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**Back to the Future: The Mechanics of Temporality in H.G. Wells'
*The Time Machine***

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CHAPTER ONE: *THE TIME MACHINE* IN VICTORIAN CONTEXT

H.G. Wells' novella, *The Time Machine*, published in 1895, is credited as the first narrative to explore the concept of time travel. A short, but dense story, it contains a mix of social and scientific interests of the time. Wells' story explores the issue of human progress, or more accurately, decline. Instead of imagining a sparkling utopian future where humans have solved all problems, or even a repressive dystopian setting, Wells depicts something much more disturbing. He describes a future where humans no longer exist, and are not even a memory. Their only traces of existence are the crumbling landmarks they leave behind.

Published at the end of the 19th century, *The Time Machine* encompasses a number of issues from that era. These themes range all the way from social, to scientific, to political, to economic. At a time when capitalism was booming, and technology was advancing, the public was looking forward, optimistic about the future and what lay ahead for humanity. However, at the same time there also existed a pessimism, stemming from scientific discoveries in the areas of geology. These discoveries showed that the world was much older than previously thought. This revelation "reduces humanity to transient insignificance in the history of a godless world." (Dean, 129).

In his book, Wells takes the positive, progressionist thoughts of the end of the century, and gives his own interpretation of the future. Instead of an advanced society, Wells gives his readers an image of our species on the decline, regressing in intelligence and function. Through his book, Wells gives a warning that progression is not always beneficial. At the end of the novella, Wells paints a picture of the Earth that is devoid of man altogether, a depiction that embraces the ideas of geology,

evolution, and natural selection. In both of these views, the optimistic progressionist and the pessimistic scientist, the view of human importance is wrapped up in the concept of time. Studying the way temporality is depicted in Wells' book (obviously a main theme in a story about time traveling), we see that the book is not as one sided as it initially appears; rather than completely supporting the view of humanity as doomed to be lost and forgotten in the wide expanse of time, we see an undercurrent to the book that indicates the opposite.

Central to the text of *The Time Machine* is the idea that there is more than one way to view time. It is an issue from which the plot of the story emerges, and a theme that encompasses the whole narrative. While the idea of time does give impetus to the story, the way it functions in the narrative in a structural and representative way also gives meaning to the overall text. Paul Ricoeur, philosopher, and author of the book *Time and Narrative* asserts that time and temporality is implicit in all narratives simply because of the way humans tell and interpret stories. In a narrative like *The Time Machine*, the representation of temporality is not simply a byproduct of the story, but the focus itself. The way Wells presents time in his novella illustrates some of the larger issues of the time. On the surface, Wells' presentation of time stems from scientific research and ideas that were developed in the 19th century. This view of time was seen as incredibly expansive, and indicated human insignificance in the grand scheme of things. The structure of Wells' narrative includes thoughts and developments on temporality that move past simply expressing a geologic view of time, but it is important to understand the background of his research and interest, and how that idea of expansive time influenced his creation of a story, and its outcome.

Growing up, Herbert George Wells was not immediately introduced to either scientific study or the practice of writing (Haynes, 11). His parents lived just below

middle class, and at age 14 he took up work as a draper's assistant (Ibid). Wells eventually ended up in evening classes, and procured a scholarship to study science at the Normal School of Science (Ibid). Studying biology under Thomas Henry Huxley, a noted proponent of Darwin's theory of evolution and the study of geology, is where Wells found his real interest and inspiration for some of his books, including *The Time Machine* (Haynes, 12). Drawing on his concern with class divisions and the future of mankind, and combining them with these new ideas of evolution and the progression of species, Wells created a book that entwined the two, making the themes dependent on each other, and describing an outcome that could be seen both in perspective of how people were living at the turn of the century, and a larger perspective that encompassed the results of such behavior and classism.

Believing in Darwin's view of evolution and the way the world and the things in it change with time, meant changing the system and way we think of time. Besides Darwin's claims, advances in the study of geology in the 19th century were largely responsible for a view of time and history that rejected the biblical notion that had previously been espoused as truth. Dennis R. Dean says in his article "Through Science to Despair: Geology and the Victorians":

"For many Victorians, geology had a further use, revealing to them (as it seemed) the nature and manner of God's creative intentions in fashioning the earth as a fit abode for man, However, when increasing geological evidence made this comfortable assumption suspect, anxious Victorians began to wonder what further, unexpected, even loathsome, revelations of divine neglect geology would bring forth next" (Dean, 111).

Instead of having scientific research correlate with religious beliefs, as expected would happen, religious minded people in the Victorian Era were put in a difficult

dilemma, Science vs Religion. Wells' mentor, Huxley "suggested in print that one could be either a clergyman or a scientist but not both" (Dean, 126). Although there were some scientists who sought to reconcile the two opposing sides, general society following the scientific exploits of geologists grew aware of the debate and opposition between the two sides. Although scientific research later in the 19th century started to turn in on itself and become a study that was less open to the public, for most of the century it was involved in the lives of everyday people. As Dean states, the Victorian people went out, purchased and read *The Principles of Geology* "as if it were a novel" (Dean, 114). the whole public was involved on the debate and advances of the scientific community, and what that meant to their own lives and beliefs. While these advances in the scientific realm pointed to a happy future for the study of natural history, biology and etc, it indicated a more negative perspective on humans and our purposeless existence in the world, an outlook we see reflected in Wells' work.

The introduction of Darwin's *Origin of Species* did not do anything to alleviate this negative outlook for humans, and reinforced the discoveries of geology, while introducing ideas such as natural selection and naturalism. These ideas again, dropped man back from the focus of science and emphasized their unimportance in the grand scheme of the world and history. As well as giving less focus to the history and existence of humans, Darwin's theories also had a distinct amoral quality to them (Dean, 128). Survival of the fittest and natural selection left no room for the ideologies of mankind, only a harsh, natural world where reason exists only as a means to survival. Dean states in his article that there were four large lessons that came from the studies of geology and naturalism. These lessons all emphasized the power of the natural world over humans and their place in it, which again, led people away from religious thought and made them see existence as "little more than a

perpetual struggle against the indifference of nature and the hostility of one's fellow man" (Dean, 128). These four lessons are all reflected in Wells' narrative and his view of the future.

This first lesson states that time is infinitely larger than and superior to humans (Dean, 128). This revelation started with the study of geology and the discovery that in the span of the earth's history and life, humans were almost insignificant in its vast timeline. This directly opposes the ideas that the Bible proclaims by having the start of the world concurrent with man's arrival on Earth. Besides giving greater agency and emphasis on human existence, the Bible also implies that the start of time on earth revolves around human existence and there was nothing of consequence before it. The discoveries made in the field of geology and naturalism automatically rendered these beliefs false in the face of evidence that there was life on Earth well before humans existence. Life forms have come and gone that have inhabited the world longer than humans. This account of a geological record of the Earth gave for many the message that man's time on earth was a nothing but a blip on a timeline of a "godless world" (Dean, 129).

Dean next says that the second lesson geology imparts is that there were once larger and more powerful creatures roaming and ruling the Earth that are now extinct. Again, this brings up the idea that if humans are thought of as the rulers of the Earth at this point, who is to say we will not eventually fall from our position and become just like the dinosaurs, extinct and forgotten relics of a time in the distant past? "Victorians were by no means sanguine that excellence of any kind would ensure human survival" (Dean, 130). This realization, even if it does not negate the existence of God, levels the playing field for humans and other species. Before, we had thought ourselves superior, masters of the world. However, this discovery of extinct species brings in the question of our future and just how secure it is or is not.

Taking the previous “lesson” along with this one, the question of our significance and meaning in the world starts to arise.

The third truth says that human civilization and individual life is on the decline. Dean describes books and texts of the time that seem to point to an understanding of this lesson. Books like May Kendall’s *Lay of the Trilobite* pointed to eventual human decline and disappearance, while others such as Mrs. Humphrey Ward’s *Robert Elsmere* indicated and acknowledged the new systems of viewing the world by writing a book about the loss of religious and theological faith (Dean, 130). From each of these realizations and discoveries came a response from the public, often in the form of literature that was being written at the time. In a book such as *The Time Machine*, we see these lessons and scientific views reflected as well, but also an underlying support for the positive, progressionist view of the future.

The fourth lesson given to the Victorian public by the advances in geology was that besides humans being in decline, our Earth is also in the process of a slow death. Here, especially, we see some of Wells’ inspiration for his bleak visions of the far future when the world is slowly approaching its own death. All of these truths coming at such a close range of time for the Victorian people brought about a distinct change in thinking. Humanism and religion, modes of thought and belief that both celebrated the human existence on Earth, were both being pushed out of the way for a depressing world view in which neither our lives nor culture, society nor ideologies matter. With doubt in the existence of God, directionality and purpose in life start to be questioned. Narratives and texts of the time take this question and give back their own answers. As Dean puts it, referencing the poet Meredith, society had moved away from religion “through Science and to despair” (Dean, 131). We see this element and overwhelming feeling of hopelessness in novels of the time that take on these themes, such as *The Time Machine*.

The rise of the sciences of geology and naturalism, and the decline in importance of religion in the 19th century changed the way people contextualized the human race and themselves in the world. This shift in view and introduction of new concerns is seen in the change in literature of the time. The tension between the pessimism of science and optimism of technological progression influenced the way that literature was both written and received. Initially the autobiography was the popular genre of literature, and once it was deemed unworthy by the public, it was followed by the historical/biographical narrative. Wells' novella is unique in that we see a combination of categories and a self consciousness in the text that ultimately advocates both progressionist and scientific views.

Autobiography was the first form of literature to gain popularity as a result of these clashing views in the 19th century. Robin Gilmour, author of *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature 1830-1890* explains this popularity arose as a result of people attempting to find understanding in not just the history of the Earth, but in human ancestry, and finding the links between past and present. "And what was true of the culture's public discourse about itself was also true of individuals, driven in an age of rapid change to find coherence and meaning in the shape of their own lives, in autobiography" (Gilmour, 25). She notes how the combination of these new studies dwarfs man in their perspective, and that despair (mentioned by Dean), slows down and makes one doubt the "optimism of the Romantics" (Gilmour 25). This change in tone and mood of the time has great influence on the types of narrative emerging. Gilmour credits the rise of the autobiography to this change in outlook. While the views of the outside world were constantly shifting with the arrival of each new discovery and with the ongoing debate between theologians and scientists, people sought to make sense of it by turning inward, creating a sphere that made sense to themselves in

the privacy of their own thoughts and personal history. The rise of the autobiography is seen as a direct output of this attempt to internalize and create logic out of society's ever changing world view (Gilmour, 25).

At the same time however, there is a dilemma in the rise of the autobiography in that it is seen as regressive, backward looking by Victorian culture (Gilmour, 27). This does not fit well with a culture that is preoccupied with discovery and advancement. "The age created profound dislocations in everyday life, and was throwing up problems in science and belief which made introspection almost inevitable for a thinking person, did not make autobiography of the frank Romantic kind respectable" (Gilmour 28). With this sort of confessional writing not respected, authors shifted, moved to discussing not the history of the individual, but the histories of other civilizations and societies.

Gilmour notes that the reading of a biographical or historical book was not frowned upon as reading "introspective" literature would have been (Gilmour, 30). However, she notes the similarity and connection between the two that explains the shift in popularity. "History-writing is also an act of memory, a form of cultural autobiography" (Gilmour, 31). Depending on who the author chooses to write and reflect on from the past, we can infer a great deal about the present concerns and issues with identity. Gilmour agrees with this by saying many artists and authors were not so concerned with displaying the past to contemplate and study it in isolation, but wanted to compare it to the present, place it against and contrast ourselves with it (Gilmour 31). These historical analyses on the past were chosen depending on how they would correlate with the events of the present. As an example, Gilmour uses the Middle Ages, a time very popular for topic in the Victorian Era historical narratives. There was no thorough understanding or knowledge of the time period, so it was a perfect subject for authors to fill with

details that would have relevance to modern times. Thomas Carlyle's book *Past and Present* is a perfect example of the way authors could posit the past against the present to come to new conclusions about their own time and culture. In his book, Carlyle literally discusses the present condition of England, then describes an idealized medieval story of a 12th century monk who became abbot, ending with the overarching message that just as St. Edmund's Abbey was in need of a leader, so is modern day England.

Wells' novella fits in its own category of narrative style that draws upon both autobiography and historical fiction. In the story, emphasizes the mode of autobiography by setting the story within a frame of a main character who is describing and reflecting his own journey, but also employs the genre of historical fiction by describing a culture and time period that is foreign to him, the future. Instead of taking a past civilization and relating it to contemporary times to learn some sort of lesson, Wells reverses the process and studies a fictional, future culture (other writers who studied past culture fabricated stories, essentially making it fiction) that has yet to exist. In creating his book, Wells makes use of aspects of an autobiographical aspect, aimed at finding an internal logic that will translate and make sense of the outside world, while simultaneously demonstrating alignment with the historical fiction, progressionist view by studying another civilization and comparing it to his own. In making use of both literature styles, we see the first indicator of a dual nature in Wells' narrative. This dual nature results in the text reflecting back not only on contemporary culture through its historical fiction portion, but a reflection of more personal significance for Wells. The autobiographical aspect of the text indicates how Wells was attempting to "impose some meaning and coherence on a rapidly changing world outside" (Gilmour, 27). Within the story and

frame of the narrative, we see that the concept of time reveals this dual nature further.

Time, as viewed in Wells' work initially seems to be in line with the ideas of temporality associated with geology and evolution. First, Wells depicts humanity in his novel that gives the reader the impression it is only a passing phase, a mere mark on the arrow of time. To do this, Wells presents his readers with a span of time that is almost immeasurable. His main character, the Time Traveler, travels into a future where humans are far extinct. They are not remembered by the current inhabitants, and not much by the way of culture or custom remains. The Time Traveler is completely isolated in this strange, yet familiar world. He is an example of his own times and culture, interpreting this foreign future from his own 19th century perspective. It is very appropriate that the character of the Time Traveler is a scientist, because he provides numerous observations about evolution that he connects to the current social state of England. John J. Pierce states the main idea regarding time and evolution in a perfect way: "For Wells, prehistoric time implied its counterpart: post historic time" (Pierce, 86). In this post historic time, Wells takes the theory of evolution and applies it. In this instance appears that cultural sense of despair that Dean emphasizes in his article. Instead of having humans progress further, becoming more intelligent and capable, Wells takes the opposite view. He reasons that eventually humanity will hit a peak. What happens when a species is at its apex, when there are no challenges left? Wells describes the depressing notion that humanity will start on a downward descent, a devolution once there are no challenges. Pierce acknowledges the view that most Victorians had about humankind: "When they do think of mankind as a species, it was a complacent belief that the struggle for existence was over: mankind was lord of the Earth; none could challenge that" (Pierce, 92). For a society focused on the wonders of the years

to come, this depressing depiction of the future was especially shocking. This also harkens back to one of the four lessons that were readily becoming obvious at the time, that there were other, more powerful, creatures once ruling the Earth, and if they could become extinct, why couldn't we? Wells' description of these almost, but not quite human creatures fascinates us because it opens up a new possibility for the future, one our species-centric mind does not usually consider. As the Time Traveler says "I must confess that my satisfaction with my first theories of an automatic civilization and a decadent humanity did not long endure" (Wells, 34). Wells takes the biblical idea of time, and human existence, and changes it so that it does not revolve around humans. Looking at the Bible, and how it describes the start of time essentially starting with the first human, we can safely assume that when the last human disappears, so will time. In surface narrative of *The Time Machine*, Wells takes the emphasis off humans and our place in the world's history. Despite our nonexistence in the future, the world still carries on, a disturbing thought to some at the end of the 19th century.

Wells writes a narrative that relates to Darwin's theory in that he contemplates and proposes a future race of our descendants. He takes it a step farther and makes it more relatable to the general public by the way he creates and describes these characters. In the year 802,701, Wells presents a image of life in the far future where the descendants of man have split into two opposite and startling categories, the childish and ignorant Eloi, and the savage and earth dwelling Morlocks. The Eloi are the creatures that the Time Traveler first encounters, and assumes are the only residents of the future Earth. They are kind and playful, but not much else. They have lost any semblance of human intelligence, and lead a mysteriously purposeless existence. They live in a place that could be described as a futuristic Eden. Again, these are themes that relate back to concerns of both time

and religion. With religion losing its influence, where does one find significance and meaning in life to fill that gap? Wells depicts this situation in the extreme, where we realize that the Eloi have no real meaning to their lives, leading us to believe that maybe humanity never found the answer.

The second category of human like creatures are the Morlocks. They are the exact opposite of the Eloi. They dwell below ground, in the dark, surrounded by machines the presumably keep life functioning smoothly for the Eloi. The Time Traveler is not even aware of their existence for some time, as they only come out at night. When he finally does see them, he is highly uncomfortable, and refers to them as “lemurs.” Here, we get another indicator and reminder of the evolutionary status of these creatures. It seems at first glance that humanity is regressing back to simpler creatures, and implies that eventually the transformation will be complete. And indeed, when the time traveler finds himself at close to the last moments of the Earth’s life, it is even more devolved. The only living creatures are monstrosly large crabs, and “something like a huge white butterfly” that is flying away from the others (Wells, 64). These two last remaining creatures are the devolution of the Morlocks and the Eloi, their forms further simplified to predator and prey. At the very end of the world, the Time Traveler has gone so far in the future, so far into the devolutionary idea, that the end of time rather resembles the beginning.

Wells uses this story line, however, to contrast and use it as a mirror to his own times, as previous authors had done with studies of civilizations past. The Eloi and the Morlocks are future renditions of the class structures, boiled down to a simpler form. The Time Traveler even comes to this conclusion on his own, just in case the reader is really not getting the point. “And this same widening gulf - will make that exchange between class and class, that promotion by intermarriage which at present retards the splitting of our species along lines of social

stratification, less and less frequent” (Wells, 40). The Time Traveler is especially disturbed once he learns the truth of the relationship between the two groups (which has been puzzling him). He realizes that the happy and free Eloi certainly do have to pay a price for their carefree lives. They are doomed to eventually become a hungry Morlock’s meal. This revelation puts into full effect what is only partially observed before for the Time Traveler. Wells is warning his society that if class divisions and structures continue the way they do, the results will not be good for anyone. Of course he is not saying we are literally going to devolve into groups of primitive creatures, only barely resembling humans, but Wells is trying to point out and inspire thought on an issue and concern of his using exaggerated tactics. By enabling a blind progression forward without thinking about the consequences, Wells warns that society will ultimately deteriorate.

When creating this story, Wells did not just include a story that supported scientific ideas of the time, but also engaged the scientific method within the plot of the story. The way Wells presents both the story and the behavior of the characters is very precise and consciously written. Throughout the novella, we see the Time Traveler engaging in different hypotheses. He rejects one, then formulates or amends another, as he explores and gets more evidence about this strange world. It is plausible, that as a scientist, he is always observing and making judgements about his surroundings. Looking closer we see that the Time Traveler is actually engaging the scientific method to help himself come to a conclusion about the future world and its inhabitants. One of his first assumptions is that “Where population is balanced and abundant , much child bearing becomes an evil rather than a blessing to the State: where violence comes but rarely and offspring are secure, there is less necessity, indeed there is no necessity - of an efficient family, and the specialization of the sexes with reference to their children’s needs

disappears” (Wells, 25). He finds out not too long later how wrong he is, that the Eloi are essentially bred and kept alive by the Morlocks. Once he realizes this, he amends his hypotheses until he has enough evidence to know he is correct. Eventually, Time Traveler comes to a complete realization and theory about this future, supported by the evidence he has witnessed. After he has completed this process of hypothesizing and revising he comes to a complete understanding. It is not accidental that after this moment he finds the means to leave the future he has been stranded in. Wells relies heavily on the ideas of science in the 19th century to help create his narrative, creating a focus around these topics. While he does support and embrace these new ideas throughout the narrative, he does not completely succeed in condemning the progressionist ideologies of the time.

The Time Machine is a novel written right at the end of the 19th century. Its story encompasses the debates of the time period, scientific versus religious, as well as progressionist versus pessimistic. The new scientific discipline of geology made the public aware of just how old the Earth was, which led to the realization of human insignificance in this vast stretch of time. The thought that the Earth was not created for humans disagrees with religious belief, and the idea that humans may be extinct some day in the future was a disturbing thought for society at the time. At the end of this century Wells writes a book that agrees with this scientific stance by moving people out of the spotlight, and looking at an expansive, long view of time. However, studying Wells’ depiction of time in his novel in its content, and especially in the narrative structure shows how it is not so simple to completely endorse one side of the argument. Rather, we see through the temporal structure of the book how Wells, as the rest of society finds it hard to give up old, engrained beliefs that the world (and by association, time) was not created for humans. His struggle in the narrative reflects the larger cultural debate happening at the turn of the 20th century,

the tension and difficulty that came along with the change in thinking about humanity's place in the world.

CHAPTER TWO: TIME IN CONTENT

Written at the turn of the 20th century, *The Time Machine* is a dense novella that contains a number of themes that were on Wells' mind, as well as the public's at the turn of the century. These themes include evolution/natural selection, geology, social class divisions, socialism, capitalism, time as a dimension, and technological advances. The scientific discoveries of the century led to a pessimistic view of the future, based on the prediction that humans will ultimately disappear into the world's history. This view did not agree with the progressionist attitudes of the era, based on the excitement of the dazzling future that technology and capitalism made possible. These new scientific views also did not agree with the normative Christian view of time or humanity. The result of the combination of these themes was a tension that is reflected in Wells' text.

In a time of such great discovery in the fields of science, and the push for the progression of mankind, it is not surprising that Wells focused his story on the future, and on the fate of humankind. He shows a glimpse of ourselves in the future if we continue finding value in blind progression. Eventually, he argues, the human race will no longer exist, and the earth will be devoid of any sign that our presence ever even existed. Throughout the novella, we see Wells supporting these "pessimistic" views associated with the rise in scientific thinking, and supporting the four "lessons" from the study of geology that Dean mentions in his article. These lessons emphasize the enormity of time, and the presence of other, now extinct creatures on Earth. The last of these lessons speak to how both human life and the Earth are in a slow decline. Although Wells emphasizes these points in his text, the way he depicts them is not totally in line with scientific belief. Instead, it reflects the already established cultural view of time and futurity. For a society focused on the

progression and the technological accomplishments of the 19th century, a view of the future without humans, as seen in Wells' novella, must have been incredibly disturbing. Studying the way Wells depicts the theme of time in his book, obviously a topic of great importance in a narrative revolving around traveling to the future, we come to the realization that Wells is not condemning these progressionist views as fervently as it initially seems.

Discussion of time in Wells' narrative does not act as just a scientific theory, or conceptual idea. Analyzing the way time functions in his work reveals another vein of thinking that is not so obvious when simply observing the events of the story. The way Wells depicts time as a human phenomenon through both the content and structure of his narrative shows how he was hesitant to fully embrace some of the advancements in scientific thinking at the turn of the century. This does not mean that Wells did not believe in the results of geologic studies or naturalism, but that accepting the consequences for humankind was a challenge. His struggle reflects the larger cultural shift in perception that was occurring at the start of the 20th century, and the difficulty in the progression of thought from species-centric to a non biased consideration of humanity's place in the Earth's history, as well as a difficulty in the abandonment of belief, religious or otherwise. With the advent of the study of geology, the Victorians discovered that the Earth is millions of years older than previously thought. Suddenly, our insignificance in this was stretch of time is obvious. Mark Twain put it in perspective with an ironic twist when he compared man's age in time to the Eiffel Tower:

“Man has been here 32,000 years. That it took a hundred million years to prepare the world for him is proof that that is what it was done for. I suppose it is. If the Eiffel tower were now representing the world's age, the skin of paint on the pinnacle-knob at its summit would represent

man's share of that age; and anybody would perceive that that skin was what the tower was built for. I reckon they would" (Gilmour, 26).

Twain humorously points out how wrong the Victorian view of humanity's place in the world was by giving expansive time an understandable metaphor. Wells book emphasizes this point by using time to move man out of the focus of his narrative. Wells imparts Dean's first lesson of geology, the idea that time is superior to humans by demonstrating an incredibly wide and expansive view of time. This conveys to readers that humankind only exists for a brief moment. However, when studying time throughout Wells' narrative, how it influences his creation of characters, we see that there is an undercurrent to the book. This logic surrounding his depiction of time shows how Wells did not quite give up engrained beliefs stemming from religious thought that the world--and by association, time--was not created for humans.

In *The Time Machine*, Wells creates two divisions of human descendants, the Eloi and the Morlocks. The Eloi live carefree lives above ground, while the Morlocks remain mostly mysterious to the readers and the Time Traveler, living underground and preying on the Eloi above. Both are depicted as nonhuman creatures, not retaining many similarities to their human ancestors. Here, we see how Wells references both the second and third lesson from geology. These lessons are that there were once were, and will be creatures around when humans do not exist, and the idea that human culture and society is declining. Wells describes, through the Time Traveler, how the slow decline of human culture has brought mankind to this point, as well as emphasizing the fact that our descendants are so unlike us, that humans have become extinct. It is important to notice how Wells depicts these creatures in order to convey how they are not human. It must be important what Wells decides to include about these future people, and what human qualities he omits. In observing what qualities Wells takes away from these

creatures, we see what he valued, or what is essential to be human. The way Wells describes the Eloi and the Morlocks, and their relation to time indicates just how far from human they have devolved. Judging from what we know of the Morlocks, we can see they do not consciously recognize the accepted human view of time, but are tethered to a system that continually operates in accordance with it, making human temporality a presence in their lives whether they realize it or not. As a future species, the average reader would assume that the Eloi would be more advanced and intelligent. Instead, we see that life is indeed easier, but perhaps because it has been simplified to such an extent that the Eloi do not even grasp the idea of time. The only semblance or connection with it they have is through the Morlocks. Along with their devolution in a physical sense, the Eloi also have devolved mentally. The way they communicate is through a simplistic and limited language, and this indicates how they have lost a sense of time. Paul Ricouer, author of *Time and Narrative*, argues that time is implicit in any narrative. He states that narrative is not just the telling of stories, but a quality embedded in the most basic ways we communicate with one another. This link between time and language is seen through the Eloi, who have lost a full understanding of both.

Paul Ricouer discusses multiple views on time, as well as their connection to narrative. Studying the Morlocks and Eloi, and their conception of temporality through Ricouer, reveals how Wells has written them to be nonhuman and what that indicates. There are two views of time generally recognized by humans, consciously or not. Ricouer refers to these types of time as cosmological, and phenomenological. Cosmological is the association of temporality with the movement of the planets, sun, stars and etc. (Dowling, 20.). Phenomenological time is a view of time created by and only understood by the human consciousness. This is the view of time in the terms of past present and future. Ricouer argues (through

Aristotle) that if human consciousness were to be removed from the world, “time would vanish along with it, leaving only the blind processes associated with motion.” (Dowling, 20). A paradox does occur however, seeing as how the phenomenological concept of time bases its measurement on the cosmological (days, months, years). So, it is safe to say that humans are aware and conscious of both sides of this time argument. As mentioned earlier, Ricouer stresses that our reality of time is expressed through the way we communicate. “Language in the making celebrates reality in the making..And the rest of our language in ordinary speech and so on has to do with reality as it is already done” (Fried). Our own language employs such sayings as “not having the time,” and “that time is gone” that reinforce the view of time in the terms of past, present and future. Just as our language defines and reinforces the way we view time, the Eloi’s simplistic way of communicating is indicative of their limited perception of temporality.

The Eloi do not seem to understand even the most basic concepts of time. This is because the type of temporality we usually think of when we hear the word “time” relates to calendrical units, days, hours and minutes. In creating the race of the Eloi, Wells has removed any sort of understanding of a phenomenological sense of time. We can see this best through Wells description of their communication and language. They have an incredibly simplistic language that the Time Traveler describes as “almost exclusively composed of concrete substantives and verbs. There seemed to be few, if any abstract terms or use of figurative language. Their sentences were usually composed of one or two words.” (Wells, 33). If Ricouer states that our sense of reality is embodied by the language we use and the way we communicate, then we see that the Eloi have a very limited perception of the world around them in the sense of time. Their simplistic way they communicate is an indicator of the lack of narrative structure in their language. They only express and

communicate thoughts on the most basic level. In another instance, the Time Travler comes to the realization that the Eloi do not have a writing system when he finds unfamiliar text when exploring. "I thought, rather foolishly, that Weena might help me to interpret this, but I only learnt that the bare idea of writing had never entered her head." (Wells, 51). Combing this realization with the Eloi's simplistic language, we realize that the concept of past, present, and future do not really apply to the Eloi, they simply live in a world of events. The Eloi's lack of writing system indicates that they are not thinking about the future, or keeping events of the past recorded. It seems that in this future society, the Eloi have no need for the concept of time. They simply do the same thing every day, and have no concern of a schedule or order of events. With the fall of humanity and the challenges facing it, the idea of temporality was no longer a necessity.

It is clear that Wells is indicating that the Eloi have lost a large part of their humanity by ridding them of the phenomenological understanding of time. However, even when looking at the cosmological aspect of time, the Eloi show a limited understanding at best. When the Time Traveler arrives in the future year of 802,701, he attempts to communicate his origins to the Eloi. "Then, hesitating for a moment how to express Time, I pointed to the sun." (Wells, 21.) Instead of understanding this explanation of time in a basic, cosmological sense, the Eloi assume he has come from the sky during a thunderstorm. (Wells, 21.). It is after this interaction that the Time Traveler makes his first judgement about the Eloi, questioning, "Were these creatures fools?" (Wells, 22). Every month, when the moon is on the wane, the Morlocks emerge from the underground to hunt the Eloi. When the Eloi refer to this dangerous time, they simply refer to these couple of days as "the Dark Nights." (Wells, 46). The Time Traveler surmises that they are speaking of the nights when the moon is giving the least amount of light, but it is not actually the Eloi that

realize this (Wells, 46). Instead of recognizing the cosmological pattern and the moon's role that results in these "Dark Nights," the Eloi simply know it is a dangerous time when it is very dark outside. This too, would seem to indicate their lack of understanding of time, even on a basic cosmological scale. However, through their interaction with the Morlocks, a naturally occurring pattern does emerge.

Time from a Morlock's perspective becomes even more confusing and hard to judge. Since they live below ground, they are almost entirely disconnected from this naturally occurring cosmological cycle of time. They only venture above ground on these dark nights, and Wells never reveals if they realize the role of the cosmos in this cycle. Rather, Wells describes the Morlocks having a stronger connection to the human, phenomenological sense of time. The Morlocks do not consciously live by this sense of time, but they remain underground, as their ancestors did, bound to the systems of machines that keep the world above ground functioning. Working and living as determined by this mass of underground machinery suggests that the Morlocks are still enslaved to a human view of time, even when the humans are long since extinct. Despite the Morlocks being decidedly less human than the Eloi (says the Time Traveler), they are the ones who still remain tied to humanity's view of time.

It seems that through the increasing of mechanization, the need to consciously think about temporality disappeared, at least for the upper classes. The Morlocks, operating the machines, are the ones who retained a semblance of understanding, and as a result of this association with human time and machinery, they are ultimately the more clever and successful of the two humanoid groups. The Time Traveler observes that in the devolution of man, "the under-world being in contact with machinery, which, however perfect, still needs some little thought outside habit" (Wells, 62). This statement acknowledges that the Morlocks'

association with this machinery kept them from becoming like the Eloi. The Morlocks do not fully understand the concept of time, but their lives revolve around tending to machines that are based on that human view of temporality, and it is this relationship that gives them a sort of independent intelligence. We see this exemplified when the Time Traveler finally recovers his machine. “I was surprised to find it had been carefully oiled and cleaned. I have suspected since that the Morlocks had even partially taken it to pieces while trying in their dim way to grasp its purpose” (Wells, 62). This quote demonstrates how the Morlocks were intelligent enough to disassemble and reconstruct the time machine, but did not have the understanding to comprehend what the machine was used for. This example also points to the fact that the Morlocks have some limited intelligence, but when it comes to a machine that uses time, they are stumped. This is symbolic of their lack of temporal awareness. At the epilogue of the novella, when the unnamed narrator is speaking, he states how humanity lives on in the future through “gratitude and a mutual tenderness” (Wells, 71). He neglects to mention how other aspects of humanity live on in the form of the Morlocks. Although certainly more unpleasant, the Morlocks as the Time Traveler says “had probably retained perforce rather more initiative, if less of every other human character, than the upper.” (Wells, 62), The Time Traveler continually describes the Eloi as more human than their underground relatives, but in matters of intellect and initiative, even the Time Traveler admits that the Morlocks are superior. Judging from this, we see that the Time Traveler, valued this described “gratitude and mutual tenderness” more desirable human traits than the Morlocks’ intelligence or initiative, certainly not the position one would expect a scientist to take.

Comparing the two different, future groups of human descendants, we see that between them they do retain quite a few human qualities, more so than it

initially appears. More valued, the Eloi possess the favorable traits such beauty, grace, kindness, gratitude and tenderness, while the Morlocks have intelligence, initiative and the determination to survive. Despite both groups possessing human qualities, we see that the Time Traveler only empathizes with the Eloi. He finds it difficult to accept or appreciate the fact that the Morlocks changed their eating habits in order to survive. By siding with the Eloi (who would never be able to survive without the Morlocks) Wells is lessening the effect of the message of his book. Even though the novella warns against classism, having the Time Traveler sympathize with the Eloi and display a lack of empathy and understanding for the Morlocks' need to survive, Wells sends an opposing message. When the Time Traveler and the narrator only sing the virtues of the Eloi, the lazy, indolent race who cannot live on their own, Wells is endorsing this desire of a life without challenges, and going against the very theme of his book. His hierarchal thought process still is discriminating against the lower class. While it is not fair to say Wells' characters' views always represent his own, the characters of the Time Traveler and the unnamed narrator act as the vehicles that deliver the book's social message, or moral, and what they say reflects the point he is trying to emphasize. Purposely making these characters discriminate against class would be a pointless, because the readers are already approaching it from that same mental frame, and would not recognize the character's judgements as unfair. This instance is representative of Wells' inability to examine issues regarding class and society from an cultural or political lens other than the one he has been immersed in during his lifetime. Instead of depicting a future where humans are gone as a result of their actions, Wells shows a race of humanoid descendants and applauds their humanistic traits instead of criticizing their ignorance. Wells is not completely accepting the de centering of humans from the timeline of the Earth by emphasizing the desirable

qualities that humans pass on to their ancestors, and ignoring their lack of negative traits, or lack of traits that we largely associate with being human, such as recognition of time. More importantly, this shows in another context how Wells found it challenging to break away from the determined cultural view of a topic.

Faced with this representation of the Eloi and Morlocks, one could argue that Wells does show the complete departure of humans from the Earth, in the Time Traveler's venture into the farthest reaches on time on Earth. However, even exploring the future past the Eloi and Morlocks we still see how Wells intentionally or not, connects humans with the timeline of the Earth's slow death. The last chapters of the book intend to show that time is a vast stretch that humans cannot claim ownership to, but ultimately serve to reinforce the familiar Christian belief that the demise of the world and the death of humanity are connected to each other.

As the Time Traveler journeys into futurity, he witnesses the change in the cosmological patterns of the earth, night and day growing slower until "they seemed to stretch through centuries. At last a steady twilight brooded over the earth...the sun had ceased to set - it simply rose and fell in the west, and grew ever broader and more red." (Wells, 63-64). Stopping here, the Time Traveler observes the much changed world around him. He comes to rest with the ocean in front of him. The lazy movement of the waves, described as "gentle breathing" communicate the exhaustion and sense of desolation that surround of the Earth, and the change from the diverse world he had just visited (Wells, 64). Instead, the only living things the Time Traveler sees are first, a giant version of a white butterfly, and second, a monstrous crab. Peter Firchow, in his book *Modern Utopian Fictions from H.G. Wells to Iris Murdoch* argues that these creatures descend from the humanoid races that the Time Traveler has just met:

The monstrous crab-like creatures that attack the Traveller are undoubtedly the symbolic progeny of the Morlocks (and possibly are even intended to be thought of as their “real” progeny), just as the only other visible, living “thing like a huge white butterfly” is a symbolic descendant of the Eloi. The dialectic of evolution, and the struggle of good and evil, continue, though in a necessarily altered and less complex form. (Firchow 29).

Understanding these creatures to be the future descendants of the Morlocks and Eloi means that they are even more distantly still related to humans. Even the opposite forms they take is even due to the split created when humans imposed a class system that separated people into certain groups. So, while at first it seems Wells is showing a future devoid of human reference, in truth these creatures are just further descendants of ours. Wells at this point has obviously stripped these creatures of any human traits, they still are significant because they are devolving and growing simpler at the same rate the Earth is decaying, showing a sort of divine connection between the life cycles of humanity and the Earth.

Traveling again into futurity, the Time Traveler stops and witnesses what may be a time just moments away from the end of the Earth. This part of the novella imparts Dean’s fourth lesson stemming from geology, that the Earth is slowly dying, a fact not often considered in the Victorian mental context of progress. The Time Traveler, seeing algae, surmises that life is not extinct, but is disturbed by the silence that indicates the lack of life as we know it. “Beyond those lifeless sounds the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives - all that was over.” (Wells, 66). Suddenly, after this moment, the Time Traveler realizes that there is indeed animate life. He spots and is

immediately horrified by a creature upon the beach. “It was a round thing, the size of a football perhaps, or, it may be, bigger, and tentacles trailed down from it, it seemed black against the weltering blood-red water, and it was hopping fitfully about. At this moment, what seems to be the last evolutionary stop for humankind, The Earth is almost finished as well. Firchow argues that this creature indicates how “at last the dialectic of evolutionary life has played itself out. Evolution has become devolution, and this wretched descendant of a once triumphant humanity has, as it were, survived only to be ‘kicked’ like a football into oblivion.” (Firchow 29). Even though Wells supports the scientific ideas of geologic time and extinction of humans the on the surface of his narrative, he inadvertently shows the earth dying concurrently with the devolution of man. This shows how Wells is unable to break free of society’s normalized ideas (that derive from religious thought) of temporality, humanity and its connection to the Earth. When we are finally devolved to maybe the lowest , most unrecognizable life form, Wells shows the Earth in it’s last days as well. Wells does not simply give humans a presence in the future, but a relation to the long, expansive view of time. The only human thing this depiction of the future includes is the narrator, insinuating that even though the slow decay of Earth is a process that involves only the cosmological process of time, Wells feels the need to include a human narrator and a representation of this time in in a phenomenological context. This is an idea that will be explored in a subsequent section. While this depiction of the future does not include anything that can be described as human, it still is advocating these normative beliefs of the era by describing the absence of man simultaneously with the death of the Earth. Wells gives a description of the Earth that declines concurrently with the disappearance of man. Instead of the apocalypse ridding the Earth of humankind, This description of the far future still has a humans, or something that we can associate as once related to humans,

spotlighted in conjunction with the condition of the Earth. Instead of highlighting our absence, Wells gives us a relation to the entire lifespan of the world placing associations throughout it, from the Morlocks and the Eloi, to the butterfly and crabs, and finally to this tentacled creature in the very last days of the Earth. As much as he wants to encourage and embrace the new scientific ideas of the Victorian Era, Wells' novella shows how he could not help but hesitate in ridding the Earth's timeline of a human presence, and had difficulty completely moving past the established cultural thought on the subject of humanity in connection with the life of the world.

In first studying the fictional cultures of the Eloi and the Morlocks they do not appear to retain much, if anything from their human roots. Wells explains throughout the Time Traveler's exploration of the future how the Eloi and Morlocks have come to be, and what human qualities they still possess. The Time Traveler admires the Eloi for their human traits of kindness and generosity, while condemning the Morlocks for what qualities of humanity they have kept. Reading *The Time Machine* we dislike the Morlocks simply because of the way the Time Traveler, and Wells, portrays them. While not keeping any of the social or emotional traits we value, the Morlocks have a sense of intellect and human drive, or initiative. We see this through the way Wells has kept them bound to machines that still function by a human, phenomenological sense of time. While Wells gives a grim outlook on the future of mankind, throughout his story we also see a thread of logic running through the story stating otherwise. Despite showing a vast stretch of time to diminish man's presence, Wells depicts the devolution of man as concurrent with the life span of the Earth. The novella ends with the narrator voicing how the positive traits of man will live on through the Eloi, while neglecting to mention the intellect or initiative of the Morlocks. In this instance we see how Wells undermines the

overarching theme of his narrative by assuring mankind will live on through these future creatures, and also negates his statement on classism through refusing to recognize the intelligence and initiative of the Morlocks simply because they are unpleasant creatures. While it seems Wells wanted to make statements about the social atmosphere of the time, and encourage the persuasion of new scientific ideas, his depiction of time hinders this. We see this again, not in the content of the events within the story, but in the way the story unfolds in time. The structure and way Wells represents narrative time in the framing of his novella is just as important as temporality within the events. In both these areas we find that there is proof that Wells was unable to completely overcome the cultural and societal views of both engrained religious thought, and progressionist attitude already established at the end of the century, despite his desire to support the scientific community.

CHAPTER THREE: THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF TIME

Scientific advances in the 19th century have an important role and influence in Wells' *The Time Machine*, due to the way they shaped his narrative and inspired his story. Although he certainly gained inspiration from new scientific ideas, Wells' novella does not simply recite and agree with them. The discussion of time in the content of his story, as explored in the last chapter, is indicative of this. Intentional or not, the way Wells writes and frames the narrative leads to different conclusions than the events in the actual story. Examining the text of *The Time Machine* through literary theorist Gerard Genette and his book *Narrative Discourse* as well as philosopher Paul Ricoeur allows us to study how Wells describes time in his narrative through form. Studying Wells through a historical lens, it has been argued that the scientific events of the time regarding evolution and geology inspired him to write a book that portrays humans as a declining race, de-emphasizing the role of humans in the history of the earth, in time. However, studying the way Wells writes, a different view and interpretation on the way Wells considers time emerges. This view, intentional or not, shows that Wells' depiction and description of time, even into the far future, depends on humans. This signifies the uncertain relationship Wells had with the scientific and progressionist attitudes of the era. We see this relationship in the way his text is formed and shaped. The result of viewing *The Time Machine* through a critical and philosophical lens is an understated connection to the idea of humanity's survival. This theme, pitted against the plot of the book (a story that clearly indicates the eventual nonexistence of humans) gives a tension to the text, opposing ideas contextualized in the form of a narrative. Taken altogether, we see Wells advocating the lessons that geology teaches, but also a refusal to

abandon the normative societal beliefs of his time regarding both religion and the progressionist spirit. This turns his story into a divided narrative that displays a tension visible in the larger culture of the time.

As both Genette and Ricoeur stress the importance of, time is inherent and essential in all types of narrative. As Ricoeur states, a plot is “primarily and irreducibly a sequence of events that unfolds over time.” (Dowling, p41). For Wells however, and his unique narrative that addresses the concept of temporality directly, time is not simply implicit or inherent in the story, but instrumental. The form and method in which he tells his story are just as significant as the actual text.

In creating his narrative and story that revolves around the character of the Time Traveler, Wells unarguably shows allegiance to the modern scientific thoughts of the turn of the century. His whole story details the discovery of the decline and extinction of the human race. Wells uses narrative time as a tool to communicate this message to his readers. The main way he employs time in this context is by arranging the narrative to refer back and forth to different temporal points in the story. There is a strong contrast between what seems to be a normal, modern day world, and the future world of the Eloi. In fact, the story does not even change in location beyond a couple feet, making this temporal change all the more dramatic. The Time Traveler takes great care to explain that the machine travels only through time, not space. The dramatically different world he experiences in the future takes place in the same space the guests are enjoying their dinner. Wells uses temporality in his narrative to shock the readers into the recognizing the newfound scientific thought that humans are merely a moment in the lifespan of the earth. These temporal based details, found consistently throughout the story, emphasize the main point Wells wants to communicate to his readers: the insignificance and decline of humans in the world. In the social and scientific context of the time, this was a

terrifying thought, looming on everyone's mind. Wells uses this to his advantage not by creating a story about an alternate world where humans never existed, but by using time as a means to both show and explain the reason for our decline and disappearance. The realization of a future reality without our presence slowly dawns on the Time Traveler, and he takes this blow surprisingly well. "It seemed to me that I had happened upon humanity upon the wane. For the first time I began to realize an odd consequence of the social effort in which we are at present engaged. And yet, come to think, it is a logical consequence enough" (Wells, 26). Instead of lamenting his species' decline, the Time Traveler adopts an impersonal, calculating persona, always deducing and thinking, not often reacting emotionally. Fast forwarding to the far future, yet keeping the mindset of a scientist in the late 19th century, Wells always aims to keep a scientific angle and analysis to the story. He recontextualizes scientific arguments of the day into the form of a narrative that aims to reinforce the point that human beings are much less significant than once thought.

However, despite the message on the surface of the story, the form his narrative takes indicates a different, opposing message. Instead of the Time Traveler's impassive acceptance of the fate of humanity, it seems that Wells himself is not as easily accepting of this verdict for the human race. His written text registers a hesitation to accept human disappearance, and an appearance of human control in areas where there should be none. On one hand, the actual story paints a harsh and uncompromising scene of a future with no humans, while on the other, the form of the book itself seems to be fighting this message by imbuing the actual narrative with an overt human control and presence, demonstrating how Wells had not quite given up the fixed cultural opinion of human presence in the world.

Determining the significance of Wells' form in *The Time Machine*, we must first examine the order, the way (usually linear) in which the plot moves forward.

Studying the way the story is framed, how the events move through time, lets us see the narrative from a different perspective. Looking at the way Wells formats his story, we glean meaning from the temporal arrangement of events, not just the events themselves. In the end, we see a narrative where the perspective and emphasis on time are situated and dominated by human presence and human influence, but a story and plot that generally indicates otherwise. This conflict between the opposite themes plays out through the entire narrative, often using temporal order as a subject to show this tension. *The Time Machine* is a novella that is full of different times, flashbacks to previous events, jumping into the future, and plenty of interruptions between. However, most of the clock/calender time in the book is scrupulously recorded. The novella is situated in an outer frame of the unnamed narrator, a guest at the weekly dinner parties. Initially the story is delivered through his voice, as he describes what the Time Traveler was up to that particular week. Then, the next week, the Time Traveler takes over the story in his own words, although still being reported back to us by the frame of the unnamed narrator. Genette refers to this “X tells that Y tells that...” structure as “narrative embedding.” (Genette, 48). The story continues in this way, with brief interjections from either the Time Traveler or the narrator. The Time Traveler describes his journeys into the future that he just returned from. At the end of his story, the narrator resumes his role, describing the aftermath of that dinner party. Continuing, we learn that the story is being told to us three years after the event, and that the Time Traveler has subsequently vanished (into time!) and has not been seen since. Despite humans disappearing from the story, they are still essential, and still assert their presence in the novel. Instead of affirming humanity’s non-importance in the scheme of the life of the world and universe, Wells does the opposite through the form his narrative takes.

Although some events may happen first in the story, they are described later in the narrative. These “discordances between the two orderings of a story and narrative” are what Genette calls “anachronies” in his book, *Narrative Discourse*. (Genette, 36). An anachrony is placed temporally below the first order of time introduced, subordinate to the time that precedes it. (Genette, 48). These anachronies generally fall into the category of analepse or prolepse. An analepse is a temporal discordance where the narrator (or character) recalls another event that occurred before the start of the story, while a prolepse is the inverse of an analepse, the advance notice of a coming event in the story. These instances are discontinuities in the time of the story, almost little time machines themselves, bringing the reader back to a previous event. In fact, the use of the analepse in a narrative is strangely similar to one primitive form of time travel, as the Time Traveler describes it in the first chapter. “But you are wrong to say we cannot move about in Time. For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instance of its occurrence: I become absentminded as you say. I jump back for a moment.” (Wells, 7). Viewing *The Time Machine* as a whole, we see that the entire story is contained in one large analepse, the narrator looking back on those dinner parties, three years previous. So, the entire novel itself is a relived memory, the same as The Time Traveler was discussing in the beginning of the story. While the title of *The Time Machine* is typically understood to refer to the machine, the narrators contained memory of the events, the book itself, or, the narrator’s memory could be referred to as a time machine. This is one of the strongest examples of how Wells reaffirms human dominance over time through the narrative and structure of his novella. By having the entire story subject to the narrator and his memory (who says it is not faulty, how do we know his account can even be trusted?) an indisputable presence hangs over all the events, even in the supposedly dark and empty last

days of the earth. "Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives - all that was over." (Wells, 66). While the events of the book indicate a bleak future, devoid of any humanity, a voice, subtly stating opinions simply by the way it presents things is always there, reinforcing a human perspective, judgement, and inhabitation in the events.

Studying the actual events in the story, the whole plot takes place over the course of two Thursday evenings. During the first, the Time Traveler discusses his concept and theory, testing out a miniature time machine for his guests. The second Thursday, the Time Traveler arrives late, disheveled, and launches into a story describing his adventures in the far future. He describes traveling hundreds of thousands of years, all the way until the death of the earth, its last day. This recounting takes up the majority of the book, 52 out of 66 pages. Yet, his traveling hundreds of thousands (maybe millions) of years into the future all takes place in the span of one Thursday afternoon. Here, we see that Wells plays with concept of time, fitting such a vast stretch of time into a normal, Thursday night. Although humans are not supposed to be present for the end of the world, or even the year 802,701, Wells has saturated it in human presence. He accomplishes this not just by sticking a character in these futuristic and alien settings, but by having him recall them in front of an audience. He turns the future, the time past our extinction, a time we are not supposed to be privilege to, into entertainment for his dinner guests. Intentional or not, Wells' story shows the beliefs at the time, the changing views, and the hesitation to give up old ideas.

We get the same message of duality when the narrator, or Time Traveler injects in his own story to comment, temporarily splicing the present time of the

narrative (or present time of the narrator) to the account they are relating. “And that reminds me! In changing my jacket I found...The Time Traveler paused, put his hand into his pocket, and silently placed two withered flowers , not unlike very large white mallows, upon the table. Then he resumed his narrative.” (Wells, 47-48). Instead of waiting for the Time Traveler to finish his story to relate this detail, the narrator interrupts the flow of time and story that was being described. As the readers are involved and transported to the place and time the Traveler is discussing, it seems that the narrator sneaks in a comment, grounding the story in a different temporal area, not letting the reader forget the outer frame, and that the story is really happening in a house, in the 19th century, all in one night. “I had got such a low estimate of her kind that I did not expect any gratitude from her. In that, however, I was wrong.” (Wells, 35). By jumping forward and hinting at how the observation was wrong, the temporal frame of the inner story is interrupted. The Time Traveler seems to include snippets of an outside, future perspective that do not belong to the immediate place of his story. Genette calls these “as we will see” moments “advance notices.” (Genette, 73). So, in describing his own past experience, which takes place in the future, he includes miniature prolepses, further glimpses into the story that will be told. Looking at these multiple temporal and literary layers, especially in a book that becomes even more complicated due to the topic of time travel, can be confusing. Overall, the intricate structure and precise way Wells lays out his novella point to an incredible control over the orders of temporality and narrative form. Simply by the organization and shape he gives his text, there is an implied meaning that points to a human domination of time, not humanity being swallowed up by it.

“The landscape was misty and vague. I was upon the hillside where this house now stands, and the shoulder rose above me, grey and dim.” (Wells, 17).

When the Time Traveler recalls his story, he describes it in the past tense. First, we may look at this tale as an analepse, something that occurred earlier in the story and is being described later. From the Time Traveler's personal perspective it would certainly seem that way. In terms of the book and linear time line, however, this event comes much later. He does all these things in the far future. Considering it from this angle, the story would become a prolepsis, an anticipatory event. Here we get an indication of how the book itself is written to be skewed towards a human perspective of temporality. The events happen according to who relates them, giving an undeniable human authority over the tales told. Instead of using an omniscient narrator, Wells chooses to have a character relate the story to us, time bound and stuck with only second hand knowledge of the events. Instead of choosing a more linear path for the story to follow, Wells writes in a way that jumps back, then forward, then far forward and back again. He does not employ a sense of temporal autonomy, letting the story go with the flow of time, but a strict control over what happens and when. As much as Wells tries to show a future without the influence of humans, a time past the scope of our own history, he steeps the entire story in human control and view, emphasizing our importance instead of diminishing it. Using Ricoeur as a sort of philosophical lens to study the form of storytelling used, we gather the same sort of conclusion.

Studying the Time Traveler's account of his story (and in a larger sense, the narrator's framing story) through Ricoeur, we see the division between what he calls cosmological time and phenomenological time. While cosmological time relates to the straightforward arrow of time, more or less determined by natural events like as the rising and setting of the sun, phenomenological time is a view of time seen through a human interpretation, time defined by the past, present, and future, and our relation to it. When both the Time Traveler and the narrator relate their stories,

we see how Wells uses a more phenomenological approach to time. Although the Time Traveler is describing a future scene, he describes it in the past tense of the story. Similarly, Wells has the narrator start from a future position and describe the past. The description of time in the book leans more toward a human, phenomenological time, time defined by how it was experienced by people. Their stories are divided into temporal categories that only make perfect logic to the people that are recounting them, again reinforcing the idea of human temporal control. This relates to the preceding paragraph in terms of the way the novella constantly jumps back and forth through time. This view of time grows confusing when simply following the narrative path of the novella, and the phenomenological ideas of past, present, and future start to merge, or at least lose their meaning. Instead of embracing this confusion and letting his readers lose their sense of relative time, Wells makes the readers reliant upon the narrators to guide them through and understand these temporal spaces using phenomenological terms and explanations, even when they do not apply. We see this in instances where the Time Traveler refers to events in the future in the past tense. This points to Wells' desire to control, categorize and describe time strictly in a phenomenological, human manner.

The narrator, referring both to the first, unnamed dinner guest and the Time Traveler as he tells his story, is an essential part of the layout of Wells' text. While the narrator sets up and gives an order to the events of the narrative, they also influence the readers to judge the story in a certain way. Looking back on their story from a future perspective enables them to make judgments and look at the situation with a different point of view, with the whole scope of the story in their minds to judge, not just one event at a time. For this reason, Genette connects anachronies to "retrospective" characters or narrators. Once the story is over and the character has learned the "unifying significance" of the events, Genette argues that they always

“hold all of the story’s thread simultaneously.” (Genette, 78). Using a narrating style that includes a retrospective view lets the teller of the story see the relationships and connections between events, influencing the way the story is conveyed. Genette describes this as “a ubiquity that is spatial, but also temporal, an ‘omnitemporality’”. (Genette, 78). This is illustrated by the way both the Time Traveler and the narrator employ “advance notices” in the middle of their texts. They can see the whole story at once, and make the connections between certain temporal spots. This is another way in which Wells implies the power of people over temporality in the novella. Where he could have used a neutral, non character narrator, he chooses to put the entire length of the text in the control of a human, giving them the privilege to oversee the entire story and its significance at once.

Genette states that the main function of analepses is to “enlighten the reader.” (Genette, 50). Looking at the unnamed narrator, his entire story (the entire text, mostly) is an analepses. Despite his role as the narrator, we instinctively know he is not the main character. His purpose is to document, to show the reader what they may not have otherwise seen. He is one of the only characters at the dinner party that seems to be sympathetic and believing of the Time Traveler. Being a retrospective, omnitemporal narrator, this unnamed fellow always sees the story’s larger meaning, and that influences the way he relates the story to us, his audience. Ricoeur has a similar outlook on narratives told in the past tense, arguing that they all are composed of a force moving forward, the linear, temporal, timeline of the story, and one moving backwards, coming from a future perspective where “the story has already been grasped as a whole.” (Dowling, 9). Although the characters and the readers are unaware, the plot is moving forward to some sort of conclusion. The moment when they meet is (arguably) the climax of the book, a full understanding achieved by the characters and the readers, at the same time, what

Ricouer calls “anagnorisis.” It is here that Ricouer stages his argument that narrative is one type of “moral experience.” (Dowling, 51). The unnamed narrator, not a truly important character in terms of the actual story, functions to enlighten the readers, and provide that anagnorisis. In fact, *The Time Machine* has two moments of anagnorisis. One belongs to the unnamed narrator, but the other comes inside the story that the Time Traveler describes. The Time Traveler comes to a startling conclusion about the future, humanoid races of the Eloi and Morlocks, and the narrator’s anagnorisis comes at the epilogue of the novella, where he considers what exactly to do with the information the Time Traveler has imparted upon him.

If the whole of the story told through the unnamed narrator functions as an analepsis, then at the end of the narrative, we end up in the same temporal moment as the beginning. The pattern of cycles repeats throughout the story, the outer temporal frame simply being the first occurrence. There seems to be a certain order to the narrative and chain of events that revolves around the idea of cycles. First, we learn from the narrator that the dinner guests meet every Thursday. When the Time Traveler sets off on his adventure, he goes and returns all in the span of a single Thursday afternoon. His adventure spans millions of years, yet he comes back to arrive at the same temporal moment he left. Wells himself, in the article “The Cyclic Delusion” was eager to point out the uniquely human outlook that always manages to see events in terms of cycles. “Nothing is more deeply impressed upon the human mind than the persuasion of a well-nigh universal cyclic quality in things, of an inevitable disposition to recur in the long run to a former phase.” (Wells, 147). Wells believes that human minds innately find the cyclic quality in events. We would assume from the scientific tone his plot adopts, that he would avoid this approach in writing a story. Yet, despite this belief, he purposely crafts his narrative around the idea of the cycle, or loop of time travel. The Time Traveler journeys through time to

the far future. He eventually ventures past the point where anything human like exists at all, to the last, dying days of the Earth. In fact, by the time he reaches this far into the future, the end of the world rather resembles the beginning. In this sense he has completed another cycle, restarted the cycle of time in his travels. Yet, he completes his own cycle within his own narrative by traveling back to his present time. In writing his narrative in frames of continuous cycles, Wells mentally posits the story and temporal order in a way that relates exactly to the way humans think, despite attempting to dismiss this view in his academic paper. The occurrence and repetitive nature of cycles within the text show again how Wells acts out his story through a more phenomenological, human based concept of time. In this phenomenological concept of time, significance is found in relation to patterns rather than an arising organically.

Throughout the text of *The Time Machine*, both the narrator and the Time Traveler are quite precise and exact about the dates and times of certain events (with the exception of the far future, in which there are no clocks or calendars). We know exactly when the guests meet for dinner, every Thursday at seven pm. We know exactly how long it takes the Time Traveler to recount his story to the guests (four hours) and the Time Traveler includes the time of when he left, and returned on his time machine that day. Even when the Time Traveler takes his journey, his machine counts off the exact amount of years that pass. The significance of including these details, again, points to a human understanding of time and a control over the temporal aspects of the novella. There is a strict control and adherence to this human understanding of time, even bringing calendrical units it to the year 802,701, where it does not make sense in the context of the much changed world. In fact, there is only one obvious example an atemporal anachrony, an instance of unaccounted time, in the entire novella.

Genette describes “atemporal anachronies” as unplaceable events in a narrative. To lose their temporality, they must not simply disconnect with any other event in the plot, but to the “atemporal commentarial discourse that accompanies them.” In his opinion, atemporal anachronies allow the narrative to prove its detachment and independence from any chronology. (Genette, 81). In the case of *The Time Machine*, however, the narrative proves its independence from a linear and straightforward chronology by asserting the power to change the order of events. All of the time in the narrative is well catalogued, even in the future, the Time Traveler counts his stay by his only available time reference, the number of days he has stayed. All these events are firmly placed in time, except for once instance at the very end of the story. At the epilogue, when the narrator returns to his own present period and reveals that it has been three years since that Thursday night, he shares that the Time Traveler never returned from his second voyage, he has simply disappeared into time. Without the Time Traveler himself there to explain his story, we are all left wondering where and to what time period he went. The narrator himself wonders if the Time Traveler is in the prehistoric ages, voyaging even further into the future, or even in the past of his own life, leaving open ended questions on the confusing topic of temporality . It is shortly after this that the second anagnorsis comes into play, leaving the readers with the lingering thoughts of humanity’s future.

This atemporal anachrony that occurs at the very end of the narrative sums up the tension between Wells’ two different views without giving a concrete answer to the conflict. The narrator reveals that the Time Traveler has taken another journey into time, and has never been seen again, which leaves two ways to look at this ambiguous ending. First, we can say that finally time indeed has swallowed up a person, that there is a section of time and a story line the narrator cannot penetrate and will forever remain a mystery, proving that in the end, humanity will disappear in

the wide scope of time, and ultimately be forgotten. This interpretation of the novella's ending would agree with the pessimistic attitudes that the knowledge of geology brought forth. Judging by the narrator's parting words however, there is an optimism that would indicate otherwise. "To me the future is still blank and blank - is a vast ignorance, lit at a few causal places by the memory of [the Time Traveler's] story...even when the mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man." (Wells, 71). Instead of expressing doubt (as he should, judging by the Time Traveler's story) about the future, the narrator seems confident that in some way, humans will live on forever, even if only through their "gratitude and tenderness." These last words ultimately reflect the positive, forward looking progressionist attitude that was also present at the turn of the 20th century, even if what he narrator says is ambiguous. By not giving the Time Traveler a concrete place in time, or even a definite ending, it could certainly be implied that the Traveler is off exploring different times, giving humans, again, a presence throughout the entire history of the world. While Wells describes the eventual extinction of humans, and a dim outlook for the future in general, it seems that his whole story revolves around the Time Traveler, a man determined to invade and observe all the times in the world where humans do not belong. Although he agrees with theories such as evolution and the decline of man on the surface of the narrative, it appears that he hesitates in actually forsaking the human race altogether. As long as the Time Traveler has an indefinite ending, he could be anywhere, and in any time, living on. Rather, it seems more appropriate to look at this conclusion as a summary of the issue Wells has been wavering on throughout the entire novella. This one instance encapsulates the ambiguous nature of the book, Wells' thoughts, and more importantly, the attitude of the general public at the turn of the century. Wells' struggle in the book reflects the larger cultural change in

perception that was going on, the attempt to reconcile the two feelings of scientific pessimism and optimistic progression, as well as the challenge in changing our species centric view of the world. Attempting to embrace the scientific thoughts of the study of geology, naturalism and the eventual disappearance of the human race, Wells cannot help but send his character off on a journey implies the opposite. He writes him off into unknown time, possibly ensuring that humanity lives on in whatever era he explores, but simultaneously gives a view that can be seen as time conquering humanity. In Wells' acceptance of scientific ideas, we also see his hesitation to give up engrained societal and cultural beliefs. Out of this internal argument, a story emerges that encompasses both views, displaying a tension that existing not only in his narrative, but the real world as well.

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