# PHANTOMS OF MARS: MYTH AND AMERICAN MARS NARRATIVES

A Thesis Submitted to the Committee on Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the Faculty of Arts and Science

TRENT UNIVERSITY
Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

English (Public Texts) M.A. Graduate Program
January 2020

# ABSTRACT

Phantoms of Mars: Myth and American Mars Narratives

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My analysis of twentieth century Mars science and fiction outlines how the ongoing dialogic between Mars science and fiction publics influences the American frontier dialectic and how Mars serves as the arena where this debate comes to life. It examines connections between myth, science, and fiction by tracing the evolution of historical and literary representations of the American frontier and understandings of Mars spanning the twentieth century. To illustrate these findings, I investigate the fictional visions of the planet in the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Ray Bradbury, and Kim Stanley Robinson. Ultimately, Mars is revealed as a fictional frontier where a better way of living may be achievable by transforming the planet and ourselves. Finally, the planet's physical site holds a haunting potential value that inspires further research and new narratives, which informs the future use of Mars in American culture.



Keywords: Mars, Burroughs, Bradbury, Robinson, myth, frontier, West, dialectic, dialogic

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to thank Andrew, G and P, my family, and my friends who have supported me during this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Epp, Dr. Brent Bellamy, and Dr. Veronica Hollinger for sharing their expertise and guidance. As well, this project would not have been possible without the generous bursaries provided by various stakeholders in the Trent community. And lastly, I want to thank Karen S. for helping me get here.

"Everything begins before it begins" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 202).

In Loving Memory

R.M. B.W. K.M. M.D. P.T. R.F. H.M. K.T. T.M. M.S.

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# INTRODUCTION

## The Quest for the Red Frontier

Mars has become a kind of mythic arena onto which we have projected our earthly hopes and fears... The real Mars is a world of wonders. Its future prospects are far more intriguing than our past apprehensions about it. In our time we have sifted the sands of Mars, we have established a presence there, we have fulfilled a century of dreams! (Sagan, *Cosmos* 68-69)

Multidisciplinary scholar Carl Sagan claims in the above epigraph that humanity has already manifested a presence on Mars. We have founded ourselves on the planet through stories, and he contends the real Mars is a "world of wonders" and not as it truly is – an inhospitable landscape. In its most general sense, Mars represents the tantalizing nature of undefined places and uncreated futures meanwhile possessing the alluring character of being all things to all people. American Mars fiction commonly involves the frontier myth. The planet holds the same tempting potential as the frontier. The connection between Mars fiction and the American frontier presents itself as an intriguing area of research within the field of publics and texts.

Through the undertakings of companies such as SpaceX, the reality of travelling to Mars is about to catch up to its fictional depictions. Although travelling to Mars is in its developmental stages, it is worthwhile to look back at Mars science and fiction and how each informs our perceptions about the planet. It is only since the Pathfinder (1996-1997) and Opportunity (2003-2004) rover missions that Mars has been confirmed as a barren planet that cannot support human life without making fundamental changes to it. Mars fiction authors

Edgar Rice Burroughs, Ray Bradbury, and Kim Stanley Robinson all capture "Mars as both scientific object and cultural artifact" (Markley, *Dying Planet* 2) by reflecting then-current scientific findings and distinctly American cultural perceptions of the planet in their texts. Even though no one has set foot on the planet, we have populated it with our visions of what it could be and haunted it with echoes from Earth. Mars is an arena for authors to depict visions of the past, present, and future with an approaching event horizon where possibility will soon become reality.

My approach to this project includes reviewing the theoretical, historical, literary, and scientific works from American studies scholars, science fiction authors and critics, cultural historians, and scientific thinkers in relation to the frontier, West, and Mars. My main research aims are to look at how science fiction shapes thinking about Mars, and how thinking about Mars shapes science fiction, and how American myths, such as the myth of the frontier, are influenced by that thinking; however, separating literary and sociohistorical understandings of the frontier has been my greatest challenge during this project. It is seemingly impossible since science, myth, literature, and history influence each other in ways that are difficult to explicitly point to yet require analysis and demonstrate how texts shape publics and how publics shape texts.

I chose to use a chronological organization format starting from Mars fiction during the late 1800s to late 1990s spanning from H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* (1898) to Kim Stanley Robinson's *Blue Mars* (1996). The majority of my literary research focusses on texts from Edgar Rice Burroughs in the Pulp Era, Ray Bradbury in the Golden Age of SF, and Kim Stanley Robinson in the Realistic Period of the 1990s. I chose these three authors because they are the best-selling Mars fiction authors of their respective periods, and fictional

works are typically popular for their innovative approaches and timely criticism upon matters of the day, which these three authors capture exceptionally well. To conclude this project, I outline the distinct relationship between American Mars fiction and the American frontier, and how the discourse between scientific publics and literary publics continues to influence visions of the planet as seen through the fictional works of Burroughs, Bradbury, and Robinson.

Next, I cover a few key terms I use throughout my thesis. Such terms include dialectic, dialogic, regressive frontier, regenerative frontier, myth, and publics. I have referred to the frontier dialectic and Mars science and fiction dialogic already, so I can start by defining these two concepts. G.W.F. Hegel (1770 -1831) explores dialectic in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), which can be summarized as "a form of reasoning that proceeded by question and answer, used by Plato" and so "Hegel thought that all logic and world history itself followed a dialectical path, in which internal contradictions were transcended, but gave rise to new contradictions that themselves required resolution" (*Oxford Companion to Philosophy* 533). For Hegel, the term dialectic has a specific meaning, namely the contradiction between ideas voiced by opposing sides of a debate. This ongoing conflict serves as the defining factor of the topic, which can be seen in debate surrounding the American frontier. To situate my claim, I use Hegel's dialectical approach to develop my chapters. A dialectic typically has three stages to its process: thesis, antithesis, and sublated synthesis. According to Hegel, final stage of synthesis is a paradox:

> "The transition as synthesis becomes an antinomy [paradox]; for reflection, which separates absolutely, cannot allow a synthesis of [the dichotomy of] the finite and the

> infinite, of the determinate and the indeterminate to be brought about, and it is reflection that legislates here" (Hegel, *Difference Between* 35).

The synthesis abolishes, preserves, and transcends the previous points of debate. These points of development are directly observed when analyzing the American frontier: thetic regenerative frontier as lush, pastoral dreamworld; antithetic regressive frontier as barren, inhospitable, radioactive nightmare; and sublated frontier, which is the fictional Martian frontier where these contrary visions can be addressed and resolved; and finally, the real frontier of history. In summary, a dialectic is the discourse that happens between two opposing groups that argue for or against a process and conclude at a compromise or synthesis, such as terraforming the planet and becoming Martian in Robinson's *Mars* trilogy. There is a distinct beginning and ending to a dialectical debate; however, Bakhtin's concept of dialogic does not conclude in a synthesis or sublated outcome as Hegel's dialectic.

Transitioning from Hegel's dialectic, I would like to explore and define my use of Bakhtin's dialogic or dialogism. As touched upon in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (first published as a whole in 1975), dialogism is distinct from Hegel's dialectic in that there is no clear resolution to a dialogical debate. The process is ongoing and involves analyzing the intent and implicit meaning of communication, instead of looking at only the explicit meaning as a dialectic would. One can observe the dialogic between Mars science and Mars fiction publics, since they respond and interact with each other, more cooperative than combative, and can coexist, which demonstrates how texts, such as Mars fiction, can shape publics and how publics, such as astronomers and scientists, can shape texts. Ultimately, the dialogic between texts and publics influences the ongoing frontier dialectic through literature to produce an evolving vision of the Martian frontier in reality and fiction.

Next, I touch upon regenerative and regressive frontiers and the myth of the American frontier. I define each term in depth as it becomes relevant in my analysis since Burroughs and Robinson write regenerative frontiers and Bradbury depicts a regressive one. Sf critic David Mogen captures a broad definition of both frontiers: "The … regenerative and regressive frontiers illustrate the range of possibilities explored in frontier science fiction" (Mogen, *Wilderness Visions* 1), which can be summarized as a successful, environmentally stable regenerative frontier, compared to a dying, unstable regressive frontier. Sf critic Carl Abbott touches on the connection between American sf and the frontier by stating that "because the imagery and mythology of the western frontier so pervade American culture, science fiction repeatedly internalizes the stories that Americans tell about the development of the West and writes them forward for places and times yet unknown" ("Homesteading on the Extraterrestrial Frontier" 243). Mogen notes the influence of the frontier on sf futures: "The frontier analogy has structured the emotions and expectations projected into our Space Age future so profoundly that until recently the influence of the analogy was hardly noticed, except in the most disreputable forms of space opera" (*Wilderness Visions* 10). However, American Studies scholar Heike Paul claims, "Yet, these myths are not fixtures in the American national cultural imaginary: the explanation for their longevity and endurance lies in their adaptability, flexibility, and considerable narrative variation over time and across a broad social and cultural spectrum" (11). Even though Mars settlement has not taken place yet, it has in sf a thousand times over. Since sf embraces and adapts American myths, and Mars fiction is particularly receptive to frontier analogies because Mars is an adaptable landscape, this only strengthens the connections between American frontier myth and Mars.

Myth, history, science, and fiction are all forms of storytelling. The methodology for each discipline differs greatly, but all share the common goal of explaining the phenomena of human experience. [1] The number of definitions for myth, and especially the myth of the American frontier, are too exhaustive to include here. Instead, I provide a few insights into defining myth in the context of American Studies and sf. In a general summary of myth, Paul asserts that "In the everyday use of the word 'myth,' which equates myth with falsehood, wishful thinking, or fiction, this meaning is still present (26). This general meaning of the word is by far the most common usage of the term. It is typically used to identify a misgiving or lie, and still retains that meaning. The term myth can be further defined by comparing it to science. Literary critics Sutton and Sutton argue that "Myth and science emphasize different aspects of the universe-structures they erect. Early myth is typically concerned with the study of origins whereas science generally focuses on the study of destiny" (Sutton and Sutton 231). To this extent, Sutton and Sutton's explanation of each term makes sense for my use of the term publics in this project. Myths reflect the thinking at the time of its telling with a focus on addressing beginnings, whereas in the post-Enlightenment era, science steps in to explain what myth cannot and begins to hypothesize what may come in the future. This shift marks a cultural transition from reacting to the past to increasing agency through scientific discovery and acting to shape the future. Although the terms myth and science seem to be at odds, they both are attempting the same outcome: to seek an explanation to the otherwise unexplainable. This is the dialectical relationship between science and fiction publics.

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[1]Publics differ by the methodological approaches they use to explain worldly phenomenon, in this case, scientists research hypotheses and authors speculate through writing about Mars. In this example of how dialogical publics interact, each group is shaped by the projections and findings of the other.

Although science is the dominant method of understanding the contemporary world, authors still turn to myth to provide the flexible language for describing the uncreated future. Literary theorist Ronald Barthes (1915-1980) concludes in *Mythologies* (1957) that "However paradoxical it may seem, myth hides nothing: its function is to distort, not to make disappear" (120). Even though the term myth implies a falsehood, the function of it is not to eliminate what it describes, but simply adapt to explain difficult concepts to a broad audience. Since mythmaking can be a means to establish legitimacy for a nation, and particularly for newer nations such as the United States that stakes its national character on actively expanding its area, the mythic imagery surrounding such an endeavor requires analysis. Mogen argues that "the New World archetype is the primal source of all our American mythology" (*Wilderness Visions* 33) and it is through this idealized approach that all American myths are connected to settling new, unspoiled lands.

The mythic New World imagery of the American Western frontier is summarized by American Studies scholar Annette Kolodny as "Eden, Paradise, the Golden Age, and the idyllic garden, in short, all the backdrops of European literary pastoral, were subsumed by the image of an America promising material ease without labor or hardship, as opposed to the grinding hardship of previous European existence" (*The Lay of the Land* 6).[2] Kolodny identifies the alluring aspects of the New World archetype, which also touches upon the idea of the American Dream. While I do not aim to dissect the concept of the American Dream in this piece, I instead focus on the expression of it through American myth in Mars fiction.

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[2] Kolodny presents a feminist perspective from the New Myth and Symbol School. There is lack of female voices in American studies and frontier works, which has been addressed by scholars like Kolodny and continues to be an active area of American Studies.

Mogen clarifies this distinction between myth and dream in his observation: "The Myth of America is the medium in which [the] theme [of American national letters] is expressed. Interpretation of the Dream is the 'message'; the Myth is the symbolic language that expresses the message" (*Frontier Experience* 22-23). It is through American Mars fiction, and American literature a whole, that the symbolic language of myth is communicated. Mogen examines the inherent connections between the American frontier and sf in the following passage:

> Science fiction's adaptations of frontier motifs are manifestations of the fact that American science fiction is American fiction, after all, which transforms the traditional themes and symbols to examine old questions in new ways. American frontier mythology continues to be reworked in exotic new settings because our conceptions of the American frontier experience are deeply identified with problems of cultural self-definition, the American preoccupation with defining 'American-ness.' (Mogen, *Wilderness Visions* 17)

Since the settlement of the West, new frontiers are necessary to fulfill the need for embodying America's national expansionist identity. And while territories on Earth are largely claimed, the alien frontiers of sf continue to provide such spaces for enacting these desires, as well as the real Mars. The New World archetype, and by extension frontier myth, is so powerful because it also embodies R.W. B. Lewis' concept of American Adam, a figure who returns to living in harmony with nature and its related Edenic innocence in the New World/Garden. Mogen reveals American myths function to inspire a return to the perceived simplicity of living in harmony with nature. Finally, Mogen states since the Myth of America

is captured in the symbolic language that expresses this desire, the literary analysis that I am pursuing here is arguably the most suitable approach to investigate the frontier myth.

In each section, I provide a historical event that frames the chapter in terms of publics influencing Mars texts. As well, I give an overview of each author, print culture during his career, and then proceed into the main discussion. In my first chapter, I investigate the quest for immortality and John Carter's depiction as the hero of the regenerative frontier. I examine Burroughs' *Barsoom* series in detail through this analytical lens, as well as touch upon H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* in order to provide greater context for the perception of Mars in fiction during this time period. By considering the amount of Mars fiction that was produced in the Pulp Era, the desire for the frontier is too great to be stifled by Turner's declaration that it closed. I begin with a discussion about Martian science and astronomy in the early 1900s. I then move into an overview of the Pulp Era and the influence of sub-genres such as science fantasy and travelogue writing. Afterwards, I analyze the use of travelogue writing in Mars fiction as a connection to frontier fiction and discuss the similarities found between them. Next, I transition into a close analysis of John Carter's actions, and lastly, I interrogate the act of writing to achieve immortality for both Burroughs and Carter through the critical lens of Foucault's essay "Language to Infinity: Writing so as not to die" within *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (1977).

In my second chapter, I focus on post-war visions of the frontier in Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*. His Golden Age of Science Fiction novel is "a metaphorical comment on the American Dream, rather than … a literal portrait of space colonization" (Mogen, *Ray Bradbury* 83). According to Mogen, "Bradbury's Martian fiction reactivates, in a futuristic setting, the ghosts that haunt the American past" (*Wilderness Visions* 77). As a regressive

vision of the frontier, Bradbury presents the troubling nature of colonizing Mars in a nuclear-armed post-war era. My discussion includes findings from Leo Marx and Henry Nash Smith on the American frontier, insight from Heike Paul on American myths, commentary from David Mogen on science fiction and American history, as well as sf criticism on the Other and alterity from Istvan Csicery-Ronay Jr.

Lastly, in my third chapter I consider a utopian vision of the planet in Robinson's Mars trilogy. In a largescale fictional world-building experiment, Mars transitions from a barren landscape to a terraformed settlement. While Robinson's texts best capture the dialogic between science and fiction publics by intertextual references and allusions to earlier Mars science and fiction, a new development in this discourse emerges – utopian potential on a realistic Mars. By presenting realistic challenges to settling Mars, Robinson moves beyond simple dualism and expresses the desire for new ways of living on the frontier, which include embracing posthuman identities and sustainable environmental practices. Posthuman is defined in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* as "[the] term for the successors of present-day humanity [which] does not normally refer to products of 'natural' Evolution" with an emphasis on "[freeing] oneself from the limitations of flesh" ("Posthuman"). I outline the development from American Adam/Eve, to Martian Adam/Eve, to becoming Martian and posthuman in this section.

Lastly, my overarching rationale for this project is to explore visions of the planet projected through American Mars fiction during the twentieth century. These depictions often take on the characteristics of the American frontier, West, and utopian desire. I show how the American frontier dialectic presents arguments for and against changing the landscape of Mars, and how the ongoing dialogic between science and fiction publics has in

many ways already assured our future on Mars for us. Finally, the way that the American frontier dialectic is expressed in Mars fiction is directly connected to the ongoing dialogism between science and fiction publics, which demonstrates how texts shape publics and how publics shape texts.

# Chapter 1

## Early Perceptions of Mars: Immortality on Burroughs' Regenerative Frontier

At an American Historical Association meeting held in Chicago on July 12th, 1893, Fredrick Jackson Turner declared that "for nearly three centuries the dominant fact of American life has been expansion" and now "four centuries from the discovery of America, at the end of a hundred years of life under the Constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history" (*Frontier Experience* 3 ). In the context of my analysis of myth and Mars fiction, Mogen argues that "The Turner thesis is a statement of American frontier myth in literal-historical terms" (*Wilderness Visions* 24). The Martian frontier in fiction emerges as a viable location for extending American frontier myth. I argue there is a direct relationship between Turner's declaration and the publication of early Mars fiction, particularly in Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Barsoom* series. This relationship shows the psychological need to develop new frontiers to fulfill America's expansionist desires. Stemming from this need, sf critic Gary Wolfe states that "science fiction emerged, at least in part, as a way of retaining some sort of frontier experience" ("The Frontier Myth in Ray Bradbury" 106). As a result, the frontier desire is expressed by seeking immortality through written narratives on Edgar Rice Burroughs' regenerative frontier.

I start this discussion by giving a brief overview of Edgar Rice Burroughs and his writing career. Next, I outline the Pulp period and early sf. Afterwards, I provide an overview of early thinking about the science of Mars as well its fiction and the lasting influence of initial observational errors. The obsession with the planet, referred to as "Mars mania"

(Crossley, *Imagining Mars* ix), manifested at the turn of the twentieth century through Martian stories in pulp magazines supported by astronomical speculations provided by Giovanni Schiaparelli and Percival Lowell. Mogen contends that "Extensive use of frontier mythology [is] an important analogical model[3] in science fiction [and it] indicates that it is still a viable imaginative vehicle, nearly a century after the American frontier was closed" (*Wilderness Visions* 23). Even now at one hundred years after Burroughs' initial Mars publications, Mars mania and interest in the Martian frontier continues to intensify with the nearing reality of interplanetary travel and settlement.

Through his *Barsoom* series, Burroughs reaches an audience influenced by both the closed American frontier and the literary visions of Mars. Mogen asserts "Though the word 'frontier' has a deceptive aura of simplicity about it, it has acquired numerous, and sometimes contradictory, meanings within the context of American culture" (*Wilderness Visions* 23) Burroughs' series occupies this liminal space between the real and fantastic, history and myth. Sf critic George Slusser states in the preface to *Visions of Mars: Essays on the Red Planet in Fiction and Science* (2011) that "[Burroughs emphasizes] Mars as a liminal space between the real and the fantastic, a place both imaginations and empires might colonize at the very time the American frontier on Earth was closing" (4). A liminal space can be defined as a transitional state, initial stage of a process, or boundary or threshold. The liminality of this narrative is expressed through fantasy romance elements, as well as adopting the style of a travelogue that imparts credibility. Similar to a doorway in both a

[3] An analogical model can be described as a scenario created to express an equivalent experience with some minor distinction, so self-reflection is encouraged. Burroughs and Bradbury follow this model in their fiction. Robinson however employs the opposing extrapolative model.

literal and figurative sense, a liminal space, or text in this case, can simultaneously possess and express contradictory ideas, similar to the American frontier dialectic.

In his fiction, Burroughs extends the myth of the immortal frontier through his protagonist acting to restore a dying planet and transforming it into a regenerative frontier. Mogen defines a regenerative frontier as a landscape that is renewed by effective environmental practices, stable agriculture, and reliable food reserves. Additionally, a champion of the landscape is required to emerge and lead a group to make these changes (*Wilderness Visions* 94), namely Burroughs' fictional John Carter in this case. The concept of a regenerative frontier captures the traditional understanding of the frontier as a site for renewal, heroism, and mastering the wilderness.[4] Carter also represents the stereotypical, and problematic, frontier hero who acts as imperial invader settling wild spaces in the name of stability and progress. By stabilizing Barsoom, Carter perpetuates his fictional immortality, and Burroughs' ensures his own authorial immortality through the act of writing, or as Foucault puts it writing so as not to die.

By exploring early theories about Mars, discussing popular fiction trends at the turn of the twentieth-century, and dissecting the writing process of both the author and his protagonist, I map Burroughs' fictional Martian frontier as a means to achieve immortality for Burroughs himself, and John Carter, through the act of writing. After discussing these crucial points, I show how fictional Mars in American texts offers a space for extending American myths and continuing the frontier. In this vision, Mars is a space for the American

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[4]The New Myth and Symbol School in American Literature Studies addresses the problematic nature of the West and the frontier as explicitly masculine spaces. I argue the feminization of the land negatively influences the West as a space to be conquered or taken, but also supports the West as agriculturally fertile land.

frontier dialectic to continue without limits, which supports contradictory notions of the frontier as a place for death, immortality, and renewal in fiction.

American author Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875-1950) achieved his lasting success from the popularity of his *Barsoom* (1917-1964) and *Tarzan* (1912-1965) sagas. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* records his "early life was marked by numerous false starts and failures – at the time he started writing, aged 36" ("Edgar Rice Burroughs"). Wolfe claims that "The first such transition involved the dislocation of the frontier from the American West into 'science-fictional' settings, and for this no better example can be found than the work of Edgar Rice Burroughs" ("Frontiers in Space" 251). The successful *Barsoom* series is an eleven-part saga following the adventures of John Carter on Mars and features the now familiar "lost civilization" and "forgotten world" motifs (252). Chronologically, the series is comprised of *A Princess of Mars* (1917), *The Gods of Mars* (1918), *The Warlord of Mars* (1919), *Thuvia, Maid of Mars* (1920), *The Chessmen of Mars* (1922), *The Master Mind of Mars* (1928), *A Fighting Man of Mars* (1931), *Swords of Mars* (1936), *Synthetic Men of Mars* (1940), *Llana of Gathol* (1948), and *John Carter of Mars* (1964). In my work, I discuss *A Princess of Mars*, *The Gods of Mars*, and *The Warlord of Mars* in the interest of focus and continuity, since these three texts function as one continuous trilogy within the series.

In Mars fiction, the frontier myth exists independently without concern for limited territory and resources. As an expansionist fantasy where the author, protagonist, and the West never ends through the deathless nature of writing, the planet serves as a new location for the endless frontier to thrive, if only in fiction. Sf critics Newell and Lamont argue that Burroughs uses Mars as a fictional site to extend America's national mythology:

> The American frontier "safety valve" was not unlimited, and when it ran out, on what basis could America continue to claim exceptional status as a frontiering nation? Burroughs turned to Mars to help sustain a little longer the mythology of a nation predicated on expansion into alien territory. (Newell and Lamont, "Savagery on Mars" 78)

While using Mars as a space to extend the frontier is familiar to contemporary audiences, Burroughs' works stand as early entries into the Mars fiction canon, which have shaped and continue to shape the understanding of Mars in sf and in popular culture.

Burroughs' initial intention as an author was to write speculative fiction to make a living, yet his ambitions propelled him into being the most widely read author in the Pulp Era (1896 - 1950s, peak popularity 1910s-1930s) and the first half of the twentieth century. Pulp magazines became popular because they were cheap to produce and were distributed regularly through serial publication, and such fiction as Burroughs' was aligned with the typical pulp content. Sf critics Peter Nicholls and Mike Ashley claim in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* that "It is usually accepted that Frank A. Munsey invented the pulp-magazine formula when in October 1896 he changed the contents of *The Argosy* to contain nothing but fiction and from December 1896 printed it on cheap woodpulp" ("Pulps"). Through Munsey's developments in the production of magazines and their contents, Burroughs' work became widely successful through low-cost publication in the period simply known now as the Pulps. This new era in publishing was a frontier in itself where Mars fiction and other speculative fiction contributed to the format's wide success.

Hugo Gernsback (1884-1967) is the editor largely credited with spearheading the Pulp Era from the publishing standpoint. He founded and owned the pulp magazine *Amazing*

*Stories* in New York from 1926-1929. Gernsback worked as an editor at several magazines that shared a focus on speculative, horror, fantastic, and scientific stories throughout his career. His significant contributions to the emerging genre include coining the name *scientifiction* and bringing sf into mass popularity. Gernsback published what he called scientifiction "as a way to promote understanding of science and technology through fiction... His formula was 75 percent literature interwoven with 25 percent science" (Gunn xx). Scientifiction stories often contained multi-generic elements from science, technology, horror, and adventure fiction, which were commonly seen within pulp stories. Sf author and critic Brian Aldiss describes Gernsback's early publications as "'tawdry [and] illiterate' ... [because they] fostered a pulp genre that 'neither thinks nor dreams'" (Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* 59-60), which may be accurate for the majority of the writing that appeared in pulp magazines, but Burroughs' vision of Mars remains as a significant early portrayal of the Martian frontier in fiction and in the imagination.

Burroughs' initial impression of the Pulps was that "'if people were paid for writing rot such as I read [in pulp magazines] I could write stories just as rotten'" (Gunn 48). Not only did Burroughs become a pioneer of early science fiction and the widest read Pulp Era author, but publishers in this period, namely Hugo Gernsback, were pioneers for popularizing a new genre of writing. Burroughs submitted his first short story about Mars titled "Under the Moons of Mars" to the pulp magazine *All-Story*; it was published in February 1912. Afterwards, he published the sixth installment in his *Barsoom* series, *The Master Mind of Mars* (1927), in *Amazing Stories Annual* 1927 under Gernsback's editorial management. He went on to publish two more titles in his *Barsoom* series with *Amazing Stories: Llana of Gathol* (1941) and *Skeleton Men of Jupiter* (1943).

Ray Bradbury (1920-2012) credits Burroughs as the author responsible for his love and interest in Mars and science fiction. Bradbury states in the introduction to a graphic novel adaptation of *The Martian Chronicles*: "When I was ten years old I began to read the books of Edgar Rice Burroughs. I fell in love with John Carter... John Carter changed my life and here is the proof. Here is the planet Mars, laid out for you to read [in *The Martian Chronicles*]" (*The Martian Chronicles: The Authorized Adaptation* v). While he was initially aiming to simply profit from his tales, Burroughs' work became significant to future generations of writers such as Bradbury. With the pioneering efforts of Gernsback and Burroughs, the Pulp Era, however unrefined it may have been, was an integral frontier period for the formation and emergence of the science fiction genre and extending the myth of the American frontier into the unlimited space of fiction.

Through unsophisticated beginnings, the genre of scientifiction transformed into science fiction through the editorial work and influence of Hugo Gernsback. Admittedly Gernsback is commonly regarded as an embarrassment to the science fiction genre, much such as Burroughs, but because of their actions the genre flourished by appealing to young readers who in turn consumed sf and may have become successful sf writers. Even though a large amount of writing from the Pulp Era may neither think nor dream, as Brian Aldiss declares, their readership thought and dreamed quite a bit about the stories they read in their childhood and decided to continue writing the frontier upon Mars.

Crossley begins his text *Imagining Mars: A Literary History* (2011) by posing the question: "Of what value is the history of an error?" (ix) referring to how American astronomer Percival Lowell's (1855-1916) inaccurate speculations about the planet greatly contributed to the formation of early Mars fiction. Some of the misconceptions publicized by

Lowell included the planet was inhabited, possessed an intricately engineered canal system, and held the secrets of an ancient alien civilization (Hotakainen 32), which are elements seen in Burroughs' fiction. As well, the additional misconceptions made by Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli (1835-1910) greatly informed Lowell's statements. Crossley summarizes "In 1877 Giovanni Schiaparelli, working from his observatory in Milan, thought he saw streaky lines on the surface of Mars. Once he named them 'canali' and what [Kim Stanley] Robinson calls 'the history of Mars in the human mind' hasn't been the same since" ("Percival Lowell and the History of Mars" 297). Through these scientific errors however, much value has been created in Mars narratives, which shows that errors can be made useful when expressed in fiction.

Schiaparelli famously referred to the lines that he observed by telescope on the planet's surface as "canali" which translates from Italian into channels, but the term was widely mistranslated as "canals." This mistranslation supported the widespread theory that water and lifeforms were present on Mars. Crossley goes on to connect Lowell's thinking to the critical development of early Mars fiction:

> Lowell never accepted the work he produced was itself a dexterous if somewhat willful blending of science and fiction, but his eloquently articulated and beautifully illustrated figments took hold on the public imagination in spite of the scorn of astronomers and generated a flood of literary fantasies that lasted well into the 1960s. (Crossley, *Imagining Mars* ix)

Crossley adds that "although challenged and discredited by most scientists, Lowell is the principal figure of the so-called 'Mars mania' at the turn of the twentieth century" (ix). The significance of these miscalculations, since they are described to produce a livable

environment in Burroughs' fiction, is demonstrated as a need for unexplored frontiers, and particularly the need to continue the myth of the American Western frontier.

Robert Markley goes on to add in his text *Dying Planet: Mars in Science and the Imagination* (2005) that while Lowell and Burroughs are now seen as relics of the past, their works continue to serve as historical indexes to the greater understanding of Mars within popular culture due to their impact at the turn of the twentieth century:

> If no historian or philosopher of science ever has made a career by championing Lowell, no literary critic has made her or his reputation by arguing for the aesthetic significance of the Martian novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs… But just as the canals occupied the attention of a generation of scientists, Barsoom and its offshoots dominated the interplanetary fiction of the first half of the [twentieth] century. (Markley, *Dying Planet* 182-183)

By combining ostensible astronomy, quasi-science, and nostalgia for the American Western frontier, while capitalizing on Mars mania, Edgar Rice Burroughs presents the planet as a site for continuing the American frontier. Since the Western frontier no longer held the promise of adventure and discovery, Burroughs creates a fictional Martian frontier using a variety of sub-genre elements to extend the frontier. Through skillful blending of science fantasy, planetary romance, invention tales, and frontier fiction elements with American frontier myth, Burroughs successfully expands the fictional frontier to Mars.

Often, the *Barsoom* series is rejected as legitimate sf, and placed in the category of science fantasy or frontier romance. Burroughs certainly uses science fantasy elements in his

tales, which include features such as telepathy and mystical or otherwise unexplained abilities. Nicholls explains the patchwork nature of the science fantasy sub-genre:

> Science Fantasy is normally considered a bastard genre blending elements of sf and fantasy; it is usually colourful and often bizarre, sometimes with elements of Horror although never centrally in the horror genre. Certain sf themes are especially common in Science Fantasy – Parallel Worlds, other Dimensions, ESP, Monsters…Psi Powers and Supermen – but no single one of these ingredients is essential. ("Science Fantasy")

By including science fantasy elements, Burroughs successfully integrates immortality into the extension of the frontier in a distinctly familiar way on an unfamiliar and at times unbelievable location. The desire for endless tales on the Martian frontier persists through the intersection of myth and Mars fiction.

Even though Burroughs' Mars is fantasy-driven, his approach to writing did not altogether ignore astronomy at the time, which ultimately creates a receptive setting for his narrative. Crossley outlines Burroughs' use of then-current science combined with frontier adventure:

> While not utterly neglecting the new information and theories developed by telescopic observers, the popular romancers were drawn to the red planet in all its ancient associations with war, blood, and male prowess… For such writers, Mars tended to be less of a futuristic setting that opened new horizons for speculation than a nostalgic and provincial one. This Mars would have princesses. And swords and beasts. (Crossley, *Imagining Mars* 149)

As a result, Burroughs' quasi-scientific interpretation of the Martian frontier reintroduces the long held American desire for progress and expansion through fictional means. These stories provoke the same temptation to explore and expand that was once experienced in the American Western frontier of the past, but only now through speculation within Mars fiction where stories do not have to end, and heroes never die.

Another notable and influential sub-genre popular during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century is the Edisonade. The sub-genre namesake is inspired by American inventor Thomas Edison (1847-1931). Sf critic and historian Roger Luckhurst states these stories typically consist of "plots based on the narrative of industrious boys [that bind] wish-fulfillment into the idea of American technological mastery" (*Science Fiction* 53) with an emphasis on scientific content. These tales were published in pulp magazines alongside other adventure, fantasy, Western, and speculative tales. This sub-genre emerged in popular fiction after the sensational fiction of the Victorian period.

Garrett P. Serviss' *Edison's Conquest of Mars* (1898) is a key crossover text between the Edisonade and Mars fiction sub-genres. It is the sequel to his unauthorized revision of H.G. Wells' (1866-1946) *The War of the Worlds* (1898) titled *Fighters from Mars* (1898). The text depicts the "'avenging counterstroke that the Earth dealt back at its ruthless enemy in the heavens'" (Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* 57). Thomas Edison is featured as the protagonist who saves the day with his "mechanical genius that elevates him over abstract science" (57) by inventing a disintegrator weapon to fight the Martians. In addition to this weapon, he crafts a spaceship fit for travel to the planet and his journey concludes with Thomas Edison himself rescuing a captured female human slave. While Serviss' narrative is a technological adventure focused on inventiveness and skill, and Burroughs' series is

comprised of science fantasy romance elements, both texts exemplify the use of the planet as a blank canvas. To connect these points to Burroughs' work, there are several instances of advanced technology on Mars, be it weaponry, vehicles, or most prominently, the atmosphere generation plant that is featured at the end of *A Princess of Mars*. Even though he typically uses technology and scientific innovation as plot devices, Burroughs creates a Martian frontier that is receptive to extraordinary visions of both science and fantasy, which shows how fertile visions of frontier locations can be.

Burroughs writes his Mars fiction in travelogue format as a way to gain credibility in an otherwise less than respected publication format. By combining various sub-genre elements, and reinforcing the myth of the frontier, he attempts to convince his readership of the authority of his works. Because Burroughs influences the reception of his texts through his travelogue format, audiences were willing to suspend criticism that would typically restrain them from reading this type of fiction. Sf critic Pfitzer explains that even though Burroughs' texts were bizarre, readers were attracted to his *Barsoom* works:

> That *A Princess of Mars* was so popular suggests that readers were willing to embrace frontier ideologies in any form, even those in bizarre and increasingly sensationalized packages. Science fiction as a genre benefited from these tendencies, since it offered both the suspended imagination of pure "fiction" and the ostensible credibility of "quasi-science." (Pfitzer, "The Only Good Alien is a Dead Alien" 56)

In his foreword to *A Princess of Mars*, Burroughs writes that the protagonist John Carter is a distant great uncle to him to reinforce the authority of his narrative. After Carter's mysterious death, Burroughs claims he was instructed to open his transcript containing the details of his adventures on Barsoom twenty-one years after his passing (vi-vii). By framing the *Barsoom*

series with his "real" account that he came by the content as a relative to Carter, Burroughs supports the supposed truth of the story by fictionalizing its origins. To attribute, even falsely, the idea that the story contained some truth lessened the negative judgment wielded upon speculative fiction and early sf as juvenile fantasy.

Speculative fiction in the early-twentieth century was often written in a travelogue format, as demonstrated by Burroughs within his *Barsoom* series. Additionally, British author H.G. Wells' Mars fiction novel *The War of the Worlds* uses this format. Writers such as Burroughs and Wells use travelogue writing to frame their narratives as personal accounts to attribute legitimacy as well as increased appeal to their fictional content. Although Burroughs is a foundational author in the Mars fiction sub-genre, H.G. Wells is a pivotal precursor to Burroughs. His novel depicts an intellectually superior race of telepathic squid-like Martians determined to absorb Earth resources and exterminate humanity. This symbolic narrative demonstrates a reversal of the typical portrayal of colonization in science fiction while criticizing Britain's imperial past. As a philosophy writer by profession, the anonymous first-person narrator records his journey in writing after the events of the Martian invasion. Through writing, characters that have experienced near-death experiences, such as Wells' narrator and Burroughs' John Carter, turn to documenting their thoughts to preserve these meaningful events in a way that serves as a historical or precautionary record.

Burroughs' inclusion of multiple sub-genre elements is an innovative synthesis on an alien, yet familiar setting. Abbott argues that Burroughs borrows heavily from the Western genre and frontier fiction, which both use travelogue writing to convey authority and credibility in a narrative:

> Burroughs was the first of many science fiction writers to appropriate the settings and tropes of western fiction. Much of the pulp magazine science fiction in the 1930s and 1940s directly adapted conventions and plots of the popular Western...and... [Burroughs] transplanted the clichés of exotic adventures from the American West to the planet Barsoom. (Abbott, *Frontiers Past and Future* 20)

By employing aspects from several familiar sub-genres in combination with travelogue writing, Burroughs transforms his fantastic vision of Barsoom into a nostalgic and somewhat credible fictional platform to extend the endless Western frontier. Wolfe summarizes Burroughs' sub-genre concoction in the following passage:

> Burroughs has grafted elements of the 'lost race' novel, with its beautiful princesses, and elements of the 'marvelous invention' story, with its atmosphere generators and flying machines. The mixture proved enormously successful for the next several decades, and if it did not quite treat outer space as a 'new frontier' it at least opened it up as a likely arena for frontier-like adventures and as a means of keeping alive some of America's favorite myths about its self-sufficient frontier heroes. (Wolfe, "Frontiers in Space" 253)

And as with any frontier, a hero is needed to champion the cause. John Carter is the agent negotiating the frontier to bring about rebirth on Barsoom, while ensuring his actions are recorded and remembered. Carter emerges as the Adamic frontier hero on Barsoom, since as Wolfe puts it, "When Americans land on another world, it seems, they expect it to resemble the American West" (252) and Burroughs presents his frontier and frontier hero exactly in this way.

In *Wilderness Visions: The Western Theme in Science Fiction Literature* (1982), Mogen defines a regenerative frontier as a landscape that is renewed by effective environmental practices, stable agriculture, and reliable food reserves. Additionally, a champion of the landscape is required to lead a group to make these changes (94). As well, working from Turner's thesis, he identifies the frontier as "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (2), which John Carter navigates as the American Adam, as R.W.B. Lewis describes, representing violence, progress, and mastery over nature on the Martian frontier. Mogen goes on to explain how new frontiers have a unique place in American society: "In a culture which defines many of its most important values in terms derived from a mythicized frontier past, images of the future which present harsh, meaningful struggle, new worlds to exploit or be reborn in, have special potency" (25). It is through this struggle on Barsoom that Carter finds his Adamic hero identity and purpose on the planet.

Heike Paul outlines in her text The *Myths that Made America: An Introduction to American Studies* (2014) that "Violence in the hegemonic discourse of the 'Wild' West has been largely imagined as regenerative and cathartic" (335) and sustains the fantasy that "the West is a site for quasi-mythical violence" (Birns, "Review: Barsoom Bonanza" 158). Violence is Carter's preferred method of negotiation: he always wins. He actively attempts to cooperate with the citizens of Barsoom first through debate, and if they do not respond to this method, he then transitions into violence as his mediation strategy. American Studies scholar Richard Slotkin asserts that "The first colonists saw in America an opportunity to regenerate their [existence]; but the means to that regeneration became the means of violence, and the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American

experience" (*Regeneration Through Violence* 5). John Carter influences and ultimately renews Barsoom through his acts of violence as Slotkin describes.[5] Through these deeds, his character propagates Slotkin's assessment of regeneration through violence, which leads to immortality on the fantastic Barsoomian frontier for both Carter and Burroughs.

A key aspect of the frontier is the presence of a frontiersman, or champion, to lead the process of settling the wilderness. In this case, Carter seeks mastery over nature through his actions. Since he possesses unique abilities such as telepathy and superhuman strength, Carter is at a distinct advantage over other peoples on the Barsoomian frontier. By stabilizing the planet's environmental and political functions, he eliminates the risk of global collapse. Wolfe describes Carter's "adventures [on Barsoom] – a repeating cycle of pursuit, capture, escape, and trial by battle – bear a noticeable resemblance to the adventures of the early fiction frontier heroes" (Wolfe "Frontiers in Space" 253), his tales continue to engage the American preoccupation with the endless, immortal frontier. At the culmination of Carter's exploits, he is declared the warlord of Barsoom and ushers in an era of peace. Since Carter successfully completes his quest to transform the planet into a stable regenerative environment, he establishes his immortality through performing heroic acts and documenting his adventures.

John Carter's role as the champion of the regenerative frontier is fully asserted at the climax of *A Princess of Mars* when he prevents the desertification of Barsoom. After sacrificing himself for his family and the future of Barsoom, Carter thwarts an attempt to

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[5]It is important to note that this is the main reason why many scholars dismiss Burroughs and his work as masculine power fantasy. Carter is an idealized and problematic vision of the American adventurer in new lands.

sabotage the environment and solidifies his connection to the Barsoomian landscape, since Mogen maintains "attitudes to nature and the fate of the hero are linked to the success or decline of the frontier" (*Frontier Experience* 70). Yet even Carter, a man confident in his ability to defend himself, his family, and his world, fears death. Of course, without a world to live on, Carter would not have a story to tell, and Burroughs would not have a protagonist to write about. And even in a fictional place where death can be evaded through his superhuman abilities, it cannot be put off entirely. As a result, Carter turns to the act of writing to preserve his tales, and Burroughs in turn writes through Carter as his own means to live forever.

At the opening of *A Princess of Mars*, Carter reflects "I do not know why I should fear death, I who have died twice and am still alive; but yet I have the same horror of it as you who have never died, and it is because of this terror of death, I believe, I am so convinced of my mortality. And because of this conviction I have determined to write down [my] story" (11). Writing is used to record personal experience and position itself against the indiscriminate hand of death. In this instance, Burroughs is writing about his protagonist writing about his own life, which simultaneously produces a lasting record for his fictional character and himself.

Burroughs employs the Greek tradition of valorizing adventure and sacrifice through storytelling, in addition to the Arabic tradition of extended storytelling to prevent death. His *Barsoom* series emphasizes these aspects within frontier myth narratives. To explain writing as a means to ward of death for the author and characters within the story, Michel Foucault states in his essay "Language to Infinity" (1980):

> In another way, the motivation, as well as the theme and the pretext of Arabian narratives – such as *One Thousand and One Nights* – was also the eluding of death:

> one spoke, telling stories into the early morning, in order to forestall death, to postpone the day of reckoning that would silence the narrator. Scheherazade's narrative is an effort, renewed each night, to keep death outside the circle of life. (Foucault, "Language to Infinity" 113)

American literary critic Fred G. See defines what he calls the West beyond the West as "life beyond death, gain beyond loss… Between one death and another Carter finds a way to write the text of a new and augmented life; and this text is the true West of American romance" ("'Writing so as Not to Die'" 62). Burroughs' expression of Barsoom captures See's definition of the West beyond the West, and John Carter is employed as a figure to extend the frontier and write against death. See goes on to explain that through the act of writing, the author also attains immortality by producing a text.

To contrast, Foucault deconstructs writing as a means that cannot be used to achieve immortality because of the contemporary erasure of the individuality of the author. In his essay "What is an Author?" (1980) Foucault explores what it means to have the author as both the centre of the text and originator of the work, while being simultaneously located outside of it. In modern and contemporary writing, he argues, writing kills the author's individuality and transforms him or her into the one-dimensional figure of the author. It can then be reasoned because Burroughs is writing in the tradition of extended storytelling and science fantasy sub-genres, the concept of immortality for the author and his characters is valid. By employing mythic and fantastic elements in his writing that specifically include immortality and the frontier, his individuality is not erased in the recorded text. Burroughs' writes himself into the narrative and creates both a mirrored distance and closeness to reality and fantasy. Burroughs simultaneously places himself inside and outside of the text by

including himself as a fictional descendant of Carter, which has been previously discussed as a strategy to impart credibility to a fledging genre, but also achieves another goal: by occupying roles inside and outside of the text, he avoids shifting into Foucault's erasable figure of the author.

Through the act of storytelling, language emerges when a tale is told and thus gazes back into itself in a self-expressive and self-aware manner. According to Foucault, upon the awareness of death, the self-reflexive nature of language is seemingly endless. He posits that "Headed toward death, language turns back upon itself; it encounters something like a mirror…[language] possesses but a single power: that of giving birth to its own image in a play of mirrors that has no limits" (54). By applying this passage to Burroughs' texts, it can be argued that Carter, aware of his own unavoidable death, writes his life experiences and is the product of the doubling effect that occurs between the writer, Burroughs, and his text, Barsoom. Fred G. See further explains the interactions between life and death in the *Barsoom* series:

> This endlessly reflective play of mirrors is not substantially different from the tale of Carter's death in Arizona (death which becomes life), countered by the manuscript which tells of his escape; and which doubles both his body (his own image, all he has left to hazard) and his language as it writes his story. ("Writing so as not to die" 69)

Speaking about and against death through Carter gives Burroughs the ability to delay mortality for a little bit longer, just as Scheherazade does in her tale. Upon the reality of death, language and myth materializes in this infinite and mirrored space. See speculates that when one is faced with death or an ending, this is where language springs forth and one is driven to record his or her life for others to know. He goes on to state that "Thanks to

writing, life and death become episodic rather than paradoxical. These are the writer's conditions; this is the writer's discovery of a place past beginnings and before closure, between our South and the end of our farthest West" (See, "'Writing so as Not to Die'" 67). The West beyond the West is the mythical location where death can be warded off, yet does not become an idle place of static, repetitive events, or in the context of my analysis, Mars can be seen as the West beyond the West.

Similar to the chapters of a novel, life follows its own patterns and continues ultimately towards one inevitable conclusion: death. Carter lives for more than a thousand years and dies and reanimates twice but concludes that even he cannot permanently ward off death. The concept that death functions as both the focus and limit of language is expressed by the storytelling in *One Thousand and One Nights*, *The Odyssey*, and the *Barsoom* series. Throughout his narrative, Carter relays the plot to the reader through his own words and perceptions. After he returns to Earth, it becomes clear to him that "Nothing is more significant in this West [on Barsoom] than the transformation of speech into writing" (64). He realizes his experiences have a purpose once they are recorded and then he can truly evade death forever:

> If language later returns Carter to the place of his death, if Mars begins to die and if, in saving the place which is now the scene of romance and power and an heir, he dies again into the American West, it is a death into life and the hope of life, followed by yet another death into yet another life, which is the beginning of the second link in the chain of Mars novels and after which Carter's death is endlessly deferred: on Mars, one lives a thousand years. (See, "'Writing so as Not to Die'" 69)

Burroughs' narrative becomes increasingly contrived as the first three Barsoom tales progress because Carter defeats all the opposing powers on the planet. It is only the unseen force that transports him from Earth to Barsoom that resembles death within this narrative "And at [the end of *The Warlord of Mars*], the tales virtually lose their interest, since once they establish the evasion of death by writing they can only repeat their own conventions" (69). Without death, the tales become less meaningful and Carter's adventures are trite because his victory is assured.

Burroughs avoids continuing his repetitive narrative pattern by creating a story arc that includes Carter raising a family, and subsequently the narrative shifts into detailing his children's adventures. See claims Carter avoids the stagnant nature of fictional immortality "So these texts are not (as indeed texts sometimes are) engaged in endless self-consumption, or in signifying any absence" (69). The pressure to write, record, and be remembered is alleviated by raising a family, which entails creating new characters, to continue adventures on Barsoom. Once that urgency leaves the narrative, the tension surrounding most of the conflict never reaches the same state of intensity seen in the first three novels.

See summarizes the point: "Foucault argues that we carry on all the activities of language, but especially writing, in order to fill this void 'which borders death but is also poised against it, where the story locates its natural domain'" (67-68). It is in moments of danger where Carter revels in the space between life and death because this is where he finds his purpose as the champion of the Barsoomian frontier, and where he finds the focus of his story. In his concluding argument, See presents the idea that "At the farthest West of this West, the text becomes the sign of a fulfillment which has already been reached when writing can be said to have been substituted once and for all for death and the place of death" (70).

Language is the human-crafted shield wielded against death. On the cusp of death, language erupts and stands as the undeniable proof that life cannot be erased. Death is many things, yet part of death requires language to stop and stories to end. Even those who are fictional and immortal such as Carter struggle to ensure the finality of death is perpetually denied through the act of writing. By extending myths and contributing to endless narratives, Burroughs and Carter write their way to the West beyond the West.

Here we see Mars function as the West beyond the west – life beyond death – where immortality can exist, if only in stories. The desire for immortality is at the root of the myth of the frontier. And if the West beyond the West is on Mars, as Burroughs tells us, then Mars may support immortality, if only in fiction for now.

While Burroughs' *Barsoom* series has garnered criticism for being sub-literary or simply science fantasy, his works inspired other writers to create their own imaginary worlds on Mars. His vision of Mars is supported by an understanding of Lowellian theory, influenced by frontier romance and science fantasy, as well as the tradition of frontier travelogues and extended storytelling. Even though his expression of Mars is scientifically inaccurate, it ignited popular thought and writing about the planet. Mars fiction was not born from a place of reliable scientific knowledge, but with partial knowledge paired with excitement over new concepts that early writers experimented with to depict new fantastic visions.

Scientific fact has defeated Burroughs' fantastic vision of Mars and Robert Crossley's statement "We know too much about Mars now to write about John Carter and Dejah Thoris on Mars again" ("Mars as Cultural Mirror" 173) summarizes this argument well; however, visions of Mars live on and haunt proceeding texts in the sub-genre and influences

astronomers to continue research on the planet. When *A Princess of Mars* was written in 1912, scientific knowledge about Mars was lacking real evidence. Markley explains how the Mariner 9 orbiter provided detailed images of the planet:

> As the Mariner 9 approached Mars in 1971, Ray Bradbury declared that "[Burroughs] has probably changed more destinies than any other writer in American history," and credited his predecessor with firing the imagination of two generations of scientists as well as dreamers: "Burroughs and his alter ego John Carter, seized off to Mars by impossible dreams, pulled by ten million boys after them and changed American's scientific territory forever." (Markley, *Dying Planet* 184)

While the real American frontier may be closed, the imagined Martian frontier is empty and open to any potential future that can be conceived upon it. The palimpsests of fact and fiction that were written, are written, and will be rewritten on Mars influence our future actions and choices in ways that I argue are both self-aware and unaware, as American frontier myth informs this kind of thinking in ways that are difficult to explicitly point to due to the distorting nature of myths.

In Burroughs' fictional vision, Mars is explored as the West beyond the West: a place beyond death, a New World, and immortal frontier. By writing to ward off death, Carter saves Barsoom from being forgotten, or more simply, to fight against his heroism from being forgotten. Mars is haunted by our myths, stories, science, and fictions that are deeply etched into thinking about the planet. At times, misguided visions have provided the push for critical scientific exploration to either confirm or deny these fantastic speculations. And while the planet still contains a potent future value, Mars, however empty it may look through a telescope, is still full of all the wild things we imagined there.

# Chapter 2

## Reflections in the Martian Mirror: Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*

Myth, seen in mirrors, incapable of being touched, stays on. If it is not immortal, it almost seems such…What a way to live. The only way. For by pretending at ignorance, the intuition, curious at seeming neglect, rears its invisible head and snakes out through your palmprints in mythological forms. And because I wrote myths, perhaps my Mars has a few more years of impossible life. (Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles* 1997 Deckle Edge ix-x)

In the final phase of World War II, President Harry S. Truman ordered nuclear weapons to be discharged upon the Japanese cities Hiroshima on August 6th and Nagasaki on August 9th, 1945. Over 200,000 deaths were recorded from impact and related injuries. This event marks the only recorded use of nuclear weaponry in the history of armed conflict. As a product of his reflections on nuclear warfare, American author Ray Bradbury (1920-2012) wrote *The Martian Chronicles* (1950). Bradbury insisted that "'Mars is a mirror, not a [fortune-telling] crystal'" (Crossley, *Imagining Mars* 7). Crossley goes on to clarify "That is to say, *The Martian Chronicles*... is not a book about the future but about the then-present of 1950, not so much about the actual Mars but the then-actual United States" (8). In his work, Bradbury does not aim to predict the future, but to reflect the American Western frontier onto new landscape: Mars.

In this chapter, I provide a brief overview of print culture in the Golden Age of Science Fiction and Bradbury's influence during the period. It outlines the regressive

frontier, which contrasts with the regenerative frontier seen in Burroughs' work. Mogen defines the regressive frontier in the following passage:

> Opposed to the predominantly regenerative frontier in outer space are the regressive frontiers that result from the collapse of technological culture ... [these stories] express both the immanence of nuclear destruction that was felt during the fifties, and a deep anxiety that excessive reliance on technology has insidiously corrupted the most basic American values. (Mogen, *Wilderness Visions* 94)

The success of Burroughs' frontier is tied to John Carter's actions as discussed in my previous chapter, but on Bradbury's Mars there is no hero to champion the Martian frontier. Throughout the narrative there are many missed chances and spoiled opportunities for settlement. Sf editor and critic Eric Rabkin explains Bradbury's "Mars is a landscape of longing" ("Is Mars Heaven?" *Visions of Mars* 95) Crossley summarizes the narrative as a "failed Martian invasion … [resulting in chastened] human pride" (*Imagining Mars* 8). Finally, the future of the few remaining settlers is left to optimistic speculation because as Mogen puts it, they are "irrevocably cut off from their origins in the Old World" (*Frontier Experience* 78). Sf critic Roger Luckhurst summarizes the survivors are "exiled to the uncanny Martian landscape" (*Science Fiction* 104) of not quite Old World Earth and not quite New World Mars, but a synthetic Martian frontier at the end of the narrative.

Similar to American scholar and critic R.W.B. Lewis' (1919-2002) arguments found in *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (1955), Bradbury is beckoning for what I call Martian Adam/Eve: a figure distinctly aware of the complexities of American history and conflict, but chooses to distance him or herself from the past to transition into a better way of living. Mogen summarizes the idea of Martian

Adam/Eve with his statement: "Yet … [Bradbury's] conclusion suggests that ultimately the frontier process will form a new 'Martian' who can learn from and thus escape from the destructive patterns of the past, who can truly adapt to their new environment rather than merely impose old fantasies upon it" (*Ray Bradbury* 93). The remaining settlers on Mars at the end of the text are tasked with surviving on the Martian frontier entirely cut off from the Old World, while facing the challenges of adapting to a new landscape.

In this chapter, I closely examine the myth of the American West. The text *The Myths that Made America: An Introduction to American Studies* (2014) by American Studies scholar Heike Paul serves as the principal scholarship guiding my discussion. Paul argues, "The American West… has been foundational for multi-disciplinary American studies scholarship since Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893 identified the frontier as the most decisive factor in shaping American political and social institutions and in creating a specifically American national character" (*Myths that Made America* 312). She explains, "Even if the myth of the West is organized around certain recurring (stock) characters (farmers, cowboys, 'Indians'), it is not focused on people, but on 'the land itself'" (313). Paul goes on to parse the myth, which I review for additional context. Finally, I look at how American Studies scholars Henry Nash Smith's (1906 - 1986) and Leo Marx's (1919 -) thoughts about the West illuminate the use of myth in Bradbury's narrative.

Next, I discuss the portrayal of aliens, specifically Martians, as the Other and include close readings from the text to support my argument. The Other is "Primarily understood as the other human being in his or her differences" (*Oxford Companion to Philosophy* 1627) however, Martians are categorically not human. So, to extend this definition into a workable term for my purposes here, it must include the extended definition: "Death, madness, [and]

the unconscious are [also] said to be Other. In each case the challenge presented by the Other is the same: in some way the Other cannot be encapsulated within the thought-forms of Western philosophy without reducing the alterity of the Other" (1627). Alterity is described as "the radically Other transcends me and the totality into whose network I seek to place it" (*Oxford Companion to Philosophy* 1627) or simply put, the Other is different in a way that one cannot know. These interactions with the Other/alien provide insight into America's frontier history, which is then mirrored by Bradbury's settlers' interactions with fictional Martians. Once the settlers realize "[a]n alternative to the Other as 'enemy' is the Other as 'friend', or same" (Kerslake 20), they begin to reconcile their planetary diaspora with their new identities as Martian Adam/Eve. To conclude, I discuss how Mars continues to be portrayed as a space to continue the American frontier and produce new interpretations of American myth through sf. These points of debate presented by authors and critics shape the American frontier dialectic and demonstrate how sf texts, such as *The Martian Chronicles*, shape publics, and how American culture, particularly in the post-war period, shapes sf texts.

As a progression from the Pulp era, The Golden Age of Science Fiction or GASF emerged and defied the popular criticism that all sf was puerile and pointless. While some critics maintain the GASF was 1938-1946, others claim it continued from 1938-1959. In terms of my work here with Bradbury, I view the latter period distinction to be relevant for my argument. In the following discussion, I contend the significant achievements of the GASF include producing a vast amount of new content, evoking a sense of wonder in its readers, and initiating sf's shift from magazine to novel format.

In this period of high productivity, while some works fell under the definition of revamped cowboy tales, many highly regarded sf authors such as Isaac Asimov (1920-1992),

Arthur C. Clarke (1917-2001), A. E. van Vogt (1912 - 2000), Leigh Brackett (1915-1978), and Robert A. Heinlein (1907-1988) contributed immense amounts of genre-defining content. Broadly, GASF tales cover themes and topics surrounding "futuristic tech and individualist ideology" (Roberts 125) and depict "linear narratives, heroes solving problems or countering threats in a space-opera or a technological adventure idiom" (195). Sf critics Nicholls and Ashley assert "1938-1946 was a period of astonishing activity (among comparatively few writers), the time when most of the themes and motifs of sf were taking their modern shape, which in some cases proved almost definitive and in others continued to be reworked and modified" ("Golden Age of SF"). By generating texts related to emerging topics such as space exploration and technocratic methodology, authors with "wild and yearning imaginations…who were mostly very young, and conceptually very energetic…laid down entire strata of sf motifs which enriched the field greatly" ("Golden Age of SF"). Technological innovation in American society during the period had a profound impact on sf content creation. As a result, these new concepts, themes, and narratives were written and speculated upon in sf. With so many new texts presenting original ideas, a specific feeling became associated with GASF authors' abilities to depict exciting approaches to science and technology: a sense of wonder.

The GASF is also remembered for how it made readers feel, often described as a sense of wonder. Sf critics Nicholls and Robu state: "'Sense of wonder' is an interesting critical phrase, for it defines sf not by its content but by its effect" ("Sense of Wonder"). Sf author and critic Gregory Benford describes the feeling as "What… the fans call "sense of wonder"—an indefinable rush when beholding something odd and new and perhaps a bit awesome. 'Dat ole sensawonda' is the essential SF experience" ("Effing the Ineffable" 26).

Experiencing a sense of wonder is not exclusively tied to GASF texts, considering any new or exciting idea in any type of text may prompt it. Nevertheless, the sensation was so frequently experienced by audiences reading GASF texts that it became expected from all sf works. Nicholls and Ashley go on to say: "For older readers, certainly, there has been nothing since [the GASF] to give quite the same adrenalin charge" ("The Golden Age of SF"). Since the GASF produced many works containing new speculations and projections based on technological progress, "Today we expect sf to present us with amazing concepts…but in the 1940s this stuff seemed… to spring miraculously from nowhere at all" ("Golden Age of SF"). Of course, these ideas came from somewhere, namely scientific and technological innovation from the 1930s-1950s. But since these ideas were typically new to youth audiences who made up the majority of sf readership during the GASF, they appeared to come from nowhere. So "In this respect the 'sense of wonder' is a phenomenon of youth – but that does not make it any less real" ("Sense of Wonder") or legitimate.

Given that early sf texts were typically published on cheap pulp paper and circulated sensational content, it was difficult to dismiss the low quality of writing and construction. As a result, this caused many audiences to reject reading sf as a worthwhile interest. Rabkin explains that "Since sf was physically ephemeral, the thinking was, it could not be artistically valuable. This opinion affected not only critics who tended to denigrate science fiction until the 1970s, but the sf editors themselves" ("Composite Novel" 94). From its early stages, arguments have been made against sf's ability to produce both critically and physically valuable texts. It was during the GASF that these perceptions began to change. Sf scholar and critic Anthony Enns explains how sf's literary status increased when published in its new format:

> Despite these negative evaluations of the genre (or perhaps because of them), science fiction gradually expanded into the literary market through paperback and hardcover novels. These new formats fundamentally altered the status of the genre, as they appealed to a wider readership and were more often reviewed in mainstream literary publications. (Enns, "Poet of the Pulps")

He goes on to say, "Over time, science fiction gradually acquired a level of cultural prestige that was never afforded to pulp magazines, and this shift was the result of a change not in the content but rather in the material qualities of science fiction texts" ("Poet of the Pulps"). The shift from pulp magazine to paperback or hardcover novel increased the genre's credibility since it could now be recognized as serious reading in a format familiar to literary critics and audiences. After literary critics endorsed sf through positive reviews, mainstream audience preferences began to shift to consume sf texts as well. Sf has always been producing texts of high literary merit but had not been given the chance to be reviewed by those who could promote the texts due the stigma surrounding the low quality of pulp magazines.

So, with its new production, distribution, and reception of texts, the GASF was arguably a most formative time for Mars fiction. Enns summarizes this argument about the shift in publishing practices and tastes during the GASF by stating:

> The early 1950s was therefore a particularly significant period in the history of American science fiction publishing, as it witnessed a dramatic transformation in the production, distribution, and reception of the genre, and this transformation reveals the inherent connections between distinctions of taste and the materiality of written texts. (Enns "Poet of the Pulps")

While the transition from low to high quality printing materials increased the literary reception and physical value of sf texts, these objects are, at their core, still texts. Production quality aside, highly praised literature still requires a compelling narrative no matter what type of publication format it comes in. As the champion of the lowbrow-highbrow divide between pulp sf and literary publics, I argue that the publication of Ray Bradbury's iconic text *The Martian Chronicles* in novel format is responsible for introducing sf to mainstream publics during the GASF.

While many texts have been written on the topic of Mars, Crossley maintains "*The Martian Chronicles* [is] still the most widely read narrative set on Mars" (*Imagining Mars* 7). Science fiction critic Robert Markley declares *The Martian Chronicles* as "the crossover book of the postwar period—really the first book since Wells' *The War of the Worlds* to challenge the divide between literary and pulp fiction" (*Dying Planet* 218). In addition to *The Martian Chronicles*, Bradbury published more than twenty-seven novels, six hundred short stories, several screenplays, scripts, works of poetry, non-fiction, and children's fiction. A few of his most popular works include *The Illustrated Man* (1951), *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), and *I Sing the Body Electric* (1969). He was also consistently recognized for his literary merit by winning various awards including the SFWA Grand Master title in 1989 and a Pulitzer Prize for Special Citation in 2007. Bradbury introduced sf to mainstream culture by gaining positive reviews from influential critics and publishing in novel format, but most importantly because of his timely reflection upon 1950s American culture and of the way he would project his musings onto Mars within *The Martian Chronicles*.

It bears noting that most of the chapters from *The Martian Chronicles* were previously published in short story format in various pulp magazines from 1946-1950. The

text was only recognized as exemplary by critics once it was published in hardcover novel format. Enns explains "In 1950 *Doubleday* published a hardcover collection of Bradbury's pulp stories, *The Martian Chronicles*, which received a favorable review from Christopher Isherwood" ("Poet of the Pulps"). Literary critic Terry Heller supports this point by adding *The Martian Chronicles* "became one of the first science-fiction works to receive serious attention from the mainstream literary establishment when reviewer [and novelist] Christopher Isherwood praised it highly" ("Ray Bradbury" 305). Once *The Martian Chronicles* received positive reviews from critics endorsing it as legitimate, serious reading, sf began to be accepted by mainstream publics. Sf was finally recognized for its literary value by critics that influence mainstream tastes, but only after texts were constructed with high quality materials and published in novel format.

Sf critic Jonathan Eller summarizes, "It could…be said then that after the publication of *The Martian Chronicles* in May 1950, science fiction was still seen as different from mainstream literature but no longer separate from it. The permanent barriers fell" (*Ray Bradbury* 105). Terry Heller goes on to note that "With moving and imaginative stories told in a lively, poetic style, [Bradbury] brought American science fiction and fantasy to the attention of a mass audience" ("Ray Bradbury" 312). By removing the longstanding barrier between sf and mainstream tastes with his poignant writing, Bradbury emerged as a highly successful and influential writer during the GASF. Ultimately, Bradbury's catalytic achievement here is threefold: it represents success for himself, the sf genre, and sf authors who came after him. In the remainder of this chapter, I detail my analysis of the American frontier and the West witnessed in both historical and literary imagination. I explore

Bradbury's literary projections of American myth upon Mars to show why his narrative was and continues to be so highly revered.

In the interest of my work here, I broadly define the literary frontier observed in Bradbury's text as the meeting place between civilization and wilderness, or a place where something is developed or tested for the first time, such as the new Martian Adam/Eve figure on the synthetic Martian frontier. As we can see here, there are (at least) two Western frontiers: thetic regenerative and antithetic regressive. The idea of at least two Western frontiers applies to this type of discourse and aligns with the literary tradition of the American frontier dialectic. In the following section, I explore Bradbury's regressive frontier through Mogen's thinking about the topic paired with close readings from the text. These regenerative and regressive interpretations of the American frontier are dependent upon and inform each other in a relationship that demonstrates how texts shape publics and how publics shape texts.

In *The Frontier Experience*, Mogen states American literature is organized around specific elements, which are also consistently represented in frontier depictions:

> Indeed, most significant American literature is structured in some form by the basic archetypes of [national] mythology: the conflict between an Old World and a New World, the ironic drama of the frontier figure negotiating between them, the theme of wilderness and metamorphosis (emergence of the "American Adam/Eve") and the triumph of "progress." (Mogen, *The Frontier Experience* 21)

The concept of the American Adam/Eve was put forward by R.W.B. Lewis. In his work *The American Adam*, he argues that "Intellectual history, properly conducted, exposes not only

the dominant ideas of a period, or of a nation, but…the dominant clashes over ideas…major pairs of opposed terms which, by their very opposition, carry discourse forward" (2). Mogen condenses Lewis's argument by describing this dialectical process of forming a culture or nation through debate as "the struggle from thesis to antithesis to synthesis" (*The Frontier Experience* 7) or sublation as Hegel identifies it, which is embodied through Martian Adam/Eve emerging on the synthetic West.

In Bradbury's vision, Mars wholly opposes the presence of Earth, but in time the transformation of its settlers takes hold. Through Bradbury's depiction of the lingering influence of the planet, or more succinctly the elements of the regressive frontier combining with hope for the postfrontier West, these forces lead to the opportunity for the birth of the American Adam/Eve on Mars, or in this case the Martian Adam/Eve:

> An important theme in much science fiction that employs New World Archetypes is resistance of the New World to outside domination – resistance that manifests itself either through the planet's direct influence or through the agency of a native culture identified with it. Projected into the future, the drama of colonizing the New World tends to depict either the defeat of invading forces or, more commonly, their transformation by the residual forces of the land. (Mogen, *Wilderness Visions* 70)

This resistance that Mogen discusses here is the conflict between the thetic (Old World) and antithetic (New World) also mentioned in Lewis' work. While this type of debate would historically appear as debate or conflict between two individuals or groups, Bradbury carries out this discussion through sf on the interplanetary scale. A new synthesis from an old argument develops through the transformation of the settlers on Mars. By using mythic concepts and mirroring elements of American history onto Mars, Bradbury presents a new

frontier (syn)thesis with the opportunity for national rebirth through the destruction of both the thetic (Old World) and antithetic (New World) traditions that previously controlled the discourse.

Ultimately due to nuclear war on Earth, the Martian frontier fails to develop as intended, yet the opportunity for rebirth emerges once the Old World is entirely cut off from the New World. At first glance, this regressive frontier seems hopeless and fraught with conflict, but Bradbury points to an optimistic future at the end of the narrative. Mogen explains "*The Martian Chronicles* concludes by foreshadowing a version of the myth of the American as Adam, the new man formed by the influence of the New World (a major motif of Nineteenth Century American literature) …Only here…the new man is the American as Martian" (*Wilderness Visions* 77). Even though Bradbury depicts an ironic frontier, the potential for rebirth is still present through the planet's transformative forces. Through these forces, Bradbury's Martian frontier calls for a new myth: the Martian Adam/Eve.

Bradbury's ironic vision of the American frontier results from his reflection upon American culture during the 1950s. Known to be a skeptical author with a cautious opinion of technology, Bradbury often depicts unexpected and anti-climactic outcomes in his narratives. *The Martian Chronicles* is one such work that captures a reversed representation of progress on the American frontier. With no figure to negotiate between the New World and Old World, the Martian landscape resists Earth's influence and does not transform into a pastoral site, and instead becomes an ironic frontier. Mogen defines the regressive frontier as "[resulting] from the collapse of technological culture ... [and expresses] both the immanence of nuclear destruction that was felt during the fifties, and a deep anxiety that excessive reliance on technology has insidiously corrupted the most basic American values"

(*Wilderness Visions* 94). This nuclear anxiety is the underlying conflict throughout the entire text. Other expressions of the regressive frontier can be observed in Pierre Boulle's novel *La Planète des singes* (1963), translated as *The Planet of the Apes* (1968) in its film adaptation, and the novel *Logan's Run* (1967) by William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson also adapted for the film *Logan's Run* (1976). In my discussion here, I limit the scope of my analysis to *The Martian Chronicles* as a depiction of the regressive frontier.

Since the planet reflects and exaggerates the sentiments of 1950s American culture, anxiety over nuclear threat is brought to the Martian frontier. As a result, Bradbury's depiction of nuclear war on Earth is shown to be even more devastating than what was experienced during WWII. "November 2005: The Watchers" describes the call of the Old World to settlers on Mars when they hear of war on Earth. When conflict erupts, many Mars settlers are drawn back home and perish when "the Old World [is] consumed in its own destruction [and] 'strangled by its own hands'" (Mogen, *Wilderness Visions* 78). Afterwards, the few remaining settlers have no alternative but to establish themselves on Mars since they are cut off from home. In an unexpected turn, Mars becomes the only viable living space for humanity. Mogen explains "Mars is the ravaged frontier of American history, and the theme is that ultimately there is no escape from one's own character" (34). Here Bradbury makes a pacifistic argument against the use of nuclear weaponry, yet it is only through the destruction of the Old World that true rebirth may be possible on the Martian frontier. Even through Bradbury is anti-war, it is through the thetic, antithetic, and synthetic influences on the Martian frontier (abolish, preserve, transcend) that sublation, or synthesis, presents a transcendental opportunity on Mars. This same transcendence is also the ultimate goal of the

Western frontier as depicted by Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau – to transcend what came before it by abolishing, and yet preserving it.

In a critical response to excessive reliance on technology corrupting the most basic American values, "August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains" emphasizes the failure of technological progress through the development of nuclear weaponry. After the war has ended on Earth, daily automated tasks, such as cooking and cleaning, are carried out by one of the few homes left standing. The house continues to run its programmed tasks until a tree branch falls on the roof causing it to ignite, which illustrates the lasting influence of nature over built landscapes. Here it can be argued that self-reliance and progress, both American humanist values, are corrupted by the pursuit of technological improvement and lead to Earth's destruction. Bradbury views technology as an unnatural influence and nature as a restorative one, which is a common theme found in American national mythology. Mogen goes on to say, "The regressive frontier theme…is employed most often to present images of a recovered New World (Nature), and to dramatize relationships between the New World and the technology that conquered it" (*Wilderness Visions* 106). On this an ironic frontier, the effect of nuclear technology that conquered Earth is exaggerated, but the opportunity for rebirth emerges only through the destruction of the planet. Accordingly, even with the collapse of technological progress through the nuclear destruction of Earth, Bradbury's regressive Martian frontier retains hope for settlers to return to simpler living and transform into Martian Adam/Eve.

*The Martian Chronicles* does not seek to accurately capture the American frontier and West, but the frontier and West found in the American literary imagination. It should also be noted that elements of the myth of the frontier and West overlap at times because they are all

directly connected to the American landscape. While characterizations of the West are vast and perhaps endless, Heike Paul primarily identifies it "as a space of residence and settlement that is often imagined as a kind of garden or even Edenic paradise symbolizing pastoral simplicity and economic independence based on subsistence farming" (314). In her secondary analysis of the myth, she adds the "American West is constructed as a site of individual and collective quests for land and dominance" (314) however, since this is a regressive frontier, expansion and settlement succeed through unplanned and non-violent means. Ironically, it is only though failing to conquer Mars that stable settlement can begin.

To provide additional sf context to my argument, Abbott states that "much science fiction is a search for places to start over, for new 'geographies of hope'" (*Frontiers Past and Future* 14) and Bradbury's depiction is no different in its optimistic search for the pastoral Garden at the end of the Martian frontier. This outlook is captured again by Abbott's claim that "the West has always symbolized the [American] national future" (34). The potential for rebirth and transformation through cultivating and expanding to the Western landscapes is a common theme in American literature. Through a dialectical analysis of the Western landscape, pastoralism, and failed quests for dominance in *The Martian Chronicles*, Mars is revealed to represent the synthetic or sublated Western frontier that supports the Martian Adman/Eve figure and a viable chance for the redemption and rebirth of America on Mars.

Without a clearly defined landscape or identity, which mirrors the conflicting historical descriptions of the West, Bradbury uses the language of American myth to describe the planet. Mogen declares that "Mars is seen as a dream, the past, a new world, a mirror, and decadent fin de siècle atmospheric fairyworld" (*Wilderness Visions* 73). He also states, "Because Bradbury's Mars is a product of the American myths imposed upon it, the planet

itself never has a clearly defined identity" (79). Throughout the narrative, "[Mars'] actual physical nature changes from story to story. Yet the nature of the planet itself, with all the ambivalence and mystery that surrounds it, is the central subject of the book. The chronicles are unified by the dreamlike aura of the planet Mars" (75). In his shifting visions of literary Mars, Bradbury captures the conflicting optimistic and ambivalent nature the American settlers in "August 2001: The Settlers": "They came [to Mars] because they were afraid or unafraid, because they were happy or unhappy, because they felt like Pilgrims or did not feel like Pilgrims" (*The Martian Chronicles* 72). This ambivalence underscores the enticing nature myths: because they are unclear, they can be interpreted in any way and typically mirror personal desires. Bradbury's literary Mars is both inviting and inhospitable, lush yet desolate since American settlers experienced the same contradictory conditions on the frontier, and this discourse continues the tradition of the American frontier dialectic. Without these opposing viewpoints, there would be no debate about the lived experience and thus the neutralize any of the mass appeal of a landscape that supports the idea of being both challenging and comfortable, empty and full, and wild and civilized.

Depictions of the Western landscape often detail transcendent experiences for those living closely with nature. Paul summarizes Slotkin's point that historically the frontier has served in this role:

> The West as a transformative space has often been considered as a *pars pro toto* [part taken for the whole, or synecdoche] for the nation and as a special place from which its future could be built, making "the discovery, conquest, and settlement of the West […] the dominant theme of American history." (Paul, *Myths That Made America* 312)

Much nineteenth century American literature explores this idea of finding transcendence in nature, as it is seen in several of Walt Whitman's and Henry David Thoreau's works, which glorify the American West as sublime Promised Land. Other historical records such as the American Homestead Act of 1862 present a conflicting position of the West as desolate, and land being allotted in a discriminatory fashion. These accounts of the Western landscape, seen in literature and history, are often contradictory as Leo Marx captures this concept from a historical point of view in his statement:

> What is most revealing about these contrasting ideas of [American] landscape is not, needless to say, their relative accuracy in picturing the actual topography. They are not representational images. America was neither Eden nor a howling desert. These are poetic metaphors, imaginative constructions which heighten meaning far beyond the limits of fact. And yet, like all effective metaphors, each had a basis in fact. In a sense, America was both Eden and a howling desert; the actual conditions of life in the New World did lend plausibility to both images. (Marx, *Machine in the Garden* 43)

The many images and metaphors constructed around the West as being both barren and fertile while opposing – are true. These inconsistent implications about the West align with the American frontier dialectic behind literary and historical thinking. Through conflicting depictions and the ensuing debate about such positions, American culture and identity is constantly formed and reformed through ongoing discourse between publics and texts.

The popular, sentimental pastoral visions of the literary West typically portray it as a paradise for agrarian living. To provide some background on this idea, agrarian philosophy regards rural living as superior to urban living and emphasizes the simplicity the agricultural

lifestyle over the complexity of the city lifestyle. Consequently, farming and homesteading on the Western frontier are significant characteristics of American identity with many associated images, figures, and stories constructed around it, such as Johnny Appleseed. The American folklore figure is depicted terraforming Mars in "December 2001: The Green Morning." Appleseed is described as "the harbinger of [American] agricultural settlement" ("Homesteading" 241) by Abbott. Abbott continues argue that "Homesteading is a particular facet of the complex processes by which agriculturalists settle 'empty' or underdeveloped territories, whether the prairies of North America or the imagined planets of sf, and it is a process with deep resonance in American history and national identity" (242). With this social and political movement in mind, it is evident that this desire for a simpler time, or sentimental pastoralism, is deeply rooted in America's imagination of its frontiering past. This urge to return to simple living becomes apparent when industrialized living and technological progress develop materials, such as nuclear weaponry, and the deadly results of such innovation are witnessed and felt.

Through the creation of nuclear weaponry, pastoralism finds an opponent needed to reignite the dialectical discourse about surrounding the call for simple agricultural living. In *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964), Marx guides his work with a relevant question to Bradbury: "What possible bearing can the urge to idealize a simple, rural environment have upon the lives men lead in an intricately organized, urban, industrial, nuclear-armed society?" (5). He continues to write, "pastoralism [is] a distinctively American theory of society, and [transformed] under the impact of industrialism" (4). The urge to idealize the frontier is at the heart of pastoral discourse and, as Paul later outlines, critical to postfrontier thinking. Through his discussion, Marx outlines

two types of pastoralism: one "popular and sentimental" and the other "imaginative and complex" (5). Popular and sentimental pastoralism is seen in frontier nostalgia for a simpler time and "[enables] the reader to enjoy an easy resolution" (130), whereas complex pastoralism is described as depictions that "enforce the poet's ironic distance from the pastoral dream" (130), and Bradbury is most certainly the latter. By depicting his settlers as nostalgic, skeptical, or both or neither, he accurately mirrors the anxieties of American settlers and postwar America onto the Martian frontier.

Pastoralism is the *counterforce,* as Marx defines it, to industrialism. Interpretations of the nostalgic pastoral past and paradoxical complex future are possible. Both concepts "show how the pastoral ideal has been incorporated in a powerful metaphor of contradiction – a way of ordering meaning and value that clarifies our situation today" (4). This ongoing debate continues to influence American culture through discourse surrounding the *counterforce* between these pastoral concepts. The contrast between pastoral living and advancing industrialism emphasizes the ongoing dialectical discourse between sentimental and complex pastoralism. And while both sides of this pastoral discourse call for vastly different methods to achieve self-reliance and transcendence, they reflect the conflicting forces that work to shape the American experience through the action of debate itself.

Instead of discouraging Bradbury's settlers, these contradictions inspire them to continue expanding westward to articulate their American identity. This core force is depicted as fatally effective in "April 2000: The Third Expedition." Smith goes on to describe it in *Virgin Land*:

> But the image of an agricultural paradise in the West, embodying group memories of an earlier, a simpler and, it was believed, a happier state of society, long survived as a

> force in American thought and politics. So powerful and vivid was the image that down to the very end of the nineteenth century it continued to seem a representation, in Whitman's words, of the core of the nation, "the real genuine America." (Smith, *Virgin Land* 124)

The urge, described by Marx, to return to agricultural living stems from the sentimental and nostalgic view of the American frontiering past. Through these contrasting aspects of simple and complex pastoralism, the opportunity emerges for postfrontier hope and a new future on the frontier. Marx argues the poetic fantasy of America as the virgin continent "was embodied in various utopian schemes for making America the site of a new beginning for Western society" (3) and the West continues to hold onto this Edenic future as being both pastoral and industrial utopia, however implausible it may be. Again, the thetic and antithetic influences, and final synthetic outcome of these conflicting perspectives, can be observed in how the American West is perceived in imagination, reality, and myth.

Since Turner declared "Movement has been [America's] dominant fact, and … the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise" (*Frontier in American History* 5), expansion has been essential to expressing America's national identity. Turner claims Americans must seize the opportunity to expand across the North American continent because "never again will such gifts of free land offer themselves" (12). Contrary to Turner's claim that the land was free, it was occupied by Indigenous peoples, just as Bradbury's Mars is populated by Martians.

In his call for expansion and progress based upon social and political humanist philosophy, Turner's lack of consideration for Indigenous peoples in his writing about the frontier shapes it as a site for individual and collective quests for land and dominance. Sf

scholars Erika Hoagland and Reema Sarwal identify how Bradbury reverses the typical depiction of historical imperialism and instead emphasizes the significance of the subaltern subject:

> Authors such as [H.G.] Wells and Bradbury reject imperialism's inevitability and instead highlight the damage—physical, psychological, and ethical—of a project that is still viewed by some nostalgically...The rewriting/revisiting of history and the recovery of the subaltern subject...are mirrors of science fiction's complex relationship with history and the haunting presence of aliens and others such as Bradbury's Martians. (Hoagland and Sarwal, *Science Fiction* 10)

First contact between humans and Martians results in causalities on both sides, and a human-initiated chicken pox epidemic kills most, if not all Martians in "June 2001: –And the Moon Be still as Bright". However, since this is the ironic frontier, quests for land and dominance succeed through non-violence. Any attempt at dominance by imperial force ends in the death of the instigator, as it is shown in "February 1999: Ylla", "August 1999: The Earth Men" and "April 2000: The Third Expedition." After several failed expeditions to Mars, human settlement begins after unknowingly transmitted a virus to an unprotected species. Finally, the Earth settlers secure Mars through indirect and unintended, yet highly infectious means.

To further delineate the contradiction of an inhospitable, yet hopeful Western frontier in both historical and literary spaces, Paul outlines, "'[t]he two sentiments, the hope for a postfrontier future in the West, followed later by a longing for the frontier past, have played an important part in the formation of western identities'… and of US national identity, one should add" (314). She goes on to state "It is the cultural work of the myth [of the West] that apparently has neutralized these contradictions and paradoxes of the West" (314). Marx also

points to these opposing concepts through his discussion on popular and complex pastoralism. While myth works to erase any inconsistencies found in historical representation, the depiction of myth in sf can be treated in a way that indulges and explores its contradictions without consequence. Mogen summarizes this conflicting desire by summarizing how expanding into untamed landscapes is pivotal to American cultural identity:

> Since the end of the Nineteenth Century, when the American frontier was finally settled and domesticated, there has been a void in American culture. We had always lived with the myth that we had a place to run to, that our destiny was still being shaped, that somewhere out West what was left of the original vision of a New World still promised everything. (Mogen, *Wilderness Visions* 33-34)

Bradbury, while writing before Mogen made these statements, understood the influence of mythologized West and the need for a national future on geographies of hope, if only captured in the literary imagination. For fiction of course, and especially science fiction, can still promise everything.

Humans and Martians are the central figures in his text, but as I stated earlier, narratives that include the myth of the West are about the land itself. However, these key figures, namely the Martian Other, requires some analysis. Bradbury navigates through the topic of the alien in three distinct ways: the quest for the alien, the alien among us, and the human as alien. These categories are outlined in *Aliens: The Anthropology of Science Fiction* by Slusser and Rabkin (1987) and are applied here through close readings to provide a framework for Bradbury's treatment of the Other/alien. The conflict between the Other/alien and humans is shown as the occupants of the Old World resisting the dominance of the

incoming settlers from the New World; however, to fully examine Bradbury's adaptation of this conflict, the relationship between humanism and the Other/alien in sf must be considered as well. First contact between the Other/alien exemplifies a sense of wonder, or an experience of alterity, and what I later explore with sf scholar Istav Csicsery-Ronay Jr.'s concept *the more*.

Perceptions of self and reality are changed when the settlers search for Martians while exploring the new landscape. Slusser and Rabkin declare "This open search for the alien can, perhaps must, result in man interacting with the alien to the point of altering his own shape in the process" (*Aliens* 8). Slusser and Rabkin distinguish between the anthropophilic and anthropophobic alien, meaning aliens who seek out or avoid humans respectively. Slusser and Rabkin go on to define anthropophobic aliens as "beings that simply will not contact us. They are creatures of the void rather than of the mirror. But the alien that will not contact us is also a limit, a warning sign placed before the void that turns us back to our sole self" (6). In Bradbury's text, most Martians are anthropophobic—they avoid contact with humans at all costs. Early encounters with Martians result in death and madness as depicted in "February 1999: Ylla", "August 1999: The Earth Men" and "April 2000: The Third Expedition." The opportunity for first contact is repeatedly anticipated and deferred by the anthropophobic nature of Bradbury's Martians and the ironic nature of his frontier, but significant human and Martian meetings do occur as the narrative progresses.

Bradbury broadly writes his Martians as parallels to North American Indigenous peoples and to mirror the serious damage caused by colonialism. He employs his Martian characters to demonstrate "the most significant function the 'Other' serves in [science fiction and post-colonial literature] is that '...encountering the Other forces us to encounter

ourselves' [and] 'the way it can reveal things about ourselves which are intensely uncomfortable'" (Hoagland and Sarwal 10). When Martians and humans begin to interact and communicate, the alterity of the Other comes to the forefront and human failings, namely violence and aggression, are examined. Sf critic and professor Istav Csicsery-Ronay Jr. discusses the alien and the Other in sf in his essay "Some Things We Know About Aliens" (2007) and closely analyzes what happens in this instance of alterity, or what he terms *the more*.

Non-fatal contact is established later in the text and first described in "August 2002: Night Meeting." Both human and Martian are changed through their meeting and realize much exists beyond their current limited perceptions. Their experience with alterity is tempered through an increasing sense of wonder and interest in each other. This happens when the Martian touches Tomas, a human settler, so they can understand each other's words: "Neither understood, but they tapped their chests with the words and then it became clear. And then the Martian laughed. 'Wait!' Tomas felt his head touched, but no hand had touched him. 'There!' said the Martian in English. 'That is better!'" (Bradbury 103). By speaking each other's language through mystical Martian touch, they debate the reality of Mars in that moment. It becomes apparent that each are experiencing a different time period: Tomas in the present and Martian in the past. While the condition of alterity inherently means the Other is different in a way that cannot be known, awareness of this unknown difference begins to emerge as humans and aliens continue to meet. Ultimately, both parties are transformed by meeting each other, which demonstrates the perception-altering nature of such fictional interspecies meetings. Fictional human and alien interactions open the possibility for gaining knowledge and experiences beyond common experience, or even

species experience, which can also be called a transcendent experience of alterity, or what Csicsery-Ronay Jr. describes as *the more*:

> The energy of the alien comes from human subjects' constant desire for a meaning giving supplement, some new thing that can be recognized and yet be free of the banality of human social existence. It is a matter of indifference whether they inspire fear or love, just so long as they keep the portals open to *the more* (Csicsery-Ronay Jr., "Some Things We Know About Aliens" 3).

Bradbury's Martians certainly open the portals to *the more*, or what I argue can also be called alterity, as there is much we never learn about their civilization since it remains forever out of reach, yet endlessly pursued by the settlers.

Another notable interaction with *the more*, and the secondary aspects of the Other, is depicted in "November 2002: The Fire Balloons." This narrative portrays an interaction between a human missionary and a Martian entity. A lengthy discussion about life and death ensues between human and entity since Martians have discovered how to evolve into non-physical sentient energy beings. Much to the frustration of the missionary, the evolved Martian does not share their secret to transforming into non-physical beings described as "blue round globes of St. Anthony's fire" (*The Martian Chronicles* 92). Martians have found transcendence beyond physical reality into divine sublimity, but the process is never described or shared, which is the same immortality and transcendence all seek on the mythical the Western frontier. Benford argues the fictional alien is intentionally constructed for the purposes of reflection and self-analysis:

> Thus, one underlying message in SF is that the truly alien doesn't just disturb and educate, it breaks down reality, often fatally, for us. Here SF departs quite profoundly from the humanist tradition in the arts. Science fiction nowhere more firmly rejects—indeed, explodes—humanism than in treating the alien. (Benford, "Effing the Ineffable" Aliens 31)

Humanism is defined as "The tendency to emphasize man and his status, importance, powers, achievements, interests, or authority" (*Oxford Companion to Philosophy* 375) and "encouraged on the ability of man to find out about the universe by his own efforts, and more and more to control it" (375). Emphasizing the benefits of progress, ethics, and scientifically informed thinking free from the influence of religion or supernatural belief are well-established themes in nineteenth century American literature. Through this interaction with *the more*, the influence and significance of humanism is reduced by an order of magnitude within non-human sf universes as demonstrated by interactions with the Other/alien.

As a regressive frontier, any attempt to dominate the landscape or Indigenous Martians has unexpected and often ironic outcomes. By progressing through the quest for the alien, alien among us, and, human as alien, Martians are gradually no longer seen as enemy or void, but as equal, friend, and same. The sense of wonder attached to Martian encounters fades and is replaced by the transformative energies of the planet, or what can also be identified as a return to an Indigenous lifestyle, when human settlers realize they are in fact the Other/alien, or Martian Adam/Eve, as depicted in "October 2026 – The Million-Year Picnic."

Mars is portrayed as a landscape that demands reverence and this sentiment culminates in "October 2026 – The Million-Year Picnic" where a handful of settlers inherit

Mars and must see to their own survival. The few remaining settlers are left to struggle on the Martian frontier after getting exactly what they wanted: the planet itself. The father of the family depicted sees to cutting off the Old World by destroying his rocket to limit the possibility for interplanetary travel for some time, which he believes will urge his family away from an overreliance on technology and repeating past mistakes:

> I'm burning a way of life, just like that way of life is being burned clean of Earth right now...Life on Earth never settled down to do anything very good. Science ran too far ahead of us too quickly, and the people got lost in a mechanical wilderness...Wars got bigger and bigger and finally killed Earth. (Bradbury 266)

Out of Earth's ruinous history, the survivors on Mars begin to consider how they can establish a new society on the planet. By reflecting upon the past and understanding the gravity of being the last of humanity, Bradbury calls for a new way of interacting with a land that embraces the transformation of its occupants by distancing themselves, literally and figuratively, from the atrocities of American history, while building a closer connection to the land. Seemingly, this new way is to return to old ways, such as living more closely to the land as Indigenous peoples did through embodying the Martian Adam/Eve identity.

At the end of the narrative, the father challenges his children to search Mars to find a real Martian. In Kim Stanley Robinson's observation below, he summarizes the end of the novel. The fictional family is depicted leaning over the side of their boat to reveal the real Martians seen in their own reflections:

> The...beautiful finish to the novel: The father taking his kids down to the canal and showing them 'we are the Martians.' Human beings will be the Martians. That brings

> in all of the other elements involved: the reflectivity of it, the fact that you have to look into the Martian water, that the water will indeed be there on Mars, but that we will be its actual life. (Robinson, "Martian Musings" 148)

Rabkin identifies this as the moment where "the redemption of mythical America can begin, and the chronicles of Mars end" ("The Composite Novel in Science Fiction" 96). The remaining settlers are "then, an American; now, a Martian, which is to say an American who has a second chance untainted with imperialism and having escaped the 1950s technology-branded fear of nuclear self-immolation" (Rabkin "Is Mars Heaven?" 98). Although the human population on Earth has been decimated, an opportunity emerges on Mars for rebirth:

> What was once the frontier land of Mars literally becomes the new Eden, giving birth to a new human civilization out of the ashes of the old. Two civilizations have died to make this new birth possible, and we are left with the slight hope that the new one will synthesize what was best about the Martian and Earth societies. The frontier sensibility that has governed most of the book is replaced by a utopian sensibility. (Wolfe, "The Frontier Myth in Ray Bradbury" 123)

Settlers have been given the chance to create a new society and learn from the past and create new ways of living that reject Earth's mistakes and embrace the optimism of the Martian frontier. The regressive frontier resulting from the collapse of technological progress provides a unique opportunity for settlers on Mars to create a new identity for themselves, or what can also be recognized as the embodying the characteristics of Martian Adam/Eve.

Ruin and Rebirth on Mars: New Geographies of Hope

With Bradbury's timely and masterful introduction to literary publics during the GASF, *The Martian Chronicles* continues to be highly regarded by audiences today. As the prologue to this chapter states, because Bradbury chose to write myths, his Mars still has a few more years of life before the reality brought in by a manned mission to the planet extinguishes his visions there. Even though Bradbury's Mars is a Mars of myth and dreams, his fictional vision shapes how the future of the planet is imagined. Mogen summarizes the lasting influence of frontier myth in American sf and the number of texts produced through this relationship. He points out this is due to how frontier myth, history, and imagined futures have combined to create a distinct cultural mythology depicted in American sf:

> Science fiction frontiers…are more accurately understood as products of a cultural mythology which, like a genetic code implanted in the American imagination, structures visions of the future. This organic relationship between myths about the past and imagined futures is evidenced by the sheer quantity of science fiction conceived by analogy to frontier myth. (Mogen, *The Frontier Experience* 7)

Since the myth of the West is tied to the landscape, and the possession of land, American myths require a physical landscape to perpetuate. This physical necessity is what makes Mars such a tantalizing new frontier in sf, since such spaces are no longer open on Earth. And while Bradbury's Mars is largely a mirrored mythic dreamworld, the planet holds potential as a geography of hope for new ways of living by learning from the mistakes of the Old World and becoming Martian Adam/Eve.

Though Mars may be a mirror and not a fortune telling crystal, Bradbury along with other authors imprints fictional stories onto the planet, which it reflects and in turn leaves a tangible, significant presence on American culture. So while Bradbury did not aim to predict the future, but simply mirror 1950s nuclear anxieties onto the planet, his fictional visions have played a role in how Mars is imagined in literary and popular culture. Kim Stanley Robinson explains the Martian landscape holds onto fictional visions of the planet and these imaginations will influence future thoughts and actions:

> The insight of [*The Martian Chronicles*] ... is that the ghosts of our Martian stories, whether true or false, are going to be there when we arrive, and they're going to have a huge impact on our minds. The people that go there are therefore going to be permanently haunted by the Martian stories that existed before. (Robinson, "Martian Musings" 147)

Mars, at the end of the text, is still in a transitional stage with an overall sense of optimism. While the progress of the new Martians is not depicted, the potential for redemption at the end of the regressive frontier remains distinctly implied.

Continuing the discourse surrounding the American frontier dialect has become and continues to be one of the central methods to national identity formation for America, yet myth works in a reductionist manner to erase the nuanced aspects of what it depicts. So by that notion, the myth of the West can contain conflicting concepts about it, such as being simultaneously fertile and barren, civilized and wild, while remaining true to itself. Accordingly, Bradbury's synthetic West, where the Martian Adam/Eve resides, develops from the conflict between thetic regenerative frontier influences from Earth, and the

antithetic regressive frontier influences from Mars. Out of this Old World and New World conflict, Bradbury suggests a new way of being can be born on fictional Mars.

When frontiers on Earth appear fully explored, America finds new sites to support old frontier visions, here fictional Mars, and uses national myths to do so. In sf literature, Mars continues to be used as a staging space where the boundaries of historical and literary visions can disagree yet coexist and continue to shape each other. This is because American myths are comfortable with paradoxical relationships and thrive in such conditions and can create new myths when projected on fictional, but viable landscapes such as Mars. These visions of Mars will continue until we travel to the planet to either extend these myths and stories – and be haunted by them – or rewrite the old stories to break from the tradition of history and take up the new identity of Martian Adam/Eve.

# Chapter 3

## A Martian Simulation: Robinson's Critical Utopia

And so we came here. But what they didn't realize was that by the time we got to Mars, we would be so changed by the voyage out that nothing we had been told to do mattered anymore. It wasn't like submarining or settling the Wild West – it was an entirely new experience, and as…the Earth finally became so distant that it was nothing but a blue star among all the others, its voices so delayed they seemed to come from a previous century. We were on our own; and so we became fundamentally different beings. (Robinson, *Red Mars* 4)

Initiated in 1990 and completed in 2003, the Human Genome Project is the first scientific study to sequence and map the entirety of human DNA. The results of this project support the identification of the genetic structures that dictate the physical and functional expression of the human body. With these findings, researchers began to explore opportunities for treating, preventing, and curing various illnesses and diseases. Kim Stanley Robinson's (1952- ) Mars trilogy (*Red Mars* 1992, *Green Mars* 1993, *Blue Mars* 1996) applies genetic modification to internal medicine and external terraforming. His fictional simulation illustrates how "among all the many things we transform on Mars, ourselves and our social reality should be among them. We must terraform not only Mars, but ourselves" (Robinson, *Red Mars* 89) to successfully adjust to living on the planet. Typically, a new frontier requires what past sf authors and American studies critics describe as an American Adam or Martian Adam/Eve to emerge by learning from the errors of the past. Robinson however beckons for a figure

beyond the American Adam, or even Martian Adam/Eve – he calls for Mars settlers to become Martian. Robinson's Mars trilogy marks a significant contribution to the dialogic between Mars fiction and Mars science publics, which in turn influences the American frontier dialectic.

This chapter outlines a brief outline of sf periods from the 1960s-1990s and summarizes Robinson's writing activity in the 1990s.[6] While this timeframe covers several genres, sub-genres, and movements, sf's development from the GASF to the end of the twentieth century provides context on the evolving dialogism between Mars science and Mars fiction. I touch on how Mars fiction developed in times of optimism about the presence life on the planet, known as the Romanic Period, and how sf developed in times of pessimism, known as the Sterile Period. Next, I cover notable missions, discoveries, and failures in astronomy during these decades, which greatly influence sf themes and topics. Finally, I discuss how Robinson's work fits into the sf tradition and how his Mars trilogy marks the Mars mania renaissance of the 1990s.

So far, I have discussed both regenerative and regressive frontiers at length in Burroughs' and Bradbury's works. In the Mars trilogy, the regenerative frontier is not reborn from a dying world, as is the case in Burroughs' series, but produced by Earth settlers. This production of the regenerative frontier is accomplished in three ways: through the actions of the frontier hero, John Boone, in exploring the debate between preserving or modifying the alien wilderness of Mars, and with the subsequent terraformation of the planet. Robinson's

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[6]It should be noted that the same publishing achievements seen in the Pulps and GASF for sf are no longer the central focus of the 1990s. Instead, Robinson's frontier is the real Mars and his thoughts on what experience may become.

protagonist Boone takes on the role of frontier hero, but in a political sense since his words and actions lead the way to make Mars safe for democracy. Secondly, two characters emerge in the debate to terraform the Martian landscape, but as representatives for and against change. These characters, Sax Russell and Ann Clayborne, embody each side of the frontier dialectic as projected on fictional Mars, and present arguments defending wilderness or civilization throughout the trilogy. While Mars terraformation goes ahead after the process is approved by administrative bodies on Earth, the planet's transformation is reflected in both the landscape and its occupants.

While authors such as Bradbury have called for a Martian Adam/Eve figure who is learned in the history of Earth and possesses the self-awareness and agency to embody a new identity, Robinson depicts becoming Martian as a dialogue between the individual and landscape. I continue to work from American literary scholar R.W B. Lewis' consideration of the American Adam, a figure who makes a conscious choice to break from history and take up a new identity in a new landscape. On Robinson's Mars, this new figure is Martian, and becomes posthuman through various means. To truly take up a new way of living on Mars, characters must become Martian by modifying the land and the self at the genetic level. This idea of adaptation is described as the process of areoformation. The character Nirgal stands as a representative of an areoformed and posthuman figure who illustrates the embodied Martian experience.

To resume my exploration of myth in American Mars fiction, which firstly traced the frontier, to the West, will now end at the Promised Land or utopia. While settling fictional Mars has many frontier elements, Robinson emphasizes the intentional desire for something better connected to critical utopian visions, which are Marxist socialist visions of utopia,

more so than typical depictions of expansion and settlement seen in American literature. It bears reiterating that Robinson's fiction is a simulation of what experience may become and does not aim to represent or model Mars terraformation. As well, frontier analogies are present on Robinson's Mars to an extent, but in several ways he depicts an entirely new experience with no historical reference. So, to say that Mars is a Promised Land and redemptive space, such as the American frontier has been portrayed by scholars such as Henry Nash Smith, is not entirely accurate, but not entirely false. I argue the frontier can be accurately described as an emancipating New World through its distance from the Old World and the catalyst for change is socialist revolution in this instance.

I argue that thinking about the frontier has evolved into thinking about utopia, and more specifically, attainable new worlds on a planet such as Mars. This fictional simulation of Mars is a critical utopia. A critical utopia is marked by what historian and sf critic William H. Katerberg calls "a genuine horizon… that successfully addresses some fundamental problems of human existence" (10). Mars settlement has an actionable event horizon, and such settlement should be executed with the utmost care, as Robinson firmly states, "Mars won't serve as a bolt hole or an escape hatch" ("Martian Musings" 151). Finally, I discuss the benefit of imagining something better, in terms of socioeconomic, political, environmental, and overall world systems, in utopian visions. Since Australian critic and scholar Bill Ashcroft (1946 - ) identifies "what is never imagined cannot be achieved" ("Critical Utopias" 411), imagining utopian visions in the sf mode takes the first steps required for implementing utopian ideologies.

In the context of publics and texts, I show how "science fiction responds to the scientific zeitgeist" (Miller 26), which in turn influences frontier depictions since "To a

rather surprising extent, American science fiction is a contemporary reworking of traditional themes of frontier literature" (Mogen, *Wilderness Visions* 10). I connect my argument about American myth, sf, Mars, and utopia through theoretical and literary analyses from sf cultural historians, critics, and theorists. In addition, I connect Hegel's concept the dialectic, and Bakhtin's dialogic, in terms how their thinking informs the ongoing debate between Mars science and fiction publics and the American frontier. To conclude, I discuss how Mars continues to be portrayed as a site to extend the American frontier dialectic through the ongoing dialogic between American science and fiction publics.

In the period spanning the years 1960-2000, sf established its permanent position in popular culture and literary publics. Throughout this section, I provide a brief overview of a few significant periods including New Wave (1960s – 1970s), Cyberpunk (1970s – 1990), and detail the Sterile Period (1964 – 1996) and the Realistic Period (1996 – present) and how these developments shaped Mars sf. New Wave and Cyberpunk subgenres emerged during the Sterile Period, when exploring outer space was not a central feature within sf, but instead interest shifted to inner space. It is important to trace these sf subgenre developments, and how they react to Mars findings, to successfully locate and contextualize Robinson's work in the 1990s, since his Mars trilogy "rejuvenate[ed] the Martian 'planetary romance' partly by incorporating the whole tradition within its vast span" (Luckhurst 221). While sf subgenres and themes do not necessarily develop directly out of each preceding period or set of texts, they react to previous works and current science and events of the day to demonstrate the dynamic relationship between publics and sf texts.

Since photographic evidence captured during the Mariner (1964) and the Viking (1975) missions showed Mars is barren, writing about space travel in sf between the 1960s-

1996 became unpopular. During the Romantic Period of Mars fiction from the 1890s – 1950s, the planet acted as an author's blank canvas. The past visions of Burroughs' mythical beasts and exotic ancient cities, as well as Bradbury's Midwest on Mars perished in the reality of an inhospitable environment. This began what is known as the Sterile Period in Mars sf.

The Mariner satellite expedition (1962-1973) to Mars produced the first black and white photographs of Mars and the surface "was revealed as a cratered, moonlike planet, lacking in seas or anything looking remotely like vegetation" (Miller 18) which "begins the Sterile Period in the history of Mars exploration...[and] persisted for about thirty years, ending with the Global Surveyor mission in 1996" (18). With conclusive negative results, sf authors turned to inner space and other fictional horizons. Life on Mars did not appear to be possible at the time, yet it continues to be the subject of endless tests and rover missions. Daily news articles are published on the newest findings from the surface of Mars, which shows an unrelenting interest, or Mars mania renaissance, in establishing the planet as a livable space.

Stellar photography alone allows for scientists and writers to begin considering how humanity may survive in such an environment, which shaped Martian research and writing accordingly. Markley summarizes the impact of real photos taken of real Mars upon literary and scientific publics:

> The Viking photographs thus mark an important step in the acculturation of the Martian landscape to human conceptions of the environment. In this respect, the desert vistas returned to Earth by the Viking landers offer two different kinds of invitations to the human imagination: on the one hand, Mars becomes ahuman,

> evoking the sense that to understand areography— ancient flood plains, immense canyon systems, and gargantuan shield volcanoes— one must extend history itself into the geological, or rather areological past, an imaginary that extends three or four billion years back in time. But this ahuman quality provokes as well the desire to impose human desires on alien landscape, to remake Mars in the image of an unspoiled Earth. (Markley, *Dying Planet* 285-286)

The conclusive evidence that Mars does not contain detectable life inspired sf authors to consider other ways to live on Mars since "it is not a matter of chance that the period of publication of Robinson's trilogy, 1992-1996, is the low point in NASA's interest in potential life detection experiments on Mars. Again science fiction responds to the scientific zeitgeist" (Miller 26). Through this new knowledge that Mars does support detectable life, sf writers in the 1990s began to generate works about the "idea of making Mars more hospitable to life by altering it, particularly by terraforming it [and this concept] reached its ultimate flower in Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy" (18). The desire to remake Mars into unspoiled Earth, as Markley puts it, touches upon frontier myth and utopian tendencies, which will be explored later in detail.

In many ways, GASF authors and scientists reached their goal with the success of the American Moon Landing in 1969. As a result, authors began to consider new frontiers in sf. English sf author J.G. Ballard comments in "Which Way to Inner Space?" (1962), "science fiction should turn its back on space, on interstellar travel, extra-terrestrial life forms… [and] galactic wars" (3) and instead move into an avant-garde and experimental mode breaking down taboos, exploring counter-culture elements, and abandoning old sf tropes for fresh approaches. Such innovative methods included incorporating scholarship from critical

theorists such as Marshall McLuhan, Fredric Jameson, and Raymond Williams into sf writing. Sf authors active in the 1960s and 1970s such as J.G. Ballard, Brian Aldiss, Judith Merril, and John Brunner are typically classified as New Wave authors. Notably, while they published during this time, Samuel R. Delany and Philip K. Dick do not identify with the New Wave movement (Science Fiction 162-163). Dick's *Martian Time-Slip* (1964) depicts colonization on Mars, but other topics such as mental health and corporate control are central to the text instead of the settlement or terraforming process. Thomas Disch also states he does not associate himself with the term "since [he did not] believe that [New Wave] was ever a meaningful classification" ("New Wave"). Peter Nicholls explains "Because it was never a formal literary movement – perhaps more a state of mind than anything else – New-Wave writing is difficult to define. Perhaps the fundamental element was the belief that sf could and should be taken seriously as literature" ("New Wave"). Writing against the fatigued concepts of Golden Age sf, these authors, among many others, were part of the New Wave. By actively engaging in literary and conceptual experimentation, their thinking on critical theoretical elements is an undeniable component of contemporary sf writing and studies.

Luckhurst points out "In SF histories, the 1960s are also regarded as an era of generational dissent, crisis, and rebellion" (142). The space adventures seen in Bradbury, Heinlein, and Asimov's works no longer dominated texts published during the period. Luckhurst goes on to note that New Wave authors "Regarded Golden Age SF as an exhausted mode of low culture, trapped in a ghetto of its own construction. Yet…New Wave more clearly defined the turn from muscular adventures in outer space to psychological examination of inner space" (142). New Wave authors established sf as serious reading by

exploring inner space through the works of critical theorists of the day. In 1973, Darko Suvin (1930 -) sf critic, author, and academic, co-founded Science Fiction Studies alongside prominent critics such as Fredric Jameson (165). New Wave authors established the relationship between sf and theory, which continues to develop. During this time, Luckhurst notes "One of the problems of assessing the New Wave is that the acceleration of academic interest in SF might itself be regarded as a New Wave product" (165). As such, the exploration of new sf themes through the lens of academic theory led the genre in a new direction, which excited authors, readers, and critics who were exhausted from GASF spaceships, ray guns, and aliens.

Space travel remained uninspiring to sf authors during the 1980s, so sf authors continued to explore inner space, but also entered new territory as influential thinkers for informing American military policy. In the Cyberpunk era of the 1980s, works by authors such as William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Rudy Rucker, Lewis Shiner, Pat Cadigan, and Donna Haraway signal another shift in sf themes and topics, and a distinct break from GASF texts. Nicholls and Ashley state in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, "Indeed, by the 1980s the Golden Age 'classics' of sf, which until then had been reprinted constantly, began to drift quietly from the marketplace as they proved less and less accessible to succeeding generations of readers" ("The Golden Age of SF"). This period focuses on concepts of overpopulation, paranoia, artificial intelligence, the posthuman body, resource scarcity, hybridity, singularity, and oppressive corporations typically depicted with elements from detective fiction. Nicholls observes "It was not long after the publication of Gibson's first novel, *Neuromancer* (1984), that the [subgenre] term began to come into general use, and *Neuromancer* was the book that definitively shaped our sense of the subgenre to which

'cyberpunk' refers" ("Cyberpunk"). While Gibson's works, along with Bruce Sterling's text *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology* (1986) stand as critical Cyberpunk publications, Roger Luckhurst argues there is another project from this period with greater significance: "the work of writers associated with the Citizens' Advisory Panel on National Space Policy" (200).

The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was a significant undertaking which saw collaboration between sf authors and American policy makers. In 1983, American president Ronald Regan "announced the Strategic Defense Initiative" which was a "military research project…commonly referred to as 'Star Wars'" (200). The initiative detailed "satellites armed with lasers [to] protect the High Frontier by knocking out enemy missile attacks" (200). Sf authors on the advisory panel for this project included Larry Niven, Greg Benford, Robert Heinlein, and Greg Bear, which greatly influenced the direction of this space militarization endeavor. Luckhurst goes on to observe "In one chapter [of the SDI], [titled] 'Exploring Our Frontiers,' military strategy blends seamlessly with science fiction, proposing that the militarization of space will also push American colonies on the moon, mining for raw materials…and Mars exploration" (200). Through the completion of the SDI project, the dialogic relationship between science and fiction evolves into a new conversation where both sides agree on the same idea. And this same point agrees to colonize the moon, Mars, and beyond.

The 1990s also saw the launch of many Mars probe missions; however, the Mars Observer (1992-1993), Mars Climate Orbiter (1998-1999), Mars Polar Lander (1999) all failed to achieve their objectives due to technical issues or loss of communication. However, these failed missions did not dissuade authors from writing about Mars or scientists from

sending more probes; Mars mania had again taken hold of public interest. In the 1990s, Robinson emerges as a prominent sf author of the decade and marks the transition of Mars fiction into conceivable reality. Sf texts reflect a world growing at an alarming rate, the effects of globalization, and *fin de siècle* anxieties (Markley, *Dying Planet* 221). Markley notes "'Realistic' [Mars sf] scenarios almost invariably cannibalize and subsume the romance of the red planet" (286). Scientist and sf critic Joseph D. Miller claims "A defining characteristic of good science fiction is that the science must be plausible" (*Visions of Mars* 26), so contemporary realistic Mars sf authors exclusively write it using hard sf terminology. As a realistic sf writer, Robinson constructs his fiction in hard sf, which focuses on chemistry, medicine, biology, and engineering in detail. This writing style often results in many lengthy sections of technical writing and extensive amounts of factual scientific research, theory, and practice, which support plausible the realism of the text.

The *Mars* trilogy is rich with references to past sf works and illustrates. According to Markley, "SF in the 1990s ... responds to the intensification and global extension of technological modernity not with new forms, but rather with ones lifted from the genre's vulnerable past" (*Dying Planet,* 221) shown through revisiting space travel to Mars and settling the planet. *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* summarizes "New tales of planetary exploration are characteristic of the revival of hard sf in North America in the1990s" (James and Mendlesohn 192). This trend is depicted in Greg Landis' *Mars Crossing* (1999) and Greg Benford's *The Martian Race* (1999), which portray realistic Mars travel, settlement, and the many challenges such endeavors include. Mars sf in this period, and going forward, does not do away with the baggage of Earth's past, and past visions of Mars, but incorporates it into its fictional visions through concrete, scientific language. By

fully embracing the realism of settling on other planets, Mars sf takes political, socioeconomic, environmental, and historical considerations into account marking another distinct break from the planet's past portrayals.

Robinson's Mars trilogy is the quintessential example of realistic Mars sf. By applying concepts in science and technology, while paying homage to Martian romances of past sf, Robinson depicts a well-researched simulation of what Mars colonization may look like. Roger Luckhurst claims, "*Red Mars* might indeed be the representative 1990s text in the way its densely particularized projection of the colonization of Mars … retrospectively surveying the political and literary possibilities of genre writing" (221-222). Markley posits "In this regard, Robinson radically revalues the science-fiction tradition of Burroughs, Brackett, and Bradbury; his literary and political touchstones become the utopian tradition represented by works such as Bogdanov's *Red Star* and Kornbluth's and Merril's *Outpost Mars*" (*Dying Planet* 357). Mars fiction after Robinson is typically depicted through concrete realism in comparison to earlier incarnations of the planet as a site for alien conquests and the discovery of lost civilizations. While Burroughs, Bradbury, and other authors' early visions of the planet continue to influence its depictions, realistic Mars sf works to hypothesize and simulate the plausible steps required to make such undertakings a success. Robinson recognizes that Mars serves as an arena for innovative ideas and a fresh start:

> And so… [the 1980s and 1990s] became a very nice time to open up a novel that said there might be a chance for a complete clean slate, where we could start over again without all this baggage and without all these rules [from Earth], and make a new world. Part of the miraculous conjunction was the desire for a terraformed Mars, the desire for a new start. (Robinson, "Martian Musings" 150)

Finally, Robinson reminds us that his vision of Mars is not an escape hatch or prediction of things to come, but a simulation based on Earth's history that explores the alternatives required to create a different future. He posits that Mars could be a place where a new start might happen, but this new future world is entirely dependent on the desire for it, and which actions are taken now to achieve this desire.

To provide background on Robinson's writing and achievements, he completed his Ph.D. on the works of Philip K. Dick partly under the supervision of Fredric Jameson and was a former student of American poet Gary Snyder. The palpable influence of these figures is present in his commentary on world-building, utopia, post-modernity, and environmental criticism. Markley summarizes the Mars trilogy as one that "offers a sustained, theoretically sophisticated attempt to conjure into being a future that resists the romantic dystopianism of cyberpunk, the antitechnological bias of much 'green' literature, and the blanket denunciations of capitalist technoscience" (*Dying Planet* 355-356). Markley goes on to explain "[Robinson] … emphasizes that science fiction is a genre of ideas: like Samuel Delany, Robinson argues that science fiction does not represent historical experience but generates simulations of what that experience may become" (356). A few of his highly regarded works include *Icehenge* (1984), the *Three Californias Trilogy* (1984, 1988, 1990), *Mars* trilogy (1992, 1993, 1996), *The Martians* (1999), *The Years of Rice and Salt* (2002), and *2312* (2012). Robinson has won over twenty-two awards for his writing including the Hugo (1994, 1997), Locus (1985, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003), and Nebula (1988, 1994, 2013) for his individual works, and the Robert A. Heinlein (2016) and Arthur C. Clarke (2018) award, which recognize an author for his or her entire body of work.

Robinson's Martian simulation stands on his claim: "Mars won't serve as a bolt hole or an escape hatch. It's crazy and immoral to say it could, and we have to remind people of that every time we discuss Mars from now on" (151). Markley points out "This distinction between representation and simulation is crucial to understanding [Robinson's] Martian trilogy as a theoretical intervention in late-twentieth-century debates about ecology, economics, and technology" (*Dying Planet* 356). As a result, his fictional vision of Mars does not simulate colonization lightly. Greg Grewell clarifies this relationship by identifying the postmodern tendencies at work in Robinson's texts: "Most contemporary science fiction productions are of the combative [colonization] model, which reveals a postmodern penchant for deflating space and collapsing time, for making the alien familiar and the familiar alien, the universe known and mappable" (25). Through his critical utopia, Robinson's Martian frontier continues to extend the American frontier dialectic, but in a new way: on a truly empty, alien frontier.

Ultimately, *Red Mars* focuses on the argument to either preserve the frontier's naturally barren state or develop it into a civilized space. When terraforming progresses in *Green Mars* and *Blue Mars*, this debate evolves into characters modifying both the planet and themselves to suit the Martian landscape, which Robinson terms as areoforming. Crossley explains, "areoformation is the process of altering the human species to accept Martian conditions…[this] could be accomplished artificially by re-engineering the human body, but it also may involve an inevitable psychological adjustment" (*Imagining Mars* 285). Effectively, settlers resolve to become Martian, and posthuman, as a result of the frontier dialectic as it is embodied on Mars. In the remainder of this chapter, I analyze Robinson's

*Mars* trilogy as a regenerative frontier, site for posthuman identities, Promised Land, and critical utopia.

In *The Frontier in American History*, Turner claims "the wilderness masters the colonist" (2). Contrary to this point, Robinson's shows how the colonist can in fact master the wilderness if given the technology to do so. In *Red Mars*, the Martian wilderness initially dominates colonists, but the First Hundred settlers are highly trained in scientific, technological, engineering related fields and possess the abilities needed to terraform Mars. Chris Pak explains Robinson "explores the fusion between the physical adaptation of the environment and the transformation of social practices and institutions" (170) on Mars, while Earth is facing environmental disasters, overpopulation, resource scarcity, and global war. A new way of living is brought about in three ways: through the frontier hero's actions, which leads to making Mars safe for democracy, terraformation, and the resolution of the argument between preserving or modifying the planet.

And with every frontier, the actions taken by the hero of the landscape dictate the success or failure of it. Boone's words and actions shape the future of fictional Mars. Chris Pak observes: "Championed by… John Boone, a break with history becomes one of the driving goals of the more politically minded on Mars" (182). Skilled in rhetoric and diplomacy, he is a respected leader who is and eventually assassinated and becomes a martyr who dies pursuing the development of an independent, democratic Mars. Chris Pak provides an assessment of Boone's values on shaping a new Martian identity:

> [Boone believes] that the social patterns on Earth are responsible for many of the ills that humanity faces and that nothing but a complete overhaul will do: a discarding of those that are unhelpful and destructive and a retaining of those that speak for cultural

> pluralism and a new Martian identity that offers the colonists a global identity distinct from earth. (Pak, *Terraforming* 182-183)

While Martian settlers in Robinson's text work to break from Earth's history, David Mogen contends: "American science fiction is a contemporary reworking of traditional themes of frontier literature" (*Wilderness Visions* 10). Boone, whose name is an allusion to American author and historian John Filson's (1747 – 1788) fictional character Daniel Boone, the first American frontier hero, makes Mars safe for democracy by powerful speeches, heroic deeds, and responding to the needs of the people. Boone is assassinated in 2056, five years before the first Mars revolution, but his vision of a free Mars greatly influences the uprising. He, among other characters, believes Mars should avoid past methods of ownership, resist corporate influences from Earth, and take this opportunity to start a new way of living in the New World on Mars.

Even though his narrative is interested in global results, Robinson weaves his trilogy together by tracing the outcomes to the individual choices made by his characters, and particularly the actions of Sax Russell and Ann Clayborne. While past visions of regenerative frontiers have resurrected dying civilizations such as Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965) or the *Barsoom* series, Robinson depicts the creation of life where there was none before without the baggage of Earth's colonial practices. Robinson outlines his thinking on settling Mars in his statement: "So I thought, well, we have to terraform Mars, obviously, and there's no higher point in human existence" ("Martian Musings" 150). Carl Abbott explains that "terraforming narratives look from the top down, from the broad problems of technology and organization to the roles and conflicts of individuals within that big picture; in short, they are about power and politics" ("Homesteading on the Extraterrestrial Frontier" 242). The

terraforming of Mars is made into a political issue and championed by individuals on each side of the debate according to their personal agendas, which include targets such as scientific experimentation, resource extraction, and immigration site.

Russell leads the terraforming initiative through directing teams to drill deep holes into the planet's surface to release underground heat, producing a breathable atmosphere through a bio-chemical formula of his creation, and detonating nuclear devices placed underground to release water from the permafrost. Pak argues that "Terraforming literalizes metaphors for the creation of discursive spaces to explore new forms of local and global connectedness and identity that stand as alternatives to destructive social formations on Earth" (*Terraforming* 183). In this new vision of living on Mars, Sax Russell takes several important actions that bring about the transformations of the planet. Distanced enough from Earth and Earth's past, Mars becomes a space where new identities and a new future can take shape.

One aspect of the frontier dialectic is articulated by two groups in the trilogy: the Green faction who wants to see Mars become an Earth-like planet as soon as possible, and the Red faction who wants Mars to remain as close to its original state. Sax Russell, a biologist and polymath, advocates for the Greens, and Ann Clayborne, a geologist, advocates for the Reds. Pak explains that "This debate pivots on the disagreement over terraforming, with Reds supporting a preservationist stance towards Mars's natural Otherness and Greens emphasizing the transformative potential that life offers to the colonists" (193). This debate is resolved the end of *Red Mars* when the planet is approved for terraformation. Sf critic De Witt Douglas Kilgore outlines the Red vs. Green debate, and land use in a broader sense, in his statement discussing the value of the Martian environment: "The conflict illuminates

Robinson's position that humankind must rethink its relationship to whatever land it inhabits. The species must learn to think of itself as people of the land and not conquerors, exploiters, or escape artists" (*Astrofuturism* 234). The Martian settlers become connected to the landscape by living in new conditions, resist traditional forms of ownership, and embrace stewardship of the land after fighting for these rights through three revolutionary wars.

Russell and Clayborne represent the most changed, or areoformed, characters by the conclusion of the trilogy. Initially, each represents a side of the terraforming debate, but fall in love with each other at the end of the narration representing a new-found harmony between Martian wilderness and terraformation. As a geologist, Clayborne understands the significance of the physical history of Mars; however, as an unaltered, Othered site, the planet holds limited potential for human settlement. Clayborne's interest in preserving Mars as it was for millions of years connects to what Markley explains as "[Robinson's] novels call into question two of the constitutive fictions of modernity: the separation of nature and culture and the consequent privileging of contemporary technoculture at the expense of a devalued, technologically primitive past" ("Falling into Theory" 774 ), or more briefly, the argument for terraforming the planet aligns with the frontier dialectic in relation to civilizing the wilderness or preserving the raw beauty of nature. Through the evolving dynamic between Russell and Clayborne, the frontier dialectic is articulated through the words and actions of characters and is effectively brought to life through Robinson's narrative.

Robinson's regenerative frontier is born through Boone's political leadership, terraformation of Mars, and renewed connection to the Martian landscape. It is important not to confuse this terraforming narrative as one that advocates for turning Mars into a livable planet, but one that simulates what that would look like based on Earth's past actions, or

more simply, it shows what experience may become. Ultimately, more challenges than solutions come up as a result of terraforming, particularly in terms of immigration from Earth in light of mounting overpopulation. While Sax and Ann, among other characters, speculate upon terraforming and in doing so engage in the frontier dialectic, the argument begs for a third option. This third option is explored through the idea of becoming Martian, which when scrutinized appears to be a return to the American Adam, but in a new land, with new ideas, which creates a new identity – a posthuman identity that combines human and non-human elements into one person's way of being.

Since the frontier creates the self-reliant heroes it needs to thrive, a successful Martian frontier hero negotiates between civilization and wilderness, and often takes on the description of Lewis's American Adam, which is based upon American writer J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's (1735–1813) portrayal in "What is an American?" While realistic Mars fiction often focuses on what it means to live on Mars through engineering and environmental challenges, Robinson explores what it means to be Martian from a philosophical standpoint. Crossley posits that "By juxtaposing terraforming experiments with the reshaping of humanity to Martian standards, writers have made the human settlement of Mars a philosophical rather than a merely technological problem. What would it mean to become Martian?" (*Imagining Mars* 285). Boone declares at the opening of *Red Mars* that the journey itself, before any terraforming, changes the First Hundred. Chris Pak outlines the reflective process of forming a new Martian identity begins to take shape for the First Hundred as their distance from Earth increases:

> This distance, and the imaginative geography already associated with Mars, establishes it as a field for the exploration of and experimentation in alternative social

> and individual identities that allow Earth's population to see distorted reflections of themselves modified by influences from the alien landscape. (Pak, *Terraforming* 194)

The Martian mirror, as it was explored in my previous chapter, emerges again in the sense of building a new identity on Mars through reflecting on Earth's past. Yet instead of simply reflecting on the past to become Martian, as Bradbury suggests, Earth settlers change their genetics and environment to create a new posthuman Martian identity. A similar recognition between land and identity happens in Robinson's trilogy, much like how the conclusion of *The Martian Chronicles* depicts Earth settlers staring into their own watery reflections in a canal and realize they are Martian. The First Hundred recognize they have a unique opportunity to establish a better world but modifying the self and environment must occur before a new world can be built.

In another fictional vision of modifying the human body to suit Mars, author Frederick Pohl's text *Man Plus* (1976) describes the process required to adapt the body to Mars in a reversal of the typical trope of changing Mars to suit human needs. In this narrative, individuals are modified with cybernetics to adapt to the Martian climate but end up losing their humanity in the process. Robinson explores the idea of modifying the body and environment in a process that he defines as areoformation: "The point is not to make another Earth. Not another Alaska or Tibet, not a Vermont nor a Venice, not even an Antarctica. The point is to make something new and strange, something Martian" (*Green Mars* 2). Areoformation is further described by Crossley as "the process of altering the human species to accept Martian conditions" (*Imagining Mars* 285) and includes changing genetic, ideological, and psychological processes to live on a new planet. A successful Martian ultimately looks like an individual who can respond to the environment, adapt their

own beliefs, ways of living, and transition into a world separated from Earth's history. Even though Earth settlers, or designers, have their Earth genetics and adapt flora and fauna from the planet, Robinson goes to explain that "This process, no matter how much we intervene in it, is essentially out of our control. Genes mutate, creatures evolve: a new biosphere emerges, and with it a new noosphere. And eventually the designers' minds, along with everything else, have been forever changed" (*Green Mars* 2). The process is not dependent on accelerated change, but on the gradual evolution of the planet, its politics, people, and shared purpose of creating a new way of living.

Nirgal is a first-generation Mars born individual who embodies an areoformed, posthuman identity and later becomes a political leader of Free Mars. His birth parents, Hiroko Ai and Coyote, and his unusual abilities cause some speculation that Ai combined plant DNA into his genetics (*Green Mars* 5). Because of Ai's modifications, Nirgal can accurately sense heat sources and identify ambient temperatures, which proves to be useful in several circumstances. Pak states that "Through the synthesis of self and Other Nirgal offers Earth an opportunity to regenerate itself in a manner that resonates with … utopian vision" (Pak 195). Nirgal represents the new Martian identity through the choices of his parents, genetic modification, and areoformed beliefs. He then uses his unique identity and position to advocate for peace and harmony between Earth and Mars as a figure connected to both worlds.

Individuals become Martian at various times in several ways. Some simply by distancing themselves from Earth, some through genetic modification, others through areoforming, and others yet by being born there and knowing no other frame of reference. The areoformed identity, or Martian identity aligns with Crèvecoeur's summary in "What is

an American?": "The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labour, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence" (3). So while Robinson's trilogy reaches for a new identity and way of living, and such identities and ways of living would be new, it still connects with American frontier thinking about identity in a new world. As much as Robinson aims to write about what experience may become through his fictional simulation, some patterns repeat even when a break from history is successfully achieved.

Rabkin explains the quintessential optimism that sustains the journey to the Promised Land: "In American myth people from the Old World journey to the New World in the hope of rejuvenation and [regaining] innocence, [while] trying to return to a time before the Fall, to become what R.W.B Lewis has called 'the American Adam'" ("To Fairyland by Rocket" 123). Simply by travelling to Mars, Earth's myths and traditions come with settlers, and these narratives are transformed on the Martian landscape into utopian desire. The myths that find their way onto Robinson's Mars are of great importance to the planet's cultural life because "these myths, these legends, these stories, all — in Sartre's terms—parts of the past pasts of Mars are told, [John] Boone says 'to give Mars life, or to bring it to life'" (Foote 65). References to mythic figures such as Coyote, Big Man, John Bunyan, and his ox Babe are continuously made throughout the text, as well as many comments on Mars functioning as a site for new beginnings. While terraforming literally brings the planet to life, these stories from Earth, founded mostly in Judeo-Christian religion and creation myths, combine to bring the Martian frontier to cultural life. These mythic depictions of creation and pilgrimage to a Promised Land give life to Mars, but of course they need some kind of "base material" such

as genetics from Earth used for the foundation of Martian terraformation, but instead this is "mythic genetic material" from the only source humanity has: Earth.

While the journey to Mars is not necessarily a pilgrimage in a religious sense, it is a journey that changes, or areoforms, individuals to adapt to the New World. The voyage out is simply to something better, since Earth is overpopulated and resource bare. This makes Mars appear as the Promised Land or utopia when compared to fictional Earth; however, it is neither, for Robison includes the distinct realities of political, social, and technological challenges of the world building process in his depiction. In the context of the American frontier and pilgrimage, which overlaps with my discussion, Heike Paul notes the impact of past religious visions of the West as the Promised Land:

> Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the notion of America as utopia has remained highly attractive for a variety of groups and newcomers, and has been modified and appropriated according to their respective agendas; these more recent visions of America as the Promised Land are still shaped and propelled by the religious rhetoric of the Pilgrims and the Puritans. (Paul, *Myths that Made America* 142)

Even though much of Robinson's work effectively handles the challenging process of living on Mars, there are several references to Earth history and creation myths since "[Mars] seemed, however, to be a world without life. People searched for signs of past or present Martian life, anything from microbes to the doomed canal builders, or even alien visitors….no evidence for any of these has ever been found. And so stories have naturally blossomed to fill the gap" (Robinson, *Red Mars* 2). By repurposing Earth myths on the Martian landscape, they become something entirely new out of the traditions of the Old World. And while terraforming not only bring Mars to life, the myths and stories about the

planet rejuvenate it and support it as a regenerative frontier. Through his inclusion of myths and stories from Earth, Robinson is communicating the idea that a world is not truly alive without cultural traditions and histories.

The desire for a Promised Land on Mars transforms into utopian desire in Robinson's fiction. Humanity still seeks something better, but not in a biblical sense of salvation or return to the Garden. A unique opportunity emerges through the pilgrimage to Mars, and as a result, Martian settlers are not redeemed in a holy land, but given the chance to be emancipated from Earth's history in a world they create for themselves:

> Over the course of Robinson's Mars trilogy, it becomes clear that the human habitation of extraterrestrial spaces does not redeem American history. Rejecting both a redemptive repetition of our past and a triumphant escape from endless cycles of rise and fall, Robinson imagines future history as a slow, nonlinear, often frustrating shuffle of the cards that must constantly reckon with the state of things. (Kilgore, *Astrofuturism* 235)

Since settlers are given the chance to escape the inertia of history and form their own new futures, the transformative nature of Robinson's Martian frontier is revealed as a liberating space for second chances, but not without the complications that such endeavors would include:

> The power of utopian myths is reflected in their dual emphasis on both emancipation and redemption. Emancipation is a social and political concept that points towards...justice, freedom, and equality. Redemption is more liminal, more religious

> or spiritual than political, and reflects a desire for wholeness, psychological healing, and unity with the divine or the universe. (Katerberg, *Future West* 11)

Robinson's Mars is more accurately described as an emancipating space that holds the opportunity for a better way of living, instead of a holy land or Promised Land capable of redeeming American history, but does not present what Kilgore describes as a triumphant escape from the cycles of history. The myths and stories that fill in the gaps take on religious and spiritual qualities due to their historical connection to Earth stories and certainly do give cultural life to Mars by filling in the gaps, as Robinson terms it. As a result, these myths combine through the process of areoformation into expressions of utopian desire.

The journey to a new world that is barren, yet capable of liberating settlers from the flawed cycles of Earth's history represents both a break from the past and new beginnings born out of the past. Katerberg emphasizes the process of retrieving and adapting elements of myth and tradition from Earth so lessons from the past can be used to articulate a new utopian vision:

> Progressive-minded radicals typically have believed that the past must be left behind to build a new world. Robinson's protagonists suggest something more complex. Elements of the past and traditions must be retrieved and adapted for utopian hopes to be dreamed, pursued, and enacted. Ways of life from the past can remind people of ideals, insights, hopes, and experiences that they had forgotten or patronizingly dismissed. Retrieving the past and adapting it to critique the present and envision a better future are essential to the utopian process. (Katerberg, *Future West* 155).

Experiences from the past have value and purpose, as Katerberg claims, in the utopia building process. Since Earth settlers become fundamentally different beings through their distance from Earth, they are still connected to the Old World and its lessons and traditions. And while Mars is not a Promised Land or redemptive site, it is a space for realistic emancipation from the cycles of history complete with failures and challenges along the way. Finally, through his critical utopian vision, Robinson's characters reflect upon the lessons from Earth's myths and traditions, good and bad, in order to create a better future through revolution, failure, and continuing to work towards a better future.

Mars is an arena for debate about the future with a tangible event horizon. In recent optimistic visions of Mars in sf, the Martian frontier typically takes on utopian speculations and ideologies. Utopia is often playfully identified as both a good place and no place, but in the context of utopian sf, Katerberg states that "Mars is not 'no place.' It is a possible place of human settlement in the future" (152). A critical utopia, such as Robinson's, actively explores the reality of its world building process in detail. Katerberg goes on to define critical utopias in the following passage:

> Critical utopias have a genuine horizon and even utopian accomplishments but emphasize ongoing historical processes and human failings, as even the utopian society being depicted is divided by economic, cultural, political, or religious conflicts...critical utopias are not static but provisional. They leave room for dissent, diversity, conflict, and ongoing historical evolution, even as they depict a society or movement that successfully addresses some fundamental problems of human existence. (Katerberg, *Future West* 10)

Robinson's narrative depicts a critical utopia in progress and underscores the frustrations related to settling on a new planet. He addresses the problem of Mars being presented as a Promised Land or escape hatch by describing the ongoing opposition and revolution that such a settlement would include. David Seed notes that "Robinson has stated that he wanted to move away from the older conception of utopias as separated places to a notion of them as a 'road of history,' and throughout the novels he never lets the reader forget the trilogy's historical context" (*Science Fiction* 96). Robinson's Mars is not the Promised Land at the end of a pilgrimage, nor does the planet guarantee redemption, but it does represent a chance for new stories and new identities to form as an imagined alternative outcome from the cycles of Earth's history.

Andrew Milner, editor for Marxist theorist, scholar, and critic Raymond Williams' (1921-1988) text T*enses of Imagination: Raymond Williams on Science Fiction, Utopia and Dystopia* (2010), summarizes "the whole point of utopia or dystopia is to acquire some positive or negative leverage on the present" (Milner, *Tenses* 93). By depicting utopia in sf, and in this case a critical utopia complete with failure and conflict, alternatives to present ways of living can be imagined since critical theorist Frederic Jameson cautions "Yet utopia as a form is not the representation of radical alternatives; it is rather simply the imperative to imagine them" (65), meaning there is value in imagining sf futures, even if such critical simulations are difficult to imagine. The future does not exist in a material sense but creating fiction about it records it in material language. These alternative visions present new approaches and actions to improve current ways of living, if only in fiction. In *Demand the Impossible* (1986), Tom Moylan's analysis adds more commentary on Milner's thoughts on the virtue of imagining utopia as leverage on the present. Moylan explores how critical

utopias develop out of the tension between the Old World and New World, which is seen between Earth and Mars throughout the trilogy. This ongoing tension results in the desire for something better, or more aptly put, initiates the revolutionary process that stems from the desire to create utopia:

> A central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as blueprint while preserving it as dream. Furthermore, the novels dwell on the conflict between the originary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives. (Moylan, *Demand the Impossible* 10).

Robinson emphasizes that Mars is not an escape hatch or bolt hole from Earth's problems and his trilogy does not serve as a blueprint on how to create a utopia on Mars. It does however present the realistic challenges and conflicts that come along with the utopian process, which is a hallmark of the critical utopian mode. The value of imagining this critical utopia is to provide some leverage on the present and explore what realistic alternatives, nonetheless flawed, may look like.

Hypothesis for Critical Utopia: What is Never Imagined Cannot be Achieved

Since the desire for a better future requires human action in order to take shape, Robinson's characters articulate their utopian longings through revolution. Two revolutions are initiated in the trilogy - the first failed revolution of 2061 occurs in response to increasing immigration to Mars and corporate control, and the second revolution of the 2120s resolves

some of the unresolved issues from the first uprising. Ultimately, the second revolution produces outcomes that move towards utopian living, since political agreements such as the Dorsa Brevia constitution are created to define language surrounding Mars immigration, economics, and sovereignty. Without the desire for utopia, revolution cannot occur, yet there are several dynamic and competing definitions of utopia, as well as ongoing arguments about whether it is possible at all. The value of utopian visions, as Bill Ashcroft argues, is if we cannot imagine it, we cannot do it. And while utopia in its most idealized sense may never be feasible, Robinson imagines the significance of imagining something better compared to current ways of living. For the purposes of locating a useful definition for my discussion, I refer to Ashcroft's summary on utopia in the following excerpt: "The concept of the utopia remains a conceptual anchor to any theory of a better world, any hope for social change and amenity…For although not everything we imagine may be achievable, what is never imagined cannot be achieved" ("Critical Utopias" 411). The realistic limitations of world building are never ignored by Robinson and thus produce an effective critical utopian vision of a challenging, but tangible simulation. Finally, Robinson illustrates the challenges of portraying the world building process. I argue it is worthwhile to go about this depiction, even though it is difficult. It is because the desire for utopia is such a deeply held structure of feeling that when authors, and particularly sf authors, write about the future and imagine everything it could be, the desire for something better – utopia – inevitably enters the discussion.

Carl Freedman argues that "Utopia is the homeland where no one has ever been" (65) which calls upon the notion as a structure of feeling as Raymond Williams employs the term, and I argue the most intensely held and universal of them all. Even though the desire for

utopia can be derided as unrealistic or foolish, imagining something better is vital to engaging in revolutionary thought and action, which produces change. In *Demand the Impossible*, Tom Moylan locates the utopian impulse in Robinson's work at the "juncture between the 'personal' and 'political,' public/private and macro/micro, as the key location for deep change…whether it takes the form of writing, reading, or more generally daydreaming" (305). Robinson's depiction of a utopia in progress contributes to "the fuller exploration of that juncture, of the role of utopian desire in revolutionary psychology" (305). It is in this structure of feeling that utopian desire and the revolutionary thinking backing it, as Moylan describes, can be observed. Sf critic Daniel K. Cho summarizes this point of utopia as iterative process initiated through revolution by stating "Revolution is the mechanism that creates the requisite breathing space - that is, wilderness - for accomplishing this work. As the trilogy demonstrates, Utopia is inevitably an iterative process, involving the development and implementation of multiple versions of revolution itself along the way" (78). While it is challenging to assign value to most things in progress, in this case Robinson uses critical utopian sf to depict Martian settlement in ways that provide insight into the desires that might shape such revolutionary actions, since what is not imagined cannot be achieved, and what is not imagined will never hold value.

The utopian impulse, as Moylan explains, is located at the juncture of public and private, personal and political. This is an ambiguous juncture that is complicated to depict and dissatisfying at times, yet worthwhile to imagine. Frederic Jameson explains: "This is...the ambiguous space in which the Mars trilogy is uniquely positioned, wedged between the moments of otherness and production, between geology and biology, rock and plant, impact crater and tented village" (54-55). Robinson begins narrating his critical utopia after

the first manned Mars expedition in 2020, but before the First Hundred settlers reach Mars. The trilogy is situated in the fictional future years spanning 2026-2225, which projects his simulation into the future, and far into the ambiguous space of plausibility and almost but not yet. Utopian thinking typically, if not always, is positioned in the future in literary depictions due to its tendency to hope for something better compared to current conditions. Freedman captures the futurity of utopia in his analysis:

> Utopia can never be fixed in the perspective of the present, because it exists, to a considerable degree, in the dimension of futurity: not, however, in the future as the latter is imagined by mere chronological forecasting, or in the mechanistic and philistine notions of bourgeois "progress," but rather as the future is the object of hope, of our deepest most radical longings. (Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* 64)

Connecting back to future as an object of hope, as Freedman mentions, and structure of feeling, this longing is revolutionary by nature. Lastly, Freedman claims that "Utopia cannot finally be understood as simply cut off from the empirical world of actuality. It is the *transformation* of actuality into utopia that constitutes the practical end of utopian critique and the ultimate object of utopian hope" (69). It is here in the transformation of reality into utopia that Robinson's depiction captures the ambiguous juncture. So while the transformation is immense, it is not complete, and since critical utopias are constantly reckoning with the frustrating reality of building a better way of living, utopia perhaps can never be complete. Even though the trilogy concludes with a democratic Mars, the planet is still in the process of becoming the New World that settlers desire and always will be.

In Mars fiction, new societies are built out of old Earth stories and myths on a sometimes barren and sometimes livable frontier landscape. As a result, the planet is haunted by the phantoms of Mars narratives from the past, but these haunted visions have value in terms of learning from the past to improve the future. The planet retains numerous projections of past, present, and future visions upon it because there is no finite blueprint for the planet just yet. I argue Robinson's trilogy employs the language needed to talk about new frontiers by transitioning into using utopian ideologies. Mars functions as a mirror to the frontier in American sf, but has noticeably moved beyond simply reflecting history and into more complex depictions of a New World beyond what myth can capture and express:

> If the American West cannot escape its history, perhaps it can be redeemed in some other way in the future. If so, then hope for the future depends on a critical understanding of the past and a utopian appropriation of inherited traditions. Stories that address these new issues suggest a more complex view of history, time, and hope than New World myths allow (Katerberg, *Future West* 7).

Through Robinson's work, one can trace the evolution of the frontier dialectic into utopian dialectic, and since what cannot be imagined cannot be achieved, there is value in grappling with the challenge of imagining and writing down a simulation of what experience and history may become.

Accordingly, Mars sf steps forward in a new way: as a record of visions of the future that may serve as base material for future myths since Williams declares "Imagination has a history. There are changing and conflicting interpretations of what it is and of its value. Imagination also has structure, at once grammatical and historical, in the tenses of past, present and future" (*Tenses* 115). When we talk about imagining Mars, in science or fiction,

we are always talking about it in its past, present, and future tenses as Williams describes, since it is only a product of the imagination at the moment. There certainly are things we know to be true about the planet through rover missions and satellite photography, but so much remains unknown and unexplored so that the temporality of visions of Mars is distinctly different and outside of human experience – for the moment. It is still valuable to record visions of Mars since these records serve as a snapshot into the present that created them.

Writing about the future in the present has constant feedback and distortion with the current understanding of the world and how it fits into the road of history, as Robinson puts it. Sf editor, critic, and scholar Veronica Hollinger explains this feedback between present and future in sf:

> That there is complex and ongoing feedback between present and future is a very familiar idea - representations of the future in science fiction, whatever else they are, are significant responses to the political, social, and cultural conditions of their production; to borrow a phrase from Elizabeth Grosz, sf's futures are "readable pictures of the present that produced them" (Hollinger, *Notes* 23-24).

Hollinger goes on to dissect this feedback by its "dialectical interplay - movements of reflexivity and feedback - between present and imagined futures" (24) and this same interplay occurs in Robinson's trilogy through characters and through the experience of reading it before its fictional start date. This feedback between present and imagined futures produces engaging sf visions, since sf is energized by contradiction and not bound to depicting historically or factually accurate narratives, it can illustrate the dialogism between contemporary and past Mars science, as well as contemporary and past Mars fiction.

Visions of Mars from neither the present nor of the future are wrong, but simply evolving based on actions taken in the present and projected through simulations of the future to show what experience may become. As a critical utopian simulation, the trilogy evaluates American history and frontier longings, and weighs the events of the past and present to project a future vision of improved ways of living. Instead of projecting a vision of Mars divorced from Earth's history, Robinson works to exercise the nightmares of history and transform them into productive learning experiences, which leads to a self-awareness, and interplanetary awareness, and results in a new Martian identity. Through depicting a truly regenerative frontier, the terraformation process, and the areoformation required to become Martian and effectively posthuman on Mars, Robinson masterfully explores alternative visions on the road of history. It is through the ongoing dialogic between Mars science and fiction that the American frontier dialectic is shaped, and in contemporary analyses, shaped beyond the frontier and into utopian visions for a new, better future on Mars.

# CONCLUSION

## Chasing Phantoms on Mars

But if the commodity-form is not, presently, use-value, and even if it is not actually present, it affects in advance the use-value of the wooden table. It affects and bereaves it in advance, like the ghost it will become, but this is precisely where haunting begins. And its time, and the untimeliness of its present, of its being "out of joint." To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology… The "mystical character" of the commodity is inscribed before being inscribed, traced before being written out letter for letter on the forehead or the screen of the commodity. Everything begins before it begins (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 201-202).

Are we not already living on Mars? The character of Mars has already been inscribed, and our physical presence is, according to philosopher Jacques Derrida, not required to haunt the planet. Derrida's above discussion on hauntology applies to my thinking here about Mars. The relevance of Mars as cultural, literary, and ultimately physical object becomes a necessary point, particularly after my discussion about Robinson's critical utopia containing Marxist ideology. In his chapter "Apparition of the Inapparent" from *Specters of Marx* (1993) Derrida considers a wooden table as the commodity for his exposition on hauntology, but by extending his thinking here, Mars easily steps in as a commodity-form that is not presently in use and currently out of reach, and the use-value is affected in advance by virtue of thinking about the planet. Derrida's opinion here connects back to my thoughts, and title

of this thesis, about the influence of human literature and science and their resulting projections upon Mars. Since what is never imagined can never be achieved, every human pursuit, however mundane or interstellar, begins as a thought. These cultural and literary phantoms have etched themselves onto the planet in ways that cannot be erased and continue to shape our thinking about Mars.

But what does it mean if we are already living on Mars? In contemporary culture, media about Mars remain as popular as ever. News articles about Mars findings and technological innovations are daily occurrences. In recent missions, the NASA Mars rovers Spirit (2004 – 2010) and Opportunity (2004 – 2018) have been extremely successful in collecting new data about the planet, which has generated increased public interest and speculation. It can also be argued the dialogic between Mars science and Mars fiction has pushed this frontiering process to near fruition. Sf critic Howard V. Hendrix clarifies this circumstance in his statement: "Science fiction is perhaps less a means by which the present colonizes the future than it is a means by which the future colonizes the present" (14). The palpable settlement of Mars has also reactivated past frontier cycles and authors such as Robinson push us to go beyond the simple dualism of humanity versus nature and worn out patterns of historical determinism to build something better in an iterative utopian process.

Mars represents a cultural mirror into our own inner thoughts, desires, and dreaming. As well, this Martian mirror has revealed itself to be distinctly American since most if not all American Mars fiction is frontier fiction. Since our proximity to Mars presents us with a viable new planet full of tantalizing possibility, it functions as a site for shaping the uncreated American future through expansion in American Mars fiction, which pushes scientific thinking to test these speculations. Even though Mars and the American frontier myth are

inconsistently represented, these contradictions are empowering and inspire the creation of new futures because according to Barthes, a "[myth's] function is to distort, not to make disappear" (120). It is through this distortion the American frontier myth can adapt itself to Mars because "myths rarely die easily, and the frontier myth has retained its validity as an allegorical device for explaining the spiritual mission of [American] culture despite the erasure of its material preconditions" (Pfitzer 51). Mars fulfills these material preconditions since it does promise an empty, endless frontier. In several ways, the Martian frontier presents itself as a more suitable location for America's expansionist mission than the West. Katerberg goes on to claim "it is frontier conditions that erase the problems of the past and make a better future possible. At the same time, and contradictorily, such stories indicate that in … new worlds the past cannot be swept away easily. Whatever it is, for good or ill, the new is built out of the old" (*Future West* 5). Through the flexible, yet distorting nature of myths, the promise of a new frontier works to eliminate the issues of the past and invite utopia into the conversation. Yet it seems that these cycles of building new worlds out of the old are tired and ineffective now, but yearning for something better, as I have identified as a structure of feeling, is getting stronger and the material requirements for settling Mars are almost within reach in order to establish the new Martian frontier.

Since American frontier myth and Mars fiction are both occupied with the uncreated future, either realistically or fictionally, they are often found expressed together. David Mogen captures this thinking by connecting back to the core of Frederick Jackson Turner's argument:

> Turner's main point: that significance assigned to the "frontier" experience is a uniquely American phenomenon, implicated with defining national character and

> institutions in an unprecedented way. This identification of the frontier with the 'uncreated future' partly explains why the future in American science fiction is so often conceived in terms of frontier analogies. (Mogen, *Wilderness Visions* 25)

The notion of Mars as frontier has been established, as well as the future potential surrounding Mars as a site for utopia. And since pursuing the frontier experience is embedded in American national character, several parallels emerge with Kilgore's concepts discussed in his text *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space*. He explains Astrofuturism as "[representing] an attempt to describe futures that are attractive projections of contemporary social and political desires" (80). Kilgore describes "the space frontier as a site of renewal, a place where we can resolve the domestic and global battles that have paralyzed our progress on Earth. It thus mirrors and codifies the tensions that characterize America's dream of its future" (2). This thinking can be connected back to Henry Nash Smith's assessment of the American frontier as a site for masculine, economic, and spiritual renewal. It is apparent that the flexibility of myths, such as the frontier myth, have adapted to the Space Age and reach beyond the American West on Earth. America no longer dreams of the Western frontier, but instead yearns to expand Mars, into the cosmos, and continue to pursue the embodiment of American national expansionist character on the interplanetary frontier.

Mars fiction authors have written and rewritten our presence onto the planet and inscribed it as a human possession, for good or ill. Mogen sums up that "Science fiction presents new frontiers where the most cherished American ideals are affirmed, but it also projects visions in which misgivings about the value of 'progress' return to haunt us in the farthest reaches of space and time" (Mogen, *Wilderness Visions* 16). It is through these

haunted visions of progress on the fictional Martian frontier where the most significant findings are exposed by authors such as Burroughs, Bradbury, and Robinson. Sf critic Delbert E. Wylder captures the elusive, yet ever-present quality of the American frontier as an unconscious form influencing more than what is immediately obvious: "The most famous of all [new frontiers], of course, is the 'new frontier' of space. Evidently, the concept of the frontier…remains not only very much part of the usable American vocabulary…but also a part of the American consciousness or, perhaps even more appropriately, the American unconscious" (Wydler, "The Western Novel as Literature of the Last Frontier" 120). The elusive and evasive character of Mars parallels the qualities of the American frontier, which can be seen in the longevity and flexibility of their connections to American cultural identity through fiction, science, history, and myth. While becoming Martian is certainly part of embodying the Martian frontier experience, what that means remains to be seen. Like grasping at sand, holding onto the meaning of myth and frontier on Mars or on Earth is temporarily illuminated, but subsequently slips away since both function to adapt and mirror what lies within the dreaming individual. The mystical character of Mars has been inscribed by the stories we tell about it, and due to the desire to embody the American expansionist identity, settling Mars has begun before its begun.

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