

Martians in wells' war of the worlds and movie adaptations: cultural imperialism



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The Martians in the book and the movie *The War of the Worlds* are a metaphor for the evils of cultural imperialism because their arrival severs the most important means of communication and transportation technology, challenges religion, and leaves identity unclear. The Martians in *The War of the Worlds* can be used as a comparison to imperialism because their invasion caused the loss of major technologies on Earth and altered the way that humans saw God and the identity of their society.

The narrator in the book explains that the Martians were “hamstringing” mankind by exploding “any stores of powder” and cutting communication and transportation such as the telegraph and railways (Wells 83). This specific example is important because it shows that the Martians crippled society not only emotionally but physically. *The War of the Worlds* provides a great example of communication and transportation technologies being taken away and it drastically affecting people’s lives. Worth explains in his article how technology and communication technology are such a big part of imperialism when he says “technologies of communication and transport are central to the imperial critique contained within the novel” (Worth, 71).

Although the technology is a great part on the human’s side for survival, Wells makes it clear that it is important both ways when he discusses how the Martians killed so many quickly and quietly because of their technology of the Heat Ray, without it, they would not have accomplished as much as they had (Wells 18). The Martians rely just as much on technology as the humans, hence their death in the end, especially made evident in the movie because of their lack of a force field.

The Martians live in giant advanced technological machines that are equipped with terrifying weapons of mass destruction, without it they would not live or attempt to conquer Earth. Worth takes this idea of the Heat Ray further when he discusses how Wells uses specific examples within his text of tying the Martian's use of the Heat Ray to real life techniques of imperialism by saying that the Heat Ray contributed "political and social organization" and how it was in a "respective relationship" to the media that we see today (Worth 71). In a way, you could say that the Martians take out human technology to overpower with their own technology. Worth is saying that the reader can compare the Martian's uses of invasion to techniques of imperialism in the 21st century. Although people may think that the broadcast airing time of the radio show adaptation of the novel was a coincidence, Mollmann brings this comparison of real time to the novel up front in his article when he discusses how the radio broadcast based on the book was purposely aired at a time of real life threat "from Nazi Germany" and how the film adaptation can be easily associated with "the invading Martians" and "with Soviet Russia and communism" (Mollmann 407).

There are many other ways to compare the Martians' actions to humans and to real life inside and outside of the book. An example of this is the narrator in the novel himself compares the Martian machines to human machines and the Martians' advancements on Earth to humans to animals when he says "I began to compare the things to human machines, to ask myself for the first time in my life how an ironclad or a steam engine would seem to an intelligent lower animal" (Wells 38). Although not intended for this, Worth makes a good metaphor for the internet and World Wide Web when he

discusses how the Martians are a “ cliché expansionist” like an “ octopus... with sprawling webs of communication” (Worth 72). Throughout Mollmann’s article, he specifically compares the Martians to the British but at one point steps back to the whole novel and discusses its uses of general imperialism when he says that the novel is “ a warning against the dangers of imperialism” and gets so in depth to do a very specific comparison when he says that “ The Martians are the British themselves” (Mollmann 407).

Although Mollmann briefly discusses the use of imperialism in the novel and its comparisons to the British, he right after says that a specific important adaptation discussed throughout the article, *Fighter from Mars*, diminishes “ the emphasis on imperialism” which disagrees with Worth (Mollmann 407).

The Martians’ tactics of invasion can be closely compared to real life imperialism and times of war when communication is cut before a country or group invades. This comparison really shows how communication is a huge part of society and when cut, it impairs a nation greatly and leaves them vulnerable for attack. The curate in the book *The War of the Worlds* is easily seen as a metaphor for God and is an odd character in many ways. The curate can also be seen as a metaphor for the Martians because his extreme beliefs and the extreme actions of the Martians, and the Martians are known to not sleep at all and the curate barely sleeps because of his anxiety. The curate is also physically described by our narrator as having large eyes and a receding chin (Wells 53-54). The Martians are described as having no chins and also large eyes (Wells 111-112).

One of the reasons that the curate is so important is because the element of cultural imperialism in the book has a larger playing part of religion, whether <https://assignbuster.com/martians-in-wells-war-of-the-worlds-and-movie-adaptions-cultural-imperialism/>

it how people's views change or how it can be compared to cultural imperialism today. The curate often says things comparing the Martians to God, for example when he says that the Martians are " God's ministers" (Wells 55). Reading the book 50 to 100 years after it was published can make a reader confused on how important this aspect of God is because 50 to 100 years ago, or when the story takes place, religion was ruling the world. Science was a lot lower on the scale than religion and scientists often got shunned or even killed for their discoveries, including Charles Darwin being shunned. The reason this is so important is because during the time in the novel, there was no belief that aliens could possibly exist which means that everyone was even more surprised than a 21st century reader could imagine. This is tied back to the curate because the curate is the example of how people would react to the attack. This reaction includes mostly saying that God is punishing them, rather than thinking that the Martians needed more resources and a place to live, as the novel's narrator thinks. The ideals of the curate are summed up when he says " It is just, O God!" he would say, over and over again. " It is just. On me and mine be the punishment laid. We have sinned, we have fallen short. There was poverty, sorrow; the poor were trodden in the dust, and I held my peace. I preached acceptable folly - my God, what folly! - when I should have stood up, though I died for it, and called upon them to repent - repent! [...] Oppressors of the poor and needy...! The wine press of God!" (Wells 110). Although the curate is very set in his own ways, it shows a nice variety of reactions when compared to the artillery man and the calm intelligent narrator. The curate questions people's actions and then blames it on the sinners and God for punishing them. These reactions are exactly how those under attack in the real world

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acted at the time of the novel. This realization causes the reader to read the novel differently because they compare it to the real world.

A religion based society can greatly affect the identity of the society compared to today. The identity of the general society and of the individual are questioned in the novel *The War of the Worlds* and the movie adaptation. Throughout the whole novel, the narrator is questioning his identity when it comes to the Martian attack, his wife, and his actions towards others. An example of this is when he is in the middle of talking to someone and thinks about himself and says " At times I suffer from the strangest sense of detachment from myself and the world about me; I seem to watch it all from the outside, from somewhere inconceivably remote, out of time, out of space, out of the stress and tragedy of it all" (Wells 22). Even the narrator's word choice here can question his identity. The narrator also questions other people's actions, and the whole society questions its own identity. Another example of this is the curate. The curate identifies that it is the sinner's fault and that God is bringing his wrath. This shows the identity of the religious part of society. The artilleryman shows the military side of society. And the narrator shows the questioning part of society. The narrator questions everything and everyone, including how people react to the Martians and how the narrator compares the Martian's actions to human's actions.

The movie adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* is a great example of all of the identity questions in the novel's theme. Throughout the movie, the main character questions himself and his relationship to others and in turn grows to improve himself and his relationships; the main character's identity changes. An example of a scene in the movie where society's overall identity

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is questioned is during the boat scene when people are fighting each other and pushing others around or off to get onto the boat. This really shows how people act during a time of crisis and how people change to become more all-for-themselves. These actions can be compared to real life war or how a country or group trying to take over another through cultural imperialism would want this societal identity to change to chaos because it is easier to take over. The boat scene also shows the opposite side of this when the main character's son goes to help people onto the boat and the intensity of this difference in identity is made apparent by the father's surprise at his actions. This is a big deal because it is showing that in times of chaos, everyone is expected to act chaotic, and when a character or person does not then people are very surprised and thrown off. Another example of the identity change in the movie is when the van comes by the plane crash with reporters in it. The people are taking all the food and water they can find and then show the main character the videos they have of the Martians. This shows another different point of view because the reporters are helping people and say that they fed New York and have been checking on big cities like DC. All of these examples show how real life people act in times of a crisis and it shows the variety of reactions and how it can completely change the identity of people drastically, people who would never hurt a fly can turn into thieves and murderers.

The novel and the book can be directly used as examples to real life cultural imperialism because of the identity question in any case of imperialism. The book and the movie *The War of the Worlds* show parallel examples to real life when it comes to the major themes of communication and transportation

technology, religion, and personal and group identity and identity change. Everything the Martians did was an example or could be used as an example for a real life imperialistic country and the reactions of the characters can be used as an example for real life reactions to imperialism.

Works Cited

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