

Myth and Reality: Points of Departure in American Literature and Culture in the Nineteenth Century

In Chapter 21, “A Hard Case,” of Herman Melville’s *The Confidence-Man*, there is a dialogue between the Missourian and the herb-doctor, who tries to sell his quack medicines on a Mississippi steamboat. Declaring his lack of confidence in everything from herbal remedies to boys and men working his land, the Missourian states that he is planning to dispense with human labour because he has decided to “get me some kind of machine to do the sort of work which boys are supposed to do” (Melville 1989: 93). A discussion on distrust follows, which, in turn, leads to an argument in which the concepts of nature and scientific progress clash. The herb-doctor rounds on the Missourian:

[...] Now, can you, who suspect nature, deny, that this same nature not only brought you into being, but has faithfully nursed you to your present vigorous and independent condition? Is it not to nature that you are indebted for that robustness of mind which you so unhandsomely use to her scandal? Pray, is it not to nature that you owe the very eyes by which you criticise her?”

“No! for the privilege of vision I am indebted to an oculist, who in my tenth year operated upon me in Philadelphia. Nature made me blind and would have kept me so. My oculist counterplotted her.”
(Melville 1989: 93-94)

This dialogue encapsulated the debate that Americans were conducting from quite early on in the nineteenth century concerning the effects of technology and scientific progress on human beings, and, by extension, on the natural landscape. That natural defects could be counterbalanced by man-made intervention sums up the way people thought and wrote about the rise of mechanisation in American society and its impact on a pastoral way of life. The Missourian can see because of an operation; he can also dream of doing away with human beings by introducing machines on to his land.

It is interesting that Henry Adams (1973: 345), in his *Education of Henry Adams*, states that “the whole mechanical consolidation of force ruthlessly stamped out the life of the class into which Adams was born,” and, of course,

he was of Boston Brahmin stock. As with all strata of society, mechanisation was to bring profound changes. Adams also points to the upheaval wrought by rapid industrialisation, especially after the Civil War, and the spread of urbanisation that accompanied it.

Herman Melville, too, looked at the results of such means of production on the lives of those who went into the factories and tended machines. In the second part of his story “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” (1855), Melville describes the pale-faced factory girls, with eyes “supernatural with unrelated misery,” who have become mere adjuncts to the machine that can produce foolscap paper in nine minutes. The narrator asks if the “great machine” ever gets jammed and is informed that “machinery makes it go just so; just that way, and at the very pace you there plainly see it go” (Melville 2007: 84). The machine is infallible. It cannot jam; it just goes reliably on and on. Looking round him, the narrator concludes that the female factory workers, all single, because more reliable than married women, are confined to hell - Tartarus - and fear grips him:

Something of awe now stole over me, as I gazed upon this flexible iron animal. Always, more or less, machinery of this ponderous, elaborate sort strikes, in some moods, strange dread into the human heart, as some living, panting Behemoth might. But what made the thing I saw so specially terrible to me was the metallic necessity which governed it. [...] Before my eyes there, passing in slow procession along the wheeling cylinders, I seemed to see, glued to the pallid incipience of the pulp, the yet more pallid faces of all the pallid girls I had eyed that heavy day. (Melville 2007: 84)

This perspective on factories and the regimes they imposed on the hands who worked in them is well-brought-out by Melville’s story and it is an example of the cultural and literary enquiries that have been made into the uneasy connection between nature and industrialisation, so much so that this obsession and anxiety has been a major concern in writing for the last two centuries and continues into the twenty-first. Long before he reaches the paper mill, the narrator has descended into a valley, which is called “the Devil’s Dungeon,” so that movement through the natural world antecedes his arrival at the infernal region of Tartarus.

What Melville’s story shows is that in the nineteenth century, American writers were already fascinated, both excited and worried, by the advent of technology. What technology brought with it was the rise of the exceptional individual, be he inventor, factory owner, or entrepreneur in what was supposed

to be a republic of equality. The ascendance of this individual through the manipulation of *the metallic necessity* would also result in the control of those who would operate the very wealth-making machines. As the mill owner puts it, “[w]e want none but steady workers: twelve hours to the day, day after day, through three hundred and sixty-five days, excepting Sundays, Thanksgiving, and Fast-days” (Melville 2007: 84). It is ironic, too, that Melville bases his story round the manufacture of paper, because every conceivable form of writing “would be writ on those now vacant things,” and the blank sheets would eventually be put to “strange uses,” some of which would be the writings considered in this paper, including Melville’s own story.

The paper-mill owner in “The Tartarus of Maids” demonstrates the idea of the exceptional man very well. Ralph Waldo Emerson had put forward the idea of the outstanding individual in his series of lectures collected as *Representative Men* (1850). There is, of course, an extraordinary ambiguity in what Emerson writes in his essay on “Napoleon, or, the Man of the World” and what he wrote in such essays as “The Transcendentalist,” “Nature,” “Self-Reliance,” and “The Over-Soul,” which preached individualism, whilst grounding themselves in a democratic vista of a new America. True, the “Napoleon” lecture shows Napoleon to be a flawed and ambivalent figure, but he is also a man who is shown to be “thoroughly modern.” It is this modernity, which is at the centre of the essay. Napoleon, we are told, “comes to be a bureau for all intelligence, wit, and power, of the age and country” (Emerson 1983: 729). There is, indeed, the hint of a certain disapproval in the attempt to place Napoleon as the focal point of the modern world, because Emerson’s opening words on the two antagonistic classes in American society point to the conflict between old money, represented by the conservatives, “the idea capitalists,” and the “young and poor,” the democrats who are eager to make money. Napoleon, here, stands for the new democratic element, which is “selfish also, encroaching, bold, self-relying, always outnumbering” the conservatives, who are selfish, timid, illiberal, and who loathe innovation. And it is innovation that is at the heart of American modernity. In many ways, a representative of the hide-bound conservatives is the family from which Henry Adams sprang and which would be no longer dynamic for Emerson, tying the “interests of dead labor” up in stocks, property, and land. Napoleon, on the other hand, is the “incarnate Democrat” (Emerson 1983: 727). If the rising generation of young entrepreneurs push selfishly in their self-reliance, however, there is an inconsistency running through Emerson’s argument, because in his essay, “Self-Reliance,” he had already hinted at the self-reliant youth with approval,

“for he cumbers himself never about consequences, about interests: he gives an independent, genuine verdict. You must court him: he does not court you” (Emerson 1983: 261).

Napoleon, for Emerson (1983:727), was a representative of that democratic class which “desires to keep open every avenue to the competition of all, and to multiply avenues; - the class of business men in America, in England, in France and throughout Europe; the class of industry and skill.” The dark side of all this was that Napoleon was “destitute of generous sentiments” and was both “egotistical and monopolizing,” as well as a “boundless liar.” Emerson’s list could go on and on and his essay could act as a mirror to what he saw as the dangers of the American scene in the mid-nineteenth century. To an extent, the essay underpins a strand in the period’s writing, in which the reliance on and worship of nature is set against the development of industrialisation and the belief, so prevalent in the century, of an unbridled and unbounded progress. If Napoleon has no generosity and stands for the ultimate egoist, Emerson has also directed us to what he did not like about the United States and its future. For him, Napoleon was not a gentleman, and so a cad, in other words. He becomes an imposter and a rogue, fully deserving “the epithet of Jupiter Scapin, or a sort of Scamp Jupiter” (Emerson 1983: 744). In one form or another, others would take this up in the context of American technologists and innovators. Napoleon represents the social engineer, the engineer of human souls, in that phrase attributed to Stalin: the engineer makes and adapts machines; the writer makes and adapts the human being.

For Emerson (1983: 744), both the conservative, representing the old, and the young democrat will converge, as the younger takes on the atrophying attributes of the previous generation, “because both parties stand on the one ground of the supreme value of property, which one endeavours to get and the other to keep.” The ultimately pessimistic tone of the work would be taken up by those writers contemporary with, and following on from, Emerson’s ideas on American democracy. Napoleon as “cipher” was a theme in the essay, and by extension the democratic, innovative imperative in his modern America is one in which original thought is replaced by an immersion in and total absorption of the surrounding world, so that Napoleon, as the man of the world, is a “ciphery operative [who] knows what he is working with and what is the product” (Emerson 1983: 730). It is in the nature of the modern world for Emerson that all human beings are turned into operatives and because of Napoleon’s knowledge of minerals, machines, and men, “the old, iron-bound, feudal France was shaped into the young Ohio or New York.” Nevertheless,

Napoleon's system was founded on military power and the middle class lives on such military imperatives, especially in America:

I call Napoleon the agent or attorney of the middle class of modern society; of the throng who fill the markets, shops, counting-houses, manufactories, ships, of the modern world, aiming to be rich. He was the agitator, the destroyer of prescription, the internal improver, the liberal, the radical, the inventor of means, the opener of doors and markets, the subverter of monopoly and abuse. (Emerson 1983: 742)

Emerson, then, despite all his doubts about the rise of technology in the country, fixes the figure of Napoleon into a peculiarly American theme, one in which praise and respect are directed, albeit grudgingly, towards the engineer, whether he deals with machines or manipulates human beings. Underlying Emerson's essay, despite himself, is a contradiction, because there is an acknowledgement that the mechanic and the opportunist are representative men in the country, even if this appreciation of the "can-do" mentality is tinged with uncertainty and anxiety about the questionable morality of such people. Emerson (1983: 738) himself uses technological images for Napoleon's energy: "this strong steam-engine does our work," because "we feel the air purified by the electric shock." The first of these images - the steam-engine - is, of course, typically iconic of the nineteenth century in its portrayal of power thrusting forward, while the second will flow through the words of many writers up to and including Elenry Adams. Force and energy are combined. As Eric Mottram (1989: 93) observes, Melville imagines Captain Ahab as a man moving along rails:

Once Moby-Dick is imagined as "the modern railway" and Ahab's energy as electricity, the *Pequod* crew become subservient to capitalist technology. It is a short step to the bridge, the tunnel, and the plane together comprising "the gigantic powerhouse" for Hart Crane in *The Bridge* (1930), and to the industrial war machine of Moloch that is the focus of damnation in Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* (1956).

Walt Whitman praised technology in his celebration of the opening of the Suez Canal and the connection of the main American railways ("Passage to India," 1871), the two events having taken place in 1869. Both Whitman and Emily Dickinson have poems in praise of railway locomotives, though if Dickinson was thrilled to see a railway engine "lap the miles" and Whitman took pleasure in its "[f]ierce-throated beauty," then Emerson had voiced his anxieties as early as 1846, in his "Ode to W. H. Charming," because he had always worried over where control lay, with human beings or with the machines themselves:

The horseman serves the horse,
 The neatherd serves the neat,
 The merchant serves the purse,
 The eater serves his meat;
 'Tis the day of the chattel,
 Web to weave, and com to grind;
 Things are in the saddle,
 And ride mankind.

The “Ode to W. H. Channing” glosses Emerson’s “Napoleon” essay in a way that emphasises the negative aspects of technological progress, though forty years later, many Americans believed that if engineering had not completely overcome nature, then it had gained the upper hand and had subdued it. Many had, nevertheless, resisted the forces of technology, as Melville had in “The Tartarus of Maids” and in *Moby-Dick* itself. As Tony Tanner (1988: xiv) writes, commenting on a passage in Chapter 114, “The Gilder,” when the *Pequod* is becalmed:

Here the loom of the book weaves together some of the deepest organising and engendering concerns of the book. These include the destinationless circularity of all human efforts - a dis-teleological vision which ran exactly counter to nineteenth-century versions of unilinear Progress and Evolutions.

Progress and (mechanical/industrial) evolution had their literary and social detractors and there are varied and common instances of “a machine (railroad or steamship) bursting on a peaceful natural setting [, which] represented a symbolic version of the trauma inflicted on American society by unexpectedly rapid mechanization” (Trachtenberg 1982: 39).

Opposition to mechanical progress became evident in the number of strikes that took place in the boom-and-bust years between 1873 and 1896. In 1873, there had been a series of coal strikes, railway wagons derailed, and coal-tips burned. The employers sent in the Pinkerton Agency, which resulted in the conviction and execution of nineteen ringleaders in 1877. In that year, the great railway strike led to civil war between railway strikers and the Pennsylvanian state militia, which caused twenty-five deaths and millions of dollars’ worth of damage. Order was only restored when federal troops were sent in, and what has been called the first national American strike only added to the fears of those who had written about the rise of technology. As industrialisation and urbanisation accelerated in postbellum America, the self-reliant individual, so beloved of, say, Emerson and Thoreau, was submerged. Alfred North Whitehead

was later to state what was already becoming true in the late nineteenth-century that “The self-sufficient independent man, with his peculiar property which concerns no one else, is a concept without any validity for modern civilization” (qtd. in Matthiessen 1979: 77).

Henry David Thoreau saw the rise of the engineer as not only dangerous, but inevitably trivial. If Whitehead saw the independent man as irrelevant to modern society, Thoreau (1983: 95-96) saw aspects of mechanical progress as diminishing rather than enhancing American relations or communications:

We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate. [...] We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer to the new; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that Princess Adelaide has whooping cough.

Two hits here for the price of one, of course, one aimed at Europe and the other directed at the significance or otherwise of progress. The “broad, flapping American ear,” (Thoreau 1983: 95), however, remained deaf to Thoreau’s enjoinders and American culture was to be governed by two large images - the Civil War, which was the first modern war, total and technological, and the Machine. To be sure, Nature continued to play its part, but the Civil War and the Machine were inextricably linked. The war itself was to be seen in industrial terms, as when Stephen Crane (1983: 105), for example, described the conflict: “The battle was like the grinding of an immense and terrible machine to him. Its complexities and powers, its grim processes fascinated him. He must get closer and see it produce corpses.” Robert Hughes (1997: 271) reminds us that if warfare was compared to a machine, then it was further documented by other machines because it was “the first American conflict to be described by the modern art of photography.”

Europe, stretching back to Crevecoeur and others, and moving through the nineteenth century, was usually seen as having an unmodified feudal system, which was built on tyranny and superstition. Engineering technology could be the instrument of change and would conquer the Old World. The rise of American industrial power transformed the nation in dramatic ways: the image of the machine was complex and its symbolic status had contradictions built into it. As we have seen, Melville’s response in “The Tartarus of Maids” was decidedly bleak. Alan Trachtenberg (1982: 38-39) points to this aspect of an evolving way of life:

If the machine seemed the supreme cause of the abundance of new products changing the character of daily life, it also seemed responsible for newly visible poverty, slums, and an unexpected wretchedness of industrial conditions. While it inspired confidence in some quarters, it also provoked dismay, often arousing hope and gloom in the same minds. For, accompanying the mechanization of industry, of transportation, and of daily existence, were the most severe contrasts yet visible in American society, [...] which seemed to make a mockery of the republican dream, a haunting paradox.

A case in point is the Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia in 1876 to celebrate the republic's first century of independence. Viewing the objects on display, some thought machinery had gone out of control, as did the economist, David Wells. Mechanization was for him like one of America's vast rivers bursting its banks and flooding the surrounding land (Trachtenberg 1982: Chapter 2).

For most visitors, though, the wonders of technology represented the future. The Corliss Double Walking-Beam Steam Engine powered the whole exhibition, whilst a gigantic electrical pendulum clock controlled twenty-six "slave" clocks. The Exposition, with its newly-invented typewriter, Bell's telephone, and other labour-saving machinery heralded the dawn of the American engineer as hero. Walt Whitman's "Song of the Exposition" is a paean to American inventiveness and an exhortation to the classical Muse to leave behind the Old World for the newer America:

Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,
 Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,
 That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Aeneas', Odysseus' wanderings,
 Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus,
 Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa's gate and on Mount Moriah,
 The same on the walls of your German, French and Spanish castles and Italian
 collections,
 For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried domain awaits demands
 you. (Whitman 1976: 226)

America is the "fresher, busier sphere," which becomes the centre of a geographical space made new by invention. In its celebration of invention and building, this poem also has an element of reconciliation because the poet remembers what he witnessed in the Civil War. The Exposition, and by extension, the maker or engineer, is identified not with war and violence, but with a peace in which technology would allow Whitman to erase the memory of the maimed,

dead and dying in battle. Crane's later simile of war being like a machine is here reversed into pacific hopefulness, in which even Thoreau's contempt for telegraphic communication is subsumed into Whitman's "delicate cable." He is ebullient and wishes to abolish "themes of war," replacing military might, so that "in its stead speed industry's campaigns,/With thy undaunted armies, engineering" (Whitman 1976: 230). For Americans by the 1880s, as Robert Hughes (1997: 279) has shown, *homo artifex* was indispensable: "the factory, the bridge, the dam, the dry dock were all parts of the Cathedral of Making, as the Grand Canyon was the temple of Nature."

Mark Twain's story "My Watch - An Instructive Little Story" illustrates the darker side of this belief in what Europeans were coming to call "the American System." Written in 1870, "My Watch" prefigures *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) in its concern for things mechanical. The narrator's new watch runs down and it is taken to a jeweller's shop, so that the narrator can set it to the right time by one of the clocks there. The result is advice and tinkering by a number of watchmakers; all this leads to various calamities, in which time slows and speeds up until the watch "would reel off the next twenty-four hours in six or seven minutes, and then stop with a bang" (Twain 1985: 64). Two themes run through this story, one being a reflection on changes in the concept of time itself during the century and the other the unreliability of the various watchmakers' (and, by extension, mechanics') skills. Although a slight piece in itself, "My Watch" represents a meditation on the age of engineering and time management modifying industrial practices: "My uncle William (now deceased, alas!) used to say that a good horse was a good horse until it had run away once, and that a good watch was a good watch until the repairers got a chance at it" (Twain 1985: 64).

This is the age of Frederick Taylor's time-and-motion studies and the development of his theory of "scientific management." Again, Trachtenberg (1982: 69) notes:

Frederick W. Taylor, a foreman at the Midvale Steel Company in Pennsylvania, inaugurated in the 1880s his famous "time study" experiments, aimed at the elimination of waste, inefficiency, and what he called "soldiering" on the part of the workers. With his stopwatch - a further encroachment of time on physical movement - Taylor proposed to systematize [...] the absolute subordination of "living labor" to the machine. [...] In *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), Taylor made explicit the heart of his program: to take possession for management of the "mass of traditional knowledge" once possessed by the workers themselves.

Taylor's intentions of reducing the human being to that of an adjunct of the machine can be seen, of course, in Melville's writings and leads us to Hank Morgan in Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), who is a foreman at the Colt factory in Hartford. American know-how engineering is then transported to Arthurian England. What Hank Morgan attempts to do is what Taylor introduced into the factories of North America. Twain uses the technique of looking backwards in order to cast light on the contemporary scene. *A Connecticut Yankee* is a parody of the romance genre and it tackles the complex themes of agrarianism and industrialisation, primitivism and progress. Twain's own feelings about the past and the present were ambiguous and in the course of the novel what emerges is a highly ironic pastoral. The book is not only a critique of mediaeval England, in which sixth-century superstition and monarchy are confronted by modern technology, but is also a reaction to Thoreau's pastoralism and the worries of Hawthorne and Melville.

Hank Morgan, is not only a foreman - the "head superintendent," as he calls himself - "with a couple of hundred rough men" under him at the Colt factory, but he has "learned to make everything - guns, revolvers, cannon, boilers, engines, all sorts of labour-saving machinery" (Twain 1981: 39). Morgan is an all-purpose mechanic of the new order, an adaptable man and one of the new kind of employees born into the era of mass production. Twain's initial setting is important, too, because the Colt factory in Hartford, where Morgan learned and carried out his "can-do" skills, had grown from making revolvers into a major centre of scientific and technological research and invention, where the latest manufacturing techniques were enhanced by the growth of precision machinery and the latest managerial methods. Samuel Colt had himself been an inventor and the revolvers that "won the West" were considered on the Frontier to be levellers: "God created man; Colonel Colt made them equal" (this slogan has various unclear origins, but the safest attribution seems to come from an early Colt Manufacturing advertisement, thought up by Samuel Colt himself). Nevertheless, it does focus attention on Hank Morgan, because he is the very opposite of those who grew up in an agrarian world, being a recent urban variation of man. Thomas Jefferson may have wanted Americans to be farmers, but Hank Morgan illustrates the late century's reversal of the pastoral dream.

Morgan is transported to Camelot after being hit on the head by one of his "rough men" and *A Connecticut Yankee* replaces the quest for the Holy Grail with the establishment of a colony in England, in which Morgan attempts to bring "the civilisation of the nineteenth-century booming." In his "Man Factories," he plans to turn "groping and grubbing automata into men" (Twain

1981: 159). What Morgan introduces in his managerial revolution is the idea of self in competition, and to these ends he uses social and technical engineering. If, as noted earlier, Emerson's modern man was incarnated in Napoleon, then Morgan is an extension of this idea, because he believes that "training is all there is to a person. We speak of nature; it is a folly; there is no such thing as nature" (Twain 1981: 161). Hank's peaceful revolution is engineered through a number of machines, which manipulate and modify men. In addition, he introduces American baseball, which he believes will democratise the feudal population in an especially American way and train everyone for team labour. His very American hopes are used with a deepening irony, however, because Twain, very much an enthusiast for engineering progress, had come to have his own doubts about the turn industrialisation was taking in America.

A Connecticut Yankee began as a comic satire and was initially directed against Arthurian chivalry. It was aimed at removing European feudal instincts and replacing them with the practical language of America, but as Twain continued to write it, the tone became darker. Morgan had begun his modernisation with dynamism and enthusiasm. It is appropriate that his schools are known as "Man Factories," and his introduction of newspapers, telephones, and industrial production are attempts at eliminating backwardness and turning attention to the progressive future. At the same time, however, we increasingly become aware that underneath the comic bravura there is something blinkered and manic in Hank Morgan's struggle to engineer an American republic in Camelot. Having started his project by organising the Knights of the Round Table for practical purposes and having turned them from chivalric elitism, the lone hero is finally defeated by the Church and chivalry. "The Boss," as he has come to be known, retreats to a defensive barrier with his chief supporter, Clarence, and "fifty-two fresh, bright, well-educated, clean-minded young British boys" (Twain 1981: 391), who have been left untainted by what he sees as religious superstition.

The defensive base is fortified and, as "The Boss" tells Clarence, "We shan't have to leave our fortress, now, when we want to blow up civilisation" (Twain 1981: 386). His armoury includes an electrified fence, thirteen Gatling guns (invented in 1861), and "glass cylinder dynamite torpedoes" (invented in 1864), whilst Merlin's cave is used to generate electricity. *A Connecticut Yankee* ends with a technological holocaust: "I touched a button and set fifty electric suns aflame on top of our precipice" (Twain 1981: 404). If Huck Finn does not want anyone to "sivilize" him and lights out for the Territory, Hank Morgan's experiments in modernisation leave him trapped behind an electric fence, surrounded by the bodies of slaughtered enemies that his war machines

have dealt with. Mark Twain's ambiguity about industrial ingenuity can be summed up in Merlin's words. Disguised as an old woman, he has infiltrated the encampment: "Ye were conquerors; ye are conquered" (Twain 1981: 407).

A Connecticut Yankee contains anxiety about the sinister manoeuvrings of the new technology and the underlying argument questions whether human beings will benefit from the engineering imperative or will be ultimately destroyed by it, as "The Boss" is in the final sequence of the book. In *Life on the Mississippi*, written in 1883, Twain had looked back nostalgically to earlier days and portrayed the riverboat pilot, Horace Bixby, as hero in complete control of the technology at his command and who works for the benefit of others. Pilotage, we are told, is "a science" and in learning his craft, the pilot's eye changes. Natural beauty gives way to a precise reading of the river, whilst the engines of the boat (the machine) take on great importance. Twain (1984: 122-23) makes an important comment on the style and functions of a pilot on a riverboat:

The moment that boat was underway in the river, she was under the sole and unquestioned control of the pilot. He could do with her exactly as he pleased, run her when and whither he chose, and tie her up at the bank whenever his judgment said that course was best. His movements were entirely free; he consulted no one, he received commands from nobody, he promptly resented even the merest suggestions. Indeed, the law of the United States forbade him to listen to commands and suggestions, rightly considering that the pilot necessarily knew better how to handle the boat than anybody could tell him.

The difference between Hank Morgan and Horace Bixby is not only that of fiction and reality, but also because in one sphere work is done with care in the natural world, whereas in the world of Camelot, Morgan is "an ancestor of the Vandal with sidearms and a marketing plan" (Powers 2005: 523). In Bixby, the reader is presented with the notion of the highly-skilled man whose abilities are founded in the Emersonian notion of self-reliance. What Morgan wished to do to Camelot was becoming grim reality during the later years of the century because the new immigrants to the urban, industrial centres were to be rapidly moulded into the "scientific management" model of industrialisation. The new discipline demanded conformity and rationalised behaviour. The slavery of work depicted in Melville became fact because factories demanded clock-based and regularised attendance, both of which brought with them repetitively ordered work patterns. A booklet produced to teach English to Polish labourers at the International Harvester Corporation illustrates this clearly:

Lesson One. I hear the whistle. I must hurry. I hear the five-minute whistle. It is time to go into the shop. I take my check from the gate board and hand it on the department board. I change my clothes and get ready to work. The starting whistle blows. I eat my lunch. It is forbidden to eat until then. The whistle blows at five minutes of starting time. I get ready to go to work. I work until the whistle blows to quit. I leave my place nice and clean. I put all my clothes in the locker. I must go home. (qtd. in Guttman 1976: 15)

So, who imposed the discipline? Fictional characters like Hank Morgan in *A Connecticut Yankee*, or, real-life figures like Frederick Taylor, men who raised themselves within the hierarchical system of which they were part. Ownership, direction, and labour were separated, unlike in earlier rural American communities.

Yet, whilst all this was going on in America, the last years of the century also saw an element of utopian fiction, of which the most popular was *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* by Edward Bellamy. It was published in 1888, a year before *A Connecticut Yankee*, and gives the reader a technological interpretation of a mechanised America, organised to “the unbounded possibilities of human nature” (Bellamy 1888: 126). Bellamy is saying that there is hope in the future. *Looking Backward* gives a portrait of a future world, which is highly industrialised, though Bellamy’s early readers were able to draw out the potential (and hopeful) tendencies already taking place in 1887 and in so doing reach conclusions about the Boston of 2000.

Bellamy’s protagonist, Julian West, is transported into the future, but while Twain’s Morgan is hit on the head, West has become sick - unable to sleep, he sends his servant for a mesmerist and falls into a 113-year coma in a sealed room in the bowels of his house. West is, in fact, suffering from “the nervous tension of the public mind” (Bellamy 1888: 11). George M. Beard’s pioneering work, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences* (1884), had likened the human nervous system to a machine suffering from the strain of contemporary life and Bellamy’s West is a product of this stress. As West’s guide and mentor in the new world explains, “riches debauched one class with idleness and riches of mind and body, whilst poverty sapped the vitality of the masses by overwork, bad food, and pestilent homes” (Bellamy 1888: 98).

Julian West is a latter-day Rip Van Winkle, but whereas Rip wakes up a new American man, West wakes up to a nationalised state in which the means of production have been taken over by the state and where consumerism overarches everything. Bellamy’s utopia is highly structured and regimented, and, as Dr

Leete, the guide, explains, the “principle of military service” is applied to the world of work. Labour is controlled and there is a hierarchy of workers, based on merit; this in turn leads to the consumption of goods, which can be bought in what West sees as warehouses. Shopping has disappeared and trade credits are issued for goods already ordered. As Robert Wiebe (1967: 70) observes:

Because the government, which had replaced private owners in industry, oversaw the distribution of labor and goods, a later generation would find ominous hints of totalitarianism in Bellamy’s message. But his contemporaries understood. Government returned to the people in a society attuned to the moral laws quite literally eliminated government as a distinct institution.

The American world no longer has any private enterprise and the state controls the means of production and directs the work force, but happiness becomes entirely dependent on leisure and consumption, because after a period of compulsory labour service, everyone is given up to pleasure. There would be a future for an industrialised landscape in the United States. It is interesting that this city-world was to be rejected by William Morris in Britain and was to be rejected by many dystopian writers in America.

Ignatius Donnelly, the agrarian senator from Minnesota, despaired of both the governing classes and the capacity of the masses for leadership, and these ideas fed into his *Caesar’s Column* (1891), where the underground organisation, the Brotherhood of Death, reacts against and challenges the “gigantic abnormal selfishness which ruins millions for the benefit of thousands” (Donnelly 1891:68). In *Caesar’s Column*, technology makes the future problematic and class war is fought with the machinery of mass destruction. Civilisation collapses into civil war: “an age of bribery terminates in one colossal crime of corruption” (Donnelly 1891: 172). War results in a holocaust akin to Hank Morgan’s apocalyptic end and the narrator can “see, like a great black rain of gigantic drops, the lines of the falling bombs against the clear-blue sky” (Donnelly 1891: 172). The future lies in Africa, where the nucleus of a new pastoral civilisation, strangely ignorant of the present inhabitants, will found a new order. The group is saved from the ruins of New York by a hovering aircraft, which is given the ominous name, “Demon.” “We stood on the deck. The engineer touched the lever of the electric engine: the great bird swayed for an instant, and then began to rise, like a veritable Phoenix from its nest of flame, surrounded by its cataracts of sparks” (Donnelly 1891: 197).

Despite the fact that this electric dynamism was so embedded in the period, the new society envisaged by Donnelly in Africa is definitely ««technological:

“We do not give any encouragement to labor-saving inventions, although we do not discard them. We think the end of government should be - not cheap goods or cheap men, but happy families. If any man makes a serviceable invention the state purchases it at a reasonable price for the benefit of the people” (Donnelly 1891: 210). Donnelly’s book is filled with the negative aspects of technology and argues for a return to an earlier rural society, where large urban conurbations are forbidden, and where people live in agricultural communities of the kind described by earlier pastoral writers. Eric Mottram (1989: 111-12) remarks that *Caesars Column*,

tries to convert “metallic necessity” into an agrarian Phoenix state in which “the ingenuity of man,” which had “conquered the forces of steam and electricity,” is applied to “the great adjustments of society, on which the happiness of millions depends.” The result is a class-structured isolationism, “a garden of peace and beauty” with a distinctly Jeffersonian intentionality. History repeats itself for the nth time as nostalgic utopian fiction.

For Henry Adams, the avoidance of the anxieties considered above would only come out of unifying the comprehension of what constituted *energy*, both electrical and sexual. Americans could only develop when they discovered that morality had to be combined with knowledge of science and technology. In addition, they would have to understand the historical and future role of women in society, as well as what power politics meant. If they did not come to an understanding of all these, American life would be continuously disastrous: “The new American must be either the child of the new forces or a chance sport of nature. The attraction of mechanical power had already wrenched the American mind into a crab-like process” (Adams 1973: 501).

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