FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

Traballo de Fin de Grao

H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* in Context:

Anxieties in the Victorian *fin de siècle*

María Victoria Fuentes Del Río

Autora

Jorge Sacido Romero

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To my father, from whom I inherited the passion for literature.

To Laura, who taught me what reverse colonisation means.

To Jorge, my supervisor, who helped me along this path.

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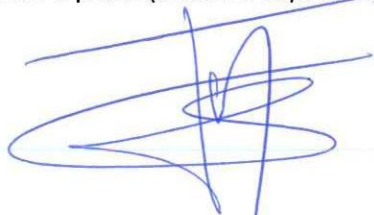Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

The War of the Worlds (published for the first time in 1897 in *Pearson's Magazine* and in 1898 in hardcover) was written by Herbert George Wells (1866–1946). It was the first novel to describe an alien invasion of our planet, which can be read as a rendition in a fantastic key of the anxieties provoked by the practices the British Empire carried out in the colonies under its rule. This invasion pictures a dystopic future for the human race — especially for *fin de siècle* Britain– which situates this novel as a prominent example of the modern science fiction genre.

By including the figure of the Other — the invaders from a foreign origin, in this case aliens, who plan to subdue technologically inferior beings –, the author provides evidence of the situation during the Victorian *fin de siècle* as a period of social angst, reflected in the so called 'narratives of reverse colonialism', in which "what has been represented as the 'civilized' world is on the point of being overrun by 'primitive' forces" (Arata 108).

In order to develop an argument around the issues this novel raises, this dissertation will (1) analyse the Victorian *fin de siècle* as a cultural and historical period, focusing on the British Empire as a colonial power linked to advances in technology; and (2) explore the anxieties and fears of the English society as articulated in H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* relating them to the topic of reverse colonialism and the genre of science fiction, taking into account the contributions of authors such as Stephen Arata.

Arata, Stephen. *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008.

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0. INTRODUCTION

"And before we judge them too harshly we must remember what ruthless
and utter destruction our own species has wrought"

—H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*

The Victorian *fin de siècle* is marked by society's change of perspective towards Victorian values. Apart from the vision against the moral austerity of the period --a pervasive spirit of austerity following the death of Prince Albert-- and the feeling of degeneration, society began to be critical of British colonialism. To the material cost of maintaining the empire, this rejection was also the result of a certain degree of awareness of the violence exerted against the settlers and the negative vision of the expropriation and occupation of territory that did not belong to them by right. The fear of reverse colonisation and the extinction of the empire arose during the last years of the 19th century, culturally influencing the topics to be dealt with in *fin de siècle* literature.

It was during this period when Herbert George Wells (1866-1946), a novelist, journalist and biologist, developed his most important work and wrote first novels. His most known novels of the 1890s --*The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), and *The War of the Worlds* (1897-1898)-- are all considered major contributions to the genre of science fiction. In each of them, Wells explores in different ways how technology, science, and colonialism affected both society and the British empire as a whole. In addition, they all comprise a dystopic vision of Great Britain's future as technologies and science moved in a direction in which they did not favour the British people, but rather damaged it. However, his works transcend the limits of the science fiction genre. He was a convinced socialist and defender of the middle and lower classes, which was reflected in his life and his work. He wrote about nationalism, socialism, class conflict, and even interviewed Iósif Stalin and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Wells' life was full of coincidences, but only two events stand out above the rest. The first one triggered his passion for reading and writing literature. When he was young, he broke a leg and spent several months in bed. In order to entertain him, his father brought him books from the local library, which made him become interested in literature, both in reading and writing. The second one inspired him to write *The War of the Worlds*. As he and his brother shared their vision on British imperialism, they spent hours talking about it. One day his brother, Frank Wells, "imagined the positions reversed" (Stephen Arata 1996, 109) and said: "'Suppose some beings from another planet were to drop out of the sky suddenly...and begin laying about them here.'" (Bernard Bergonzi qtd. in Arata 1996, 109). From this conversation, H. G. Wells developed his idea of a science fiction novel in which this type pf reverse colonisation is portrayed.

In my case, passion for literature is, as Wells', something that comes from my childhood and that acquired new strength in my years at the University. My interest in this particular area developed while I was in third year, when I learned about the notion of 'reverse colonisation' when reading of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The choice of Wells' *The War of the Worlds* as the focus of analysis derived from the fact that it represents British society by referring to the technological an scientific progress of the day that allowed the Empire's maximum territorial expansion. All this together with the fact that the novel is a portrayal in the first-person of a traditionally colonial territory invaded by foreign forces, which made it vulnerable and put it in the same position as any space occupied by the British in Africa, America, Asia and Oceania. All this, along with the inclusion of the theme of bacillophobia, make the novel a very good example to analyse the reverse colonialism and the context of the Victorian *fin de siècle*.

As the period in which the novel was written is important, Chapter 1 of this dissertation is devoted to delineating the historical context. The section is divided in three sections in which I discuss the topics of technology and science, British colonialism and international competition, and finally, the anxieties affecting High Victorian society. The implications of the advances in technology and science in the Late Victorian period (1873 - 1901) are initially considered. The first section covers mainly the field of communication technologies as they were indispensable for the maintenance of the empire. Furthermore, the addition of the topics of medicine and astronomy shows how the discoveries made in these fields are still relevant today, especially the study of the planet Mars. In the second section, I examine British colonial expansion during the period, emphasising the problems that some colonies provoked in the 1890s. Besides, I deal with the European imperial competition of the times, since the British feared losing colonial hegemony in the world and the tensions between imperial powers increased, which were 'solved' at the Berlin Conference (1884 - 1885). The last section of this chapter provides an account of the anxieties of Victorian *fin de siècle*'s society. Because the British possessed the largest empire on Earth, British society was not in agreement with the violence and oppression they inflicted on the colonised. As a result, fears of reverse colonisation grew in the British community. Moreover, connected with the advances in medicine, bacillophobia appeared as a consequence of bacteria's invisibility, especially in a period which saw the emergence of several illnesses.

In Chapter 2 I relate the context and the anxieties of the times to Wells' novel. On the one hand, I investigate why the work is considered part of the science fiction genre and how the author got to make a fantasy of his own creation into something (almost) credible for the 1890s society. In addition, the chapter explores the ways in which technology influenced *The War of the Worlds*, as communication modes were devastated

and the Martians used destructive futuristic weapons for invasion and colonisation. On the other hand, the chapter provides an overview of reverse colonisation and bacillophobia rendered in the novel through the figure of the Martians, that at the same time resemble the British themselves, which reflects Wells' critique on English imperialism.

As regards to the methodology of this TFG, the central analytical concept is taken from Stephen Arata, who allows for an analysis on *The War of the Worlds* considering the topic of reverse colonisation. Also, Jeremy Black and H. C. G. Matthew helped me to understand the Late Victorian period in and Aaron Worth provided valuable information as to how technological progress is absolutely relevant for an understanding of both in the Victorian *fin de siècl*e and in *The War of the Worlds*. Also, an article by Károly Pintér was extremely useful as it established the similarities and differences between humans and Martians. Concerning the secondary sources, they complete and contrast the primary sources on the questions of context and anxieties. All in all, mine is a sociocultural and political approach to the Wells novel.

1. GREATNESS OR DECADENCE? THE BRITISH EMPIRE DURING THE LATE VICTORIAN PERIOD (1873 – 1901).

"The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much."
― Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

1.1. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

The technological developments of the first phase of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century saw an exponential increase in the nineteenth century. It was during this period when "the scale of development […] was unprecedented and it was then that the industrial revolution affected the whole country" (Black 2008, 177), which had an impact in English economy, politics and, especially, society. The middle of the century was a period of technological improvements, primarily in the field of the communications technology, where it is important to highlight the prominence of the railway and the telegraph, both linked directly with the connection between the colonies and their metropolis, as well as different parts of Britain. Other scientific and technological fields that progressed dramatically during the Late Victorian period were medicine and astronomy, certainly an inspiration for literary works such as *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The War of the Worlds* (1897-1898) and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) written by H. G. Wells, who also dedicated part of his effort to scientific dissemination, especially in the field of biology, which was incorporated in his works science fiction, a genre of which he often credited with being "the father". His invention of utopian and dystopian presents and futures are not totally divorced from real scientific and technological developments and theories.

The technologies of communication and information were "indispensable to projects of colonial expansion and control" (Worth 2010, 67). On the one hand, the telegraph was used to transmit messages in a short period of time, which implied: (1) the fast connection between Britain and its colonies all around the world as "[l]andline telegraphy was introduced in the 1840s, short submarine telegraph cables in the 1850s, and intercontinental cables in the 1860s" (Headrick 2005, 491); and (2) the fast spread of news in order to provide newspapers and journals with immediate pieces of information. On the other hand, the steamships were successful on the field of commerce in the late nineteenth century -gradually replacing the utilisation of the sail ships for this purpose-, when they allowed the English to trade with distant places, for example, they permitted the trade of tropical fruits, which was not possible before due to the length of the travel by sea and allowed more punctuality than sailing ships, which put them close to the level as rail transportation.

However, the railway was the first technology of communication that placed Great Britain as one of the leading industrial powers and "they [railways] were the icon of the new age. They cut journey times for both passengers and freight, created new links, and had a powerful psychological impact." (Black 2008, 178). Their improvement affected not only the economy, but the society and politics of the period: industries -- especially iron ones-- benefited immensely from the consolidation of these developments: "the belief in the beneficial impact of the train was captured in Charles Dickens' *The Uncommercial Traveller*" (Black 2008, 178), which shows the impact on society and culture; including politicians' use of the railway to expand their campaigns all over the country. As cities grew in size all over Britain, railways "made it possible for better-off people to live away from the town centre by providing cheap transport" (Matthew 1993, 530). As to the countryside, "roads linking with the new railways" (Matthew 1993, 531)

brought about its modernisation products could be exported to and imported from other parts of the realm in a fast and efficient way. In *Anticipations* (originally published in 1901), H. G. Wells (*Anticipations*) pointed out tha any terrestrial engine could not go faster that "fifty miles an hour" (2006, 11) in the nineteenth century, because "most authorities are agreed, is the limit of our speed for land travel, so far as existing conditions go" (11-12) Yet he was prompt to add: "Only a revolutionary reconstruction of the railways or the development of some new competing method of land travel can carry us beyond that" (12). He even predicted that the engines would soon be brought to the roads, competing with the railway in terms of urban and suburban communication. These vehicle would, nevertheless, "find themselves hampered in the speed of their longer runs by the slower horse traffic on their routes" (*Anticipations* 2006, 16), and would be in need of "private roads of a new sort, upon which their vehicles will be free to travel up to the limit of their very highest possible speed" (*Anticipations* 2006, 17). By stating this, Wells prophesises the construction of present-day highways.

As previously stated, the improvement of this transport was advantageous for the British economy. The need for the railway to reach more parts of the country not only made the iron industry the largest one in the state, but also contributed to the development of fields as diverse as agriculture and journalism. The latter entailed the availability of newspapers on the same day in different parts of the country: railways "allowed London newspapers to increase their dominance of the national newspaper scene" (Black 2008, 198). Nevertheless, not every part of the country could take advantage of this situation as a consequence of a lack of the materials needed to construct railways, the consequence being, as Black (2008) points out, that the East and South lagged behind while the North and Midlands developed rapidly (179). Moreover, the speed with which the metropolis could communicate with its colonies through the use of steamships had a negative impact

on part of the agricultural sector as the export of produce from different territories of the British Empire had as an effect the impoverishment of some rural areas of Great Britain. As a consequence, the countryside lost inhabitants, who moved to the city to have more opportunities, primarily trade, which was the time's biggest force of economic development and city growth, and that was partly thanks to the railway and the steamship system. According to Wells: "[t]he final limit to the size and importance of the great city has been the commercial 'sphere of influence' commanded by that city" (*Anticipations* 2006, 41).

Medicine was not really considered an actual profession until the nineteenth century. At the end of the period, one had to study to become a doctor for, as Mary Wilson Carpenter (2018) mentions, "legislation had imposed standards requiring university medical education and hospital training" (763). Even though the requirements were tough, this profession was a way of social promotion for people of the lower classes, as was the case of John Snow, who ascended in the social ladder and became the anaesthetist in Queen Victoria's deliveries, as Carpenter (2018) informs us (764). Anaesthesia underwent a considerable progress and started to be used frequently in medical practice, after being perfected by physicians like Snow. Moreover, one of the greater findings of the period was the X-Ray, even if discovered by a German --Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen-- in 1895, as Aaron Worth (2010) mentions (86), its precursor was British scientist William Crookes. Furthermore, the changes experienced by the healing art and social welfare over the fin de siècle caused a decline in mortality rates. Black (2008) refers in this connection to the improvement of the Late Victorian society's conditions of living:

The supply of clean water was improved or begun and […] London at last acquired a sewerage system appropriate for the capital of a modern empire. Typhus virtually disappeared by the 1890s, typhoid was brought under partial control, and death rates from tuberculosis and scarlet fever declined. Improved diet, thanks, in part, to a significant fall in food prices, played an important role in the decline in mortality rates, while medical advances, not least the replacement of the 'miasma' theory of disease by that of 'germs', helped. (212)

The importance of bacteriology and the so-called germ theory must be highlighted. Between 1890 and 1900, there were three epidemics in Britain according to Anne Hardy (1998): "influenza between 1890 and 1892; cholera between 1892 and 1898; and plague between 1898 and 1900" (331). Experts of the 1870s believed that "diseases were caused by a combination of four factors: heredity, climate, miasmas and immoderate lifestyles" (Jørgensen 2015, 36). It was not until the 1890s that scientists agreed that certain infections were caused by microorganisms, especially bacteria. Their symptoms were perceivable by the human senses, but infectious agents were not perceivable to the human eye: "bacteria are paravisual, in the sense that they are invisible phenomena existing in the realm of the visible" (Jørgensen 2015, 37) and their study was directly linked and "dependent on advanced technology" (Jørgensen 2015, 37). As a consequence of their invisibility, a great anxiety invaded British society: bacillophobia --a topic that will be discussed in detail in part 1.3. of this dissertation--, triggered the organization of major hygiene campaigns.

Astronomy was a field likewise influenced by the technological advances of the times. Observatories and large telescopes were operative by the end of the century. In

Wells' story "In the Avu Observatory", the narrator provides us with a description of how a *fin de siècle* observatory would be:

> The building is usually cylindrical in shape, with a very light hemispherical roof capable of being turned round from the interior. The telescope is supported upon a stone pillar in the centre, and a clockwork arrangement compensates for the earth's rotation, and allows a star once found to be continuously observed. Besides this, there is a compact tracery of wheels and screws about its point of support, by which the astronomer adjusts it. There is, of course, a slit in the movable roof which follows the eye of the telescope in its survey of the heavens. The observer sits or lies on a sloping wooden arrangement, which he can wheel to any part of the observatory as the position of the telescope may require. Within it is advisable to have things as dark as possible, in order to enhance the brilliance of the stars observed (*Stolen* 2009, 35-36).

Though they existed before, their use was increased due to the intense interest in studying other planets and celestial bodies. Thanks to these improvements, Mars was studied in more detail than ever before. As a result, scientists were able to establish the average temperature of the red planet as well as to have a more precise knowledge of its atmosphere. Furthermore, "the planet's disc has appeared at time unaccountably bright, […] small spots […]" and "many irregularities were observed" (Lockyer 1896, 625), which resulted in the discovery of the existence of mountains in the planet.[1] During the 1890s, scientists showed already an interest in knowing or speculating about the existence of water in the planet. The observation of ice in the poles and its rapid melting made scientists wonder where the resulting water had gone, as Lockyer (1896) states (626).

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[1] As Lockyer mentions in "Mars as Seen at the Opposition in 1894" (1896), it was Mr. Percival Lowell who stated that it was mountains what could be observed rather than other accidents or phenomena.

Numerous bluish and greenish spots were seen on the surface of Mars, which seemed to be "areas of vegetation, and they have been observed to alter their tints as the seasons on the planet progress" (Lockyer 1896, 626). Mr. Percival Lowell even suggested that they have once been seas (Percival Lowell qtd. in Lockyer 1896, 626). Due to the finding of the disappearance of water in the red planet, Lockyer (1896) states that:

> With such a state of affairs, a small water supply, the inhabitants of Mars must, to exist, have a very elaborate and scientific means of utilising every drop they can procure; or, in other words, their system of irrigation must be on a gigantic scale. If there be inhabitants then, as Mr. Lowell says, "irrigation must be the chief material concern of their lives". (626)

All this indicates that already at the time, there was speculation about and interest in the possibility of the existence of intelligent life outside the earth. Nonetheless, at the same time that technology allowed a planet so far away to be investigated, many astronomical phenomena that occurred here on Earth were still inexplicable, such as the Northern Lights mentioned in a passage of Wells' short story "From an Observatory" (1897), where it is referred to as "a strange thing to be seen at times in the Arctic Circle" (*Certain* 2006, 174).

In conclusion, Great Britain was one of the great technological and scientific powers at the end of the century. Not only was this closely linked to the health and maintenance of the Empire and its colonies, but to the need of development of the English society as opposed to the sense of degeneration of Victorian *fin de siècle*. In addition, and as I have already stated above, all these advances had a huge impact on the literature of

the times, especially the novel discussed in this dissertation, *The War of the Worlds*. Furthermore, the introduction of such advances increased the creation of schools, some for those who wanted to pursue a medical career, while others specifically dedicated to instructing professionals in innovative technological fields, a model taken from the Germans, according to (Matthew 1993, 550).

1.2. EUROPEAN COLONIALISM AND IMPERIAL COMPETITION

Queen Victoria's Great Britain managed to position itself as one of the greatest empires in the world ever seen. At the end of the century, the British empire continued to maintain its status of the leader of nations, with the Queen at the helm, managing to possess, as Black proposes, "a quarter of the world's population and a fifth of the land surface" (190) so that "in 1851 Britain was the world's trader, with an overwhelming dominance of world shipping" (Matthew 1993, 559). However, since the 1870s the Empire seemed to degenerate at times: many of its colonies began to rebel, for example Ireland and India, and the desire for expansion of other powers such as Germany and the United States were undermining Britain's leading position in the colonial arena. Yet, the British Empire continued to spread across the world as if the world were its own. Victoria "became the leading power in Southern and East Africa" (Black 2008, 191) by occupying Egypt, Sudan and the Afrikaner republics of Southern Africa during 1880s and 1890s, but also extended her power through the oceans in places such as Jamaica in the 1860s. All these territorial annexations made Britain the largest empire that had ever existed in the world, above the Mongol and Spanish empires, reaching its greatest extension at the beginning of the 20th century under the rule of Edward VII and his son George V, as argued by Joseph Kiprop.

As explained above, since the middle of the century Britain had problems with its actual colonies, especially Ireland, India and South Africa. Regarding Ireland, Britain spoke about the 'Irish problem' due to all the attention and effort they put into keeping Ireland as part of the Empire as a strategic territory. The Act of Union of 1800, which included the suspension of the Irish Parliament, and the famine of the 1860s and 70s produced the rise of the Fenian Irish Independent movement, resulting in terrorist attacks especially in England. According to H. C. G. Matthew (1993):

> The Fenian movement in no sense represented Irish opinion generally, but the danger that it might come to do so encouraged Liberal politicians, especially Gladstone, to concessionary action. Disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland in 1869, the Land Act of 1870, and the abortive educational reform in 1873 (rejected by the Irish members themselves) were intended to show that Westminster could give the mass of the Irish what they wanted. But these reforms were not enough. (555)

Along with the discontent with Westminster's policy, during the 1880s and 1890s the depression due to bad crops followed so that Ireland "could not produce her own capital" and "her economy could not sustain her population" (Matthew 1993, 555), resulting in the mass migration to foreign lands, as the United States. Furthermore, the dissatisfaction continued with the passing of the Land Act of 1881 during Gladstone's Government (1880), which did not provide the Irish with the ownership of the land, which was still in the hands of Protestant landowners. Finally, Gladstone's Home Rule Bill of 1886 which "did not grant independence" to Ireland (Matthew 1993, 556), but permitted the Irish self-government in some areas, even though Britain did not give up on others like the power to declare war.

India began as a case of indirect imperialism since the East India Company was present for commercial purposes, however, it soon began to have great influence over the territory. As the British seemed to be taking the control of several regions, they remained under suspicion of having an urge for substituting the English culture for the Indian. This growing dominance of the subcontinent caused the so-called Indian Mutiny in 1857 and 1858, which was an attempt on the part of the Indians to liberate themselves from the increasing power of the British. In 1858 the war was over and Britain was victorious. The greatest measure imposed was the withdrawal of the East India Company, whereby India was made a formal colony and led directly by the Crown and in 1876, "at the express wish of the queen, an Act was passed at Westminster which declared her 'Empress of India'" (Matthew 562), possibly to demonstrate to all colonial territories and to other world powers British imperial authority prevailed.

Finally, in South Africa, the Boers --Dutch descendants settled in this region-- "moved out of the (British) Cape Colony across the Gariep (Orange) River into the interior of South Africa" (Pretorius 2011, 1) and "established two independent republics (Pretorius 2011, 1). The British tried to re-annex these territories, and the Boers' response was to rise in arms against the British which meant the outbreak of the First Boer War (1880-1881) to be followed by the Second Boer War (1899-1902). According to Fransjohan Pretorius (2001), "before the Boer Wars, the late Victorian Army had been engaged in colonial campaigns against irregulars inferior in armaments, organisation and discipline. The Boer experience therefore came as a total surprise" (3). As Matthew points out: "the Boers, however, were well stocked with German arms; the British, used to fight colonial wars against undisciplined natives without guns, proceeded ineptly, and a series of disasters followed before weight of armaments captured the main Boer cities in 1900" (1993, 564). By 1901 the "Boers refused to accept defeat, and harassed the British with

guerrilla tactics" (Matthew 1993, 565) and the British answered with violence. Eventually, a treaty of peace was signed, however, the war costs were remarkably great for Britain.

However, the rebellion of certain colonies was not Britain's only concern. Her leadership as a power --both colonial and industrial-- was being jeopardized: France, Germany, Russia and the United States were advancing in terms of technological progress and territorial expansion. Britain was economically damaged by the Boer War, and its economic boom of the 1850s was cut short during the last decades of the 19th century. As Matthew mentions: "The USA, Germany, France, and Russia were now all substantial industrial powers, with the first two superior to the British in certain sectors of their economies. […] Yet for the most part British society and government behaved as if nothing had changed." (566), nevertheless, the possibility of foreign invasion created a great anxiety among the English, which will be explained in 1.3. below.

The economic growth of other powers made them also begin to be interested in colonisation, Germany in particular, which was positioning itself as the primary European power, challenging Britain's position. Wells, himself, did not fail to comment on Germany's growing status among the colonial and technological powers:

> at present the Germans, with the doubtful exception of the United States, have the most efficient middle class in the world, their rapid economic progress is to a very large extent, indeed, a triumph of intelligence, and their political and probably their military and naval services are still conducted with a capacity and breadth of view that find no parallel in the world (*Anticipations* 2006, 252).

During the 1880s, Africa was the favourite continent for colonisation, being Britain and Portugal the ones with more territories under their control. However, the rest of the

industrial European powers wanted their part, which lead to confrontation between countries, particularly Britain and Germany, whose intentions to extend and "its search for a place in the sun" (Black 195) made the British anxieties grow. Tensions among the powers increased impulsive annexations of territory[2] to show others their power. According to Black (2008), "specific clashes of colonial influence interacted with a more general sense of imperial insecurity" (195). Reactions to these land claims were mixed, but Britain and Germany decided "to abandon their preference for informal control and influence in favour of a formal policy leading to their annexations in Southern, East and West Africa from the end of 1883 onwards" (Uzoigwe 1985, 28).[3] This situation began to change, according to G. N. Uzoigwe (1985), when Leopold I of Belgium declared his interest in exploring the Congo, the Portuguese Crown annexing territories after their large expeditions through the continent, and the French "expansionist mood" (28).

In order to manage "the ongoing process of colonisation in Africa (the 'Scramble' as it was dubbed by a Times columnist) so as to avoid the outbreak of armed conflict between rival colonial powers" (Craven 2015, 32), the Berlin West Africa Conference was celebrated between 1884 and 1885. At the conference, the General Act was drafted. In this act, according to Matthew Craven (2015), the regulations for the acquisition of territory on the African coast were drafted, the Congo and Niger rivers were internationalised, and a campaign against the sale and purchase of slaves began (32),[4] however, the reunited nations ended up dividing the continent. By 1885, Africa had

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[2] As Black mentions, Britain occupied Sierra Leone in 1896, established the protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1900 and extended up to Egypt (because they feared the French intentions over this territory), among others (195). The empire's need to ensure its presence in Africa was due to routes with India, important for trade with the subcontinent.

[3] The so called "reluctant imperialism" was used often by the British. The most known example is India, that was controlled indirectly by the East India Company until the Indian Mutiny (1857-58) and from then by the Crown itself.

[4] Uzoigwe declares that "[t]he conference did not discuss seriously either the slave trade or the lofty humanitarian idealism that was supposed to have inspired it. It nevertheless passed empty resolutions regarding the abolition of the slave trade and the welfare of Africans." (29).

already been divided into forty units, moreover "some 30% of the total length of the borders were drawn as straight lines, and these and others often cut right across ethnic and linguistic boundaries" (Uzoigwe 1985, 42-44).

The Europeans completed their occupation by 1902. There are many reasons why Europeans were able to colonise Africa, according to Uzoigwe (1985): the first would be the great exploratory activity in Africa, which made the settlers much better aware of the terrain and what they were facing, but the natives did not know Europeans nor their ways of procedure; the second, the breakthrough in European medicine allowed diseases like malaria to be treated; thirdly, "the material and financial resources available to Europe were overwhelming in comparison with those of Africa" (38); and finally, the superiority in armament and the coordination of all the colonizers, in contrast to the lack of resources and alliances between African peoples. The colonisation was bloody and devastating for the natives.

1.3. *FIN DE SIÈCLE* ANXIETIES

Much as neither society nor the English government wanted to show their concerns about the scientific and colonial advances of the other world powers, they kept to themselves different anxieties concerning degeneration, the fear of reverse colonialism --or reverse imperialism--, and bacillophobia. These anxieties were reflected in the literature and other cultural manifestations of the time, thus demonstrating that they were present in the minds of the British.

At the turn of the century, British society suffered from a constant fear of degeneration and its consequences. Rod Edmond (2000) establishes three terms: decline, degeneration and extinction (39), which may be related with the imperial discourse and

modernism. At first, the idea that empires flourished and withered away was widespread among the British, but this idea seems to have been less well carried out at the end of the century. Many authors compared the British Empire with the Roman empire at its peak, yet others related "the resemblance between English social decay and the late days of the Roman Empire" (Edmond 40). While the idea of degeneration was advancing, not only imperial but also physical and psychological, society decided to rely on what is called Social Darwinism, which included what Herbert Spenser[5] called "the survival of the fittest" (Herbert Spenser qtd. in Ian Watt 1980, 156), replacing the term 'natural selection' coined by Darwin.[6] The "survival of the fittest", according to Ian Watt (1980), "was a law which validated the current competitive economic order and its attendant inequities, because they were a necessary stage in the process of social evolution" (156), and which "supported the ideology of colonial expansion" (156), due to the fact that the Europeans had proven to be the best adapted to survive. This led them to believe in their right to take their culture, politics, etc., to other parts of the globe, which meant that, through colonisation, they imposed their ideology and identity to replace that of the native. Furthermore,

> it was also widely thought […] that the dominance of the white races was itself the result of inherited superiority, and in *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin himself spoke of "high" and "low" races, and of "stronger" and "weaker" nations. Later in the century the assumption that all evolution occurred in a single upward line of development was extended by such Social Darwinists […] to include the necessary domination or destruction of inferior peoples by white civilization. (Watt 156-7)

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[5] *First Principles* (1862)
[6] *The Origin of the Species* (1859)

This added support to the British imperialist ideas of the *fin de siècle*. However, Wells went even further to suggest that there would be a moment in the future in which where the entire human race would go into extinction, as it will not fit in the world any longer, as was the case with other species before ("The Extinction of Man". *Certain* 2006, 115-116). He added that it was possible a type of animal would develop that would oust the human race from power over the rest of the creatures: "as far as we know there is no reason why in the future these creatures should not increase in size and terrestrial capacity" ("The Extinction of Man". *Certain* 2006, 116).

In addition, it is important to highlight the "widespread belief in the inevitable extinction of many colonised native peoples" (Edmond 2000, 42). The "superiority of the Aryan races" (Edmond 2000, 40) was being threatened by the mixture of races and cultures, which for the British was also considered degeneration and posed a danger to that 'purity' and supremacy. As Edmond (2000) mentions, "this, of course, was profoundly ideological, substituting a natural process for the human violence of colonization" (42). Nevertheless, it seems that this fixation with the death of other cultures was only a reflection of the fear of their own extinction and the so called 'going native', term that implies "the European becoming decivilised in savage surroundings" (Edmond 2000, 43), embodied, for example, by Kurtz, a character in the novella *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad.[7]

Moving on now to consider the degeneration ideas linked to the health of the Empire, it is important to remark disease and infection connected to the idea of trade. In his review of degeneration, Edmond (2000) identifies that "disease and infections were always a hazard for travellers, and home was a place to return to for quarantine and recuperation" (43). Furthermore, Edmond argues, as trade was the main focus of disease

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[7] He was completely absorbed by the native culture and traditions, especially under the influence of the jungle.

transmission and the British Empire was one of the most active commercial powers, society began to develop anxieties towards the possible spread of different diseases and the return of those already eradicated (43-44). As I mentioned in the previous section, the discovery that certain illnesses were caused by bacteria increased the general anguish of the population concerning their invisibility, damaging organisms visible only by means of technological devices in the hands of experts. This anxiety is what the term bacillophobia refers to. In the Late Victorian era, the rumour that bacteria, once entering your body, created irreversible damage, had spread among the population causing much distress and resulting in the demonisation of "a wide range of everyday utilities including soap bars, books and money, as well as everyday customs such as kissing, doing the laundry and receiving the Eucharist." (Jørgensen 2015, 39), for example. Additionally,

> Invisibility, penetrability, omnipresence, procreativeness and pathogenicity: in the constellation of these features, bacteria had an enormous conceptual impact in the late Victorian era. […] In her excellent book *Membranes* (1999), […] Laura Otis investigates how the consciousness about bacteria's omnipresence called for a new conception of the individual around 1900; a conception that was not founded in demarcation, but was able to 'incorporate' the unwished-for closeness of other individuals. (Jørgensen 39)

All this changed the conception of and attitudes towards closeness and connection in Victorian society. This fear of diseases was taken further by Wells. He stated that diseases of the past were small compared to what may come in the future: "all we know even now we may be quite unwittingly evolving some new and more terrible plague—a plague that

will not take ten or twenty or thirty per cent, as plagues have done in the past, but the entire hundred" ("The Extinction of Man". *Certain* 2006, 118-119).

As far as reverse colonisation is concerned, it arose from the fear that the colonised would become colonisers, invading the metropolis and causing the same damage that they had caused in the occupied territories, although it also included the invasion of English territory by one of the emerging powers, such as Germany or the United States. This fear was caused by the critical vision that society began to have about the management of the colonies, in which the colonists took the liberty of devastating the resources, trying to eliminate the native culture to impose their own, producing damage to their identity, and the destruction caused by the bloody colonisation wars, as well as the tense situation with the other powers.

This anxiety about reverse colonisation --or reverse imperialism-- inspired the authors of the time. Stephen Arata describes two types of narratives: the narratives of reverse colonisation and the invasion scare novels. On the one hand, the narratives of reverse colonisation describe how "what has been represented as "civilized" world is on the point of being overrun by "primitive" forces. These forces can originate outside the civilized world […] or they can inhere in the civilized itself […] In each case a fearful reversal occurs: the colonizer finds himself in the position of the colonized, the exploiter is exploited, the victimizer victimized." (Arata 1996, 108). These fictions --or not-so-fictions-- contain the figure of the 'Other', which is the figure of the new coloniser, the one that had been colonised before. On the other hand, the invasion scare novels are limited to anxiety about invasion and submission by the great rival powers, however, these could be included as part of the novels of reverse colonisation.

Nevertheless, literature of colonisation in reverse also included but expressions of bacillophobia and fear of degeneration. The major examples of reverse colonisation novel which includes bacillophobia is H. G. Wells' *The War of The Worlds* (1897-98), which is the major focus of this dissertation, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). It is also worth adding the novel by Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness* (1899), which tackles the theme of 'going native'. Furthermore, there are other interesting examples like *The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer* (1871) by Sir George Tomkyns Chesney, a work in which England faces an invasion by a German-speaking enemy; and *She* (1887) by Henry Rider Haggard, who introduces an alleged antagonist of Queen Victoria, from whom she claims to take away the throne because she considers Victoria too old to occupy the post of Queen of England (Arata 1996, 108).

2. ON H. G. WELLS' *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS*

"Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change."
— Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

2.1. *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS*: SCIENCE FICTION AND TECHNOLOGY

The author of *The War of the Worlds*, Herbert George Wells, is considered to be the father of science fiction and "a pioneering and transformative figure in the development of the modern form of this mode" (Károly Pintèr 2012, 133). He was vital for the flourishing of what we recognise today as science fiction., Wells was the one who "established the tone of pessimistic irony that has become traditional with literary S[cience] F[iction] ever since" (Clarke qtd. in Pintèr 2012, 133), making Science Fiction --even for a reader of the twenty-first century-- a genre that contains a disturbing futuristic vision of technology as well as a tragic event such as a natural disaster; an invasion (as in *The War of the Worlds*), or, even, a dystopian future where the Nazis control half of the world after winning the Second World War (as in *The Man in the High Castle* [1962] by Philip K. Dick). This tragic event changes the destiny of humanity, which is forced to face it in order to survive. Furthermore, together with Wells' introduction of science fiction, John Rieder (2012) mentions how "[s]cholars largely (though not universally) agree that the period of the most fervid imperialist expansion in the late nineteenth century is also the crucial period for the emergence of the genre" (2-3) and adds that "[s]cience fiction comes into visibility first in those countries most heavily involved in imperialist projects —France and England— and then gains popularity in the United States, Germany, and Russia as those countries also enter into more and more serious imperial competition" (Csicsery-Ronay qtd. in Rieder 2012, 3). Rieder further suggests that the existence of a "genre's prehistory" is to be found in works such as Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift (2).

The War of the Worlds --from now on referred to as *WW*-- was written in the period of the greatest expansion of the British Empire, the 1890s, and the period in which the field of technology saw a considerable advance, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. As a result, Wells wanted to portray the last decade of the century in his scientific romance, as some authors denominate his work. The novel offers a representation of the *fin de siècle* and its anxieties by supplementing it with futuristic technologies to mean a deadly threat to humanity such as the invading Martians' destructive Heat Ray and the armour they use as they are in a higher position-- and to avoid the pressure of the Earth's gravity, which is greater than the one in Mars, as the narrator affirms: "I laid stress on the gravitational difficulty. On the surface of the earth the force of gravity is three times what it is on the surface of Mars. A Martian, therefore, would weigh three times more than on Mars, albeit his muscular strength would be the same" (*WW* 41). Moreover, we find a story of "confrontation of the familiar and the fantastic that cast a critical light on the well-known mundane reality" (Pintèr 2012, 133). Wells talks about a Martian invasion --a fantastic element-- in a well-recognized environment, as it takes place in several parts of England, for example Woking or London. So, "the text is constantly peppered with local place names and references" (Pintér 2012, 136), and only British people or those familiar with English soil would have that sense of 'familiarity' that Pintèr talks about -- although a twenty-first century reader has easy and quick access to the needed information, which increases the degree of proximity with what is depicted in the text. However, the references to real places in England are not the only recognisably realistic elements as we must add many journalistic sources named throughout the work such as the magazine *Nature* in chapter one (*WW* 15) --also referred to in this dissertation-- or *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* newspapers in chapter seven (*WW* 41). All these real

allusions make the fantastic merge with the quotidian, causing the reader to feel that the given situation may occur in the world in which she or he lives.

As far as the presence of alien beings that come from other planet, *WW* is "the first major literary text in which the alien becomes interesting for its own sake" (Fitting qtd. in Pintèr 2012, 134). In fact, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, H. G. Wells was the first person that used the term 'Martians' referring to the "its [Mars'] (imagined) inhabitants" (OED), even though the term was used before in relation to the characteristics of the planet Mars', but not to its inhabitants. The Martians land on the Earth with the purpose of escaping the destruction of their own planet, which is becoming colder as the time passes: "The secular cooling that must someday overtake our planet has already gone far indeed with our neighbour." (*WW* 14), which pushes the alien to invade the nearest planet for their survival. The first tactic of these beings in Britain is "the devastation of England's networks" (Worth 2010, 73): "They do not seem to have aimed at extermination so much as at complete demoralisation and the destruction of any opposition. They exploded any stores of powder they came upon, cut every telegraph, and wrecked the railways here and there" (*WW* 112). This destruction was possibly due to the need of the Martians to leave the English incommunicado, without the possibility of uniting with other against a common objective. Their aim was to make the English remain completely isolated as well as eliminating the previous technologies of communication that they cannot use due to their different ways of transmission: "They communicated with one another by means of siren-like howls, running up and down the scale from one note to another" (*WW* 91). Additionally, the appearance of technologies such as the heliograph confirm the conversion of England from an imperial power to a colonized territory:

If the narrator of *The War of the Worlds* has never seen a heliograph before, it is for good reason: unlike, say, the telegraph (equally at home in Delhi or Birmingham), it was a technology overwhelmingly, if not solely, to be found in colonial contexts, in the service of projects of conquest and control. Its appearance on English soil in the novel would, then, have signaled to readers both the devastation of the domestic communications infrastructure and the fact that Albion had itself become a colonial space (Worth 2010, 70)

The end of the novel suggests a period of restoration of the normal order of things: "the reconstitution of the English social organism is likewise figured in terms of the restoration of its communications networks, beginning with the telegraph" (Worth 2010, 74).

As regards Martians' technology, the novel contains a wide range of references to this topic. The first thing that catches the reader's attention may be the cylinder in which the Martians have arrived to the Earth, described by the narrator as "caked over and its outline softened by a thick scaly dun-coloured incrustation. It had a diameter of about thirty yards." (*WW* 20). However, it is not the most salient thing about them. They were observing the Earth for some time before the invasion in order to study human behaviour and the best way to colonise our planet as theirs was through cooling: "No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own" (*WW* 13). The possessed exceptional tools of observation, while the nineteenth century scientists on the planet Earth were only able to watch Mars's surface, but and have been incapable of determining whether there is life on the Red Planet for centuries. In addition, the ownership of what is called the Heat-Ray by the narrator makes the Martians a powerful enemy who are in possession of deadliest weapons and more

protective armours make the English troops. powerless when it comes to fight them off. As Michael C. Frank (2009) suggests "a ruthless enemy makes a devastating attack on British soil and how the helplessly inferior British army cannot stop the enemy's advance towards London." (81). As the text reads:

> Then it was, and then only, that he realized something of the full power and terror of these monsters. He learned that they were not merely a handful of small sluggish creatures, but that they were minds swaying vast mechanical bodies; and that they could move swiftly and smite with such power that even the mightiest guns could not stand against them. [...] Five of the machines had been seen moving towards the Thames, and one, by a happy chance, had been destroyed. In the other cases the shells had missed, and the batteries had been at once annihilated by the Heat-Rays. Heavy losses of soldiers were mentioned, but the tone of the dispatch was optimistic. The Martians had been repulsed; they were not invulnerable. (*WW* 85)

Their advanced technology, though destructive, prefigures what may lie in stock for humanity in the future:

> By taking the theme of technological progress several steps further, Wells shifts the main emphasis from the description of the war itself to the question of its evolutionary preconditions. Wells makes it very clear that, as outlandish as they may appear, the Martians represent mankind's evolutionary future. Men, he writes, "are just in the beginning of the evolution that the Martians have worked out" (Frank 2009, 81)

The references to journals and periodical mentioned earlier is an indication of the importance of journalism at the end of the nineteenth century. In the previous chapter I mentioned that this field developed dramatically in Great Britain thanks to the new and

more efficient ways of communication: the railway and the telegraph, which implied the faster compilation of information and more far-reaching and punctual distribution. On the one hand, at the beginning of the novel, the news about the Martian landing run fast: "The early editions of the evening papers had startled London with enormous headlines: 'A MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM MARS.' 'REMARKABLE STORY FROM WOKING.' and so forth." (*WW* 24) The news did not inform the population of the seriousness of the matter, in fact they did take away its importance: "In *The War of the Worlds*, however, the reluctance of the newspaper industry to inform the public of the object astronomers have observed approaching the earth from Mars comprises a significant aspect of humanity's species arrogance" (McLean 2009, 95). Indeed, as the narrator informs us: "the next day there was nothing of this in the papers except a little note in the Daily Telegraph, and the world went in ignorance of one of the gravest dangers that ever threatened the human race" (*WW* 15). On the other hand, as the novel advances and the Martians destroy the railways and telegraphs, the media were unable to report the news from other parts of the country as fast as they had been able before, they were, as a matter of fact, even incapable of publishing any report on the events. It is not until the penultimate chapter of the book, during his walking through London, that the narrator buys a newspaper, the *Daily Mail*: "I bought a copy for a blackened shilling I found in my pocket. Most of it was in blank, but the solitary compositor who did the thing had amused himself by making a grotesque scheme of advertisement stereo on the back page. The matter he printed was emotional: the news organization had not as yet found its way back" (*WW* 183). Being almost entirely blank, it is shown that the rise of the media depended on the technologies of the time, which were the ones that allowed the flow of information that filled the newspapers' columns. Commenting on the British Empire dependence on media, Worth (2010) refers to how

Harold Innis has argued that the destinies of particular empires are rooted in their dependence upon technologies of communication that tilt toward control of space or time. Empires whose power is largely predicated upon the mastery of "space-biased" media (the light, portable documents of the Roman imperium, for instance) tend to be expansionist, exerting influence over vast stretches of territory—but doomed to collapse, insufficiently grounded in tradition. Those empires, on the other hand, most characterized by the use of "timebiased" media (the graven stone and spoken word of Egypt, for instance: relatively immobile technologies fostering respect for tradition) may not sprawl, but they endure. The most stable systems, for Innis, are those that balance spatial and temporal orientations. (75)

Worth (2010) found that it is possible that, like the Martians, the more advanced an empire or a civilisation is, the more chances it has of going extinct once the communicational technologies are undermined or stopped from functioning properly if at all (69). Certainly, this is a fictional rendition of how Power depends on Knowledge, on how Knowledge (o information) *is* Power. As described in the previous pages, apparently humans will follow in the footsteps of the Martians in terms of science and technology, for example, at the end of the novel, the narrator mentions that from the study of aliens, things like "the 'Secret of Flying'" (*WW* 183) were discovered. If the fate of such civilisation was the extinction, such can be the destiny of the whole humanity at some point.

In conclusion, *The War of the Worlds* is a prominent novelistic example of the science fiction genre for the way it combine fantasy and the introduction of futuristic technology not yet known by the human race. Moreover, it is important to highlight how H. G. Wells managed to effectively mix this fantasy with elements of reality, which make

the work more credible, especially for readers who can identify the spaces in which action takes place in the text. In addition, the work brings us closer to the Victorian *fin de siècle*, since the context of references is clearly that of 1890s England.

2.2. *FIN DE SIÈCLE* ANXIETIES IN *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS*

The fear of the colonisation of British soil was present in the society of the 1890s. Arata (1996) suggests that "the fantasies of reverse colonisation are products of the geopolitical fears of a troubled imperial society" and "responses to cultural guilt" (108). During the 1890s, as I have mentioned before, the British Empire was in the period of greatest territorial expansion. English society did not agree very much with the actions of British settlers around the world and feared their colonies' revenge by attacking and occupying English soil. Arata (1996) maintains that this type of narratives "contain the potential for powerful critiques to the imperial ideology" (108) and H. G. Wells refers to his discontent with the massacre that British troops committed in Tasmania in *The War of the Worlds*: "The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit?" (14). The novel is a great example of the so-called 'narratives of reverse colonialism --or colonisation--', since "the colonizer finds himself in the position of the colonized, the exploiter is exploited, the victimizer victimized" (Arata 1996, 108). In the same vein, Rieder (2012) presents the white European narrator, who formed part of a colonialist society, as the "dominated indigenous inhabitant of the colonized land" (7).

With respect to the figure of the Martians, it is charged with symbolism. As a novel of reverse colonialism, the Martians may represent those colonised by the British Empire, seeking revenge for the abuses committed by the English. Other possibility is that they are the illustration of other European peoples, who take advantage of what was the beginning of the decadence of the British Empire. The countries suspected of conspiring to invade England were France and Germany, since at the time they were both colonial and industrial powers. The third and most recurrent identification portrays the Martians as a reflection of the English themselves, of their imperialist past, present and future, at the risk of ending up as aliens: defeated as an empire. For example, Worth (2010) identifies them with England's "own possible (imperial) future" (71), whilst Frank (2009) maintains that "[c]ondemning the Martians' cold-blooded logic [...] would therefore mean to condemn ourselves" (82), due to the fact that the extra-terrestrial beings are mirroring English actions in the world. The narrator of *WW* critiques British imperial actions and the hypocritical character of readers of the times, who would be scandalised by an invasion of their homeland, but do not defend the rights of those colonised in the name of their country. Thus, in Book I, Chapter I, he states: "And before we judge of them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its inferior races" (*WW* 14). One last consideration on who would be represented by the figure of the Martian is pointed out by Arata (1996): "In Wells's invader, the late-Victorian reader could discover, distorted but recognizable, both his own face and that of the colonized Other" (109).

On the question of the Martians reflecting the British, Bed Paudyal's idea of imperialist --or colonist-- guilt (2009, 105) is of high importance in this novel. Paudyal (2009) affirms that the British traumatised those who were colonised (104) as they were

forced to be subjects of the Empire without other choice. In *WW*, this trauma is now part of the lives of those who previously caused it. The imperialist guilt is depicted in the character of the curate, who is one of the companions of the narrator of the story. He has been described as "a clichéd, silly, and irritating character, included in the story to serve as a butt of Wells's anticlerical satire" (Pintér 2012, 141). The clergyman introduces a religious and apocalyptic tone in *WW* and he repeats several times the question "what sins have we done" (*WW* 77) --'sins' may unwittingly refer to the damages caused to other humans submitted to the imperial yoke--, and laments that "'[t]his must be the beginning of the end.' he said, interrupting me. 'The end! The great and terrible day of the Lord! When the men shall call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them and hide them -- hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne!'" (*WW* 78), which resembles a reference to the Apocalypse described in the Bible: "When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature call out, 'Come!' I looked and there was a pale green horse! Its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed with him; they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence, and by the wild animals of the earth." (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Revelations 6.7-8). In the case of the novel, the Apocalypse was instigated by the human wrongdoings, precisely colonial bad practices. However, the narrator does not agree with the curate, he does not see the coming of the Martians as the Apocalypse, but as an "unpredictable natural catastrophe" (Pintér 2012, 141): "'Be a man!' said I. 'You are scared out of your wits! What good is religion if it collapses under calamity? Think of what earthquakes and floods, wars and volcanoes, have done before to men! Did you think God had exempted Weybridge? He is not an insurance agent'" (*WW* 78). Another significant aspect of the curate's attitude towards the extra-terrestrial invasion is that he suggests it is deserved. The British Empire did not need the exploitation of other

territories for their survival, whilst Martians invade the earth out of necessity as their planet is getting cold. As McLean (2009) argues: "The invasion of earth has, at least, the moral justification of being essential to the survival of the Martian species" (93). The defeat of the British troops, McLean (2009) suggests, is the punishment the English deserved for the damage they caused.

Later in the novel, after the curate is killed by the Martians, the narrator finds another companion: the artilleryman. This man is the opposite of the clergyman's character, because he has a completely different vision of the invasion, influenced by his profession (Pintér 2012, 142). About this character, Pintér (2012) notes that

> what the curate read as the mighty wrath of God, the artilleryman reads as the overpowering dominance of a superior enemy. He declares the end of the war and the pitiful defeat of humans: "We're down; we're beat. . . . Cities, nations, civilization, progress—it's all over. That game's up" (Wells 152, 154). (142)

But unlike the curate, he has a postapocalyptic vision of the future of humanity under the Martians (*WW* 142).

Besides, the artilleryman preaches a discourse based on the theory of Social Darwinism. When the narrator comes across him in Book II Chapter VII, they speak about the post-invasion --or post-apocalyptic-- England and the soldier says: "So soon as they've settled all our guns and ships, and smashed our railways, and done all the things they are doing over there, they will begin catching us systematic, picking the best and storing us in cages and things. That's what they will start doing in a bit" (*WW* 164). Here, he applies the logic of the survival of the fittest: the strong humans will survive the war of invasion, while the weaker will die as they are not capable of adapting to the situation nor will they be able to resist alien dominance. In his analysis on the character, McLean

(2009) identifies that "the artilleryman's proposal to use the Martian invasion [is] an excuse to purge humanity of its weak members might appear as a mere variation of Social Darwinism" (111). As he concludes in the novel: "Life is real again, and the useless and cumbersome and mischievous have to die. They ought to die" (*WW* 167-168). Pintér argues that "he proposes the acceptance of the new role of humans prefigured in the recurring analogies of the novel; while Martians will permanently occupy the former dominant position of humans on Earth, humans should hide in subterranean dwellings" (2012, 142).

Nonetheless, whereas the artilleryman works as the mouthpiece of Social Darwinist ideas in the novel, but the Martians embody the ideas. They seem to follow "the same kind of social Darwinist logic that can be found in much late nineteenth-century imperial discourse" (Frank 2009, 82) as they "felt that they had the right to take possession of the sunnier and more fertile planet Earth" (Frank 2009, 82). Through the alien invasion, Martians are positioned on "the top of the evolutionary ladder" (Pintér 2012, 139), and humans are deprived of their position on the Earth, "relegated to the level of animals" (Pintér 2012, 138). Although aliens have ascended the evolutionary scale, the narrator suggests that the extra-terrestrial beings lack emotions, an opinion caused by the selfishness of the Martians towards the human race. However, McLean (2009) writes that this is just the point of view of the narrator, due to the fact that humans do the same when referring to animals and plants, and adds that in case of analysing the Martians' behaviour, the study must be focused on the relations between them (103). The possession of emotions "is demonstrated in their recovery of a fallen comrade from the field of battle and in their mourning of each other's deaths" (Parrinder qtd. in McLean 2009, 103): "two were stooping over the frothing, tumultuous ruins of their comrade. The third and fourth stood beside him in the water" (*WW* 73).

Having defined what is meant by reverse colonisation and Social Darwinism in *WW*, I will now move on to discuss bacillophobia in the novel. There are two ways of identifying bacillophobia in *WW*: the first one portrays the Martians as the disease; the second is the bacteria that society was so anxious about --as I explained in Chapter 1-- which end up killing the aliens. On the one hand, Patrick A. McCarthy (1986) identifies the Martians' invasion as a "process of disease" (55): they arrive, destroy everything they can, but at the end, they die, nevertheless, McCarthy (1986) says, the process is "that of successful resistance to disease (the microbes are our planet's antibodies) and the development of immunity" (55). At the end of the book, the narrator points at this direction when mentioning they should be prepared for the next attack --if any--:

A question of graver and universal interest is the possibility of another attack from the Martians. I do not think that nearly enough attention is being given to this aspect of the matter. At present the planet Mars is in conjunction, but with every return to opposition I, for one, anticipate a renewal of their adventure. In any case, we should be prepared. It seems to me that it should be possible to define the position of the gun from which the shots are discharged, to keep a sustained watch upon this part of the planet, and to anticipate the arrival of the next attack. (*WW* 188)

Similarly, Alexander C. Irvin (2004) found that "[t]he Martians are a plague to humanity, just as European civilizations has been a plague to animals and other humans, and just as the native diseases of Earth will prove to be a plague to the Martians" (36). This study provides evidence that imperialism was --and is-- a disease for the world, and that this work is, in fact, a critique to the disease of the British Empire, which infects and destroys,

as Irvin (2004) pointed out, "animals and other humans" (36) that were considered inferior to them.

In addition, it is important to emphasise the similarities between Martians and bacteria. In *WW*, Wells included several biological descriptions of the Martians, since he was a biologist himself and frequently enjoyed to craft "figures of sensory amputations, isolation, and distortion" (Worth 2010, 69), as well as portraying the interior organs of any being, due to his fascination with the X-Ray, which was invented during the Victorian period. The narrator describes the Martians as having "something fungoid in the oily brown skin" (*WW* 29); "all the complex apparatus of digestion, which makes up the bulk of our bodies, did not exist in the Martians" (*WW* 134); and "the Martians were absolutely without sex, and therefore without any of the tumultuous emotions that arise from that difference among men" (*WW* 135). The idea of being asexual is what determines the identification of the Martians with bacteria. As Wells claims in "Through a Microscope" (*Certain* 2006): "To use the decorous phrase of the text-book, 'They multiply by fission.' Your amœba or vorticella, as the case may be, splits in two" (161-162), without any sexual intercourse, resembling the Martians' way of reproduction. All of these characteristics coincide with those of the bacteria and demonstrate that the Martians could be taken as a representation of it and a reflection of the contemporary fear of these invisible beings.

On the other hand, the Martians succumb to bacteria that coexist with humans without harming them: "in all the bodies of the Martians that were examined after the war, no bacteria except those already known as terrestrial species were found" (*WW* 187). Throughout history, it was very common for colonists to carry bacteria and viruses that they have but were immune to other territories, making them deadly for the colonised. Conversely, the colonised themselves had diseases that the Europeans did not know, so

their body did not resist them. For example, in the first Castilian expeditions in America both colonised as colonisers were affected by diseases for which they had no antibodies. Consequently, the Martians, like previous colonisers, succumbed to foreign diseases. The Martians, Irvin (1986) says, were "too short-sighted to examine the ecology of the world they were colonizing" (38). If they had study the ecological conditions of humans, they would have conquered the earth "[f]or, in terms of technological development, mankind cannot possibly prepare itself for an invasion of the kind described in the novel, while, in terms of biological evolution, it is already prepared – thanks to the work of 'natural selection'" (Frank 2009, 82).

With respect to the ecology of the planet Earth during the Martian invasion and domination, the red weed plays an important role. The aliens spread this kind of vegetation as the colonisers did in the colonies in order to make them resemble the metropolis. As Irvin (1986) suggests: "another visible emblem of progress was the extent to which the colony's ecology and topography could be changed to reflect the imperial seat" (37). So did the Martians. In *WW*, the narrator notes that the red weed brought a desert-like climate –"at first I was surprised at this flood in a hot, dry summer, but afterwards I discovered that it was caused by the tropical exuberance of the red weed" (*WW* 156)--, such as the one in Mars. Again, as in the case of the aliens, the red weed could be compared to a disease, as it spreads faster and annihilates all the trail of earthly vegetation. This can be compared with Wells' short story "The Stolen Bacillus" (1895), in which a Bacteriologist affirms that: "those mere atomies, might multiply and devastate a city!" (*Stolen* 2009, 5), just as the red weed eliminated the terrestrial ecosystem. Nevertheless, as in the case of the Martians too, the red weed contracted an earthly bacteria and expired because of it:

In the end the red weed succumbed almost as quickly as it had spread. A cankering disease, due, it is believed, to the action of certain bacteria, presently sized upon it. Now by the action of natural selection, all terrestrial plants have acquired a resisting power against bacterial diseases -- they never succumb without a severe struggle, but the red weed rotted like a thing already dead. (*WW* 156)

Bacillophobia was an issue in Victorian times. Nowadays we acknowledge that bacteria exist in the human body and are necessary for its proper functioning, as pointed out by Jørgensen (2015): "the human body should be understood as an ecosystem in which microorganisms interact with the host physiology, mood and behaviour" (43). Nonetheless, in the late Victorian period, "bacteria were at the same time perceived as homely – in the respect that they are implied in the most mundane acts and objects; even homely in the respect that they live in us – and as exotic foreign bodies, as my discussion of 'bacillophobia' testifies to. The fear that bacteria evoked was the consequence of this duality" (Jørgensen 2015, 44).

3. CONCLUSION

"I felt the first inkling of a thing that presently grew quite clear in my mind, that oppressed me for many days, a sense of dethronement, a persuasion that I was no longer a master, but an animal among the animals, under the Martian heel. With us it would be as with them, to lurk and watch, to run and hide; the fear and empire of man had passed away."

—H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*

When thinking about the Late Victorian period, it is usual to relate it to greatness and hegemony. Queen Victoria is one of the most famous monarchs, not only among the British, but among the European dynasties. She is known as the 'grandmother of Europe' as her offspring spread throughout the main royal houses of the Continent. Her reputation as queen was faultless and she became a myth, principally due to the fact that the British Empire reached its larger expansion during her reign. This mythification of the Queen led to an overvaluation of the era for the next hundred years that reaches up to today. It is true that the period's advances in technology impacted on and influenced the ensuing scientific advances, and without them, many contemporary scientific theories would not exist. However, the period was not just one of greatness, as decadence was also present in both British society and empire.

The aim of this dissertation was not only to demonstrate the ambivalence of the Victorian *fin de siècle*, but to analyse H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* taking into account the context of the novel and the anxieties of the society of the period. In the first chapter, I developed a description of technology, science, colonialism, bacillophobia and fears of reverse colonisation, as they were significant matters in the 1890s. While delineating the context, I restricted the study on the relevant topics that were specifically important for my approach to the novel. I focused on the technologies of communication, medicine and astronomy, in terms of the advances in those fields that were most notable

in relation to the period as a whole and the novel in particular. Furthermore, I included British colonialism, paying special attention to rebellions in colonies against those in power and to the European competition for colonial hegemony, that was supposed be repaired in the Berlin Conference (1884 - 1885). Nevertheless, the tensions between European countries remined and provoked the outbreak of the First World War (1914 - 1918).

In the second chapter, I focused specifically on the analysis of *The War of the Worlds*. It was important to position the novel as an example of the science fiction genre and relate it to the technological advances featured in the book, both real one and futuristic projections of them. The mixture of the real and the fantastic make *WW*, as I have pointed out through the TFG, a more credible work. In addition, the study on the figure of the Martian brings into discussion the topics of reverse colonisation and bacillophobia, two of the most recurrent anxieties of High Victorian society, and the comparison between them and the British. Many consulted authors point out that Martians reflect the English past, present and future.

The results of this study indicate that the ambivalence of the period has been confirmed. Even though the British still demonstrated an innovative spirit in the scientific field, social and colonial decline was evident in the 1890s. As a consequence, the period can be described as one marked by social angst, which is reflected on the cultural products of the period, especially in literature, as is the case with *The War of the Worlds*. The analysis of the novel indicate the ambiguity of the period and the social anxieties described in this final dissertation, as it emphasises the power of the Martians --mirroring the imperial past of the British-- at the same time that it prefigures the present and future decadence of the empire.

Further research might explore the representation of *The War of the Worlds* in other cultural products. On the one hand, the use of the novel in the Yellow Press in the two last years of the 19th century and the first of the 20th was outstanding. They utilized the serialized version of the book in order to promote American imperialism during the Spanish-American War (1898), which acted against the critique of imperialism the novel contains. On the other hand, the impact of the novel on popular culture must be examined. The most notable example is the radio program of Orson Welles. He produced a version of *The War of the Worlds* where the first-person narrator was exchanged for several correspondent journalists covering the invasion. Connected with this, a further study could assess the effects on society that both the novel and the radio program generated.

The question raised by this study can be applied to other novels. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) could be studied under the same parameters, but putting more emphasis on the medical part and bacillophobia, and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) is a great example of reverse colonisation and the theme of going native. In order to follow the research on the field of science fiction, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) should be taken into account as she is one of the precursors of the genre. Further research could show or, at least, discuss the impact of *The War of the Worlds* on later works of the genre like *Martian Time-Slip* (1964) by Philip K. Dick, in which the humans colonise Mars, or George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), in which the world is merged in a dystopic future where the human race is under surveillance and the ones in power control and corrupt them.

Nowadays, novels of dystopian futures are more up-to-date than ever. From H. G. Wells to Philip K. Dick, many of their fantasies could be said to have become true in real life. The issue so prominent in of Stoker and Wells, bacillophobia, is more present than ever this year, a situation that seemed impossible to us, people of the 21st century.

Manipulation through the press and the so-called "Big Brother" --the continuous vigilance to which we are exposed through social networks and mobile phones-- are increasingly frequent in the daily life of the human race. The predictions these authors made and that situate them as science fiction writers, do no longer look as exclusively 'fiction' to a contemporary reader.

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