The Things of Civilization, the Matters of Empire: Representing Jemmy Button*

Ruth Mayer

In 1830, Jemmy Button, a native of Tierra del Fuego who was about 12 years old at the time, was taken captive, together with three other native Fuegians, by Robert Fitzroy, captain of the H.M.S. Beagle. That is, Captain Fitzroy claimed to have "bought" Jemmy from his family for the price of a mother-of-pearl button.[1] He was brought to England, to be returned to his native land three years later as an emissary of civilization. In the following years and decades, indeed until our days, the story of Jemmy Button has been told over and over again, with so many variations and ramifications that it is hard to come up with one definitive version. Jemmy Button's fate was taken as proof that civilization shall eventually rule the world, or, conversely, as evidence that savagery will prevail or even gain the upper hand. He appeared at times as the upwardly mobile hero of a successful story of modernization, at other times as a sly trickster figure moving between the worlds, then again he was envisioned as the atavistic primitive who will forever hold on to his brutal heritage; he was made out as victim or as perpetrator, agent or inert object?depending on who told what part of his story in what format, at which point in time, and with what goal in mind.

Ultimately, however, Jemmy Button's story is the story of any subaltern subject caught in the thralls of colonialism and its narratives: he will not speak to us today, and those who spoke and speak for him, speak with their own voices and express their own intentions and interests, even where they might have his representation in mind. Jemmy Button's story is, thus, the story of Robert Fitzroy, of Charles Darwin (who acted as "naturalist" during the Beagle’s return trip to Tierra del Fuego in 1833), and of many other Western travelers who made it to Tierra del Fuego; it is the story of several generations of nineteenth-century explorers, scientists, missionaries, and social theorists, who met Jemmy Button under varying circumstances or speculated about the implications of his development from afar.[2] All of these texts usually approach Jemmy

Button's story with a larger purpose or argumentative framework in mind, so that his own point of view or experience is almost inevitably lost. In consequence, the most appropriate approaches to Jemmy Button might very well be the markedly speculative ones, as they manifest themselves in Bruce Chatwin's travel and story book In Patagonia or in Sylvia Iparraguirre's historical novel Tierra del Fuego[3]—narratives that try to recuperate Jemmy Button's point of view while at the same time highlighting the futility of their effort.

This paper will stick to academic conventions—and thus Jemmy Button's story will be left untold here, too. In fact, I will take the process of reification that Jemmy was being submitted to—he was allegedly "sold" from savagery into civilization, after all—to its extreme, and turn this paper into a reflection on the power of things in colonial contact narratives. It is "civilized things" and their exchanges that interest me in what follows: the material objects and reified subjects that were associated with civilization and a civilizing mission in the nineteenth century, that traveled together with the colonizers and the explorers and that were accredited with almost magical properties—not so much by stunned natives but rather by the travelers themselves, as we shall see. I argue that Jemmy Button's story—and the story of the Fuegians in general—needs to be written in terms of material culture, as it is a story replete with objects, objectification, and with the fantasies that objects inspire.

The history of the three Beagle voyages between 1826 and 1837 is also the history of British expansion, a history that was driven by commercial interests, the emerging ideology of free trade, a need for foreign resources and manpower, and the idea of establishing and fostering new markets worldwide. In the case of Latin America, this project was carried out in competition with the United States—which had tried to gain a monopoly on the South American markets ever since President Monroe had proclaimed his famous doctrine to Congress in 1823. While backing the Americans, the British Foreign Secretary George Canning, who was a fervent supporter of trade expansion, was also very much aware of the opportunities that Latin America, with its many resources, its underdeveloped industry, and its great demand for goods, presented to British industrialists and manufacturers. It is against this backdrop that the Beagle voyages need to be approached. They were launched by the British Admiralty as part of a concerted effort to establish a British naval presence in South America and to work out reliable maps and charts of the area for the use of merchant ships and company vessels: "it must always be remembered that the voyage of the Beagle was undertaken not in order to take a naturalist round the world but to survey and chart the coasts of South America," writes David Stanbury.[4] The venture of the Beagle, which was for a long time related almost exclusively in terms of

a quest inspired by immaterial interests—be it the spiritual interest in converting the natives that fueled Robert Fitzroy or the scientific interests in gathering knowledge that drove Charles Darwin, to name only the most prominent incentives—has to be seen as part and parcel of the very concrete history of commerce, commodification, and industrialization, colonization and imperialism: the material history of the nineteenth century. This history, as we will see, is envisioned, expressed, and negotiated in the language of things—a language that Jemmy Button, for one, must have also learnt to speak, if perhaps only brokenly. It is, at any rate, the language that takes over when Jemmy Button's story is being told. And while an approach that focuses on this language will not give a voice to Jemmy Button after the fact, it might, at least, cast light on a larger logic of materialism that framed the development of Darwin's theory of evolution and civilization, and its social Darwinist offspring.

I. Greed

Charles Darwin's first encounter with Fuegian indigenes has rightfully been described as a "shock"—"never in his wildest imagination had he thought that the three native missionaries on board—York Minster, Jemmy Button, and Fuegia Basket—had been like this," write his biographers, Adrian Desmond and James Moore.[5] The fact that the young scientist (Darwin was 22 at the time of the Beagle expedition) had established friendly relations with the teenage Fuegian Jemmy Button during the trip might have indeed heightened his sense of disorientation and disbelief when he first came across his friend's peers. This was "without exception the most curious and interesting spectacle I ever beheld," Darwin recalls later: "I could not have believed how wide was the difference between savage and civilized man: it is greater than between a wild and domesticated animal, inasmuch as in man there is a greater power of improvement."[6] And when he resumes this train of thought, he comes to still harsher conclusions: 'Viewing such men, one can hardly make oneself believe that they are fellow-creatures, and inhabitants of the same world" (V 203).

Darwin's reaction to the natives, which registers in writing that high lights his surprise, his shock, the sense of newness, difference, and utter unfamiliarity, stands in glaring contrast to the reaction that the abducted Fuegians showed when first encountering the world of civilization. In the very first place, this experience is not couched in words—or, to be precise, the words that the Fuegians might have used to describe what they saw are lost to us. But we have the words of their observers, most notably Captain Fitzroy and Charles Darwin. Both remarked time and again upon the fact that the Fuegians were not impressed.

In particular, Fitzroy is amazed about the lack of amazement on the side of the Fuegians: "The apparent astonishment and curiosity excited by what they saw, extraordinary to them as the whole scene must have been, were much less than I had anticipated," he writes at one point, and at another: "in no instance was outward emotion noticed."[7] Darwin seconds this impression, when he remarks upon the Fuegians: "We were this time, as on all former occasions, much surprised at the little notice, or rather none whatsoever, which was taken of many things, the use of which must have been evident to the natives. Simple circumstances . . . excited their admiration far more than any grand or complicated object, such as our ship" (7217).

Gillian Beer comments upon this theme with reference to the first volume on the Beagle voyages, written by Fitzroy's superior, R Parker King, who equally registered a "want of curiosity" on the side of the Fuegians he encountered:

> The absence of wonder or surprise was one of the phenomena that most disconcerted Western travellers in their encounter with indigenous people and which they described as most animal-like. Curiosity was so strong a driving force in Western expeditions, and so valued as a disinterested or "scientific" incentive as opposed to the search for material gain, that the absence of an answering curiosity was felt as rebuff or even insult. Moreover, the reader of the narrative is likely, functionally, to agree with this view unless alerted, since the reading of natural-historical travel narratives is an intensified form of that zealous curiosity that drives all reading.[8]

But it might not only have been on the grounds of the contemporary formulas of travel and science writing, with its emphasis on newness and sensation, discovery and thrill, that the natives' lack of curiosity appeared disconcerting to the travelers. The disappointment of the Beagle crew might just as well have had to do with the expectations fostered by much earlier accounts of natives speechless with amazement about the achievements of their Western visitors. Seen that way, the nineteenth century travel report needs to be read against the popular first contact narratives of earlier times, narratives in which material objects time and again take center stage and come to represent the very difference between "savagery" and "civilization." To cite one exemplary, yet by no means exceptional version—Thomas Hariot's report on the settling of Virginia in 1599:

> Most things they saw with us, as mathematical instruments, sea compasses, the virtue of the loadstone in drawing iron, a perspective glass whereby was shown many strange sights, burning glasses, wildfire works, guns, books, writing and reading, spring clocks that seem to go of themselves, and many other things

> that we had, were so strange unto them, and so far exceeded their capacities to comprehend the reason and means how they should be made and done, that they thought they were rather the works of gods than of men, or at the leastwise they had been given and taught us of the gods.[9]

What Thomas Hariot jotted down in 1599 had at the time already established itself as a blueprint for describing the first encounter between civilization and savagery—by the nineteenth century this scene has become a staple element of colonial discourse, especially colonial fiction.[10] Michael Taussig points out the complicated circles of projections involved in this troping—evoking "the white man's fascination with their fascination" with the achievements of modernity.[11] It must have been frustrating for the British travelers not to meet with this kind of breathless admiration among the Fuegians, and then to see them react with indifference to the wonders of the civilized world. Whatever may have been behind the lack of wonder in the Fuegians—whether it was just a projection of the Englishmen who expected their own gestures of surprise and amazement to be repeated, whether the Fuegians simply had different priorities in their focalization than the English, or whether it was plain culture shock that hit the Fuegians just like Darwin, if with different effects—we will never know.

But we do know about Charles Darwin's conclusions, derived from his own sense of shock and the observation of the Fuegians' difference. For him, the Fuegians' reactions attested not only to a lack of interest, but moreover to a lack of long-term perspective—a crucial lack, as it turns out:

> The perfect equality among the individuals composing the Fuegian tribes, must for a long time retard their civilization. As we see those animals, whose instinct compels them to live in society and obey a chief, are most capable of improvement, so is it with the races of mankind. Whether we look at it as a cause or a consequence, the more civilized always have the most artificial governments. . . . In Tierra del Fuego, until some chief shall arise with power sufficient to secure any acquired advantage, such as the domesticated animals, it seems scarcely possible that the political state of the country can be improved. At present, even a piece of cloth given to one is torn into shreds and distributed; and no one individual becomes richer than another. On the other hand, it is difficult to understand how a chief can arise till there is property of some sort by which he might manifest his superiority and increase his power. (V 219)[12]

At first glance, this unconditional association of civilization with a system of hierarchical rule seems surprising at a time in which democratic reform was the call of the day among intellectuals, and coming from a Whig like Darwin. Yet the ending of the paragraph points to the real

concern of this and other reflections: this is not about establishing or maintaining an autocratic system, but about establishing and maintaining a system of property ownership—which is based upon a sense of possession and a sense of authority, most importantly legal authority that ensures property rights. It is against this backdrop that we have to read the many references to the practice of stealing in Tierra del Fuego that run through virtually all nineteenth-century accounts on the region.[13] In order to establish a system of property ownership, it seems, one needs to get a grip on the "primitive" impulses of greed that rule supreme among the natives: "Young and old, men and children, never ceased repeating the word 'yammerschooner,' which means 'give me.' After pointing to almost every object, one after the other, even to the buttons on our coats, and saying their favourite word in as many intonations as possible, they would then use it in a neuter sense, and vacantly repeat 'yammerschooner'" (V 208). In fact, "yammerschooner" does not mean "give me," but rather "be kind to me" or "be kind to us," as the missionary and amateur linguist Thomas Bridges established in the 1880s.[14] But for Darwin, as for countless European travelers to the region after him, the word demarcated the Fuegians' desire for other people's things—a desire that according to Darwin was driven solely by the self-propelling dynamics of greed. Wanting things, Darwin and others did not tire of pointing out, was not enough. At first glance, this logic seems ripe with contradictions: First of all, the frequent reference to the Fuegians' greed clashes with the complaint that they lack curiosity and interest in their visitors' things. And secondly, while the travelers and missionaries could not stop complaining about the natives' greed, they still continued to bring more and more stuff to Tierra del Fuego, more and more material goods that were to inspire even more envy, desire, and craving.

Both contradictions, however, are resolved once one distinguishes between greed and ambition. Greed expresses the desire to get things in order to have them, while ambition emanates from the desire to have things because of their implications: social distinction, political authority, cultural respectability. In the rendition of the nineteenth century, greed is informed with the spirit of momentary arrangements and orientations, whereas ambition points to a long-term perspective, a future-oriented idea of consumption as self-fashioning—the principle of the self-made man, if you will. This latter dimension, Darwin held, was fatally foreign to the Fuegians. It demarcates, however, the core of Victorian theories of civilization. This is the reason why the Beagle, on the second trip, came not only with the three Anglicized Fuegians (one had died in England) and a British missionary, trained by the Church Missionary Society, but packed to the brim with goods collected by the same Society. While Captain Fitzroy, who depended upon the Society's moral and material

support, writes diplomatically about "all the stock of useful things which had been given to [the Fuegians and the missionary] in England," Darwin is more outspoken in his diary: "The choice of articles showed the most culpable folly and negligence. Wine glasses, butter-bolts, tea-trays, soup tureens, mahogany dressing-case, fine white linen, beaver hats and an endless variety of similar things, shows how little was thought about the country where they were going to. The means absolutely wasted on such things would have purchased an immense stock of really useful articles."[15] Again, the last sentence is significant. After all, it is not the association of civilization and things that Darwin condemns. It is the choice of things that he objects to. Instead of endorsing the import of luxury goods, he opts for building and furnishing a house with a garden, establishing agriculture and a sense of husbandry, so that the natives may develop "the feeling of having a home, and . . . of domestic affection," which for Darwin is a prerequisite for bringing "the higher powers of the mind into play" (V 205). Material goods are crucial for the implementation of civilization—in this matter, the later agnostic Darwin saw eye to eye with the later Christian fundamentalist Robert Fitzroy and with all of the missionaries who made it to Tierra del Fuego in the following years. The instructions for Richard Matthews, the first of many ambassadors of the faith, by Dandeson Coates, lay secretary of the Church Missionary Society, were a case in point: "[B]ear in mind that it is the temporal advantages which you may be capable of communicating to them [the Fuegians] that they will be most easily and immediately sensible of. Among these may be reckoned the acquisition of better dwellings, and better and more plentiful food and clothing."[16]

Within the framework of the Victorian ideology of consumption and free trade, Patrick Brantlinger points out, a primitive and "unprogressive fetishism" must be replaced with "commodity fetishism," the epitome of civilized ambition.[17] This is what inspires contemporary narratives of colonization such as the novel Dawn Island (1845), written by Darwin's friend, Harriet Martineau. In this novel, a group of newly discovered natives learns after some initial bartering "that there were many other desirable things which they could not have till they could offer commodities less perishable and more valuable than food" and thus becomes part of an international system of trade and consumption.[18] Reflecting upon this trend in nineteenth-century literature and science writing, Thomas Richards has coined the term "pious consumption"[19] to demarcate a new ideal of the day that held sway not only in Great Britain but also in the United States, and was "promoted by an array of theological, philosophical, and literary discourses that had gained widespread currency [in the 1830s]," as Lori Merish writes. The ideal promoted the function of "'refined' domestic artifacts [that] would 'civilize' and 'socialize' persons and awaken 'higher' sentiments."[20]

In conscious or unconscious line with such theories of civilization, the first thing the Beagle crew does in Tierra del Fuego is to build a large hut and some smaller ones with a garden for the Fuegians. "[A] good house (and by this I mean a fitting, tasteful, and significant dwelling) is a powerful means of civilization," writes the antebellum American de signer A. J. Downing, attributing an elevation of character and morals to house ownership that "distinguishes a civilized from a coarse and brutal people."[21] In light of such associations, the discovery of the Beagle upon returning to the site of the crew's experiment, after having left the missionary and the Anglicized natives for some days, carries ill forebodings. Alarmed, they notice that the "large wigwam" was still standing, but that "[o]ur garden, upon which much labour had been bestowed, had been trampled over repeatedly, although Jemmy had done his best to explain its object and prevent people from walking there."[22] But then the crew had already been made aware of the impending failure of their civilizing project by numerous other signs, such as "several parties of natives . . . who were ornamented with strips of tartan cloth or white linen, which we well knew were obtained from our poor friends" or canoes that were "much painted, and ornamented with rags of English clothing, which we concluded to be the last remnants of our friends' stock."[23] Again, the natives' craving seems to have no civilizing potential, it revolves around itself. They desire and take things not in order to use them according to their visitors' master plan, but just in order to have them. On these grounds, the Beagle crew decides to leave Jemmy and his companions, but not the British missionary, with the Fuegians—these people were just not ready for civilization.

II. Mimicry

What Patrick Brantlinger wrote about the nineteenth-century development of colonial discourse at large, most importantly in fiction writing, applies exemplarily to the particular case of Charles Darwin: "it was largely out of the liberal, reform-minded optimism of the early Victorians that the apparently more conservative, social Darwinian, jingoist imperialism of the late Victorians evolved."[24] The liberal reform movements with their emphasis on continual self-improvement, the civilizing function of commerce and free trade, and the ideology of "pious consumption" reached their limit with the Fuegians, but with Jemmy Button, at least, their theories seemed to have scored a success. That Jemmy Button could achieve what seemed out of reach for his fellow countrymen was deeply puzzling to Charles Darwin and other writers of his generation. As we shall see, there is no consensus in the critical community over how

to read Darwin's conclusions—and this might have to do with the fact that they are far from clear. At least at the time of the Beagle expedition and in its aftermath, Darwin seems to have veered between optimism and doubt—and his reflections on the strange case of Jemmy Button time and again prompt more general contemplations on the possibility of civilizing savages in the course of a lifetime. The very ambiguity of Darwin's writing, and the fact that he kept recurring with different accentuations to the issue of the Fuegians throughout his scientific career provide material for all kinds of interpretations and speculations from the side of Darwinian critics and followers.[25] And time and again, it is Jemmy Button's attitude toward civilization and its things that figures as the yardstick by which to measure the extent of his transformation and to gauge its implications.

At first glance, the young Darwin is impressed by the evidence he confronts. In England, Jemmy Button had become a commodity fetishist, as Darwin is pleased and amused to observe. He describes Jemmy Button as a foppish young man—"vain of his personal appearance"; "he always used to wear gloves, his hair was neatly cut, and he was distressed if his well-polished shoes were dirtied. He was fond of admiring himself in a looking glass" (V 197). Donning the accoutrements of civilization and adopting the accessories of the cultivated man, the Fuegian seems to have managed successfully to overcome the predicament of his upbringing: "It seems yet wonderful to me, when I think over all his many good qualities, that he should have been of the same race, and doubtless partaken of the same character, with the miserable, degraded savages whom we first met here," writes Darwin (V 197). It is remarks such as these that led Stephen J. Gould to the conclusion that "Darwin was a meliorist in the paternalistic tradition, not a believer in biologically fixed and ineradicable inequality .... The meliorist may wish to eliminate cultural practices, and may be vicious and uncompromising in his lack of sympathy for differences, but he does view 'savages' (Darwin's word) as 'primitive' by social circumstance and biologically capable of 'improvement' (read 'Westernization')."[26] Changed circumstances—that is, unobstructed access to the tools and repertory of civilized life—may turn savages into civilized men, this logic runs. And certainly this line of reasoning registers in Darwin's contemporary notes and later recollections of the Beagle expedition, to the point that he develops strong doubts about the ethical implications of the experiment of abduction and return. When the Beagle crew is about to leave the Anglicized Fuegians behind, he starts to wonder whether Jemmy Button is still fit for the savage world into which he is to be abandoned—a world in which personal property is not respected and things go for nothing: "Poor Jimmy [sic] looked rather disconsolate, and would then, I have little

doubt, have been glad to have returned with us. His own brother had stolen many things from him. . . . Our three Fuegians, though they had been only three years with civilized men, would, I am sure, have been glad to have retained their new habits; but this was obviously impossible. I fear it is more than doubtful, whether their visit will have been of any use to them" (V216). When the Beagle returns to the spot where Jemmy Button was left behind about a month later, this impression seems to be confirmed: the back and forth between cultures or—to stick with the Darwinian vocabulary—the back and forth between civilization and savagery seems to have been too much for the young Fuegian. A boat meets the Beagle, in which a man is busy washing off his tribal face paint: "This man was poor Jemmy,—now a thin, haggard savage, with long disordered hair, and naked, except a bit of blanket round his waist. We did not recognize him till he was close to us; for he was ashamed of himself, and turned his back to the ship. We had left him plump, fat, clean, and well-dressed;—I never saw so complete and grievous a change" (V 218). Yet the first impression is deceptive:

> As soon, however, as he was clothed, and the first flurry was over, things wore a good appearance. He dined with Captain Fitzroy, and ate his dinner as tidily as formerly. He told us . . . that he did not wish to go back to England: in the evening we found out the cause of this great change in Jemmy's feelings, in the arrival of his young and nice-looking wife. . . . Jemmy had lost all his property. . . . I do not now doubt that he will be as happy as, perhaps happier than, if he had never left his own country. (V 218-19)

Even though he adds the pious wish that "one must sincerely hope that Captain Fitzroy's noble hope may be fulfilled, of being rewarded for the many generous sacrifices which he made for these Fuegians, by some shipwrecked sailor being protected by the descendants of Jemmy Button and his tribe!" (V 219) the story of Jemmy Button is eventually full of ambivalences for Darwin. After all, Jemmy Button cast off his civilization as quickly as he cast off his garments once he was returned to his native country. It is true, once Jemmy Button is dressed up again he just as quickly readjusts to civilization. But for Darwin, this fact seems to have less to do with a process of acculturation and learning, and more with the Fuegians' ingrained mimetic capacities that he remarked upon before: "All savages appear to possess, to an uncommon degree, this power of mimicry" (V 196). In retrospect, Jemmy Button's transformation from a savage to a cultivated gentleman threatens to be a mere masquerade—a manifestation of the basic drives of instinct rather than the higher qualities of mind. Like all Fuegians, this evidence seems to suggest, Jemmy Button lives in the moment, he is incapable of developing a long-term perspective and just imitates whatever model he is confronted with.

"Instead of admiring Jemmy's survival skills Darwin, like Fitzroy, reads this as degradation," writes Beer, in marked contrast to Gould's "meliorist" interpretation of Darwin's mindframe.[27] To the end of Darwin's scientific career, the "meliorist" reading of savagery finds itself in tension with the conclusions drawn from the encounter with the Fuegians. What Darwin's biographers sum up as the insight of a later stage of his career might very well relate back to this early encounter with cultural difference: "There could be no shortcut to the top, via a Beagle kidnapping or otherwise."[28]

III. Treachery

Michael Taussig points out that Darwin, had he pursued his reflections on the Fuegians' mimetic talent and its effect on Western viewers systematically, could have arrived at a much more radical conclusion about the logic of cultural contact than the one he ends up with. Taussig refers to the records of Captain Fitzroy, who—by contrast to Darwin—mentions that it was the British sailors who started the game of mimicry and imitation between Fuegians and English (in particular, one "man belonging to the boat's crew, who danced well and was a good mimic"[29]). On this basis, Taussig claims that the tropes of the mimetic and of mimicry introduce an uncertainty factor into the colonial situation, by questioning the dichotomy of copy and original rather than confirming it: "it is far from easy to say who is the imitator and who is the imitated, which is copy and which is original."[30] Yet once the clear-cut hierarchy of original and copy is questioned, the very structure of colonial hierarchies starts to give, as not only Taussig, but several other postcolonial critics have pointed out.

This implication of the encounter between the British and the Fuegians was lost to Darwin, but it crops up in the report of another traveler to Tierra del Fuego, W. Parker Snow. Snow was the captain of the Allan Gardiner, the ship that set out to look for Jemmy Button in 1852, twenty-one years after the Beagle had left. One goal of the expedition was to reestablish the missionary project in Tierra del Fuego, which had been disrupted in the preceding period. Snow's trip was supported by the Patagonian Missionary Society, which had been founded in 1844, in large part due to the fascination with the Fuegians, most importantly Jemmy Button, triggered by Fitzroy's and Darwin's volumes of the Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle . . . that came out in 1839.

It is amazingly easy for Snow after all these years to find the most famous of Fuegians, and at first sight his impression merely confirms the

impression of Darwin: "[W]hat a transformation appeared from what I had pictured of him when in England. The man I saw before me was a rude, shaggy, half repulsive-looking being, and in all respects like his brethren around him. Yet that same poor creature had been the petted idol of friends here at home, had been presented to royalty, and finally sent back to Fuego as a passably finished man!"[31] These critical observations notwithstanding, Snow emphasizes Jemmy Button's flexibility, his quick adaptation to the new situation, even more emphatically than Fitzroy and Darwin: "He would not attempt to go below when I explained that my wife was in the cabin until he had been properly clothed; and, to shew how he remembered things, he asked for braces as correctly as I now use the word."[32] Even though Snow's account could be appropriated easily for racialist and racist interpretations that read the Fuegians as "irreclaimable" savages,[33] Snow did present in many respects a more balanced outlook than Darwin, insisting, in marked and explicit contrast to the scientist, that some of them were "even handsome fellows," that they were "very fond of their children," and most importantly that "they have a sort of property right among them"[34]—the idea of ownership and long-term material values still ruling supreme in determining cultural status.

Snow sees the Fuegians as active agents in the contact scenarios, and the ambivalence about this agency that for Taussig already registers in Fitzroy's narrative is even more pronounced in Snow's relation, although his conclusions from his insights are far from egalitarian. True, Snow ranks people on a scale "calibrated in Eurocentric units" just as Darwin did,[35] yet by contrast to Darwin he does concede that the Fuegians might see things differently—and might expect the British to mimic them, rather than the other way round: "In their rude state, wild men often fancy themselves our superiors in many things, and to rightly deal with them we must show that we can hunt, fish, sing, talk, dance, and endure hardship as well as they."[36] What Snow misses here, obviously, is that the Fuegians in all likelihood were superior to the Englishmen in these realms, although in what follows he provides a perfect example for the ways in which superiority was established and maintained in colonial contact situations: "on one particular occasion, when their noise was deafening, I took my speaking trumpet and shouted, louder than they. This answered. It made them delighted with my supposed skill, and it shewed them that the white man could be equal to themselves . . . ."[37]

In this exchange, the "civilized thing" has become a mere prop to fake superiority. Control and hierarchy are constituted by the tools, the instruments, and not least the weapons of the civilized world, not by superior physical skills, let alone the moral stance, of the colonizers themselves. By this token, the larger framework of the Allan Gardiner

Expedition—to further the project of moral education and conversion among the Fuegians—almost drops out of sight in Snow's account, an effect that clearly has to do with the circumstances of his writing. When it was published in the Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London, Snow had already established himself as a harsh critic of the Patagonian Missionary Society. In his The Patagonian Missionary Society and Some Truths Associated With It of 1857 he accuses the Society of routinely kidnapping natives and of being interested in its own material well-being only. Out of personal disgruntlement, but also humanitarian concerns, Snow did not cease to lobby against the Society, shooting off letter after letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Colonial Office in the late 1850s.[38]

And his campaign was far from futile, although its success might have had less to do with his rhetorical and legal skills or his political connections, and rather with a changing attitude at large vis-à-vis the colonial venture. Snow's impact on the Colonial Office, which started to distance itself from the Patagonian Society during the late 1850s, attests to the emergence of a new discourse of colonial—or rather, imperial—relations, which would become more pronounced as the century drew to its close. And once more, Jemmy Button's story seems like an illustration of the larger developments.

What Snow omitted from his report to the Ethnological Society, because it would have contradicted his optimistic reading of the improvability of the Fuegians, was the fact that some years earlier, Jemmy Button's international reputation had undergone another serious revision. In 1859, the man whose life Robert Fitzroy had tried to turn into the epitome of a colonial success story found himself in court in Port Stanley, capital of the Falklands, accused of having committed cold-blooded murder. Eight missionaries had been killed in Tierra del Fuego, all of them emissaries of the Patagonian Society, which had in the meantime set up quarters in the Falkland Islands. Jemmy Button stood accused as the head of the native mob that had violently turned against them, as the only surviving member of the party, the ship's cook, Alfred Coles, claimed. What really happened was never found out, yet significantly enough, in the speculations about the killers' motivations, the allegation of greed plays a predominant role: "My belief is that the cause of the massacre was Jemmy Button being jealous that he did not get as much as he thought he had a right to," Coles testified after his rescue, and George Packenham Despard, the first mission superintendent of the Patagonian Society in the Falklands and Tierra del Fuego—and W. Parker Snow's big antagonist—drives this interpretation of the events home in his testimony: "I ascribe it [the massacre] entirely to covetousness to be gratified by plunder of the vessel."[39]

Only months before, Despard had sent home to England enthusiastic reports from the Falklands. After lengthy negotiations, the missionaries had convinced some Fuegians to join their settlement temporarily—among them Jemmy Button and his family. In the reports home, Jemmy Button's family is shown to have set up a perfect Victorian household, copying their English neighbors in every minute detail, as in particular one vignette dispatched by Despard illustrates. He describes visiting Jemmy Button at home and coming across a harmonious scene of domesticity and good breeding: "What was my surprise and delight to see the worthy fellow sitting, denuded of his jacket, sewing very neatly, with thimble on finger, a strip of calico, to make braces for himself?"[40]

Again, the impression of the harmless and amiable fop will not hold for long. Despard's description epitomizes the logic of "pious consumption" at a time when this logic was already irretrievably in decline. When the Fuegians together with some missionaries returned to Tierra del Fuego, the massacre took place—and the trial in Port Stanley elicited another dramatic reinterpretation of Jemmy Button's life. Where Darwin had suspected that the Fuegians were incapable of a thorough transformation of character and instead assumed a mere mimicry of civilization and a masquerade of good manners to be at work, the later commentators on the Jemmy Button case come to a conclusion that is considerably more devastating. What is so alarming to these observers about the incidents of 1859 is not the Darwinian suspicion that the experience of civilization might have had no effect, but rather the inkling that it had all the wrong effects—that it trained Jemmy Button and his peers in treachery, duplicity, and led to a greed that easily turned into aggression. Savages, concludes Darwin's friend, Frederic Farrar, in a reply to Snow's report to the Ethnological Society, "learn with terrible and fatal facility the worst vices of civilization, without acquiring one of its nobler lessons."[41] Beer sees a similar line of reasoning crop up even in Snow's own later writing, when he associates the contact zone between the Fuegians and the English with corruption due to the natives' familiarity with the British customs: "Snow later remarks that Jemmy's tribe was the least to be relied on in any dealings, having learnt a double language and behaviour."[42] In the court of Port Stanley, Jemmy Button is acquitted eventually, for lack of committing evidence; but a different verdict has been passed for Fuegian-English relations in general. Not accidentally, one parallel drawn in the British press in order to make sense of the events in Tierra del Fuego was to the 1857 Rebellion in India, the so-called Mutiny, which had been set off by the "treachery of a too trusted native soldiery."[43] Together with other episodes that seemed to provide evidence for an ultimate irreclaimability of savage people, the massacre in Tierra del Fuego became a standard argument for a call to "caution" and a change of strategy in

colonial relations—implemented too quickly and too incautiously, this logic ran, the civilizing missions might not only be futile, they might, even worse, be fatal for both sides involved.[44]

The darkest endnote to the Darwinian reading of Fuegian-English exchange comes to the fore in an anecdote that Bruce Chatwin related many years after Jemmy Button's death by an infectious disease in 1864. Chatwin heard the story on his own travels to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego in the 1970s: "In the 1890s a crude version of Darwin's theory, which had once germinated in Patagonia, returned to Patagonia and appeared to encourage the hunting of Indians. A slogan: 'The Survival of the Fittest,' a Winchester and a cartridge belt gave some European bodies the illusion of superiority over the far fitter bodies of the natives."[45] In this scenario of European-Patagonian contact, the pretension of a humanitarian venture has completely disappeared, while the material object at the core of the encounter, the gun, signals an idea of authority that is no longer grounded in moral convictions, but legitimized by brute force. Like a sinister riff on the theme of trickery by means of the props of civilization that W. Parker Snow introduced, this anecdote epitomizes the logic of imperialism. Here, the incentive is clearly no longer to implement the principles of civilization and religion through "pious consumption" or otherwise. This is only about gaining control by any means necessary. By 1910, the Fuegian indigenes had almost disappeared from Tierra del Fuego—guns and germs had cleared the land for gold mining and sheep farming, conducted largely by European immigrants.

IV. Decadence

The enthusiasm for commercialization and free trade that runs through earlier Victorian accounts and speculations lives on in late Victorian writing, yet what could be described in terms of a practice of "pious consumption" in the earlier context is then gradually changing into a concept of "cultural" or "conspicuous" consumption. Increasingly, the goods and wares of the civilized world are no longer invested with moral significance; they are now made out openly as tools to achieve an effect—to establish control, to ascertain superiority and difference, or, simply, to reap a profit. At the same time, the rhetoric of free trade starts to rule supreme in the arguments on behalf of colonization. What Thomas Richards points out for the colonial venture in Africa in the 1890s applies even more blatantly to the case of Latin America: "A hundred years earlier the ship offshore would have been preparing to enslave the African bodily as an object of exchange; here the object is rather to incorporate him into the orbit of capitalist exchange."[46]

The mid- to late-nineteenth century was an era "when the invention, production, distribution, and consumption of things suddenly came to define a national culture," as Bill Brown writes.[47] He cites an anonymous writer in The Atlantic Monthly of 1906 who calls the new century "the age of things." A logic of possession was taking over in this period that is increasingly seen to cut both ways: 'We realize that we don't possess [the things], they possess us," the writer continues.[48] "In the late nineteenth century," Thomas Richards writes about the situation on the other side of the Atlantic, "the commodity had become a cultural force to be reckoned with, and people could no longer dismiss it, as Marx had said they were wont to do, as a 'trivial thing.' Commodities now appeared to cement political coalitions, mobilize public opinion, make and break Empires."[49]

In the course of this commodification of culture—and of global inter relations at that—the moral or cultural incentives behind the transfer of goods became increasingly irrelevant. But goods themselves were more important than ever before. It was over things—commodities, resources, wares—that the major conflicts of the late 1800s broke loose: "during the 1890s," writes Edward Said, "the business of empire, once an adventurous and often individualistic enterprise, had become the empire of business."[50]

The idea voiced by the anonymous writer in The Atlantic Monthly, that "things own us," is charged with anxieties. In these and many similar reflections, a development with a momentum of its own is envisioned—a process of commodification and commercialization that is no longer to be controlled by people. Neither producers nor consumers are fully in charge. Karl Marx saw as early as 1867 that the circulation of goods tends to become self-serving and that in the world of consumption the "products of the human hand" seem to become "autonomous figures which have a life of their own, and interact among themselves and with man."[51] By the turn of the century, this insight had thoroughly hit home. Many shared Marx's skepticism vis-à-vis a universal growth of commodity fetishism, although they might not have agreed with his final conclusions. And while some writers of the day juxtaposed domestic decadence with imperialist vigor and regeneration—with the "hope that a population fallen into degeneracy would find spiritual renewal through participation in far-away imperial ventures"[52]—others conceived of the imperial venture itself as part of the problem, since here, too, the spirit of "commercial money-grubbing" was about to replace a "past of innocent adventure," as Patrick Brantlinger writes with reference to the literature of the day.[53]

But there is more to the rhetoric of decadence and degeneracy and its interrelations with the rhetoric of imperialism and empire than these easy antitheses or analogies suggest. First of all, the world of the late

nineteenth century was a globalized world, so that to distinguish between a domestic and a foreign scene became increasingly difficult:

> The humblest village inhabitant has to-day a wider geographical horizon than the prime-minister of a petty, or even second-rate state a century ago. If he do but read his paper, let it be the most innocent provincial rag, he takes part, certainly not by active interference and influence, but by a continuous and receptive curiosity, in the thousand events which take place in all parts of the globe, and he interests himself simultaneously in the issue of a revolution in Chili [sic], in a bush-war in East Africa, a massacre in North China, a famine in Russia, a street-row in Spain and an international exhibition in North America. A cook receives and sends more letters than an university professor did formerly, and a petty tradesman travels more and sees more countries and people than did the reigning prince of other times.[54]

This is a scenario of global transactions mapped out by Max Nordau, and what might easily be taken as an enthusiastic evocation of a world of possibilities was in fact a horror vision. Nordau's famous and most popular book on the cultures of late-nineteenth-century Europe was titled Degeneration (1892, first English translation in 1895). Nordau describes the world of his days as a world in decline and he associates this decline primarily with a ubiquitous information overload and a market culture without borders and without restraints.[55] Both phenomena overstimulate the senses and thus cause a panoply of fatal nervous diseases in the modern man: "The heart and the nervous system first break down under the overstrain" (41). Nordau, a physician who organized his book as a clinical case study, clearly saw the globalized culture of his days as a pathological phenomenon.

The focus of his study is not on imperialism, though, but on the arts, which Nordau criticizes as increasingly decadent—geared not so much towards exploring the world of the future but rather caught in morbid self-reflection. The central goal of the artists of his day, Nordau claims, is no longer to strive for originality but to engage in cheap imitation: "Clever in discerning externals, unscrupulous copyists and plagiarists, they crowd round every original phenomenon, be it healthy or unhealthy, and without loss of time, set about disseminating counterfeit copies of it" (32).

The decadent artist is made out as a counterfeiter and imitator, but we might just as well think of him as a consumer—by contrast to a producer. Significantly enough, in order to capture the decadence of this scene Nordau first highlights its members' "masquerade" of outfits and hairdos (10), then he turns to their homes. Apparently one need not even look at the artistic output of this world to capture its workings, since its paraphernalia of self-enactment attest much more succinctly

to the fatal status quo. Again, we are acquainted with a culture in which people have lost all sense of authenticity and engage in breathless and confusing performances of imitation that do not "limit themselves to one pattern, but copy several at once, which jar one with another" (9). In the privacy of the home, this collage principle turns out to be even more pronounced than on the metropolitan street. In a description of a typical abode that runs over two pages and is fraught as much with fascination as with disdain, Nordau enumerates "Kurd carpets, Bedouin chests, Circassian marghilehs and Indian lacquered caskets" in addition to 'Japanese masks," "Chinese tables," "a Limoges plate," "a long necked Persian waterpot of brass," "a squatting or a standing figure of Buddha"—in short, an assemblage of the spoils of empire, travel, and tourism. For Nordau, the effect is in keeping with the dominant spirit of the day: "Everything in these houses aims at exciting the nerves and dazzling the senses" (10-11).

In many respects, this setting could be considered the graveyard of pious consumption, here the center has given up any ambition to shape the periphery with good taste and civilized values. Instead, the periphery hit home with a vengeance, inundating the metropolitan scene with things that do not allow for distanced contemplation but overwhelm, excite, and eventually root out what appears as the essence of Europeanness: rationality, distanced contemplation, and levelheadedness. In Nordau's horror vision, the spirit of greed and the practice of mimicry that Darwin associated with the primitive men of faraway regions have taken over the European scene—they determine the mode of action and became the call of the day. But in an interesting inversion of the Darwinian logic, Nordau in a next step comes to identify the periphery with a healing power that is about to get lost in the increasingly Orientalized Western metropolis. By contrast to his British peers and fellow pessimists, Nordau does not associate this healing with the imperial project, with white male adventure, self-assertion, and strain, however. He associates it with Jemmy Button:

> I need only recall the anecdote, related in detail by Darwin, of the Fuegian Jemmy Button, who, taken as a child to England and brought up in that country, returned to his own land in the patent-leather shoes and gloves and what not of fashionable attire, but who, when scarcely landed, threw off the spell of all his foreign lumber for which he was not ripe, and became again a savage among savages. . . . Humanity has, to-day as much as ever, the tendency to reject all that it cannot digest. If future generations come to find that the march of progress is too rapid for them, they will after a time composedly give it up. They will saunter along at their own pace or stop as they choose. They will suppress the distribution of letters, allow railways to disappear, banish telephones from dwelling-houses, preserving them only, perhaps, for the service of the State, will prefer weekly

> papers to daily journals, will quit cities to return to the country, will slacken the changes of fashion, will simplify the occupations of the day and year, and will grant the nerves some rest again. Thus, adaptation will be effected in any case, either by the increase of nervous power or by the renunciation of acquisitions which exact too much from the nervous system. (542)

Even more pointedly than Fitzroy or Darwin, Nordau stylizes Jemmy Button as the epitome of savagery, as a wild man who appropriates the accoutrements of civilization only externally and who drops them like an empty shell as soon as he is no longer confined by its restraints. But nevertheless, he calls up the figure with markedly new implications. After all, Jemmy Button might be the epitome of a savage, but here the savage seems superior to the decadent metropolitan in that he prevails where the latter goes down in the maelstrom of consumption. In fact, one could argue that in this rendition of Jemmy Button's life story, it is precisely his superficiality and his lack of impressionability—the very characteristics that seemed most problematical to Charles Darwin—which present themselves as marks of distinction. Ironically, Nordau highlights Jemmy Button's instinctive turn against "the foreign lumber" (or the stuff of civilization), and thus inverts the former associations of the figure with greed and covetousness. In his defiance of the practices of consumption, Jemmy Button points to a possible escape route from the fatal spiral of overcivilization: "The feeble, the degenerate, will perish; the strong will adapt themselves to the acquisitions of civilizations, or will subordinate them to their own organic capacity" (550). The most important characteristics of the man of the future—here Nordau finds himself altogether in the Darwinian tradition—are adaptability and perseverance at the same time. And on these counts, Jemmy Button wins the day over the fickle and nervous man of the European metropolis. Of course, this is not to say that Nordau envisions Tierra del Fuego as the world of the future. This is the scenario he maps out for the world a hundred years from his own days:

> The end of the twentieth century, therefore, will probably see a generation to whom it will not be injurious to read a dozen square yards of newspaper daily, to be constantly called to the telephone, to be thinking simultaneously of the five continents of the world, to live half their time in a railway carriage or in a flying machine, and to satisfy the demands of a circle of ten thousand acquaintances, associates, and friends. It will know how to find its ease in the midst of a city inhabited by millions, and will be able, with nerves of gigantic vigour, to respond without haste or agitation to the almost innumerable claims of existence. (541)

Jemmy Button, of course, will not be part of this future world—and neither will be his descendants.

In Nordau's reference, which might have been one of the last references to the Fuegian in the nineteenth century, Jemmy Button appears as a mere emblem, a signifier of the difference between civilized and savage life. Nevertheless, in this functionalization and appropriation, this nineteenth-century reference, which is clearly caught in concerns and anxieties of the day, is indicative of a further turn of the argumentative screw that leads over into the twentieth century with its own approaches to Jemmy Button. In the course of the twentieth century, it was Jemmy Button's difference that constituted his most prominent feature and mark of attraction. Jemmy Button was increasingly called up in order to represent colonialism's repressed, its victims, its dark legacy. Especially in the most recent enactments of the figure, these aspects of resistance and denial are valued most prominently—in particular, Jemmy Button's ambivalence towards or defiance of the Western culture of consumption. In these renditions, moreover, Jemmy Button's life no longer serves to figure forth the possibility of universal sameness and conformity (Captain Fitzroy's utopia), but points to an alternative world and an alternative worldview, which is characterized, however, as doomed—as bound to disappear. Bruce Chatwin's cult book about his travels through Patagonia in the 1970s is a case in point in its nostalgia for a world inevitably in decline. Jemmy Button does not play a major role in this odd assortment of tourist observations, historical reflections, anecdotes, and records of conversations. But still, the facets of Chatwin's Patagonia seem like broken reflections of the region a century before. At one point, the British writer recalls a conversation with an old English lady who had traveled all over the world for some years, to settle down on a farm in Tierra del Fuego for the time being, at the invitation of a local British immigrant family. In a world that has been thoroughly Anglicized, Miss Nita Starling succeeds where the crew of the Beagle failed. In the absence of the Fuegians, a garden is being established after all:

> The owners of the estancia had invited her to help with the garden. Now they did not want her to go. Working in all weathers, she had made new borders and a rockery. She had unchoked the strawberries and under her care a weedpatch had become a lawn.
>
> "I always wanted to garden in Tierra del Fuego," she said . . . , the light rain washing down her cheeks, "and now I can say I've done it. ..."
>
> She quite liked Tierra del Fuego. . . . "It's beautiful," she said, looking from the farm at the black line where the grass ended and the trees began. "But I wouldn't want to come back."
>
> "Neither would I," I said.[56]

Notes

1. Gillian Beer comments on the discrepancy between Fitzroy's claim and his own description of the abduction: "While seeking a boat stolen from the Beagle [Fitzroy] writes, 'accidentally meeting two canoes ... I prevailed on their occupants to put one of the party, a stout boy, in my boat, and in return I gave them beads, buttons, and other trifles.' Hence the name 'Jemmy Button.' This shockingly cavalier appropriation of human beings rings ironically alongside Fitzroy's constant complaints about the Fuegians' pilfering." "Travelling the Other Way: Travel Narratives and Truth Claims," in Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 65.
2. Not surprisingly, the study that comes closest to presenting Jemmy Button's biography—Nick Hazlewood's Savage: The Life and Times of Jemmy Button (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), the findings of which I rely on heavily—focuses almost exclusively on the experiences and impressions of the mostly British travelers and writers that encountered Jemmy Button in the mid-nineteenth century.
3. Bruce Chatwin, In Patagonia, intro. Nicholas Shakespeare (London: Vintage, 1998), Sylvia Iparraguirre, La tierra del fuego (Buenos Aires: Editorial Alfaguara, 1998).
4. David Stanbury, introduction to A Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle, by Robert Fitzroy and others (London: Folio Society, 1977), 8.
5. Adrian Desmond and James Moore, Darwin: The Life of a Tormented Evolutionist (New York: Norton, 1991), 132. Beer, too, uses the term "shock" to describe Darwin's first encounter. Beer, "Travelling," 66.
6. Charles Darwin, The Voyage of the Beagle (London: Everyman's Library, 1959), 195 (hereafter cited as V).
7. Quoted in Hazlewood, Savage, 44.
8. Beer, "Travelling," 62.
9. Thomas Hariot, A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (1588), in Early American Writing, ed. Giles Gunn (New York: Penguin, 1994), 63.
10. For a more detailed delineation of the trope and its inception, see my Artifical Africas: Colonial Images in the Times of Globalization (Hanover, NH: Univ. Press of New England, 2002), 27-30. On early colonial travel narratives and their enactment of a "sense of wonder" cf. Stephen Greenblatt, Marvelous Possessions: The Wonders of the New World (London: Clarendon Press, 1991).
11. Michael Taussig, Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses (New York: Routledge, 1993), 198.
12. This observation is later taken up in The Descent of Man and further elaborated on: "While observing the barbarous inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, it struck me that the possession of some property, a fixed abode, and the union of many families under a chief, were the indispensable requisites for civilization." Darwin, The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex, 2nd ed., intro. James Moore and Adrian Desmond (1879; London: Penguin Classics, 2004), 158.
13. Beer, "Travelling," 65.
14. Hazlewood, Savage, 325.
15. From Fitzroy et al., A Narrative, 109, cf. also Desmond and Moore's biography, Darwin, 111.
16. Quoted in Hazlewood, Savage, 102.
17. Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988), 31.
18. Quoted in Brantlinger, Rules of Darkness, 31. Incidentally, Charles Darwin read Martineau's Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated during the Beagle trip, and later Darwin and Martineau almost became in-laws, since Darwin's brother Erasmus courted Martineau for a period of time. Desmond and Moore, Darwin, 153, 201.

19 Thomas Richards, The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle,1851-1914 (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990), especially 118-67.
20 Lori Merish, Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2000), 90.
21 Quoted in Merish, Sentimental Materialism, 15.
22 Fitzroy et al., "Captain FitzRoy's Narrative," in A Narrative, 123, 128.
23 Fitzroy et al., "Captain FitzRoy's Narrative," in A Narrative, 127.
24 Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness, 27. Cf. also Stuart Peterfreund's "Colonization by Means of Analogy, Metaphor, and Allusion in Darwinian Discourse," Configurations 2, no. 2 (1994): 237-55. Peterfreund argues that Darwin's theories need to be read against the context of the day, in interaction with a "system of social, political, and economic relations that we understand by the term colonialism" (255).
25 Christopher Tourney mentioned the Fuegians' "cameo appearances" in The Descent of Man, whenever a link was sought between savagery and civilization. Christopher Tourney, 'Jemmy Button," The Americas 44, no. 2 (Oct. 1987): 199.
26 Stephen J. Gould, The Mismeasure of Man, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 419.
27 Beer, "Travelling," 68.
28 Moore and Desmond, intro. to Darwin, The Descent of Man, xlv. Cf. also Darwin's biography by the same authors that pins down Darwin's conclusion to the story of Jemmy Button: "Jemmy's habits were ingrained, it was now obvious. For untold generations his people had adapted to this wilderness, and no civilizing influence could erase his deep seated instincts. Human differences were more profound than Lyell knew." Darwin, 148. Moore and Desmond thus point out that even Darwin, whose theoretical model is associated with arbitrariness and branching rather than with linear development, was affected by the influence of contemporary scientific theories such as the ones formulated by John Lubbock or E. B. Tylor who assumed a "racial ladder" through all cultures: "This racial ladder was a sapping image, 'pre-Darwinian' as we say, and in tension with Darwin's radical selection theories which allowed, not for a unidirectional, upward-stretching elevator of life, but rather a branching, bush-like diversification, with organisms spreading laterally and adapting to multifarious niches. . . . Yet the ethos of a civilizational escalator now shaped Darwin's attitudes too as he invoked Lubbock and Tylor on the beliefs of 'primitive peoples.'" Desmond and Moore, intro. to Darwin, Descent, xliv.
29 Fitzroy et al., "Captain FitzRoy's Narrative," in A Narrative, 102.
30 Taussig, Mimesis and Alterity, 78.
31 W. Parker Snow, "A Few Remarks on the Wild Tribes of Tierra del Fuego from Personal Observation," Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London 1 (1861): 265.
32 Snow, "Remarks," 266.
33 A case in point is Frederic Farrar's response to Snow in the same journal. Farrar nails down Snow's account to an easy message that reverberates with Darwin's assessment of the Fuegians as particularly backward and hideous people: "in fact the real, wild, pagan savage not only has a horror for civilization, but deliberately despises it." Frederic W. Farrar, "Aptitude of Races," Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London 5 (1867): 121. This crude reasoning does not do justice to Darwin's theories, which do highlight transitions rather than differences, and thus emphasize a scale between savagery and the civilized state. At least on an individual level, he claims, "improvement" is possible—even though Jemmy Button's example shows that it is often deceptive: "Differences . . . between the highest men of the highest races and the lowest savages, are connected by the finest gradations. Therefore it is possible that they might pass and be developed into each other." Darwin, Descent, 86.
34 Snow, "Remarks," 264.
35 Desmond and Moore, Darwin, 191.

36 Snow, "Remarks," 264.
37 Snow, "Remarks," 264. On similar lines of self-fashioning in colonial literary discourse cf. Mayer, Artificial Africas, 30-34.
38 Hazlewood, Savage, 192, 257.
39 Quoted in Hazlewood, Savage, 261, 300.
40 Hazlewood, Savage, 201. Hazlewood points out that Despard's bulletins in the Society's journal, Voice of Pity, have to be taken with a grain of salt: "behind the idyllic reports there was a creeping sense of frustration. . .. The mission party had realised the limits of Jemmy's co-operation and were tiring of him. Frequent references to his laziness litter the journals, and there is unmistakable disappointment at his failure to help with the general work of the settlement" (205).
41 Farrar, "Aptitude of Races," 122.
42 Beer, "Travelling," 69.
43 Quoted in Hazlewood, Savage, 269.
44 It is on the grounds of such a break in the interpretation of the project of Empire that I endorse the conceptual distinction between "colonialism" and "imperialism," as Benita Parry, among many others, has defined it. In this usage, imperialism demarcates "the radically altered forms to capitalism's accelerated penetration of the non-capitalist world, a process that gained momentum in the late-nineteenth century and issued in the creation of a world economic system." Benita Parry, "Narrating Imperialism: Nostromo's Dystopia," in Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson, Benita Parry, and Judith Squires (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 228; cf. also Laura Chrisman, "The Imperial Unconscious: Representations of Imperial Discourse," Critical Quarterly 32, no. 3 (1990), 38-58.
45 Chatwin, In Patagonia, 151.
46 Richards, Commodity Culture, 140; cf. also Anne McClintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising," in Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest (New York: Routledge, 1995), 207-31.
47 Bill Brown, A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2003), 4.
48 Quoted in Brown, Sense of Things, 5.
49 Richards, Commodity Culture, 165.
50 Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (1993; New York: Vintage, 1994), 25.
51 Karl Marx, Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, ed. Benedikt Kautsky (Stuttgart, Germany: Kroener, 1957), 51 (my translation).
52 Parry, "Narrating Imperialism," 229.
53 Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness, 43.
54 Max Nordau, Degeneration, intro. George L. Mosse (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1993), 35, 39 (hereafter cited in text).
55 On this fascination and fear vis-à-vis ever faster circuits of information and communication in the modern world, and on the representation of these feelings in early-twentieth century writing (though without reference to Nordau), see Hartmut Böhme, Fetischismus und Kultur: Eine andere Theorie der Moderne (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006), 141-49.
56 Chatwin, In Patagonia, 156.