

Glimpse to the Future: Depiction of Degeneration and Victorian Decadence in *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells

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Abstract

HG Wells' *The Time Machine* is a cult classic; one of the pioneers of science fiction masterpieces navigating us through the prevailing decadence along with a glaring social inequality mounted by capitalism witnessing degeneration in the late 19th Century. These were not just burning thoughts critiquing Victorian era in relation to the aspect of evolution but also putting forth a blueprint of the futuristic world with some mind blowing scientific theories & discoveries opening new vistas of a new social order . *The Time Machine* is a tale told by an eccentric traveler with his sheer *chutzpah* showcasing his 'Promethean' *chase* of humankind to defy the boundaries & go beyond. If the mortal Earth is plagued by a dialectical divide of two extremes ; he is livid to see this divide in the savagery of *Morlocks* & in the obtuseness of *Eloi* in the realms of *extraterrestrial* thousands year ahead in future degrading even further making us question if 'Utopia' will just remain a dream.

The Novella captures the extraordinarily supernatural voyage of *The Time Traveler* in a Frame Narrative fast forwarding into the year *Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred One* where he has landed fairly disillusioned & disheartened defying gravity & time as the fourth dimension putting his guest in absolute disbelief & shock. The guests who are all the 'elites' of his contemporary society at first refuse to let go of their Victorian prudishness to this bizarre tale of chaos which was aligning perfectly to the chaos that their present society had laid bare to them in the rude awakening of 'change' that was hard for them to accede to the mind boggling discoveries especially in the fields of medicine, metal & space storming upheaval that was beyond them. The degenerated & deprived *Morlocks* a modern day *mutants* mimic their own Victorian 'cousins' who

at the mercy of *Big Brother* in the State stood even further dehumanized owing to the burgeoning Capitalism rendering them even more powerless & wretched to dwell in the dungeons of apathy, distress & death. The final scene falls into the emptiness of awe & intrigue as the time traveler is gone *in aeternum* leaving us in the perpetual suspense of horror & hope. *Will he ever come back?*

It is of our Modern Day *Prometheus* through his chase & rebelliousness along with his mortal limitations that makes this classic tale so relevant today & even more when humanity in the present times is pitted against science in a gargantuan dilemma like never before with the tsunami of artificial intelligence & robots taking over the planet Earth replacing humans. The Paper looks at the Social Degeneration Theory of Edwin Ray Lankester (1847-1929) whose controversial yet thought provoking ideas on how the ever mutating & dwindling biological construct of humans had its collateral on the social, cultural & moral decline. Wells being his former student & later a friend had the privilege of reading the great biologist's concerns through the exchange of letters which impacted his writings great deal along with *The Time Machine*.

Furthermore, Benedict Augustin Morel's (1809-1873) Theory in particular of Savagery further elaborates on the aspects of human decadence on how energy dissipates & degrades over time. He posits primitives regressed from their civilized state thereby distorting into a certain social class especially of a lower stratum who were predisposed to various neurological & mental manifestations due to a deviant heredity resulting in their social degradation. Theory propounds that certain species including humans can deteriorate over time devolving from a complex to a simpler form suggesting that civilizations could decline due to biological changes within population. Therefore, humanity has evolved but carried regression to beastliness and savagery. Along with these train of thoughts from biology to psychiatry who drew a lot from Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection the Paper intends to contextualize

Keywords – HG Wells, The Time Traveler, Time travel, Dystopia, Degeneration theory, sci fi, future, hope

1. Introduction

The term ‘Decadence’ is often associated with the works of French writers such as Charles Baudelaire, Joris-Karl Huysmans, and Stéphane Mallarmé, with a profound influence on British writers especially in the latter half of the 19th century. In literature it could be defined as a sense of aesthetic detachment from moral or social concerns, a fascination with beauty, sensuality, and decay, and an exploration of human degradation. In Britain, this was seen in the works of authors such as Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater, and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

Victorian society which once stood for the grandeur of decorum, class & a definitive social order of a welfare regime under the benevolent monarchy with a strong belief in the dignity of labor & social morals was slowly waking up to a new social order of chaos & callousness by the late 19th century. This was the tsunami of industrialization, urbanization, and the evolution of scientific though leading to an increasingly visible inequality between social classes, coupled with a growing sense of existential anxiety about humanity's place in the universe giving rise to a sense of disillusionment with the notion of progress.

This so called growth of flying high into the lap of technology & mad paced exploration was looked at with skepticism & awe by some visionaries who could foresee the impending doom focusing instead on the other/destructive side of this obsession. Their pessimism transcended in their writings & art as they witnessed this degeneration, moral decay, and the decline first hand. Sir E. Ray Lankester in a letter to his former student & friend H.G .Wells on the 5th of January 1901 shared this concern & skepticism. The lines are so prophetic it can give goosebumps to anyone who reads it...

“I fear that a great catastrophe must come up in England—an utter defeat and breakup—before the rotten crusts of conceit, imbecility, and self-indulgence which dominate us, will be got rid of, and the rottenness may have spread too far below the crust before that happens.” (Wells, 1998, p. 371)

Wells was no stranger to this bleak outlook on mankind's future. In *The time machine*: An invention, published six years earlier, he had imagined the disintegration of so called civilized human life on the verge of Decadence , the dissolution of humanity into two distinct species—the childish yet beautiful Eloi, and the powerful but bestial Morlocks—and the end of all life on Earth with the burning out of the Sun.

The Time Machine(1895) by H.G. Wells is a post-apocalyptic legendary sci-fi masterpiece that has inspired millions of readers & writers across & is still such a revered classic that continues to marvel us all even today! Victorian era especially the later last decade of it was one 'Helluva' time for some *Avant Garde* inventions, to expeditions to Cutting Edge Genre in literature. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to Robert Louis Stevenson's *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the novels threw light on the 'unexplored' intricacies of the human minds, especially where the lines were drawn between the primitive beast and civilized human. *The Time Machine* explores these wide arrays of very pertinent themes that needs our grave concerns from dystopia to the untamed technology leading to a new social order of humans with a 'specialized 'skill' rendering him dependent & making him lose 'core' his individualism. thereby producing a system of money & power where man was a mere 'product' in this complex power structure shaping/distorting a questionable future with a morbidly degrading society whose moral compass is absolutely gone in for a toss.

This was a period marked by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and an increased divide between the working and upper classes. Social Degeneration Theory which is mainly related to the pseudoscience and medicine posits that the complex interaction between hereditary factors and environmental influences could lead to the deterioration of human capabilities. While Morel's work focused on Degeneration as a result of hereditary factors like sexually transmitted diseases & lifestyles related issues like addictions to social conditions Lankester widened the horizon to include environmental and social conditions as main factors of societal and biological decay.

Lankester was an avid enthusiast & advocate of Social Darwinism which was acclaimed & gained lot of weight & acceptance. He drew a lot especially the Theory of Natural Selection to ‘*post - mortem*’ the prevailing human society which was decadence personified. He opined that that as society became even more complexly stratified, the working classes would further render poorer from pathetic living conditions; pushing them beyond the boundaries into a hereditary decline of mental & physical contract. The upper class on the other hand being absolutely ignorant of their fellow citizens’ grim poverty and degradation will strangely get even farther from creating a gap seemingly impossible to bridge. We in the 21st century are still grappling with the same old poverty same old aristocracy & same old moral social decay when on one hand we are exploring Mars for life beyond Earth along with untamed poverty crimes & covid on other.

This is a story of & from a maverick scientist along with his epic invention of a miniature clock sized device made from ivory & crystal taking us through the future & leaving us along with some big questions about future along with present . The guests who get to witness this extraordinary tale are the elites from a from a Provincial Mayor to the Editor of an illustrated newspaper along with many other ‘hotshots’ from their respective fields from a Doctor to a Psychologist invited by *The Time Traveler* over a couple of dinners where he showcases his invention, which lands him into a dysfunctional future thousands’ year ahead into a dystopia. He is flabbergasted upon landing here unable to see which society is more decadent the one he has escaped from or the one he has just propelled himself int society albeit a more ‘distorted’. There were two species of mankind evolved in this future world – the carnivore *Morlocks* and the vegan *Eloi* who according to the *Time Traveler* are the descendant humanoids representing a diligent working class of the underworlds & a benevolent upper class of aristocrats respectively.

The guests wish to obliterate this desolate future laid bare by The Time Traveler; final acceptance comes through the shared hope that Humanity will live through any extreme of dystopia surviving through any ordeal traveling even to the speed of life just like our hero. Expeditions must go on These are merely the exaggerations of the society in the Victorian era. According to Yevgeny Zamyatin –

the ... tribes of [M]orlocks and [E]loi are, of course, the two warring classes of the modern city, extrapolated, with their typical characteristics heightened to the point of the grotesque (189)

Yevgeny Zamyatin cemented the link between the creatures of the year *Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred One* & the Victorians. The old constructions of the Victorian England as has been upside down and workers were summarily abused under the aristocracy exactly in the similar manner were these ‘fatted cattle’ in Eloi whom the ant like Morlocks preserved & preyed upon later to devoured them (Wells, 2009).

When *Time Traveler* comes back all his guests debunk his discovery, no matter how much evidence he gave to corroborate the fact. This Paper not only intends to explore the transformation his guests undergo by the end after being witness to this extraordinary saga but also connecting through the aspects of degeneration with respect to the current society of Victorian England that was transforming along with its burgeoning economy like never before in the aftermath of wars ,expeditions all around & beyond.

The effects of decision of not having belief has been a criticism against the route taken by the science and society. If it is decided consciously to avoid believing in this machine, they also choose to live in the old tracks of inequality. The novel symbolizes as the warning of how our own future will be if we keep ignoring these ‘signs’ & denying them due to our own fear and comfort. The essential focus of *The Time Machine* on the degeneration of civilizations and social difference has been explored in various scholarly articles (Lee, 2010; Cantor & Hufnagel, 2006).

The significance of the Technique Frame Narrative is the subject of research along with its importance related to the themes of novel. Existing research has the focus on non-significance and irony of characters presented through this. The dinner had an illustrious line up of people invited and all of them were named after their professions like The Medical Man, The Editor, and The Very Young Man. This way they show their roles in society instead of their own inner persona.

Critics like Nicholas Ruddick and Bernard Bergonzi hence argued that party doesn't get it and cannot accept the potential of time travel. It is interesting to observe how through the Framed Narrative where the time traveler was introduced and he exits to give readers a sense of familiarity to their everyday feeling that can stand in juxtaposition to the unknown & extraordinary tale which has yet to reach them.

2. Literature Review

Randell (2015) focusses on three different movie adaptations of *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells –a feature film *The Time Machine* (1960) by George Pal, a telefilm *The Time Machine* (1978) by Henning Schellerup, and Hollywood flick *The Time Machine* (2002) by Simon Wells. The source text has some elements considered important for a film to engage well if it might be considered as an adaptation for *The Time Machine*. Proper fidelity to the source text need not be an effective adaptation. But they should respect the source text, especially a well-known classic *The Time Machine*. Each adaptation of *The Time Machine* is a product of history. To be effective, each adaptation must upgrade the narrative's tautness and characters etched out clear cut to engage themselves & empathize & be in sync with the societal anxiety that was synonymous with the audience during its production. Hence Each adaptation must respect the authenticity of the principle source text and prior adaptations given due credit wherever required.

Rosenberg (2018) discusses the impact of deep time on literary genres. This study considered a case study of *The Time Machine* (1895) to find out how the works of H.G. Wells repurposes the conventions of romance as a genre to narrate wider temporal scales exceeding the representation of a Realist novel. The overarching suggestion of the essay is that stretching narratives to the *longue durée* of the geographic epoch which requires moving away from Realism & hence opening new possibilities for Epic, Melodrama, and Romance. This study understands the formal grandeur of literary themes which can be mobilized smartly and affords critical insight to analyze the concept of "Anthropocene" whose discursive and narrative patterns focus on modernity of deep time.

A lot of critics have found that a good deal of non-human characters in British late-Victorian sci-fi novels reflect cultural fear and social alienation of mental, physical, and moral degeneration. However, through the concept of Posthumanism in the 20th and 21st centuries to debunk the concept, Jaroenvong (2020) in his paper emphasizes on this importance of inhuman ‘otherness’ and references through three sci-fi novels – Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871), H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) providing speculative views of what humans are going to be in future. It shows the assemblage of non-human others like machines and animals, manmade ambiguous & distorted identity which disfigures a near perfect picture of man and destabilizes the anthropometric belief of hegemony as well as unnatural and natural dualism. Though *The Coming Race* presents humanoids with mechanical wings and electricity under the skin as a creature like cyborg, the Human-animal body shows how amalgamation of human and animal in “*The Time Machine*” ends human aspect and form. In the early 20th century, extreme biotechnology & engineering marvel in *Brave New World* results in artificial body of cloned humans whose desires & self are insanely manipulated and built by the state. Rather through proper thematic transition of “Anti-Anglocentrism and Degeneration” this thesis argues that it is possible to find the Posthuman body in the late 19th century British sci-fi that gets its clearer depiction in the beginning of early 20th century marking the pinnacle of scientific growth & technology widening its wild periphery.

2.1.Research Gap

When The Time Traveler enters the future, he is shocked at the lack of houses as machine didn't move in time. He had after all arrived from one of the biggest cities of the in the world of 19th century London which was (Wells, 25). Later, he announces,

It seemed to me I had happened upon humanity upon the wane. The ruddy sunset set me thinking of the sunset of mankind. For the first time I began to realize an odd consequence of the social effort in which we are presently engaged” (Wells, 2009).

This reveals the voices & concerns of Victorian society and their social inequality in the wake of degeneration, which all start in a Frame Narrative. The world of future is supposed to have

‘evolved’ as per the plan but when *The Traveler* is stupid beyond words to look at the menacing *Morlocks* & ethereal *Eloi* he observes humanity has further degenerated beyond imagination.

In the light of all this the current paper looks at society through the lenses of Two Social Degeneration Theories to understand this complex, curious & callous dynamics where humans will have no choice but to further degrade into Primitiveness & Deviance of mind due to Biology. To see through the current social order under the ‘lens’ in order to decode the Dystopia of *Morlocks* & *Eloi* in “The Time Machine” of H.G. Wells as to how the futuristic social order of *Morlocks* & *Eloi* are a warning ‘signs’ & symbols of our old demons of savagely stratified & decadent society which will eventually bay for each other’s blood & will feed on the fatted rich cows of *Eloi* if something radical is really not thought of....**Think** is if we must.

The Time Machine of H.G. Wells is not just a book but a cautionary tale in the wake of some eye opening ‘advancements’ in technology yet making us look back to connect the dots....

Research Objectives

- To explore the literary theme of Decadence through the Social Theories of Degeneration & madness of untamed technology as revealed by The Time Traveler in *The Time Machine*
- To help humanity look back in anguish if not in anger to not see *Morlocks* & *Eloi* here anytime soon through H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine*
- To give due regard to Nature & Environment to make it sustainable as the near future is desolate & unsustainable.

3. Research Methodology

To fulfil the objectives discussed above, this study is majorly based on some secondary data collected through various literary studies published across all peer-reviewed journals. Study is also based on all the relevant sources in relation to H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* that depict & explore the concept of Degeneration with respect to Primitivism; to the mortal limitations vis a vis untamed science & equally untamed social fabric of society so far in a moral & ethical decline as observed by the *Time Traveler* in context of the Victorian Decadence.

4. Data Analysis

4.1.Literary Theme of Degeneration of Society revealed by The Time Traveler in *The Time Machine*

The Time Machine focusses on degeneration of humanity along with many other relevant themes with countless research & adaptations with a spotlight on great social divide which studies through “*The War of the Worlds and Island of Dr. Morrow*”, “*Reading Meat in H. G Wells*” by Michael Lee Parrish, ‘*The Beastly Journeys*’ of Tim Youngs in particular of ‘Morlocks Martians & the Beast-People’, and finally of the two major social thinkers in Lankester’s *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* and Morels’ Theory of Degeneration.

Lankester had the belief that societies that were not able to evolve along with evolution further ‘regressed’ into primitives. Society the social fabric of which itself is an outcome of a very complex nuance of labyrinthian intricacies will inevitably fall through the cycle of moral & social degeneration decay. This fall will manifest through various inadequacies from mental social to emotional triggers varying from extremes of civilizational advancements to environmental destruction & its repercussion on mind to extreme obsession to depend on machines to culture moral void.

In this context, Lankester explores how some conditions become the cause of degeneration of humans in his work *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism*

"Any new set of conditions occurring to an animal which render its food and safety very easily attained, seem to lead as a rule to Degeneration." (Lankester, 1880)

He further explores the effects of such degeneration as –

“We are as a race more fortunate than our ruined cousins—the degenerate Ascidians. For us it is possible to ascertain what will conduce to our higher development, what will favor our degeneration.” (Lankester, 1880).

Morel had propounded the exact same train of thought that Lankester posits except that he further goes into the genetics of a man on how his mental moral being will also impact him differently owing to his social conditions of his surroundings his habits to fathom the journey from savage to saint or vice versa along with physical environment being a major factor to ‘shape’ him up.

According to Bénédict Morel’s Theory of Degeneration, human population declines by its hereditary change of traits. According to him,

“When under any kind of noxious influence an organism becomes debilitated, its successors will not resemble the healthy, normal type of the species... but will form a new sub-species... these being morbid deviations from the normal form—gaps in development, malformations and infirmities.” (Morel, 1857)

The great divide between *the Eloi* and *Morlocks* personify the great divide which the Capitalist Economy had stormed itself into the contemporary Victorian society. Wells was extremely perceptive of the ruthless rave of Industrial Revolution which had already widened the gap between Haves & Have Nots. The nonchalant & nonsensical *Eloi* on one extreme; the savage & mean *Morlocks* on other mirror the anxieties & angst of the current society where the so called Aristocrats & elites have totally cut off from the laborers’ wretchedness that will eventually leading to the ‘violent’ upsurge of the Revolution when Religion will no longer remain the opium anymore.

Wells also explores the idea of Evolutionary Regression, as opposed to Progress very deftly . He shows how *Eloi* despite having every comfort & near perfect living is pathetically fragile & that any moment any time a *Morlock* will devour him hence devolving him into a pitiable piece almost at the mercy of time. This Regressive Evolution is a perfect example to analyses the Victorian notion of Social Darwinism, which was often used to justify inequality and imperialism. The novel definitively implores that without the Struggle for survival, civilizations will decay stagnate & eventually fall.

Lankester postulates that degeneration or regression of mankind takes place when societies adapt to environment when survival doesn't need much effort, causing the loss of complexity in the long term. His Regression Theory is rooted in 1880 in his work titled *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism*

On the ease of survival, he quotes,

“When an animal or group of animals is relieved from the necessity of effort to maintain itself in the struggle for existence, it may undergo a process of simplification or degeneration. The organism is no longer forced to evolve, and thus it may retrogress.”
(Lankester, 1880).

The Victorian era was the era of possibilities and path breaking discoveries, the Industrial Revolution being at its pinnacle , eye opening inventions in the field of biology, metallurgy & physics in particular ‘space’ with the first ever proposal of *space elevator* by *Konstantin Tsiolkovsky* exactly in the same year (1895) when The Time Machine reached its audience, at home front with a pathbreaking essay of *William Lietch's A Journey Through Space* (1861) creating ripples of obsession for the subject among scholars; foundations of which were already laid by the great inventions of *Galileo Galilei*, *Sir Isaac Newton* to name a few in the field. These discoveries were a proof of ever striving scientific temper pursued by human amidst all the wars & impending doom of deaths & diseases challenging human endurance from time to time.

The Time Traveler is a ‘visionary’ who was far ahead of his times . He was not just superior to his fellow elites in terms of his mental strength but also never confirmed to the so- called prevailing social order existing in his own times. According to the guests, *the Time Traveler* didn’t like his servants to wait at dinner (Wells, 2009). He was far beyond the scourge of social hierarchies which ails the society even today.

He realizes that existing society must change radically if they wish to not end up in the dungeons of malicious *Morlocks* & idiotic *Eloi* of that awful future that he has just returned from disillusioned & disheartened & with a lot mental baggage.

The guests; from a Provincial Mayor to the Editor of an illustrated newspaper along with many other ‘hotshots’ from their respective fields from a Doctor to a Psychologist who initially have their own reservations to un/see this fantastic tale *that The Time Traveler* lays in front of them to them each time he would ‘pop up’ almost bruised & disheveled a spark in his eyes nonetheless; considered their Victorian society as ideal as they all came from the upper-middle to elites far disconnected from the angst & anger of *Morlockian* poor who were inching closer. Too ignorant to accept their dark realities of their near ‘perfect’ society; too complacent & too rigid to believe the supernatural tale of horror & disbelief of *the Time Traveler* . The minds will have to open first to come out of their comfort zone to ‘accept’ the current societal divide before any constructive ideas to work through.

Degeneration unlocked by the great Darwin’s Theory of Evolution, according to which life is supposed to adapt to nearby environment, moving ahead, into new species and changing from old to new shapes are best for changing environments.

According to the theory of degeneration, life would fall back and regress to more primitive and previous shapes rather than moving to something more suitable and better. According to the scientists in Victorian society, they had proof of degeneration. A contemporary scientist, Lankester

(1880) had traced the degenerating evolution of mollusk of some kind. Lee (2010) argued that evolution is regarded well as a reversible phenomenon also supported by degeneration theory. It means that mankind has evolved and carried the regression with them to savagery and beastliness. As man is the part of society, the same theory is applicable to the foundation of society, but it is not applied until humanity is organized in the form of society that is civilized. Hence, Degeneration Theory refers that society would get back to its primitive stage of primal needs and chaos if mankind is degenerated which was different from Victorian standards where the idolatry of respectability was the answer to natural waywardness. When the *Time Traveler* visits this frightening Future, he is shocked beyond belief to see lack of houses, as if machines didn't move in time. He being a 'true blue' Londoner, which was one of the biggest cities in the world back then *The Time Traveler* says:

“It seemed to me I had happened upon humanity upon the wane. The ruddy sunset set me thinking of the sunset of mankind. For the first time I began to realize an odd consequence of the social effort in which we are presently engaged.”

It had the resonance of his own Victorian society & their plight of social differences of the decadent world, the degeneration as a theme which starts in a Framed Narrative so we can see that needs to be unseen if possible. Initially his dream of the future was supposed to be 'evolved' as per the plan instead the *Time Traveler* realizes that humanity is degraded even further into this grotesque reality/illusion? That needs our attention & action both if Humanity is to survive & not degrade into the *zombie* like Morlocks of the dark.

While encountering the cannibalistic Morlocks:

“I grieved to think how brief the dream of the human intellect had been. It had committed suicide. It had set itself steadfastly towards comfort and ease, a balanced society with security and permanency as its watchword, it had attained its hopes – to come to this at last.” (Wells, 2009)

By getting rid of all the obstacles and making it near 'perfect' for themselves *Eloi* have created one extreme of a world in a faraway corner far from the dungeons & darkness of 'Half Lemurs' the *Vermins*. they are too lazy & complacent, perfectly adapted to the world of their own which

doesn't need any exertion -mental & physical thereby rendering them dangerously vulnerable hence only to be devoured by the menacing Morlocks upon getting caught when darkness looms.

“Degeneration is the necessary accompaniment of parasitism or of any condition of life in which energy is dispensed with and complexity of structure is not maintained.” (Lankester, 1880).

By being ignorant of all the awful conditions and the abject living conditions of their own ‘cousins’ in another extreme just like the *time traveler’s* guests; these tiny *humanoids* in doing so have ended up creating their own dystopia of ‘Parasitism’, devoid of any mental stimulation. It appears as a near perfect utopia at the first glance but that apparent balance flips into primitiveness and degeneration subsequently upon digging a little deeper. Victorian Decadence of two extremes is in fact the *Eloi & Morlocks* personified if looked deeper.

4.2. Victorian Decadence in H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine*

Decadence refers to a state of downfall or decline of something from Moral to Culture due to an excessive indulgence. It is a behavior showing an obsession for money, pleasure, and self-indulgence or decay or fall of moral values or ethics in the society (Chilima, 2019). At the same time, moral decadence is a spectacle of an individual’s character or people’s group. Victorian society was on the verge of both Moral as well as the Material where society is divided into- the super elites, who comprised mainly the Royalty & Aristocrats; the ‘Bourgeois’ middle & Poor. These social disparities are further exasperated by the Capitalism which was spreading its tentacles reckoning modernity by late 19th Century. As an economic system, Capitalism is all about making profits via free market & ruthless privatization. The Capitalisms focused only on the welfare of one; who owned the means of production reducing labor class into a petty puppet at the mercy of sometime Oligarchs to Aristocrats or a business Owner making powerful even more by wealth exponentially multiplied & poor further more ‘wretched’ of the earth, beast of burden; a struggle personified. *The Time Machine* hence shows this perennial struggle of ‘Haves’ in all the affluent people versus the ‘Have Nots’ in working class to wretched poor who are doubly disintegrated;

first at the work space secondly in their lives mostly at the mercy of market. The irony lies when the time traveler finds to his utter dismay & disillusionment that even thousands year later the condition is even more distorted & bizarrely absurd .

The lead character of Wells' *The Time Machine* tells the audience that the only difference between Space and Time is that our Consciousness goes with it. His justification presumes correspondence between temporal and cultural changes. He makes his point out of beastly and racial comparisons (Youngs, 2013). Moving about time, he suggests,

“For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly, I go back to the instant of its occurrence. I become absent-minded, as you say. I jump back for a moment. Of course, we have no means of staying back for any length of Time, any more than a savage or an animal has of staying six feet above the ground. But a civilized man is better off than a savage in this respect. He can go up against gravitation in a balloon, and why should he not hope that ultimately, he may be able to stop or accelerate his drift along the Time-Dimension, or even turnabout and travel the other way?” (Youngs, 2013, p.109)

The following statement by the Traveler introspects the confidently held conception that there is a difference between the “savages” and the “civilized” in both cultural and physical manner. Wells uses the narrative which shows affinities between the problems of relativity and distinction. Elias (1993) assigns to this standpoint of the observer who can perceive –

“The symbolic character of the four dimensions as means of orientation for human beings ... who are capable of synthesis and so are in a position to have present at the same time in their imagination what takes place successively and so never exists simultaneously” (Elias, 1993, p.7).

This concept of synthesis also remedies false differentiation between the social and the natural. He affirms that -

“Time, which on the preceding step was recognizable only as a dimension of nature, becomes recognizable, now that society is included in the field of view as a subject of

knowledge, as a human-made symbol and, moreover, a symbol with high object-adequacy” (Elias, 1993, p.8).

The text structure shows Victorian decadence through the setting and the characters. It represents social structure in the Victorian era, especially during the Industrial Revolution.

The Time Machine has two settings –

1. London (in the timeline where most part of the story takes place) &
2. England of the future in the year of *Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred One*.

H.G. Wells lived in London, England who pays tribute to his beloved city with significant structure of the story as inspired by the social events around him which he experienced firsthand.

The classic book shows how the English upper class enjoyed all the luxuries, lived in far better conditions but degrading into a moral decadence thereby becoming inferior and weak creatures just like Eloi, who were not just unproductive & disinterested but also with a dangerous level of ‘childlike’ stupidity with questions like- ‘if *the Time Traveler* has come from the sun along with a thunderstorm!’ upon meeting him the first time (Wells, 2009)

However, this decadence was not dismissing the science completely for the thoughts of mankind and art, instead it was the movement which hoped to discover and empower the “Enlightenment” for advancing the feeling and human understanding (Winks & Neuberger, 2005). Decadence and Science have never been exclusive mutually and former was built upon the latter actually in some of its different forms. One must consider that Wells was writing on both movements when it could bring both together as a completely new idea. Similarly, the science is not completely practical in Wells’ science fiction. Usually, it is downplayed to the point of working as a device to preserve the message of the story (Malmgren, 1991). A message is more aligned with decadent principles in this case.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

H. G. Wells raises several hard-hitting questions through his apocalyptic science fiction from its readers concerning evolution, social behavior, tameless technology which was spreading its medusa like vis a vis human with their mortal limitations & consequences. *The Time Machine* sets up the ground in the backdrop of a decadent enlightenment, menacing industrialization to social Darwinism of the late 19th century giving rise to the extreme division between laborer and capitalist while setting the trademarks of a science-fiction genre. When viewed from the vantage point of a visionary as the author himself who could foresee this entire complex science of timeline, social differences, and genre itself, the uniqueness of science-fiction arises as a literary strength. *The Time Machine* acts as a record of history and mirror of its time while giving readers the glimpse of this distant & a desolate future called dystopia. Most importantly it intrigues the readers towards a grotesque 'Frankensteinian' imaging of how industrialization, the social class difference, corrupted humanity almost on the verge of a decadence in relation to the amazonian proportion of scientific chase; where it all ends.

Wells' *Morlocks* & *Eloi* are a grim reminder that future is just our mirror of the present whether to see ourselves as humans or mutants. Both extremes of a cannibalistic deviants in *Morlocks* to dimwit *Eloi* is a resultant outcome of a society & civilization in immediate need of taking a pause & see through if we as race are evolving at all.

After delving deeper into the social construct of human via the biology of Degeneration of Sir Lankester & Monsieur Morel, we ought to not keep a blind eye & keep going 'back' to seek some answers to unravel & undo the mystery called humans.

Wells' humanity is surely fated to crumble into an oblivion as it is based on an innate human nature to be corrupt, diabolical & power hungry. There is an emergent need to do some overhauling on our part urgently before we traverse into the realms of humanoids leaving humans 'behind'. Humanity still would split into such sub-human species if class extremes is abolished if poverty is

abolished is something we can reserve our thoughts as of now . Like miles to go before we ascent/descent into the dystopia of doom, dependence & finally the decadence ; there is a lot of homework to do on our part by being in sync with Nature to nurture our space called Earth before we all are spaced out.

One thing remains certain though is mankind will come back stronger on every rebound. We shall strive to pay heed to Nature to work in tandem not to disrupt this beautiful balance & harmony that Nature has blessed us with. Machines ought not to lead man to become his puppet; has to be the other way around. All in all, it is the man who being much flawed as he is has his future in his hands & in mind which is as unfathomable as the universe ; will have to choose either to keep 'devolving' into either *Eloi* of the light with no 'light' or the *Morlock* of the dark with no dignity or to become the *Na'vi* of his *Pandora* to soar high into the immortality of wisdom & virtue . Choice is all his.

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