

## The Socio-cosmological Dystopia in *The Time Machine*

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### I. Abstract

The present study discusses Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) as a major work of dystopian fiction. It looks at the work from sociological and cosmological views. It tries to point out the different manifestation of dystopia in the future society. Besides, it searches for the reasons that bring about dystopia on earth and tries to find how mankind can avoid the final disaster awaiting man. It proves that it is a deep analysis of the dark destiny awaiting earth in general and humanity in particular in the future. Due to its intellectual richness, it can be approached from different directions.

## II. The Social and Cosmological Dystopia of *The Time Machine*

Many famous literary critics such as Mark R. Helligas, M. Keith Booker, Zamyatin classify *The Time Machine* (hereafter *TTM*) as a major work of dystopian fiction.<sup>1</sup> This short novel can be interpreted on different levels – it can be considered a work of social criticism – as Wells's Socialist warning for what could happen in the future if society does not embrace equality and humanity and if capitalism does not stop exploiting workers for the benefits of the rich. Wells's scientific study made him a passionate believer in humankind's perfectibility through scientific discoveries. Being a tireless and constantly frustrated working reformer, Wells implemented what he could not achieve realistically in life in his world of fantasy. Then, as perceived that his fantasy romances brought no change in the society, he started to warn human beings with his dystopias. As such, *TTM* can be seen as a meditation upon the class structure of *fin-de-siècle* Britain as well. Looking at it from a different angle it can be regarded as a novel about Social Darwinism – Evolution / (de)evolution. One can still go deeper and think that it is about the concept of entropy and its effect on all species. Moreover, the work bears the seeds of the fearful fate

awaiting man eventually. In fact, the novel is so rich in symbolism<sup>2</sup> that it can be interpreted on different levels –'The Time Machine' can be viewed as a 'history machine'<sup>3</sup> and even 'The Eloi', 'The Morlocks', 'The Palace of Green Porcelain' and 'The White Sphinx' have both symbolic and realistic values.

Wells's dystopian outlook of what will happen to the human race in the distant future is the common thread that runs through all these themes. In Chapter 4 of *The Vital Science: Biology and Literary Imagination 1860-1900*, entitled "Laying the Ghost of the Brute: The Fear of Degeneration", Peter Morton asserts, "the continuous regression of life is the only uniting theme. ... Life is running all the way downhill into extinction."<sup>4</sup> From the first sight, one can think that the world explored by the Time Traveller in 802,701 AD is a utopian one. Nevertheless, as the action of the novel progresses, gradually this assumption is diminishing when he discovers that instead of one world, there are two – one of the Eloi, pseudo utopian and the other one is of the Morlocks, a gloomy and dystopian one. The present chapter delves into both worlds, trying to study them in all aspects and attempts at showing which one of them overbalances the other.

*TTM* is primarily a social critique of H.G. Wells's Victorian England projected into the distant future. Wells was a Socialist for most of his life with Communist leanings, and he argued in both his novels and non-fiction works that capitalism was one of the great ills of modern society.

Class distinction dichotomizes the future society of *TTM* into a utopian and a dystopian one. These dichotomous societies reflect the class struggle throughout history. The ruling class leads a utopian life on the surface, while the poor class leads a dystopian life in the underground. The gist of the novel is the struggle between these two species and these two modes of life. Similarly, the contrast between these two classes and societies is reflected in terms of antithetical expressions used for describing them. As a result, the world of *TTM* is the world of contradictions: paradisiacal world of the Eloi/ demonic world of the Morlocks; herbivorous race/ carnivorous race; lightness/darkness and gentle people/ harsh people.

Throughout the novel, Wells describes the species of the futuristic society in a very negative way using unfavourable adjectives for describing both types –the Eloi are referred to as 'frail, fragile, and foolish' creatures, also as 'indolent and

easily fatigued', 'idle and non-productive' while the Morlocks are described as 'savage, wild and cannibalistic.' More adjectives with negative connotations are used for the Eloi throughout the novel. The Time Traveller describes them as having 'consumptive' and 'dilapidated' look.<sup>5</sup>

This degenerative change of the species produced a kind of creature, which can be called small humanoid or Homo inferior. Gradually, the more the Time Traveller gets acquainted with the Eloi and the Morlock's way of living, the fiercer he attacks them. His description of these species culminates in the animal imagery of both types. The Eloi are referred to as "cattle" and the Morlocks in terms of unpleasant animal life: as 'apes', 'worms', 'lemurs', 'rats' 'ant-like', and 'spiders'. (*TTM*, p. 49)

In effect, Christopher Caudwell thinks that H. G. Wells is not a real socialist and he is "farthest from Marxism." He ascribes this to Wells's *petit bourgeois* mind. The way Wells presents the proletariat (Morlocks) as animalistic in *TTM*, according to Caudwell is because "Wells comes from a class that regards the proletariat not as passive inferior brutes but as something dirty and evil and dangerous and terribly near."<sup>6</sup>

The novel's appeal lies in its attempt to fathom what will become of human beings in the distant future. Wells explores many of the themes that obsessed him, including class inequality, (de)evolution, and the relationship between science and society. In describing the future world of the effete Eloi and the cannibalistic Morlocks and the world beyond that in which all semblance of human life has been erased, Wells illustrates what he believes may very well be the fate of humanity. Patrick Parrinder in an article entitled "Imagining the Future: Zamyatin and Wells" summarizes the ideas that Yevgeny Zamyatin (1884-1937), the non-conformist Russian critic, expressed about Wells's fiction in his deep study thus:

In the section of *Herbert Wells* entitled "Wells's Genealogy", we read that the traditional utopian romance from More to Morris bears a positive sign – the affirmation of a vision of earthly paradise. Wells invents a new form of "socio-fantastic novel" with a negative sign; its purpose is not the portrayal

of a future paradise, but social criticism by  
extrapolation.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, Wells's dystopias influenced Zamyatin greatly. Zamyatin, in turn, left immense influence on both Aldous Huxley and George Orwell.<sup>8</sup> The novel tries to show how far human evolution will go if capitalism continues unhampered: humankind will split into two distinct species, the Eloi (ruling class in the novel whose name even sounds like "elite") and the Morlocks (the working class whose name sounds like morbidity and disease). Furthermore, the advancements of civilization will not necessarily advance the species – quite the opposite, in fact. Their luxurious, carefree civilization has made the beautiful Eloi the weak, lazy, and stupid targets of the Morlocks; without an urgent need to survive, the Eloi have not needed to become more "fit," but have instead regressed. Therefore, even though man may evolve to adapt to his environment, the changing environment itself may make that evolution ultimately undesirable. Social Darwinism does not take this into account, and Wells's portrayal of the Eloi serves as an ominous warning to the ruling class who believes it is striving toward perfection.

What Wells wants to convey in this novel is that human being's animalism will reach a very high level of brutality if there is no stop for the exploitation of man. "These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon – probably saw to the breeding of" (*TTM*, p.59). The Morlocks had turned into carnivorous creatures (*TTM*, p.52) and are described as 'nauseatingly inhuman' and 'malign' (*TTM*, p.53). In *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction*, Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove think that the Eloi, "those pale decadent artistic people", living in a neo-hellenic [sic.] communistic pastoral paradise above ground "carry a flavour of the aesthete from the eighteen-seventies."<sup>9</sup>

The Time Traveller begins his time travelling as an optimistic Social Darwinist, believing civilization will continually advance, but he quickly reverses his thoughts once he observes the Eloi and the Morlocks. Therefore, evolution does not lead to the "perfectibility" of any species, as is generally perceived, but to the increasing adaptability and complexity of the species.

The Time Traveller is shocked when he discovers that, instead of progressing, these creatures have degenerated. Wells thinks that the communal way of living and man's



triumph over nature do not lead to perfection but lead to degeneration or dilapidation of human beings' physical ability and mental talents as seen in the case of the Eloi:

'You see, I had always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand odd would be incredibly in front of us in knowledge, art, and everything. Then one of them suddenly asked me a question that showed him to be on the intellectual level of one of our five-year-old children – asked me, in fact, if I had come from the sun in a thunderstorm!'

(*TTM*, p. 26)

The Eloi are not only dull-minded, but they are sexually indistinct due to the close resemblance of the sexes which is the result of their over idleness and excessive rest (*TTM*, p.30). Comfort, ease and security led to the demise of intelligence especially on the part of the Eloi. Therefore, the amelioration of the conditions of life, and man's triumph over

Nature ironically do not lead to man's perfectibility but to his degeneration.

'The too-perfect security of the Upper-worlders had led them to a slow movement of degeneration, to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence. That I could see clearly enough already.'

(*TTM*, p. 48)

In the future society discovered by the Time Traveller the human feelings such as sympathy and true love have disappeared. A good example is when Weena was seized with a cramp no one was ready to rescue her while she was about to drown (*TTM*, p.41). Furthermore, Wells depicts that there is no more strong emotions and family relationships. Instead of love and making the family, the Eloi enjoy themselves with playing, singing and dancing in the sunlight (*TTM*, p.32). All the joy of the Morlocks is their night hunting of the Eloi.

Through the technique of contrast between the Eloi and the Morlocks, Wells tries very hard to bring into light the continuous class struggle and the contradictions of the future society. The Eloi are soft, weak creatures, small in stature and effete in gesture and conduct, they devote their time to the simple pleasures of erotic play and eating delicious fruit. The Morlocks, toiling in their underground factories, make everything the Eloi need for their easeful existence. Nevertheless, like human spiders, the Morlocks emerge after dark to prey upon the Eloi, who are meat for them.

The physical and the spiritual degeneration of the Eloi in *TTM* will consequently bring about the cultural and the linguistic deterioration. In the future community of the Eloi and the Morlocks, culture and the artistic impetus that give colour and meaning to life will be diminished (*TTM*, p.33). Language, the most effective vehicle for expressing culture and art, and which is the most significant mental invention made by man will also be on the wane:

'Either I missed some subtle point, or their language was excessively simple – almost exclusively composed of concrete

substantives or verbs. There seemed to be few, if any, abstract terms, or little use of figurative language. Their sentences were usually simple and of two words, and I failed to convey or understand any but the simplest prepositions.'

(*TTM*, p.39)

From the first sight, the Time Traveller thinks that "there were no signs of struggle, neither social nor economical [sic] struggle..."(*TTM*, p.32). In spite of all these deficiencies, the Time Traveller still thinks that he has discovered a 'social paradise' and the age he reached with his Time Machine is the 'Golden Age' (*TTM*, p.44). However, it is a sinister Elysium to the Traveller, who puts together this equation as his first hypothesis to explain what he sees: that monotony of environment plus a stabilised population equals cessation of competition, panmixia, and stagnation of body and mind.

But the more the Time Traveller progresses in his narration, the more this outlook fades. Then the Time Traveller discovers that the upper-world species are not the sole inhabitants of this world, for there are other under-world

species who are very different from the previous one. They are nocturnal, not diurnal, carnivorous, not herbivorous, strong, not weak, bestial not hedonistic, cannibalistic, not gentle. Class distinction brings about all types of evil to the society and leads to brutality. Bergonzi describes this shift thus:

By now we have wholly moved from dominantly paradisaical imagery of the first half of the narrative to the demonic imagery of the second. Instead of a golden age, or lotos [sic] land, we are back in the familiar world of inventiveness and struggle.<sup>10</sup>

Wells's outdated Social Darwinian and eugenic preoccupations are clear enough from his fantasy. Society, Wells thought, was splitting into two castes that eventually would evolve into separate species because of their different conditions of existence. On the one hand, were the owners of capital, doomed to mental and physical enfeeblement because they never had to struggle to survive; on the other were the workers alienated from their labour as Marx says, made

increasingly stunted, amoral, and angry by the harshness of their labour conditions and life. Wells's future dystopia showed what he thought would happen when this division reached its end. As such, Wells's vision of the future becomes as shocking to the socialist or humanist as to the bourgeois reader.

Wells imagines the separation of workers and capitalists taken to the extreme. At last, Wells thinks that the Sunset of mankind has come as he states: "It seemed to me that I had happened upon humanity upon the wane. The ruddy sunset set me thinking of the sunset of mankind" (*TTM*, p.31).

The dystopian world of the Eloi comes to surface in the fifth chapter that contains much of the political message of the book. Here, the reader sees in the Time Traveller's remarks a thinly veiled criticism of contemporary social mores in Victorian England. It is crucial to note that the Time Traveller does not move in space, but only in time. Therefore, we can read the novel as a projection of England's future. Here, the Time Traveller concludes that the world of the Eloi is a dystopia, or a negative utopia:

'The great triumph of Humanity I had dreamed of took a different shape in my mind. It had been no such triumph of moral education and general cooperation as I had imagined. Instead, I saw a real aristocracy, armed with a perfected science and working to a logical conclusion, the industrial system of today. Its triumph had not been simply a triumph over Nature, but a triumph over Nature and the fellow-man.'

(*TTM*, p.48)

In *TTM*, Wells presents the idea that capitalism is dangerous. Now man is divided into two species: one of them is the upper species and the other is nocturnal and subterranean (*TTM*, p. 45). This class distinction and social segregation lead to the difference in the mentality and later on in the language of the Eloi and the Morlocks (*TTM*, p. 51). That is, there is complete misunderstanding between the Eloi and the Morlocks due to the total difference of their environments, which induces two different languages. That is quite natural, because after such a long segregation, the needs and the interests, the ideas and the behaviour of each group

will be so far from each other that none of them will understand the other:

'At first, proceeding from the problems of our own age, it seemed as clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the present merely temporary and social difference between the Capitalist and the Labourer was the key to the whole position...Again, the exclusive tendency of richer people – due, no doubt, to the increasing refinement of their education, and the widening gulf between them and the rude violence of the poor – is already leading to the closing , in their interest, of considerable portions of the surface of the land.'

(*TTM*, pp. 46-47)

Later on, Wells expounds what happened to the capitalists and the labourers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and how the Haves have turned into the Eloi and the Have-nots into the Morlocks:



'So, in the end, above ground you must have the Haves, pursuing pleasure and comfort, and beauty, and below ground the Have-nots, the Workers getting continually adapted to the conditions of their labour. Once they were there, they would, no doubt, have to pay rent, and not a little of it, for the ventilation of their caverns; and if they refused, they would starve or be suffocated for the arrears.'

(*TTM*, p. 47)

After long years of struggle, the Morlocks, the evolved, nocturnal, Underworld members of the working class are now the true masters; they breed the Eloi like cattle and stalk them at night. The class warfare and the revenge of the slaves (the Morlocks) on their former masters (the Eloi) ends with hunting, terrorizing and eating the Eloi, as the ancestors of the Eloi metaphorically preyed on their subjugated workers.

These two opposing classes produce a violent class struggle, with neither class seeming a preferable alternative to today's humans. This struggle between them is implied to be the consequences of today's distinctions, showing the worst

parts of both classes; the feebleness of the rulers and the mechanical nature of the workers. The combination of evolution and class differentiation has provided a society in *TTM* with two distinct, undesirable classes. Gradually,

the rich have tended to preserve themselves more and more as an exclusive and self-contained group, with fewer and fewer social contacts with the workers, until society has stratified rigidly into a two-class system.<sup>11</sup>

Certainly, the Morlocks are explicitly identified in the novel as the Darwinian extension of the proletariat: "even now, does not an East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth?" (*TTM*, p. 47) These cannibalistic, monstrous Morlocks literally eating the imbecilic, beautiful Eloi are easily read as a savage satire, or reverse-satire, on the inherent violence of class in late nineteenth-century Britain. The opposition of the Eloi and the Morlocks can be interpreted in terms of the late nineteenth-century class struggle, but it also reflects "an opposition between aestheticism and utilitarianism,

pastoralism and technology, contemplation and action, and ultimately, and least specifically, between beauty and ugliness, and light and darkness." <sup>12</sup>

The degeneration of human kind into Eloi and Morlocks, followed by further degeneration into crabs and polyps reflects the entropic philosophy of Wells in the 1890s. The ill effects of capitalism, with its close ties to Social Darwinism and entropy, will be explored in greater depth later in the novel.

At the beginning, the Time Traveller thinks that he has arrived in a communist paradise, and that these creatures are the result of a world without hardship and fear. He thinks how in his own time, human intelligence is bent toward making life easier, and now, he thinks, he sees the outcome in the frail, naive creatures. Hardship necessitates vigor, and keeps man intelligent and strong. Without danger, he thinks, there is no need for the family, which results in the communist way of life he sees in these creatures. On the surface, the Eloi live in a "sexual utopia" in which the idea of free love has reached its crescendo.<sup>13</sup> Wells, quite openly, supported this idea in a number of essays and novels. But, as the story progresses and the Time Traveller remains more among the Eloi, the Time

Traveller understands them better and concludes that his first theory was very wrong.

The tale of 802,701 A. D. is a political commentary of late Victorian England. It is a dystopia, a vision of a troubled future. It recommends that current society must change its ways lest it end up like the Eloi, terrified of an underground race of Morlocks. In the Eloi, Wells satirizes Victorian decadence. In the Morlocks, Wells provides a potentially Marxist critique of capitalism.

In the future society explored by the Time Traveller, the division of labour is so strict and it is carried to the extreme. At one point, the ancestors of the Morlocks must have been driven underground to work for the ancestors of the Eloi, but now the balance of power has shifted. In their restful ease, the Eloi have grown weak, while the Morlocks in the toil and suffering have grown strong. He imagines that both are the descendents of man, and that the instinct against cannibalism must have gone out of style.

Wells's vision of the future, with its troglodytic Morlocks that descended from the working class of his day and the pretty but helpless Eloi devolved from the leisure class, may

seem as an antiquated political theory. It emerged out of the concern for social justice.

Describing two classes that seem to have solitary capabilities, *TTM* applies to industrialized society, warning of the great gap between the ruling class and the workers. The Time Traveller notes, "the gradual widening of the merely temporary and social difference between the Capitalist and the Labourer was the key to the whole position" (*TTM*, pp. 46-47).

As seen, the Eloi who represent the ruling class has adapted to their function of relaxing and ruling the lower class to the point of becoming unchallenged; feeble creatures, unable to defend themselves against the stronger workers, that is, the Morlocks. Without the shield of daylight, the Eloi must congregate and sleep together, vying unsuccessfully to protect themselves from the Morlock raids. As the duties of the Eloi become fewer and fewer, their capacity for productivity also shrinks. They start to cultivate leisure and pass their time in playing and enjoying themselves while hating all forms of physical and intellectual labour. They became, over the centuries, soft and decayed and in effect, they end up to a mere beautiful futility. Lacking physical or mental challenge,

"human vigour and energy have passed into languor and decay".<sup>14</sup>

The workers, on the other hand, have reached the opposite end of the evolutionary spectrum. After living underground for so long, they are solely adapted to working machines and living in the dark; they cannot handle even the light of a solitary match, much less the light of the over-world sun. After being stuck in the middle of a class war, the Time Traveller chooses the obvious position, to defend his class, and his ideals, against the invading workers and the unfortunate position created by the pressures of his own time period. He, like the rest of upper-class society, wishes to preserve his own sense of security and success rather than pursue the justice achieved in a higher level of equity and a greater respect for human worth, and he does so in both societies, his own and the future.

Thus, without an attractive choice when looking to the extremes, *TTM* shows that humanity must choose to resolve the problems of class conflict. Rather than achieve progress through exploitation and hatred, progress must be achieved through mutual benefit. The Time Traveller believes that he has happened upon the end of humanity, and that the

advances of civilization – in agriculture, medicine, shelter, community, pacifism, and so on – logically enfeeble its inhabitants, since hardship forces humans to use their intelligence for survival. While civilization has evolved into some sort of perfection, it has outstripped the progress of its inhabitants. Within these increasingly self-sufficient civilizations, the inhabitants weaken, their energy dissipated through entropy: "Under the new conditions of perfect comfort and security, that restless energy would become weakness." There is no longer "survival of the fittest" for, as The Time Traveller points out, "what we should call the weak are as well equipped as the strong" (*TTM*, p. 33).

The moment Wells introduces the troglodytic Morlocks, he pushes the dialectic of the biological Utopia forward to a second stage – Dystopia: that humanity has become separated, not merely into the Two Nations of the rich and the poor, but into two distinct species. What distinguishes them from other species are: parasitism, slavery, cannibalism. Theodore Dalrymple in "The Dystopian Imagination" illuminates this point thus:

The dystopians look to the future not with the optimism of those who believe that man's increasing mastery of nature will bring greater happiness but with the pessimism of those who believe that the more man controls nature, the less he controls himself.<sup>15</sup>

The Time Traveller formulated three theories about the destiny of mankind in the remote future. First, he thinks that the Eloi are the sole descendents of humanity. He assumes that scientific progress continued to make life easier for humans, so much so that they lost their edge, becoming stupid and lazy. He implies that this fate is the result of communism, as if the lack of competition drove the human race to indolence. Second, after he discovers the Morlocks, he thinks that the Morlocks are the slaves of the Eloi. He still feels that the Eloi have devolved into frail creatures because their life is too easy, but he believes that the Morlocks, humanity's other descendent, have evolved into brute workers. He thinks that this is capitalism's division of labour taken to the extreme.

Finally, the Time Traveller explains he has only seen a "half-truth" in the environment so far; what this other half is



will be essential to unlocking the various mysteries so far. The Time Traveller realizes that man has evolved into two distinct animals, the "Upper world" creatures and the nocturnal ones below.

He believes the human race has split due to the widening gap between the "Capitalist and the Labourer," and that the poor have been increasingly relegated to underground areas, while the rich have remained on the surface. The lack of interaction between the "Have-nots" (the poor workers) and the "Haves" (the rich) has cut down interbreeding and created two distinct species who have adapted to their own environments. Nevertheless, he believes that the species are equally happy. He believes humanity has not triumphed merely over nature, but over "Nature and the fellow-man."

The future is not a Communist state, as he previously believed, but an excessively capitalist one that has completely erased all human symptoms from both species. Moreover, the Time Traveller sees a natural integration of capitalism and evolution in human history. The differences between the rich and the poor in his contemporary England, especially in places of habitation, have led to the physical evolution of two distinct species.

This evolution can be interpreted as a harsh critique of capitalism; though the Time Traveller believes the two species are equally happy, the numerous defects just in the Eloi – notably their weakness and stupidity – indicate Wells's disapproval of the capitalist evolution. The Eloi are representatives of the upper class of Victorian England, childishly leading lives of luxury, while the Morlocks are projections of England's oppressed workers, toiling underground to provide for their masters. However, there is evidence that the Eloi fear the Morlocks, and that they cannot get the Time Machine back from them.

The Time Traveller at the end reaches an opposite conclusion. Therefore, he revises his hypothesis: while the Eloi and Morlocks may have once had a master-slave relationship, now the Morlocks are growing in power to the point that they hunt the Eloi. It is a theory of revenge of the working class on those who have deprived them of natural living and have exploited them throughout different stages of history.

The Time Traveller's Victorian upper-class disgust with the poor comes out in Chapters 8 and 9. First, he "instinctively" loathes the Morlocks, much as someone raised in class-

conscious English society would immediately react to poverty. When he figures out that the Morlocks are the true masters of the Eloi, his sympathy with the Eloi overshadows whatever ideas he may have about the rich being justly punished. The Eloi, the last vestiges of the humanity he embraces, are too much like the Time Traveller for him to take great delight in their defeat.

Yet the Time Traveller does acknowledge that the Morlocks' growing power is a logical progression of class tension. His idea that the Morlocks, driven by necessity, have overtaken the ruling classes is thoroughly Marxist. Wells, a Socialist for much of his life, knew [Karl Marx](#)'s basic recipe for how Communism would start in societies and how the working class – the proletariat – eventually gains a "class consciousness," an awareness of themselves as oppressed, and then unites to overthrow the ruling class. While we see no evidence that the Morlocks have this class-consciousness, the Time Traveller does posit that they have turned to the Eloi for food when their supply was depleted.

Although it has been dissected before, it is worth analysing again, how Wells looks at the concept of evolution. Wells argues that evolution is not necessarily leading mankind to a

perfect state (utopia) as many believe, or if it is, then human beings' utopian goal will soon backfire and become a dystopia (an anti-utopia). The direct significance his argument bears on Wells's own time is that the rich are gradually becoming useless, while the poor are being driven to revolution by their need to survive.

The Time Traveller's third theory on the world of the Eloi is revealing because it clarifies many facts. Not only has capitalism led to a ghastly division of labour in which the workers must live underground, but also the workers are now exacting revenge on their former masters. Because of this class warfare, the Morlocks eat, hunt, and terrorize the Eloi, just as the ancestors of the Eloi metaphorically preyed on their subjugated workers. It is a theory of revenge of the working classes.

This theory seems to represent some of Wells's own anxieties. Capitalist societies often produce tales about fears of an uprising from below. In Wells's novel, the uprising is an unavoidable evolutionary consequence. It should be noted that while Wells seems to attack communism earlier in the book, the Time Traveller's third and ultimate theory still

incorporates the idea of class warfare, a way of looking at society that is a key element of Marxism.

By depicting the Morlocks gaining the upper hand in the class warfare, Wells in *TTM* launches a fierce attack on the capitalistic system. It shows how the capitalist system destroys all human relationships. As the Time Traveller theorizes, the working class has been pushed underground for so long that it has evolved into distinct, nocturnal species. The upper class has remained above ground, and their advanced civilization, stocked with amenities, has turned them into weak, lazy, and dependent creatures. However, at some point the Morlocks – the underground group – ran out of food and were forced to hunt down the Eloi, which they now breed like cattle.

The Morlocks are very similar to the miners of the Victorian times. The only difference is that they lived underground and in the dark, but the miners did not live underground, though they did spend most of their time working there. The Morlocks seemed much like slaves to the Eloi, because that is what the miners were like to the upper class.

Many factors contributed to the evolution of the Eloi into androgynous automatons, while the Morlocks devolved into brutish troglodytes. The Morlocks lost their humanity because of a long process of exploitation and persecution. The ancestors of the Eloi have driven them away with force from the civilized world for many centuries. They have been treated violently and like animals were reduced to live in sordid conditions. Thus, they lost their humanity and were turned into ferocious beasts. Because of the harsh treatment of the Morlocks, physically they became stronger and started to attack the effete weak Eloi during dark nights. They terrorize and avenge themselves upon the Eloi and eat their meat. In effect, violence breeds violence. Thus, the former master-slave relationship has shifted when the Morlocks become the masters of the Eloi:

'The Upper-world people might once have been the favoured aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants; but that had long since passed away. The two species that had resulted from the evolution of man were sliding down towards, or had already

arrived at, an altogether new relationship. The Eloi, like Carlovingian kings, had decayed to a mere beautiful futility. They still possessed earth on sufferance: since the Morlocks, subterranean for innumerable generations, had come at last to find the daylight surface intolerable. And the Morlocks made their garments, I inferred, and maintained them in their habitual needs, perhaps through the survival of an old habit of service... But, clearly, the old order was already in part reversed. Ages ago, thousands of generations ago, man had thrust his brother man out of the ease and the sunshine. And now that brother was coming back – changed! Already the Eloi had begun to learn one old lesson anew. They were becoming reacquainted with Fear.'

(*TTM*, pp. 54-55)

'Fear' is a dominant feature of the future society especially that of *TTM*. The Eloi live in an intense fear of the night, because during dark nights the subterranean creatures attack and devour them. Similarly, the Morlocks are scared of the daylight and they run into their underground dens with the first ray of the sun. Besides, they are afraid of any source of light – even the light of a match. Only now the Time Traveller fully understands why the Eloi are so much afraid of darkness and why they are living in a perpetual fear of the imminent darkness.

By the example of Eloi and Morlocks, Wells warns of Capitalism and its consequences to mankind. The vision that is presented in *TTM* shows or rather forecasts the results of the social split between the leisurely wealthy upper class and the working class, especially in the Victorian England. While industrialists revelled in their unbounded wealth, droves of men, women, and young children toiled long hours for meagre wages in dirty, smoke-filled factories. The increasing development of the division between “upper” and “lower” class will lead into further disaster in the distant future when the best part of mankind will turn into a cattle and the worst



into cannibals. When so, that is the end of humanity (*TTM*, p. 72).

Both the Eloi and the Morlocks have been produced by a genetic differentiation, which stems from the earlier separation of the ruling class and the proletariat – and here Wells inverts the optimism of the Marxist theory of the class struggle as he had already inverted Darwin.

In that brutal society of the future where human beings hunt their fellow-brothers, the Time Traveller will be also affected by that epidemic. Instead of trying to find a way to stop that cruel act, he himself will be an active participant of that filthy struggle. The apex of inhumanity in the novel is that the Time Traveller turns into a murderer when he kills his own descendents- the Morlocks! (*TTM*, p. 63) In effect, the last struggle between the Time Traveller and the Morlocks turned the Time Traveller into an actual murderer (*TTM*, pp. 68-69).

The final episodes of *TTM* are gloomy and heart sickening. They denote the end of human species on the earth due to the ecological disaster. Then, the sun dully ceases to rise and set, and the earth rests with one side facing it, much as one side of the moon faces the earth. The Time Traveller slowly reverses the Time Machine until it stops. He observes the reddish

landscape and the moss-like vegetation everywhere. There is no wind, and the water of the sea barely moves. The Time Traveller has difficulty in breathing and believes the air is more rarefied than normal.

Travelling further into future, the sign of the physical world disappears step by step until no trace of human beings is left. All that the Time Traveller can see are crab-like creatures and lichens. He then travels thirty million years into the future. The air becomes very thin, and the only sign of life is a black blob with tentacles. He sees a planet eclipsing the sun. An incredible darkness and blackness follows. On the verge of fainting, he climbs back on the machine, and as he does, he notices a black blob with tentacles flop over in the distance. It is the only evidence of animal life. What the Time Traveller sees at the end of his journey is total ecological, biological and social disaster, in addition to horrifying darkness:

The darkness grew apace; a cold wind began to blow in freshening gusts from the east, and the showering white flakes in the air increased in number. From the edge of the sea came a ripple and whisper. Beyond these

lifeless sounds the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives – all that was over...The sky was absolutely black... 'A horror of this great darkness came on me... then I felt I was fainting. But a terrible dread of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight sustained me while I clamboured upon the saddle.'

(*TTM*, pp. 77-78)

Wells delights in discussing the future in terms of astronomy and (de)evolution. His imagery is closely related to the theory of entropy, the theory that the universe will ultimately decay into a state of inert uniformity. According to the concept of entropy (from the Second Law of Thermodynamics), the universe is gradually decaying and is heading toward disorder and loss of energy over time.<sup>16</sup> Many scientists perceive the idea of the so-called death heat of the universe as contradictory to evolution, since evolution implies

that systems grow more ordered in their complexity over time. Wells is clearly a believer in entropy and degradation of the universe, as evidenced by two parts of *TTM*. The futuristic Eloi seem to embody the effect of entropy; they are lazy, dull creatures whose energy is easily sapped (note how Weena can never keep up with the Time Traveller) and who grow chaotically fearful of the Morlocks. Wells tries to show the reality of entropy in Chapter 11 when the Time Traveller advances thirty million years into the future and witnesses the universe's gradual dissipation of energy (the earth stops moving, the sun dies, the winds cease). Ultimately, Wells's championing of entropy forms his argument against the existence of Social Darwinism; rather than becoming more perfect, human beings are gradually losing energy.

This was one of the major social theories of the late 19th-century which adapted Charles Darwin's theories on evolution to justify 19th-century social stratification between the rich and the poor. In *TTM*, the beautiful Eloi seem, at first, to be the perfect inhabitants of an advanced age. However, the Time Traveller soon discovers that the advancements of civilization have enfeebled the Eloi; without any pressing requirements for survival, they have become weak, lazy, and

stupid. While their civilization has seemingly become perfect, they have become decidedly imperfect. In other words, evolution has problems in application to the world of mankind, since man changes his environment as he himself changes. Therefore, the changing environment may not always produce desirable changes in man, and Social Darwinism's argument that those who succeed in a given environment are naturally superior is not valid.

Wells's major target is the often elitist branch of evolution, Social Darwinism. In his famous book, *On [the Origin of Species](#)*, Charles Darwin argued that different environments encouraged the reproduction of those species whose varying traits best suited them to survive; their offspring, in turn, would be better adapted for the new environment, as would their offspring, and so on. Social Darwinism, developed by British philosopher Herbert Spencer, frequently misapplied this concept of "natural selection" to justify 19th-century social stratification between the rich and poor. The catchphrase "survival of the fittest" does not mean that the surviving members of an environment are the "best," but merely the best fit for their specific environment.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, evolution does not lead to the "perfectibility" of any species,

as is generally perceived, but to the increasing adaptability and complexity of a species.

The Darwinian Theory claimed that human beings came from the ocean and that human beings evolved from fish-like creatures into monkeys in the trees. It also stated that human beings would all die along with the sun and that all living things would vanish from earth and Wells uses this idea to end his book. Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie think that:

The method whereby Wells arrived at this prophecy of extinction was itself significant. It was, to put it simply, the reversal of Darwinian pattern of evolution – the process whereby man evolved was run backwards and, for the purpose of the story, the stages of evolutionary process were telescoped.<sup>18</sup>

In *TTM* one can find five types of degeneration. Degeneration in the economic system brings about the second type of degeneration that is social degeneration; social degeneration, in turn, engenders cultural and linguistic degeneration; and degeneration in the cosmological order

causes the last type of degeneration which is degeneration of the biological species. These five types of degeneration go side by side and influence each other in the end:

For Western pre-scientific cultures a belief in the progressive decline of man and nature found its explanation in the Genesis myths. Even earlier, the Greek legendary history retailed by Hesiod and others already told of an ideal Golden Age in even remoter antiquity which had long since relapsed into the contemporary Age of Iron.

In short, certain writers had to face up to the frightening prospect of degeneration in the future because we are already living in the bright noon, and not the dawn, of man's day. These fears co-existed uneasily with the progressivism inspired by another selection of evolutionary facts.<sup>19</sup>

J. R. Hammond thinks that four authors and two great events changed the life of H. G. Wells and shaped his supple

mind before writing the original draft of *TTM* in 1888. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), and *The Descent of Man* (1871), T. E. Huxley's thought-provoking book *Man's Place in Nature* (1863), John Ruskin's *Unto this Last* (1861), and William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890) had tremendously influenced Wells. The events were the foundation of the Fabian Society 1884, and leaving Midhurst for studying in London at the Normal School of Science where he studied physics, chemistry, geology, astronomy and biology for three years – under the inspiring tuition of professor T. H. Huxley.<sup>20</sup>

Looking at *TTM* from a different angle, the novel can be studied from the point of view of the science of biology. The effect of the four branches of biology – Evolution, Degeneration, Eugenics and Heredity – on man and the future of the species on earth is clearly observable. These branches of the science can be utilized for the advantage and the progress of mankind and they can also be used to destroy everything man has achieved. Unfortunately, in many places of the world these branches of science are used for inhuman ends that accelerate man's downfall.



Wells himself was quite aware of the insecurity of progress and of man's position on earth. On 26 June 1939, for example, he wrote a letter to the *British Weekly*:

What have my books been from *The Time Machine to World Brain* and *My Fate of Homo Sapiens* (now in the press) " he asked, " but the clearest insistence on the insecurity of progress and the possibility of human degeneration and extinction? I think the odds are against man but it is still worth fighting against them.<sup>21</sup>

With the Time Traveller's journey into the decaying, dying future, Wells suggests that entropy, the gradual dissipation of energy within an increasingly chaotic system, will be the fate of the universe. It makes sense that Wells would believe this, since entropy seems at odds with evolution - evolution implies that life becomes more complex and fitter with time, whereas entropy leads to chaos and death. As he has already shown with the Eloi and Morlocks, evolution leads to dystopian imperfection, not utopian perfection, and should

not be considered as a vision of progression. Moreover, this dystopia is governed by entropy; the Eloi have little energy, physical or mental, and they live in chaotic fear of the Morlocks.

At the end of his journey, the Time Traveller's ideas are turned upside-down, and it makes sense that he sees a life-form crawling out from sea. Just as life began in the water, so it does end. However, the universe no longer has the resources of the sun and the earth's movement to reproduce life.

The novel ends with a type of pessimism very rare in the English fiction. It was described by some critic as "gruesome and horrible to the last point."<sup>22</sup> Wells, being a pessimist by nature, added more flavour to the concept of entropy and the degeneration of all species. The novel is certainly one of Wells's most pessimistic works. David Lodge, in *The Language of Fiction*, has described *TTM* as "one of the most desolating myths in modern literature."<sup>23</sup> Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie think that there were three factors behind Wells's gloomy outlook:

The first was the brooding sense of impending collapse, both of the business and the family... This was intensified by his fears of his persistent ill-health and his fears of an early death. It was but a short step from his fears of his own extinction to a more generalised fear of the Extinction of Man. The second was the effect of his childhood religion, which made Wells peculiarly susceptible to any theory of biology or cosmology... And, thirdly... Huxley's pessimistic gloss on evolutionary theory ... (and) ... the law of entropy would eventually lead to a cooling of the sun and the reduction of the planets to a system of dead matter whirling in the nothingness of space.<sup>24</sup>

Hammond notices that the strain of pessimism found in much of his later work was already existent in his earlier writings, from the 1890s onwards. In "The Extinction of Man", published in 1894, Wells expressed the idea that the last stage of development will be followed by degeneration

and "the hour of ... complete ascendancy" of any predominant animal "has been the eve of its entire overthrow".<sup>25</sup>

The last episode of the world is pathetically presented when the Time Traveller describes the gradual death of the whole physical world.

The delineation in *The Time Machine* of the bases of our remote descendent preying cannibalistically upon one another, and further on in time, our familiar world, with all human life gone, dying in a desolation of cold and darkness, had been spine-chilling.<sup>26</sup>

Wells addresses his anxiety that evolution may not always result in the positive progression of a species, but may, in fact, present just the opposite possibility – an eventual de-evolution. The epilogue of the novel summarizes the Time Traveller's idea about man's existence and advancement on the earth and he "saw in the growing pile of civilisation only a foolish heaping that must inevitably fall back upon and destroy its makers in the end" (*TTM*, p. 83). So, the reader is

left to face a "black and blank" future which "is a vast ignorance" (*TTM*, p. 83).

Parrinder points out a deep symbolic value of 'the Palace of Green Porcelain' which he calls "the ruin of ruins." Parrinder's explanation for neglecting the museum in such a way in *TTM* is that "our descendants have lost all sense of the nature of its contents and their possible use as tools and weapons." <sup>27</sup> According to Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, the main plot of *TTM* is "the contrast between a smug faith in inevitable progress and the possibilities of degeneration." <sup>28</sup> According to John Lawton "The plot of The Time Machine is the plot of Evolution – and, as becomes slowly clear, Evolution runs backwards." <sup>29</sup>

Wells inspires his readers to think about possible future worlds and alternatives that envision ideas concerning either utopian or dystopian societies. H.G Wells was a greatly influential science fiction novelist of his time, whose attempt in trying to scare his readers with visions of where capitalism could lead, have undoubtedly gone unmissed. His fantasies reflect the concerns of his days, warning the modern man against the dangers of contemporary political system and the

fate of the human society in a world, where technology and science dominate.

### III. Conclusion

To conclude, one can clearly pinpoint Wells's message – that every utopia contains its own dystopia. In this short novel, Wells puts humanity before a very difficult test. There are only two destinies awaiting man on earth – one of them is full of love, kindness, and mercy. The other is tinted with hatred, selfishness, and animosity. Man should choose one of these alternatives. The first one will lead to peace, harmony, and happiness. The other will lead to revenge, death, and destruction. Both ways are doomed at the end due to the second law of thermodynamics governing the universe that will bring about total entropy. However, if man chooses the first way, humanity can at least enjoy happiness before the advent of inevitable ecological disaster that will destroy all living creatures on earth. Wells's future is a world in which men harked back to cannibalism and there is no trace of the intellectual life on earth.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For this point see: Mark R. Hillegas, *The Future as Nightmare: H. G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University, 1974). See also M. Keith Booker, *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide* (London: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> J. R. Hammond, *An H. G. Wells Companion* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1979), p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Parrinder, "History in the Science Fiction of H. G. Wells" <http://revel.unice.fr/cycnos/document.html?id=615> (accessed February 25, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Peter Morton, *The Vital Science: Biology and Literary Imagination 1860-1900*, [http://WWW.mega.nu:80/80/ampp/Peter Morton/vs contents htm](http://WWW.mega.nu:80/80/ampp/PeterMorton/vs%20contents.htm). (accessed November 5, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> H. G. Wells, *Selected Short Stories* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 24-27. Subsequent references to page numbers of The Time Machine will appear in the text.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Caudwell, *Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick Parrinder, "Imagining the Future: Zamyatin and Wells", Source: <http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/1/parrinder1art.htm>.(access ed September 11, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, trans. Bernard Guilbert Guerney (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977), pp.17-18.

<sup>9</sup> Brian Aldiss, and David Wingrove, *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (London: Gollancz, 1986), p. 118.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Bergonzi, "The Time Machine: An Ironic Myth" *The Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Winter, 1960), p.302.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Bergonzi, *The Early H. G. Wells* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Bergonzi, "The Time Machine: An Ironic Myth", p. 305



<sup>13</sup> For further understanding of Wells's "Sexual Utopia" see: Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1979) and especially Chapter 11, "Mr. Wells's Sexual Utopia".

<sup>14</sup> Mark R. Hillegas, p. 430.

<sup>15</sup> Theodore Dalrymple in "The Dystopian Imagination", [www.city-journal.org](http://www.city-journal.org) (accessed February 20, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> For full understanding of the Second Law of Thermodynamics see: W. F. Bynum, E. J. Brown, and Ray Porter, eds., *MacMillan Dictionary of the History of Science* (London: MacMillan Press, 1984), S.V. "Heat and Thermodynamics" By: Bruce R. Wheaton.

<sup>17</sup> For further knowledge on this topic see: Robert L. Carneiro, ed., *Herbert Spencer: The Evolution of Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967).

<sup>18</sup> Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *The Time Traveller, The Life of H. G. Wells* (London: Weidenfeldenand Nicolson, 1973), pp. 122-123.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Morton, *Ibid.*,

<sup>20</sup> J. R. Hammond, *An H. G. Wells Companion* (London : The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1979), p.10.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *The Time Traveller, The Life of H. G. Wells*, p. 420.

<sup>22</sup> Unsigned Notice, 'A Man of Genius' in Patrick Parrinder, ed., *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage* (London: Vikas Publishing House PVT Ltd, 1973), p.33.

<sup>23</sup> David Lodge, *The Language of Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 223.

<sup>24</sup> Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, p.120.

<sup>25</sup> J. R. Hammond, p.14.

<sup>26</sup> Lovat Dickson, *H. G. Wells, His Turbulent Life and Times* (New York: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1969), p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> Patrick Parrinder, "History in the Science Fiction of H. G. Wells".

<sup>28</sup> Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, p. 122.

<sup>29</sup> John Lawton, ed., *H.G. Wells: The Time Machine* (London: Dent, 'The Everyman Library', 1995), p. xxxii.

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### خلاصة البحث الموسوم

اليوتوبيا المضادة الاجتماعية والكونية في رواية آلة الزمن للروائي هيربرت جورج ويلز يتناول هذا البحث بالنقاش والتحليل رواية هيربرت جورج ويلز الموسومة ب (آلة الزمن) والتي تم نشرها في عام ١٨٩٥. ويعتبر الكتاب احدى روايات اليوتوبيا المضادة الكبرى. منطلق هذا البحث و منطقته هو ان هذه الرواية ابداع على المستوى الاجتماعي و الكوني حيث ان هذه الرواية مسرودة تتوقع المظاهر المتنوعة لمجتمع المستقبل "السعيد" بحيث تصل البشرية الى مفترق طرق تؤدي للكارثة. هناك، بعد تحليل طويل، مصير سئ ينتظر البشرية والكرة الأرضية. ولأن هذه الرواية ثرية بالمدلولات الفكرية فيمكن التعامل معها بمناهج متعددة و النظر اليها من عدة زوايا تؤكد جميعاً في نهاية المطاف ان مصير الأنسان هي كابوس حقيقي.

ثوختهى ليكولينتوكة

ديستوتياى كؤمة لآبتهى و طةردونى لة رؤمانى ماكينتهى كات  
هربت جؤرج ويلز

نعم تويدنيقوةية لة رؤمانى ماكينى كات ي رؤماننوس هر بقرت جورج ويلز وئك بقرهاميكى ديستوي مآزن دةكوليتقوة كة لة سالى ( ) دا بلاوكر اوتقوة. تويدتر لة هتر دوو طوشةنيطاي سؤسيولؤدى و طتردوونى يقوة نعم بقرهامة دةخاتة بقرتير وانينيكى ورد و شيكاريانة. هتر لقم روانطهشقوة دةستنيشاني دةركقوةية جياواز ةكانى ديستويثيا لة كؤمةلطةى دوارؤذا دةكات. لةئال نقوةشدا بقءواى نقو هؤكارانءدا دةطتريت كة ذيانى نعم سترز ةمينة دةكئة ديستويثيا و هءولى نقوش ة بخاتة روو كة ضؤن مرؤطايئتى دةتوانيت حؤي لة كارءساتى كؤتايى كة ضاوةر وانى دةكات بقءور بطريت.

رؤمانءكئى ويلز شيكر دنقوةيةكى قوولى نقو ضارءنووسءة تاريخية كة لة نايبندءدا ضاوةر وانى زقوى دةكات بقطشتى و مرؤظ بقئايبئتى. جا ضونكة رؤمانءكة لةلايئتى فيكريبقة دةؤلمءندة، دةكريت لة زور طوشةنيطاي تريشقوة سقير بكريت. بقشى كؤتايى نءجامى نقو ليكولينقوة دةخاتة بقر ضاوان و دواتر يش بقء ليستى سقرضاوةكان كؤتايى ديت.