

## Architects of the Future: Scientists in H.G. Wells's Early Fiction

**Auteur :** Vezzu, Emma

**Promoteur(s) :** Delville, Michel

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Université de Liège  
**Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres**  
Département de Langues et Lettres Modernes

# **ARCHITECTS OF THE FUTURE: SCIENTISTS IN H.G. WELLS'S EARLY FICTION.**

Mémoire présenté par Emma VEZZU en vue de l'obtention du grade de  
Master en Langues et Lettres Modernes, orientation générale, à finalité approfondie

Promoteur : Michel DELVILLE

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Mom, this is for you.  
You knew better than anyone how much this dissertation meant to me,  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1	Preliminary words and purpose of this dissertation .....	1
1.2	<i>Fin de siècle</i> , culture and science .....	4
1.3	Scientific romances and Utopian literary tradition .....	6
1.4	A Modern Utopia .....	8
2	THE TIME MACHINE .....	11
2.1	Plot summary .....	11
2.2	A kinetic society .....	12
2.3	Nature <i>versus</i> Culture .....	17
2.4	Scepticism, subjectivity, and ethics .....	19
3	THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU .....	27
3.1	Plot summary .....	27
3.2	Grotesque bodies and liminality of the monstrous .....	29
3.3	Mad scientist(s) .....	32
3.4	The case of (in)humanity .....	39
4	THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON .....	45
4.1	Plot summary .....	45
4.2	The pursuit of knowledge .....	46
4.3	Absurd mankind.....	52
4.4	The first Wellsian World Order? .....	56
5	CONCLUSION .....	61
6	WORKS CITED .....	63



# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 PRELIMINARY WORDS AND PURPOSE OF THIS DISSERTATION

As Claire Tomalin declares in her biography titled *The Young H.G. Wells Changing the World*: “I doubt if anyone forgets their first reading of *The Time Machine*” (16). This dissertation’s author surely has not, which is why she felt compelled to delve into this and two other ‘scientific romances’ by the notorious, though sometimes controversial, Herbert George Wells. For those who are already acquainted with Wells’s character, it will come as no surprise that one should deem it rather difficult to differentiate between Wells the writer, Wells the social prophet, and Wells the educator, which is reason enough to write a few introductory words about this multi-faceted author.

As a young man, Wells was quickly drawn to literature and naturally became an insatiable reader. Books rendered possible discoveries and experiences of unparalleled precedence: “another book made him aware of astronomy, of the awesome size and complexity of the universe. Biographies let him make the acquaintance of the duke of Wellington, history books taught him of the recently ended American Civil War, science books gave him the first hints of the mystery of evolution” (Ferrell 15). He very well grasped the power contained within the almost infinite possibilities of literature and held onto that for the entirety of his future career: “He began to see patterns, to understand that the world of books could serve as a map toward mastering the real world, and that experience in the real world was also invaluable and enriching when approaching the world of books. They reinforced each other” (Ferrell 25). The novel, Wells will later write, “it is the only medium through which we can discuss the great majority of the problems which are being raised in such bristling multitude by our contemporary social development” (Wells, *An Englishman* 163).

He also manifested a deep interest in the study and teaching of science, and the subsequent complex question of education. He was asked to fill out as a teaching assistant at barely fourteen years old, which could not have been an easy feat at such a young age, but he succeeded and found the experience very interesting (Tomalin 16). Later, he studied biology under Professor Thomas H. Huxley at the Normal School of Science (Tomalin 31). Of course, his many successive—and successful, writings were most certainly instigated by his scientific education:



Wells was seized by the theory of evolution, and he became equally obsessed with the idea of science as the great salvation of mankind. But first, he knew, the average citizen must be made aware of the promise of science. This could only happen by way of teachers, explainers like Huxley. Wells threw himself into his studies with more ferocity than he'd shown at Midhurst. He wanted to be another Huxley. (Ferrell 42)

In hardly a page or so, Wells's most predominant concerns have then already unfolded. He proved to be a perceptive young man, understood thus the merits of literature, science, education, and, above all, the necessary merging of the three.

Literature, he noticed, needed to adapt to these subjects, for even the audience was progressively shifting away from the traditional Gothic novel onto something rather different: "The reading public was ready for books and stories dealing with the wonders and perils of science, and Wells gained his first great fame by successfully fussing the scientific world with the literary" (Ferrell 79). As a result, scholars agree that Wells both dismissed and reinstated some aspects of the late-Victorian literary tradition, thus producing an altogether new interpretation of reality as one dealing with the relationship between modern concerns and society (Pagetti 124). He stepped away from the "nostalgic glorification of the past so dear to the romances and the oversimplifications of an irrational condemnation of technical processes" (Pagetti 125), while being fully conscious that imagining the future with unwavering optimism was both foolish and dangerous (Ferrell 101). Humans, though, Wells maintained, "were *special*; they could be great, they could make for themselves and their descendants a great future" (Ferrell 101, original emphasis).

Hence, everything Wells had ever written, from his early scientific romances, to his social pamphlets and other miscellaneous comments, was always with the resolved feeling that people needed to see that "the way they lived and the way they ran their nations and their world were ways that would doom them to repeat, on ever larger and more terrifying scales, the catastrophes that had always plagued humanity" (Ferrell 133-4). Although at times Wells proved to have a difficult temperament, so much that scholars do not miss an occasion to point it out<sup>1</sup>, it should be acknowledged that "he *tried*, and watched as most did not" (Ferrell 172, original emphasis).

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<sup>1</sup> In the biographies referenced so far, one can read Tomalin's stating that "[Wells] could be unreliable, selfish, and even vengeful" (94); Ferrell in turn asserted that "H.G. Wells was in many ways petulant and egocentric. He never did understand that people and governments were simply not going to do things *his way*" (176)

His understanding of society, science and the nature of man has led Wells to imagine the disastrous consequences of complacency, of overconfidence in the administrators of our civilisation, and poorly managed technologies. Scholars, it is true, have often stressed the existence of at least two Wellses, whom “they have variously termed the ‘artist’ and the ‘journalist’, or the novelist and the polemicist, or the imaginative skeptic who experimented with ideas and the close-minded optimist with monomaniacal delusions” (Philmus 250). While this dissertation will that this separation of character is not as clear-cut as one might claim, it is undeniable that critics have invariably pointed out that he owes the better part of his reputation to his early literature, having thus “produced stories and novels of extraordinary brilliance and originality”; after the First World War, however, “he seems to have stopped trying, with the result that his novels became disappointing” (Tomalin 3).

That being said, this dissertation will actually focus upon his ‘early’ production, namely *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901). This choice was motivated by three considerations. For the one, all three novels contain their version of a scientist figure; they are usually described as either scientific romances, dystopia or science fiction; they were published around the late-nineteenth century. As such, this dissertation’s author certainly does not wish to disregard Wells’s successive works, nor does she ascribe to the general acceptance that Wells’s best literary works were written before World War I, and she could actually argue, without emitting any value judgement, that Wells’s ‘later’ production only reflects what he has always manifested, that is, the irresistible urge to shape literature, over and over again, to his and society’s needs; the desire to find the better path to mankind’s salvation through literature working thus as the organising agent of world chaos.

It is in that very perspective that the three selected novels should be envisioned, but, more than that, the figure of the scientist will demonstrably be at the heart of this reorganisation, which thus echoes Wells’s later and oh-so-very recurrent vision of a ‘modern eutopia’ with its intellectual elite, as well as consequently demonstrates the very few disparities between his ‘early’ and his ‘less early’ production. In order to conduct this analysis, this dissertation will begin with four short theoretical sections, which shall aim to recontextualise the novels in their connection to the late-Victorian era, contemporary scientific discoveries, literary tradition of Utopia and scientific romances, and, finally, Wells’s very own ‘modern eutopia’. The following chapters will in their turn investigate the role of the scientist(s) in each novel, revealing Wells’s attempts at bringing the questions of morality; education; nature to the fore, as well as evidencing the fundamental plasticity of literature, especially in Wells’s hands.

## 1.2 FIN DE SIÈCLE, CULTURE AND SCIENCE

The end of the nineteenth century was characterised by “disparate social, economic and political changes, as well as “an acceleration of the instabilities” that followed the Industrial Revolutions (Saler 46, 47). There was a rather singular mood, a *fin de siècle malaise*, or, in Bergonzi’s words, “the feeling that the nineteenth-century—which had contained more events, more history than any other—had gone on too long, and that sensitive souls were growing weary of it” (3).

One of the most characteristic contemporary works commenting on the matter is probably Nordau’s *Degeneration*, in which he argues that the vast majority of that period’s art and literature were “the products of mental and physical degeneration” (Bergonzi 4) and that the “relentless technological advancements, the increased pace of living, the overturning of traditional customs and standards, and especially urbanization with its population pressures and pollution [...] not only mark the body but foster a wide-spread hysteria that reinforces mental deterioration” (Bergonzi 4; Glendening 24). In Nordau’s very writing, one can witness how old and familiar forms—even in behaviour or attitude—disappear for new strange and bizarre ones, which constitute the main contention of *fin de siècle* (Bergonzi 7).

As such, the nineteenth-century circumstances worked as the incentive the contemporary novel needed to express the modern world’s new concerns: “[l]oss of religious faith, fears about the effects of the expanding metropolis, increasing political unrest in Europe, the emergence of the ‘New Woman’, apocalyptic predictions for the future and anxiety about scientific advances found expression in the late nineteenth-century novel” (Dryden 1).

The late nineteenth century was already in low spirits, but Darwin’s evolutionary theory through natural selection of a species’ most adaptive characteristic, was to shatter the mood even further. In more recent years, the observations have remained consistent, and scholars still invariably argue that Darwin was “striving to establish the truth of a hypothesis which affects the scientific approach to a whole body of sciences, ranging from palaeontology to psychology, and which was destined to have repercussions upon the entire philosophical outlook of the succeeding age” (Harris 178). It should be noted that the philosopher Herbert Spencer preceded Darwin in theorising upon evolution, which for him, Mander wrote in the introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, is “a fundamental law of matter that wherever homogeneity is acted on by external forces it produces difference and variety, generating a vast evolutionary scheme which manifests itself throughout the physical,

biological, and social worlds” (Mander 9). In any case, during that period, science and scientists became “the hot topics of the day” (Lightman 17).

A new generation of scientific practitioners thus appeared, advocating for the secularisation of nature and the professionalisation of their discipline, amongst which Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Wells’s own mentor T.H. Huxley nicknamed ‘Darwin’s bulldog’ for his relentless commitment to defending evolution, to name only a few relevant to this dissertation’s analysis (Lightman 19-20). Many of them came from the rather modest end of the middle-class and were interested in “transforming British culture as a whole”, putting forward “new interpretations of humanity, nature and society derived from the theories, methods and categories of empirical science, especially evolutionary science” (Lightman 20).

Darwinism, and other approaches to evolution considerably impacted the intellectuals and thinkers of the late-Victorian period in many a different way, for instance:

For Marx, Darwinism strengthened his conviction that revolutionary struggle, not gradual reform, was inherent in nature. For Bagehot, Spencer, Froude, and Kingsley it was proof that nature enjoined the powerful (white, Christian, British, male) to dominate and only the fittest of them to survive. For Arnold, Tennyson, Clough, and Hardy it produced an abiding sense of pessimism which was variously overcome by reaffirmation of Faith, Culture, Nature and Art. For scientists and philosophers it offered the possibility of a new human type with different physical and psychical facilities, ever progressing—but to what end, especially as phrases such as the ‘struggle for existence’ came to imply that conflict was embedded in human nature, while the will and intellect were devalued and debased? (Graff 34)

The acceleration of scientific discoveries stimulated the imagination of authors and readers, with the resulting increasing production of novels which addressed the application of evolutionary theory to various domains, although some scholars have noticed that, sometimes, “Victorians’ translation of Darwin’s ideas from the biological to social realm, relentless from the first, led to varied and conflicted applications” (Glendening 14). Indeed, it could be argued—and actually was, that late Victorian authors were prompted to portray “the contingencies, uncertainties, and confusions” generated by Darwinism, rather than more objective truths (Glendening 8). These contingencies and confusions involved but were not restricted to the sudden rupture with former truths beckoned by religious beliefs, thus

completely decentring humans and “returning them to the status of mere animals” (Glendening 14). The idea that the evolutionary theories were at least partly responsible for the *fin de siècle* “sense of human dethronement” has been the focus of many academic writings that usually emphasise the facility with which contemporary authors, such as Wells, subjected their characters to subsequent monstrous developments, stressing the “ephemerality of earthly things in relation to the geological or cosmic time scale”, and positing nature as an unpredictable force able to define “perfection or rather the suitability of any species for its environment, which in some cases means extinction” (E. Roberts 8; Glendening 20; Graff 34).

### 1.3 SCIENTIFIC ROMANCES AND UTOPIAN LITERARY TRADITION

One thing becomes entirely too plain when one peruses the academic literature concerning Wells, it is how scholars have been unable to reach a consensus regarding his early literature and how it should be defined. While this dissertation’s author will certainly not venture to offer a definitive proposal, she can surely make the most of this ongoing discussion and argue that that it only further instantiates the dissertation’s claim that Wells’s literature is decidedly plastic, in constant evolution, and never quite satisfies one definition or the other.

Two literary traditions, however, have repeatedly stood out in scholarly production, that of the scientific romance and of Utopia. Regarding the former, Linda Dryden wrote in *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles* that the circumstances of the *fin de siècle*, such as discussed above, prompted the rise of a “new form of romance fiction” in which scientific themes found their application to said romance, thus creating the scientific romance hybrid (Dryden 2). Wells was indeed inspired by the new possibilities science discoveries laid out before him and the rest of the world but wished to acknowledge “the concomitant demonstrations of human vulnerability and alienation”; as a result, science progress needed “to be examined as a bipolar process, revealing both its cognitive vitality and its apocalyptic dimension” (Bowen 333; Pagetti 125).

Now, although the word ‘utopia’ came into use centuries later, the concept itself traces its existence back to the Antiquity, with, for instance, Plato’s famous *Republic*. Utopia, however, is a neologism coined by Thomas More in 1516, both the title of his novel and the island it described (Viera 3). Although it was intended as the derivation of the Greek prefix *ou-* (οὐ) joined with *topos* (τόπος), then quite literally translated as a ‘no-place’, it can also be understood as ‘good place’ with the prefix *eu-* (εὖ), and because of this, scholars have pointed out that “More created a tension that has persisted over time has been the basis for the perennial

duality of meaning of utopia as the place that is simultaneously a non-place (utopia) and a good place (eutopia)” (Vieira 5). This paradox makes the study of utopian literature all the more interesting, for it shows its “facility for acquiring new meanings, for serving new interests, and for crystallizing into new formats”; ultimately, “Utopia is then to be seen as a matter of attitude, as a kind of reaction to an undesirable present and an aspiration to overcome all difficulties by the imagination of possible alternatives” (Vieira 6, 7)

The end of the nineteenth century, just as it did the scientific romance, offered the utopian tradition new perspectives, perspectives in which “great scientific, technological and industrial progress seemed to demonstrate that it was reasonable, ethical, possible, even natural to create the ‘good time’ of democracy and an equality of abundance in ‘real places’” (Roemer 82). Meanwhile, others proved more cautious, the optimism of their fellow writers then replaced “by a sense of the incapacity of humanity to restrain its newly created destructive powers”, which prompted them to dismiss the utopian ideal and to rather imagine societies in dystopian form (Claeys 107). Naturally, one should note that very often utopia and dystopia somehow co-exist, as “the eutopia of the few being built at the expense of the dystopia of the many” (Stableford 263).

Often, Wells’s *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *The First Men in the Moon* have also been said to belong to the science-fiction genre, regardless of its other denominations, namely, scientific romance and utopia/dystopia. The relationship of science fiction with Utopian literature is strained at best, “researchers in the field of Utopian Studies have claimed that science fiction is subordinate to utopia, as the latter was born first, whereas those who have devoted their study time to science fiction maintain that utopia is but a socio-political sub-genre” (Vieira 8). Darko Suvin is a name often associated with the latter view, he has repeatedly argued for “an understanding of science fiction as the *literature of cognitive estrangement*”, in addition to presenting Wells as the father of contemporary science fiction (Suvin 3; James 29-30). Science fiction possesses what Suvin calls the *novum*, that is, “the fantastic element”, “the strange property or the strange world”, as Wells himself wrote in a personal essay” (Parrinder 36; Wells, Preface vii).

On top of that, concerning the scientific romance, it has been argued to be a “mere artefact of a shift in the underlying logic of commercial publication” and thus one of many iterations of the science fiction genre (A. Roberts 8). Regarding Wells’s early works, some argue that they go “beyond dystopia” and “into science fiction [...] by moving beyond short-term to long-term evolution” (Claeys 113).

Of course, this is a very condensed overview merely presenting the connections and contentions between the different tradition and the difficulties that arise when one attempts to outline a literary canon. Again, it must be reiterated that the purpose of this dissertation is not to oppose or confirm any of these various—sometimes even antagonistic views, but humbly suggest that they, if anything, only emphasise Wells's novels' adaptability and lack of clear commitment to one or the other genre.

#### 1.4 A MODERN UTOPIA

After the success of his scientific fictions, Wells wanted to experiment with his writing in a different way, and so he published a series of writings touching on contemporary social issues; the first being *Anticipations* (1901), the second *Mankind in the Making* (1903), and the last one, which shall interest this section, *A Modern Utopia* (1905). With this last publication, Wells single-handedly “appeared to offer an alternative to Marxist revolution, Communist ideals, and Fascist politics” which even attracted the interest of state leaders” (Fokkema 289). Unlike his previous fiction novels, decidedly more ambiguous, this one writing unequivocally postulated Wells's very personal views and ideals:

Wells would, were he in charge, end all frustration and unhappiness by creating a new order. This new order—a fair and just order of society, not simply a *proper* one—would be based upon rationalism. It would be based upon the power of thought and education rather than upon acquisition and the power of money. (Ferrell 34)

In *A Modern Utopia*, Wells thus expressed his utopian ideas. This is a rather particular text, which, Fokkema explains so well it cannot be necessary to attempt another formulation, is “close to an expository argument and much relying on the notion of hypothesis” (Fokkema 290):

In a brief introduction, printed in italics, the author explains the hybrid nature of the text, which is both fiction and essay. There is an ongoing interaction in *A Modern Utopia* between the fictional narrative of two men who suddenly enter another, utopian planet that in appearance and geography resembles Earth and

the critical discussion of earlier utopias involving references to Plato, More, Bacon, Campanella, Cabet, Bellamy, Morris, and others. (Fokkema 291)

What transpires from the characters' exchange throughout the book is that the traditional utopia failed to self-actualise, and so "the modern utopia cannot be static and must be dynamic and open-ended instead" (Fokkema 291). Such utopia is not created out of thin air, but meticulously planned, and its success requires that said planning view every human as unique and optimally balance individual liberties and state intervention (Partington, "Static" 63). In this perspective, the role of the state is twofold; on the one hand, it shall provide "a regulatory framework for society which prevents the exploitation of individuals or groups by others"; on the other hand, it shall "provide a basic minimum standard of life through welfare, education, health, housing and legal reforms" (Partington, "Static" 63). The goal is certainly not perfection, but continuous advancement so that one generation "provide[s] the best opportunities and conditions for the next generation to build upon and succeed, and such a responsibility will rest with all future generations of human being *ad infinitum*" (Partington, "Static" 65).

Wells's utopia contains a vision of society with scientists, doctors, and engineers in the most prestigious positions, working toward forming a world state in perpetual evolution (Tomalin 99). Philosophers and scientists had already brought forward the idea that science "should serve the needs of community rather than its own purpose" as early as the sixteenth century with, for instance, Francis Bacon, or, later, with Francis Galton who entertained the idea of a "'sort of scientific priesthood' that would provide the teachers, researchers, and government administrators of the not too distant future" (Haynes 33, 163). More recently, scholars have written of science that "it is the chief agent of change in society; at first, unconsciously as technical change, paving the way to economic and social changes, and, latterly, as a more conscious and direct motive for social change itself" (Bernal 383). Wells clearly approved the idea of a scientifically based society, but he did also question the scientists' moral compass in his scientific fictions, as this dissertation will demonstrate. What uniquely sets apart the scientists, in Wells's opinion, is their inherent flexibility: "Scientists were the only member of society whom Wells associated with an acceptance of change, but change almost inevitably involves destruction, and this, it seems, the scientist must accept without regret" (Haynes 160).

He thus also shared his mentor's view that politics "should be based on the principles of science", and he became "the literary spokesperson for the contemporary scientists who were crusading vigorously either for scientists to have greater political influence or for all politicians



to have scientific qualifications” (Haynes 163, 181). Interestingly, more recent studies in scientific communication have stressed the difference between scientific knowledge and scientific expertise; as such, experts have different responsibilities, they must obviously acquire the full extent of knowledge relating to a specific situation, they need to make a systematic and exhaustive assessment of said situation, and, most importantly, be able to communicate to the public in an intelligible manner, not to “leave it to the people to make sense of it” (Peters 71-3). Again, Wells had already anticipated this very problem and does draw attention to it in the selected novels.

If an educated class was indeed needed to bring about the realisation of any modern utopia, it had to begin with a complete transformation of the educational system, but such vast enterprise did not deter Wells, for he profoundly “believed in the perfectibility of civilization” (Ferrell 177). In this view, Huxley proposed “to make the training in natural science the main part of education, for the great majority of mankind at any rate”, while at the same time valuing a literary training (Lightman 12-3, paraphrasing Huxley, “Science” 153-4). It does echo the more recent scientific literacy theory, which builds on the idea that an education in science is necessary to exercise one’s role in civilisation (Bauer and Falade 145). If some scholars, such as W. Warren Wagar, have argued that Wells only stressed the necessity of universal education because it would “transform all men and women everywhere into servants of the emerging racial [or collective] mind”, they fail to take into consideration that every single of Wells’s idea is based upon the belief that one better proposal might always—should always, eclipse the former (Di Leo 161, paraphrasing Wagar 49-50). In this respect, Wells is very much a Utopist of the former tradition, following More’s idea of utopia as “based on the discovery that the human being did not exist simply to accept his or her fate, but to use reason in order to build the future” (Vieira 4).

## 2 THE TIME MACHINE

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### 2.1 PLOT SUMMARY

In the smoking-room of a Richmond townhouse, a dishevelled man called the Time Traveller begins a most peculiar tale, one of journeys into the future and back. A few days before his story actually takes off, he had presented his creation—the Time Machine—to a room filled with very eclectic personalities: Filby the Argumentative Man, the Psychologist, the Very Young Man, the Provincial Mayor, the Medical Man and, finally, the very person narrating these events. This unnamed Narrator comes back to Richmond, accompanied by three new characters—the Editor, the Silent Man and the Journalist—only to witness his host in a terrible state of disarray and confusion. He had been travelling to the year 802,701, to a world most different from theirs: “At first things were very confusing. Everything was so entirely different from the world I had known—even the flower” (34). He met the frail and delicate Eloi, creatures of a “graceful gentleness, a certain childlike ease” (32). Initially, the Time Traveller believes he witnesses the perfect realisation of a pastoral communism, wherein Man’s successors hardly have any preoccupations: they spent their day in a leisurely fashion, bathing, playing, and eating fruits.

Once he returned to his Machine, the Time Traveller was surprised to see it had vanished. After careful examination, he found out that it had been concealed inside a sphinx-like statue, with no means to reach it. On the same day, he rescued one of the little Eloi from drowning, which marked the beginning of an amicable bond between the both of them. From Weena, as she was called, the Time Traveller learned that her fellows were not exactly the completely carefree beings he had initially believed them to be. The perfect picture of glee and insouciance the Eloi had elicited indeed quickly darkened when the Time Traveller discovered the existence of another creature. Hidden in the darkness of the underground, the dreadful ape-like Morlocks possessed “a something inhuman and malign” and the Time Traveller “instinctively loathed them” (52). In his eyes, they had to be responsible for the disappearance of his Time Machine. They still operated great machinery buried with them below ground, thus probably providing for the little Upperworlders’ needs, and exploited the cover of darkness to abduct the Eloi at night, for the Morlocks turned out to actually feed off the helpless creatures:

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 Nemesis of the delicate ones was creeping on apace. 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 re-acquainted with Fear. (52-3)

The affectionate Weena by his side, the Time Traveller journeyed to the distant ‘Palace of Green Porcelain’ in the hope of finding something, anything, to fight the Morlocks. The building had gone to rack and ruin, but it very obviously stood out as a museum once they ventured inside. The ape-creatures feared fire, and the Time Traveller was lucky to find more matches to use against them, as well as a semi-helpful weapon. Tired, he and Weena were forced to halt in the forest for the night before resuming their way back. Of course, the Morlocks did not miss this opportunity, but they were held off by the little campfire the Time Traveller had lit, which quickly turned into a massive forest fire allowing him to run for his dear life. Unfortunately, little Weena was lost.

Returning to the location of his Time Machine, the Traveller was surprised to notice the Sphinx had been left open. The Machine back in his possession, he travelled further into the future, where he witnessed “a monstrous crab-like creature” with “its stalked eyes gleaming at you on either side of its metallic front”, the “red eastern sky, the northward blackness”, and the “uniform poisonous-looking green of the lichenous plants, the thin air that hurt one’s lungs” (68). He made a last stop, further still. The world had grown silent, dark and cold.

Back to the familiarity of his laboratory, he opens the door on the figures of the Narrator and the other guests. Said guests are mostly unamused and think the entire tale a complete absurdity, while the Narrator simply cannot reach a conclusion. When he visits Richmond again some time later, the Time Traveller promises him some evidence and vanishes. Three years later, he still has not returned.

## 2.2 A KINETIC SOCIETY

Before the Time Traveller even begins his journey through time, he already envisions the prospects the future holds. At first, his mind, it seems, does not even concede the remote possibility that human civilisation had not developed at all, but only fancies “wonderful advances” (29). At the idea of the future, one is often seduced by the assumption that progress

automatically follows. Of course, as reminded by Kenneth M. Roemer in his contribution to the *Cambridge Companion to Utopian Thinking*, the industrial revolution is much to blame for this conjecture, for at last “it seemed as if the basic goals of traditional utopias could be met: science, technology, mass production and improved distribution systems ensured that all humanity could be fed, clothed and sheltered” (82). The Time Traveller brings up his initial assumption once again when exploring the year 802.701, for he had always been positive future generations would be immensely ahead of the previous ones in matters of sciences or even art (*Time Machine* 32). In fact, some argue that science might be the only form of human activity in which progress is guaranteed. For instance, Errol E. Harris has described the systematic character of science and its self-generating nature, which implies that “the more systematic it becomes the more it increases its capacity to develop” (386). It proves much less evident to ascertain the same characteristics in other intellectual activities, for they are often complicated by various degree of emotional factors (Harris 386). In other words, one cannot guarantee that Man may move steadfastly towards greater prowess in matters of morality, for one, or even art.

The Eloi, as it turns out, do not seem to shine by their intelligence. They sorely lack interest in anything, and whenever presented with a novelty they would “come with eager cries of astonishment, like children, but, like children, they would soon [...] wander after some toy” (*Time Machine* 34). If there ever was a more advanced species somewhere in the future, the Time Traveller reckons it had long since passed into oblivion. The Eloi, as it initially appears, know not of the struggles of the modern man:

There were no hedges, no signs of proprietary rights; no evidences of agriculture; the whole earth had become a garden. [...] The air was free from gnats, the earth from weeds or fungi; everywhere were fruits and sweet and delightful flowers; brilliant butterflies flew hither and thither. The ideal of preventive medicine was attained. Diseases had been stamped out. I saw no evidence of any contagious diseases during all my stay. And I shall have to tell you later that even the processes of putrefaction and decay had been profoundly affected by these changes. Social triumphs, too, had been effected. I saw mankind housed in splendid shelters, gloriously clothed, and as yet I had found them engaged in no toil. There were no signs of struggle, neither social nor economical struggle. The shop, the advertisement, traffic, all that commerce which constitutes the body of our world, was gone. It was natural on that golden evening that I should jump at the idea of a social paradise. (36-37)

In this paradise of sorts, Man's intelligence and vigour had gradually declined, for "with change in condition comes inevitably adaptations to the change" (37). The capable man must face adversity in order to survive, intelligence and vigour are not needed where there is no hardship at all, or so it was believed. This is probably a *clin d'oeil* to Spencer's theory of the "survival of the fittest" and Lamarck's law, stating precisely that which the Time Traveller assumes, namely, that circumstances play a part in shaping the organism (Spencer 48; Lamarck 221).

Not only did Man seem to have faded into a vain inanity, but its successor's deficiency reaches rather concerning proportions when it proves completely indifferent to a fellow's distress. Indeed, on the day of the disappearance—or, as it turned out, the theft—of the Time Machine, one of the small Eloi was caught by the shallow's stream, and, if not for the Traveller's prompt reaction, faced imminent drowning. None of the present Eloi's attitude had suggested the slightest worry, thus the Traveller resorted to saving the creature himself (*Time Machine* 43). Humanity which had been strong and intelligent, "used all its abundant vitality to alter the conditions under which it lived" and now it could not even resort to a modicum of self-preservation (37).

As mentioned above, the Time Traveller first imagines all the ways in which men of the future would surpass their predecessors, but he still has the sense to consider the opposite scenario, although belatedly: "What if cruelty had grown into a common passion? What if in this interval the race had lost its manliness, and had developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful?" (30). Next scene enters the Morlock; ah—this dissertation's author bets the Time Traveller had wished to put his words back in his mouth. Indeed, the Eloi are not the only living species to exist in the year 802.701, but they surely are the most sympathetic, if one is to trust in the Time Traveller's depictions. From Weena, the Traveller "learned that fear had not yet left the world. [...] she dreaded the dark, dreaded shadows, dreaded black things", for in the darkness lurked the dreadful ape-figures of the Morlocks (44).

Having already deduced the existence of a system of machinery underground, for the presence of random wells from which a characteristic thud of some big engines could be heard led him to this conclusion, the Time Traveller guesses that at some point the industry had been relegated under the surface. After all, even in his time there already is "a tendency to utilise underground space for the less ornamental purposes of civilisation" (47). As a consequence, the pre-existing division between the proletarian and his counterpart bourgeois only worsened, for only the latter was allowed to enjoy the surface of the land freely, while the former was

relegated below ground. Ultimately, they had differentiated into two species: the “graceful” Eloi and the “obscene” Morlock (46).

At this point, one may be questioning the relevance of the past few paragraphs apropos the initial purpose of the present dissertation. Although, rest assured, this has not turned into an analysis of the failures of a capitalist society, it is still necessary to cover the topic as it will greatly improve the transition towards the main argument. Now, as John S. Partington stated in one of his article, “the underground drudgery of the Morlocks and the relative luxury of the upper-world Eloi was a result of the continuation of late-Victorian Capitalism” (“Polemic”, 17). However, the inequality between the Haves and the Workers did not exactly remain stable, the two had arrived at a new relationship: “the Morlocks made their garments [...], and maintained them in their habitual needs, perhaps through the survival of an old habit of service” (*Time Machine* 52-3), but “these Eloi were mere fatted cattle which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon—probably saw to the breeding of” (55).

Again, the Time Traveller displays one of the many fallacies he had assimilated about the subject of evolution when he supposes that the reason why the Morlock never ceased to provide for their former masters could be “because ancient and departed necessities had impressed it on the organism” (53). In other words, labour as a survival means has had long-lasting consequences on their physiologies and consequent evolution, which actually corresponds to what Lamarck defended, that is, the idea that circumstances had a progressive but profound effect upon the form and organisation of animals (Lamarck 221). Unfortunately for the Eloi, the Morlocks being in contact with the underground industries and the machines still necessitating some maintenance, they managed to cultivate a certain degree of initiative, which their former patrons thus came to sorely lack (*Time Machine* 65).

The bourgeoisie had attempted to realise the perfect Utopia, in which their comfort and wealth was guaranteed. What this Utopia lacked, however, was the possibility for evolution. Correspondingly, in response to why were the pre-Darwinian utopias no longer plausible as bases for modern life, Wells argues that they were “all perfect and static States, a balance of happiness won for ever against the forces of unrest and disorder that inhere in things” (*Modern* 11). *The Time Machine*’s offensive relies on its criticising the body of the tradition of Utopian Literature, for “such a stable balance would be doomed to degeneration and to ultimate extinction. In an evolving universe, no one species can remain static” (Partington, “Death” 98). As the Time Traveller puts it:

It is a law of nature we overlook, that intellectual versatility is the compensation for change, danger, and trouble. An animal perfectly in harmony with its environment is a perfect mechanism. Nature never appeals to intelligence until habit and instinct are useless. There is no intelligence where there is no change and no need of change. Only those animals partake of intelligence that have to meet a huge variety of needs and danger. So, as I see it, the Upper-world man had drifted towards his feeble prettiness, and the Under-world to mere mechanical industry. But that perfect state had lacked one thing even for mechanical perfection—absolute permanency. (65)

In an article named “First and Last Things. A Confession of Faith and Rule of Life” originally published in 1908, Wells himself had mentioned this notion of permanency:

The current syllogistic logic rests on the assumption that either A is B or it is not B. The practical reality is that nothing is permanent; A is always becoming more or less B. But it would seem the human mind cannot manage with that. It has to hold a thing still for a moment before it can think it... It cannot contemplate things continuously, and so it has to resort to a series of static snapshots. It has to kill motion in order to study it, as a naturalist kills and pins out a butterfly in order to study life. (21)

Partington has argued that Wells’s *A Modern Utopia* is in fact the rectified version of the Eloi and Morlocks’ failed eutopia (“Static” 57). Through the Morlocks’ adaptability and the Eloi’s lack thereof, Wells demonstrates “the evils of a static society rather than the benefits of a kinetic one and thus his story inevitably ended in doom” (Partington, “Static” 62). In *A Modern Utopia*, however, the key theme is this very adaptability and the importance of maintaining one’s sense of initiative and curiosity. Wells agreed that controlling evolution was impossible—but directing it should be encouraged (Partington, “Static” 12). Utopia, in Wells’s view, should not aim for perfection; this is why the Eloi’s utopia ultimately becomes their own dystopia, they failed to understand—when they still had the capacity to do so, that “in Utopia there must also be friction, conflicts and waste”; there should not exist a permanent being of things or people, but “universal becoming of individualities” (*Modern* 176, 21, both also quoted in “Static” 65).

In the end, Wells’s attempt at transforming former literary traditions into an entirely new paradigm becomes obvious. Just as the Eloi and Morlocks became accustomed to the

conditions of their situation, Wells, too, adapted himself and his prose to the imperatives of the *fin de siècle* circumstances. Established orders, of any kinds, really, are the real threat: “It was the same trap that caught and ultimately destroyed all civilizations. The status quo. The way things are. The nature of life. Those were the traps, and they were especially annoying to Wells, who had fought against existing orders all his life” (Ferrell 123).

### 2.3 NATURE VERSUS CULTURE

The Time Traveller is quick to notice that Nature is no easy ally. However, at first, he understands that the bourgeoisie, armed with patience and new technologies, had managed to transform their living circumstances. Patience was indeed required, because man’s “ideals are vague and tentative, and our knowledge is very limited; because Nature, too, is shy and slow in our clumsy hands” (36). This, however, suggests that Nature, in *The Time Machine*, is not some elusive, unpredictable, and somehow terrifying agent. Or, at least, it is not anymore. Science once offered the possibility of a new future, one in which man “shall readjust the balance of animal and vegetable to suit our human needs” (36).

So, on the one hand the bourgeoisie indeed succeeded at ensuring the perennity of their pleasures, but on the other hand, in doing so, they had “thrust [their] brother man out of the ease and the sunshine”, and “that brother was coming back—changed!” (53). Failing to anticipate the possible consequences of their triumph—or failing to care about it, perhaps—, the Eloi must face Nature’s last trick up its sleeve: the Morlocks, representing, as Youngs puts it, “the return of the psychologically and socially repressed” (113).

On that note, one could even argue that the repressed worker, who had to live under such artificial conditions, completely alienated from his former home in nature, could not escape his tragic evolution in something not even remotely human in appearance or character, as the Time Traveller continuously comments. It is almost as if the survival of humanity, as presented in the novel, is intrinsically tied to its connection to nature. If Youngs has aptly pointed out that “‘savage’ survivals in civilised ‘man’ are necessary if one is not to sink into idleness and decay” (114), it might also be that a position in the natural world is necessary in order to keep some degree of humanity. The Narrator himself is comforted by the idea that “even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man” (*Time Machine* 73). The following section will explore this very topic a step further; nevertheless, it made sense to mention it briefly at this earlier point.



Ironically, the Time Traveller himself seems less confident in the outdoors than he is surrounded by big machines. When he and Weena visit the 'Palace of Green Porcelain', he claims to be in his element, "for rising on either side of [him] were the huge bulks of big machines, all greatly corroded and many broken down, but some still fairly complete" (58). The "Palace of Green Porcelain" is evidently a museum of sorts but, while of course he would have liked "to trace the patient re-adjustments by which the conquest of animated nature had been attained" (57), he finds a deeper-seated interest in man-made machines: after all, he has "a certain weakness for mechanism", and was thus "inclined to linger among these [...]" (58). In fact, one could even argue that his curiosity about the natural history is mainly motivated by the role Man had to play to force said "animated nature" to suit his needs. If Man's hand had not been so determining in evolution, maybe the Time Traveller would not have cared less about generations of Nature study.

However, if the Time Traveller reckons the year 802.701 was the successful realisation of a "triumph over nature and the fellow-man" (48), it is clearly before the reality of the Morlocks and the Eloi dwells on him. In effect, Wells often conjured up the idea of an "essentially amoral, endlessly changing natural world remaining indifferent, if not actively hostile, to human dreams of dominion over it" (E. Roberts 3). *The Time Machine*, unlike his other scientific romances, draws attention to the singular experience of the inevitability of death and the meaninglessness of existence:

Looking at these stars suddenly dwarfed my own troubles and all the gravities of terrestrial life. I thought of their unfathomable distance, and the slow inevitable drift of their movements out of the unknown past into the unknown future. I thought of the great precessional cycle that the pole of the earth describes. Only forty times had that silent revolution occurred during all the years that I had traversed. And during these few revolutions all the activity, all the traditions, the complex organisations, the nations, languages, literatures, aspirations, even the mere memory of Man as I knew him, had been swept out of existence. (55)

The Time Traveller's pessimism sometimes borders on existential nihilism, or even something resembling and anticipating H.P. Lovecraft's cosmicism, also known as 'cosmic indifferentism'. Indeed, Lovecraft's horror finds its voice in the discovery that Man is utterly irrelevant against the vastly indifferent and chaotic universe (MacCormack 200). It is true that

by the end of *The Time Machine*, one cannot help but question the vanity of Man or the ‘futility of all ambition’, as the Time Traveller formulates (59). The numerous books the Traveller stumbles upon in ‘Palace of Green Porcelain’ merely resembles a decaying mess, which might thus suggest that the intellectual and artistic legacy of mankind will be first to pass into oblivion.

The memory of Man is short-lived, and *The Time Machine*’s ending in particular draws attention upon the fact that, to use Ferrell’s words, mankind may very well achieve that which it may, but it bears almost no significance against the “awesome, unfeeling, overwhelming immensity of the cosmos” (80-1). Partington has in turn argued that by depicting a world devoid of man’s presence, Wells aimed to demonstrate the failings of a Capitalist Utopia (“Polemic”, 19), and while it is not technically incorrect, it might be important to complete this statement; the Time Traveller, as a scientist, has a unique comprehension of the subject of evolution and its endless possibilities, thus by picturing the oh-so-very-lonely end of the world through a scientist’s eyes—and not a mere nobody’s eyes—Wells might be trying to emphasise the intricacies of the relationship between Nature and the experts wanting to measure up against her. In his own way, he is warning against a world in which Nature is controlled by means of technologies and scientific prowess, rather than embraced and organically integrated in our progress.

#### 2.4 SCEPTICISM, SUBJECTIVITY, AND ETHICS

The guests attending the Time Traveller’s dinners constitute a rather homogeneous sample of the late Victorian society, as they represent the dominant classes of educated bourgeois gentlemen. These dinners, Partington also points out, are casual and do not necessitate any prior invitations, and they do recall the soirees of scientific demonstrations the upper-class much demanded and enjoyed in real life, for science had become “part of a culturally sophisticated urban middle-class identity” (“Polemic” 12; Haynes 128; Lightman 17).

Some of the gentlemen prove rather sceptical when the Traveller exposes his recent discoveries. He himself warns the guests that his ideas are likely to disprove what is generally acknowledged (19). With his tale of time travelling, he is creating a tear in the fabric of reality and hitherto accepted facts. That being said, Partington argues that the nature of this entire demonstration is almost imprudent and quite singular, for in late-Victorian times much secrecy usually followed new technologies and projects; any potential spying scientific could have attended his meeting and stolen the invention’s blueprints (“Polemic” 12). The Time Traveller

seems not to care, or even realise, that there exist profit-driven minds who would be entirely too interested in such an invention: they could sell it for an important sum of money. The Traveller's only focus, or so it appears, is the sheer feasibility of the enterprise. Also, one should remember that, at the turn-of-the-century, science was not yet professionalised—and Huxley spent a great deal of his energy in advocating for it, so that the practice of science necessitated either a “complex network of patronage” or good university connections, usually with the “highest ranks of the learned professions” which the Time Traveller's guest then represent (White 33).

On another note, it is worth mentioning that Filby, the most argumentative of the guests, is the only one referred to by a name. This creates a significant division between the specialists—the Medical Man, the Provincial Mayor, and so on—and the ordinary citizen. One could perhaps even suggest that he is a proletarian.<sup>2</sup> His confrontational nature only highlights society's general suspicions towards the advances in both technology and science. The nineteenth century *fin de siècle*, Colin Manlove points out, stressed a new, highly modern, preoccupation, that of the unpredictability of man's inventions which could very well “in ways unknown to him work rather to undermine the whole fabric of existence on the planet” (226).

What is more, society might not only doubt science as a discipline, but men of science altogether as well. The Narrator reckons that the Time Traveller is simply “too clever to be believed” and that “[they] distrusted him” (24). Intelligence is perceived as a threat, and, as a matter of fact, by the mid-nineteenth century, scholars have argued that Victorians had started to pathologize genius, and held an almost clinical association between genius and insanity (Stiles 322, 319). Plus, there is a notable history of myths and even biblical texts recording Man's fear related to the idea that the pursuit of knowledge is sometimes dangerous, “that some things should remain hidden” (Haynes 4). Then, of course, in the hands of very articulate and capable men, knowledge seems inaccessible, and one might then question the reasoning behind trusting blindly someone they cannot even understand. It certainly does not help that Wells's scientists are notable solitaires; they usually are, as Manlove puts it, “separate from the social fabric” (226). This is not entirely true of the Time Traveller, for, as it has already been said, he is uncommonly open and hospitable. The Narrator and the fellow guests are the ones to detach themselves from the too-clever scientist. However, science was not altogether questioned and

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<sup>2</sup> Nothing stands concretely in the text to support this; it is merely an extrapolation based on the sheer thought that, given the nature of the following tale and the predominance of the class struggle as a theme, there had possibly been a desire to represent both the higher class and the lower class during these meetings. Of course, such a mingling would have been unlikely, but one is allowed to speculate.

repudiated, on the contrary: “Science! It was the golden dream of the nineteenth century, the new art that would transform life into paradise for all” (Ferrell 38).

With caution and because, perhaps, his curiosity is too strong to simply ignore, the Narrator is still willing to describe the events. He reckons that he must be as explicit as possible in his report “for this that follows—unless [the Time Traveller’s] explanation is to be accepted—is an absolutely unaccountable thing” (22). His prudence is a testimony to his understanding of scientific progress, albeit superficial one can suppose. Indeed, the Narrator has in mind that in order to believe the Time Traveller, he cannot simply rely upon his seeing the experiment; the man and his invention would have to gain the scientific community’s consensus. However, he is quickly losing himself to emotional descriptions of the “speaker’s white, sincere face in the bright circle of the little lamp, [and] the intonation of his voice”, consequently drawing attention to the Traveller’s own agitation which could very well prove his lack of neutrality (27).

Upon reaching the year 802.701, the Time Traveller must face remarkable changes. As already mentioned in the introduction, the landscape itself is most different than what he is used to:

As I walked I was watchful for every impression that could possibly help to explain the condition of ruinous splendour in which I found the world—for ruinous it was. A little way up the hill, for instance, was a great heap of granite, bound together by masses of aluminium, a vast labyrinth of precipitous walls and crumbled heaps, amidst which were thick heaps of very pagoda-like plants—nettles possibly—but wonderfully tinted with brown about the leaves, and incapable of stinging. It was evidently the derelict remains of some vast structure, to what end built I could not determine. [...] Looking round, with a sudden thought, from a terrace on which I rested for a while, I realised that there were no small houses to be seen. Apparently, the single house, and possibly even the household, had vanished. Here and there among the greenery were palace-like buildings, but the house and the cottage, which form such characteristic features of our own English landscape, had disappeared. (35)

There are no traces of men as the Traveller knows them. However, he does encounter some rather small creatures: the Eloi. His initial nervousity amidst this foreign setting lessens, for “there was something in these pretty little people that inspired confidence—a graceful

gentleness, a certain childlike ease” (32). The Time Traveller evidently seeks out something familiar, that is, the comforting innocence and harmlessness of children, and a subjective beauty that so pleases his own contemporaries (31), but in doing so he is allowing an arbitrary judgment to seep in his mind, which one could perceive as most un-scientific of him.

Being a scientist, one might justifiably expect from the Time Traveller’s attitude a certain rigour, detachment and objectivity. Errol E. Harris, whom we have already mentioned in an earlier paragraph, has pondered over the question of the scientific approach quite extensively in *Hypothesis and Perception, the Roots of Scientific Method* and his conclusions shall guide the following paragraph. In essence, the popular conception of science may be erroneous. It is restrictive and quite even misleading to present the scientific method solely as observable facts supplying the scientist with data, which in turn he will classify and hypothesise upon, in order to further test them and thus render his observations more precise (Harris 19). The issue, he argues, is that such a definition prompts the conceptualisation of the scientific method as a mere generalisation of directly observed phenomena, while it is, to be precise, “is the construction of a system of interrelated facts and ideas built up by a progressive organization of experience, by reference to which explanatory hypotheses are deduced, facts are rendered intelligible and events may be predicted” (Harris 188).

Furthermore, it is important to distinguish science from perceptual knowledge. As reminded in Harris’s work, men initiated their journey towards science when they sought to uncover the anomalies of the perceptual world: a way to make sense of that which their senses perceived was the creation of myths, until more inconsistencies urged them to reach more systematic explanations (Harris 295). As a sentient being, man is aware of the world continuously presenting itself through his senses. Scientific observation, however, differs in its persistence. It is “more developed than common-sense perception, because it is more deeply impregnated with theoretical interpretation. It is not mere perception but trained, discriminatory, theoretically informed perception [...]” (Harris 292). Therefore, the common-sense view is hardly precise enough and contains its share of unconscious biases, unfortunate preconceptions, or intrusions of folk lore, which, as will be demonstrated in mere moments, the Time Traveller is plagued by.

Before investigating the heart of the matter, a short passage actually illustrates the tension co-existing between folk lore and science, that is when the Time Traveller makes out silhouettes in the dim moonlight: “They must have been ghosts, [...] I wonder whence they dated” (45). He alludes to the author Grant Allen and his “Pallinghurst Barrow” ghost story, suggesting that each dying generation leaves their ghosts, so eventually the world will be

overpopulated by them<sup>3</sup>. Even in jest, the fact that the Traveller should consider such an approach is one of the many elements exposing his possible lack of commitment to the scientific approach.

On this note, his subjectivity creeps back upon his meeting the underground Morlocks. Admittedly, their features do not exactly arouse a sense of safety. Their big eyes reflecting the light, their ghastly demeanour terrify the Traveller: “You can scarcely imagine how nauseatingly inhuman they looked—those pale, chinless faces and great, lidless, pinkish-grey eyes!—as they stared in their blindness and bewilderment” (51). That being said, one may argue that the Time Traveller’s animosity towards the Morlocks is not solely based upon “the old instinctive dread of wild beasts” they elicit (45). The following comment suggests that he is prone to letting his personal desires and beliefs work the interpretations in the stead of an actual scientific method: “And what, I wondered, was this Lemur doing in my scheme of a perfectly balanced organisation?” (46). He would like the future to accommodate his initial theory of a “perfectly balanced organisation”, more than he might be interested in reporting things as they are without his judgment weighting in. As Partington pointed out, most of the Traveller’s analyses are “simple extrapolations from his own time”, and he never acknowledges that the future might simply not resemble his Victorian present at all (“Static” 58). Therefore, one might suggest the Time Traveller makes a methodological mistake in attempting to ‘read’ this new situation with possibly entirely outdated concepts.

A rather comical observation—if one concedes this dissertation’s author a minor personal assessment, after all the Time Traveller is allowed so many of them it might be only fair—is the constant back-and-forth of the Traveller’s attitude regarding his analytical approach. On the one hand, there is the rigorous and methodological Traveller; on the other hand, there is the scattered-and-ever-quickly-jumping-to-conclusions Traveller. The latter eclipses the former, and vice-versa, throughout the novel. This is particularly noticeable when he is attempting to reach a conclusion about Man’s differentiating into two species. He begins with a fairly empirical approach, thus relying on examples and actual observations and not mere guesses; then he promptly returns to his shortcomings mere moments later, accepting his conclusions awfully quickly on the sole basis that it sounds “so plausible” (47). Naturally, the present writing has already pointed out that empirical observation, if not conducted with the rigour and persistence required of a scientific observation, proves too vague, if not entirely

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<sup>3</sup> For a captivating analysis of the surprising similarities between Allen’s story and Wells’s *The Time Machine*, one might consider David Y. Hughes’s “A Queer Notion of Grant Allen’s”

erroneous. On multiple occasions, the Traveller proves that he is not as meticulous as one could expect, admitting for instance that he takes no time to examine things closely, or remembering he should have prepared more thoroughly in an afterthought: "If only I had thought of a Kodak! I could have flashed that glimpse of the Underworld in a second, and examined it at leisure" (33, 51). In the Traveller's case, one should not find it difficult to determine whether his approach is correct, for almost each of his attempt at examining the situation in a scientific spirit invariably culminates into mere judgemental opinions.

It is interesting to note that, in a paper discussing late Victorian representation of Darwin's theory of evolution, Anahita Rouyan argues that Wells grew tired of Darwin's theories succumbing to public sensationalism, the Time Traveller thus became an outlet for expressing his frustration, for he, too, "fails to distance himself from popular fallacies about evolution" (63). Indeed, his interpretations are motivated by and originate from his bourgeois position, or, in Rouyan's words, "his narrative is informed by an anthropocentric view on evolution where the Victorian white gentleman figures as its most sophisticated product" (74). His reading of the year 802.701 thus clearly reveals an attempt at maintaining the idea of society such as is natural to him, where the privileged position of the 'Victorian white gentleman' remains untouched. Indeed, by consistently contrasting the abhorrent, inhuman Morlocks against the beautiful, innocent Eloi, the Time Traveller is only perpetuating a decades-long tradition of looking down on the lower classes.

Unconsciously perhaps, the Time Traveller attempts to justify his attachment to the Eloi, and more specifically to the little Weena he had saved, by appealing to the great and complex question of humanity. While the Morlocks keep revolting him by their bestiality, the Eloi possess qualities not unlike those of humans: "[Weena] always seemed to me, I fancy, more human than she was, perhaps because her affection was so human" (56). That which makes up humanity has troubled many a philosopher over the centuries, and so it will this dissertation's author. By comparison, the Morlocks' composure makes them entirely too different from what the Traveller deems humans to be and there might be something profoundly disturbing in imagining the Morlocks as somehow related to Man, albeit distantly. Of course, the fact that the Morlocks belong to the working class certainly does not help, as already stated above: "Critics have invariably remarked that the Time Traveller, for instance, is a falsely objective witness of his journey, because his bourgeois origins lead him to take the side of the Eloi" (Pagetti 126). In *Class*, Gary Day demonstrates how Gaskell's *North and South* "subscribes simultaneously to the hierarchy of feudalism and the dynamism of capitalism", for its characters display an understanding of humanity through the property relations of feudalism

“whose inequalities are justified as the natural expression of differences in ‘human’ nature” while also getting its meaning from the bourgeois idea that workers “can only be regarded as ‘human beings’ so long as they dutifully fulfil their economic function and aspire to middle-class values”; the working class loses its human status, becoming ‘animals’ or ‘wild beasts’, as soon as it steps away from its ‘duties’, by going on strike, for instance (138-40, quoting Gaskell 175-6). Following this, the Time Traveller might be said to ascribe to the same view, entertaining thus a feudalistic and capitalist view of the lower stations as individuals different in nature, hardly human at times; while he may be trying to “look at the thing in a scientific spirit”, he nonetheless considers the Morlocks—and by extension the working-class, differently than he does the Eloi (55). By wondering how on earth the Morlocks could come from the same species than the Eloi—Man, he is betraying his profound contempt for the working-class altogether.

What is more, their supposed lack of humanity seems to warrant violence and questionable behaviours: “And I longed very much to kill a Morlock or so. Very inhuman you may think, to want to go killing one’s own descendants! But it was impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity in the things” (58). By stating this, the Traveller is asserting his opinion on the hypothetical differentiation of Man into the Eloi and Morlock; the underground creature has turn into a mere animal, whose bestial nature makes it so very different from Man that in practice one should find almost natural to ignore the relation between the two. What the Traveller fails to notice is his own dualistic persona by refusing to acknowledge his own capacity for committing violence.

Much later, as the story reaches its end and he returns to the present, the Time Traveller must face his audience’s disbelief, and he then declares: “No. I cannot expect you to believe it. Take it as a lie—or a prophecy. Say I dreamed it in the workshop. Consider I have been speculating upon the destinies of our race until I have hatched this fiction” (71). He assumes, knowingly so or not, the position of an expert, an authority—although his knowledge of the matters of science and evolution, as previously discussed, is grounded in popular fallacies of his time (Rouyan 66). However, one could argue that his scientist status renders him uniquely equipped to ponder the question of ‘the destinies of our race’, as he worded himself. Even though there is almost no denying the unscientific nature of his method of observation, interpretation and generalisation—much evidence was given in this respect—, the parallel between the Time Traveller and H.G. Wells, the social prophet himself, must have become clear by now. Not only is Wells using the Traveller’s narrative as a means, in Rouyan’s words, to urge “a cautionary approach towards the capacity of cultural narratives for appropriating and



reshaping biological discourses in directions which he deemed ‘unscientific’” (80), but also to introduce his audience to what is to become a recurrent trope within both his fiction and non-fiction, that is, the scientist as an architect of futures.

Wells is, in the end, only preaching a somewhat premature version of his well-known ‘Modern Utopia’. As discussed above, he had come to consider society as that which needed to be a dynamic process, much as science itself is a dynamic system. In this view, Harris wrote that science “is constantly growing because it is imperfect and its imperfection gives rise to the aporiai, the contradictions, that impel the theorist to new researches, so that his endeavours is constantly towards greater comprehensiveness, in extent and in detail, with closer unity, integrity and coherence” (352). One could surely see the parallel with the ever-perfect quiet that followed the numerous achievements of the Eloi, for their “too-perfect security [...] had led them to a slow movement of degeneration, to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence” (*Time Machine* 48), which ultimately precipitated their downfall. Whereas, in imperfection lies better unity and coherence, as Harris claimed, but above all else, it should be added, lies an essential possibility for change.

### 3 THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU

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#### 3.1 PLOT SUMMARY

In a letter, Charles Edward Prendick, nephew of Edward Prendick, introduces the tale to follow: the peculiar story of his uncle, who had been considered lost at sea after the shipwreck of the *Lady Vain*, but was eventually rescued almost a year later. Of these long months during which he was presumed dead, Edward Prendick gives the strangest account.

So, it all begins with a shipwreck and three stranded passengers, among which Prendick himself. Soon, there remains only Prendick, for his two desperate companions fought each other and fell off the boat. Growing feverish by the minute and hallucinating, the survivor passes out only to regain consciousness on a dirty little schooner, the *Ipecacuanha*, where Montgomery, a passenger, was tending to him.

Aboard the schooner, Prendick eventually meets Montgomery's assistant called M'ling whose "singularly deformed face" with a "huge half-open mouth" with teeth bigger than he had ever seen, and eyes "bloodshot at the edges, with scarcely a rim of white round the hazel pupils" positively startle him (85). The mere sight of the strange fellow triggers confusion, if not utter disgust, in Prendick, the captain and the rest of the crew; only Montgomery seems immune to his queer demeanour. It turns out that, he and M'ling are heading home to an unnamed island with an entire cargo of rabbits, dogs, llamas and a puma.

Once the curious travellers set down, the captain urges Prendick to follow them, for he and his crew are through with the whole affair. There, Prendick meets more of Montgomery's subordinates, all as equally grotesque-looking as M'ling. In what sort of unfortunate hell has he landed? Another inhabitant of the island introduces himself as Doctor Moreau, a name not unknown to Prendick for he remembers a certain scientist of that name whose career was shut down abruptly, on account of having conducted dreadfully cruel experiments. Barely a moment later, Moreau's abominable tendencies are confirmed when Prendick hears the puma from the boat screaming of agony behind the scientist's door. It is too much for the newcomer, and so, he exits the confines of his room for the jungle around the station.

Amidst the greenery of the vegetation, another strange-looking man was on all-fours like an animal, drinking water. Prendick attempts to walk back to the station, with the beast fellow following his trail closely, that is, until the man, terrified, knocks him out unconscious. Making his way back to the station, alone at last, Prendick hears some more yelling from Moreau's room, only this time, they sound dreadfully human. He cannot help but wonder whether the mad man intended him to be his next vivisection project, and, instead of waiting

for an answer, he flees back into the jungle where he meets more of Moreau's creations, for Prendick had concluded the scientist was responsible for transforming poor men into creatures half-human, half-animal. There, the Ape-Man enthusiastically leads him to a cavern, inside which the 'Sayer of the Law' begins his litany of said 'Law':

Not to go on all-Fours; *that* is the Law. Are we not Men? Not to suck up Drink; *that* is the Law. Are we not Men? Not to eat Flesh or Fish; *that* is the Law. Are we not Men? Not to claw Bark of Trees; *that* is the Law. Are we not Men? Not to chase other Men; *that* is the Law. Are we not Men? *His* is the House of Pain. *His* is the Hand that makes. *His* is the Hand that wounds. *His* is the Hand that heals. *His* is the lightning-flash. *His* is the deep salt sea. *His* are the stars in the sky. (113-4)

Eventually, Prendick allows Moreau the benefit of the doubt and accepts to listen to his explanations: the creatures he had met were never men, but humanised animals, "triumphs of vivisection" (120). He had committed his life and research to the 'plasticity of living forms' and was thus able to reconfigure the animal into the human, and so, both the physical and mental structures were altered. However, to his most utter frustration, his attempt at suppressing, or even repressing, the bestiality in them could only go so far. Very soon their cravings and instincts come creeping back, and they then revert.

Later, a series of unfortunate events unfold: Prendick and Montgomery realise upon the discovery of a mutilated rabbit that the Beast have not been that compliant to the Law, and, in order to make an example out of the incident, the perpetrator—the Leopard Man, who stalked Prendick on his first walk in the jungle—must be punished, but is shot by Prendick after having attempted an escape; the puma breaks free from the station, Moreau bolts after him, and Montgomery ends up finding the scientist's body, slaughtered by his creations; a desperate Montgomery suffers the same tragic end and leaves Prendick alone to face the Beasts.

Forging an alliance with the Dog-Man, Prendick manages to survive on the island by invoking the Law and asserting his authority, although the Beast Folk begin to lose pieces of their humaneness little by little. The jungle becomes more insecure by the day, and fearing increasingly for his life, Prendick sets out to depart the island when, at last, a little boat drifts ashore. He is finally picked up by a ship, and, as his nephew tells in the opening letter, "gave such a strange account of himself that he was supposed demented" (79). He never mentions his

adventure again, tries to resume his life back in England, but is so tormented by his memories of the Beast Folk that he simply cannot appreciate the civilised world anymore.

### 3.2 GROTESQUE BODIES AND LIMINALITY OF THE MONSTROUS

Promptly after his rescue aboard the *Ipecacuanha*, Prendick, still positively weakened from days spent delirious while drifting away on the seas, is offered a curious beverage, a “dose of some scarlet stuff” that “tasted like blood, and made [him] feel stronger” (83). It is such a meaningful moment to inaugurate this section, for, as it will be thoroughly discussed, it emphasises the inherent ambiguity and polarity of the character, and it does so very early on the novel, almost as a preliminary warning. Indeed, on the one hand, one might very well imagine Prendick claiming that the mere idea of drinking what could be blood and gaining strength from it is grotesque and vile, in such case this would hardly be an unreasonable claim as many of the selected passages to follow will confirm; but, on the other hand, Prendick’s very notions of what is revolting, or even inhuman, be it in the practice of science or more broadly speaking, are only hanging by a thread and always a crisis away from being altogether denied.

One may have noticed the word ‘grotesque’ being used a couple of times so far. While scholars agree that it is a difficult notion to define, the grotesque does possess some recurring characteristics, such as, Graulund names, “disharmony, hybridity, excess, exaggeration, and transgression” (2). Often correlated with that which is absurd, degenerate and bizarre; in the end, it exists where “the natural order of things has been subverted” (Kayser 21). On that account, Prendick’s stay on the island will definitely take a path for the grotesque, but even aboard the ship he must familiarise himself with a peculiar vision, that of Montgomery’s, his saviour, assistant:

I had paused half-way through the hatchway, looking back, still astonished beyond measure at the grotesque ugliness of this black-faced creature. I had never beheld such a repulsive and extraordinary face before, and yet—if the contradiction is credible—I experienced at the same time an odd feeling that in some way I *had* already encountered exactly the features and gestures that now amazed me. (85)

This marks his first encounter with one of Moreau’s Beasts, and the familiarity that emanates from the creature is simply his former animalistic traits that were grossly rearranged by the

scientist so as to reproduce a human face, which Prendick will come to the realisation of, once given some time to observe more of them: “Suddenly, as I watched their grotesque and unaccountable gesture, I perceived clearly for the first time what it was that had offended me [...] [they] were human in shape, and yet human beings with the strangest air about them of some familiar animal” (103). As such, the Beasts’ bodies very much embody—pun semi-intended—Bakhtin’s definition of the grotesque body as one in a perpetual “act of becoming”, never fully content in one form and forever morphing into another (Bakhtin 26). The Beast Folk are not animal anymore, but decidedly not human either; instead, their bodies exist in a third, liminal, space somewhere beyond the two.

Even the jungle functions as a grotesque catalyst, in such a place Prendick’s imagination behaves wildly, invisible things watch him, or so he believes, and “every shadow became something more than a shadow, became an ambush, every rustle became a threat” (102). As reminded in a work soberly titled *Grotesque*, the origins of the word ‘grotesque’ trace back to the Italian *pittura grottesca* and the fifteenth-century excavation in Rome of murals “of graceful fantasies, symmetrical anatomical impossibilities, small beasts, human heads, and delicate indeterminate vegetables” under the ruins of Nero’s palace (Edwards and Graulund chap. 1; Harpham 26). The grotto, then, is the equivalent of a labyrinth for instance, “a disorienting and threatening place that inflames anxiety and fear”, much like the jungle is to Prendick (Edwards and Graulund chap. 1).

Furthermore, one might without difficulty see the parallel between the Beast Folk and the Morlocks discussed in the previous chapter. In *The Time Machine*, the ape-like creatures are often described as looking “nauseatingly inhuman” and, especially after the careful—or so this author hopes—analysis conducted in the corresponding chapter, there is no more denying their repulsive countenance contributed to the Time Traveller’s animosity towards them (*Time Machine* 51). Similarly, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* presents the idea of ugliness as a justification for hatred and violence. It is already apparent aboard the *Ipecacuanha*, when Montgomery opposes the captain for his and the crew’s hazing his assistant, M’ling. Captain Davis argues that before they embarked, his ship had always been clean, and with a “clean respectable crew”, and that this assistant of his was nothing but a “devil, an ugly devil”, whom none of them could stand (*Island* 87). He is even willing to “cut his insides out” if M’ling keeps coming near them (87). Ironically enough, one could mention that for such a ‘respectable crew’, harassing the poor fellow curiously came as a second nature to them, and this happens to support the idea of an inherent duality within, not only the main character as suggested earlier,

but, also, Man in the general sense. One's notion of respect is greatly challenged in the presence of that which threatens their regular impression of the world.

As it turns out, the ugly countenance of the majority of the Beast People does not only legitimise one's hostility, but also, supposedly, signals their very inhumanity: "The thing came to me as stark inhumanity. That black figure with its eyes of fire, struck down through all my adult thoughts and feelings, and for a moment the forgotten horrors of childhood came back to my mind" (90). Two elements should be acknowledged in the preceding excerpt, the thing's 'stark inhumanity' and Prendick's 'forgotten horrors of childhood'. Indeed, for the one, the grotesque, by definition, is a complete blurring of the spaces until the one remaining space is the liminal one where distinctions are utterly "unsettled, thrown into question, discombobulated", and the ones between human and the inhuman are no exception (Edwards and Graulund ch. 6). Edwards and Graulund have aptly point out that the word 'inhuman' has often been correlated with a lack of morality, as though humanity necessarily imply morality; the inhuman grotesque is in fact "the otherness that always inhabits the human from the inside" (ch. 6). While the last section of this chapter will further instantiate this, for it will concern itself with the matters of humanity and morality, already, though, one can observe how *The Island of Doctor Moreau* does suggest, through Prendick's impression of the Beast Folk, that whatever humanity is made of, it is very easily altered and made unrecognisable. The mere idea that "the most horrible cripples and maniacs" ever possible to conceive were engaged in a poor mimicry of civilisation, "a mockery of a rational life" as Moreau would have it, is simply detestable in the characters' opinion (114, 126).

On another note, although already informed by the excerpt above, fear is a recurrent topic within the novel, and a great evil to oppose—eliminate, even—according to Moreau. In his opinion, his creations lack the "spark of pugnacious energy to face torment", for, indeed, they are only "fear-haunted pain-driven things" and "no good for man-making" (123). One may question his reasons for believing fear as such a defect, and Prendick himself will have to admit he is no stranger to that oppressive feeling. One may even notice, yet again, a subtle hint at *The Time Machine* when the character finds himself roaming through the jungle for the second time, after witnessing the disturbing experiment in Moreau's laboratory; he does not wish to return to the station, but even more disagreeable is "the idea of being overtaken in the open by darkness, and all that darkness might conceal" (104). Just like the Time Traveller and the Eloi, Prendick reckons that some very peculiar monsters might take advantage of the night's veil of obscurity. Darkness, often experienced as frightening in itself—for man is a diurnal creature, becomes a theatre for the Others' monstrous play, the grotesque inhuman creatures

Prendick had met thus revelling in the dark which brings out their departed instincts, just as it does man's instinctual fear: "Montgomery told me that the Law, especially among the feline Beast People, became oddly weakened about nightfall; that then the animal was at its strongest; a spirit of adventure sprang up in them at the dusk, they would dare things they never seemed to dream about by day" (127). In the dark, shadows assume the strangest shape, "every dark form in the dimness ha[s] its ominous quality, its peculiar suggestion of alert watchfulness", an uncertainty which, in most grotesque-fashion, might challenge anyone's sanity (105).

The concept of the grotesque has demonstrated adaptive properties, and this very section has evidenced the presence of grotesque elements in Wells's prose. For an author so committed to experimenting with forms and traditions, it is certainly not surprising he should lean towards such a concept who relies so much upon notions of liminality, transformation and 'acts of becoming', while, by extension, allowing him to taunt the reader with uncertainties regarding his very humanity—or his possible lack thereof.

### 3.3 MAD SCIENTIST(S)

Refining—one might even say redefining—conscientiously the literary tradition of his time, Wells makes use of another notorious contemporary trope, that of the mad scientist. However, while one will undoubtedly point out the very convincing Doctor Moreau as assuming this role, and while this dissertation will certainly not deny them the obvious manifestation of the most stereotypical traits of such particular madness, it shall be suggested, as some few others also did, whom shall be referenced—albeit reaching different conclusions, that Doctor Moreau is merely the scapegoat of the story, while the true mad scientist might be the most unassuming one. It only makes sense that Wells would not choose to give in to simplicity, after all, is it not?

It can be discussed that the three selected novels, *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, and *First Men in the Moon*—if a reminder be needed, all contain their own version of a mad scientist. However, this particular question has already been investigated by Goran J. Petrovic in the essay titled "Mad Scientists in H.G. Wells's Early Fiction", in which he conducted an analysis based upon Roslynn Haynes's classification of the scientists in literature, namely, the alchemist, "driven to pursue an arcane intellectual goal that carries suggestions of ideological evil"; the stupid virtuoso, "out of touch with the real world of social intercourse"; the Romantic unfeeling scientist, "who has reneged on human relationships and suppressed all human affections in the cause of science"; the heroic adventurer, "towering like

a superman over his contemporaries, exploring new territories, or engaging with new concepts”; the helpless scientist, who “has lost control either over his discovery (which, monsterlike, has grown beyond his expectations) or, as frequently happens in wartime, over the direction of its implementation”; and the scientist as idealist, “holding out the possibility of a scientifically sustained utopia with plenty and fulfilment for all but more frequently engaged in conflict with a technology-based system that fails to provide for individual human values” (Haynes 3-4). Petrovic’s conclusions are rather convincing and cover, amongst others, this dissertation’s selected works. It appears thus unnecessary to repeat it entirely, although references to both his and Haynes’s work will assuredly be needed to carry on with this section.

Historically, the familiar trope of the mad scientist can be traced back to the character of the alchemist, often appearing as rather obsessed, if not entirely maniacal, and mostly inspired by the sixteenth-century German alchemist Johann Georg Faust and the many legends written about him (Haynes 3). Of course, one of the most illustrious contributions to this literary trope must be Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, much later, during the nineteenth century. As Haynes reminds the reader, “Frankenstein’s problem begins with isolation, which leads to his suppression of emotional relationships and aesthetic experiences and the delusion that his work is being pursued in the interests of society, when in fact the real goals are power and fame; above all, he fails to foresee and take responsibility for the results of his research” (5).

Regarding Moreau’s pretention for the title of ‘Mad Scientist of the Year’, he clearly has no reason to envy Frankenstein. Initially, though, Moreau had been a “prominent and masterful physiologist, well known in scientific circles for his extraordinary imagination and his brutal directness in discussion” but “suddenly his career was closed” and he had to leave everything behind him (*Island* 98). Then secluded on his island, he carries on with more ruthless and vicious experiment. As Haynes herself argues, it is obvious that Moreau is a rather convincing embodiment of the alchemist figure: he is completely isolated, conducts his research in the strictest secrecy, and is set on creating his very own human being (154).

Many scholars have pointed out, including Haynes, that Moreau has a deep-seated contempt for his fellows, he has forsaken human interactions and does not, it seems, miss them at all (Haynes 154). However, it could be argued that the motivations behind his entire enterprise are not only the obvious god complex he appears to suffer from as some have stressed: “[...] it is clear that [Moreau] assumes for himself the power and aura of godhead without displaying an appropriate sense of concern or obligation to the creatures around him” (Graff 46). Of course, many passages do suggest that Moreau has a rather conflated ego, for the Beasts, motivated by the Law, have been forced to erect him to a god-like figure, potent



enough to have created them (“*His* is the Hand that makes”), to punish them when they sin (“*His* is the Hand that wounds”), to bring ease (“*His* is the Hand that heals”), but also to be responsible for Nature’s wonders (“*His* is the lightning-flash. *His* is the deep salt sea. *His* are the stars in the sky”). Prendick understands the power such an authority possesses, and in order to assure his survival after Montgomery and Moreau’s death, he even magnifies it further, making thus an all-knowing and all-seeing force out of the deceased Moreau: “‘Children of the Law,’ I said, ‘he is *not* dead.’ [...] ‘For a time you will not see him. His is... there’—I pointed upward—‘where he can watch you. You cannot see him. But he can see you. Fear the Law’” (141).

Moreau’s arrogance is not confined to the mere satisfaction of some Beasts’ veneration, for his ultimate purpose is nothing less than transcending and superseding Nature’s power over evolution, as Jaëck explained: “[...] his fantasy of creating human beings out of animals is directly prompted by the new developments in the theory of Evolution that are conspicuously mentioned in the novel” (209). Despite his commitment to this research, Moreau was never able to fully achieve the success he sought, even though he clearly surpasses his famous literary counterparts, namely Frankenstein and Jekyll, from Stevenson’s *Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde*, as the following excerpt from Jaëck’s essay demonstrates:

In this context, Moreau’s progress is substantial: Frankenstein had opened the way by composing a human being out of inanimate matter, but the experiment had been cut short since he had refused to create a companion for his monster. Jekyll’s success was merely due to chance, probably owing to the presence of an impure ingredient in the salt had had used—thus making his achievement highly ephemeral and hazardous. Moreau on the other hand stabilizes a real method to emancipate living creatures from their bodily coordinates, and is thus able to envision mass creation, through the hope that acquired characteristics will eventually be inherited. (Jaëck 211-2)

Unfortunately for our visionary scientist, the beings he did create were unable to conceive the next generation, as Montgomery explains, the offspring they bear usually dies, so that there is “no evidence of the inheritance of the acquired human characteristics” (127). This alone should already have informed Moreau of their aberration, for an entire species that is either infertile or only suffers unviable pregnancies is obviously doomed to extinction, almost as if Nature could not condone their existence. If one were to fantasise Nature as a person, she must

certainly have laughed at Moreau's futile attempts at imitating her. Prendick himself witnesses the scientist's failure after a few months on the island, the Beasts growing clumsier by the day, resorting progressively to their old ways, because, as the story implies, evolution is impossible to be rushed. This clashes entirely with *The Time Machine*, the aristocracy and soon-to-be Eloi having embraced the slow nature of, well, Nature, they had achieved a perfectibility that Moreau only dreams of. The scientist's hubris leads him to fantasise he could short-circuit the process of evolution (Jaëck 212), but he is perpetually faced with the ultimate realisation that "nature defines perfection or rather the suitability of any species for its environment" (Graff 34).

Furthermore, Moreau's arrogance and ambition only encourage a complete and utter indifference for life. His experiment being what he considers a failure, he does not embarrass himself with their care or to show even a modicum of concern, he simply takes "no interest in them" (126). This absolutely raises the question of scientific responsibility. As Graff explains, Moreau's actions could somehow be justified and defended for their ameliorative function: "science, by reducing both the individual and the social organism to general principles, holds out the promise of infinite progress, the elimination of physical suffering, disease, discomfort, work (in its most derogatory sense), poverty and even moral evils, social, discord, and criminality" (46). The problem arises when he refuses to take accountability for his experimentation's outcome. Outside the world of fiction, the same debate takes place, and Einstein, for instance, defended the idea that scientists do have a social responsibility, while others argued that scientists could not be held responsible for the application of their research; in any case, a good compromise would be a preventive responsibility "wherever harmful effects can be anticipated and possibly be averted" (Lenk 12, 15).

On this matter, Prendick himself reckons that, "especially to another scientific man", there is nothing wrong with some experimentations in the name of science and progress, especially vivisection (98). One should note that during the late nineteenth century, animal experimentation was exposed to many criticisms, Frances Power Cobbe, for instance, advocated for "tight restricts on experimentation with live animals", which did not agree with Huxley and Darwin, who saw the anti-vivisectionists as threats to the progress of the new science of experimental physiology" (Lightman 32-3). Wells himself wrote about the matter:

Vivisection is only occasionally and incidentally the infliction of pain, and anti-vivisection is not really a campaign against pain at all. The real campaign is against the thrusting of a scientific probe into mysteries and hidden things which

it is felt should either be approached in a state of awe, tenderness, excitement, or passion, or else avoided. [...] It is a counter-attack upon a treatment of animals that gives the lie to a delightful and elaborated mythology in which these poor limited creatures are humanised and have thrust upon them responses, loyalties, and sympathetic understandings of which they are, in reality, scarcely more capable than plants. The curious, materialistic, shameless, and intelligent monkey lends itself far less easily than the dog to such mythological interpretation, and so gets far less consideration from the anti-vivisectionists. [...] And so it is about the dog that the controversy centres, and the passions of the dispute rage most obstinately. (*Way* 228)

Experimentations are expected and encouraged; the vivisectionist, Wells argued, does not “desire that pain should enter into his experiments” and takes on a role that few do by “stand[ing] up to knowledge like that” (*Way* 230). The anti-vivisectionist, on the other hand, wants only but to stay in his illusions, feelings and self-projections, while fancying himself protector of the weakest (*Way* 229-30). In *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Prendick understands and shares the pro-vivisectionist view; however, Moreau openly states that pain “is a little thing”, tortures repeatedly his creations regardless of their agony, which highly contrasts with Wells’s arguing that vivisectionists usually avoid pain when possible.

Moreau’s colleague, Montgomery, has his quirks as well; while they both repudiate mankind, their difference resides in Montgomery’s appreciation of the creatures, defending thus M’ling against the captain and his crew earlier on, and regularly visiting the village where the Beast Folk regroup. Although Montgomery dislikes ‘real men’, Prendick explains that “his heart had warmed to [him]”, probably because “he had saved [his] life” he reckons (129), which somehow echoes the Time Traveller’s befriending Weena after rescuing her. That being said, Montgomery initially displays a rather cold attitude towards Prendick, refusing his gratitude, and stating that the rescue had been motivated by boredom and wanting “something to do” (89).

However clear Moreau’s ambitions may be, another less patent motivation could be an unconscious desire to entertain his own version of an ideal society. There is no denying that he wishes to rise above Nature’s authority, but a certain urge to surround himself with ‘rational creatures’ reappears every once in a while, for instance when he admits to taking no interest in his ruined creations and denigrates their “mockery of a rational life” (126). He rejects the Beast Folks because they fail, according to him, to achieve the ideal of a rational and civilised man,

even though Moreau himself hardly embodies this ideal, for he has been excluded from said civilisation, after all. His experiments allow him, in theory, to reproduce an improved version of the society he was rejected from, with superior beings at least as rational as he supposedly is.

It is rather manifest that human feelings and ethical values are—to varying degrees, insignificant to the islanders. To Montgomery's eyes, a human life is worth saving merely if he finds it somehow accommodating (89); in Moreau's deeply deranged mind, pain is but a detail, the animal only a problem to be solved, and the ethics of the matter nothing worth being troubled about for "the study of Nature makes a man at least as remorseless as Nature" (122, 123). Huxley was mentioned earlier and one should note that, as Bergonzi also did, while Huxley and Moreau share a common vision of natural processes, they would definitely not see eye to eye on their ethical considerations, for Moreau would not have any, and Huxley would argue that one should not aim to imitate Nature's severity but oppose it "in the interests of ethics" (Bergonzi 106-7). Evidently, with such characters Wells is able to put forward a "trenchant satire on scientism, on the isolationism of scientists and their contempt for the layman and, ultimately, for mankind" (Haynes 157). For Wells, science as a solitary practice, imbued with hubris and egoism, can be nothing but destructive, and as such, Moreau decidedly makes a 'good' mad scientist—perhaps too good.

Again, one shall consider Jaëck's essay and her claim that Moreau is merely the scapegoat of the story, and that Prendick's own delirium should be more thoroughly investigated. While this dissertation's author—yours, truly—shares most of the premise, the conclusion is slightly different.

At the very beginning of the novel, a letter written by Prendick's nephew, already suggests that Prendick might not be entirely reliable, for "he gave such a strange account of himself that he was supposed demented" (79). Of course, anything, anyone, contradicting the traditional perception of reality is likely to be deemed 'demented', as discussed in the previous chapter, but the nephew carries on and explains that "his narrative is without confirmation in its most essential particular" for no evidence has ever been found of the existence of either the Beast Folk or a station such as the one in which Moreau and Montgomery worked (79). Regardless, once he sets foot on the island, Prendick finds himself unable to impose sense and order upon the alienating environment of the jungle; therefore, as Glendening argues, "the ultimate source of confusion is Prendick's mind, which, unable to assimilate his experiences to his self-conceptualizing codes and constructs, must interpret the external world as confusion"

(53). This menacing instability and confusion instigate Prendick's growing delirium, revealing himself as a possible mad narrator.

According to Jaëck, Prendick does exhibit signs of psychotic disorder, and madness, which had only been externalised in Moreau's gruesome experiments so far, had to be found within Prendick after Moreau's demise (13). Hence Jaëck believed that Wells's aim was not restricted to commenting the ethics of science—or lack thereof, but to propose “a metatextual reflexion on literature” (208). Prendick then becomes a literary device to achieve this goal, narrating an entire world of possibilities, worlds as unstable as Wells's one, for it had turned out decidedly more complicated and infinite under Darwin and other scientists' discoveries.

Following such conditions, Jaëck argues, “Wells enacts a literary mutation in this formal laboratory, he insists on the necessary link between literature and delirium, and develops the modern idea that literary discourse should not try to discipline the world, but rather aim at fantasizing it”, and “not only is [Prendick] a mad narrator whose version is thus highly questionable but his narration itself is an experiment in delirium, and thus a militant literary move” (209, 217).

However, it is regrettable that Prendick had only been considered a mad narrator, when it is so clear that he eventually becomes yet another mad scientist, above all else. One may have already forgotten that he had indeed told Montgomery he had “spent some years at the Royal College of Science, and had done some research in biology under Huxley” (94). Mentioning Huxley cannot be coincidental, for Wells himself had learned from the renowned biologist, and more importantly, as Bergonzi explains: “three years before *The Island of Doctor Moreau* appeared, Huxley had delivered at Oxford his Romanes lecture, *Evolution and Ethics*, a powerful summary of the moral dilemmas with which the theory and practice of Evolution confronted the late-Victorian world” (106-7). Prendick's association with Huxley might very well result from Wells's sharing his mentor's view that “though individuals could not alter the course of evolution, they could, in Huxley's view, change the moral tone and character of an age” (Graff 38, paraphrasing Huxley, “Mr. Darwin” 443-76). As a scientist, Prendick is able to take on the mantle left by his Wellsian predecessor, namely, the Time Traveller, and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* thus becomes the “literary laboratory” brought up by Jaëck which allows Wells to experiment on the plasticity of literature, the privileges offered by scientific knowledge, and the unique potential they both carry.

### 3.4 THE CASE OF (IN)HUMANITY

There seems to be multiple attempts at defining that which embodies humanity throughout the novel. Needless to say, any grotesque, abnormal or ugly traits are to be excluded, as the previous paragraphs have demonstrated, so, naturally, one might assume their opposite to represent the epitome of humankind. Moreau would surely agree, for he argued that “there is something in the human form that appeals to the artistic turn of mind more powerfully than any animal shape can” (122). He seems to retain a rather teleological view of evolution, where man is seen as the pinnacle of evolution, and it may be worth mentioning that scholars have offered counterarguments to this view, thus demonstrating imperfections in human evolution, as well as explaining the fallacy of the cultural view of human superiority (Werth 260). On another note, one can surely imagine that Moreau also assumes the role of an aspiring grotesque artist, to circle back to the section above. Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* had completely changed Man’s aesthetic sense and presented beauty as an “evolutionary inheritance from animals”, a “utilitarian trait produced by, and for, evolutionary survival”; following this view, Moreau understands that since the human species obviously is the pinnacle of evolution—for he is the most rational one, therefore he is the most aesthetically evolved as well (Lightman 36). The lesser animal needs to be improved; Moreau becomes the artist who shall transform the animal—rebus of evolution, into Nature’s most successful creation—Man. Moreau had strayed from his man-made human creatures on the one occasion only, that is, when he experimented on a “limbless thing with a horrible face that writhed along the ground in a serpentine fashion”, but, after that, he has “stuck to the ideal of humanity” (125).

As briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, one must acknowledge that there seems to be very little difference made between humanity in the sense of belonging to the human race and humanity as a synonym for morality in the novel. Both are valued equally, almost considered intrinsically related, as though the human species must embody an ideal of morality by essence. By comparison, the question of morality in non-human animals has been discussed in academic literature, reaching the conclusion that animals probably do not have a specific moral sense, “because they are incapable of taking universal positions organized in conformity to agreed-upon moral imperatives”, although they do display many instances of cooperation, following rules that “make their mutual coexistence possible” (Wolfe 40, paraphrasing Stent 14 and Smith 21-30).

Concerning morality, Moreau, for one, understands the matter as follows: “Very much of what we call moral education is such an artificial modification and perversion of instincts;

pugnacity is trained into courageous self-sacrifice, and suppressed sexuality into religious emotion” (122). In other words, he claims that morality is a trained behaviour, not an innate one. In *Moral Relativism and Pluralism*, David B. Wong examines different conceptions of morality; morality as it arises from judgements “about what one would desire if one were rational”; morality as inherently relative because there exists nothing that “unconditionally give[s] any one reasons to behave morally”; a theistic view of morality; morality as a set of conventions; and finally, a naturalistic and evolutionary approach which argues that morality “is used to socialize and guide human beings toward productive forms of cooperation” (23-6). This latter view echoes that of Wells’s contemporary and mentor—Huxley, who considered morality and human ethics as “a process rooted in self-sacrifice and mutual aid” (White 166). It is not clear whether Moreau is a moral relativist or has a naturalistic understanding of morality—which his scientific education might presuppose, because despite his arguing morality to be “an artificial modification and perversion of instincts”, he still implants in his Beasts’ mind what they call ‘Fixed Ideas’ which roughly correspond to the various lines of the Law. These Fixed Ideas, Montgomery later explains, “were woven into the texture of their minds beyond any possibility of disobedience or dispute” (*Island* 127). In fact, it might not be too bold but to assume that morality, to Moreau, is restricted to ‘not behaving as an animal would’, and hardly anything more.

They are not to go on all-fours, they are not to eat flesh, they are not to chase each other... the Beast Folk are to renounce their previously natural behaviours, as the litany of the Law keeps reminding them (113-4). However, Moreau himself admits that the former beast in them remains inevitably ready to resurface, and Prendick experiences that firsthand during the long months he spends alone on the island: “They held things more clumsily; drinking by suction, feeding by gnawing, grew commoner every day. I realised more keenly than ever what Moreau had told me about the ‘stubborn beast flesh’. They were reverting, and reverting very rapidly” (125, 154). One may thus claim that the Beasts’ comprehension of humanity is rather imperfect, if not altogether weak. Their progressive atavism raises a few considerations, chief among them, there really exists nothing to safeguard humanity. Even science, in the hands of Moreau, has failed to produce mankind’s next greatest specimen. The scientist has managed to transform the body but the mind, despite his best effort, remains somehow enigmatic, with “something that [he] cannot touch” somewhere “in the seat of the emotions” (125).

What is more, these “certain things not to be done” that Moreau implants in the mind of his creations and brought up by the Law are a somehow condensed, very superficial description of what peak humanity resembles, one might argue. Prendick, at times, offers some

observations upon this matter, for instance when he acknowledges one of the Beast Folk as a proper man because he could talk (111). Later, Prendick also adds that, granted the Beast People did not stray too far from their human heritage, he could perhaps “find some handle in their minds to take hold of”, thus insinuating that the minds of men are somehow more malleable and susceptible to manipulation than others (111). By the end, he says that “an animal may be ferocious and cunning enough, but it takes a real man to tell a lie” (152). So, according to Prendick, language, compliancy, and deceit are all human traits. This is a rather perfunctory vision of mankind, one might say, but it especially demonstrates Prendick’s attempt at separating the Beasts’ grotesque imitation of a civilised person by any means necessary, while at the same time reassuring himself that mankind does possess some unique characteristics.

The tension between the animal and the man is thus perpetually exacerbated, so is the one between bestiality and humanity. One might find that humanity exists only in a liminal space, never fully in existence, and decidedly contingent, very much like the second section of this chapter suggested. Prendick’s own integrity is continually challenged, as mercy overlaps with disgust, or morals with the need to survive. For instance, when the Leopard Man, who had frightened Prendick so very much upon his first walk in the jungle, is accused of having killed and tasted the blood of a rabbit, and is consequently chased by Moreau to face his punishment, Prendick is seized by a wave of pity, despite the initial terror this Beast elicited in him: “[...] seeing the creature there in a perfectly animal attitude, with the light gleaming in its eyes, and its imperfectly human face distorted with terror, I realised again the fact of its humanity” (136). He is struck by the fact that fear renders the creature unequivocally human, regardless of what Moreau had claimed, and he cannot be indifferent to the tortures the creature shall face if the scientist ever catches it. Mercy, then, leads him to pull the trigger, thus easing its anticipated sufferings. This whole scene could easily be analysed and connected to many an ethical debate, among which the ethics of euthanasia, for instance, but it unfortunately escapes the scope of this analysis; however, what is of concern to this discussion is twofold, the relativity and contingency of morality, and the question of the recognition of responsibility in scientific practice, as well as the ethics of said practice, though this very point has already been discussed in the previous section.

The more Prendick stays on the island, all the more both external and internal forces oppose his principles. The jungle and its most unusual and terrifying inhabitants severely contrast with the ‘normal world’ Prendick is accustomed to; as Bergonzi puts it, “he is the humanistic intellectual alone in an alien and increasingly hostile universe” (109). At some point, fearing for his life, he declares: “For I meant to kill this brute—the most formidable of



any left now upon the island—at the first excuse. It may seem treacherous, but I was so resolved. I was far more afraid of him than any other two of the Beast Folk. His continued life was, I knew, a threat against mine” (*Island* 148). He had already decided that his life be worth more than a Beast’s, legitimises straying from the path of non-violence on account of fear, thus emphasising, once again, the very relativity of his morality. As Glendenning puts it, “a related area of confusion is the appearance of moral relativism that occurs when ethical strictures are found inapplicable or conflicted, especially in extreme situations (44). It may have occurred to many a perceptive mind that the Time Traveller, too, faced a similar conflict between the peaceful character that his societal station supposedly requires and his actual behaviour pressed by hostile circumstances.

Furthermore, the Beast People prove that humanity, as understood and taught by Moreau, that is, is not all sunshine and rainbows. Prendick reckons that “before they had been beasts, their instincts fitly adapted to their surroundings, and happy as living things may be”, but “now they stumbled in the shackles of humanity, lived in a fear that never died, fretted by a law they could not understand; their mock-human existence began in agony, was one long internal struggle, one long dread of Moreau [...]” (137). Although the validity of the proverb ‘ignorance is bliss’ has been rejected by some studies<sup>4</sup>, in this instance, one can surely agree with Prendick that the Beast Folk seem to struggle with their imputed ‘knowledge’, which in fact does nothing but threatening their survival, for it requires them to constantly struggle between old and new instincts.

On another note, throughout the novel, one might notice the recurrent idea that civilisation, or more precisely city-living, nurses an incomparable happiness, as Montgomery argues: “‘Why I am here now—an outcast of civilisation—instead of being a happy man enjoying all the pleasures of London?’” (89). However, it might be slightly sarcastic, for Montgomery later reveals that he profoundly dislikes his peers, the pleasure of London may rather reference the facilitated access to hard liquors he indulges so often (137). Prendick, however, after some time surrounded by the Beast People and the two queer scientists, definitely yearns for his ‘fellow-creatures’, who even begin to “assume idyllic virtue and beauty in [his] memory” (137). In romanticising and idealising his memories of civilisation, he fails to realise that Moreau and Montgomery are his ‘fellow-creatures’ as well.

That being said, when, at last, the time comes to leave the island for good, Prendick reckons he does not care for returning to mankind, but only escaping the “foulness of the Beast

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Sigelman Lee’s paper and the other studies it mentions.

Monsters” (158). Please, do note that the creatures are no longer Beast People to Prendick’s eyes, but mere monsters for their “stubborn beast flesh” has almost completely resurfaced in the span of the ten months following Moreau and Montgomery’s death (154). Consequently, he is tormented by visions of these looming Beast Monster Folk wherever and whenever he walks the city he, at first, so desired to return to:

Then I look about me at my fellow men. And I go in fear. I see faces keen and bright, others dull or dangerous, others unsteady, insincere; none that have the calm authority of a reasonable soul. I feel as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale. [...] When I lived in London the horror was well-nigh insupportable. I could not get away from men; their voices came through windows; locked doors were flimsy safeguards. I would go out into the streets to fight with my delusion, and prowling women would mew after me, furtive craving men glance jealously at me, weary pale workers go coughing by me, with tired eyes and eager paces like wounded deer dripping blood, old people, bent and dull, pass murmuring to themselves and all unheeding a ragged tail of gibing children. Then I would turn aside into some chapel, and even there, such was my disturbance, it seemed that the preacher gibbered Big Thanks even as the Ape Man had done; or into some library, and there the intent faces over the books seemed but patient creatures waiting for prey. Particularly nauseous were the blank expressionless faces of people in trains and omnibuses; they seemed no more my fellow-creatures than dead bodies would be so that I did not dare to travel unless I was assured of being alone. (158-9)

The alienation he felt towards the scientists and the creatures of the island is only magnified now that he found his way back to the city. Interestingly, some scholars have put forward the link, in the popular consciousness, between city life and a tendency to degeneration (Dryden 8). The question of ‘race degeneration’ had already received ample attention around the 1860s’, often with reference to Darwinian theories, and soon enough discussions about the degeneration of the body blurred themselves with those about urban crisis: “A certain image of degeneration had emerged to articulate in biological terms what was felt to be the widening political contradiction between national prosperity and empire on the one hand, and persistent urban poverty, criminal sub-culture and social pathology on the other” (Pick 200). Referencing

the work of Gareth Stedman Jones, Daniel Pick mentions how the “middle class fear of the urban poor” is very much at the core of the later-Victorian widespread belief in the theory of hereditary urban degeneration (202).

In *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, the pitfalls of urban living are implied rather early in the novel. When Prendick flees off into the jungle after opening the door on the puma being vivisected, he realises that he “knew no way of getting anything to eat”, he “was too ignorant of botany to discover any resort of root or fruit that might lie about [him]” and “had no means of trapping the few rabbits upon the island” (110). Indirectly, this shows that once outside the normality and safety of civilisation, one has little to no knowledge on the matter of survival.

In the end, Prendick is unable to readjust himself to a life in the city, and he has “withdrawn [himself] from the confusion of cities and multitude” (159). It would not be exactly correct to say that he thus follows in the steps of the mad, isolated and profoundly misanthropist Doctor Moreau, but rather that he has become aware of the grotesque masquerade of modern civilisation; of Man denying his former heritage, forsaking his connection with Nature and everything which he is not the centre of. Very possibly, Wells wished to engage the reader in a reflection about the artificiality and relativity of humanity, and as such, he dramatized “the ethical vacuum that results from evolution and [gave] the reader agency to articulate a response or, at least, engage in the debate” (Graff 47). As a student of Huxley, he may have shared his view that: “Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest [...] but of those who are ethically the best” (Huxley 102). Moreau and Montgomery then exemplify, through their untimely demise, a cold, egocentric, uncompassionate understanding of humanity, Nature, and evolution; Prendick owes his survival to his late realisation that “there it must be [...] in the vast and eternal laws of matter, and not in the daily cares and sins and troubles of man, that whatever is more than animal within us must find its solace and its hope” (159).

## 4 THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON

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### 4.1 PLOT SUMMARY

Penniless and without any prospects, a failed businessman named Bedford moves to the Kent countryside hoping this change of routine will suffice to help him in the writing of a play, which he most certainly intends to be a success—especially in securing loads and loads of money. His peace and quiet is soon troubled though, by the frenetic pacing of a very odd man, and every single evening this curious character resumes his frenzy, until Bedford, decidedly annoyed at the disturbance, goes out to confront him.

The plump little man is named Cavor, and is in fact a very busy scientist on the verge of a monumental discovery, for he is theorising upon the existence of an unknown material which could possess properties that would negate the force of gravity. Immediately, although without understanding much of the man's extensive chatter, Bedford imagines his "redemption as a business man" if such a substance were to be found or created, for indeed he "saw a parent company and daughter companies, applications to right of us, applications to left, rings and trusts, privileges and concessions spreading and spreading, until one vast stupendous Cavorite Company ran and ruled the world" (271).

As it sometimes happens, a sheet of Cavorite is indeed created by accident, although the scientist is able to replicate the process later with a more sophisticated result, that of a sphere "large enough to hold two people and their luggage[,] [i]t will be made of steel, lined with thick glass, it will contain a proper store of solidified air, concentrated food, water, distilling apparatus and so forth, and enamelled as it were on the outer steel" (277). Aboard such a sphere, Cavor and a very hesitant Bedford shall embark on a journey to the Moon and back.

The Moon initially appears cold and rather desolate, that is, until the Sun rises, and a luxuriant jungle of strange-looking plants springs up before their eyes. They soon notice something, a "boom... boom... boom..." from beneath their feet, but they dismiss it for a while, focusing on a pasture filled with huge creatures, "mooncalves" as they name them (301, 303). Tending to the beasts are something like men, except they are not, well, men. Just like the Earth is the home of mankind, the Moon is that of the Selenites, a five-foot-high creature having "much of the quality of a complicated insect" (304), and soon Cavor and Bedford are captured and led inside their underground fortress.

While Cavor keeps manifesting an interest in the idea of a new species to learn from, Bedford is much less enthusiastic and only thinks about returning to the surface in search of

the Sphere. Not stopping at dreaming about an escape and against Cavor's admonitions, he kills several Selenites, allowing the two of them to break free. Back on the surface, they need to split up in order to maximise their chance of finding the Sphere. Bedford is the lucky one and stumbles upon it, travels back to Earth alone, after having found a note left by a missing Cavor: the Selenites had caught him.

Not long after his return, having written and published the story of this adventure, a certain Mr. Wendigee contacts Bedford with news that his experimental telegraph had picked up some fragmentary messages from space, which he reckons had to come from Cavor in the moon. Although the communication is far from being flawlessly intelligible—as it contains many damaged and broken pieces, it gives some critical information about the Selenites. For instance, one is to learn that the Selenite society resembles an ant-hill, in which “each is a perfect unit in a world machine” (373). Unfortunately, though, Bedford reports that it is unlikely more messages are to reach the Earth, for Cavor had revealed Man's irrational propensity for war when discussing with the Selenites. His fate is unknown, he has been prevented from further transmissions, but, clearly, the Selenites do not wish to risk answering to Man's “insatiable aggression” (385).

#### 4.2 THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

After having instated the scientific figures of the odd Time Traveller in *The Time Machine*, the mad Doctor Moreau, the unassuming Prendick and the lonely Montgomery in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Wells introduces the eccentric Cavor. It is made abundantly clear very early on that Cavor possesses traits very similar to those of his predecessors—Moreau, especially, while manifesting a unique enthusiasm, bordering on agitation at times. The Time Traveller displays a vigorous passion at the beginning of his tale, but it positively subsides by the time of his discovering the year 802.701. In comparison, Cavor's fervour never—or at least hardly—lessens, even in the face of adversity. If anything, danger only brings out an exciting novelty from which much could be learned, he might think.

Bedford describes the man as having “a jerky quality in his motions”, perpetually gesticulating, jerking his head about, and buzzing “like something electric” (264). If such frantic display of manners initially baffled the wannabe-writer, the “apparition was repeated with remarkable precision, and again the next evening, and indeed every evening when rain was not falling” so that it soon bothers him enough that he goes to confront the little man (265).

Interestingly, Cavor does not present himself as a scientist *per se*, but as an “investigator [...] engaged in a scientific research”, and this research is absolutely “vital” (267). This might seem a rather insignificant line, but it emphasises both his voluntary separation with the scientific community and his belief that he is somehow uniquely equipped to conduct this tremendously important research. Cavor holds the scientific community in poor esteem, in fact, and is highly critical of its gatekeeping: “so much pettiness”, he had told Bedford, “so much intrigue!” (268). With this attitude, one is sure to be reminded of the author, for, as Partington wrote, “Wells’s major criticism of the scientific world of his day was its secrecy and scheming which led to militarism and war” (Partington, “Polemic” 12-3). Bedford also points out that Cavor’s deliberate seclusion bore consequences, such as an excess of confidence, this time mirroring Moreau’s dispositions (*First* 269). In many ways Cavor does resemble Moreau—this will be further discussed throughout this chapter, but, for one, they share a similarity in ego.

Furthermore, the pursuit of knowledge shall come above all else, the cost of this approach being an entirely unimportant factor to both Moreau and the present Cavor. In *The First Men in the Moon*, Cavorite is first processed accidentally “when Mr Cavor least expected it”, the direct consequences of this incident hardly worry Cavor, his three assistants “may or may have not perished” in the explosion but “that is a detail”, what concerns him is whether the news of his being involved shall become public and thus cause him to “never get a chance of working in peace again” (272, 276). This dissertation’s author shall certainly not judge the character’s sense of priorities, but they surely seem slightly contestable. Just as Moreau only wishes to conduct his experiments, for the sake of science—for the most part, at least, as has been discussed earlier—and unbothered, Cavor, too, is motivated, first and foremost, by knowledge.

In fact, it is absolutely astounding to Bedford that Cavor should only be interested in the theoretical framework of his research:

This astonishing little man had been working on purely theoretical grounds the whole time! When he said it was ‘the most important’ research the world had ever seen he simply meant it squared up so many theories, settled so much that was in doubt; he had troubled no more about the application of the stuff he was going to turn out than if he had been a machine that makes gun. (271)

As such, Bedford represents an interesting counterpart to the zealous scientist—or rather, investigator, as he calls himself. To reference Carlo Pagetti's essay on Wells's scientific romances, the character-narrator of Bedford allows Wells a different means to engage the reader in the debate about scientific progress, for Bedford then "functions as an intermediary between the non-real world of the fable and the real world of the reader" (125).

The scientist never exactly occupies the same space than the 'common man' does, both conceptually and literally, which is true for *The First Men in the Moon* and Wells's world. Some studies, the extent of which may be found in Hayne's work, have revealed a rather very negative general opinion of scientists and their activity (1). It surely may remind *The Time Machine*'s guests who display a profound disbelief, if not utter hostility at the Traveller's tale and his threatening position as an intellectual. As such, Bedford assumes a crucial role in becoming the intermediary between the elusive figure of the scientist and the rest of the audience. Pagetti wrote that it is his "ironic mediocrity" precisely that "enables him to communicate the bourgeois formalization of the scientific myth to an audience with the identical ideology and cultural background" (128). It is true that Bedford often comes out as a totally oblivious, or even heedless, character, and one might question his reliability on several occasions, for he never shies away from admitting he never does care for the technicalities or accuracy of his narration, for instance: "Doubt had been thrown upon this detail, but I am almost certain it was *helium* [...]. If only I had taken notes..." (*First* 269-70). It makes sense that he should not be as committed as Cavor might be, for Bedford is not scientifically trained after all, but it does indicate that the reader should nonetheless proceed with caution. The same thing happens at an ulterior time, when Bedford compiles Cavor's transmissions from the Moon and he explains that only the scientific report contains the messages in full, for they are too broken for his present narrative. It becomes evident that there is a major difference between the scientific approach and the narrative one, but Bedford also typifies the average reader who may be annoyed with an incoherent narration and thus needs the subject to be simplified to its most essential parts.

However, Bedford is no ordinary 'common man'—and would probably be horrified to be referred as such, for he is a businessman. A failed one, though, but still. After the first sheet of Cavorite is processed, Cavor suggests they could replicate it and make a giant sphere they shall thus use to visit the Moon. This makes no sense to Bedford, not the replicating part, but the risking themselves into the unknown part. He simply does not "quite see what [they] shall do for it! It's really only jumping off the world and back again" (278). The same issue arises

after their Moon landing, where Cavor sees theories, data, information and the sheer possibility of them,

‘Here below our feet is a world. Think of what that world must be! Think of that machine we saw and the lid and the shaft! They were just remote outlying suggestions, and those creatures we have seen and fought with, no more than ignorant peasants, dwellers in the outskirts, yokels and labourers half akin to brutes. Down below! Caverns beneath caverns, tunnels, structures, ways... It must open out and be greater and wider and more populous as one descends. [...] And we may die here upon it and never see the masters who must be—ruling over these things!’ (340)

Bedford only has eyes for profit, money, and ruling over the world with one “vast stupendous Cavorite Company” (271). That is, when his usual indifference does not completely overpower him.

On that matter, Bedford reckons Cavor is the oddball with his belief that “every other mind wants to know” when, in fact, “very few want knowledge for its own sake” (329). He will even argue that if it were not for specific reasons and uses, men would have never bothered observing that which is so remote to him, namely the skies and the other planets (329). This is grossly overlooking man’s curious nature, as well as assuming that need necessarily motivates interest. Why, assumes Bedford, “should people living inside a planet trouble to observe that sort of thing?” (329). His opinion is in total contradiction with the shared feeling amongst scholars that, in the case of scientists and intellectuals, “they are primarily concerned with the creation of knowledge, not its practical application”, which completely corresponds to Cavor’s attitude towards new discoveries: “It wasn’t that he intended to make any use of those things: he simply wanted to know them” (Peters 70; *First* 321). Through his impression of Cavor, Bedford dismisses centuries, if not millennia, of men having gathered knowledge for their strict enjoyment, much as, for instance, the gentleman scientist for whom science was then a hobby (Mieg 72).

Men like Bedford are exactly whom Cavor apprehends, even though he expresses his distrust with relative subtlety. What he expressly does, however, is pondering the question of his responsibility as a scientist after Bedford reveals his aggressive tendencies—most representative of men’s “tireless futility of conflict”—attacks multiple Selenites whilst fleeing their compound, and is positively bent on bringing as many crowbars of gold as possible back



to Earth (385). On this account, Cavor is convinced he should keep the Selenites' heaps of gold a secret, otherwise the consequences will simply be far too great:

‘It was I found the way here, but to find a way isn’t always to be master of a way. If I take my secret back to earth what will happen? I do not see how I can keep my secret for a year, for even a part of a year. Sooner or later it must come out, even if other men rediscover it. And then... Governments and powers will struggle to get hither, they will fight against one another and against these moon people. It will only spread warfare and multiply the occasions of war. In a little while, in a very little while if I tell my secret, this planet to its deepest galleries will be strewn with human dead.’ (340-1)

This is a dilemma Moreau would simply not have bothered contemplating, one should notice. If Moreau is very convincing as the unfeeling and helpless portrayal of the mad scientist as theorised by Haynes, Cavor is determined not to lose control over the “direction of [his discovery’s] implementation” (Haynes 4). Science, he exclaims, “has toiled too long forging weapons for tools to use” (341)<sup>5</sup>. In his contribution to the collective work *The Responsibility of Science*, H.A. Mieg draws attention to this matter, stating that there has been a demand for use of science in warfare for millennia, and mentions thus Archimedes who did not stopped after having described the laws of leverage but applied them in order to invent the catapults as well, or da Vinci who promised new types of weapons to whomever would guarantee his employment (Mieg 72). Bedford typically exemplifies the issue, when discussing the processing of Cavorite his “first natural impulse was to apply this principle to guns and ironclads and all the material and methods of war and from that to shipping, locomotion, building, every conceivable form of human industry” (271). While Bacon changed the conception of science during the sixteenth century and advocated a science which should serve human progress, the Industrial Revolution signalled the transfer of scientific expectations from progress to mere marketability (Mieg 72-3). Bedford is mainly interested in the earnings such his and Cavor’s discovery might generate, but his thoughts are, at the same time, almost immediately directed in applying it to means of destructing human life, not improving it.

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<sup>5</sup> Anecdotally, this dissertation’s author had to double-check the latter quotation, for she was convinced Wells may have been meaning to write ‘forging weapons for *fools* to use’, but, alas, he had remained politically correct for once.

The dialectical relationship between a scientist and a ‘common man’—represented here through the zealous Cavor and the greedy and reckless Bedford—allows Wells to inform the reader on the potentialities which accompany the vulgarisation of knowledge, and, because such a format as fiction beckons it, he obviously dramatises their ramifications. At the beginning of the novel, Cavor is depicted as a lonely man whose thirst for knowledge leads him to forsake human relationships, not, unlike Moreau, because he despises his fellows, but simply because the practice of science supposedly demands it. He finds in Bedford an unexpected ally; “quite willing to supply information”, Cavor indeed talks to him “like a man long pent up, who had it over with himself again and again” (267). His monologues, once allowed to be parroted by someone else, eventually lead him further than his frantic solitary exertions have, thus suggesting the idea that there is success to be found in community, and indeed, Wells believed that “individuals are subject to limitations dangerous not to acknowledge, but humanity as a whole is potentially less limited than individuals” (Glendening 51).

In the same way, Bedford has much to gain from Cavor’s lectures, unfortunately, his well-established lack of curiosity prevents such benefits. Not only that, but Wells uses this character in order to hint at another issue: “During that first interview,” Bedford says, “I gathered very little of the drift of his work”, and “half his words were technicalities entirely strange to me, and he illustrated one or two points with what he was pleased to call elementary mathematics [...] in a manner that made it hard even to seem to understand” (267-8). As is often the case when one uses a highly technical language, it fails to engage the ‘common’ listener. In the *Routledge Handbook of Public Communication of Science and Technology*, one may indeed read that the general conceptualisation of science and scientists as being entirely separate entities from the rest of society increases the need of some translation “to establish connection between science and society at large, making elements of the science domain approachable, understandable and eventually appealing” (Bucchi and Trench 2). Science, Wells seems to agree, should be made more intelligible to the audiences, and on that account, Pagetti argues that Cavor and Bedford’s relationship “presents itself as a reflection on the nature of the ‘scientific romance,’ on the potentialities of the novel as a means of communication, and on the possibility that science itself may become a means of communication” (131).

#### 4.3 ABSURD MANKIND

This section shall continue to delve into Cavor and Bedford's antithetical temperaments, thereby stressing Wells's profound, but creative, dramatisation of their respective narrative function. To do so, one might begin with considering the constant—omnipresent, almost—emphasis put on the necessity of leading a rational life, keeping a rational thinking, and doing so at all times. Cavor—of course, one may have probably guessed it was him indeed guilty of 'chronic rationalism'—is a water-drinker and a vegetarian, his entire life characterised by "a philosophical simplicity" and "all those logical, disciplinary things" Bedford explains (269). This seriously contrasts with, for instance, Montgomery's character in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, who never denies himself a good bottle or a good portion of meat, even though the Beast Folk are forbidden to do the same. In fact, this parallel—or lack, thereof—could serve to underline Wells's tendency to create highly hypocritical characters, as well as situations which reveal the existence of many nonsensical double-standards in society.

On that very note, *The First Men in the Moon* sets up Bedford as a perfect example of hypocrisy, and it does so on multiple occasions. The most telling occurrence, perhaps, might be his arguing that Cavor's "disastrous want of vulgar common sense had utterly betrayed him", for "he had talked of war, he had talked of all the strength and irrational violence of men, of their insatiable aggressions, their tireless futility of conflict" (385). In that moment, he conveniently forgets—or, more likely, refuses to acknowledge—his own violent aptitudes, which he had made so very plain back in the moon, after having slain dozens of Selenites in an attempt to escape them (324-5, 333-7). In a much more recent book, *The Human Difference: Evolution, Civilization, and Destruction*, Michael Robbins notices the tendency that Man is utterly blind to his own destructiveness, a tendency Bedford seems to share (11). Moreover, he repeatedly fantasises situations of conflict, thus imagining that a planet abounding in gold and new ideas must necessarily cause fights (*First* 376). It never occurs to him that, for one, the "strange race" with whom they must "inevitably struggle for mastery" may not have the slightest inclination towards violent scheming, or that, simply enough, man could leave everything and everyone as they initially find them (376). Sometimes, Man is under the assumption that he is preserving or enhancing human-life, while he actually is causing more harm to his own fellows or his environment instead (Robbins 16). Embracing the sacrosanct process of civilisation, Man has killed his brother man and enslaved him; eliminated entire species and exhausted the Earth's resources; if one thing separates him from other animals, it might just be the terrific extent of his self-destructiveness (Robbins 12-6).

As it turns out, the Selenites do not care for conflict, and for that reason, Cavor, who holds in the highest esteem any person capable of exercising good sensibility and reason, becomes their ultimate admirer. Of course, he had quickly assumed they should be reasonable creatures for, after all, “they can make things and do things”, which makes them “more human than [they] had a right to expect” (312). The parallel between the present novel and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* is, yet again, evident, for Moreau is interested in creating his very own rational creature, thus putting the ideal of reason as the ultimate expression of mankind above all else. However, one might feel inclined to challenge Cavor’s view in his stating that the Selenites must be akin to human if they are able to “make things and do things”. If the ability to craft and build equals reason and, by extension, humanity—here intended as belonging to the human race—are some other animals not rational beings, too? As a matter of fact, scholarly literature has discussed this and exposed nine characteristics which supposedly sets humans apart from other non-human animals, they are, communication; metacommunication; capacity for thought; symbolisation; toolmaking; culture; self-reflection; the division of labour; morality (Wolfe 52). These aspects unique to humans, or so it was believed especially during the nineteenth century, have been studied in non-human species and the results conclusively demonstrated they do possess these very abilities as well (Wolfe 28-54). This suggests that there exists nothing really specific enough to separate humans from other animals, a thought which tormented many individuals in the late nineteenth century, as already discussed.

It is worth noting that Cavor suffers from many biases, including that of class prejudice. According to him, the Selenites’ inability to effectively communicate with them during their detention must necessarily imply they are mere plebeians of lower classes, and that there may be “others less stupid”, thus not only assuming that only the higher classes of society may display a modicum of intelligence, but also that he and Beford cannot be blamed for not being understood (321). The feeling that lower classes lack the intelligence and order of the bourgeois’ is, amongst other factors, significantly reinforced by the contemporary literature which entertained the idea of chaos and stereotyped imbecility connected with the working class (Keating 1). On that account, Cavor then imagines:

‘Their central world, their civilised world, will be far below in the profounder caverns about their sea. This region of the crust in which we are is an outlying district, a pastoral region. At least, that is my interpretation. These Selenites we have seen may be only the equivalent of cowboys and engine-tenders. Their use of goads—in all probability mooncalf goad—the lack of imagination they show

in expecting us to be able to do just what they can do, their indisputable brutality, all seem to point to something of that sort.’ (328)

Yet again, a Wellsian character falls victim to a certain degree of hypocrisy, for Cavor is always disposed to point out the rashness and irrationality of mankind, “even of their own planet what have they made but a battle ground and theatre of infinite folly?”, he thus says of his fellow; however, warfare remains the product of the civilised world, of the authorities, this brutality thus clearly not restricted to the commoners, although he does entertain that belief (341).

Bedford and Cavor both embody a conception of the late-nineteenth century hypocritical bourgeois; the former failing to consider a world outside of his capitalistic ideals; the latter so emboldened by his privileges, so grounded in rational thinking and thus so detached from human feelings, his interpretations and observations ultimately cause his own demise. Bedford’s ‘killing spree’ should have offended and angered the Selenites, or so Cavor thinks, instead, they seem to be capable of mercy: “We came to a difficult passage with them, and Bedford, mistaking certain gestures of theirs’—pretty gestures they were!—gave way to a panic violence. He ran amuck, killed three, and perforce I had to flee with him after the outrage. Subsequently we fought with a number who endeavoured to bar our way, and slew seven or eight more. It says much for the tolerance of these beings that on my recapture I was not instantly slain” (363). However, the reader will soon learn this is not mercy the Selenites act upon, but simply logical and methodical reasoning.

The next section of the present dissertation will explore the depths of the Selenites’ social order, but it is important to already stress their strict rationalism. As already mentioned, Cavor cannot help but praising their accomplishments, even though, after witnessing the Selenites ‘educational process’, the sliver of compassion he might still possess tries to creep up to the surface and smother his cold pragmatism:

The making of these various sorts of operative must be a very curious and interesting process. I am still much in the dark about it, but quite recently I came upon a number of young Selenites, confined in jars from which only the fore limbs protruded, who were being compressed to become machine-minders of a special sort. The extended ‘hand’ in this highly developed system of technical education is stimulated by irritants and nourished by injection while the rest of the body is starved. Phi-oo, unless I misunderstood him, explained that in the

earlier stages these queer little creatures are apt to display signs of suffering in their various cramped situations, but they easily become indurated to their lot; and he took me on to where a number of flexible-limbed messengers were being drawn out and broken in. It is quite unreasonable, I know, but these glimpses of the educational methods of these beings have affected me disagreeably. (374)

This entire process haunts him, he claims, but eventually he finds a way to justify the Selenites' methods and argues that it is "a far more humane proceeding than our earthly method of leaving children to grow into human beings, and then making machines of them" (374). For anyone who has read some of Wells's more social and political writings, or even, quite simply, remembers this dissertation's introduction, this will come as no surprise that the author should draw attention to the necessity of providing children with better education. Here again, just like he did with *The Time Machine* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, he takes advantage of the possibilities the novel afford him and consequently dramatises the whole contention while sharing some of his personal ideas at the same time.

If at the beginning of *The First Men in the Moon*, Cavor's pragmatism is mainly exposed through Bedford's descriptions of the scientist and sporadic ejaculations such as his work requiring "constant thought, constant mental ease and activity" or his habits and time for intercourse being respectively regular and limited; by the end of the story, the reader witnesses an even greater detachment from his human feelings (267, 265). He talks to the Grand Lunar of Man's disunity and belligerent nature, "surely they do not like it!" interjects the Selenite, but Cavor assures them men "considered battle the most glorious experience of life" (384). It is surprising he should so casually present this aspect of mankind, when he keeps condoning Bedford's heedless attitude, he seems to have thus completed his severance with his fellows who have turned into mere subjects to be exposed to better trained eyes, that is, Cavor and the Selenites'.

Consequently, as Haynes puts it, "like the Time Traveller, Moreau, and Griffin, Cavor receives the nemesis he deserves. Having unreservedly admired the strict rationalism of the Selenites, he becomes its victim" (159). While scientists possess, according to Wells, an extraordinary capacity to seek and embrace change because their sensible dispositions allow them to do so, reason must not be entirely separated from feelings. Moreover, Bedford and Cavor's personalities put an emphasis on the idea that Man is not very inclined to acknowledge his limitations or faults, nor is he willing to admit the absurdities of his ways, which thus

prevent him from accomplishing that which he may if he had honestly “assess[ed] [his] constraints and possibilities” (Glendening 51).

#### 4.4 THE FIRST WELLSIAN WORLD ORDER?

The idea—and ideal, of a worldwide government reappears every so often in Wells’s succeeding social writings, as stated in this dissertation’s introduction. Scholars have mainly focused on said writings to investigate Wells’s thoughts, and subsequently omitted their earlier manifestations. It could be—should be, dares this author say—argued that *The First Men in the Moon* communicates a somehow still immature—in the sense that it will be considerably refined in later writings—but undeniable reflection upon the question of a World Order and the role of scientists in such a process. If one doubts this assertion, let them read the following: “[...] mankind had dwelt in cities only for nine or ten thousand years, and that we were still not united in one brotherhood [...]”, Cavor thus speaks (383). If Wells supported but one aspect of the Selenites’ social organisation, it undoubtedly is their unity and community.

Once Bedford finds his way back to the Sphere and travels back to earth alone, Cavor, thus relieved of his former partner’s presence, can unleash his undying curiosity and learn more about this “enormous and wonderful world” (321). The moon, Bedford then gathers from Cavor’s transmissions, resembles a super-anthill:

He does not mention the ant, but throughout his allusions the ant is continually brought before my mind, in its sleepless activity, its intelligence, its social organisation, and, more particularly, the fact that it displays, in addition to the two forms, the male and the female, produced by almost all other animals, a great variety of sexless creatures, workers, soldiers and the like, differing from one another in structure, character, power and use and yet all members of the same species. (327)

A few paragraphs or so above, Wolfe’s work regarding human and animal differences was mentioned, along with the supposedly human precedence over the division of labour (Wolfe 30). In the same work, Wolfe thus opposes this view and illustrates his counterargument with Edward O. Wilson’s work on insect societies, which revealed “extraordinary degrees of task differentiation among other species” (39). If usually, the ant differentiates into five subtypes, namely, the worker, the soldier, the winged male, the queen and the slave; the ant-like Selenite

surpasses the little insects and comes with “all sorts and conditions [...] each a perfect unit in a world machine” (*First* 373).

Indeed, in the Selenite world, nothing is left to chance and Cavor explains that “every citizen knows its place” (372). There cannot be another way, for the Selenite is born for the completion of certain tasks, and undergoes both an elaborate training and surgery that “fits him at least so completely to it that he has neither ideas nor organs for any purpose beyond it” (372). The trained Selenite quite literally lives for his purpose as a member of the society, “his one delight lies in the exercise and display of his faculty, his one interest in its application, his sole society the other specialists in his own line” (372). In his contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Roemer referenced the work of Saint-Simon who had suggested the existence of three primary capacities in human nature, namely, the emotive, the rational, and the motor (Roemer 83, summarising Saint-Simon). In order to bring about a perfectly balanced society, everyone should be educated in all three areas; then, at some point, the individual’s strongest suit, determined by teachers and mentors, shall be developed even further (Roemer 83, summarising Saint-Simon). While this dissertation’s author cannot unreservedly claim Wells had Saint-Simon particularly in mind while redacting *The First Men in the Moon*, the parallel is simply too interesting to be dismissed. Wells most likely became highly knowledgeable about the body of Utopian literature—the contrary would be most surprising, after having written so extensively about his predecessors in *A Modern Utopia*, to name only the one—and this thorough understanding finds a voice in the Selenites’ social organisation, which both echoes and subverts past traditions, and at the same time comments upon his own interests.

On a different—albeit related—note, the three main classes the Selenites fall into “differ greatly in influence and respect”, Cavor says (373). The scientist had anticipated it, the ant-like people he and Bedford had initially met were not the brightest from the lot and there are, indeed, “others less stupid” somewhere deeper in their compound (321). The intellectual elite Wells endorses in his *A Modern Utopia* and other similar writings, had already taken shape years before their publication with *The First Men in the Moon*: “These beings with big heads to whom the intellectual labours fall, form a sort of aristocracy in this strange society, and at the head of them, quintessential of the moon, is that marvellous gigantic ganglion the Grand Lunar” (373). That being said, the Selenites represent, yet again—one might think this dissertation revels in its repetitions—an exaggeration, a grotesque *mise en scene* of Wells’s thoughts in order to explore entire worlds of possibilities that non-fiction would not allow. As such, scholars have pointed out the resemblance between the intellectual Selenites’ relationship



with their low-class counterparts and that of the Eloi with the Morlocks in *The Time Machine*, for both depend on the lower-class, and develop thus a “grotesquely symbiotic relationship” (Stiles 336). In the case of the Selenites, some of them have massed considerable knowledge and their brain expansion had to carry along with it inasmuch as to eventually impede their locomotion so that they need to be carried everywhere in a sort of tub:

I have already mentioned the retinues that accompanied most of the intellectuals: ushers, bearers, valets, extraneous tentacles and muscles as it were, to replace the abortive physical powers of these hypertrophied minds. Porters almost invariably accompany them. There are also extremely swift messengers with spider-like legs, and ‘hands’ for grasping parachutes, and attendants with vocal organs that could wellnigh wake the dead. Apart from their controlling intelligence, these subordinates are inert and helpless as umbrellas in a stand. They exist only in relation to the orders they have to obey, the duties they have to perform. (373-4)

The Selenite aristocracy have succeeded where the Eloi failed. Unlike the Eloi, they have entertained their intellectual habits, and their educational processes guarantee the lower classes may never turned to them: the problem of Morlocks is entirely resolved, for a similar scenario has thus been completely prevented from happening. In any case, the unwanted worker, instead of being dismissed and left to fend for himself, is simply drugged and safely tossed aside, as such, Cavor reckons “the trouble of an unemployed problem is altogether anticipated”, which it surely is if one considers a living being as nothing more than a mere worker (375). With this passage, Wells is sure to bring attention to the question of labour ethics and man’s intrinsic value in society, here perceived solely through his utility, very similar to the bourgeois class of the nineteenth century who considered the labourer hardly as much as “an appendage of the machine”, the ‘human’ status of the working class becoming thus increasingly less evident (Marx and Engels 41; Day 138).

As such, another close look at Glendening’s work seems relevant. Indeed, he invokes, amongst other concepts, chaos theory as a means to understanding Wells’s thoughts on evolution and society. Chaos theory, it reads, “concerns the disorder and attendant indeterminacy that can arise within open system, a disorder that differs from a more traditional understanding of chaos as entropic randomness within closed system” (Glendening 28). This sounds all very scientific and complicated—especially to a literary mind such as this author’s,

yours truly, once again—but this simply means that chaos theory studies that which was stable but suddenly and unpredictably ceased to be. Glendening then stated that it is impossible to predict how a complex system might change or develop for two reasons; on the one hand, human intelligence is finite and has thus a limited reach; on the other, the indeterminacy of events contains far too many variables (28). In comparison with his contemporaries, Wells, Glendening argued, “best understood historical contingency and the relationship between order and chaos” (28).

In this perspective, the Selenite social order represents an absolute control over chaos. They have not merely reached a balance between order and chaos, but perfectly suppressed the latter, subduing it further and further to their science and methodical organisation. One should be careful, though, for it certainly does not signify Wells endorses what he writes, despite its resemblance with the sort of World Order he will be known to promote in successive years. Bergonzi had said on the matter that the Selenite society “represented an extreme, and even grotesque, type of the totally organized social order that was increasingly to be the ideal of his utopian speculation” (164).

By making the Selenites a non-human species thus unaffected by Man’s limitations, Wells is allowed to stretch the possibilities of their biological characteristics, and consequent social achievements. For instance, Cavor explains that “the unlimited development of the minds of the intellectual class is rendered possible by the absence in the lunar anatomy of bony skull, that strange bow that clamps about the developing brain of man, imperiously insisting ‘thus far and no further’ to all his possibilities” (373). In passing, their very unique physiologies suggest a Lamarckian inspiration on behalf of Wells, for the parallel with what the biologist wrote is too plain to be ignored: “use of any organ gradually strengthens, develops and enlarges that organ [...] while the permanent disuse of any organ imperceptibly weakens and deteriorates it, and progressively diminishes its functional capacity, until it finally disappears” (Lamarck 113). The Selenites—those born to be so, that is—are not only highly intelligent and sensible, but they are increasingly and perpetually so. What is more, Cavor also notes that their unlimited growth of the brain, and consequent accumulation of knowledge in such “distended brains”, renders the existence of books, records, libraries, inscriptions of any sort completely irrelevant (373). In comparison, “mankind stored their knowledge about them and remained brutes” (383).

The Selenites, armed with perfect knowledge made possible by equally perfect biological conditions, were able to thwart the disorder and indeterminacy of their circumstances. Cavor may very well fancy them “colossally superior” than man in intelligence,

morality and social wisdom, this is precisely the heart of the matter, that they are not men (368). Wells never exhorts his reader to aspire to the sort of rationalism the Selenites demonstrate, and actually condemns it when writing off Cavor's character, because it simply cannot and should not be what humanity is. What Wells does instead is bringing attention to the question of an ethical world machine, or, to put it another way—Hayne's way, to be precise, "Wells was the first to enunciate this fundamental logistical problem [...]: how to combine freedom and efficiency" (159).

## 5 CONCLUSION

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The present dissertation intended to explore the role of the scientist figure in three of Wells's early fiction, namely, *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901). The consequent analyses have emphasised Wells's concomitant use of his own scientific knowledge, personal society ideals, and existing literary tropes, traditions and genres, in order to voice his concerns about the future(s) of humanity.

In *The Time Machine*, the Time Traveller initially embodies the optimistic bourgeois. As a scientist and gentleman inventor, he finds that the recent advances in technology must obviously predict a bright future for mankind. His opinion, though, becomes increasingly negative the more he travels farther into the future. The disturbing relationship between the delicate bourgeois Eloi and the dreadful worker Morlocks develops into a reflection about the possibilities—or lack thereof, of ever completing the realisation of a world Utopia, reaching the gloomy conclusion that, ultimately, Man only represents a mere blip, a microscopic insignificant moment in time, and Nature certainly does not answer to him. Wells did not only have a thorough understanding of the evolutionary theories, especially those articulated by T.H. Huxley—his mentor, but he also discerned their popular fallacies. That enabled him to orchestrate one of many fictional futures in which these misconceptions are thus extensively dramatised in order to appeal to his audience. Scientists, with their extraordinary mastery of scientific knowledge and unwavering faith in progress, are able to build an incredible future for mankind; Wells, however, taking advantage of the former Romantic impulse, sets up a new sort of romance fiction, a dramatic narrative in which the scientist figure, being the Time Traveller, assumes the role of an observer, the only human witness to his scientist predecessors' fatal 'triumphs'.

Similarly, in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Wells employs his scientific education to 'evil' ends, entertaining thus once again his audience's anxieties through horrific visions of hybrid bodies wherein the animal and the human is not longer discernible. Wells's understanding of the potentialities of fiction climaxes in his using elements of the grotesque in the creation of the Beast Folk, both his literature and Moreau's creatures thus in perpetual 'acts of becoming'. Doctor Moreau—Wells's obvious homage to the trope of the mad scientist, becomes a terrifying agent of change, directly impacting the course of evolution in a desperately egoistical and egotistical desire to transcend Nature's power. Prendick, on the other hand, assumes the role of the mad scientist narrator, whose very existence signals the permeability of boundaries between fiction and real life, between literature and science.

Finally, *The First Men in the Moon*'s narrator Bedford magnifies this permeability by acting as the audience direct intermediary, his utter mediocrity thus bringing a sliver of comic relief, while manifesting Wells's desire for a more transparent, systematic—and systemic, intelligible communication of scientific knowledge. The bourgeois scientist, Cavor, represents an extreme version of the rational mind, and Wells ultimately condemns his hypocrisy and admiration for the Selenites' even stricter rationalism, while simultaneously bringing to the fore the ethical dilemmas associated with the realisation of a Utopia, any Utopia.

In the end, Wells never strictly wrote one genre or the other, neither Utopian literature nor science fiction, but repeatedly bent the rules to accommodate his needs. All three novels function as an immense laboratory in which Wells himself exists in a liminal space, both in a world of fantasy and the real one, both an author and a scientist—never just one or the other, pondering the endless possibilities of the novel, of science and how to effectively harmonise the two. In this laboratory, this factory of possibilities, Wells becomes each of his fictional scientist: the Time Traveller as he observes with both optimism and apprehension man's decisions; Doctor Moreau, artist of the grotesque, expert in transformational processes; Prendick, the mad narrator who has seen the worse of man and science; Cavor, relentlessly attempting to find answers. Well before the publication of his non-fiction in which he presented his very personal version of a Utopia, Wells had thus already implied that scientists—fictional ones or not, have the potential to become real architects of Utopias.

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