

# Imagining Genocide in the Progressive Era: The Socialist Science Fiction of George Allan England

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Late one afternoon in the spring of 1912, a seven-year-old boy lurked behind the door of his family's New York City apartment. His design, this day as every day, was to offer a perfunctory welcome to his weary, work-worn father and to spirit away that day's edition of the *New York Evening Mail*. If he succeeded, young A. J. Liebling—pulp-adventure fan and future *New Yorker* columnist—would quickly repair to his favorite reading spot and immerse himself in the latest installment of an absorbing post-apocalypse serial called *The Last New Yorkers*. Fifty years later, Liebling still vividly remembered that story and was inspired to re-read it, making it the subject of an alternately wry and nostalgic *New Yorker* column. On this reading he discovered a considerable amount of sex, racism and socialism that he had overlooked as a boy, and noted that he had still never heard of the author, George Allan England, a name that he mistakenly thought was probably a pseudonym.<sup>1</sup>

George Allan England should be remembered today as the once immensely popular author of socialist-inflected science fiction stories and novels, and especially of his signature work, the epic trilogy *Darkness and Dawn* (1914), of which Liebling read a serialized extract.<sup>2</sup> An examination of the book and its author in their historical and literary contexts offers an illuminating if sometimes jarring entree to aspects of both socialist and popular consciousness in the Progressive Era. England envisioned an America devastated by natural disaster and then rebuilt into a socialist city upon a hill, wherein all social and economic

contradictions were resolved through the indomitable leadership of a surviving socialist engineer, and he conveyed that vision to a large popular audience. But more interestingly, he deployed the classic interlinked oppositions of “man” against nature, reason against unbridled passion, and whiteness against color to explore the murky border zone between humankind and apes that so fascinated and frightened a culture in transition between Victorian and modernist sensibilities. In doing so, England said the unsayable: he graphically portrayed the resolution of American history’s central contradiction—race—through what later generations would call genocide. It is a striking if sobering fact that such a vision could attain enthusiastic audience response at a historical moment shortly before W. E. B. Du Bois would call upon African Americans to “close ranks” with their white compatriots and to fight in the genuine apocalypse that was then brewing in Europe.<sup>3</sup> In England’s epic story, which grew ever longer as its pulp-magazine audience clamored for more, erecting a city upon a hill was inextricably intertwined with exterminating an entire race.

What do we gain today from reading a text such as *Darkness and Dawn*? One may say that popular writers simply give an audience what it wants; England obviously did this, as his tale expanded from one book to three in response to popular demand—and there is certainly something useful in knowing what an audience wanted at a given historical moment. One may say further that a text can embody significant cultural tensions and contradictions of its era, and sometimes symbolically resolves them; or, as Jane Tompkins puts it, texts, and specifically novels, do “cultural work,” offering a society “a means of thinking about itself,” about its problems and their possible solutions. England also clearly accomplished this. He pictured a utopian outcome arising from apocalyptic origins, and he resolved, in his way, the American racial dilemma. And finally, one may say, with Fredric Jameson, that most mass cultural artifacts embody both reifications of dominant ideology and expressions of utopian longing, that “anxiety and hope are two faces of the same collective consciousness.”<sup>4</sup> All of these statements, and perhaps the last one most pressingly, are true of *Darkness and Dawn*. All suggest reasons why the book now warrants our attention.

George Allan England wrote prolifically in the realms of socialist and science fiction before World War I, and also produced adventure, romance, and travel books, as well as endless miscellaneous magazine articles. As a radical novelist, he particularly excelled in the sub-genre that scholar Walter Rideout styles the “revolutionary romance.” Such works, of which Jack London’s *Iron Heel* (1907) is the best-remembered, usually combined epic tales of adventure and conspiracy with prophetic visions of a socialist future. Their emphasis on apocalyptic violence linked these works to Ignatius Donnelly’s grimly prophetic *Caesar’s Column* (1890) and similar Gilded-Age novels of social conflagration, while their visionary element linked them to the utopian tradition commonly associated with Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* (1888). As in both earlier genres, writers of revolutionary romances often shaped plot, characterization,

and social vision according to their understanding of the evolutionary ideas of Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, and the anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan.<sup>5</sup>

Socialist novelists of the Progressive Era may be seen as participating in the wide-ranging socialist discourse on science during a period when uncritical scientism and belief in a social-evolutionary framework tended to draw socialist intellectuals away from a traditional Marxist analysis and toward a version of socialism to be realized by inevitable progress through preordained, universal stages. Socialists built into their thinking Morgan's model of cultural evolution proceeding from savagery through barbarism to civilization, and Spencer's model of a social organism becoming ever more complexly interdependent while progressing from the "militant" to the "industrial" social stage. They often imagined a socialist order dominated by technocratic elites, especially scientists and engineers. The commitment to making socialism scientific also often implicated socialists in the reinforcement and perpetuation of varieties of Darwinized racial thinking that were widely considered legitimately scientific.<sup>6</sup> In all of these respects, George Allan England's fiction was exemplary. It was probably less typical, however, that an author should command an audience ranging from serious socialist scholars to seven-year-old boys.

A. J. Liebling apparently never knew that his wonderful discovery had previously been published in the Frank Munsey pulp magazine *The Cavalier and the Scrapbook*, where it had found a large and enthusiastic audience; that reader demand had elicited two sequels; and that the entire trilogy had then been published in a single volume in 1914 under the title *Darkness and Dawn*, having, in England's words, a "very excellent sale." Neither did he seem aware that England wrote two other socialist science fiction novels, one of which was also serialized in the *Cavalier*, and that he was a well-known activist and writer in the Socialist party. But then, most of the contemporary mainstream critics who reviewed England's books ignored his socialist connection and ideas, and even socialist reviewers seemed equally unaware of his popularity in the pulp world. *The Boston Transcript* boomed *Darkness and Dawn* as "Tremendous! Thrilling! Bewildering! Sensational!" Meanwhile, the socialist intellectual journal *The New Review* engaged the work on ideological grounds, taking issue with certain seemingly un-socialist features but allowing that England was still "a rattling good story teller."<sup>7</sup>

England's contemporaries were not alone in perceiving only a portion of his tale. Later scholars have also failed to understand England's participation in these multiple discourses. Historians of literary radicalism seem unaware of his pulp science-fiction career and audience, while historians of science fiction rate him a forgotten master but disparage his adulteration of "pure" storytelling with socialist ideas.<sup>8</sup> But science fiction and socialist theory do share the assumption that the world can change in dramatic and sometimes efficacious ways, and England saw no contradiction in combining genres and exploiting what he called the "didactic" possibilities of "pseudoscientific" fiction. Thus he dedicated one

of his books to Socialist party leader Eugene V. Debs, another to *Cavalier* editor and pulp impresario Robert H. Davis, and a third to an unlikely combination of Davis and various socialist comrades.<sup>9</sup> As a professional writer, England crossed many borders, even as he probed the very idea of borders in his fiction.

Like Edward Bellamy, Jack London, and Upton Sinclair, George Allan England was a socialist novelist who reached a broad audience—in his case, one that stretched beyond his fellow socialists to readers who were both male and female, younger and older, working-class and middle-class, followers of the mildly disreputable *Cavalier* (with a circulation in 1913 of approximately 75,000) and of the solidly middle-class *Evening Mail*.<sup>10</sup> His work was intended to represent socialist ideas to both the radical and the general reader, to feed the appetite of each for science-related material, and to entice the coveted female consumer with a romantic sub-plot—since she was assumed to be unmoved by the aforementioned appeals (the *Cavalier*'s letters pages suggest that, contrary to most scholars' assumption that the pulp audience was mainly male, women also read the magazine).

In its original *Cavalier* incarnation, Book One of *Darkness and Dawn* prompted an outpouring of letters calling for sequels from an author who was already busily occupied with other projects. Editor Davis extracted the next two segments from England by paying only upon delivery, and then responded to persistent reader demand by arranging for publication in book form. Finally, in the face of still-unceasing calls for more, England declared himself exhausted. He was so successful that, together with Edgar Rice Burroughs, author of the contemporaneous Munsey serial *Tarzan of the Apes*, England made Frank Munsey the world's premiere publisher of pulp science fiction, and himself one of the genre's most influential writers.<sup>11</sup> Pulp magazines endlessly recycled primitivist narratives of lost white races that had degenerated, sometimes by mating with apes,<sup>12</sup> and of heroic white men doing battle with dark-skinned savages. The pulps thereby became one of late Victorian culture's primary sites for exploring the alluring but frightening interspecific border zone: the zone where humans merged with animals, especially apes; the zone that Burroughs and his imitators usually located in Africa, on Mars, or in a similarly exotic locale. It was from the border zone's shadowed depths that England drew much of the emotional intensity of *Darkness and Dawn*.

We may thus locate England's fiction at the intersection of several formative discourses and genres, each of which his writing both exemplifies and illuminates. These include debates about socialism and evolutionary theory, cataclysmic hopes and fears in fiction, examinations of the fluctuating boundaries between humans and animals, racial tensions in American society, attitudes toward science and scientists, the development of pulp primitivism and science fiction, and the myths of American mission and imperial destiny. These discourses and genres not only shaped England's work, they also shaped his socialist generation's ability to envision the means of transcending an intolerable

present and of inventing alternative futures; and they further shaped, as well as reflected, his popular audience's views on the question of the color line in the United States. I will relate England's work to that of his forebears and contemporaries in these various realms, and will argue that *Darkness and Dawn* sums up an American discourse on evolution, race and violence which demonstrates the inability of oppositional writers to stand outside of dominant cultural assumptions on these issues, and the surprising ability of readers and writers to imagine and countenance, when presented in slightly estranged form, the genocidal destruction of intrusive and unwanted "others."

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The son of an Army chaplain, England was born at Fort McPherson, Nebraska in 1877 and grew up on a succession of Army posts. After his family moved to Boston, he worked his way through Harvard. There he apparently embraced socialism, and also earned a Phi Beta Kappa key and a Master's degree. But the onset two years later of tuberculosis and nephritis forced him to quit his job with a New York insurance company and to retreat to his wife's childhood home in the Maine woods. England first tried writing stories for magazines while recovering in Maine and living on charity from his in-laws. He sold his first story in 1903 and his first science fiction tale in 1905. These initial successes opened the door to a contract with the Munsey organization and then to a career in which, by his own account in 1920, he had already published three hundred short stories, twenty-five serials, eleven books and "innumerable newspaper articles and essays" on miscellaneous topics. England remained everlastingly grateful that illness had saved him from the threat of a career in insurance.

Besides selling to the pulps and to mainstream magazines such as *Harper's* and *Cosmopolitan*, England also wrote for various socialist publications, completed an authorized history of the famous socialist newspaper *The Appeal to Reason*, and ran for the governorship of Maine on the party ticket. In the forward to his 1915 socialist novel *The Air Trust*, which the magazines apparently refused to serialize, England announced his conviction that, while he preferred political action to violent insurrection, if the American plutocracy insisted on foreclosing political change "then by all means let us have revolution in its other sense." But he left political and literary radicalism behind when he renounced his earlier pacifism and supported American involvement in the World War. England continued to write in the travel and adventure genres until his death in 1936. He often sought to live the exciting life that he wrote about by hunting treasure under the ocean and seals in the Arctic. After he emerged from the Maine woods, both physically renewed and materially successful, much of England's writing showed a devotion to hunting and hardship similar to that evinced by Owen Wister, Theodore Roosevelt, and other once-sickly devotees of the cult of male virility and violence.<sup>13</sup>

Reflecting in 1923 on his prodigious output of science fiction stories, England wrote that the public was “insatiably eager” for “science mixed with fiction,” making this a profitable field for the writer. Indeed, England and Burroughs remained the two most successful and popular writers in the Munsey stable until the organization shifted its focus in the early 1920s. England admitted that the romance angle was essential, as “romance-eaters” far outnumbered the “scientifically-minded” among the public. But he also stressed the need for serious scientific reading if the writer would lend verisimilitude to what he cheerfully called “science faking.” And such stories did, he insisted, have their redeeming qualities: the scientific knowledge gained by both reader and writer was more enriching than the usual “he-and-she stuff,” undermined “supernaturalism and superstition,” and inclined the reader toward “the most important factor in the world’s thought—the scientific habit of mind.” Like other ex-socialists in the 1920s, England retained a powerful commitment to the “august” ideal of science long after his commitment to socialism, once understood as inextricably linked with science, had been abandoned.<sup>14</sup>

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The “scientific habit of mind” also served the revolutionary romance writer well. Following the path blazed by Jack London in *The Iron Heel*, the prototype for this genre, socialist authors such as England and Charles A. Steere showed less interest in naturalistic descriptions of the conditions that made socialism desirable and instead emphasized the process of change. These novels all lionize an intelligent and domineering hero of the “fittest” type, often a scientist or an engineer cast in the mold of London’s Ernest Everhard and bearing a similarly Nietzschean name. For example, Steere’s *When Things Were Doing* (1908) features a conspiracy of scientists and engineers, led by the rugged and heroic “Bill Tempest,” who institute socialism after infiltrating the armed forces and seizing the communications system. Socialist scientists have invented an extraordinarily powerful explosive called “sizmos”; such weapons are a standard device in revolutionary romances and are lineally descended from the gas bombs used in *Caesar’s Column* to devastate the republic’s degenerated remains. Beyond the fact that the romancer usually had an eye for spectacular effects, the ubiquity of such socialist super-bombs suggests a certain skepticism about the proletariat’s revolutionary potential. Steere’s workers, again like Donnelly’s in *Caesar’s Column*, remain a “dim, pathetic” breed who doubt the new commonwealth’s longevity.<sup>15</sup>

Although some socialist intellectuals quarrelled with Steere’s bent for conspiratorial politics, *When Things Were Doing* was founded on the cosmic Spencerian-Marxist evolutionism that typified Socialist party theoretical discourse.<sup>16</sup> As a philosopher in the book explains, evolution has phased quietly but relentlessly from progressive biological development into organicist social and economic integration, culminating in a transition to socialism so “smooth and

orderly” as to pass nearly unnoticed by the docile citizenry (221-225). Steere’s rationalized, socialist mass society is simply a higher and more humane form of the social organism’s natural elaboration into the “coherent heterogeneity” predicted by the British evolutionary systematizer Herbert Spencer. This is the end of evolution, described in lavish but stupefying detail by Steere as he fails to resolve the utopian writer’s classic dilemma: how to keep the plot alive once evolution has reached its goal. George Allan England, while sharing Steere’s model of socialist evolution, avoids this problem by emphasizing the processes of change and leaving the outcome largely to the reader’s imagination—the natural course for a writer with his particular knack for action and adventure writing.

In all of England’s socialist novels, science figures as a fundamental force. After *Darkness and Dawn* came *The Air Trust* (1915), in which capitalists exploit their in-house scientist’s brilliance to monopolize oxygen. Then in *The Golden Blight* (1916), a socialist physicist destroys the world’s gold by remote control, ending the reign of capital and introducing “the dominance of Intellect.” Here England proved once again that his forte was action, not economic theory.<sup>17</sup>

*Darkness and Dawn*, by far the most ambitious product of England’s pen, is a tour de force of romantic socialist pulp. In a torrential outpouring of some 225,000 words, England dramatizes with florid and overheated prose the struggles of the only two civilized survivors of the apocalypse as they guide the re-enactment of the entire drama of social evolution from savagery through barbarism to civilization, culminating in the building of a socialist utopia. The book is in some respects a socialist retelling of *Caesar’s Column*. In Donnelly’s book, evolution has exacerbated American class differences to the point that the class struggle has become one with the struggle for existence. The climax of the novel occurs with the furious revolt of the degenerating workers (who balance precariously on the border between the human and animal realms) and the hereditary criminal lumpenproletariat—“a new variety of the genus Homo” (43-49). The rebels turn the tools of scientific warfare to the slaughter of their oppressors and of each other in a carnival of carnage that utterly destroys ten thousand years’ worth of civilization. The Gilded-Age utopians’ worst fear is realized in *Caesar’s Column*: if class conflict did become class war, the degenerated working masses’ unleashed fury might turn back the course of evolution, reinstating as the “fittest” the fiercest wielders of club and stone.

By contrast, in England’s novel a natural disaster wipes out civilization but also creates the conditions for socialist renewal—with race, rather than class, the central remaining social contradiction. England calls his catastrophe “Ragnarok” (18), referring to Donnelly’s little-read tome *Ragnarok: The Age of Fire and Gravel* (1883), which details the author’s theory that evolutionary cycles are periodically terminated by natural cataclysms.<sup>18</sup> But while Donnelly was both anti-socialist and anti-evolutionist, the cataclysm that England’s survivors believe has marked “the closing chapter” in the “Book of Evolution” (22) actually

becomes, through their agency, the inception of a higher, socialist phase. At the end of *Caesar's Column* Donnelly's heroes flee the ruins of America for Uganda, where they found a Populist utopia with the sturdiest of the older, northern European American "stock," including a certifiable descendant of George Washington. They assume that centuries must pass before civilization will re-establish itself on the smoldering ashes of the United States. But England's Allan Stern—socialist, consulting engineer, and indomitable white American—redeems the degenerated "Merucaan" (that is, "American") race, whom he discovers in a great western abyss, and guides them from savagery and barbarism to socialism in a single generation.

Borrowing Edward Bellamy's widely-copied device of the sleeping protagonist, England has Allan Stern and his secretary Beatrice Kendrick awaken in the ruins of New York City after a 1500-year sleep. At first they are horrified by the utter devastation of the city and by the lonely prospect of apparently being the last surviving humans on earth. But as they make fire, clothe themselves with animal skins (gleaned from a storage chest in a furrier's shop), and begin the arduous process of recapitulating the history of the human race, they take increasing satisfaction in the idea of beginning the world again and making it right this time. During an endless series of harrowing adventures, improbable coincidences, and cliff-hanging crises, Allan is transformed from a competent but ordinary engineer into a mighty, god-like warrior-chieftain and lover, while the colorless Beatrice figuratively takes off her glasses and blossoms into a voluptuous barbarian queen and primal mother of the new race. Although obviously destined for greatness, the two must at first struggle fiercely simply to survive in their neo-Darwinian world. And, as Donnelly believed even more strongly, evolutionary progress is reversible: like the most urbane characters in other contemporary socialist novels, Allan periodically reverts to the primitive and violent "jungle stage" (132)—especially when attacked by the couple's nemesis, the degenerate, ape-like Horde.<sup>19</sup>

As these reversions to type suggest, England resembles other socialist novelists of his era in being a convinced Darwinian; but like most, he is also only an inconsistent literary naturalist. On the one hand, he certainly invokes no watchful God or guiding universal moral force, and the struggle for existence proceeds with unyielding ferocity as England revels in scenes of brutal violence. Indeed, for one who also wrote pacifist tracts, England seems to have been strangely fascinated with guns, explosives ("Pulverite," in this incarnation), and wholesale slaughter. Yet given the possible literary expressions of Darwinism, England imagines a universe that is neither fully and implacably determined nor fraught with contingency and randomness; rather, his plot often turns on the improbable but salutary coincidence more typical of genteel romance. The characters also remain quaintly sentimental with regard to sex and marriage. Beatrice's alluring body, clad at first only in fifteen hundred years' worth of lustrous hair and later in a tiger skin, does repeatedly arouse Allan's "atavistic passions" (35). But the reader trembles for the fate of the species when the two



remain determinedly celibate for over four hundred pages before finally stumbling (in one of those happy coincidences) upon a phonograph recording of the marriage ceremony and a still-intact gramophone.<sup>20</sup> Thus they heroically sublimate sexual desire into social engineering, subordinating their surging animal passions to the pressing tasks of staying alive and re-establishing a technologically modern, socially harmonious civilization.

England highlights his characters' "animal" instincts, which literary naturalists often associated with sex, in a different connection. Socialist authors imbued with evolutionary thinking were fascinated by the question of just how thick might be the veneer of culture that overlay and contained the voracious "beast" within the human shell. Where Jack London explored this issue through the tensions of sex and class, in *Darkness and Dawn* England displaces the question of culture's fragility from the arena of sex to that of race.<sup>21</sup> He constructs his novel so that it must eventuate in an epic battle between its white American hero—the engineer of the future—and that hero's own revolting evolutionary past, externalized and made palpable in the form of a mass of stunted and menacing non-white survivors. Allan Stern seeks to prove by his deeds that men like himself are fit to plan and to lead the new society, but the single greatest obstacle to his socialist engineering ambitions is the vicious Horde: a blue-black, ape-like race that inhabits the post-apocalypse border zone, giving flesh and bone to the most fearful white fantasies of degenerated slum-dwellers and sub-human blacks, and suggesting for England the need expressed by a long tradition of socialist writers to distance themselves from their unbridled, primeval past.<sup>22</sup>

In the process of writing a stirring adventure story, England exposes some of the most tangled contradictions and fearful prospects in the socialist—and American—psyche. Socialists believed that biological and social evolution merged into a single process, a unitary progressive movement away from humankind's rapaciously self-seeking origins and toward the elaboration of a harmoniously interconnecting social organism. The socialist movement's task was to theorize, explain, and guide this process: to cooperate, as they often put it, with evolution. The resultant socialist polity, itself a natural product, would also represent the ultimate human triumph over nature, both internal (in the form of bestial and primitive impulses) and external (in the form of challenges to human survival and progress). Because England's narrative disrupts and perhaps even reverses that putatively natural process, its hero must regard his overgrown Eden with a mixture of vaulting optimism and deepest dread. Happy though he is for the chance to be the American Adam, to cast off the constraining bonds of history, he also faces a task far more daunting than the ordinary rigors of the struggle for existence. He must fight for his life, and for the future of civilization—which he identifies exclusively with the white race—in the obscure depths of the border zone.

For Allan Stern, what is most appalling about the Horde is their indeterminate status in the hierarchy of species: they are "black," like some humans, but are also

“bestial” (94); they wield spears, but also have elongated, ripping, dog-like canines; they practice voodoo rituals, but also eat their enemies’ raw flesh. Are they human, or animal, or something in between? White Americans, including socialists, had always associated African Americans with the vile passions and uncontrollable urges of a now-transcended evolutionary past, often classifying blacks as forms transitional between animal and human. And, similarly, as Donna Haraway points out in her recent study of primatology, apes were understood in the white Western imagination of this era as liminal creatures that also, like blacks, occupied the shifting border zone between culture and nature, between “higher” animals and “lower” races. Thus the ape was potentially both the savage “other” and the submerged but dangerous natural self.<sup>23</sup>

The idea of liminal beings ranging across a border zone between species must have been profoundly disturbing to Americans of essentially Victorian sensibility—socialist though they might be—because Victorian culture demanded fixed categories and firm boundaries between black and white, between nature and culture, between evil and good.<sup>24</sup> Evolutionary schemes such as Spencer’s and Morgan’s possessed the virtue of imposing order and purpose on the messiness, lack of temporal fixity, and fluidity of lines between species that Darwinism had disclosed in a universe previously understood in more tidily Linnaean terms. But creatures like the Horde, or the “Anthropoids,” as England also calls them, violate all boundaries, all predictable evolutionary trajectories, all tidy categories. They confront the heroic engineer with the stark negation of the qualities he most prizes: reason, self-control, order, progress, civilization—and whiteness, which comprehends all the others.

These tensions, although never fully articulated, are at the very heart of the action throughout England’s trilogy. The Horde, a ghastly form devolved to a point somewhere below Morgan’s savagery, is the stuff of Allan’s evolutionary nightmares—and presumably of England’s as well, if the similarity between their names may be taken as meaningful:

“Why—what *are* these?” he asked himself, shuddering despite himself at the mere sight of what lay outside there in the forest. “What? Men? Animals? Neither! God help me, what—*what are these things?*” (104)

The creatures are repulsive to Allan less for their bestiality—he understands animals, just as he understands “savages,” and knows how to deal with both (107)—than for their undefinability and their apparent “degeneration from the man-standard” (108). But is it degeneration? In a world where the already permeable boundaries between nature and culture have been abolished, where historically incommensurable life-forms are shockingly juxtaposed, are the Horde degenerated remnants of the past or lowly progenitors of some human-like future form? Allan will toy with both explanations, but from his first sighting of

the Horde's distant canoes, he hopes they will prove to be white and therefore susceptible to civilizing influences (89). But when he observes them creeping with spears, blowguns, and torches through the forest that now blankets Manhattan Island, to his chagrin, "No white thing showed anywhere." The passage that follows is a portrait of liminality, a moving picture of the border zone itself:

All was dark and vague. Indistinctly, waveringly as in a vision, dusky heads could be made out. There showed a naked arm, greasily shining for a second in the ruddy glow which now diffused itself through the whole wood. Here the watchers saw a glistening back; again, an out-thrust leg, small and crooked, apelike and repulsive.

And once again, the engineer got a glimpse of a misshapen hand, a long, lean, hideous hand that clutched a spear. But, hardly seen, it vanished into obscurity once more.

"Seems as though malformed human members, black and bestial, had been flung at random into a ghastly kaleidoscope, turned by a madman!" whispered Stern (94).

Instantly repulsed and enraged, he longs for a load of Pulverite.

This blind and unreasoning hatred erupts periodically throughout the book and legitimizes Allan's remorseless engagement in endless acts of violence. Perhaps what most strikes the modern reader is the speed and conviction with which Allan and Beatrice commit themselves to eradicating these human-like creatures, presumably their evolutionary cousins. There is no self-questioning, no agonizing or equivocating, no thought of avoidance or peaceful coexistence. Once Beatrice, watching from their rooftop eyrie, observes, "Why, they look black!" (93), the Horde's fate is sealed, both in the characters' minds and in the reader's. Although they number in the tens of thousands, it is obvious that no inferior race stands a chance against two white people armed with guns. Beatrice suggests that "We *could* mow them down, from here. . ." (93), but Allan counsels a more cautious approach.

Also striking is the deep and ferocious hatred expressed by the white characters, and especially by the engineer-patriarch Allan, whenever they see the Anthropoids. Even before their first actual contact with the creatures, while watching them from above, Allan, "with hot anger, fingered his revolver" (95); he struggles to restrain himself from simply opening fire, and tries instead "to observe them with the cool and calculating eye of science" (106). The scientist's gaze proves deadly indeed. First with guns, and then with a hastily-mixed batch of Pulverite, Allan and Beatrice eliminate hundreds of the enemy and send the rest retreating from the city in disarray. They next see the Horde more than a year later, on returning from a trip to the West in their salvaged airplane. They spot the creatures from aloft, and again Allan's hatred boils up instantly: "He longed for

slaughter now; he lusted blood—the blood of the Anthropoid pack. . .” (454). Lacking the resources to attack immediately, Allan and Beatrice resolve to exterminate the Horde another day.

Part of Allan’s boundless fury is of course sexual. After catching the “perfume” of the sleeping Beatrice’s “warm, ripe womanhood” (98), Allan is besieged by horrific visions of her violation by the Horde, and sets off to mix up a batch of Pulverite. But Beatrice is no helpless Victorian wallflower. Unlike Tarzan’s Jane, she spurns the role of passive spectator who watches admiringly while her man vents his primordial rage on her attackers.<sup>25</sup> “Magnificent in her tiger-skin, the Krag [rifle] gripped in her supple hand,” she is strong, self-sufficient, occasionally proves the better strategist, and participates actively in the killing. In the course of the story, Allan comes to see her as his “comrade” and “equal” (200), recalling the title of Eugene Debs’s pamphlet *Woman—Comrade and Equal*, in which Debs denigrates the notion of male superiority as “the snarl of the primitive.”<sup>26</sup>

Yet Beatrice’s characterization reflects the Socialist party’s ambivalence on the woman question. Facing a string of disasters in Allan’s absence, she suffers a nervous breakdown and acknowledges herself to be “only a woman” after all (581). And despite her strength, she still becomes an archetype of besieged white womanhood, constantly threatened by legions of insatiable black rapists. In their first encounter with the Horde she is attacked by their chief, a sinister, cigar-puffing Voodoo “obeah” whose eyes burn with the “hell-flame of lust” (132). One of her later tormenters actually turns out to be a gorilla, who abducts her when he forays into the human enclave from just beyond the border zone. This event is replicated in Burroughs’s *Tarzan of the Apes*, also a Munsey magazine serial that appeared as a book in 1914; such abduction scenes are a staple of the entire *Tarzan* series, and always encode both racial and sexual fears.<sup>27</sup> The gorilla is of course killed and Beatrice saved, in this case by two of Allan’s Merucaan friends who thereby prove their ascendancy over the natural world and their fitness for Allan’s civilizing plans. Donna Haraway argues that in western society, “White women mediate between ‘man’ and ‘animal,’” between culture and nature, between civilization and the border zone, and so it is in *Darkness and Dawn*.<sup>28</sup> Beatrice may sometimes be strong, shrewd and capable, but at the moments of severest crisis in the plot, her body becomes a battleground over which light and dark males engage in combat. At stake is white civilization, and only secondarily her life. Thus as the last battle rages, Beatrice lies helpless, consumed by fever and immobilized by nervous collapse.

Allan dispatches uncountable numbers of the ape-men in repeated confrontations, but his abiding concern is not simply self-protection or shielding Beatrice from outrage; he hopes quite literally to effect “a total slaughter of the Anthropoids” (527-28). England would not have been alone in finding this goal to be entirely natural and not requiring much discussion or explication. Psychologist and educator G. Stanley Hall argued in his influential study *Adolescence* (1904)

that human beings are uniquely intolerant of rivals in the struggle for existence, and are instinctively driven to exterminate “animal forebears,” “lower races,” and “missing links” between themselves and other species. Hall even referred to “the rage which exterminated the missing links and made man for ages the passionate destroyer of his own pedigree, so that no trace of it is left.”<sup>29</sup> When Allan Stern confronts dark-skinned traces of his evolutionary pedigree, his response is indeed violent rage. As the last and climactic battle approaches, “A mental picture of extermination flashed before his mind’s eye,” and he reaffirms that his “life’s work” shall include this final solution (527-28).

As if to silence any intrusive note of moral ambiguity, the author dwells obsessively on the Horde’s skin color, in which he seems to find reason enough to slaughter them. Their color contains tones of black and blue, but, similar to the creatures’ species status, is on the whole not categorizable: “‘What color then? For heaven’s sake, what?’ . . . He could hardly name it” (106). This unnameable hue is “rather mottled and wholly repulsive, very like that of a Mexican dog” (107)—in contrast to the albino Merucaans, descendants of white Americans from the canyons of the Colorado Rockies whose skin quickly regains its conventional pigmentation when Stern leads them from their subterranean home into the sunlight. It is clearly because they are white that Allan commits himself without hesitation to the Merucaans’ evolutionary rehabilitation. He immediately sees their potential for civilization, and feels for them the swelling, triumphant “love of his own race within him” (550). The Horde, on the other hand, are apparently descended from blacks who regressed once deprived of white tutelage, sinking socially and biologically through barbarism to utter savagery and physical apishness—an outcome commonly predicted by whites after the Civil War, and which Allan relates to supposed black degeneration in black-ruled Haiti and Liberia. In their features Stern sees something of the “Mongol” but more of the “negroid type” (108), suggesting a degenerative amalgamation of inferior races. The Horde are thus the ultimate evolutionary outcasts, and there is no place for them in the utopia Allan is building. In the end, he takes a fierce joy in exterminating the entire race: “‘With fire we must sweep and purge the world, even though we destroy it!’” (614) With fire, set to sweep through the forest that shelters the attacking Horde, he burns away the border zone and consigns its dark minions to oblivion.

\* \* \*

The utopian component of a romance is its dream of what might be, and *Darkness and Dawn* offers its audience a resplendent image of utopian fulfillment, along with the pleasures of an engaging popular entertainment. But such pleasures unsettle and disturb. Allan Stern’s monomaniacal devotion to genocide is the necessary precondition for George Allan England’s dream of socialist revolution—and perhaps a chilling intimation of the subconscious scenarios entertained by white Americans, socialist and otherwise, in the era of Burroughs’s

*Tarzan*, G. Stanley Hall's psychology of racial extermination, persistent lynchings in the South, racial warfare in Springfield, Illinois, and Thomas Dixon's racist novels, which reached their apotheosis in D. W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). The imagination of genocide, as mediated in popular culture through images of inevitable conflict with dark and dangerous liminal beings, was a brooding and potentially potent force that could make itself felt in unexpected quarters. After all, Eugene Debs's eloquent rhetorical blasts against racism were sometimes levelled at partisans of Thomas Dixon in his own party.<sup>30</sup> In England's book, genocide and utopia are inextricably linked: America could still be a city upon a hill, but only if the race issue were settled at the beginning of social evolution, and not left to fester until the end.

As engineers of evolution, Allan and Beatrice intend to lead their people through the traditional evolutionary stages laid out by Herbert Spencer and Lewis Henry Morgan, and to end by establishing a world without poverty, oppression, and strife, a world that will complete the shift to collectivism that Allan says the old world had already been undergoing (164, 259). The Horde must vanish because they are inopportune, just as freed blacks seemed inopportune to many Americans of England's day. Putting evolutionary racial science into play, England represents the Horde as capable of rising only to the level of that older human nature that was "in essence a beast nature, with "Grab" for its creed" (550). Oddly, while real African Americans in England's day were largely consigned to sharecropping and service occupations, the Horde appear here as the last repository of capitalist values. If a world without capitalist exploitation and social Darwinist racial strife is to be built, such backward forms must be eliminated in advance. For the albino Merucaans, white Americans in whose genes civilization remains "latent," evolution is actually atavism. Once restored to the proper environment, their minds revert to older ways, as do their eyes and skin—but those older ways unaccountably do not include the animal ethics of their capitalist ancestors. Somehow the worst of the past's legacy has all been concentrated in dark-skinned creatures, with whom it now vanishes forever. Unsurprisingly, Allan's socialist paradise, once achieved, is marred by "no racial discords" (669). In Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, people of color are oddly absent. In *Darkness and Dawn*, we know where they went.

England expresses his beliefs about evolution, race, and violence with a frankness and vigor so ingenuous as to imply that he assumes his readers must share them. This was not necessarily an untenable assumption. The American republic had a long history of imagining (and occasionally of carrying out) wars of extermination, from Thomas Jefferson's fear that the abolition of slavery must necessarily lead to racial warfare and "the extermination of one or the other race," to various nineteenth-century proposals to exterminate any of a wide variety of culprit classes: proslavery Kansas Border Ruffians, recalcitrant leaders of the former Confederacy, *all* former Confederates, ex-slaves, strikers, paupers, political radicals, and of course, numerous Native American tribes who stubbornly

impeded the course of progress. Richard Slotkin argues that the “idea of the war of extermination is the central theme of the Myth of the Frontier, and of the myths of class struggle” insofar as strikers came to be represented as savages. Slotkin also notes that Americans since the colonial era had used supposed racial traits as rationales for wars of extermination; as we have seen, this had become an article of faith for England’s Allan Stern.<sup>31</sup>

Among England’s fellow producers of science fiction and primitivist romance, Edgar Rice Burroughs endlessly replayed the same scenario of white triumph over variously hued others, whether it was John Carter battling ugly green Martian creatures or Tarzan tangling with apes, Africans, and liminal humanoids. Burroughs believed that blacks were a transitional evolutionary form, and thus the apes in *Tarzan* pound drums, practice cannibalism, and threaten white women, just as England’s Horde do.<sup>32</sup> England’s work brings sharply into focus a cultural discourse on racial conflict and wars of extermination, giving unusually if not uniquely frank voice to the idea of genocide by representing the extermination of liminal others who stand in for African Americans. And England’s book also fits into a larger pattern in Anglo-American science fiction that had begun to emerge during the 1890s, in which plots began to portray a united Anglo-American stand against the world’s “inferior” peoples and to project the rise of an integrated world order based on imperialism.<sup>33</sup> Thus Allan plans at the book’s end a voyage of discovery to the Old World (662). His newly founded “universal race” of vigorous and intelligent whites will someday colonize Europe, Asia and Africa, realizing Progressive-Era expansionists’ most grandiose imperial dreams. George Allan England, then, was both a product of and a contributor to all of these cultural and literary discourses, and in bringing their themes to a kind of crescendo, he created a work that reverberated far beyond the boundaries of socialist fiction.

Finally, with its appeals to seemingly disparate audiences, England’s novel also suggests the degree to which American socialists, committed as they were to the goal of elaborating a “scientific” socialism, and enfolded as they were within the culturally-bounded scientific discourse of their moment, were far too much a part of the world they intended to change. *Darkness and Dawn* is finally a socialist vision of the renewal of America’s mythic promise, freed from the nagging problem of the American dilemma. Allan Stern triumphs not only because he is a socialist, but also because “he [is] an engineer—and an American” (80)—a white American. By mobilizing the engineer’s scientific and technological resources to expunge darkness, he invites a new American dawn. His socialist society, established somewhere in the American West, reconstitutes the bounty and spaciousness of that region without its exploitation, violence, and inconvenient native peoples. In such a setting, he can lead the true Americans from their abyss and up to his city upon a hill, where they literally become cliff-dwellers. In the end, this is a familiar story; *Darkness and Dawn* poses the question of how Americans might cast off the burden of history and start over. But here history

begins anew from the premise of homogeneous whiteness, rather than “mottled” variousness and difference. John Locke had once written that “In the beginning, all the world was America”<sup>34</sup>; George Allan England imagined that without darkness, it might be so again.

## Notes

I would like to acknowledge Bonnie Lawson’s assiduous and very helpful research assistance in the early stages of this article’s preparation

1. A. J. Liebling, “That Was New York: ‘To Him She Clung,’” *New Yorker*, October 12, 1963, 143-68.

2. *Darkness and Dawn* was the original title of the first book of the trilogy, as it appeared in the *Cavalier*. Some or all of the trilogy may also have been syndicated elsewhere (that is, in addition to the *New York Evening Mail*) according to Sam Moskowitz, ed., *Under the Moons of Mars: A History and Anthology of “The Scientific Romance” in the Munsey Magazines, 1912-1920* (New York, 1970), 334. In the book version of *Darkness and Dawn* (Boston, 1914), Book I became *The Vacant World* while the other volumes were called *Beyond the Great Oblivion* and *The Afterglow*. The trilogy was later re-published in *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* (1940), in five volumes by Avalon (1964-1967), and in a single volume by Hyperion Press, Incorporated (1974). On the trilogy’s popularity, see Moskowitz, *Under the Moons of Mars*, 339, 344-45. All page references to *Darkness and Dawn* in the text that follows are to the Small, Maynard edition.

3. I take the term “border zone” from Donna Haraway, who writes of apes occupying the border zones between the “potent mythic poles” of nature and culture; see her *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York, 1989), 1-15. My view of the transition from Victorian to modernist culture is shaped by Daniel Joseph Singal, “Towards a Definition of American Modernism,” in Singal, ed., *Modernist Culture in America* (Belmont, 1991), 1-27, and especially 4-6, 8-13. W. E. B. Du Bois called upon African Americans to support the U.S. war effort in “Close Ranks,” *The Crisis* 16 (July 1918), 111.

4. One example of the analysis of a text as embodying larger cultural tensions is David A. Hollinger, “Science and Anarchy: Walter Lippmann’s *Drift and Mastery*,” in his *In the American Province: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas* (Bloomington, 1985), 44-55; Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York, 1985), 200; Fredric Jameson, “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture,” *Social Text* 1 (1979), 145

5. Walter Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the United States 1900-1954* (Cambridge, 1956; rpt. New York, 1966); Jack London, *The Iron Heel* (New York, 1948; first published New York, 1907); Ignatius Donnelly, *Caesar’s Column* (Chicago, 1890); Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2,000-1887* (Boston, 1888). The impact of evolutionary theory on American socialist thought is the subject of Mark Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought, 1870-1920* (Madison, 1993).

6. Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought*, 168-86, addresses socialist evolutionary racism.

7. England’s comment on sales comes from his “The Fantastic in Fiction,” introductory essay in *Darkness and Dawn* (Boston, 1914; rpt. Westport, 1974), n.p. This essay originally appeared under the title “Facts About Fantasy,” *Story World*, July 1923. Review of *Darkness and Dawn*, by George Allan England, *Boston Transcript*, February 14, 1914, 6, in *Book Review Digest*, 1914, 169-70; Felix Grendon, “A Thousand Years From Now,” rev. of *Darkness and Dawn*, by George Allan England, *New Review* 2 (1914), 230-33.

8. Rideout makes no mention of England’s pulp career; for his reputation among science fiction scholars, see Brian Ash, *Who’s Who in Science Fiction* (New York, 1976), 92; Moskowitz, *Under the Moons of Mars*, 53-54, 345-46.

9. England, “Fantastic in Fiction,” n.p.; *The Air Trust* (St. Louis, 1915) was dedicated to Debs; *Darkness and Dawn* was dedicated to Davis; and *The Golden Blight* (New York, 1916) was dedicated to Davis and several socialists.

10. Moskowitz, *Under the Moons of Mars*, x-xi, 346-47; Liebling, “That was New York,” 159.

11. Moskowitz, *Under the Moons of Mars*, 337-45; England, “Fantastic in Fiction,” n.p.; James E. Gunn, *Alternative Worlds* (Englewood Cliffs, 1975), 86. On the reputed maleness of the pulp audience, see for example Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*



(Chicago, 1990), 70. Moskowitz indicates that by 1913 the *Cavalier* was seeking a more respectable audience, and especially wanted to attract female readers; it was attractively produced, ran love stories along with more traditionally "male" fare, and usually featured a woman's face on the cover. Munsey's *Argosy* and *All Story Magazine* followed a similar strategy: see Moskowitz, *Under the Moons of Mars*, 346. Burroughs's *Tarzan* began as a serial in *All Story Magazine* in 1912, and was then published as a book in 1914, exactly paralleling the publication history of *Darkness and Dawn*: Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes* (New York, 1990, introd. John Seelye; first published New York, 1914).

12. Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, 60.

13. Biographical information on England comes from Rideout, *Radical Novel*, 59; Moskowitz, *Under the Moons of Mars*, 53; Anonymous, "Illness Plucked Him From Insurance and Hurlled Him Into Fiction," *Literary Digest* 64 (6 March 1920), 63-65. England's book on the *Appeal* was *The Story of the Appeal* (Fort Scott, KS, 1915). His statement on revolution appears in the "Foreword" to *The Air Trust*, 7-8, while the unsigned editor's introduction to the Hyperion reprint asserts that the book was "too controversial" for magazine publication. It only saw one printing, an unusually light sale for England. His most notable antiwar tract was "Fiat Pax," *International Conciliation* 81 (1914); Oakley Johnson notes England's later rejection of pacifism in his *Marxism in United States History Before the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1974), 196. For hunting, virility and violence, see England's *Vikings of the Ice* (New York, 1924).

14. England, "Fantastic in Fiction," n.p.; Moskowitz, *Under the Moons of Mars*, 427; on ex-socialists and science, see Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought*, 245-47.

15. Charles A. Steere, *When Things Were Doing* (Chicago, 1908; rpt. New York, 1971), 89, 182-83 (further references in the text are to this edition). The names of the romancers' heroes generally evoke London's "Everhard" tradition of Nietzschean/proletarian machismo. England's protagonists are named "John Storm" (*The Golden Blight*), "Gabriel Armstrong" (*The Air Trust*—suggesting also "Gabriel Weltenstein" of *Caesar's Column*), and perhaps most tellingly in light of the unusual spelling of England's middle name, "Allan Stern" (*Darkness and Dawn*).

16. A. M. Simons, rev. of *When Things Were Doing*, by Charles A. Steere, *International Socialist Review* 8 (1908), 443; John Spargo, rev. of *When Things Were Doing*, *International Socialist Review* 8 (1908), 563.

17. George Allan England, *The Golden Blight* (New York, 1916; rpt. New York, 1975), 344.

18. Ignatius Donnelly, *Ragnarok: The Age of Fire and Gravel* (New York, 1883). See also David D. Anderson, *Ignatius Donnelly* (Boston, 1980), 43-54.

19. See for example *The Iron Heel*, in which a socialist speaker so infuriates his audience of high-toned capitalists that he reduces them to "snarling, growling savages in evening clothes": Jack London, *The Iron Heel*, 84-97.

20. A socialist critic made sly fun of Beatrice's four hundred pages of "Not yet." But to be fair, England was probably already pushing the limits of propriety regnant in the story's original magazine forum, especially when *The Cavalier* consciously sought to attract a middle-class audience. See Grendon, "A Thousand Years from Now," 230.

21. See the discussion of Jack London, sex and culture in Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought*, 202-11.

22. On socialist views of hereditary working-class degeneration, see Robert Hunter, *Poverty* (New York, 1965; first published New York, 1904), xxv, 7, 65, 69, 92, 131, 318; and Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (New York, 1963; first published New York, 1903), 38-39, 83, 98-99, 103, 137, 164, 167-68. Both writers' language suggests the Morlocks, the degenerated subterranean machine-tenders of H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (London, 1895). Blacks in Charles A. Steere's socialist utopia are understood to evolve very slowly and to require the direction of Caucasian "experts" to run their segregated Southern region. Until that "far distant day" when blacks might advance sufficiently to travel as they please, curious whites amuse themselves by visiting the black belt, where the "dusky belles" and "bucks" work industriously and indulge their natural propensity to sing (255-58). On the Oneida socialist John Humphrey Noyes's plan to bring nature under the control of culture and to promote the eugenic improvement of the human race through sexual continence and planned propagation, see John Humphrey Noyes, "Essay on Scientific Propagation," in *The Berean; Male Continence; Essay on Scientific Propagation* (New York, 1969), 2-5, 9.

23. George M. Fredrickson details the origins of nineteenth-century scientific racism, in which lines between blacks and animals were often blurred, in his *The Black Image in the White Mind* (Middletown, 1987); Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 1-15.

24. Singal, "Towards a Definition of American Modernism," 4-5.

25. Burroughs, *Tarzan*, 175; Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, 51. On female characters as spectators who observe while male characters reassert their masculinity and physical prowess through violence, see Amy Kaplan, "Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s," *American Literary History* 2 (1990), 659-90.

26. Eugene V. Debs, *Woman—Comrade and Equal*, pamphlet reprinted in *Writings and*

- Speeches of Eugene V. Debs*, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (New York, 1948), 453.
27. Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, 52-53.
  28. Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 154.
  29. G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence* (New York, 1904; rpt. New York, 1969), Volume II, 93, 651.
  30. Eugene V. Debs, "The Negro and His Nemesis," *International Socialist Review* 4 (1904), 391-97.
  31. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 1955, ed. William Peden; first published London, 1787), 138; Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890* (Middleton, 1985), 54, 222, 269, 322, 384, 485; quote from 528.
  32. On Burroughs and *Tarzan*, see John Seelye, "Introduction" to Burroughs, *Tarzan*, vii-xxviii; and Torgovnick, "Taking Tarzan Seriously," Chapter Two of *Gone Primitive*, 42-72.
  33. I. F. Clarke, *The Pattern of Expectation 1644-2001* (London, 1979), 108-11.
  34. Locke quoted in Leo Marx, *The Machine in The Garden* (London, 1964), 120.