetoric of peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance. A critique of a dominant capital organization like the IMF as a neocolonial entity might point out that it operates in a similar fashion. While presenting itself as providing aid to materially deprived communities, it leverages the indebtedness that this aid results in to affect ideological and cultural control over these communities—manipulating, in effect, their financial and political DNA. This manipulation is then justified on the grounds that it is "for their own good" and any alternatives are fatally flawed.

It is the Oankali's imperial capital of Chkahichdahk that perhaps most embodies this critical subtext, its unpronounceable name aside. Unlike the other imperial cities investigated thus far, it combines Wolfe's 'icon of the city' with another prominent icon he sees as central to sf: that of the spaceship. Chkahichdah represents an instance of what one might call a city-ship, a traveling metropolis taking the form of a vessel for transportation. And while sf contains a number of these kinds of cities Chkahichdah is rare in that it is also an imperial capital—rarer still in that it is not rebuilt twice, parodied ad nauseam and run by one Emperor Palpatine and his heavy-breathing black-masked former Jedi minion.

The form of Chkahichdah alone bridges the imperial signs of the past to contemporary signs of empire. The ship itself is one of the oldest symbols of commerce—since ancient times its most basic function has been to act as a vessel to facilitate the exchange of goods across large distances. To some extent, this benign valence communicates that on one level the Oankali are what they claim to be: mere traders who decide to help a group of people less rich and powerful than themselves.

But the less benign valences supervening on this ancient mercantile significance communicate that it is often in the name of commerce and aid that the colonizers proceed to dominate the colonized. The great European empires of the Spanish, the British, the French and others often first established their colonies as trading posts, before using military might to quell rebellious behavior in agitated native populations. As noted above, the IMF's acts of financial domination were also done in the name of 'helping' troubled territories. And, of course, the ideological justifications for the Transatlantic Slave-trade frequently made use of the notion that the colonial powers were saving black Africans from a 'barbaric' culture and helping them to become 'modern', 'properly educated' and so on.

Butler compounds this message when she reveals some of the details of the administrative functioning of her imperial city. Perhaps most important among these details is that the city-ship itself isolates and cuts off those who do not submit to the ideological beliefs of the Oankali. This presents a dilemma to Akin—the protagonist of the third Xenogenesis novel, Adulthood Rites—who is attempting to help the humans of Earth survive without forcing them to integrate themselves into Oankali culture:

> Would he truly be able to help them at all, no matter what happened? The Oankali would not stop him from doing anything they did not consider harmful. But if there were no

> consensus, they would not help him. And he could not help the Humans alone. He could not, for instance, give them a ship entity. As long as they remained Human enough to satisfy their beliefs, they could not communicate with a ship. Some of them insisted on believing the ships were not alive—that they were metal things that anyone could learn to control. They had not understood at all when Akin tried to explain that ships controlled themselves. You either joined with them, shared their experiences, and let them share yours, or there was no trade. And without trade, the ships ignored your existence. (Butler Lilith's Brood 435)

Here the supposedly peaceful mechanism of trade is portrayed as a clandestine form of ideological domination. While the exchange may be put in monetary and material terms, its true basis is absolute cultural assimilation. Without submission to the norms of the colonizers' culture, they will not engage in commerce. In his work on the political economy of neocolonialism and black liberation movements, scholar Clarence J. Munford identified precisely this commercialized form of cultural conquest as central to the neocolonial programs of dominant capital organizations:

> "Multinational corporations preserve the colonial link by concentrating investments mostly in the extractive industry, plantations, the services sector, as well as the preliminary processing of farm products for the markets. This is what makes 'third world' economics so one-sided or *monocultural*. Imperialism transforms them into raw material and agrarian appendages of the metropolises." (Munford 146)

The extractive monocultural aspect of the Oankali's methods of expansion renders their promises of 'aid' and 'financial/material assistance' as pretexts for forcefully asserting colonial supremacy—and more importantly, an avenue for asserting this supremacy without expending military resources. These themes are concretized in the governmental infrastructure of the imperial city: Chkahichdah fulfills its administrative role by issuing commands from its political (and literal) nerve-center directly to the minds of its denizens, whose ideological integration and submission is so complete that it needs no group of political elites solely focused on the details of governance and urban management to run it properly. (or, put another way, becomes a singular and almighty substitute for said statesmen and stateswomen)

This arrangement of signs thematically links the bureaucratic structure of contemporary neocolonial states and organizations to the structure of ideological assimilation and socioeconomic control that characterized the colonialism of the slave trade. The ships that carried African slaves through the Middle Passage and the various organs of plantation slavery were constructed and managed so as to psychologically break the will of the slave and enforce total submission to the colonial and racial hegemon. Those that refused to sacrifice their independence and obey the traders' commands were violently punished until they acquiesced or killed if their resistance proved unyielding. Likewise, it is not hard to find the same imperative at work in the structure of Nazi and (given a particularly harsh evaluation of the USSR) Soviet governance, where the purpose of the state's central planning of society is to erase all individual deviations from the prevailing belief system of communist collectivism and create a singular, collective political consciousness anchored in the state.[3] The Soviet Empire's rival, of course, has been subjected to similar criticism by staunch libertarians and (less consistently and more opportunistically so) by naked partisans. Butler's critical appraisals of the state of human rights in the Soviet Union and the United States are mixed enough to suggest Chkahichdah may encompass both polities.

Butler also uses the method of imperial growth the Oankali deploy to gesture to the outcome of colonial growth strategies old and new. Whether it is the IMF buying out the reserves of precious metals and commodities in poor, developing African postcolonies while shredding their social safety nets or whether it is envoys of colonial empires driving vulnerable species like the Dodo Bird into extinction while setting up new outposts, the extractive basis of colonial and neocolonial expansion hollows out the resource base of the native population so that it may be appropriated to sustain the metropole. Akin's description of Chkahichdah's itinerant

method of extending the imperium's reach—reluctantly withheld from one of his human companions, Tate—shows how this process is engraved into the workings of the capital:

> How would she have reacted if he had told her all he knew—that it was not only the descendants of Humans and Oankali who would eventually travel through space in newly mature ships. It was also much of the substance of Earth. And what was left behind would be less than the corpse of a world. It would be small, cold, and as lifeless as the moon. Maturing Chkahichdahk left nothing useful behind. They had to be worlds in themselves for as long as it took the constructs in each one to mature as a species and find another partner species to trade with. The salvaged Earth would finally die. Yet in another way, it would live on as single-celled animals lived on after dividing. Would that comfort Tate? Akin was afraid to find out. (Butler Lilith's Brood 365)

The imperial city itself is structured to expropriate the resources of its newly-formed colonies until they have nothing more to give, leaving them as "less than the corpse of a world." Even this process, however, is done in the name of 'salvaging' the new territory. The sign of the ship here again bridges new to old. While a representation of the role of the ships of the European empires of the past in extracting resources from their peripheries, the fact that it is not terrestrially bound—that, unlike in the great empires of the past, its metropole can travel where it pleases—emphasizes the rootlessness of neocolonial powers. Organizations like the IMF could be said to preside over large empires and have much in common with past imperia, but they represent a break from the past in the sense that they are based in the non-local space of global communication networks; they are everywhere and nowhere, whereas past empires were always located in a relatively fixed *somewhere*.

It is in the series' long-running debate over how to secure independence for humanity that these connections come to rearticulate the paradox of growth and the dilemma of imperial resistance. And it is in the imperial city where the turning point in this debate takes place. There, Akin—who has become sympathetic to humans resisting the Oankali despite being half-Oankali himself—persuades the Oankali to allow the remaining members of the human race to

settle on Mars. Thereafter the series focuses on attempts by Akin and his offspring to foster this resettlement, attempts continually met with human disdain and violence. Ultimately, however, Butler closes the series on a hopeful note, as the Oankali instruct another one of Lilith's children, Jodahs, to "plant" a new town in the mountains of the ruined Earth.

In this context, the paradox of growth and the dilemma of imperial resistance is invested with the same ambiguity as the Oankali empire, since the prominent role of Oankali protagonists throughout the series makes the problem two-sided. From the perspective of the humans, Butler presents the conventional conundrum of how to thrust off the imperial yoke without committing acts of violence that would make them little better than the colonial forces they resist. From the perspective of the Oankali, the riddle concerns how they can aid troubled societies without unintentionally or unconsciously culturally and materially colonizing them. This quite brilliantly represents the anticolonial challenge of the late capitalist era: how to provide aid to struggling postcolonies in order to "right the wrongs" perpetrated by the colonial empires of yore without creating a situation in which said aid merely reinstates the structures of colonial power. It also seeks to complicate anticolonial discourse in an age where imperialism can take non-militarized forms, cautioning political advocates over the possibility of bad faith. For the most chilling question the end of the Xenogenesis trilogy seems to pose is "How much of the desire to help other societies really stems from philanthropy and altruism, and how much of it really stems from the imperialist desire to reshape the world in one's own image?"

Reclaiming the Empire: Edward Uzzle and the Black Imperial Past

Butler's work helps capture how black anticolonial politics in the post-Civil Rights Movement era slowly receded into postcolonial criticism and discourse. Yet the Xenogenesis sequence represents only one approach to interrogating the colonial legacy and neocolonial

phenomena. Its perspective is broad; aside from the Californian roots of its protagonists, it does not emphasize a specific geopolitical context. The metaphors at play in the tale of the Oankali's encounter with humanity might fit the situation of any number of African and Afro-diasporic postcolonies as well as the global dynamics of neocolonial organizations.

Butler's later works would change this approach, most notably in the case of her Parable duology. Both novels in the series—1993's Parable of the Sower and 1998's Parable of the Talents—would focus much more on the particular crisis of the American black urban underclass. As discussed in this project's introductory chapter, scholars like Madhu Dubey have identified this crisis along with general issues of black urban community as a defining context for works of African American fiction in the post-Civil Rights era. Hence the present investigation of the historical valences of black sf's imperial cities concludes with a text whose empire focuses specifically on interrogating the legacy of colonialism within this context.

The author of this text, Edward Uzzle, is a child of California like Butler. Born in Richmond but today working amidst the bustle of the capitol of the Empire of the Sunshine State in Sacramento, he is also rather obscure. Some of his closest associates, however, are far less so. Among them is Charles Saunders, a pioneering author and critic of African American science fiction and fantasy whose prodigious output in the 1980s included an incisive screed criticizing shortcomings in sf's racial sensibilities entitled "Why Blacks Don't Read Science Fiction." (later revised into "Why Blacks Should Read (and Write) Science Fiction" in appreciation of the strides in racial diversity the genre has made since the seventies) In a review of Uzzle's first and (so far) only novel, Retro-km: Lord of the Landlords, Saunders notes "Edward and I are great admirers of each other's work," describing the book as "a serious examination of what can happen when technology advances while attitudes stagnate, and even regress." (Saunders 1)

It is also an example of literature that portrays the deterioration of black inner city neighborhoods as an extension of the colonial project—much in the way the anticolonial politics of the interwar and early postwar period conceived of Jim Crow and European imperialism in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean as one interconnected system of colonial oppression. This science fictional portrayal has precedents in works of black political economy dating back to well before the publication of Uzzle's novel in 2008. Indeed, just as Butler was beginning the second installment of the Xenogenesis trilogy after publishing the first in 1987, the sociologist Robert Staples published a treatise entitled The Urban Plantation: Racism & Colonialism in the Post-Civil Rights Era. It exemplifies academic attempts to apply the concept of the 'internal colony' to the development and struggle of the black urban underclass in the age of late capitalism. Uzzle's narrative tries to do the same through ludic science fictional metaphor, codifying the dynamics of this application in a highly unique imperial city.

The concept of an internal colony resonates with the title of Griggs's black sf empire, as it posits that marginalized groups like African Americans constitute a nation-within-a-nation. The concept itself arguably dates back to the late nineteenth century and the scholarship of figures such as Griggs, Dubois, Martin Delaney, William Henry Highland Garnett and others but would feature most prominently in later works of black political economy by scholars like Robert Blauner, Harold Cuse, William Tabb, Bennet Harrison, Barry Bluestone and Ron Bailey. Bailey captures the basic notion in concise fashion in a 1973 article for the Review of Black Political Economy, defining internal colonialism as "the forceful conquest of people of color by Europeans for purposes of economic exploitation," which includes the contexts of the plantation, share-cropping, and of the black urban ghetto. While the internal colony is not typically located overseas like the prototypical colonial territories of European imperial powers, it maintains the

same economic superstructure as those territories: the dominant racial group relegates the colonized racial group to an enclave where it monopolizes the mechanisms of production, exchange, distribution and economic diversification to facilitate capitalist growth *outside* the enclave while leaving its population in a position of dependency and poverty. (Bush 142) This dependence and poverty in turn works to diminish the racial minority's ethnic identity and self-esteem.

In a famous essay published in The Crisis on October 1926 entitled "The Criteria of Negro Art", W.E.B. Dubois crystalized the notion that art could be used to fight back against this process of colonization. All art, he averred, was inherently political. Thus whether the author intended it to or not, a piece of literature served to propagandize. Over time the latter term has accrued negative connotations, but its origin is in the Latin word *propagare*, which simply means "any movement to propagate some practice or ideology," (Online Dictionary of Etymology) and its basis lay in missionary work, with Pope Gregory XV calling the committee of cardinals he established to supervise foreign missions *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, or "The Congregation for Propagating the Faith." Dubois claimed that to advance the cause of securing equal rights for the black race and push back against the demeaning forces of the colonial project, artists should recognize this aspect of art and create works that portrayed African Americans in a positive light—and so the aesthetic program of 'racial uplift' was given a name.

While it would be unwarrantedly reductive to simply think of Uzzle's novel—or, from a rigorous critical perspective, any work of art—as *only* a work of uplift and nothing more, it could certainly be said that it inhabits the broad spirit of uplift. And in doing so, it makes a point about all the Anglophone sf previously discussed that pulls from the histories of real empires: namely, that this act of historical appropriation works to celebrate those histories—even when they are

used to construct tragic narratives of the imperium. The fall of Asimov's Galactic Empire and later the Foundation itself may express the societal flaws that brought about the fall of Rome, but nonetheless it stresses that Roman history is important, interesting and impressive enough to be worth studying and understanding. This, in turn, validates the historical legacy of those who can trace their ancestry back to the ethnic groups that emerged out of Roman history, just as the echo of the Hanseatic League in Anderson's work validates the ethnic history of the descendants of the Teutons.

Retro-km seeks to combat the colonial assault on the ethnic self-esteem of those sequestered in the internal colony of the ghetto by appropriating and celebrating the history of an empire that features black men and women in positions of power, influence and respect. This validation of black ethnic history attacks the image of the black underclass as mere victims of colonial depredation, recasting their struggle not as 'victim against victimizer' but as 'heirs to a great kingdom against violent usurpers'. In the process, he reminds those white readers whose bloodline reaches back to the empires of Anglo-European history that this is a privilege they often enjoy without even recognizing it. Indeed, this privilege is so culturally embedded that one can easily find it in settings that have nothing to do with literature or history. An early December NFL football game might be the last thing one thinks of when pondering the cultural validation of white ethnic history; nonetheless, in December 2009 when the former defensive coordinator of the New York Giants Bill Sheridan sought to inspire his team before a game against the Dallas Cowboys, he had them read a passage from the speech the Spartan King Leonidas supposedly gave to his vastly outnumbered squadron of troops at Thermopylae before they plunged into battle against the Persian King Xerxes. Such an invocation is obviously designed to transform the defeatism implicit in the image of an underdog that is entirely

overmatched into the inspirational image of an underdog that is evenly matched but sorely underestimated. What often goes unspoken and unnoticed, of course, is that black men and women are left out of this picture of imperial glory and heroism altogether—even when the picture is meant to inspire a football team where the majority of the players are black. Uzzle's novel emphasizes that this is not the only kind of history there is, and uses black history's own empires of the past to promote an image of the struggling members of the black urban underclass as proud and evenly matched underdogs wildly underestimated by their colonial oppressors rather than as the helpless victims of imperial bullies.

To perform this imperial reclamation, Uzzle reaches back into the deep recesses of black urban history. There, long before the growth of the black ghetto, long before black slaves ever flowed through European and North American cities and well before the city of Rome ruled over a Mediterranean empire, the Kushite Empire reigned over the ancient kingdom of Egypt from the cities of Napata and Meroe. It arose from the fertile soil of the land where the Blue Nile, the White Nile and the River Atbara meet, in a territory originally known as Nubia and referred to throughout classical antiquity as 'Kush.'[4] As the collapse of Bronze Age civilization unfolded and the New Kingdom of Egypt imploded along with it, a Nubian king named Kashta (Egyptian for 'the Kushite') overthrew the prior dynasty of pharaohs sometime in the 8th century BC. This set up the twenty-fifth dynasty of Egypt, where for over a century Kashta and a succession of Kushite kings and queens became the imperators of a vast territory populated and run almost entirely by black Africans. (Souren 9)

Two interlocking plotlines are used to link this history directly to the struggles of the black urban underclass: one is set in the near future, where a black community organizer named Skah helps the black population of North America weather a meltdown of the US empire that

culminates in a chaotic race war; the second unfolds three hundred years later, after the descendants of this population have created the Ta-Amentan Empire, and a soldier appropriately named Kashta (reminding us that 'Skah' is an anagram for 'Kash', the Egyptian term for the population of Kush) helps to resolve a crisis between the Ta-Amentan imperium and the white supremacist Empire of Valhalla. Valhalla has reinstated slavery and is relying on enslaved black urban-dwellers to grow. They are drawn from 'Wasted Cities,' which "are abandoned urban centers that surround Nation States," created by the abandonment of US cities during "The Great Ethnic Clashes of 2013" when "the cities were the last places you wanted to live." (Uzzle 1) The black men and women who refused to leave were rounded up by decree of the Valhalla Empire and "The Relocation Act of 2017," (Uzzle 1) enslaved, and then put to the task of scavenging the cities for resources. Kashta is a member of the 'Khuti', Ta-Amenta's Praetorian Guard-cum-special forces charged with recovering and liberating Valhalla's slaves, or the "Lost-Found".

Through this conceit Uzzle literalizes the colonialism of black urban poverty while celebrating black urban history, and in doing so both inhabits the spirit of racial uplift and carries on the Pan-African anticolonial politics of an earlier era. As expected, this inheres in the form of the imperial city. One may find nothing in The Wasted Cities of Valhalla's periphery but "horribly misshapen buildings" (Uzzle 1) and "huge scorched slabs of concrete," (Uzzle 1) but should they venture to the Imperial City of Waset, metropole of the Ta-Amentan Empire, they will find that "Huge gleaming pyramids bedeck the Southern landscapes. Giant bio-engineered buildings built from the wood of genetically altered trees twist into cyclopean towers. Environmentally friendly homes and factories house both [Ta-Amenta's] population and [Ta-Amenta's] industry." There, "Using homeopathic remedies, the life expectancy for the average Ta-Amentan is well over 110 years." (Uzzle 13)

Waset's grandeur both communicates that Ta-Amenta is as technologically formidable as the empire fighting against it and validates the accomplishments of Kushite culture. Its "gleaming pyramids" invoke the Nubian Pyramids of Napata and Meroe, which in many ways testify to the most admirable aspects of Kushite society. A description of their uniquely dense arrangement by Egyptologist Bob Brier is illustrative:

> So why are the Nubian pyramids packed so closely together? …each pyramid is aligned with a different star, so if you wanted to build in one pyramid field, drawing straight lines from stars to pyramids, things get crowded. Another factor is that there are so many of them. Queens in Nubia were almost as powerful as kings and had pyramids just as large. Over the centuries there were only four locations of choice for pyramids, and with queens' pyramids occupying the same area as kings', they had to be placed closely together. (Brier 54)

Aside from celebrating Kushite innovations in architecture and urban planning, Waset's pyramids also implicitly celebrate the astrological prowess and the gender equality of Kushite culture. At the same time, even though the American empire is on the decline in Retro-km a description of Waset's central administrative building—home of its governing body, the 'Mesniu'—communicates that Ta-Amenta has the centralized form of an empire on the rise:

> "Waset… Location of the Ka-Ba-Ra Chamber. An immense Intelligence facility, the Ka-Ba-Ra Chamber houses the principle Spiritual, Scientific, Engineering, Social, Military, and Agricultural agencies, used by the Mystic scientists of this region of Ta-Amenta. Every four months, the military commanders of the Mesniu, summon all members of the K'huti; the highly specialized division within the Mesniu, to the Ka-Ba-Ra Chamber. The K'huti division is responsible for the retrieval of all 'Lost-Found.'" (Uzzle 15)

Uzzle's *curia* makes for an informative contrast with the one drawn by Griggs over a century earlier; while the latter felt the need to conceal his imperial city and his empire in the imagery of American urbanity, the former uses a highly visible and independent imperial city to elevate the status of black urbanity in both American and and ancient Egyptian society. Furthermore, Uzzle jettisons Schuyler's sardonic parody and pessimism, shrugging off criticism that would paint his

work as overly 'militant.' In fact, he openly disparages such critics, referring to them derisively as 'The Wonderers' in a blog post on his website:

> The Wonderers are spoilers who feverishly extol the positive experiences they've enjoyed with non-Black artists and creators. They do so, while condemning and showcasing the negative history they've faced when participating in creative projects with Black people. Wonderers are agents. Wonderers are nomads…The Wonderers' as agent is a compelling phenomenon. They actively seek out Internal Based Black Creators; their works and conversations, in hopes to castigate, misdirect, and chastise. They work hard at painting the Internal-Based-Black-Creator as narrow minded, limited in scope and success, and as reverse racists. They never miss an opportunity at showing and proving how following the yellow-brick-road of mainstream thought, is vastly superior to any and all things perceived as militant – read: unapologetically Black creatively. (Uzzle daathrekh.com)

This too in many ways inhabits (and defends) the Pan-African anti-imperialist politics of the past, which were also derided by critics (Schuyler included) as too 'militant.' In doing so, however, Uzzle's empire inherits the conundrum faced by past black sf empires: How does one construct an empire to fight against colonial domination without having it become an engine of colonial domination itself?

Uzzle's description of Waset's environmentally friendly forms of urbanization and medicine provide part of the answer, in that they are meant to convey (albeit vaguely) that Ta-Amenta is self-sustaining; it does not follow the parasitic model of growth its enemy does, where resources are violently appropriated from other territories until they are nothing but empty shells and their former denizens slaves to the empire. It grows 'naturally' from what resources its environment produces.

Another part of the answer lies in the all-too-convenient loophole buried in the description of the Ka-Ba-Ra chamber and the governmental function of the imperial city—the gathering of the Khuti and the Mesniu "every four months" to track down and recover more

"Lost-Found." Because the "Lost-Found" always choose to stay and work in Ta-Amentan society after they have been rescued, they provide an ever-expanding resource base and labor pool for the empire. Ta-Amenta turns the extractive basis of its own imperium into a negation of the extractive basis of Valhalla's.

But Uzzle is never fully able to solve the puzzle. His story ends with Kashta's successful defeat of the Valhalla Empire, and says little about the history to follow. How Ta-Amenta will maintain itself when all of Valhalla's slaves have been freed and it is the undisputed imperial hegemon is a Sphynx's riddle pushed forever into the speculative future unanswered. However, perhaps it has become clear by now that the dilemma that black sf's empires have reckoned with since Griggs is possibly, in the words William Gibson used to describe Delany's Dhalgren, "a riddle that was never meant to be solved."

Conclusio Incipio ad Infinitium

This investigation of sf's imperial cities began with an ancient philosopher providing the context for empires set far in the future; it concludes with a vision of the future by an author of the present that introduces the study's most ancient empire. This befits the cyclical logic of these cities' history; however, that same logic defies the *teleologos* of endings, mocking any attempt at closure. Nonetheless, one may draw conclusions from the necessarily inconclusive journey itself. It has confirmed the variety and heterogeneity of the capitals of sf empires as well as the universality of the growth paradox that orients them; it has validated the principle that the imperial city and the empire mutually construct each other; it has demonstrated that both are inherently unstable, yet steadily conform to a set of narrative roles.

It has also articulated racial difference: the colonial roots of the expansionary impulse of

Anglophone sf's empires differ significantly from the anticolonial roots of the empires of black sf. The great differences between the position of black men and women and the position of Anglophone groups in the urban history of colonial expansion have been shown to inhere in their fictional imperia and the metropolises at their center. The ways in which black sf's imperial cities reflect on black urban history turn out to possess vast dissimilarities from the historical resonances in Anglophone sf's empires.

Yet these stories also reveal the necessarily paradoxical common ground shared by all sf empires. While the diversity of the ethnic heritages channeled into stories of sf imperia makes the archive of sf empires endlessly variegated, sf's imperial cities nonetheless all cohere around a shared principle: the cycle must go on, and no single arrangement will last. The riddles of imperial growth are universally repeated across racial boundaries, and this very universality makes each individual attempt to answer them, in the words of Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, "unrepeatable since time immemorial." *Sic semper erat, et sic semper erit*. With this antinomic commonality in mind, the investigation at hand may thence turn to another urban typology—one that moves one step past the inevitable rise and decline of the imperial city to probe the thematic and symbolic territory encompassed by the urban desolation a fallen empire leaves behind.

[1]Plato's Apology contains his most strident criticism of Aristophanes, accusing his play The Clouds of slandering Socrates and Athens.

[2]The chain reaction I articulate here describes what econo-jargon calls 'debt deflation.' My picture of it is informed most directly by various relevant sections of John Maynard Keynes's The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money , Irving Fisher's The Debt-Deflation Theory of Great Depressions, and Hyman Minsky's collection of essays on financial fragility, Can 'It' Happen Again?.

[3]I do not wish to imply by this identification of similar imperatives and structural properties that Soviet governance can be equated to chattel slavery or Nazi Germany's Jewish Holocaust.

[4]Modern-day Sudan.

Chapter III: Dereliction in Black and White, Part I—Creative Destruction and the Dead Cities of Anglophone Science Fiction

> Through this broad street, restless ever, ebbs and flows a human tide, wave on wave a living river; wealth and fashion side by side; Toiler, idler, slave and master, in the same quick current glide.
>
> -John Greenleaf Whittier

> "I found later that all the electric generating-stations…must have been shut down before the arrival of the doom; also that the gas-works had almost certainly been abandoned some time previously: so that this city of dreadful night, in which, at the moment when Silence choked it, not less than forty to sixty millions swarmed and droned, must have more resembled Tartarus and the foul shades of Hell than aught to which my fancy can liken it."
>
> -M. P. Shiel, The Purple Cloud

Strung between the evocative words of the poets above is a spectrum of urban experience that underscores the centrality of crowds to the character of the city. Its allure is the allure of the crowd—the liberties its anonymity bestows upon you, the frantic pace of life it cultivates, the exhilarating sight of thousands of people on the move offered by a mere stroll down main street during rush hour. Its ugliness is the ugliness of crowds—the solitude its anonymity can affect in you, the restless noise and acrid pollution that stokes anxieties and invades nostrils, the maddening frustration of an afternoon traffic jam.

The verses of Whittier remind us of the exhilaration that can accompany a robust encounter with the crowd; they uncover a nascent sublimity in the urban landscape's teeming masses. But when paired with the words of West Indian author M.P. Shiel, they also demonstrate what sf writing does that the expertly crafted verses of the Fireside poets cannot: it invests its moments of wonder with speculative energies, taking the sublime reality of "what is" that Whittier describes and modifying it with the sublime possibilities of "What if…?" through

speculation, extrapolation, and other cognitive techniques of world-building.

In Shiel's case, this "What if…?" modifier might be stated as "What if the crowd disappeared, and you were alone in the metropolis?" His vivid realization of this hypothetical scenario preserves the sense of wonder also evident in Whittier, but inverts it in a way only science fiction can.[1] In the process, he communicates that that which makes the crowded city exuberant and wondrous in Whittier is also what makes its empty, inverted form so nightmarish in his own writing. As such, if Whittier's vision is one of the life of the city's crowds, Shiel's ghastly inversion might be called a 'dead city.'

If one adopts the thesis of the first two chapters of this investigation and views science fiction's narratives of imperial cities as expressing the paradoxes of the genre's expansionary ethos and its roots in colonial culture, one may render feasible the idea that its narratives of dead cities explore the antipodal paradoxes of the *failure* of growth. This differs somewhat from the collapse of an empire (and thus its imperial capital) fomented by the momentum of the growth cycle as discussed in prior sections; for in the case of the imperial city, the implosion of the imperial metropolis takes place in the context of an (anti-)teleology of growth, as a necessary stage in a larger process of expansion. In stories revolving around dead cities, on the other hand, urban collapse itself is the prevailing teleology; these stories are concerned primarily with the paradoxes of dereliction, not how dereliction fits into the paradox of growth. The exuberant critic may argue this is a mere perspectival and semantic shift; but as preceding analysis has made clear, mere shifts of perspective and the semantic changes they entail can in themselves yield entirely new and informative understandings of literary texts.

The modern world contains its fair share of dead cities. One may find them in the barren streets of Pompeii; the empty warehouses and factories of Gunkanjima, (or 'Ghost Island') an

abandoned mining colony sleeping off the coast of Japan since the 1960's; and the phantom metropolises of China, built by the government in the expectation of a wave of urbanization that has yet to materialize. Yet for all the wondrously ominous specimens reality provides, its repertoire of phantom municipalities cannot compare with the myriad dead cities of sf. The genre produces them with startling regularity, in an endlessly variegated panoply of forms. Confronted with this vibrant multitude, the thoughtful critic may find themselves beset by questions: can a universal thematic structure be said to underpin them all? What is their relation to urban history?

In the case of the investigation at hand, these two questions are accompanied by a third. It is the query buried in the unspoken contrast between the two poetic perspectives above: their position on opposite sides of the color line. Whittier was a pale Massachussets-born descendant of the Huguenots of France; Shiel was the lightly tanned son of a black woman who was a freed slave and an Irish father who was a ship-owning merchant. If one were to trace their racial history backward several generations, one would discover vastly divergent stories—even when they faced oppression by religious authorities, the Huguenots possessed a bevy of socioeconomic freedoms that made their world totally different from that of the black slave laboring under the shackles of legally-supported bondage and culturally ingrained race prejudice. Likewise, if one follows the arch of history that encapsulates the experience of urbanization by black men and women, they discover a reality of a very different nature than that encompassed by the arch of white urban history. This frames a key question unique to this project: what relationship might exist between the dead cities penned by black authors and black urban history?

What follows is an attempt to answer such inquiries, with conclusions necessarily sketched with both broad and narrow strokes of the brush. The critical endeavor will unfold in

two chapters attending to two interrelated tasks. The present one will survey the various aspects and incarnations of the dead city in Anglophone sf and investigate the antinomic tension that animates them; it shall make clear that whether the product of a cataclysm or of a gradual decline, the dead city can be defined in terms of the way the two ends of its orienting paradox interact. It shall also become apparent that the urban typology bears significant metaphorical relations towards certain parts of urban history. Finally, once the nuances of their Anglophone forms have been elaborated, the project will proceed in its fourth and penultimate chapter to an analysis of the dead cities of black sf—where it will uncover a racial history rooted in the central distinction between the metropolises of both groups in works by not only Shiel, but W.E.B. Dubois, Sam Delany and Colson Whitehead.

Creative Destruction and the Two Faces of Urban Apocalypse

The universal thematic tension that animates the narratives of sf's dead cities parallels the tension implicit in condemned buildings, neighborhoods, or island cities. On the one hand, condemnation is a reaction to urban blight and decay, a way of marking those parts of the city that have fallen into ruin due to some malady of metropolitan life; on the other hand, condemnation is also the prelude to new spaces and the resurrection of old ones. Urban sociologists like Ernest Burgess pointed out as early as 1925 that cities like Chicago do not simply expand ever-outward as earlier theorists thought; instead they grow by reformatting their internal spaces. Burgess conceived of this structural process as taking the form of the Chicago School's famous concentric ring pattern. "The main fact of expansion," he claims, "is the tendency of each inner zone to extend its area by the invasion of the next outer zone." (Burgess 94) Similarly, it is the push and pull between the urban apocalypse as a form of rebirth and the urban apocalypse as the death knell of urban life—and the way it effects the various 'zones' of the city—that defines the character and movement of the ghost metropolises of science fiction.

The qualities of this tension thus have a particular historical resonance one might express through a statement Fred French—one of the most powerful real estate developers in New York City during the first half of the twentieth century—once made to a group of Princeton students in 1934:

> Our company, strangely enough, was the first business to recognize that profits could be earned negatively as well as positively in New York Real Estate—not only by constructing new buildings but by destroying, at the same time, whole areas of disgraceful and disgusting sores. (Max Page 101)

French expressed in this statement the essence of the process that underlies programs of urban redevelopment—that of "creative destruction". The history of urban planning and urban renewal programs is a history of the intentional annihilation of old forms—not only of urban architecture, but of the forms of urban life determined by that architecture—to make way for the building of new ones.

Narratives of the dead city resonate with this history of reconstruction-through-deconstruction; their dynamics mirror the dynamics of the process, and their stories unfold in metaphor what urban redevelopment programs unfold in planned demolitions, renovations, mortgage lending, and so on.

But as suggested by prior commentary, there is a racial asymmetry to this history; the story of these programs' effects on the Anglophone population of urban centers is quite different from the story of their effects on their black population. And this is the wrinkle the chapter to follow will investigate—an investigation that will proceed by answering the two interrelated questions of "How does this history differ?" and "How might this difference register in the unique properties of black sf's dead cities?"

First, however, the inquiry at hand must properly articulate the broader aspects of the

dead city's central thematic tension—a task that may be accomplished by investigating its manifestation throughout an archive of Anglophone sf's urban derelicts. Observations drawn from real dead cities aid in determining this archive's organization; and perhaps the most basic and most important of these observations might be that none of these metropolitan ghosts springs up *ex nihilo*. Each is the end result of a history, and the form that history takes determines the form of the dead city. With this in mind, the texts addressed here may be divided up according to the two major schemas these histories seem to conform to.

Dereliction by Cataclysm and the Urban Frontier

The first of these historical templates might best be represented by Pripyat, a city in the Ukraine built right next to the infamous (and now defunct) Chernobyl Power Plant. With the fallout from the plant's disastrous meltdown twenty-seven years ago having chased out or killed every last one of the city's inhabitants, it now slumbers in silence, even with many of its schools' chalkboards still littered with teachers' writing, its hospital rooms still crammed with expensive medical equipment, and its bedrooms still lined with personal belongings in various states of decomposition.

Pripyat's history of dereliction is a swift and violent one, with the great catastrophe turning it into a ghost town rapidly and without much warning. This sort of history mirrors those of the best known kind of science fictional dead cities: those created by an apocalyptic cataclysm.

The disaster that empties out the city serves many functions, but among the most cardinal of them is as a device through which the sf author can swiftly and completely 'reset' the urban landscape. They need not integrate every last detail of the often overwhelmingly complex social

histories of cities into their tale, though they may certainly choose to; the apocalyptic event clears away these historical constraints on the evolution of the urban environment and allows the author to start anew and impress their own vision of the world onto the shape of the city.

This reformatting of spatial logic usually corresponds to a reformatting of the narrative logic of the sf tale. Whereas typically the sf city represents 'known space', where the landscape has been mastered by the technologies of civilization, the urban apocalypse strips it of its civilized history and defamiliarizes it such that it becomes a frontier. The protagonist's starting point comes to represent the thin sliver of known territory left. The spaces from which originate the wild forces that seek in the apocalypse's aftermath to reclaim the city from the technologies of civilization—be they the forces of invading hordes or invading shrubbery—represent *terra incognita.* And the city being reclaimed by these wild forces becomes the transitional space between them that the sf hero or heroine seeks to conquer. Richard Jefferies's 1885 novel After London: Or, Wild England provides an exemplary description of the process:

> "The old men say their fathers told them that soon after the fields were left to themselves a change began to be visible. It became green everywhere in the first spring, after London ended, so that all the country looked alike…the former roads were thinly covered with the grass that had spread out from the margin… By the thirtieth year there was not one single open place, the hills only excepted, where a man could walk, unless he followed the tracks of wild creatures or cut himself a path." (Jefferies 1)

The destruction of the city "ends" the urban order, inviting the unknown forces of nature heretofore lurking in *terra incognita* to overrun it until it becomes a place where the individual must 'cut themselves a path' through adverse conditions to survive—i.e., where the sf hero or heroine is tasked with conquering the frontier and furthering the process of reintegrating the wild beyond back into the totality of civilization.

This re-establishment of the frontier takes on a kaleidoscopic array of forms not only

according to the specific kind of apocalyptic event used in the narrative but in the character of an authors' use of the device. After London is a story of nature's forces taking back the titular metropolis after its inhabitants have polluted it to death; it rings heavy with the anxiety stoked by the precipitous rise in air pollution in late nineteenth century England's largest cities and contemporaneous sanitation crises over the off-loading of massive amounts of London's waste into the Thames river. It revels in its descriptions of how natural processes of growth and evolution in flora and fauna successfully reclaim the space paved over by the city. Its American kindred spirit could be said to be George R. Stewart's 1949 novel Earth Abides , which displays the same kind of revelry in its detailed descriptions of a Berkeley succumbing to the unencumbered growth of Californian plants and animals. In contrast, while H.G. Wells's War in the Air also performs an apocalypse that annihilates the London landscape—as well as that of San Francisco, New York, and a bevy of European cities—pollution and waste receive scant attention, as do the growth of flora and fauna. Instead, Wells's anxieties clearly radiate from the sleeping beast of industrial warfare, soon to be awakened in World War I but probably stirred by the marriage of aviation technology with advanced weaponry going on at the time the book was written. His story is one of invading hordes of armed flying machines and his descriptions drip with the terror of the chaotic aftermath of a firebombing—eerily previewing what would happen to London not long after the book's publication in 1908. (Davis 366)

Cataclysmic Dereliction as Renewal: The Frontier and Urban Archaeology

As the almost gleeful quality of Jefferies's description of nature's return to power reminds us, in some cases the catastrophe-induced re-opening of the frontier within the urban form has the potential to represent renewal and rebirth. (Jefferies's message is mixed, however, in that his text also briefly portrays a dystopian breakdown in the European political order)

Though the urban apocalypse may destroy the old world, a better society springs up from its ashes; or, in many cases, another society benefits directly from its destruction. The latter is most particularly apparent in texts where the dead city is uncovered as an archaeological artifact by a team of explorers. Though it remains a frontier to be explored and ultimately mastered, an archaeological discovery also typically marks the reclamation of a lost history. This characterizes the dead cities in Larry Niven's Ringworld, Kim Stanley Robinson's Icehenge, and Greg Bear's Eon, among others.

In truth, one could argue that the sf city is *always* an 'archaeological artifact' to the reader insofar as it is supposed to help them reconstruct the speculative history that lies behind it. But these novels in particular mimic the modern version of an official archaeological survey, where specialists in the field set out to dig up, document, and then make educated guesses about the significance of the relics of a civilization that has passed on. And in each of them, the discovery of the dead city is also an act of self-discovery where clouded, opaque parts of human history are seen with new clarity—an act of psychological renewal that improves the overall well-being of civilization and conveniently justifies whatever measures the archaeologists must take to uncover the secrets of the past. For instance, Ringworld's two main protagonists discover that the Ringworld engineers who inhabited the now-empty metropolises they stumble across may very well have created Earth as an aborted terraforming project. Similarly, one of the most important of Icehenge's several archaeologist heroes, Hjalmar Nederland, uncovers the suppressed history of a bloody revolution crushed by the Martian government by digging up the ghost city of New Houston. The revelations he uncovers within it give birth to utopian dreams of fomenting a second and more successful insurrection against the oligarchical, bureaucratic and exploitative Martian authorities. Finally, the Caltech-educated heroine of Eon, Patricia Luisa

Vasquez, discovers that the abandoned cities found inside a giant asteroid called 'The Stone' actually originate from humanity's future—where, according to records carried in the dead cities' libraries, an all-consuming nuclear war annihilates them all. As with Nederland and Ringworld's cadre of scientists, Vasquez's newfound knowledge opens the door for positive change in society—such as saving it from future extinction.

Yet even in these archaeological expeditions into a lost history of urbanity these energies of renewal are influenced by a countervailing tendency for the urban cataclysm to signify dystopia and decline. Vasquez cannot be totally sure the knowledge she gains will help save future humanity from annihilation. Nederland realizes soon after his discovery that it is possible there will be no political repercussions and no coming revolution, as the Martian government admits to its bloody past and Mars's denizens remain indifferent. And when Nessus—one of Ringworld's protagonists—insists he and his entourage are lucky they discovered the history of Ringworld's dead cities before a long expedition to explore it, his companion Speaker-to-Animals can only remark "Lucky…indeed. If this is luck, why am I not joyful? We have lost our goal, our last meager hope of escape." (Niven 291) In this way even amidst the signs of rediscovery and reclamation of the past one may also find the energies of urban decay.

Cataclysmic Dereliction as Decay: Apocalyptic Devolution

In addition to these oppositional trends in works seemingly rooted in the notion of the urban apocalypse as rebirth, a myriad of sf's dead cities root themselves almost entirely in the opposite notion by focusing on a societal regression into some inferior, more 'savage' form of civilization by the survivors. Much of the time, this regress ends in some kind of barbaric 'state of nature' organized by tribalistic violence; note how the narrator of Jack London's 1912 work The Scarlet Plague describes the devolution of his society following the mayhem caused by the

eponymous pandemic, berating his young companions from the generation that has grown up in its shadow:

> "Where four million people disported themselves, the wild wolves roam to-day, and the savage progeny of our loins, with prehistoric weapons, defend themselves against the fanged despoilers. Think of it!... You are true savages. Already has begun the custom of wearing human teeth. In another generation you will be perforating your noses and ears and wearing ornaments of bone and shell. I know. The human race is doomed to sink back farther and farther into the primitive night ere again it begins its bloody climb upward to civilization. When we increase and feel the lack of room, we will proceed to kill one another. And then I suppose you will wear human scalp-locks at your waist, as well—as you, Edwin, who are the gentlest of my grandsons, have already begun with that vile pigtail. Throw it away, Edwin, boy; throw it away." (London 34)

The lament of London's protagonist captures the implicit criticism behind such returns to savagery and primitivism; namely, that modern human civilization—and the urban social order in particular—is a radically contingent phenomenon. At heart, says London (whose views of social conventions tended towards the rigidly Darwinistic) people are still violent, territorial creatures. The norms, political institutions and other social structures that supposedly hold together the peace and pluralism of modern society are fragile, impermanent, and fabricated. All that is needed to wipe them away is a shock to the system of great severity; this, again, is the role the cataclysm that ushers in the apocalypse plays. The city is the prevailing sign of second nature, of the human ability to construct a civilization apart from the chaotic forces and whims of the natural environment—ergo the catastrophe that destroys it and returns human society to a more 'primitive' form becomes the sign of the fragility of that second nature.

However, not all such societal regressions hew to the Darwinist spirit and return us to a Lockean "war of all against all"; authors may choose other forms to express different anxieties over the tenuous grip of modern civilization on human life. In After London , Jefferies returns England not to tribal primitivism but to its younger relative, feudalism:

> Those who live by agriculture or in towns, and are descended from the remnant of the ancients, are divided, as I have previously said, into numerous provinces, kingdoms, and republics…

Far from someone who sees the feudal period as a lost age of Arthurian romance and intrigue, Jefferies scorns it as virulently as London scorns premodern societies:

> Justice is corrupt, for where there is a king or a prince it depends on the caprice of a tyrant, and where there is a republic upon the shout of the crowd, so that many, if they think they may be put on trial, rather than face the risk at once escape into the woods. The League, though based ostensibly on principles the most exalted and beneficial to humanity, is known to be perverted. The members sworn to honour and the highest virtue are swayed by vile motives, political hatreds, and private passions, and even by money… The land, too, is weak, because of the multitude of bondsmen. In the provinces and kingdoms round about the Lake there is hardly a town where the slaves do not outnumber the free as ten to one. The laws are framed for the object of reducing the greater part of the people to servitude. For every offence the punishment is slavery, and the offences are daily artificially increased, that the wealth of the few in human beings may grow with them. If a man in his hunger steal a loaf, he becomes a slave; that is, it is proclaimed he must make good to the State the injury he has done it, and must work out his trespass. (Jefferies 47)

Descriptions of this kind allow the author to connect the imperfections of a supposedly more 'savage' historical period and societal configuration to the imperfections of their own, allegedly less savage society. In this case Jefferies expresses the strong skepticism he held of the soundness of industrial capitalism's social foundations. Evidence of his misgivings can be found in a series of three letters to the *Times* in 1873, where he portrays the industrial capitalist and the industrial laborer as greedy, spoiled and prone to debauchery, as well as thoroughly exploitative of the less privileged tenant farmers to which Jefferies was close. (Thomas 83) He seems to articulate the notion that just as human society is not too far removed from savage tribalism in London's formulation, industrial capitalism is not too far removed from feudalism when stripped to its essence. Society consists of a wealthy nobility who enslave the poorer classes and engage each other in a hedonistic *bellum omnium contra omnes* in pursuit of ever-greater power; the

industrial magnate, Jefferies suggests, is but one sufficiently large catastrophe away from the feudal lord.

Historical Resonances in SF's Shock Doctrine

Whether gravitating towards rebirth or decay, however, the urban apocalypse is a rhetorical tool that calls attention to—and in some cases arguably legitimizes—the ideological underpinnings of urban renewal initiatives and 'creative destruction'. Not only is it often fears of an imminent urban apocalypse that a city's authorities and real estate developers use to garner support for their renewal projects, but the projects themselves are supposed to 'wipe the slate clean' in apocalyptic fashion. In the case of powerful moguls like New York's Robert Moses, this became justification for the displacement caused by their redevelopment programs; this is the spirit of his obituary's snarky proclamation that "I raise my stein to the builder who can remove ghettos without removing people as I hail the chef who can make omelets without breaking eggs," and his statement to Robert Caro declaring "You can draw any kind of picture you want on a clean slate and indulge your every whim in the wilderness in laying out a New Delhi, Canberra, or Brasilia, but when you operate in an overbuilt metropolis, you have to hack your way with a meat ax." (Caro 894) As his exclamation indicates, particularly when it comes to redevelopment programs like those Moses carried out, very little of the process involved building something new organically out of the old. Instead, it involved a disruptive and absolute annihilation of the old landscape and social order, and when the effects are considered such abrupt demolitions parallel the kind of 'shocks' that the urban apocalypses of these dead cities carry out on a city-wide scale. The obliteration of black neighborhoods to erect a corporate skyscraper or superhighway stages in microcosm the macrocosmic saga of obliteration and subsequent human diaspora and dispersal that Wells and Jefferies effect upon London and that

(Jack) London effects upon San Francisco.

Gradualist Alternatives to Cataclysm: The Long(er) Goodbye

The derelict created by apocalyptic calamity forms the most common category of dead city narratives in sf and constitutes many of the best-known ones. As swift and violent spectacles, catastrophes have an allure that has enshrined their ruined cities in popular sf novels, movies, video games, and so on. But other models of ruination exist, and not all of sf's ghost towns inhabit the catastrophic register.

Another template for the death of the metropolis is better represented by the Northern Philadelphia neighborhood of Kensington than by the corpse of Pripyat. Like its counterparts in sf, the history of Kensington's death has a longer arc than the cataclysm-induced urban demises discussed above—though it possesses a similarly horrifying ending.

Photographs old and new capture the essence of this history: a faded picture of the district taken in the late nineteenth century and published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* presents the onlooker with an impressive array of factories, each billowing the noxious but oddly spell-binding vapors of industry through their smokestacks and casting shadows over streets filled with blue-collar aspirants to the Middle Class. The article accompanying the picture declares Kensington to be the "workshop of the world" and boasts that the neighborhood produces "more carpets than the whole of Great Britain and Ireland." (Weber 1)

But such is not the Kensington of today; a century and a half later a photograph of the same area reveals uninhabited, empty shells of former factories, decaying sidewalks and roads, abandoned houses and lots and amidst it all a thinning population of some of the city's most destitute denizens. (see image 1) Its story of dereliction is not brief and centered around an

Armageddon-like disaster; it is instead a long tale of gradual but continual decline and abandonment.

These longer histories constitute sf's other mode of urban dereliction, where the dead city is the outcome of some extended process of decay. While this process may vary widely, typically it involves less violence and mayhem and focuses more on social and technological factors whose effects are less sudden but compound in number and severity over time to result in the abandoned city.

Gradual Dereliction as Renewal: Apocalyptic Evolution

Though such a gradualist structure may make the notion counterintuitive, here too this abandonment can bend its spirit towards a message of rebirth. In such instances, the cause of the dereliction is often social progress. A better society develops outside the city due to socioeconomic and technological change, and the appeal of this society draws away urban dwellers. Soon all that is left is an empty metropolis; but this emptiness has a positive connotation, pointing as it does to an improvement in humanity's overall quality of life.

One may find this narrative arc in Campbellian classics as much as one may find it in the innovations of New Wave writers. Both J.G. Ballard's 1976 short story, The Ultimate City, and the eponymous first chapter of Clifford Simak's 'fix-up' novel, City—first published separately as a short story in 1944—employ this model. In the former the protagonist, Holloway, lives in a world of agrarian, environmentally friendly "garden communities" before an adventurous exploratory flight crash-lands him in a nearby abandoned city. As he begins to explore it, Ballard provides us with an account of the urban history of his future world that exemplifies the gradualist abandonment-as-rebirth narrative:

> Ten miles from the city, by some unwritten rule, as if they were aware that the physical spell of the metropolis might still intimidate them, the last inhabitants to leave their factories, offices and apartment houses had marked out a no-man's-land to separate themselves from their pasts. Halloway remembered his grandfather's lurid account (the old man was only too keen to be tricked into these reminiscences) of how the city, like a thousand others around the globe, had gradually come to a halt and shut itself down for ever. When the world's reserves of fossil fuels had finally been exhausted, when the last coal silos were empty and the last oil-tankers had berthed, the power-stations and railway systems, production lines and steel-works had closed for the last time and the post-technological era had begun. By then, twenty-five years earlier, there had been few people left anyway. By some unconscious perception of their own extinction, the huge urban populations of the late twentieth century had dwindled during the previous decades. Halloway's parents had been among the last to leave, abandoning their apartment – the only one still occupied – in one of the high-rise blocks that Halloway could see now emerging from the haze beyond the ruined suspension bridge. Perhaps it was this long-postponed departure that had separated his father from the other inhabitants of Garden City. The small but determined parties of colonists – doctors, chemists, agronomists and engineers – had set out into the rural backwaters determined to build the first scientifically advanced agrarian society. Within a generation they, like countless similar communities around other major cities, had successfully built their pastoral paradise, in a shot-gun marriage of Arcadia and advanced technology. Here each home was equipped with recycling and solar-energy devices, set in its own five acres of intensely cultivated market garden, a self-supporting agricultural paradise linked to its neighbours by a network of canals and conduits, the whole irrigated landscape heated and cooled, powered and propelled by a technology far more sophisticated in every respect than that of the city they had abandoned, but a technology applied to the waterwheel, the tidal pump and the bicycle. (Ballard 877-878)

While partially instigated by a crisis—here, the exhaustion of the world supply of fossil fuels—the gradual abandonment of the city is portrayed more as the result of the urban environment's failure to compete with the more efficient, peaceful and eco-friendly society developing outside it. Ballard seems to emphasize this point when he states that most denizens of the city had already left by the time of the fuel shortage crisis. Reversing the devolutionary trend seen in the cataclysm-induced dead cities, here an evolutionary trend empties the metropolis. Society does not regress back to a more barbaric state, but progresses into a less barbaric one that renders the industrial metropolis obsolete. This obsolescence is not forced on urban society through some violent or intrusive means; it instead arises as a natural consequence of technological development. Ballard leaves little doubt about the superior efficiency, environmental friendliness, and sustainability of the "scientifically advanced agrarian societies" that have

siphoned off the old central city's denizens. In fact, his story may easily be read as a commentary on the centrality of certain inefficiencies to city life. The remainder of the narrative documents Holloway's attempt to revive the city by renovating and rebuilding certain neighborhoods and attracting denizens of the outlying garden communities back to its premises. His ultimate failure to do so coupled with his gradual transformation into a corrupt, exploitative bureaucrat during the process—and his police force into a corrupt gang split between loyalty to him and his criminal nemesis, a man named Stillman—redoubles the message of the movement away from industrial urbanity into a new, technologically advanced agrarianism as a positive social change that resolves the problems of the society from which it evolves.

A similar situation characterizes Simak's City. Depicted as the first in a series of apocryphal 'tales' of human history discovered by a utopian future race of hyperintelligent dogs, the narrative begins with a declaration that the city is an outmoded form of civilization:

> Most authorities in economics and sociology regard such an organization as a city an impossible structure, not only from the economic standpoint, but from the sociological and psychological as well. No creatures of the highly nervous structure necessary to develop a culture, they point out, would be able to survive within such restricted limits. The result, if it were tried, these authorities say, would lead to mass neuroticism which in a short period of time would destroy the very culture which had built the city. (Simak 1)

This positions us in a non-urban future which the narrators insist is superior to its predecessors. It also prefigures the process of dereliction that produces the coming narrative's dead cities; as in Ballard's story, Simak's metropolises are emptied out not by cataclysmic forces but by technological advances that allow people to more easily relocate to more rural and isolated settings. While he does not characterize their new communities as specifically eco-friendly the way Ballard does in his description of the 'Garden Cities,' Simak portrays them as participating in a utopian technoscientific agrarianism that—even more so than in Ballard—is characterized as

more in tune with humanity's natural instincts. A Wisconsinite who loved the outdoors and whose favorite recreation was fishing "the lazy way, lying in a boat and letting them come to me,"[2] Simak conceives of the second nature of the city as a fragile construct just as writers like London and Jefferies do in their dead cities. The city is fragile in Simak, however, not because of its weakness to catastrophic forces but because it is a form of social organization that thrusts into close quarters a human race whose instincts naturally run to a more spacious pastoral isolationism, and because it subsists off of crowds. As Robert Moses himself once said, "Cities are created by and for traffic. A city without traffic is a ghost town." (Caro 300) Without the crowd, the city shuts down, and Simak portrays the crowd as a highly nervous arrangement liable to disperse as soon as circumstances allow—as soon as technology gives its members a way out. The city, in short, is naturally doomed to failure in the long run. Perhaps for this reason his future history proceeds even less turbulently than Ballard's, foregoing the use of even ancillary crises like The Ultimate City's petroleum shortages. Instead, he portrays the abandonment of the city as a peaceful, natural evolutionary product of technological innovation:

> The years had moved too fast. Years that had brought the family plane and helicopter, leaving the auto to rust in some forgotten place, the unused roads to fall into disrepair. Years that had virtually wiped out the tilling of the soil with the rise of hydroponics. Years that had brought cheap land with the disappearance of the farm as an economic unit, had sent city people scurrying out into the country where each man, for less than the price of a city lot, might own broad acres. Years had revolutionized the construction of homes to a point where families simply walked away from their old homes to the new ones that could be bought, custom-made, for less than half the price of a prewar structure and could be changed at small cost, to accommodate need of additional space or just a passing whim. (Simak 2)

Once again, the metropolis is not so much destroyed as made obsolete. Its existence is revealed to be dependent on a specific set of social and technological conditions that, once changed, make it impossible to sustain. Like an assembly-line worker replaced by automated machinery, it falls victim to another kind of 'creation-through-annihilation' that predates urban society—that of

technological change.

Gradualist sf stories of metropolitan abandonment like City and The Ultimate City capture the essence of the theoretical foundations of urban redevelopment programs—though as Robert Caro's The Power Broker informs us oftentimes these foundations played a distant second fiddle to the urban developer's pursuit of power and influence. Regardless, they postulate that by renovating "problematic" neighborhoods, one makes them more competitive with newly developed or highly valued real estate; winning this competition draws people away from other, newer communities back into the previously problematic one. Thus when the New York City Slum Clearance Committee coupled with the Manhattan Avenue Merchants Association to target the dilapidated wood-frame dwellings in Williamsburg, Brooklyn for demolition and subsequent renovation in the 1930s, the secretary of the latter organization declared success meant the neighborhood would "regain its grandeur with new and up-to-date apartment houses in keeping with the competition of the newly established sections." (Schwartz 38)

Gradual Dereliction as Decay: Abandonment qua Cultural Stagnation

However, as with many theories in sociology and economics, this model of renovation to "match the competition" often failed to work in practice; and so it goes in sf. More often than not in science fictional tales of gradual urban abandonment humanity never manages to flock to a better society outside the city through the wonders of future technology; in many instances, sf's dead cities follow the story of Kensington, with socioeconomic and technological stagnation driving an exodus from a once-prosperous metropolis by making its living conditions intolerable—leading to a secular decline in the former urban population's quality of life.

Two well-known narratives exemplify this particular structure of decay. The first involves another dead city located on the Red Planet, though one significantly predating Robinson and Icehenge; I refer in this case to the abandoned cities found in Edgar Rice Burrough's 1917 Martian romance The Princess of Mars, and thereafter in several other episodes of the 'Barsoom' series of which it is a part. Documenting the adventures of a former confederate army captain named John Carter on the Red Planet, the novel has him stumble into an abandoned city on the planet's surface at the outset of his journey. Before long, his inclination towards derring-do has him rescue a native noblewoman named Dejah Thoris, who introduces us to the history of the ghost metropolis:

> "Dejah Thoris and I then fell to examining the architecture and decorations of the beautiful chambers of the building we were occupying. She told me that these people had presumably flourished over a hundred thousand years before. They were the early progenitors of her race, but had mixed with the other great race of early Martians, who were very dark, almost black, and also with the reddish yellow race which had flourished at the same time. These three great divisions of the higher Martians had been forced into a mighty alliance as the drying up of the Martian seas had compelled them to seek the comparatively few and always diminishing fertile areas, and to defend themselves, under new conditions of life, against the wild hordes of green men. Ages of close relationship and intermarrying had resulted in the race of red men, of which Dejah Thoris was a fair and beautiful daughter. During the ages of hardships and incessant warring between their own various races, as well as with the green men, and before they had fitted themselves to the changed conditions, much of the high civilization and many of the arts of the fair-haired Martians had become lost; but the red race of today has reached a point where it feels that it has made up in new discoveries and in a more practical civilization for all that lies irretrievably buried with the ancient Barsoomians, beneath the countless intervening ages. These ancient Martians had been a highly cultivated and literary race, but during the vicissitudes of those trying centuries of readjustment to new conditions, not only did their advancement and production cease entirely, but practically all their archives, records, and literature were lost. Dejah Thoris related many interesting facts and legends concerning this lost race of noble and kindly people. She said that the city in which we were camping was supposed to have been a center of commerce and culture known as Korad. It had been built upon a beautiful, natural harbor, landlocked by magnificent hills… The shores of the ancient seas were dotted with just such cities, and lesser ones, in diminishing numbers, were to be found converging toward the center of the oceans, as the people had found it necessary to follow the receding waters until necessity had forced upon them

their ultimate salvation, the so-called Martian canals." (Burroughs 64)

Prima facie, one may be tempted to categorize this as a history of a cataclysmic urban apocalypse—certainly the phenomenon of oceans drying up around cities that use the sea for trade qualifies as a large environmental shock. But Burroughs does not describe it as a sudden, explosive crisis; instead, he characterizes it as a gradual crisis contributing to a larger process of dereliction akin to Ballard's fuel shortages in The Ultimate City. Furthermore, it is not the central reason for the foundering of the Martian cities; as indicated above, their demise is due primarily to their inability to adapt to change. They prove incapable of simultaneously "fitting themselves to changed conditions" and preserving their "advancement and production" and "archives, records, and literature" over an extended period of time. From this perspective Burroughs's future history is not entirely unlike the story of Kensington, which found that it could not maintain its former standard of living once urban sprawl and corporate "deconcentration" of industrial production sent middle class urban dwellers to the suburbs and manufacturing jobs either overseas or to the sunbelt—ultimately resulting in a ghettoized, dilapidated shadow of its former self.

A similar schema of abandonment characterizes the work of a young John Campbell in his 1934 short story Twilight. At the time, the narrative marked a new turn for the developing writer away from the themes of his older work. Until then, Campbell had established himself as an author of fairly straightforward space opera. Early efforts like 1931's Islands in Space featured the typical formula of a rag-tag group of scientific-minded frontiersmen—in Campbell's case, his classic trio of Arcot, Morey and Wade—navigating the treacherous challenges of space. These challenges came in the form of alien races with names like 'The Nigrans'; in the form of red giants that throw their ship's gyros out of control and drain all of its power; and in the guise

of collapsing stars that get everyone lost in 'intergalactic space.' (i.e., hyperspace) Twilight marked a shift away from these formulae into new, subtler and darker territory. Its narrative consists of an account of the future state of mankind recited by a character, Ares Sen Kenlin, claiming to have come from seven million years in the future. At the story's outset he is picked up as a hitchhiker by an average Joe named Jim Waters Bendell in Campbell's present of early-to-mid twentieth century America. Kenlin describes his tour of a future world where the cities he stumbles upon are all empty save for indefatigable machines that continue to function despite having been abandoned by their creators for three-hundred thousand years. "There were machines going about the streets," he informs us, "repair machines, you know. They couldn't understand that the city didn't need to go on functioning, so they were still working." (Campbell 28)

Campbell slightly modifies the model articulated in Burroughs's work. Whereas the dead cities in The Princess of Mars were abandoned due to the inability of their ancient inhabitants to effectively adapt to exogenous change in their environment—the drying of the Martian seas—the dead cities of Twilight result from a failure of its future humanity to adapt to endogenous changes within their own society. Ultimately the reader learns that the cities have been abandoned due to a civilizational decline resulting from an over-reliance on advanced machinery to regulate urban life and the gradual loss of the human capacity for intellectual curiosity due to extreme longevity and dependence on automata. Kenlin informs us of this in describing his own visit to human civilization in the future:

> "…as I stepped from that ship and watched it rise away from me, I saw why the race of man was dying…There was one single quality gone from the still-great minds—minds far greater than yours or mine…As I looked in their faces and eyes on landing I knew it…They were not curious! Man had lost the instinct of curiosity…Oh, not entirely! They wondered at the machines, they wondered at the stars. But they did nothing about

> it. It was not wholly lost to them yet, but nearly. It was dying…all those people knew was that to do a certain thing to a certain lever produced certain results…those people did not understand the things that fed and clothed and carried them." (Campbell 37-38)

Campbell is keen to place even more responsibility for the societal stagnation that creates Twilight's dead cities on the shoulders of the city-dwellers than Burroughs. Their loss of curiosity is a regression internally generated by trends in human evolution and technological development, and the loss of the essential knowledge and techniques needed to run the metropolis is an outgrowth of this psychological decay. Indeed, one might read the dereliction of Campbell's future cities as a reflection of the dereliction of creativity and innovation in the minds of future generations of humans.

Notable here is the resonance of this theme with such early urban dystopias as E.M. Forster's 1909 short story The Machine Stops. In Forster's narrative, a future humanity lives in a series of underground cities around the globe whose every detail is managed by a central intelligence called 'the Machine.' The technological advances that typically allow the protagonists of space opera to move forward in their narrative and navigate their world have instead been turned towards the end of maintaining an all-encompassing leisure society whereby automata attend to the need of every urban denizen. Rather than a progressive revolution, the advancement of technology in this fashion has instead yielded intellectual, physical and cultural stagnation. Forster details this decline by describing a day in the life of Vashti, an ordinary denizen of one of the Machine's underground cities. Rather than exemplifying the intrepid courage and refined scientific intellect of the space opera hero or heroine, she exemplifies both physical and intellectual lethargy—she can barely feed and clothe herself without the Machine's help, is implied to be grossly overweight, despises any idea that breaks from the fatuous, mundane and pre-formed ones it tells her to 'contemplate,' and completely lacks the

individualistic mindset that allows the sf hero or heroine to prevail in conquering the unknown. Her impoverished mind and the fashion in which it is cultivated by a reliance on automata strikes a significant parallel with the impoverished minds of Twilight's future humans, which are cultivated in much the same way. Both Campbell and Forster seem to share the same skepticism over the intellectual effects of technological development and its tendency to foster increasing reliance on mechanical devices, and it is hard not to think of Forster's omnipotent machine when Kenlin describes the cities of his future world as having "spread all over. And the cities between grew into them. And it was all one vast machine. It was perfectly ordered and perfectly neat." (Campbell 39) Condensed to their essences, their stories carry a warning to the would-be technological optimist inhabiting the metropolis: urbanized humanity need not fall because of maladaptation to environmental change—drying seas, dwindling fuel resources, etc.—as its own flaws and vices are more than sufficient to topple urbanity on their own given enough time.

Black SF and The Dead City: Dislocations behind the Veil

The above survey of the various ways the tension between urban renewal and urban decay manifests itself in sf's dead cities demonstrates the broad connections between its numerous dimensions and aspects of the process and history of urban redevelopment. This tension allows these cities to act out the concept of creative destruction that is central to redevelopment programs; it gestures to their theoretical foundations in using renovation strategies to make old, declining properties competitive with new ones; and it stages the processes of dereliction that renewal initiatives claim to combat.

Yet the truth articulated at the beginning of this project still stands to complicate the evaluation of these metropolitan ghosts; specifically, that the history of the urbanization of Anglophone groups, while doubtlessly possessing its own internal diversity, diverges

considerably as a whole from black urban history. And from this divergence springs the questions of if and how the dead cities penned by black authors of sf differ in any broad, consistent fashion from their white peers; and, accordingly, how these differences might reflect on the differences between the two distinct but intertwined histories of urbanity. The chapter to follow will search for and articulate possible answers to such queries.

[1]As many an sf scholar knows, the term 'sense of wonder' was coined by Damon Knight to refer to an appreciative sense of awe at the cosmic potentialities of technoscience that supposedly defines science fictional writing. Needless to say, in the years since its coinage debates have raged over whether it is a useful way to distinguish sf from other forms of fiction—what constitutes a 'sense of wonder' is so nebulous that it has been criticized as a way to "fudge" what does and doesn't count as sf. While these debates are oftentimes enlightening, they are not ones this study is meant to probe and engage in; I use the term here merely in the literal sense to refer to the awestruck tone of Whittier's verse. On the other hand, my references to 'sublimity' and 'the sublime' *are* meant to invoke the critical valence of the terms, where historically the sublime has been defined as a 'pleasant terror' inspired by the apprehension of a majestic object—a mountain, a great maelstrom, an ominously beautiful work of art like the faces of Rushmore, or an sf text that is an eidolon of creative speculation.

[2]He stated this in a blurb for his novel *Time and Again*.

Chapter IV: Dereliction in Black and White, Part II—The Dead Cities of Black SF and a Century of Urban Dislocation

As the preceding chapter makes clear, the haunting figure of the ghost metropolis looms large over both the history of cities and the history of science fiction. Within its symbolic economy each resonates with the other in fascinating and significant ways. A refined understanding of these resonances, however, requires a refined understanding of the heterogeneous fabric of urban history. The prior chapter addressed one thread of this fabric in its analytical survey of Anglophone sf's dead cities; to complete the comparative inquiry, the present chapter now turns to the dead cities created by black sf authors and explores the way they reflect upon the weave of black urban history.

Its analysis identifies the central distinction between the two group of texts as rooted in each's portrayal of the dislocations the death of the city creates: while both conceive of the city's demise as an event that displaces large groups of urban-dwellers in powerful and diverse ways, black sf's dead cities exhibit a heightened awareness of the racial aspects of these displacements. This awareness connects these narratives to discourses over the racial history of demographic dislocation in urban spaces; and in doing so, it likewise connects them to discourses over urban redevelopment programs, which possess a central role in such racialized dislocations—particularly (but not exclusively) in a North American context.

Dubois and Shiel: Urban Ghosts and Slum Clearance in the Great Migration and Victorian England

The first stories written by black authors featuring the ghost metropolis appeared during the first stage of the 'Great Migration' of black men and women in the United States from the countryside to urban centers—a rush to the city paralleled in other countries like Great Britain (albeit with a racial composition less concentrated with ethnic minorities in the case of the latter) and lasting from the end of Reconstruction to the Great Depression. Fleeing from the post-Reconstruction South's lynch mobs, sharecropping debt peonage, systematic disenfranchisement and protracted economic depression, great numbers of African Americans flowed into the industrial cities of the North and Midwest during this period. As the door on European immigration was closed during the early twentieth century, the rapidly growing manufacturing industries of such urban centers needed to look elsewhere for cheap labor, opening up the door for Southern blacks to find employment in central city factories.

This immense demographic shift had powerful effects on the character and racial composition of cities like Detroit, Chicago and New York. Before World War I, African Americans who had migrated to these urban centers typically came from cities in the states of the upper South—Kentucky and Virginia in particular—and so generally had little trouble acclimating to urban life. By contrast, the newer migrants came predominantly from poor rural backgrounds in subsistence agriculture, and unlike their antecedents had been reared in relative isolation from white communities; thus one of the largest changes that followed upon the Great Migration was a dramatic increase in the concentration of urban black communities coupled with a simultaneous diversification of class structure and cultural sensibilities within those communities. The crowding also had the effect of consolidating racial barriers; many racially mixed communities that had once been central to black life in the city quickly lost their white population, and as the influx of migrants continued these newly homogenized communities grew

in size and spread into new residential areas. Before long white communities throughout the metropolis —who often viewed black migrants from the South as unsophisticated country bumpkins—were speaking nervously of black "invasion" of their neighborhoods, and complaining of skyrocketing rents caused by the soaring demand for housing. Racial tensions manifested themselves in riots and other forms of violence such as the bombing of black residences—a phenomenon occurring over fifty-eight times in Chicago alone from 1917-1921. (Fusfeld 27-36)

Despite the industrial might of its metropolises, the United States at this time was not the expansive superpower it was to become as the twentieth century marched on; instead, the reigning hegemon lay across the Atlantic, anchored in the city of London. And while the exact racial dimensions differ significantly, the broad process of British urbanization unfolded in a similar fashion to its American counterpart: rapid industrialization took root in urban centers, creating huge markets for unskilled labour and bounteous—but unevenly distributed—wealth. Despite this growth, however, British agricultural production was hurt by the 'Long Depression' that stretched from 1873-1896. This prompted a massive influx of artisans and laborers into the city from the countryside; and, like in the United States, one of the largest results of this migration was increased urban congestion, increasingly concentrated populations of an increasingly diverse number of ethnic groups, and—thanks to the population growth's deflationary pressure on wages—the proliferation of slums. (Wohl 22; Redford 6; Lawton in Pacione 17-37)

Two black renaissance men of the literary arts and social sciences found themselves caught up in the flow of these historical eruptions, each on a different side of the Atlantic. In London, a West Indian who has already been introduced named Matthew Phillips Shiel grew up

watching the cities of England grow crowded with newcomers from all over the Isles. Meanwhile, in the United States, the immortal William Edward Burghart Dubois was busy crisscrossing between several American cities and the Southern countryside to try and attain a bird's-eye view of the changing character of the black population of the United States as huge portions of it were quickly woven into the social fabric of its largest urban centers. Both would express part of their experience of these changes in the form of an urban derelict: in 1901, as the Victorian era came to a close, Shiel published his most famous novel, The Purple Cloud, in which middle-class Londoner Adam Jeffson returns from an expedition to the North Pole to find a purple miasma has annihilated the entire population of the planet and left him to wander through cities filled with nothing but corpses; nineteen years later, Dubois would publish a short story entitled The Comet in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, in which a black man and a white woman find themselves in a similar situation as they wander through a New York whose population has been eradicated by the gases of the eponymous celestial body.

Each writer's respective apocalypse borrows from the conventions of the catastrophe-induced dead cities covered in the preceding chapter; their mass-extinction events act as fierce shocks to the urban order that wipe away the modern form and history of the city, creating a *tabula rasa* that functions narratively as a frontier-space for the protagonists to explore and attempt to master.

But as longtime students and residents of the urban environment, both Shiel and Dubois would have already seen this idea of destroying the old social order to wipe the societal slate clean put to use by city planners—and they could not be counted as ignorant of its ugly unforeseen consequences. For it was precisely this idea that came to inform early twentieth-century initiatives of slum clearance—and most stridently so in New York and London.

In both cities, rapidly growing populations following the Industrial Revolution had lead to a correspondent growth in the number of slums and the severity of the afflictions that plagued them. New York's Gotham Court, built in the 1850's, exemplified the phenomenon—its overcrowded and dilapidated tenements housed all the worst self-perpetuating externalities accompanying mass poverty. For half a century, a long line of tenement house boards, committees, commissions and departments proposed various remedies for its "crying evils"; finally, in the late nineteenth century a fiery social reformer and photographic documentarian named Jacob Riis decided that "the optimists at the Health Department" continually calling for improved inspection and enforcement of pre-existing housing regulations as the solution to the slums were avoiding implementing what he considered the only policy that would actually work. Chiding their efforts, he wrote "the more that has been done the less it has seemed to accomplish in the way of real relief, until it has last become clear that nothing short of entire demolition will ever prove of radical benefit." (Page 78) A series of exposes by Riis featuring numerous photographs of slum life would popularize his sentiment, opening the door for new policies of slum clearance. The language authorities used to express the ideological foundations of these new, more aggressive measures mirrors the language Dubois and Shiel deploy to describe their apocalyptic catastrophes. In fact, in the same year Shiel published The Purple Cloud Lawrence Veiller, Secretary of New York's Tenement House Commission, wrote of the demolition of Gotham Court that

> "It would seem that after such a revelation, no civilized community could tolerate such a condition of affairs for a moment , yet not till nearly forty years later was Gotham Court dealt with. In 1896 it was torn down, and no longer can it send forth its evil influences to pollute the stream of our civic life. But if one could reckon the evil it has done in the sixty years of its existence, what a heavy sum would it be! Who can estimate the extent of the physical and moral disorder thus created by this one building, the loathsome diseases, the death, the pauperism, the vice, the crime, the debasement of civic life?"

(Page 76)

Veiller's reproachful lament presents the slum as a toxic object emitting poisonous vapors of death, pauperism, vice, crime and debasement into the atmosphere of city life. Likewise, a newspaper headline in Dubois's narrative warns that "The Comet's tail sweeps past us at noon. Deadly gases expected. Close doors and windows. Seek the cellar," (Dubois 7) and Shiel's protagonist claims the group of volcanoes that produce the deadly purple cloud of the novel "still surrounded its own neighborhood with poisonous fumes." (Shiel 177) To the minds of Veiller's ilk, there was only one course of action left to the urban planner: destroy the toxic phenomenon completely.

Shiel's novel uses its dead cities to act out this aggressive method of reforming the city's infrastructure in dramatic and phantasmagoric fashion. Not long after returning to find the cities of the world silent and filled only with rotting corpses, Jeffson sets about burning them down. At first glance this may seem to speak more to the imagery and thematics of a riot than anything else; but riots are outbreaks of violent disorder. They connote irrationality and spontaneity; they are like brushfires grown out of control, the result of an ill-placed spark on the bed of a particularly dry and vulnerable pasture. And though Jeffson indeed shows signs of mania, his conflagrations are eminently *rational* and *systematized* in nature. One learns this during his first and most important act of fiery urbanicide, when he proceeds to burn down his hometown of London. He notes as he carries out the deed, "I proceeded through the town, stopping with perfect system at every hundredth door: and I laid the faggots of a great burning: and timed them all for ignition at midnight of the twelfth day." (Shiel 145) Such complex planning does not mimic the structure or psychology of a riot; instead, it parallels the structure and psychology of planned demolitions. For even when slums are cleared due to irrational fears, city developers

must always construct a rational, systematic plan to demolish them or risk damaging properties not involved in their project.

Figures like Veiller and Riis insisted that behind their calls for tearing down the tenements of the slums lay sincere desires for improving the lives of both those living in the afflicted community and of the urban population as a whole. Shiel's narrative, however, portrays less savory motivations at work. Jeffson's mindset communicates to the reader that the fundamental drive behind such aggressive restructuring of the city's form is both the desire to attain and exercise social power and fear borne of xenophobic paranoia. His moments of candor over his motivations admit as much to us:

> "It is written: 'It is not good for man to be alone!' But good or no, the arrangement of One planet, One inhabitant, already seems to me, not merely a natural and proper, but the only natural and proper, condition; so much so, that any other arrangement has now, to my mind, a certain improbable, wild, and far-fetched unreality, like the Utopian schemes of dreamers and faddists. That the whole world should have been made for me alone— that London should have been built only in order that I might enjoy the vast heroic spectacle of its burning— that all history, and all civilisation should have existed only in order to accumulate for my pleasures its inventions and facilities, its stores of purple and wine, of spices and gold— no more extraordinary does it all seem to me than to some little unreflecting Duke of my former days seemed the possessing of lands which his remote forefathers seized, and slew the occupiers: (Shiel 139-140)

Such confessions of his lust for power only appear, however, after the cataclysm has eradicated the entirety of human society. This indicates another possible function of the dead city of particular relevance to its racial dynamics: by removing its characters from the context of social life within a crowded urban setting while keeping that setting's form, it allows the author to expose the thoughts, desires and motivations people suppress to avoid social friction and confrontation in the public sphere. Now devoid of societal scrutiny, they are free to transgress any social norms they please—and the character of their transgressions comments on the social norms that underlie and regulate urban life.

It is in the character of Jeffson's xenophobia that Shiel's awareness of the racial displacements caused both by runaway population growth and by urban redevelopment initiatives becomes clear. Fundamentally, his protagonist comes to mimic the mindset of the white middle-class urbanites of the time period; while they often portrayed themselves as more tolerant of ethnic difference than their "less sophisticated" country-dwelling counterparts, this tolerance most often only held when conditions induced them to feel that their favorable social position was secure. When that security was threatened, their tolerance often collapsed into aggressive racial antagonism. Therefore in the nineteenth century, when the white urban-dweller of middle- to upper-class means vastly outnumbered other ethnic groups and lived in less congested conditions, racial conflict was more subdued in both British and American central cities. However, as both countries moved into the twentieth century urban whites soon found that other ethnic groups were rapidly reaching parity in numbers—particularly in the United States, where the black population of major cities exploded—and that increased congestion within the city was putting downward pressure on their wages, imperiling their class status. It was hardly coincidence that the militant language of a 'black invasion' of American cities only gained widespread popularity as the black population of cities grew dramatically in size over the course of the Great Migration and increased demand for cheap labor during the Industrial Revolution coupled with a rapidly expanding supply of local and migrant laborers deflated the wages of workers in manufacturing and service industries. (Fusfeld 27-29)

While Shiel goes into far more detail about the actions of his protagonist after the apocalypse than about his background before it, one can see in his brief allusions to his past that Jeffson occupies a precarious class position that gives him only a tenuous grip on the middle-class rung of the social ladder:

> "I had then been established about a year at No. II, Harley Street, and, though under twenty-five, had, I suppose, as élite a practice as any doctor in Europe. Élite— but small. I was able to maintain my state, and move among the great: but now and again I would feel the secret pinch of moneylessness. Just about that time, in fact, I was only saved from considerable embarrassment by the success of my book, 'Applications of Science to the Arts.' (Shiel 7)

This admission of the fragility of Jeffson's middle class (or 'elite') status casts a deep shade of insecurity over his character. It tempers his often boastful and decadent tone with the insinuation that it stems from a defensiveness over his economic position. It also places him in that class of people most likely to respond with aggression to newly arrived groups and increased demographic concentration in a congested urban environment. Hence when the desolation of the dead city has freed him from the constraints of social propriety, he begins to make such statements as

> In an enclosed passage ten yards long, with railway masonry on one side, I saw five dead lie, and could not believe that I was in England, for all were dark-skinned people, three gaudily dressed, and two in flowing white robes. It was the same when I turned into a long street, leading northward, for here were a hundred, or more, and never saw I, except in Constantinople, where I once lived eighteen months, so variegated a mixture of races, black, brunette, brown, yellow, white, in all the shades, some emaciated like people dead from hunger… (Shiel 82)

Such thoughts demonstrate that he has already begun to associate his home with white racial homogeneity and conceive of ethnic difference not in terms of inclusion and tolerance but in terms of invasion. This kind of racial xenophobia is also coupled with a classist xenophobia; when later in the novel he is asked by his naively innocent love interest, Leda, as to whether he grieves over the suffering endured by the poor before the cataclysm he answers

> "There were some few tolerably good and clear-sighted ones among them, you know: and these all agreed in pointing out how, by changing one or two of their old man-in-the-moon Bedlam arrangements, they could greatly better themselves: but they heard with listless ears: I don't know that they ever made any considerable effort. For they had become more or less unconscious of their misery, so miserable were they:" (Shiel 273)

Or, phrased less eloquently, "the poor are mostly victims of their own pathologies; they would not be poor but for their propensity to 'hear with listless ears.'" These sentiments mirror the sentiments not only of the typical late nineteenth-century bourgeois Anglophone urban dweller who feels threatened by new ethnic groups migrating into the city, but of the bourgeois Anglophone urban dweller confronted with the side-effects of slum clearance.

These side effects took on similar forms both in cities like Chicago and New York and in cities like London; Dubois himself succinctly summarized them in a caustic footnote in The Philadelphia Negro, a study of the urban black community in Philadelphia he published two years before Shiel's novel:

> "The almost universal and unsolicited testimony of the better class of Negroes was that the attempted clearing out of the slums of the Fifth Ward acted disastrously upon them; the prostitutes and gamblers emigrated to respectable Negro residence districts, and real estate agents, on the theory that all Negroes belong to the same general class, rented them houses. Streets like Rodman and Juniper were nearly ruined, and property which the thrifty Negroes had bought here greatly depreciated; It is not well to clean a cesspool until one knows where the refuse can be disposed of without general harm." (Philadelphia Negro 64)

Slum clearance in both American cities and Shiel's London more often than not resulted in the ousted tenants relocating to another slum, wherein increased congestion would worsen the slum's situation and eventually leave it liable to be targeted for clearance itself. Mass homelessness and disruptions caused by demographic dislocation therefore became a consistently accepted 'social cost' of redevelopment programs, as city governments would replace the old tenements with new housing too expensive for the neighborhood's prior tenants to afford or replace them with parks instead, aggravating housing shortages. Ironically, these social costs would often end up on the doorstep of Jeffson's class of white middle-income urban dwellers; thinking that slum clearance would improve their circumstances by improving property

values, they would sometimes find themselves outraged when displaced populations of the poor and ethnic minorities would end up relocating nearer to their homes, causing their values to decline instead. In short, they unwittingly condoned in the name of preserving homogony of class and ethnicity a process that oftentimes fostered the disruption of that homogony; the same sort of irony drips from Jeffson's surprise at the "variegated mixture of races" he encounters, which occurs not long after his demolition of another metropolis.

Jeffson's moral rehabilitation in the latter half of The Purple Cloud is one of the more interesting turns of the novel, if only for its sheer conventionality. After ravaging multiple metropolises he discovers Leda, a young woman who happens to be the only other survivor of the deadly miasma's global apocalypse, and with extreme reluctance falls in love. Immediately he ceases his city-sized demolitions and abandons his Machiavellian impulses. Shiel portrays their relationship as coming to resemble that of Adam and Eve, transforming the dead city into a concrete Garden of Eden. When discussing what he should call her, she even suggests that Jeffson refer to her as 'Eve', which the reluctant lover immediately rejects, saying "not Eve, anything but that: for my name is Adam, and if I called you Eve, that would be simply absurd, and we do not want to be ridiculous in each other's eyes." (Shiel 253) However, when she convinces him to settle on Leda, it is not long before he realizes "that Leda was the name of a Greek woman who had borne twins. In fact, I should not be surprised if this Greek word Leda is the same word etymologically as the Hebrew Eve," (Shiel 254).

The relationship takes on yet more significance when the reader learns of its racial character. Jeffson's fawning over Leda's 'brown skin' and ambiguous ethnicity marks the beginning of the end of his racial xenophobia. While his classism takes longer to dissipate, when it does Shiel takes the opportunity to critique his protagonist's worst drives as stemming not

from an inherently savage nature—as Jeffson seems to suggest in several of the manic confessions of his decadent desires to the reader—but from the alienation engendered by the pressures of capitalism, as suggested by his descriptions of the tenuousness of his class position. The key passage appears in his response to Leda's confusion over why social conflict was so widespread before the apocalypse but absent between them in its aftermath:

> 'No,' I said, 'we do no vices and crimes, because we lack motive. There is no danger that we should hate each other, for we have plenty to eat and drink, dates, wines, and thousands of things. (Our danger is rather the other way.) But they hated and schemed, because they were very numerous, and there arose a question among them of dates and wine.' 'Was there not, then, enough land to grow dates and wine for all?' 'There was—yes: much more than enough, I fancy. But some got hold of a vast lot of it, and as the rest felt the pinch of scarcity, there arose, naturally, a pretty state of things— including the vices and crimes.' 'Ah, but then,' says she, 'it was not to their bad souls that the vices and climes were due, but only to this question of land. It is certain that if there had been no such question, there would have been no vices and climes, because you and I, who are just like them, do no vices and climes here, where there is no such question.' (Shiel 245)

An ardent socialist, Shiel's commentary here cuts against the *laissez faire* political ideology that dominated the Victorian Era in England and the Gilded Age in the United States. Left to function without any checks in place, he insists, capitalism's competitive pressures interact with the gravitational forces of scarcity to create social conflict by distributing wealth—and in turn social power—unequally. By using land in particular to represent wealth as opposed to currency or precious metals and stones he strongly suggests his critique is centered on the urban order, where the number of people who suffered personally from the side-effects of consistent housing shortages (exacerbated by slum clearance projects) and rapidly rising rents far exceeded the number of people who suffered from such side-effects due to land scarcity in the countryside.

Adam and Leda's relationship also articulates a socialist solution to the problems caused by overcrowding and demographic displacement in the city—the equal sharing of power and wealth. Whilst during his acts of grand arson Jeffson takes the position of the urban planner

using social power to forcibly reshape the form (and therein the character) of urban society according to his personal desires, as he falls in with Leda he relinquishes this supremacy and shares it with her. Their reciprocal affection equalizes an unequal distribution of power, so that Jeffson's moral rehabilitation from his decadent state becomes a symbol of the abandonment of the solipsistic individualist impulses of the capitalist (signified by Jeffson's morally vacuous actions when he is alone in the first half of the novel) for the collectivist impulses of the socialist. (signified by his morally virtuous actions after he enters into his relationship with Leda) Shiel does not mince words here; he likens the changeover to a religious conversion where Jeffson renounces his former declaration that it is 'natural' "that all history , and all civilization should have existed only in order to accumulate for my pleasures its inventions and facilities, its stores of purple and wine, of spices and gold" and contrasts the two modes of thought as modes of politics:

> It must be true, true that it is 'not good' for man to be alone. There was a religious sect in the Past which called itself 'Socialist': and with these must have been the truth, man being at his best and highest when most social, and at his worst and lowest when isolated: for the Earth gets hold of all isolation, and draws it, and makes it fierce, base, and materialistic, like sultans, aristocracies, and the like: but Heaven is where two or three are gathered together. (Shiel 207).

This use of a conventional romance to resolve both the internal and external conflicts of the narrative produces a good degree of thematic and tonal dissonance given the mania and terror that permeate the first half of the novel, a point on which it has been criticized. In an article entitled Supernatural Horror in Literature, H.P. Lovecraft—a writer much endeared to mania and terror in his own influential works—declares "Unfortunately the second half of the book, with its conventionally romantic element, involves a distinct letdown." (Lovecraft 1) But perhaps such criticism fails to appreciate the urban focus of the work; Shiel can only paint a portrait of white middle-class urbanite anxiety and its architecture of social power by painting an oppositional

image that inverts that architecture—and there are few better images to serve that role than that of an interracial romance with reciprocal power relations.

The same holds true of the portraits The Comet paints, only Dubois reverses the order. His story *begins* with a utopian interracial relationship that represents balanced power relations between all classes, races and genders and then ends with the shattering of this cohesion at the hands of the anxieties of white middle-class urbanites. In essence, Dubois's dead city uses the same mechanics as Shiel's to articulate the opposite message—as in the latter's novel, the emptiness of the city removes the gaze of a crowded urban society while retaining its form, allowing the narrative's characters to let their socially transgressive urges run wild. But while Shiel's novel sees its protagonist regress into violence, decadence and xenophobia, The Comet depicts a different transformation. It is crystallized when its main characters—a white woman and a black man—initially start to believe that they are the lone survivors of the apocalyptic event, and begin to converse with each other at length for the first time:

> "Have you had to work hard?" she asked softly.
> "Always," he said.
> "I have always been idle," she said. "I was rich."
> "I was poor," he almost echoed.
> "The rich and the poor are met together," she began, and he finished:
> "The Lord is the Maker of them all."
> "Yes," she said slowly; "and how foolish our human distinctions seem—now," looking down to the great dead city stretched below, swimming in unlightened shadows.
> "Yes—I was not—human, yesterday," he said.
> She looked at him. "And your people were not my people," she said; "but today——" She paused. He was a man,—no more; but he was in some larger sense a gentleman,—sensitive, kindly, chivalrous, everything save his hands and—his face. Yet yesterday——
> "Death, the leveler!" he muttered.
> "And the revealer," she whispered gently…Above the dead past hovered the Angel of Annunciation. She was no mere woman. She was neither high nor low, white nor black, rich nor poor. She was primal woman; mighty mother of all men to come and Bride of Life. She looked upon the man beside her and forgot all else but his manhood, his strong, vigorous manhood—his sorrow and sacrifice. She saw him glorified. He was no longer a thing apart, a creature below, a strange outcast of another clime and blood, but her Brother Humanity incarnate, Son of God and great All-Father of the race to be.

> …Up from the crass and crushing and cringing of his caste leaped the lone majesty of kings long dead. He arose within the shadows, tall, straight, and stern, with power in his eyes and ghostly scepters hovering to his grasp. It was as though some mighty Pharaoh lived again, or curled Assyrian lord. He turned and looked upon the lady, and found her gazing straight at him… Silently, immovably, they saw each other face to face—eye to eye. Their souls lay naked to the night. It was not lust; it was not love—it was some vaster, mightier thing that needed neither touch of body nor thrill of soul. It was a thought divine, splendid. (Dubois 15)

Dubois also temporarily turns his ghost metropolis into an analogue for the Garden of Eden, with an interracial couple posed as Adam and Eve figures. However, he provides a Rousseau-esque counterpoint to The Purple Cloud's more Lockean view of humanity as prone to violence and xenophobia when unrestrained by social conventions. As Rousseau did in The Social Contract, he seems to assert here that "Man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains." In isolation, the individual or even a group of individuals exist in peace and liberty as his two main characters do here; under society's institutional constraints, they end up in various states of bondage and conflict. In isolation, the natural kinship between human beings makes ethnic difference irrelevant; only in society do people develop social norms that divide them along the axes of race and make the expression of this kinship across the boundaries of racial difference transgressive. The latter part of the message does not become clear, however, until the close of the narrative. After the above exchange occurs and both protagonists have consummated their love, a group of white men arrive on the scene to inform them that only New York is empty and others have survived. This immediately tears down the utopian relationship, re-instating the social pressures of race and class conflict; when one of the men asks "Who was saved?", another answers "A white girl and a nigger", which is then followed by exclamations like "A nigger? Where is he? Let's lynch the damned—" such that by the end of the story, all the woman is inclined to do for her former lover is suggest with mild conviction that the newcomers not lynch him. (Dubois 17)

Underlying both Dubois's and Shiel's faux Edens is a socialist critique of the deleterious

consequences of capitalist society's unequal distribution of wealth and, by extension, social power; when power is shared reciprocally between the members of society and class divisions are cast off, people are capable of living in a stable, peaceful equilibrium. When power is organized hierarchically and individual self-interest replaces reciprocity, conflict is inevitable. Like Shiel, Dubois is hardly vague on this point; when he published The Comet in 1920 as the final chapter of a larger text mixing sociological essays with short fiction entitled Darkwater: Voices from Behind the Veil, he wrote the following in his fourth chapter on the state of human society in the first decades of the twentieth century:

> This is the stage for the tragedy: the armored might of the modern world urged by the bloody needs of the world wants, fevered today by a fabulous vision of gain and needing only hands, hands, hands! Fear of loss and greed of gain in the hearts of the giants; the clustered cunning of the modern workman, skilled as artificer and skilled in the rhythm of the habit of work, tasting the world's good and panting for more; fear of poverty and hate of "scabs" in the hearts of the workers; the dumb yearning in the hearts of the oppressed; the echo of laughter heard at the foot of the Pyramids; the faithful, plodding slouch of the laborers; fear of the Shadow of Death in the hearts of black men.
>
> We ask, and perhaps there is no answer, how far may the captain of the world's industry do his deeds, despite the grinding tragedy of its doing? How far may men fight for the beginning of comfort, out beyond the horrid shadow of poverty, at the cost of starving other and what the world calls lesser men? How far may those who reach up out of the slime that fills the pits of the world's damned compel men with loaves to divide with men who starve? (Darkwater 91)

With such a screed against industrial capitalism as prefatory material, the reciprocal power relations that characterize the utopian romance of The Comet's main characters can be read in the same light as those between Leda and Jeffson—as a somewhat conventional metaphor for utopian socialism. More significantly, they illustrate how the setting of the city magnifies power differentials by crowding multitudes of people with very different positions on the social pyramid into one suffocating space. The placement of this metaphor in New York City specifically, of course, reminds the reader that there are deeper valences to Dubois's imagery—and that it retains the central distinction the preceding analysis identifies in black sf's dead cities.

Dubois's criticism of the slum clearance initiatives carried out in The Philadelphia Negro gestures to the way his text exhibits its own understanding of the racial dimensions of demographic dislocation and increased congestion in American cities during the first stage of the Great Migration: whereas Shiel's text uses Jeffson's egomaniacal and xenophobic mindset to illustrate how the aggressive rearrangement of city infrastructure through urban redevelopment is driven partially by the allure of social power and partially by white middle-class anxiety over the economic consequences of large increases in the population of the city environment and the rapid growth of minority communities, Dubois uses the repeated dislocation of his story's protagonists to emphasize another principle at play—that of "out of sight out of mind." This is the hidden significance of his claim that "It is not well to clean a cesspool until one knows where the refuse can be disposed of without general harm." As much as slum clearance was about reforming the spatial architecture of the city, he suggests, it was also fundamentally about removing the social inequities and injustices of urban society from public view so as to remove it from public consciousness. This informs the opening lines of the story, where the black protagonist, Jim, expresses feelings of dislocation and displacement and attributes them to society's broad attempts to ignore his existence: "He stood a moment on the steps of the bank, watching the human river that swirled down Broadway. Few noticed him. Few ever noticed him save in a way that stung. He was outside the world—'nothing!' as he said bitterly." (Dubois 5)

Dubois wields his cataclysmic comet to inflate the dislocative force of slum clearance and other forms of urban renewal entailing large-scale demolitions to encompass the entire city. The few survivors of the catastrophe in the narrative are all forced to experience what the victims of such programs often experienced—with the conditions of their former lives eradicated, they are rendered homeless and forced into diaspora, spontaneously relocating to whatever new

territory can accommodate them. Until the New Deal era, slum clearance was not paired with any systematic attempts by city authorities to rehouse evicted tenants by building new, low-cost public housing, meaning appeals to such authorities accomplished little. This harsh reality is reflected in the first words of the first survivor Jim meets—the white woman, Julia, who he sees "leaning wildly out an upper window" of an apartment in a middle class neighborhood—who introduces herself to the reader by shouting

> "Hello—hello—help, in God's name!" wailed the woman. "There's a dead girl in here and a man and—and see yonder dead men lying in the street and dead horses—for the love of God go and bring the officers—" the words trailed off into hysterical tears. (Dubois 9)

Her desperate plea for help from city authorities is the desperation of the displaced slum dweller; despite the high social costs of turning poor families out onto the street en masse—the "dead men lying in the street"—no one with any power at City Hall is willing to "bring the officers" to their aid. The subsequent frantic movement by both Jim and the woman from one part of the city to the next in search of survivors mimics the frantic search of evicted slum-dwellers for new homes—and like them, they end up in places just as troubled as the run-down dwellings they came from:

> "Up and down, over and across, back again—on went that ghostly search. Everywhere was silence and death—death and silence! They hunted from Madison Square to Spuyten Duyvel; they rushed across the Williamsburg Bridge; they swept over Brooklyn; from the Battery and Morningside Heights they scanned the river. Silence, silence everywhere, and no human sign. Haggard and bedraggled they puffed a third time slowly down Broadway…She bent forward on the wheel and sobbed, with great, dry, quivering sobs, as they flew toward the cable office on the East side, leaving the world of wealth and prosperity for the world of poverty and work. In the world behind them were death and silence, grave and grim, almost cynical, but always decent; here it was hideous. It clothed itself in every ghastly form of terror, struggle, hate and suffering. It lay wreathed in crime and squalor, greed and lust. Only in its dread and awful silence was it like to death everywhere." (Dubois 11-13)

The order of the procession of neighborhoods both characters move through here is instructive:

Madison Square and Spuyten Duyvil have long been among New York's richest neighborhoods; Morningside Heights saw a burst of growth from 1900-1915 that solidified its status as a middle- and upper middle-class area in Manhattan; the Battery has always been home to middle-income and high-income city dwellers owing to its role as Southern Manhattan's harbor; and the East Side (and particularly the Lower East Side) contained what people referred to as the 'foul core' of New York's slums both during and after Dubois's time. His protagonists' journey re-enacts in metaphor the process Dubois refers to in his scathing footnote—the displaced populations of the cleared slums had neither the monetary nor social capital necessary to gain housing in (often overwhelmingly white) upper- or middle-class neighborhoods, and in time were ultimately either funneled into blighted areas with depreciated real estate or into areas dubbed by real estate agents as 'race-specific neighborhoods', which then experience a fall in property values, a rise in the externalities associated with concentrated poverty, and ultimately in cases like those of the residents of Rodman and Juniper Streets in nineteenth century Philadelphia the growth of a new slum. These problems would have been particularly acute and visible in the New York of 1920, with a stall in residential property construction in 1919 and the continued influx of black migrants from the South reducing the vacancy rate to near zero. (Max Page 98) Such crowding would ultimately lead Dubois to take up positions of some notoriety among people on both sides of the color line. Alarmed by the socioeconomic changes engendered by the Great Migration, he would end up advocating for an end to black migration from the South into the cities of the Frostbelt. History would largely brush aside his warnings and prescriptions; though the flow of migrants would experience a lull during the Great Depression, a Second Great Migration would unfold during the post-World War II boom years from 1945-1970.

Of Highways, Southern Strategies and the 'New York Approach': The Wraith Metropolises of Chip Delany

Following Dubois and Shiel's work, it would be forty years before black sf added another dead city to its repertoire. Needless to say, urban redevelopment programs would not endure a similar hiatus. As before, New York stood as an iconic exemplar of the evolution of these programs, capturing in its story the character of similar dramas unfolding in cities across the United States.

Key to this story is the troubled neighborhood Dubois's two protagonists arrive at after their frantic search—the crime and poverty-ridden tenements of the Lower East Side, the "foul core" of New York's slums. As housing construction experienced a boom in the 1920's, new middle-income housing in Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx nearer to the rapidly expanding elevated train and subway systems drew away many upwardly mobile working class New Yorkers remaining in the neighborhood. As the population dropped precipitously from approximately 530,000 to 250,000 in 1930 and landlords faced mounting financial challenges, they decided the only remaining option was to renovate or reconstruct their properties into middle-income housing or commercial buildings. (Page 100)

With the dawn of the Great Depression, the *laissez faire* ideologies that had been inherited from the Gilded Age largely fell out of favor with the public and the New Deal's promises of optimal outcomes created by the coordination of private industry and government came to define the popular mindset. This was visible in the real estate sector of New York's economy: in 1934 the New York City Housing Authority was created, and by the end of World War II it had enacted a plethora of projects that carried out large-scale demolitions of slums to replace them with public housing and commercial buildings—helping to effect the transformations landlords like those with properties in the Lower East Side claimed was their only ticket to making their real estate profitable again. (Page 102)

While the urban renewal initiatives of the early twentieth century posed problems for urban African American communities, they were not nearly as deleterious as those undertaken during the Great Depression and after World War II. From the 1930's to the 1960's, these predominantly took the form of Robert Moses's "New York Approach". With his hands on the reins of political power in the Big Apple, Moses bull-dozed scores of neighborhoods filled with minorities and blue collar workers to build huge corporate headquarters, freeways and bridges. As the slum clearance of an earlier era had done—although this time on a much larger scale—Moses's new form of redevelopment forced the poor tenants of the bulldozed neighborhoods into an exodus to other, more ghettoized areas where the externalities of overcrowding and poverty redoubled their effects on the black community. The repeated diasporas became so egregious that leading black intellectuals like James Baldwin came to label urban renewal programs "Negro Removal".[1]

Aside from these forced dislocations, the New York Approach and the age of the automobile also brought large infrastructural changes to the city. The highway system combined with racialized mortgage-lending spurred white flight to the suburbs and urban sprawl, phenomena which not only thinned out the city's tax base but also prompted many middle-class African Americans to leave the older central cities as well. Already ghettoized neighborhoods soon began to see the development of an increasingly large 'underclass' of African Americans enduring high unemployment and rates of poverty in the city's hardest-hit neighborhoods. (Wilson 63)

Growing up in this milieu was a black, gay, dyslexic sf literary wunderkind named Samuel "Chip" Delany, whose work has already been introduced in prior chapters' discussions of the imperial city. Born on April Fool's Day just four months after the U.S.'s official entrance

into World War II, he lived in East Harlem during his youth as the precocious son of his father, a funeral home proprietor, a mother who worked as a clerk for New York's Public Library system, and the dear nephew of civil rights pioneers Sadie and Bessie Delany. His time there brought him into close contact with Moses-style demolition, living not far from many of the neighborhoods that would be bulldozed in the name of reconstruction-qua-deconstruction and only about seven miles North of the Lower East Side. The consequences of these projects of aggressive spatial rearrangement would shape his identity to such a degree that the opening lines of his autobiography The Motion of Light and Water are dedicated to haunting images of a 1963 urban redevelopment project in the Lower East Side: "Demolition for the Village View Apartments hadn't quite finished…in July dawns you could still wander the small streets…and among the devastated acres, catch sight, in the muggy morning, of fires here and there beside one or another still standing tenement wall." (Motion 1) In a bit of poetic irony, he goes on to mention this particular demolition took place not far from a completed renewal project of an earlier era with a fitting name: The Jacob Riis Houses, overlooking the East River.

Harlem endured all the worst effects of Moses-era programs of redevelopment, and its hardships stand as a representation of how urban renewal transformed the fabric of black urban social life. The new highways constructed throughout New York City carried the white population of the neighborhood away following a series of racially-charged riots starting in the mid-1930s and extending through the 1940s, destroying the last vestiges of the entertainment industry that had defined the area during the Harlem Renaissance but had suffered heavily during the Depression years. (Gill 282) While Moses carried out plenty of slum clearance, he contributed little to the Harlem economy. His demolition initiatives did not involve plans to replace bulldozed parks and recreational sites, leaving the neighborhood with fewer of each than

other sections of New York—of 255 playgrounds built under Moses, a grand total of one went to Harlemites. (Caro 252)

From the rough materials of this history of struggle and dislocation Delany constructed two very different but equally significant dead cities. He named the first of these ghosts Telphar—once again discussed in chapter two—which sprung forth from his pen when he was only twenty-one years old in 1963's Captives of the Flame, the first of the three parts of his Fall of the Towers series, later published as a single volume in 1970. Like its precursors, Telphar demonstrates an awareness of the racial displacement that results from the aggressive reconfiguration of the city's infrastructure through the leveling and subsequent rebuilding of neighborhoods; its portrayal throughout Fall of the Towers can be read as a critique of Moses-style renewal programs dressed in the trappings of classic Campbellian sf.

This critique channels—knowingly or unknowingly—the criticism of perhaps the most famous opponent of Moses and his style of 'creative destruction', the urban sociologist Jane Jacobs. Two years before Delany published his first visions of Telphar, Jacobs published The Death and Life of Great American Cities, perhaps the most famous academic assault on the urban planning establishment. In it, she argued that city neighborhoods were systems exhibiting 'organized complexity'—though their many parts (people, buildings, commodities) seem to operate individually without any direct coordination between each other, their interaction in aggregate gives way to emergent properties of a highly ordered nature, as the intricate and perfectly symmetrical shape of a fractal is constructed from graphing randomized inputs plugged into a basic mathematical algorithm. (Jacobs 432) As such, Jacobs claims, attempts by the state to reorganize the spatial configuration of these neighborhoods in a rationalistic, bureaucratized, top-down fashion only serve to disrupt their natural equilibrium and community cohesion; urban

life unfolds according to an underlying algorithm they cannot understand, and trying to force it to conform to their own invented algorithms only throws its functioning out of joint. (Jacobs 270-288)

Delany signals throughout The Fall of the Towers that he, too, conceives of cities in this fashion. This is perhaps clearest when the reader first meets the three-minded, god-like being who does battle with the novel's principle antagonist, a singular but similarly god-like intelligence called The Lord of the Flames. Their introduction takes place in a city far from the future Earth where Telphar is located, and is prefaced by a simple question from the narrator: "What is a city?" Delany's answer is that

> "Responding to the psychic pressures of those who observed it, at times the City seemed a lake, at others a catacomb of caves. Once it had appeared a geyser of flame, and occasionally it looked like buildings, towers, lopped together with elevated roads, with double light glinting from thousands of sunward windows. Whatever it was, it stood alone…" (Fall of the Towers 139)

This establishes the urban order as one of organized complexity; it exhibits definite forms, but these ordered forms emerge from the chaotic interaction of many different constituent parts. They are radically contingent in nature, and so change organically when their parts change, as confirmed when Delany delineates the urban order as something that "responds to the psychic pressures of those who observe it"—that is, the city's character changes as its inhabitants change, they being the most essential components of the system.

A system of such rich complexity does not lend itself to forms of central planning that try to arrange it into a static order that has been mapped out in advance, as New York Approach urban planners had hoped to do once they bulldozed themselves their urban *tabula rasa*; furthermore, attempting to achieve such a static order requires strict control and regulation of

parts that are numerous and interact in chaotic fashion, necessitating possibly oppressive actions by a central authority.

Telphar represents the negative outcomes of such attempts at central planning by the rational bureaucratic state. Delany hints at this in his protagonist Jon Koshar's description of the city to his sister, in which he compares it to Toron, the capital of the Toromon empire in which the majority of the novel's action takes place: "Clea, it's like an open-air tomb. The city is very unlike Toron. It was planned, all the streets are regular, there's no Devil's Pot nor could there ever be one. Roadways wind above ground among the taller buildings." (Fall of the Towers 53) With the 'Devil's Pot' being a rough working-class neighborhood in Toron, Telphar's planned form, its "regular streets" and its grandiose but inaccessible roadways present a foil of rationalistic urban planning to compare to the organic but messy social order of the typical urban neighborhood. A similar notion is communicated by its role in the plot of the novel; as is eventually learned, it houses an ancient supercomputer that perpetuates the wartime economy of Toron by controlling the dreams of a captive population of the latter city's denizens to simulate a war against an unknown "enemy beyond the barrier". With a giant supercomputer providing an apt sf analogue for the rational bureaucratic state, this method of regulating Toron's population demonstrates the kind of oppressive, rigid and expansive forms of state control that would be required to make central planning of the urban order successful over the long run. Indeed, it is not too much of a stretch to see this as a dystopian symbolization of the political measures taken by Moses and other urban planners to push their projects through. Moses in particular would use all manner of corruption, political strong-arming and laundered money to attain absolute control over the construction of all public housing in New York and the toll income from its busy Triborough Bridge, giving him unprecedented command of the urban landscape and the public

officials that were supposed to manage it.

Beyond its role in the plot, Telphar articulates a critique of urban renewal through its most prominent re-occuring images. Chief among these is the 'transit ribbon', a device that allows people and materials to be beamed from Telphar to Toron and back which Koshar discovers in his initial encounter with the dead city in the opening pages of the novel. This device reappears throughout the novel and plays an important part in Telphar's system of social control. In each of its appearances it is described with the imagery of highways; it loops through all of Toron and only mildly conforms to the demands of the city's layout, being held high above it by an endless series of 'pylons'—a descriptor that conjures the image of the pillars that support the mega-highways Moses imposed onto the body of New York City. The fact that the transit ribbon is the most direct method of traveling from Telphar to other urban areas transforms the city's ghostly state into a symbol for the blight that follows ill-conceived highway construction. It was not until Moses's aggressive efforts to build New York's highways, after all, that urban sprawl became widespread and Delany would see middle-income denizens of Harlem use them to relocate to the suburbs. Delany reinforces this symbolism in his description of the ribbon's history, in which he discloses that "As a token to this new direction of science [of transmitting matter over long distances], the transit-ribbon was commissioned to link the two cities [of Telphar and Toron]. It was more a gesture of the solidarity of the Toromon empire than a practical appliance." (Fall of the Towers 10) This historical context parallels and criticizes the manner in which Moses and other urban planners went about building the highways: they commissioned them as a means to connect two or more large hubs of commerce, but their plans often completely ignored the particular qualities and needs of the individual neighborhoods they cut through—making them more symbols of the power and authority wielded by the central

planners than symbols of beneficial innovation in urban infrastructure. Indeed, it was the consistent impracticality of Moses's largest projects that ultimately provoked a backlash against him.[2]

The racial dislocations at work in The Fall of the Towers and Telphar are seen more at the margins of the story than at the center. However, the history of the 'forest people' in the novel provides an example of the gestures Delany makes to the ugly racial history of Moses-style redevelopment. They are a loosely knit population of mutant creatures resembling highly intelligent Neanderthals that live in the jungle right next to the mainland where the maritime industries of the Toromon Empire operate. Ultimately, the reader learns that their mutations are the result of their exposure to nuclear radiation generated by a device controlled by Toron's leaders and the central computer of Telphar. They also learn that this radiation-generating device was used to drive out the inhabitants of Telphar by engulfing the city in radioactive energy. The resulting implication is that actions taken by central authorities to control the population of Telphar through the device's use are at least partially responsible for the mutation of the Forest People. This is similar to the pattern of displacement that should now be familiar to us: attempts to renovate struggling neighborhoods through central planning and urban renewal—renovations which by the 1950's were usually targeted at black-majority neighborhoods—facilitated a diaspora of the groups within those neighborhoods to other areas of the city. Here, however, the radiation poisoning and genetic disruptions provide another layer of symbolism for this process, signifying the long-term toll such repeated displacement can take on any demographic group: the psychological scars of homelessness; the physical and mental deformities engendered by persistent poverty; and the social isolation at both the individual and community-wide level.

Telphar was the creation of a young Delany still leaning heavily on his Campbellian and pulp sf influences; by the 1970's he had shed these remnants of an earlier era and fully embraced the formal and thematic experimentation of the New Wave, epitomized in his sprawling 1975 tome Dhalgren. It was also in the 1970's, as the postwar boom came to an end, that urban renewal programs had some of their most disastrous effects. In the light of the Civil Rights Movement's breakthroughs, political authorities in key positions of municipal and federal power cultivated a 'Southern Strategy' whereby they would adopt policies designed to gain the favor of racist whites and 'George Wallace voters' while avoiding the use of overtly racial language, aiming to undermine the political coalitions that helped the Civil Rights Movement succeed. Particularly under the political regime of Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and their Secretary of State John Mitchell urban renewal programs were enrolled in the strategy with the aid of organizations like the Federal Housing Authority and that infamously powerful tool of social engineering, the redlining of mortgages. Their actions would jointly foster a plague of inner city dereliction. As Richard Morris's landmark 1978 study tells us,

> "No longer was [The FHA] an agency designed to shore up bank confidence in areas suffering from a shortage of mortgage capital. FHA became, instead, a mechanism to direct bank investment *away* from Northeastern and Midwestern cities and toward the booming Sun Belt. No longer were mortgages insured in the inner city or in the Northeast; instead the bulk of FHA insurance commitments flowed South where it acted to attract mortgage money from all over the nation with the lure of a building boom supplemented by the attractions of federal insurance." (Morris 76)

Aided by the power of mortgage lenders' red pencils, the FHA helped insurance companies, banks and S&L's extract capital from the Frostbelt's inner cities without having to lend it back, particularly to black-majority neighborhoods. Redlining helped set up a self-reinforcing process of decline, as "banks assessed neighborhoods negatively prior to the actual evidence of blight without reference to the specifics of resident credit ratings, housing conditions, community

viability or business solvency." (Morris 159) The resultant collapse in housing values depressed city revenues and prompted absentee landlords to flee from their tax bills; this ravaged the older central cities' already declining tax bases and froze them out of the municipal bond market, leading to a downward spiral of fiscal crises that necessitated heavy cuts to municipal services and ultimately the withdrawal of maintenance and vital services from inner-city neighborhoods. A pandemic of urban blight would follow, swelling the ranks of a black urban underclass already enduring calamitous levels of poverty, unemployment and social isolation. (Davis 389)

Delany's second dead city, the mysterious Midwestern metropolis of Bellona in which Dhalgren is set, makes use of the narrative techniques of sf but addresses these historical developments more directly than in his prior works of fiction. This engagement with the changes in the inner city wrought by urban renewal is what sets it apart, he claims, from the mid-seventies postmodern tome to which it is most often compared—Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow, also published in 1975.

> "Gravity's Rainbow is a fantasy about a war most of its readers don't really remember, whereas Dhalgren is in fairly pointed dialogue with all the depressed and burned-out areas of America's great cities…to see what Dhalgren is about, you only have to walk along a mile of your own town's inner city." (Silent Interviews 37)

Dhalgren unfolds as a series of images representing various aspects of inner city decline which collectively point to urban redevelopment programs as the phenomenon's largest cause. In this sense it can be read as a response to popular explanations of this decline that lay the blame on the culture of impoverished black communities; by the time of the novel's publication, such explanations had garnered support from controversial works of social science like Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 study of poverty in black ghettos, The Negro Family: The Case for National Action. Moynihan's report attributed inner city decline and black poverty less to structural

forces than to ghetto culture, claiming "at the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time." (Moynihan 3) Fatherlessness and an overabundance of single-mother households were Moynihan's culprits, which he claimed proved a reversal of sociology's materialist assumptions. "The work began in the most orthodox setting," he would write later, "the U.S. Department of Labor, to establish at some level of statistical conciseness what 'everyone knew': that economic conditions determine social conditions. Whereupon, it turned out that what everyone knew was evidently not so." (Miles to Go 170) As a longtime student and advocate of Marxian economics and Marxist social theory, Delany rejects such explanations. He registers his objections most explicitly in his later works of urban history and sociology such as Times Square Red, Times Square Blue , where he launches the following broadside on both the notion that the inner city's troubles stem from a "tangle of pathology" on the part of its residents and the notion that urban renewal's goal is to improve the quality of life in its targeted communities:

> "The New Times Square is simply not about making the area safe for women. It is not about supporting the theater and arts. It is not about promoting economic growth in the city…The New Times Square is about developers doing as much demolition and renovation as possible in the neighborhood, and as much construction work as they possibly can. Some old-fashioned Marxism might be useful here: infrastructure determines superstructure—not the other way around. And for all their stabilizing or destabilizing potential, discourse and rhetoric are superstructural phenomena." (Times Square Red 161)

Psychological explanations for inner city decline, in other words, have it backwards; studies like the Moynihan report mistake the symptom for the disease and the disease for the symptom. Dhalgren unfolds this critique in its portrayal of the role of Bellona's infrastructure. This is most obvious in instances such as the reflection of the novel's protagonist, Kid, on the fate of a minor character who dies by falling down an apartment building's elevator shaft earlier in the novel:

> "…suppose it's an accident?" He took another breath. "*That's* what frightens me …Because …Because that means it's the city. That means it's the landscape: the bricks, and the girders, and the faulty wiring and the shot elevator machinery, all conspiring together to *make* these myths true." (Dhalgren 236)

While 'myths' can evoke many valences here, among the most prescient of the term's possible meanings is "a popular explanation for worldly phenomena not rooted in the empirical, analytical reasoning of scientific research", like ancient Greek mythology's attribution of meteorological phenomena to stories of the caprice of the Olympian Gods. At the same time, of course, a myth may simply be a story that crystalizes a popular cultural ideal or mindset. In both cases the popular explanation or cultural ideal has the potential to carry racial prejudice within it.

Delany thus seems to suggest in such passages that urban planning informed by racial prejudice will create situations mirroring the myths that form the basis of that prejudice. If infrastructural change proceeds according to a myth that black inner city poverty is the result of a "black culture of poverty", it will foster the creation of communities and socioeconomic trends that conform to that myth. This is the significance of the caveat that follows the passage from Times Square Red, Times Square Blue above:

> There is, of course, a corollary particularly important for late-consumer-media dominated capitalism that's largely overlooked in classical Marxism: 'Superstructure stabilizes infrastructure'…superstructural forces…may decide a small business to shutdown and vacate to Queens…but infrastructural forces will determine whether the landlord has three bids from white-owned businesses for the same space two months before his long-term Puerto Rican dry cleaner tenant leaves—or whether the same space will sit vacant for the next eighteen months with a crack across the glass behind the window gate." (Times Square Red 162)

Misguided analyses such as Moynihan's that focus single-mindedly on superstructural phenomena—his report barely mentions the perpetual exoduses created by urban renewal programs—thus have the potential to perpetuate development of the spatial base that will replicate said superstructure; analyses of the urban order must hence be wary of falling prey to

such self-fulfilling prophesies, as they easily breed self-defeating attitudes towards problems in the urban environment.[3]

Dhalgren expresses this attitude toward the representation of demographic dislocation at multiple registers. In its more abstract and surreal moments, it literalizes the process of displacement-through-infrastructural-change for Bellona's scant smattering of remaining residents. This is the significance of the multiple instances throughout the novel in which the city rearranges itself to the confusion and dismay of its various inhabitants. Initially one is tempted to attribute this to hallucination or madness on the part of Kid, who is hinted to be mentally unstable; however, the phenomenon is later confirmed by the testimony of other characters such as Tak, one of the first people Kid meets as he enters Bellona who declares in a lament over the fact that he can't tell time inside the city that "It's not the season that changes. It's us. The whole city shifts, turns, rearranges itself. All the time. And rearranges us…I'm damned if I wouldn't have sworn morning used to start over there." (Dhalgren 46).

While these Calvino-esque moments of surrealist metaphor permeate the novel, Delany also engages with the racial aspect of his dislocations in a more straightforward fashion. This becomes evident in the few glimpses one gets of Bellona's history, as in the brief recapitulation of the city's long-term demographic trends proffered to us in an argumentative exchange dominated by the character of Paul Fenster, a civil rights advocate living in the city's largest black neighborhood:

> "Maybe you've lost ninety-five percent of your population, but you're still the same city you were before…Bellona was…what? Maybe thirty percent black? Now, even though you've lost so many people, bet it's closer to sixty. From my estimate, at any rate…you're still kidding yourself if you think you don't have a black problem here." (Dhalgren 266)

The trends Fenster mentions in this comment directly mirror the trends that characterized the growth of the black underclass throughout the Moses era. The real estate titan's method of slicing through ghettos and low-income neighborhoods to build highways providing automotive access to the suburbs effected a similar process of funneling poor black urban dwellers into ever more-concentrated ghettos while luring away white middle-class urbanites. With real estate agents often unwilling to lend suburban mortgages to black families or confining them to small neighborhoods closer to the city and away from their white clients, city-dwelling African Americans increased their share of the total urban population dramatically but also became poorer as a whole. The urban sociologist William Julius Wilson would later cite this process in his counterarguments to the superstructural hypotheses that evolved from the Moynihan report:

> More specifically, I believe that the exodus of middle- and working-class families from many ghetto neighborhoods removes an important "social buffer" that could deflect the full impact of the kind of prolonged and increasing joblessness that plagued inner-city neighborhoods in the 1970s and early 1980s, joblessness created by uneven economic growth and periodic recessions. (Wilson 56)

Both Dhalgren and sociologists like Wilson see this problem as reinforced by the tendency of news media to sensationalize the worst aspects of underclass inner city culture, a tendency which lends credence to flawed pathological explanations for black urban poverty and perpetuates the processes that impoverish inner city black neighborhoods. In his study of mass media coverage of black Americans from the 1950's to the end of the twentieth century, for example, sociologist Martin Gilen describes the growth of this trend in the coverage of poverty and poverty-fighting initiatives during the period:

> First, the stage was set by a series of historical changes and events that made black poverty a less remote concern for white Americans. These included the migration of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North, the increasing representation of blacks among AFDC beneficiaries, the civil rights movement, and the riots of the mid-1960s. But these changes only created the environment in which racial portrayals of

> poverty were transformed. The proximate cause of that transformation was the shift in the moral tone of poverty coverage in the news. As news stories about the poor became less sympathetic, the images of poor blacks in the news swelled. The association of African Americans with the "undeserving poor" is evident not only in the changing media coverage of poverty during the mid-1960s, but throughout the period studied. From the early 1950s through the early 1990s, images of poor blacks increased when the tone of poverty stories became more critical of the poor and decreased when coverage became more sympathetic. Similarly, images of African Americans were most numerous in news stories about the least sympathetic subgroups of the poor…these differences in the racial portrayal of the poor cannot be accounted for by true changes in the racial composition of the poverty population or by racial differences across subgroups of the poor. Rather, the media's tendency to associate African Americans with the undeserving poor rejects—and reinforces— the centuries-old stereotype of blacks as lazy. (Gilens 102)

Dhalgren is all too aware of the state of this media bias and its effects. For instance, criticism like Gilen's reverberates in passages like Delany's initial introduction to Bellona, where he declares

> "Very few expect the existence of this city. It is as if not only the media but the laws of perspective themselves have redesigned knowledge and perception to pass it by. Rumor says there is practically no power here. Neither television cameras nor on-the-spot broadcasts function: that such a catastrophe should be opaque, and therefore dull, to the electric nation! It is a city of inner discordances and retinal distortions." (Dhagren 26)

With the nation acting largely with indifference towards the decay of the inner city by the 1970's, it would be easy for the casual outside observer to gloss over it as if it did not exist. Furthermore, with little documentation of the deeper material and spatial aspects of the process going on in a supposedly cutting-edge, 'electric' media environment, coverage becomes biased towards cultural spectacle—spectacle more easily wrangled from the most outrageous and stereotype-reinforcing members of poor black communities than from the complexities of the process of racialized ghettoization. This spectacle obfuscates the underlying causes of these phenomena by focusing the individual's attention solely on the visceral qualities of the superstructural manifestations of a complex infrastructural problem. Delany comments on this early in the novel in his first description of the fires that burn non-stop in Bellona, connoting in

his imagery the media coverage of the race riots of the sixties and seventies:

> "There is no articulate resonance. The common problem, I suppose, is to have more to say than vocabulary and syntax can bare. That is why I am hunting in these desiccated streets. The smoke hides the sky's variety, stains consciousness, covers the holocaust with something safe and insubstantial. It protects from greater flame. It indicates fire, but obscures the source. This is not a useful city. Very little here approaches the eidolon of the beautiful." (Dhalgren 80)

By focusing the public's attention on the violent images of the riot—the 'smoke that stains consciousness'—media coverage of such racially-infused conflicts obscures their deeper socioeconomic causes and "covers the holocaust" of the ghettoization of black communites in the city "with something safe and insubstantial." But as before, Dhalgren does not just address the racial character of this issue in such an abstract fashion; Delany also addresses it directly through such characters as George Harrison.

George Harrison is Dhalgren's amalgamation of fetishized and sensationalized images of the inner city African American male that play to the cultural fears of bourgeois whites in the U.S. He is introduced to the reader as Kid learns about a riot that took place in Bellona's black neighborhood in the novel's recent history from the testimony of another minor character, Joaquim Faust. While it is implied that the persistent social isolation that afflicts constantly dislocated inner city blacks is the root cause of the riot, Bellona's only form of news media—the local newspaper produced by the rich media mogul Roger Calkins—focuses instead on the outrageous actions of Harrison and plays to the paranoid racial fear of the black male as a serial rapist of white women:

> "See if you can get ahold of the paper for that day…There's supposed to be one set of pictures; of this *big* buck, getting after this little white girl…a whole *lot* of stink about them pictures. 'Rape' is the nasty word they didn't use in the paper but rape is what it was. People was saying Calkins shouldn't've printed them. But you know what he did?...He went down and hunted up the nigger in the pictures and had somebody

> interview him; and he printed *every*thing. Now if you ask me, what he shouldn't've done was that interview. I mean, Calkins is all interested in civil rights and things. He really is. The colored people in this town had it bad I guess, and he was concerned with that. Really concerned. But that nigger had the dirtiest mouth, and didn't use it to talk nothing but dirt. I don't think he even knew what a newspaper interview was. I mean, I know the colored people got it rough. But if you want to help, you don't print a picture of the biggest, blackest buck in the world messin' up some little blond-headed seventeen year old girl, and then runnin' two pages of him saying how good it was, with every other word 'shit' and 'fuck' and 'Wooo-eeee,' how he's going to get him some more as soon as he can, and how easy it's gonna be with no pigs around! I mean not if you want to help—do you? And because of the article, Harrison—his name was George Harrison—is some sort of hero, to all the niggers left over in Jackson; and you'd think just about everybody else, too…There's this other colored man up from the South, some civil rights, militant person—a Mr Paul Fenster? He got here right around the time it happened. Calkins knows him too, I guess, and writes about what he's doing a lot. Now I would guess this guy probably has some decent intentions; but how's he going to do anything at all with that George Harrison business?" (Dhalgren 78)

Faust's comments describe the process by which the media exaggeration and inflation of the spectacle of stereotyped images of urban African Americans reinforces the process of urban blight and, more broadly, American racial prejudices. Yet like Wilson Delany also eschews a single-minded focus on the superstructural; this media tendency, he indicates, is not the mere result of prejudice on the part of those working in the media but part of a larger socioeconomic system. The representative figure of the news media—Calkins—is not portrayed as a 'George Wallace' racist; in fact, his image is one of a well-intentioned white social activist who is beset by a certain cultural tone deafness (or, less charitably, illiteracy). Nonetheless, with the figure of George Harrison inflated to mythic proportions and stoking bourgeois whites' racial fears, Calkins and the media foil legitimate attempts at improving the lot of poor urban blacks by less tone-deaf advocates like Fenster. As these myth-sized stereotypes circulate, they strengthen their association in popular culture with the black neighborhoods of the inner city, further incentivizing the process of sprawl, while distracting from the role of the dislocative forces of urban renewal in compounding black urban poverty.

Together both of Delany's ghost cities serve to further define a historical arch to the typology's use in black sf literature that tracks the evolution of urban renewal programs; furthermore, his commentary on the way they converse with the racial history of urban dereliction and its intimate ties to the history of such programs helps to contextualize and reinforce the above readings of Dubois and Shiel as participating in a similar conversation. These authors' use of the conventions of Anglophone sf's dead cities prove that their work is deeply intertwined with that of their white peers. However, the continuity of the awareness of the racialized character of the displacements caused by the aggressive destruction and reconstruction of the urban form by central authorities also testifies to a uniqueness on the part of black sf—a 'black difference' as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. might call it—that reflects the uniqueness of black urban history. To that end, this project must disagree with Dhalgren's narrator when he asserts that Bellona "is not a useful city."

On the Blackness of Floods, Finance and The Undead: Colson Whitehead and the New Urban Renewal

Delany's generation of black Harlemites grew up watching Moses and Nixon-era urban renewal plant the seeds of inner city decay; when Dhalgren was published, "Chip" was thirty-three and intellectually engaged with pushing back at the urban planning establishment in the spirit of Jacobs.

But by the time the next generation of black Manhattan natives entered the early years of their childhood, both Moses and Nixon had faded from power by falling victim to their own excesses. The author of black sf's next high-profile dead city had just been born when the Metropolitan Transportation Authority finally froze 'The Power Broker' out of its sphere of influence in the late 1960's and was merely five years old when the thirty-seventh president

resigned in 1974 over Watergate. The urban order Colson Whitehead's generation faced would be defined by new forms of urban redevelopment, as well as the rotten fruits grown from the seeds planted by their predecessors. When in his forties he penned 2012's Zone One, a zombie horror novel qua racial commentary, the derelict New York City he would erect would reflect and critique these changes—confirming once again what sets black sf's dead cities apart from their peers. Or, as he puts it, "The postapocalyptic wasteland is usually a literal wasteland, the desert or the country; I grew up in postapocalyptic New York—my horrible '70s is my apocalypse." (Schulman 131)

A similar experience could be attributed to many inner city black communities in the following decades. The 1980s and the first half of the 1990s bore out the worst effects of urban renewal's dislocations; both concentrated poverty and violent crime exploded in the largest U.S. cities, reaching unprecedented heights in ghettoized black-majority neighborhoods and dovetailing with an emergent crack-cocaine epidemic that exacerbated the mass incarceration of black men. While the latter half of the 1990s and the early 2000s saw a decline in these historically high rates, the trend would reverse from the latter half of the first decade of the millennium to the present. Problems of prolonged unemployment and a preponderance of single-mother households compounded and grew, and "culture of poverty" arguments gained renewed strength (and renewed resistance from scholars like Wilson) from the work of sociologists like Charles Murray, who argued in his 1984 treatise Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980 that the persistence of high rates of crime and poverty in black underclass inner city neighborhoods stemmed largely from a culture of dependency and low productivity created by government welfare policies.

Meanwhile, neoliberal capitalism replaced the old Keynesian industrial capitalist regime

and rose to dominance on the back of renewed economic growth and the collapse of communism. With a deindustrialized economy increasingly dominated by an integrated finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) sector and an accelerating trend of the globalization of capital, newly deregulated financial markets feasted on cheap urban real estate. The diversification and prominent rise in value of real-estate backed financial instruments coupled with new 'pro-growth' policies facilitated a surge in mortgage lending that moved commercial capital into formerly blighted inner city neighborhoods that now provided a surplus of cheap real estate. In essence, what had been destroyed and abandoned by targeted redlining in the seventies was now being colonized by the targeted green-lining of hungry lenders in the twilight of the twentieth century and the early light of the twenty-first. The gentrification of these decaying neighborhoods heralded a new era of urban renewal: old "problematic" areas of the city could now be "saved" by having commercial interests buy up and renovate their dilapidated properties. (Hyra 2) While not quite as overt as slum clearance or the bulldozing of low-income housing for highway construction, the effect was much the same—the poor inhabitants of neighborhoods targeted for gentrification were forced to migrate to other declining areas of central cities as increased rents and residential property values made it too expensive to stay in their former homes. A familiar pattern replicated itself, if in a newly financialized form.

Zone One takes aim at gentrification; however, it also addresses another form of urban redevelopment that has gained widespread visibility only very recently. Social activist and researcher Naomi Klein as well as others inspired by her best-known work, The Shock Doctrine, have labeled this phenomenon 'disaster capitalism,' wherein dominant capital coalitions (aided by compliant national and transnational governments) leverage the emotional and socioeconomic upheaval created by ecological and socioeconomic catastrophes to push through programs and

policies that allow them not only to profit from the aftermath, but to exert social control over the dislocated victims. (Schuller et al. 20) While not strictly limited to disasters in cities, the most visible example in recent history—the relief operations and political maneuverings following the horrors of Hurricane Katrina and the flooding of New Orleans—seared the process into the urban fabric of the U.S., and into Whitehead's novel. Zone One draws on the imagery of this catastrophe to highlight a deep connection between gentrification and disaster capitalism, exposing them as integrated parts of the newest incarnation of urban renewal and the systematic process of racial dislocation that continues to define it.

Of course, Whitehead's narrative differs from the other dead cities covered so far in that it is more of an undead city. While the qualities of the derelict metropolis remain in place—the laws of civilization have vanished, the city has become an unknown territory to explore and conquer, wild forces have overrun the technological dominion of urbanity, etc.—they are coupled with new dynamics created by the overwhelming presence of the 'walking dead.'

The zombie is a richly polyvalent figure; while purveyors of fantastic fiction have long known it as a stock character deployed in a variety of narrative contexts, its origins are far older than 'zombie horror', and lie in the racial history of slavery. In Haiti's Voodoun culture, the figure first appeared during the 17th and 18th century era of French colonial rule when the black population of the island nation—then the colony of Saint-Domingue—lived under the brutal system of plantation slavery. The horrific conditions they were subject to made suicidal feelings a constant presence and suicide a constant recourse for slaves who felt they could bear no more—something which the slave-owner saw as a threat to his wealth. It is thought that the Vodoun myth of the zombie arose as plantation slave drivers—who were often slaves themselves as well as voodoo priests—sought to use it to control rebellious or suicidal slaves and prevent

them from taking actions that would disrupt the functioning of the plantation system. According to this myth, if you offended the God of the Dead, Baron Samedi, instead of taking you to a heavenly afterlife in a mythical, paradisiacal 'Lan Guinee' in Africa he would resurrect you as a zombie, both dead for eternity and under the ultimate control of a mortal master—trapped in an eternal form of slavery from which there is no hope of escape. (Wilentz 1) Fittingly, Baron Samedi did not appear as some mythical creature or come clothed in mystical robes. He manifested instead as a man wearing a black fedora, a business suit and sunglasses; he came clothed in the robes of the capitalist.

It seems unlikely this racial genealogy escaped the agile-minded Whitehead, who has compared Zone One to other books that use genre types as metaphors to explore African American history's roots in slavery. "Looking back at [Toni Morrison's] Beloved…I was fortified by these so-called literary writers doing horror stories, genre stories…Beloved is a ghost story" that channels and grapples with the history of slavery just as his own novel does through the genre of zombie horror. (Schulman 131) Accordingly, he drops hints of the zombie's cultural heritage throughout the novel. Indeed, the moment before they learn the name of the protagonist, Mark Spitz, the reader witnesses him staring down at the landscape of Manhattan where he describes the straggling zombies he sees as slaves: "He was fifteen floors up, in the heart of Zone One, and shapes trudged like slaves higher and higher into Midtown." (Whitehead 9) Later, in describing a government-run refugee camp, he notes "The civilians in the camp could be policed, as most never left the perimeter, but untold Americans still walked the great out there, beyond order's embrace, like slaves…" (Whitehead 48) Even these brief narrative moments suggest Whitehead is linking the zombie's roots in slavery to the racial history of the city; Midtown Manhattan is the largest central business district in New York City and a symbol

of the American ideal of ascending to a comfortable position in the middle class. It not only signifies what many poor, marginalized urban minority groups still aspire to, but what the former slaves who came flooding into the city during the Great Migration aspired to. Whitehead's sly rhetorical maneuvers link all these historical moments and cultural attitudes together in the figure of the zombie, from the opening pages of the novel to its close.

Through this figure, Whitehead is able to circumscribe the use of disaster capitalism to reformat the physical and socioeconomic structure of the city and to exploit and control poor urban minorities; the racialized character of the displacement this method of urban redevelopment causes reinforces the distinction characterizing black sf's dead cities. The ending of the novel demonstrates how Whitehead connects the zombie and the 'zombie apocalypse' that creates it to the mass displacement of New Orleans' poorest minority communities after the Katrina flood, the most widely studied instance of disaster capitalism at work. The narrative closes with a re-enactment of the breaching of the New Orleans levies; Mark Spitz and his associates are walled into a refugee camp that doubles as a base for their efforts to clear New York of zombies, block by block, when a massive group of the undead manage to break the barrier that has until then kept them from invading the camp. Whitehead describes this breach using the metaphors of floods and deluges, implicitly likening the barrier to a levee:

> The dead sloshed through the gap, clambering over the concrete ramp and the crushed bodies, losing balance on the uneven surface and spinning in ludicrous pratfalls onto Canal. They stepped on one another, impelled one another forward in a current, spread in hungry rivulets east and west and downtown after being penned in for so long. (Whitehead 306)

He nimbly switches between referring to this zombified inundation using the language of 'natural' disaster and referring to it using language that channels descriptions of the urban underclass. He also connects this dramatic ending of the narrative to the moment atop the

skyscraper at the novel's outset where Spitz describes the zombies he sees as "slaves marching into midtown." As the narrator notes of Spitz in the book's final pages, "He'd always peered from the skyscraper windows into the streets, seeking. Close to the ground, almost at their level, he read their inhuman scroll as an argument: I was here, I am here now, I have existed, I exist still. This is our town." (Whitehead 306)

Scholars and social critics Chris Russill and Chad Levin provide us with an analysis of the Katrina disaster that helps to illustrate how these rhetorical strategies by Whitehead constitute a sociopolitical commentary on racial displacement in the urban environment:

> Perhaps more than anything else, the flooding of New Orleans brought to the surface all of the displaced costs of a neoliberal approach to governance and public safety, as the water rendered it impossible to ignore the impoverished populations, slashed budgets, and environmental racism that kept the Crescent City afloat. The ensuing meta-crisis provoked long overdue (if perhaps fleeting) attention to…racial and economic segregation…the unequal distribution of vulnerability in our society, and the real consequences of environmental collapse. (Russill and Lavin 25)

The disaster from this perspective was not merely a flood, but an uncovering of the city's racial landscape and that landscape's relationship to neoliberal policies of urban planning, local and national. Likewise, the deluge at the novel's end becomes synonymous with the repressed racial history of the urban underclass, with the breaching of the wall and the camp's inundation by the undead being necessary to get Spitz to see the city's neglected class, which has not only been around for a long time ("I was here…I have existed") but is still growing ("I exist still") and represents far more of the city's population than an average middle-class observer might think. ("This is our town") Channeling the racial history of the zombie, Whitehead also seems to gesture to the fact that the city's underclass is overwhelmingly black, and the product of policy stretching back to the first 'flood' of freed slaves into American urban centers during the Great Migration.

The actions undertaken by governments and dominant capital organizations in Zone One articulate the other half of this critical re-enactment of disaster capitalism. Here the process he outlines applies not only to Katrina but to a wider range of capitalized catastrophes. Mark Schuller's expansion on Klein's work is helpful in this instance, as he points to three defining characteristics of the phenomenon: "first, the increasing *role of private constituencies* within 'public' responses; second, the *instrumental use* of catastrophes; and finally, *promoting neoliberal capitalist interests*." (Schuller 20)

In Zone One, the post-zombie apocalypse United States government—referred to simply as 'Buffalo' owing to its headquarters in Buffalo, New York—accomplishes this trifecta under the banner of its post-disaster recovery program, simply referred to as "reconstruction." Through this device Whitehead is able to weave his critique of disaster capitalism into his criticism of the 'new' urban renewal of gentrification. Among the most straightforward instances of this is found in his description of military leaders' use of the dereliction caused by the catastrophe to claim newly abandoned real estate for 'renovation and use':

> All the COs had annexed Chinatown turf for briefings and strategy sessions, spreading out from Wonton Main at Broadway and Canal according to their disparate appetites. General Summers, for example, claimed an elegant and cavernous dim sum palace on Bowery, rescuing it from the enlisted men's amusements… Corporal Brent of the U.S. Army Corps, for his part, conducted his daily planning sessions at a noodle house, addressing his men and women from behind the counter as if serving up strands of udon instead of baroque strategies of city planning (or, more accurately, reconfiguration). The officers spread out, homesteading. Manhattan was empty except for soldiers and legions of the damned, Mark Spitz noted, and already gentrification had resumed. (Whitehead 35)

Under the labels of 'city planning' and 'reconfiguration', the government uses the zombie cataclysm to encourage the basic process of renewal-by-gentrification, providing favorable terms for real estate in rundown neighborhoods to favored parties so that they may be renovated and

repurposed. This resembles many of the neoliberal 'pro-growth' policies that provided favorable terms for real estate in declining urban areas to capital interests—particularly in the inner city—which would then proceed to gentrify the neighborhood and force its poor tenants out by raising the cost of housing.

Beyond this stealth form of urban planning, Whitehead makes clear that the Reconstruction program is also funded by private corporate interests, although it is billed as a 'public' response. The way the government funds the operation is telling:

> Buffalo created an entire division dedicated to pursuing official sponsors whenever a representative turned up, in exchange for tax breaks once the reaper laid down his scythe and things were up and running again. (Additional goodies the public would never find out about weeviled the fine print.) (Whitehead 48)

This is precisely the corporate-government complex that disaster capitalism encompasses, and fulfills Schuller's second condition of the instrumental use of catastrophe. Wielding neoliberal rhetoric portraying market-based, privatized solutions to large social undertakings as being optimal, the government offers economic incentives—tax breaks being most popular among them—to large corporate interests in return for their funding of disaster relief operations. Once again Katrina epitomizes this process: during the aftermath, the government awarded lucrative no-bid contracts to large corporate entities like Halliburton and Bechtel. Eight months would elapse before pressure from local civic groups pushed FEMA to offer temporary housing contracts to small, local or disadvantaged businesses. This process also dominated the relief operation following the largest catastrophe in the history of the novel's setting, with large corporations connected to the implementing community development agency getting the vast majority of the funding for rebuilding the damage caused by the cataclysm of September 11, 2001. (Schuller 21)

Such methods allow for disasters to become sources of profit and devices for control. Yet Whitehead also suggests that like a zombie, disaster capitalism and gentrification are vulnerable to cannibalizing themselves—only to live on in undead form, as the devastation of Moses and Nixon's redevelopment programs lived on long after the two had devoured themselves through overreach in their pursuit of power. He makes his point by invoking another catastrophe that encompasses both processes—one every bit as devastating as Katrina. This is the double meaning of the final scene; while Whitehead conjures Katrina through his use of flood imagery and the likening of the barricade to a levee, when one considers how he articulates the structure of the camp earlier in the novel a metacommentary becomes apparent:

> Fort Wonton's nerve center was an old bank. The owners had changed over the years in the inevitable consolidations, liquidations, and takeovers, but the building still stood, a tiny granite hut among the furious high-story construction in downtown over the last hundred years. The offices overlooked the main intersection of the wall, Broadway and Canal. (Whitehead 114)

The wall protecting the camp is in fact the entrance to a bank; and, just as significantly, the passage immediately following the depiction of the wall's collapse (and its diluvian language) states,

> Here they came, the ambassadors of nil. Already the front door of the bank was impassable, already the dead infiltrated one block south of the shattered barrier to reclaim the Zone as their own. The soldiers on the catwalk were stranded. (Whitehead 306)

In the final analysis, then, the destruction of the wall articulates metaphors for at least *two* different crises: one, of course, is the Katrina tragedy; the other is the financial crisis of 2008-2009. "I wanted to accommodate all different kinds of catastrophes," Whitehead confirms, "—they're natural, they're man-made, they're out of the blue." (Schulman 131) To wit, one catastrophe destroyed thousands of homes and jobs because—largely due to poor oversight and maintenance—the official barriers holding back a disastrous flood of seawater could no longer handle the pressure put upon them by a perfect storm; the other did the same when—also largely

due to poor oversight and maintenance—the proper safety mechanisms of the banking system holding back a flood of bad debt could no longer handle the pressure put upon them by a perfect financial storm. This doubled metaphor is itself a criticism of gentrification's direct role in creating the Global Financial Crisis and the Lesser Depression that followed upon its heels. Derek Hyra, a scholar studying the 'new' urban renewal of the neoliberal era, helps explain the context of that role:

> The deregulation of financial markets forced countries to compete in worldwide credit markets. This worldwide competition was associated with financial product innovation, particularly risk-based priced mortgages (both prime and subprime) and their securitization (Getter 2006; Sassen 2009; White 2004). Some of this credit came in the form of subprime loans, as inner city markets went from being red-lined to green-lined. Subprime originations, which disproportionately went to African-Americans, increased from $35 billion in 1994 to $625 billion in 2005 (Gramlich 2007). Ding et al. (2008: 212), in their subprime-lending analysis of Atlanta, "found a strong geographic concentration of higher-priced lending in African American tracts and low-income tracts, even after including other tract-level explanatory variables."
>
> This increase in inner city credit, combined with federal funds, fueled the new urban renewal. The credit that stimulated inner city redevelopment was connected to international financial markets (Hackworth 2007; Ranney 2003; Wyly, Atia, and Hammel 2004; Wyly et al. 2009). Mortgage companies and commercial banks originating prime and subprime loans in inner city areas sold them to financial institutions that repackaged these pooled loans into mortgage-backed securities (MBSs). These MBSs were then sold to both domestic and international investors (Sassen 2009). The increasing demand for MBSs by national and foreign investors helped make large sums of capital and credit available to inner city areas, which facilitated urban redevelopment projects. (Hyra 13)

What happened next is a well-known zombie horror story: Commercial banks bundled together their MBS's into Collateralized Debt Obligations; by mixing together different groups of mortgages into one package, CDO's were able to earn AAA ratings despite the fact that they contained a significant number of subprime loans. They were subsequently sold in huge quantities to financial institutions all over the world, who were also purchasing insurance policies called 'Credit Default Swaps' en masse to conceal the riskiness of their mortgage products from official reports. However, unbeknownst to most, many subprime borrowers were

only able to make their mortgage payments due to the rising value of their property. When those values unexpectedly stopped rising sometime in 2008, defaults skyrocketed; in response, MBS's (and thereby CDO's) became essentially worthless, necessitating insurance giant AIG—which had taken on the majority of CDS's—to pay out defaulted mortgages all over the world, all at the same time. Needless to say, it did not have the funds to do so, and it soon became clear that its fall would bring down the whole banking system with it. Suddenly, the entirety of the FIRE sector that had dominated the global economy for thirty years stood on the brink of complete collapse; neoliberal capitalism had engineered its own doomsday. The effect was an apocalypse-sized financial crisis that vaporized an enormous amount of wealth, sent countless houses into foreclosure, and destroyed enough jobs to push unemployment up to levels not seen in decades. The ocean of bad debt had broken through the levees; the deluge announced itself to the world through the collapse of Lehman Brothers, a "Too Big to Fail" investment bank holding a gargantuan amount of mortgage capital on its books. Enacting a financial version of Zone One's reconstruction program, the US government (and many other governments around the world) 'bailed out' the banks that threatened to follow it into to the grave. *Not* coincidentally, the term economists use for a financial institution that must rely on government bailouts in order to remain afloat is a 'zombie bank'—precisely what Whitehead fashions to end his novel—and a toxic home-loan that typically sends a house into foreclosure (most assuredly so when the homeowner could only make payments due to the rising value of their property) is dubbed an 'underwater mortgage'. By pairing this crisis with the Katrina flood, Whitehead indicates that the financial crisis was an instance of globalized disaster capitalism defined by a horrific irony—namely that a catastrophe engendered by neoliberalism's excesses finally catching up to it was ultimately itself leveraged for profit and control by neoliberal interests to perpetuate those

excesses—and rooted directly in the exploitation and dislocation of black Americans by the new neoliberal version of urban restructuring.

Despite integrating these new histories into the form of the dead city, however, Whitehead's narrative also once more reiterates the significance of the urban apocalypse in all of the previously discussed dead cities emptied out by cataclysm: it acts as a shock of sufficient magnitude to annihilate the old urban order, and allow for the imposition of a new one. It is what Mark Spitz communicates when he notes "He'd always wanted to live in New York but that city didn't exist anymore. He didn't know if the world was doomed or saved, but whatever the next thing was, it would not look like what came before." (Whitehead 320) It is the sf author's own act of urban redevelopment, of creation through annihilation—but as Whitehead is keen to show, it carries far more productive potentialities than the callous demolition of a poor neighborhood. In Whitehead's case, it allows him to frame a 'solution' of sorts to the problem, an answer to the question of "What can be done?" to deal with dislocation, crisis, poverty and the exploitation of all these phenomena by the powerful—particularly in an urban setting. "Hopefully," he says, "I'm getting at some sort of essential way of dealing with these disparate horrors," (Schulman 131). His recommendation is interesting in its highly individualistic nature, one at odds with the collectivist dreams of Shiel or Dubois and perhaps even the Marxian impulses of Delany. It is captured in the novel's final pages in two aphorisms—"There was no other reality apart from this: move on to the next human settlement, until you find the final one, and that's where you die…" and "On to the next human settlement, and the one after that, where the barrier holds until you don't need it anymore." (Whitehead 321) Both statements cut in at least two directions: from one angle, they are a grim acceptance of a life of continual displacement; urbanity's dislocative processes have existed and will always exist, according to

such an interpretation, so there is nothing left to do but accept it and hope for the best. From another angle, they are an urging to embrace self-reliance and autonomy, a suggestion that a program of 'reconstruction' will not save the poorest members of the underclass, and may exploit them instead—but individual determination and a survivalist ethos can. Perhaps most interesting, however, is a third possible message: that it has been precisely this determination and survivalist ethos that has helped black Americans overcome their greatest challenges—it was the failure of America's most famous program of Reconstruction, after all, that brought forth much of the first Great Migration and ultimately turned African Americans into an urban people. In the end, the goals of Reconstruction were achieved through the striving of multiple generations of black folk long after the program itself collapsed; interpreted as such, Whitehead here holds out the same hope for the urban underclass.

The Dead City Lives

As the preceding pages should make it clear, the corpse of a city is an endlessly dynamic artifact. Its forms and uses are legion: it is a frontier for the sf hero or heroine to conquer; it can be a sign of holocaust, a sign of evolution, a sign of devolution; it can be a space that inscribes the social norms of urban society by encouraging those exploring it to cast them off; a space that identifies the fragility of modern civilization; a device that unveils the barbarism of our own society through the evocation of prior, supposedly more 'savage' social orders; in short, a semiotic playground for the science fictional imagination.

But beyond this, it also channels past history through future history by re-enacting disruptive processes of reformatting urban infrastructure through grand metaphors of creative destruction. It cannot be built without first being destroyed—gradually, suddenly, or somewhere in-between—and so it may act as a prism through which to view the history of this dialectical,

paradoxical construction-through-deconstruction of the city.

And through this lens one finds that the tug between urban renewal and urban decay that so defines the ghost metropolis also defines a century of racial dislocation for urban-dwelling African Americans at the hands of urban redevelopment. The derelict city allows black authors to grapple with this history, to register the pain, struggle and alienation its repeated diasporas cause and proffer metaphors for ways to deal with the burdens they place on the individual. In turn, its perseverance marks the perseverance of its history's contradictions—as befits a ghost, it reminds us that many black men and women have risen to meet and surpass the challenges of continual racial displacement, only to see the vanquished fiend return to haunt a new generation. As the work of Shiel, Dubois, Delany and Whitehead prove, however, each new generation answers with new heroes and hopes that keep the dream of conquering the frontier of the dead city alive.

[1]I pull here from several histories of Robert Moses, especially Robert Caro's legendary The Power Broker and Joel Schwartz's The New York Approach.

[2]While there are a bevy of examples, the public furor over the demolition of Pennsylvania Station in the 1960s was a quintessential case; its decay was attributed to the cumbersome development schemes Moses orchestrated, and hurt his public stature considerably.

[3]To avoid excessive terminological repetition, I occasionally substitute 'base' for 'infrastructure' when specifically discussing Delany and his critical method; insofar as one can tell from reading the academic works in which he invokes his Marxian roots, he uses the binary of 'infrastructure/superstructure' in roughly the same way an 'old-fashioned' Marxist would speak of the 'base/superstructure' binary. In my analysis, he avoids using the term 'base' mostly for rhetorical reasons; the word 'infrastructure' always connotes the setting of the city, whereas 'base' connotes a purely economic concept.

Conclusion: The Black Boxes of the SF Urban Frontier

In 1893, while a nationwide financial crisis plunged the cities and mill towns of the United States into a depression of (at the time) unprecedented proportions, the historian Frederic Jackson Turner published a paper entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History". His argument was that the American character and the egalitarian spirit of its democratic institutions emerged from the development of the American frontier. By staking out their own homesteads amidst *terra incognita*, he claimed, Americans liberated themselves from old and outmoded social patterns entrenched within European societies. They owed no allegiances to longstanding religious authorities or to the aristocrats of an established nobility; they did not depend on the standing armies and military might of a monarch or imperator; and they were not encumbered by the socioeconomic power of a landed gentry's rentiers.

As illustrated in this project, both the insights and the blind spots of the Turner thesis might easily be applied to science fictional writing and science fiction's treatment of cities. Fundamentally, science fiction is a frontier literature; its narratives center on the transitional zone between the territory and categories of knowledge urbanized society has mastered and reshaped through technological development and the unknown and unmastered categories and territories of the unexplored wilderness. It is driven by an expansionary impulse just as the pioneers along the American frontier were, ever attempting to increase the reach of human-constructed civilization, or 'second nature'. It is underpinned by a spirit that seeks to overthrow and revolutionize the established social order through the disruptive forces of technological innovation and the scientific method, as the inhabitants of the American frontier did during the industrial revolution. This gives its cities two faces: they are where the revolutionary

technological knowledge that provides the basis for expansion is accumulated; they are also territories that have already been conquered, negations of the *terra incognita* where the pioneer goes to chart new territory and perpetuate the expansionist enterprise. The preceding chapters have shown how the concept of the frontier can be used to understand the coexistence and mutual constitution of these two contradictory faces.

They have also demonstrated how the concrete history of urbanization complicates this structure and, when read against stories of the sf city, reveals significant nuances and resonances in the symbolic economy of these municipalities. In a way, the Turner thesis reflects this as well. For when one reads his famous work against American urban history, it soon becomes clear that there are certain aspects of the frontier Turner chose not to see—such as the role of non-white Americans in its formation and expansion. Turner paints a portrait of an implicitly egalitarian and libertarian frontier democracy, but never mentions that its prodigious growth was propped up by two systems of colonial totalitarianism: chattel slavery and the systematic expropriation of wealth and land from the continent's native inhabitants. In addition, Turner overlooks the role of American cities as the centers of industrial production and mercantilist trade that provided the frontier society with the means to expand Westward—and as ports for the slave trade.

In his work of Chandlerian surrealism and pastiche, The City & The City, British sf author China Mieville articulates a grand urban metaphor for this sort of willful blindness—the process of 'unseeing'. The novel revolves around two vaguely Eurasian cities—Besźel and Ul-Qoma—that inhabit one space but maintain a strict partition between each other by requiring their respective denizens to 'unsee' the other city. On penalty of apprehension by an ambiguously supernatural intra-city border police called 'Breach,' citizens of each municipality must pretend as if the other does not exist. Describing an 'accelerated orientation course' for

new citizens, Mieville's canny Philip Marlowe, Tyador Borlú, says it "was concerned to help a Besz citizen through the potentially traumatic fact of actually *being* in Ul Qoma, unseeing all their familiar environs, where we lived the rest of our life, and seeing the buildings beside us that we had spent decades making sure not to notice." (Mieville 133) Borlú's investigation of a murder in Ul Qoma ultimately leads to the disruption of this process of social erasure—a rupture of borders that, in metaphorical terms, constitutes the contribution to both black studies and sf literary studies that this project makes: a demonstration of how using urban history and the structure of city/frontier/*terra incognita* as a cipher to read stories of the sf city reveals resonances and connections between them that might otherwise go unseen at the margins of literary criticism.

A second work of science fictional urban pastiche, Colson Whitehead's debut novel The Intuitionist, represents the specific historical thread used in the weave of this inquiry's historical analysis—the history of black urbanization in the West. The text tells the tale of Lila Mae, the first black elevator inspector in an unnamed city that also mixes together aspects of several different periods of African American urban history. Her story revolves around solving the mystery of a sudden, catastrophic elevator accident and its relationship to a mythical 'perfect elevator' designed by her mentor, the elevator theorist James Fulton, dubbed the 'black box' in a bit of deft racial symbolism. Between the arch of her narrative and Borlú's one can glimpse the divergences and convergences of historical valence united under the pattern of the frontier and inflected through the two urban typologies—the imperial city and the dead city—covered herein.

Colonial Heritages and Imperial Expansion

The universality of the frontier pattern is evident in the commonalities shared by Lila Mae and Borlú amidst the sprawling spaces and times their stories meld together; while each

protagonist is a canny navigator of the urban terrain, both also exhibit Gary Wolfe's "anti-urban frontier mentality". The reader learns early on that Lila Mae has migrated from a life in the countryside beyond the city to arrive in her current situation within it, crossing and conquering in true frontierswoman fashion the zone between the territory beyond urbanity and the city limits. Borlú dares to cross the frontier between Besźel and Ul-Qoma despite the threat posed by Breach, and in the end becomes a permanent resident of it by joining Breach's otherworldly ranks. Each character also traverses an intellectual frontier: Lila Mae belongs to the heterodox 'Intuitionist' school of elevator inspection, and Borlú eventually decides to entertain a heretical theory positing the existence of a secret 'third city' called Orciny. "A secret colony," he calls it, "A city between the cities, its inhabitants living in plain sight." (Mieville 90) In addition, to complete the investigative projects driving them both characters must utilize knowledge that can only be found in the intellectual space between science and mysticism, scientific orthodoxy and religious dogma, positivist empirical analysis and intuition.

Both novels also share a fittingly transitional environment, as each uses science fictional devices to create a city defined by an amalgamation of differing urban histories. The revolutionary nature of the elevator in Whitehead's narrative evokes the cities of the mid-to-late nineteenth century, when the elevator first became a widely-used technology. Yet Whitehead's description of a "Bright day, sparks erupting off of car chrome, the fins on the cars in front of [Lila Mae] cutting through bright day," (Whitehead 163) is a scene whose fin-sporting technology is plucked from the automotive revolution of the early-to-mid twentieth century, not the pre-Fordist era. Mieville conjures vaguely modern images to describe Besźel and Ul Qoma, as when Borlú accesses a website, fracturedcity.org, to assess the nature of rumors about Orciny; yet the Oversight Committee that manages both cities meets in a building out of a different era,

'Copula Hall', a "giant, baroque, concrete-patched coliseum in the centre of Besźel Old Town." (Mieville 59) These dissonant historical moments manage to fit convincingly into a single story because Mieville and Whitehead effectively deploy science fictional strategies of alternative history and technological extrapolation—the effects of the elevator in the latter's work, the effects of the symbolic technology of 'unseeing' and the partition of the cities in the former's—to make their collapsed timescapes seem like coherent histories when taken on their own terms. The frontier pattern and its transitional nature prevails even in the form of their narrative setting.

Chapter one of this analytical project sought to illuminate the historical roots of this pattern in the expansionary ethos of the colonial culture of Euro-American imperialism. It illustrated how sf's imperial cities in particular embody this culture and its attendant socioeconomic and ideological foundations, as well as the cyclical and contradictory nature of imperial expansion. In the process, its inquiry delineated a mimetic tradition, demonstrating that both black and white authors often model the history and structure of the urban heart of their sf imperia after the history and structure of actual empires and their capitals.

Though neither Mieville's twin cities nor Whitehead's metropolis are the center of an explicitly defined empire, the imperial city nonetheless bubbles to the surface in their respective narratives through the articulation of their municipalities' colonial underpinnings. The conflict and partition between Ul-Qoma and Besźel in The City & the City evokes the territorial disputes that drove imperial growth and the modern residual effects of imperial collapse found in such contemporary conflicts over culturally-contested territory as that between Israel and Palestine; indeed, it is likely no coincidence that 'Besźel' is phonically close to 'Israel' and 'Ul-Qoma' mashes together the Arabic sounds of Palestinian municipalities like Al-Bireh and Qalqiya.

The colonial roots of The Intuitionist's city are less direct, but Whitehead nonetheless reveals its imperial foundations in the brief pieces of his metropolis' history he dispenses to the reader. This is most apparent in his description of the structure which originally stood in what is presently the city's main square: a crystal palace. The reader encounters this precursor in an analeptic episode that describes it as being constructed for presentation at a fictional analogue to the 'World's Fair's of St. Louis and Chicago—and as being a "replica of its namesake in London." (Whitehead 79) This connects it to the metropoles of the two last empires of the modern era that also inspire Mieville's work—the London-centered British Empire and its unruly stepchild and successor, The Inter- and Post-war American Empire, centered around the explosive production of industrial metropolises like New York, Chicago and St. Louis. A royal palace, of course, is also an ancient sign for the urban basis of empire; only at the heart of an imperial capital would one expect to find such a monument, and Whitehead suggests through this device that the modern city is yet underpinned by the colonial logic of an imperium, which is in turn underpinned by the logic of the growth cycle. Chapter one outlined the ebb and flow of this process. Expansion engineers collapse, and at some point Rome must fall; yet at the same time the collapse of one empire creates the conditions for another. The Intuitionist's narrative suggests urbanity is bound to this cyclical teleology when the reader learns that "The Crystal Palace will fall five years [after the exhibition] in 1858, devoured by fire in fifteen minutes and become Times Square, in due course," (Whitehead 79). In a single conflagration, the old British imperial order embodied in the grand houses of royalty built at the heart of London is absorbed into and replaced by a new order expressed through the symbolic heart of the American empire—it is of no small significance that New York's Times Square has at various times borne such monikers as "The Crossroads of the World" and "The Center of the Universe."

This imperial changeover also exemplifies the kind of deliberate linking of moments in urban history to moments in science fictional urban histories on which this project has focused: there was in fact a 'Crystal Palace' built in New York for the 1853 'Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations'. And, indeed, elevator innovator Elisha Otis showcased his new 'safety elevator' model (aspects of which are still used in modern elevators) in a dramatic performance at the Crystal Palace in 1854. Most tellingly, New York's Crystal Palace burned down in 1858—in what is now Times Square. But Whitehead never explicitly mentions New York, nor any other particular city in The Intuitionist, and not all of his nameless city's historical characteristics match up to the Big Apple's; using alternative history, he leaves his setting outside this specific historical context. But the deep historical resonance remains, facilitating the dialogue between science fictional history and the history of the world as we know it.

The preceding analysis has revealed that these historical exchanges appear in the work of sf authors of all races. In all cases they have relied, as Whitehead does, on the genre's narrative strategies and devices. These strategies are capable of enabling this historical dialogue precisely because they are speculative strategies—in this sense, they too are 'black boxes'. The term 'black box' itself refers to a mechanism whose internal dynamics are unobservable; that is, a mechanism that can only be understood speculatively, through comprehending the implications of its inputs and its outputs. Like Whitehead, Mieville uses the 'black box' of alternate history to put his urban world in conversation with real urban history:

> "[The cities'] beginning was a shadow in history, an unknown—records effaced and vanished for a century on either side. Anything could have happened. From that historically brief quite opaque moment came the chaos of our material history, an anarchy of chronology, of mismatched remnants that delighted and horrified investigators. All we know is nomads on the steppes, then those black-box centuries of urban instigation—certain events, and there have been films and stories and games based on speculation (all making the censor at least a little twitchy) about that dual birth—then history comes

back and there are Besźel and Ul Qoma." (Mieville 50)

The 'invisible mechanism' of both cities' alternative history can only be known through Mieville's description of what preceded it and what followed it—and the 'shadowy' nature of those details allow Besźel and Ul Qoma to exist both inside and outside of the established historical record. The reference to 'steppes' invokes the fractious history of cities in the Balkans, many of which were (and some of which still are) long torn by ethno-political divisions. However, when Mieville later mentions a "disastrous open war" between both cities around the time of World War II and elaborates on the tension in them between Muslim and Jewish populations, he adds another layer of historical meaning by once again summoning the past of Jerusalem: in 1948 dissatisfaction with a UN Partition Plan for the city caused a civil war to erupt between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Thus even without an empire, the colonial foundations of the frontier mentality expressed through the figure of the imperial city are made evident in his dual metropolises.

Yet when compared to Mieville's creations Whitehead's city also embodies the differing, racially divided historical perspectives on this colonial foundation discussed in chapter two, perhaps ironically captured in yet another historical sobriquet for Times Square that invokes American urbanity's racial history: "The Great White Way." The different position within the imperial order each novel's protagonist inhabits expresses this divergence with clarity. As a detective for Besźel's 'Extreme Crime Squad', Borlú is plugged into the imperial bureaucratic framework; his life is not complicated by his ethnic identity, which remains non-descript, and he enjoys some of the power and privilege that comes with a position of authority. Furthermore, the racial conflicts that *do* go on in Ul Qoma and Besźel are portrayed as the result of a breakdown in the imperial order. An early glimpse of these conflicts is provided in a moment of fictional

etymology:

> "…for at least two hundred years, since refugees from the Balkans had come hunting sanctuary, quickly expanding the city's Muslim population, *ebru*, the antique Besz word for 'Jew', had been press-ganged into service to include the new immigrants, become a collective term for both populations. It was in Beszél's previously Jewish ghettos that the Muslim newcomers settled." (Mieville 21)

Borlú's position thus reflects the position of the white colonial administrator. For him, racial conflict is a problem of imperial management, a result of the weakening of the empire's central authority over its heterogeneous territory; in the eyes of an administrator, it seems that without that authority to provide artificial unity to the correspondingly heterogeneous population, old ethnic conflicts re-emerge and lead to instability—such as Ul Qoma and Beszél's clash between their Jewish and Muslim denizens. First as an officer of Beszél law, and later as an officer of 'Breach's meta-urban laws, Borlú is directly involved in the process of keeping these conflicts dormant by policing the empire's borders and reasserting its waning authority. The growth paradox manifests itself through he and Breach's inability to effectively do so; the stability supposedly provided by the system of 'unseeing' collapses into chaos and riots when the latter fails on a massive scale in the novel's later chapters.

Lila Mae operates within a very different situation that instead reflects the struggles of black ethnic groups against Euro-American colonialism's depredation and exploitation of both them and their homelands. Indeed, the very concept that she should be employed *and* properly compensated at a large, successful company is itself transgressive enough in her world to invite raised eyebrows and general hostility from white inhabitants of the city. This conjures the historical spirit of the fight to overthrow the colonial regimes of *de jure* and then *de facto* slavery, of *de jure* and *de facto* racial segregation and disenfranchisement, and finally their modern political-economic residues. As in black urban history, Lila Mae's societal position—

delimited by her racial identity—entails more than just social discomfort: it also places heavy and tangible burdens on her well-being. This accounts for her dismay at the actions of a black coworker named Pompey, who engages in a racially derogatory minstrel performance halfway through the novel at a dinner held for their elevator company's white elites. When she approaches him later in the narrative to reprimand him for his actions, it becomes clear her frustrations are as much at the similar social obstacles placed in the path of her attempt to thrive in a still highly segregated urban world than with Pompey himself; just as Pompey is forced to denigrate his ethnic identity through minstrelsy to stay in the favor of his white employers, Lila Mae is forced to set aside part of her dignity so that her bosses may use her as a political chess piece to get re-elected as Chair of the Elevator Guild. As Whitehead caustically notes, "So far Lila Mae thinks her role in [her boss' re-election] campaign is limited to window dressing—evidence for the new, progressive face of the Elevator Guild, and by extension, city government." (Whitehead 15) She may not engage in the degrading performance of minstrelsy, but she nonetheless consents to racial exploitation in order to maintain the possibility of upward mobility, channeling the disappointment and anger of Ralph Ellison's eponymous protagonist in Invisible Man when he decides to use his invisibility—that is, the tendency of white society to see him merely as a dehumanized tool to be utilized in the pursuit of power—as a means to gain favor with and manipulate white society so as to prosper safely within it. Pompey's response to her criticism that "you shuffle for those white people like a slave" (Whitehead 194) makes the point clear enough:

> "What I done, I done because I had no other choice. This is a white man's world. They make the rules. You come along, strutting like you own the place. Like they don't own you. But they do…I was the first one in the Department. I was the first colored elevator inspector in history. In history! And you will never, ever know what hell they put me through. You think you have it bad? You have no idea. And it was because I did it first that you're here now. All my life I wanted to be an elevator inspector. That's all I wanted

> to be. And I got it. I was the first colored man to get a Department badge. They made shit of what I wanted and made me eat it. You had it easy, snot -nose kid that you are, because of me. Because of what I did for you." (Whitehead 195)

This perspective echoes the character of such imperial cities within black sf as Sutton Griggs's home for The Imperium in Imperio. As chapter two made clear, such cities are caught up in a tradition of anti-colonial politics that refigures the paradox of imperial growth into a dilemma over counter-imperial tactics. Griggs's awareness of the dangerous and often violent repercussions of resisting the empire's subjugation of his race during his time compelled him to conceal the capital of his empire and its rebellion in the unassuming form of a university decorated with symbols of American nationalism and hidden in Waco, Texas—the hometown of six of the Civil War's Confederate generals. This tactic is similarly reflected in the strategies both Lila Mae and Pompey use to successfully maneuver a segregated, white-dominated urban society. Pompey is content to work within the empire of the white elite of the city and overturn it through both the manipulation their racist thinking and the clandestine deployment of subterfuge. Despite her own manipulation of white racial assumptions to maintain her position, however, Lila Mae expresses a more revolutionary desire; she doesn't want to "shuffle for white people like a slave", but to assertively and openly attack, destroy and reform the establishment. Pompey presents her with The Intuitionist's own version of the recurring dilemma of the black imperial metropolis: how is she to carry out her revolution without ruining the material prosperity people in his position have managed to attain and without placing burdens on him similar to those already imposed on her by the Anglophone elite? Or more generally for all the works covered in the second chapter, how does a minority oppressed by a colonial power create a political organization powerful enough to overthrow colonialism without engaging in predatory colonial practices itself? That chapter illuminated this narrative dilemma's connection to a long history of similar debates between differing black Civil Rights leaders and ideological factions

over how to combat imperialist domination: while Booker T. Washington urged African Americans to fight colonial oppression in a restrained and accommodationist manner not unlike Pompey's, figures like Griggs, Marcus Garvey and even Washington's opposite number—the great W.E.B. Dubois—all eventually advocated separatism as the better tactic. Even Martin Luther King, Jr.'s strategy of peaceful protest, now often hailed as what finally allowed for the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the ultimate success of the Movement within the U.S., contended in its own time with the more violent tactics advocated for by contemporaries like Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon.

Ultimately, Whitehead's novel also reiterates the second chapter's attempt at divining an answer to this dilemma from the texts it surveys: namely, that there is no final answer at all. The paradox is instead a pedagogical tool of sorts to perpetuate anti-imperialist discourse, a "riddle that was never meant to be solved." Or, rather, a riddle that can only be solved speculatively, as the potential outcome of a process of continual resistance against imperialist forces. Once again the 'black box' plays a part in this picture. If one takes the 'elevator' as a metaphor for the pursuit of racial liberation and equality, or 'uplift', and Fulton's mysterious 'black box' as a representation of the achievement of total equality and liberation for the souls and bodies of black folk, the established pattern of the paradox continues: the creation of Fulton's 'black box'—the reaching of a final, definitive stage of pristine, everlasting racial equality—is in itself an impossible task. It is made real only as an ever-receding possibility lying at the end of a never-ending pursuit of equal and humane treatment by oppressed groups that adapts to new circumstances, time periods and environments.

This can be seen as the larger significance of The Intuitionist's conclusion. Amidst the scramble by different factions of the Elevator Inspectors Guild to locate the plans for Fulton's

perfect elevator, Lila Mae realizes that Intuitionism and the Black Box are a hoax of sorts. Fulton was in fact a black man passing as white in academia, and both Intuitionism and the non-existent 'perfect elevator' were parodies designed to unmask the fact that white urban society's established systems of technoscientific analysis and classification—symbolized in the orthodox 'Empiricist' school of elevator inspection—are rigged to confirm their pre-established prejudices, assumptions and attitudes about race. The key ironic twist, however, is that his hoaxes are eventually made real by white society's belief in their reality; through processes of imaginative speculation, conjecture and extrapolation, the Empiricists make their 'fake' rival school as real as their own. The novel's coda, in which we see Lila Mae writing Fulton's mythical 'lost text' on the Black Box, conveys the same idea the black imperial city's paradox of growth does—that it is only through an unending attempt to use such imaginative processes to make racial liberation real that it can become real at all. The work is never done, and this is the significance of the phrase the story's final paragraph repeats twice for emphasis—"She returns to the work":

> "She returns to the work…Fulton left instructions, but she knows she is permitted to alter them according to circumstances. There was no way Fulton could foresee how the world would change…She returns to the work. She will make the necessary adjustments. It will come. She is never wrong. It's her intuition."

And so it goes for the dilemma over how to overturn systems of colonial oppression expressed in the black imperial city. No one can foresee what new forms imperialism will take, what new circumstances it will spring up in, and what methods will be best to fight against it in any given future context. But continually attempting to resolve the dilemma over counter-imperial methods as the world changes carries on the battle against the empire—and because no ending is final and every empire's death gives birth to another, carrying on the battle is really the only way to (speculatively) win it in the long run.

The Potentialities of Urban Ruin and The Racial Dimensions of Urban Dereliction

The imperial city captures the expansionary aims of the frontier mentality and one side of the contradictory coin of the sf city by serving primarily as a base from which to expand the reach of second nature. But Mieville and Whitehead's cities also probe the contours of the obverse side of the coin, where the metropolis serves as a prison and/or a tomb for the sf hero or heroine from which they must escape via the frontier.

Chapter three illustrated how the typology of the dead city embodies this other face of urbanity. The fundamental antinomy that orients these kinds of cities is a push and pull between urban dereliction as signaling the collapse of urban society and urban dereliction as a mark of the rebirth of a new—and possibly better—form of urban life. In this sense, they are the next step in the evolution of the imperial metropolis—when the empire falls, as it must, will a better way of life emerge from its ruin, as in such cases as Post-imperial Japan, or will it bring only chaos, struggle and suffering to the city's inhabitants, as in the medieval turmoil that resulted from the collapse of the Roman Empire? Will the new empire-to-come bring peace and prosperity to city folk, as growth and stability was brought to postwar Tokyo, Yokohama and Osaka; or will it devolve into the feudal anarchy and mass poverty that beset the Roman empire's greatest cities from the fifth century through the late Middle Ages?

Moreover, if the imperative of the imperial city is to continually push the boundaries of the frontier ever outward, the dead city marks an inward expansion of the frontier: as the reach of technologically mastered territory collapses down into a small shard of known, inhabited space surrounded by a barren city reclaimed by the forces of nature, the ghost city itself becomes a frontier-space for the protagonist to brave and conquer.

Mieville and Whitehead's hybridized municipalities explore the potentialities of the dead city without ever explicitly creating one. Most prominently, they demonstrate a core principle in the construction of the dead city discussed in chapter three: namely, that the character of the event that creates the conditions for the dead city generally determines the character of the city itself. A city emptied out by a crisis of gradual depopulation and migration differs considerably in nature from a city emptied out due to a sudden, explosive nuclear holocaust. And as a corollary, the fears associated with a cataclysmic collapse in the urban social order differ from the fears associated with a slow stagnation of the urban social order. In The Intuitionist, the cataclysmic malfunctioning of an elevator in the Fannie Briggs Memorial Building is what exposes the fragility of the dominance of the second nature of the city; in The City & the City, it is the mass breaching of the Ul Qoma/Besźel partition by a group of refugees that throws the city into chaos and forces Breach to belatedly and rather ineffectively impose martial law. Each of these calamities constitute a shock to the urban order that re-enacts the processes of urban redevelopment, which more often than not consisted of demolishing old urban landscapes to erect new ones. However, each is connected to a repressed fear of a different kind, and the difference elucidates the way the historical resonances within dead cities, particularly those involving the racial history of urban renewal in the West, also diverge along the axis of race.

However, these repressed fears also bare many similarities to each other. Fundamentally, The City & the City's crisis is rooted in fears over the upending of established political and economic institutions that maintain a precarious equilibrium between its two cities; in other words, a fear of what will happen if people ignore the system of unseeing that (supposedly) keeps each city running smoothly. Being outsiders untrained in local custom, the refugees cannot properly "unsee", and their breach of the mental partition (as well as the political and

economic one) between both cities upon their arrival threatens to throw each into the tumult of a metaphysical and sociopolitical identity crisis. With each city and its denizens having constructed their identity around the refusal to acknowledge the other, this identity crisis in turn poses a threat to the entire social order around which their lives are organized.

The Intuitionist too features this kind of anxiety over the disruption of institutional architecture and social identity; however, in Whitehead's text it takes on a distinctly racial character. This is most apparent immediately after the Fannie Briggs Memorial Building accident, when in response to a radio commentator's question of "Do you think that a party or parties resistant to colored progress may be responsible?" the narrator declares

> "Everyone thinks, as they must, of last summer's riots, of how strange it was to live in a metropolis such as this (magnificent elevated trains, five daily newspapers, two baseball stadiums) and yet be too afraid to leave the house. How quickly things can fall into medieval disorder." (Whitehead 22)

In this fashion the cataclysm that threatens the urban order in The Intuitionist roots itself in historical fears over the escalation of urban racial tensions into violent race riots. Within this context, the collapse of second nature has special consequences for black urban dwellers. Chapter four illustrated how this theme runs through the dead cities penned by black authors and how the stories of those cities resonate with a long history of black struggles against not only the violence of race riots in American cities but also against neighborhood dereliction caused by racially targeted programs of urban redevelopment.

Between the imperial metropolis and its ghostly shadow one may trace the arch of expansionism and glimpse a wide spectrum of urban experience, symbolism, and organization. The frontier mentality pushes the second nature of the city to expand, and then as expansion begets collapse and the retrenchment of the limits of second nature it aids the sf hero or heroine

in navigating the frontier of the ruined metropole. This project has probed connections to urban history located along this spectrum and this evolutionary trajectory for both black and white ethnic groups; but what ultimately could be said to be the greater significance of these convergences and divergences of historical valence, and of the analytical framework deployed here to investigate them? If Mieville and Whitehead's novels manage to draw a diverse array of urban times and places together into a cohesive narrative whole, how might one draw the threads of this project's investigation together into a coherent weave?

Conclusions: Mapping the Urban Frontier

Perhaps most importantly, the analysis carried out here reveals a deep synergy between urban history and the cities of sf literature. Even when not explicitly referenced, this history underpins and reverberates with the tensions that drive narratives of the sf city. Such a synergy validates the work of scholars of sf like Gary Wolfe—who points to the history of urbanization as a determining factor in the development of sf's attitudes toward cities—and of black studies scholars like Madhu Dubey, who claim contemporary African, African American and Afro-diasporic literature is characterized by a focus on interrogating modern problems of black urban community and connecting them to the history of black ethnic groups in the cities of the West.

Moreover, probing such historical connections reveals and begins to explore a new frontier of research situated in between black literary studies and sf scholarship. While scholarly analysis of black sf has blossomed in recent years, scholars have also struggled to find a sufficiently syncretic context in which to discuss how its texts simultaneously converse with both the broader sf archive and important works of black literature. Hence much work on black sf favors one group of texts over the other, depending on the disciplinary predispositions of the author. The integral role cities play in the works and historical contexts that define each field of

study, however, makes urbanity a useful nexus through which to draw their insights together into a more cohesive analytical whole. The preceding chapters provide examples of how this might be accomplished; however, they also gesture to myriad unexplored possibilities. A study of the typology of underground cities might put the subterranean metropolis of Pauline Hopkins's Of One Blood and the urban underground hideouts used by the protagonists of Ellison's Invisible Man and Richard Wright's The Man Who Lived Underground in meaningful conversation with the underground municipalities of Fritz Lang's Metropolis, J.G. Ballard's The Wind from Nowhere, and Elizabeth Vonarburg's Out of the Silent City. The sprawling netropolises of Gibson, Sterling and Stephenson may provide keen insight into the cities of black cyberpunk imagined by both established authors like Walter Moseley and Nalo Hopkinson and by little-known newcomers like Tenea D. Johnson, Nicole Givens Kurtz and Valjeanne Jeffers—and vice versa. And black works that might justifiably be labeled cases of marginally science fictional 'urban surrealism'—such as Toni Morrison's Jazz with its fantastical Renaissance-era Harlem —could shed light on the surreal urbanity of a book like Mieville's The City & the City, which is also perched at the margins of what could be categorized as science fictional. The city—and, by extension, the frontier—provides a common language and framework by which to carry out a fruitful dialogue between such texts, and produce insights that neither Anglophone sf nor African, African American and Afro-diasporic literature can provide solely on their own.

Finally, in addition to elucidating these possibilities and opening up a new frontier of research, this project's inquiry helps further clarify the importance of science fiction to black literature, and the importance of black writers to science fiction. It provides substantive answers to a question readers, editors and other authors frequently asked Octavia Butler: "What good is science fiction to black people?" Such a query springs from a tradition of viewing black writers

as largely uninvolved in sf culture or literature and of viewing science fiction as a genre that leaves black men and women on the margins of its narratives. Indeed, it is these perceived shortcomings that prompted writers like Charles Saunders to pen works like Why Blacks Don't Read Science Fiction. Butler, of course, has provided her own savvy responses in her interviews, essays and novels; but this project provides another. Its selection of texts demonstrates that black authors have been contributing to the sf genre and participating in its traditions since long before the rise of Sam Delany and Octavia Butler, so that despite the scarcity of pre-New Wave black sf texts when compared to Anglophone sf's massive archive it is clear that black writing is nonetheless definitively wired into sf's historical DNA. Furthermore, although scholars like Isaiah Lavender have documented how both black ethnicity and much of black history undergoes erasure in many classic Anglophone sf works, the preceding chapters document how black sf texts reflect in some profound ways upon black history. This is important in that it illustrates that the racial erasure affected by the conventions of Anglophone science fiction which critics like Lavender point out coexist with contrapuntal attempts by black sf authors to use sf conventions to assert and interrogate the history of their ethnic identity. Hence even though many works within the literature of cities choose to "unsee" black men and women—as the residents of Besźel and Ul-Qoma choose to do to each other—as in The City & the City no amount of such unseeing eliminates the fact of their real influence on and presence in sf literature. Works like The Intuitionist and writers like Whitehead, meanwhile, serve to breach the barrier of unseeing and demonstrate how intertwined the work of black and white sf authors truly is. Binding all these insights together is the urban experience and the walls of the sf city.

Ultimately, the urban frontierism explored here and its connections to the history of the

city for both black and white men and women contribute to sf and black studies scholarship in a fittingly transitional way. This project's inquiry may serve to expand established knowledge within these two fields; but it also points to a vast unexplored critical territory that holds numerous possibilities for further research. The frontier that emerges beckons the literary critic to take up the mantle of the pioneer and forge ahead to lay claim to new, fruitful scholarly homesteads—but it also reminds them that the interstitial space of the frontier is key to understanding the paradoxes of the sf city, and that different ethnic histories may invest a city with different historical meanings. In this sense, the critic is in the same position as Borlú, who ends his story as an avatar of Breach in the transitional zone between Beszél and Ul Qoma, declaring with prescience that "I live in the interstice, yes, but I live in the City & the City." (Mieville 312)

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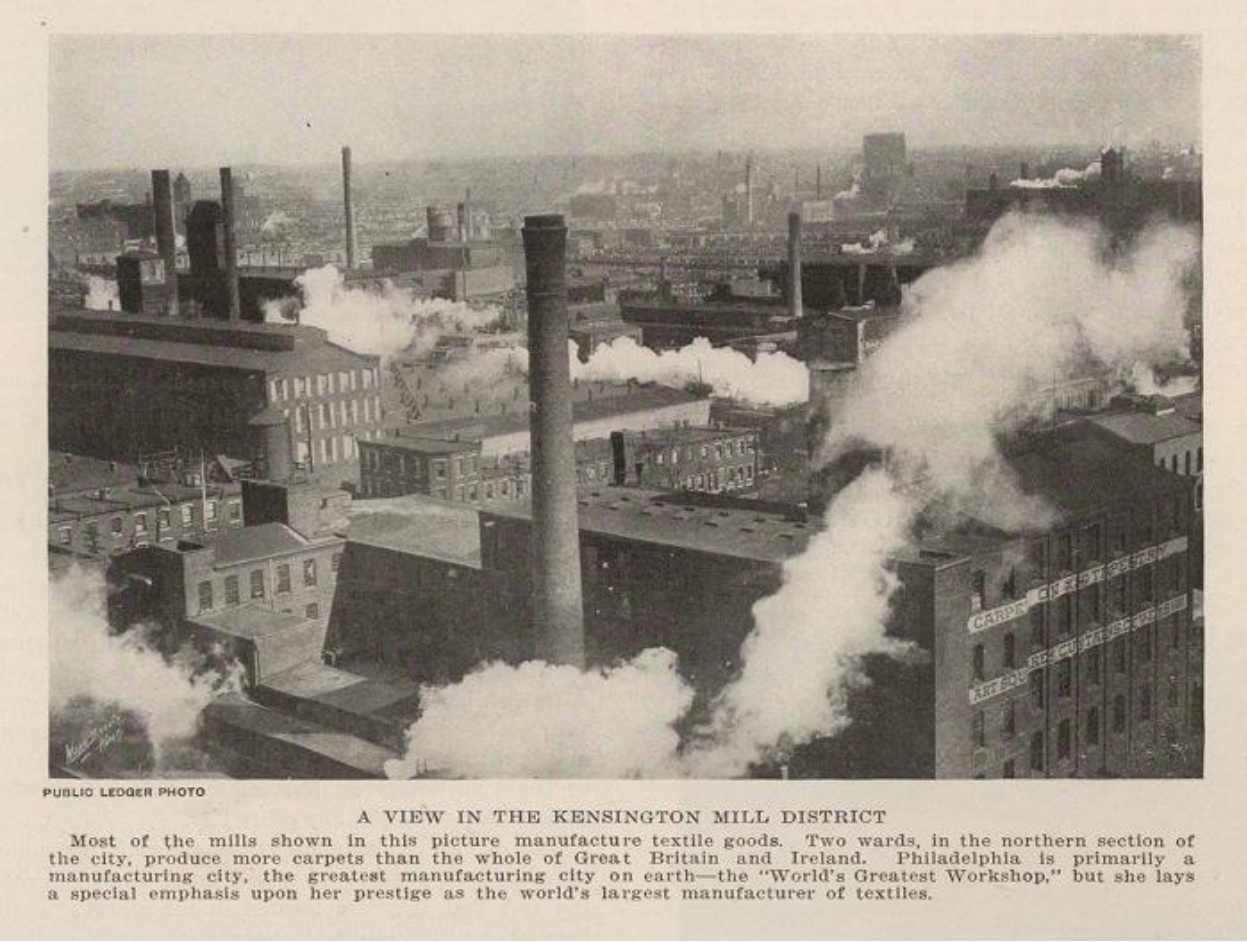
Appendix



PUBLIC LEDGER PHOTO

A VIEW IN THE KENSINGTON MILL DISTRICT

Most of the mills shown in this picture manufacture textile goods. Two wards, in the northern section of the city, produce more carpets than the whole of Great Britain and Ireland. Philadelphia is primarily a manufacturing city, the greatest manufacturing city on earth—the "World's Greatest Workshop," but she lays a special emphasis upon her prestige as the world's largest manufacturer of textiles.

Figure A1: Photograph of Kensington, Philadelphia, early 19th century.

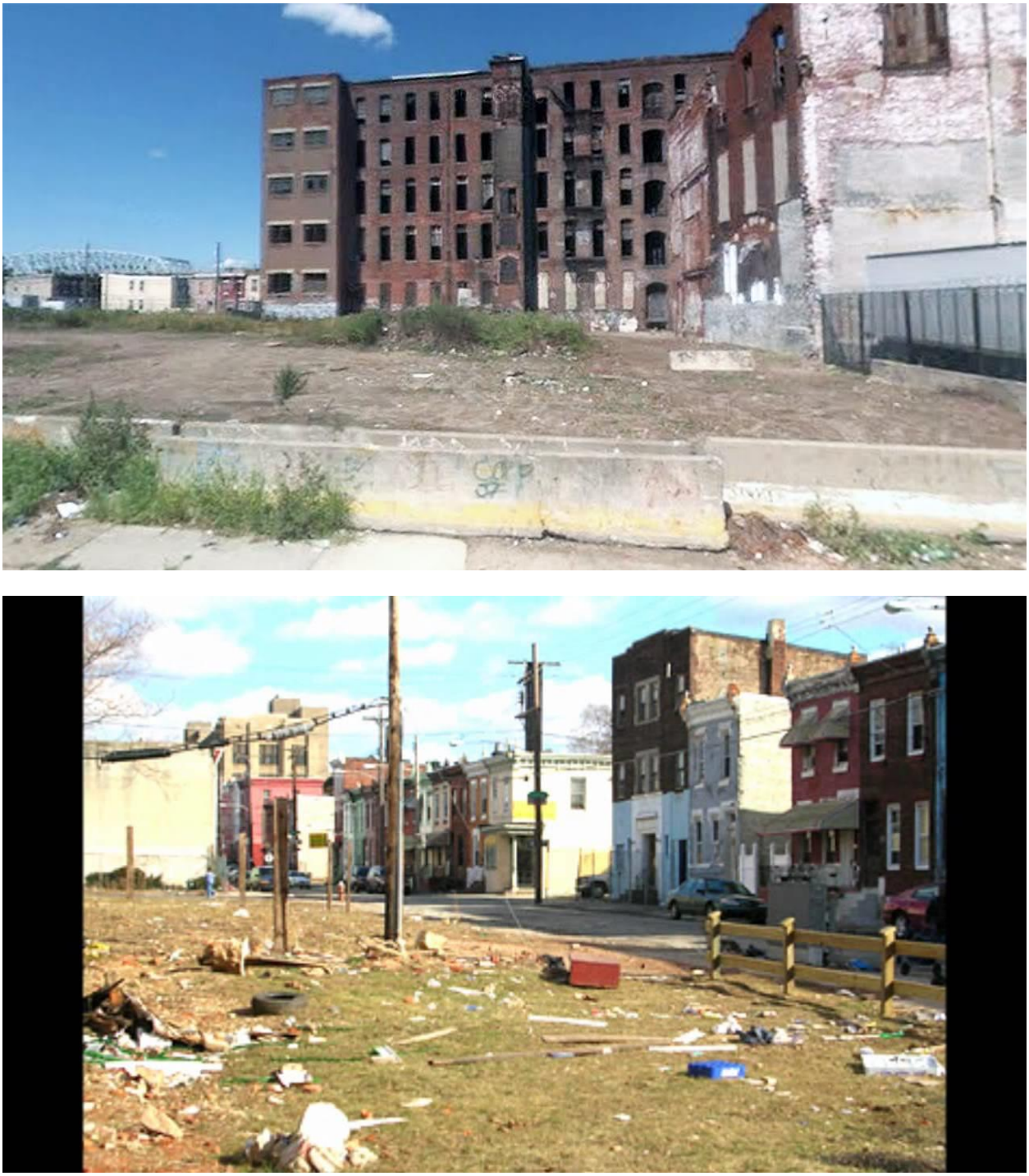


Figure A2: Photographs of Kensington, Philadelphia circa 2011