

ENGLISH B, CATEGORY 3

Title: Portrayal of the Good and the Evil in The Time Machine

Research Question:

“How does H.G. Wells portray the concepts of good and evil through the depiction of the Eloi and Morlocks in The Time Machine?”

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1.Introduction

The Time Machine by H.G. Wells is a novel that extends way beyond its time. At first look it might seem like a science fiction novel, but it is far beyond that. This novel tells a story of the future of a fallen community where humans have devolved instead of evolving. By doing so, unlike the other futuristic novels; creating a new perspective for many new ones. Using this dystopic feature, H.G. Wells creates two versions of humanity, the Eloi and the Morlocks. By using these species, he talks about many problems about his time and beyond, such as: social classes, prejudices, the morality of humanity, and the new theory that started to become popular in his time: evolution.

Set in a future time, the year 802,701; tells the story of his experiences during his journey. Time traveller explains how the future is not how he expected to be the downfall of humanity with the new species emerging from the human race; Eloi and Morlocks.

As the time spent in the 802,701 extends, the time traveller notices these newly discovered species have different senses of living and survival. This distinction between Eloi and Morlocks draws the lines of good and evil for the reader. Wells creates this conflict between Eloi and Morlocks using the distinction in their physical appearance, behaviours, technology advancement, and development levels. These various distinctions lead answers to the question “How does H.G. Wells portray the concepts of good and evil through the depiction of the Eloi and Morlocks in The Time Machine?”, in addition to measuring the effect of the social critique and changing morals with the present dilemma happening. Moreover, because the terms good and evil differ from person to person, Wells uses different methods to measure the true meaning of these, such as; imageries, metaphors, ironies, and symbolisms. These will be analysed and connected with the intentions of the novel. This

analysis will focus on how these language techniques are used for descriptions, class divisions and challenges on Morlocks and Eloi as well as the reader's understanding of good and evil. The purpose of this essay and research question is to outline how H.G. Wells had presented the terms good and evil in the Time Machine by usage of literary features like symbolisms, metaphors, ironies and symbolisms.

2.Main Analysis

2.1 Physical Appearance

In the novel, *The Time Machine*; physical appearance of the Eloi and Morlocks plays an important role in understanding how the time traveller has used his prejudice and perspective against the new species' being good and evil.

As the time traveller first steps out of his time machine in the year 802,701, he meets the upper-worlders, the Eloi. His first impression of them was "He was a slight creature clad in a purple tunic, tied at the waist with a leather belt. Sandals were on his feet; his legs were bare to the knees, and his head was bare."¹ He described the Eloi as bare and fragile, which is often used to describe someone's vulnerability, powerlessness, or bareness. Which is a metaphor for pureness and innocence. By using this metaphor, Wells wanted to indicate the "goodness" of the Eloi. Wells connected this metaphor of pureness with the symbolism of Eloi being childlike, which was stated many times by the time traveller in the novel "The creature's friendliness affected me exactly as a child's may have done."² Some of the reasons he compares the Eloi with the children are the way they dress, their intelligence level and their behaviours such as "As they made no effort to communicate with me, but simply stood

¹ Wells, p.57

² Wells, p.64

round me smiling and speaking in soft cooing notes to each other”³. Wells used metaphors and symbolisms to connect Eloi with the childness and pureness because, he wanted to emphasize from the first look the Eloi are the “good” ones in that time.

As the time traveller spends more time with the Eloi he finds out that essentially they were scared of something because they were sleeping in one place, close to each other out of fear. So there was an evil among them; the Morlocks. The first impression of them from the time traveler's perspective was “I saw white figures. Twice I fancied I saw a solitary white, ape-like creature running rather quickly up the hill...”⁴ and “It made me shudder. It was so like a human spider!”⁵. Wells uses the visual imagery to describe the Morlocks as animals by making similarities such as “ape-like” and “human spider”. He uses the imagery to highlight the non-human side of the Morlocks, using parallelisms between them and the wild animals. This indicates that the time traveller didn’t even consider them as a part of humanity, which he makes it clear by saying that “It was not for some time that I could succeed in persuading myself that the thing I had seen was human.”⁶. Subsequently Wells uses prejudice with visual imagery to lead the time traveller to believe Morlocks are the “evil” ones.

The difference between the time traveller’s first meeting with the Eloi and Morlocks indicates that the animal-like Morlocks had no chance of receiving favouritism against the child-like Eloi, especially after it is made clear that Eloi don’t even eat meat, which showed that they did not harm anyone. Subsequently the Eloi are associated with the herbivorous animals while the Morlocks with the carnivorous ones, leading to a separation and a favouritism towards the harmless Eloi. This suggests that the physical appearance of the

³ Wells, p.63

⁴ Wells, p.66

⁵ Wells, p.68

⁶ Wells, p.69

species and their way of determining whether humans love, feel safe around them can be explained. Another example that can be associated with this is the prey-predator situations. It can be agreed that most humans feel empathy towards the prey, like butterflies, frail and good, while they hate the predators, the spiders, the Morlocks. Additionally, the way of Morlocks' physical qualities are mentioned as "Then, those large eyes, with that ability to reflect light, are common features of nocturnal things, such as the owl and the cat."⁷. Morlocks are described as predators many times in the novel often likened to owls, cats, and spiders. Which is another example of how Wells gives Morlock's predatory physical appearance to match them with the evil title. Time traveller saw Morlocks as savages and he even admitted that no matter what he would side with the Eloi, because they were 'good'. "Probably my shrinking was largely due to the influence of the Eloi, whose disgust of the Morlocks I now began to appreciate."⁸. This usage of the imagery and metaphors by Wells is to describe the first look for the species that affect moral judgement by giving the Eloi and the Morlocks the physical appearance of everyday associations of good and evil.

As a continuation to the relationship between goodness and beauty, it is also important to take a look into the lifestyle of the two beings; Eloi lives in the daylight, under the bright sun, while the Morlocks live in the underground, crawling through tunnels. Light is a metaphor for goodness while darkness is a metaphor for evilness. So, how could it be expected from the Morlocks who had lived in the darkness for centuries, to have the same "goodness" and morality level as Eloi, when even the time traveller didn't want to spend more than one second there because it is an unpleasant and depressing environment. Wells's usage of light and dark metaphors here is to indicate the difference and expand the gap

⁷ Wells, p.109

⁸ Wells, p.115

between goodness and evilness of the Eloi and Morlocks by using their living environments and its effects on them.

To conclude the distinction of literary devices Wells used to describe the time traveller's first look for the Eloi and Morlocks; the tone he used are different from each other, as he used an enthusiastic tone to describe the Eloi but a skeptical tone against the Morlocks. Hence, the time traveller's bias towards the Eloi can be shown through the Well's tone and the narrative style of his describing Eloi and Morlocks. By using these techniques Wells wanted to show the effect of physical appearance and the prejudice on the understanding of good and evil.

2.2 Darwinism

2.2.1 Behaviours

Darwin's theory of evolution had risen during the years that the time machine was written. His theory states that, "Any variation in the least degree injurious would be rigidly destroyed. This preservation of favourable variations and the rejection of injurious variations, I call Natural Selection." (Darwin, p.25). Which is saying the one who adapted the best will survive. This leads to the question to what extent humanity can go for survival and rather this act of survival can be associated with being good and evil. Morlocks are an example for this with their cannibalism and hate towards the Eloi. "The too-perfect security of the One-worlders had led them to a slow movement of degeneration, to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence."⁹. The Eloi were able to survive by being lazy and that led them to be downgraded compared to Morlocks overtime. This different adaptation leads to different outcomes which are explained with the usage of the juxtaposition of the progress of the evolution with the two species by H.G. Wells. As, the ones who adapted to live in the day

⁹ Wells, p.48

and the ones in the night; the herbivorous Eloi and the omnivorous Morlocks. These usages of juxtaposition throughout the novel, expand the gap of good and evil between the two species.

Despite the fact that in the beginning of the novel, the Morlocks are represented as evil, as the story progresses, their behaviours are figured out to be acts of survival developed by years of determination and will to survive. They may be cannibals but they need to eat meat to survive, and the only way to do that is by eating the species with which they once shared the same history. It might seem as Morlocks being cannibals may make them evil but, in the end, they didn't have any other choice but to survive and that was just the strong will to survive. Wells uses evolution as a moral metaphor, as determining the good and evil stage of the species by not concluding their different evolutionary progresses that lead to different paths. Additionally this moral metaphor of evolution is the first indication in the novel that the good and the evil are not broad topics, even with Eloi and Morlocks which also makes both reader and the time traveller start questioning the moral aspect of the situation.

2.2.2 Technology-Intelligence

Natural selection is the survival of the fittest, so there must be a reason why the childlike Eloi with the minds of 5-year-olds have survived. "A question that showed him to be on the intellectual level of one of our five-year-old children"¹⁰. While the Eloi had no talent except dancing, ironically Morlocks were the reason that they were alive. They used them as live-stocks to survive, they built or fixed the Eloi's houses for the sake of the both. This is also mentioned in the Imam Basuki's article as a reason for their underdeveloped intelligence "Eloi not only become weak and fragile creatures, but they also develop into unintelligent beings. The upper class who has a habit of relaxing and morally decadence

¹⁰ Wells, p.60

becomes the stupid Eloi of the future. They have lost the ability to self-regulate.”(Basuki, p.46) In conclusion, Eloi do not try to improve themselves, while the Morlocks had done that a lot to survive, they like to craft and they are curious. Morlocks had also stolen the time traveller’s time machine and removed essential parts from it to stop it from working. They were curious about what the machine was and they knew that the time traveller would look for it, or at least come looking for it. Wells had used curiosity and intelligence as a tool of survival and its effect on the morality of the species.

The species advance to make sure their survival is maintained and can be obtained in a simpler way. That is one of the reasons why Morlocks are the ones that have actually improved over the years, as they built ladders to reach the Upper-World and maintain their food source. Although the species had devolved from the humans, Morlocks, the animal-like ones, had higher intelligence than the ones that are child-like, or the ones who look more human. This creates a juxtaposition between the two of the species, focusing on their advancement and its necessity. The Eloi didn’t advance in technology because they didn’t need it; even their clothes were made by the Morlocks. This usage of juxtaposition indicates the struggles behind becoming “evil” and showing not everything is 100% pure evil nor good. Additionally Morlocks still making Eloi clothes and maintain seeing their needs which will end up on them feeding from Eloi is a use of situational irony which results in an example of what survival instinct can lead. Wells uses this situational irony to emphasise the full reversal of the roles of good and evil. Nothing was changed in the future at all, the lower class was building everything for the Upper-Class when they did nothing. In the end the “evil” ones were smarter than the “good” ones which leads to the question that could they really be classified as evil if they were forced to live as monsters from underground, forced to serve the “good” ones. In the article by Imam Basuki this interpretation is supported by the

statement; “The purely natural and quite inevitable characteristics of good and evil are well illustrated by some qualities which are merely the extremes of one and the same thing. They are good when present in small or moderate amounts; evil when present in excess.”(Riddle, p.40). Which indicates the results are not really far off from each other, as Eloi and Morlocks and it wouldn’t be correct to say Morlocks are pure evil and Eloi are pure good.

2.3 The Good and The Evil

2.3.1. Class Ideology

Just like Darwinism, the novel reflects many aspects based on the year it was written; the Victorian Era. In the Victorian Era, the classes at the time were the British Elite and British Workers. Through the novel it is clear that the Eloi represent the descendants of the British Elite while the Morlocks were the descendants of the British working class. The Elite was lazy, getting their backs by the working class. When the time traveller first met the Eloi, they were wearing, “clad in rich soft robes” and a “purple tunic”¹¹. First of all, the colour purple is a symbolism for money, royalty, and rarity.(Hassan, p.588) Also, they were wearing robes or tunics, which is a type of a short robe, another symbolism for being elite. Meanwhile the Morlocks were the working class; the underground refers to the newly made metro stations in Britain¹². Wells’s critique of capitalism was the beginning of the time traveller’s dilemma; “The Upper-world people might once have been the favoured aristocracy and the Morlocks their mechanical servants...”¹³. Because Morlocks were once servants who were forced to live underground, who survived despite the situations that are not human and despite all of that continued to improve themselves whereas the Eloi had way more opportunities by them living under the sun, they chose not to improve and simplified their

¹¹ Wells, p.57

¹² “World's first Underground.” *London Transport Museum*,
<https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/visit/museum-guide/worlds-first-underground>.

¹³ Wells, p.84

living standards. In the article *Beyond Science fiction*, this novel being a highlight for the capitalism problem is mentioned; “Wells warns again and again that the Eloi and Morlocks’ separation is due to the widening gap between the capitalists and labourers. He reminds readers of the overwhelming power of nature against man.”(Vugrincic, p.52). All in all with the usage of symbolism Wells establishes the connection between the Eloi and the British Elites and uses this to start the moral dilemma that lies beneath Morlock's past.

2.3.2. False Interpretations for Hope

Time traveller was disappointed when he stepped into the year 802,701 and had found out humans were not advanced in technology, instead the new found Eloi were; dumb, child-like and living in some type of utopia with peace, or at least he thought they were. “For a moment I was surprised, though the meaning of his gesture was plain enough. I thought: were these creatures fools? I had always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand would be incredibly ahead of us in knowledge, art, everything.”¹⁴. Time traveller's first false hope was humanity not being developed, because he hoped that humanity would overcome the problems and be advanced instead. He imagined it to be a utopia. The Utopia's are supposed to be perfect worlds, which was accurate with the way he saw this world, he even described the Eloi as “perfect creatures” made him believe that this new future was a Utopia. Although he was disappointed, he created a hope that he was safe there, which turned out to be a false hope as he describes; “As I stood there in the gathering dark, I thought that in this simple explanation I had mastered the problem of the world. Very simple was my explanation, and plausible enough—as most wrong theories are”¹⁵. There were no wars, no guns, no wild animals to be scared of, it was a safe place. His idea of this place being a Utopia disappeared as soon as he met the Under-Worlders, the Morlocks and

¹⁴ Wells, p.39

¹⁵ Wells, p.79

his idea of the perfect world had evolved into a non-Utopia, a world that had fallen a long time ago and the downfall of humanity. Wells also had used narrative irony in time traveller's perception as the false utopia. He used a non advanced future which involved devolved humans the exact opposite of what the time traveller believed he would see. So, his idea of a “partially good”, perfect society had changed when he met with the Morlocks. Beings that are too good had given him a false hope about this new time.

Time traveller started to see the minds of the Morlocks as being more advanced even though they were further away from being human and finally his idea of the benevolent Eloi had started to shift slowly. “They were once the privileged urban upper class, whose pursuit of comfort would eventually force the working-class underground forever. In the novella’s futuristic scenario, the rich, as Eloi, are portrayed as frail, lazy, sexless, and unintelligent.”(Loberg, p.8) Although in the end he always liked Eloi better, he saw that the Morlocks weren’t pure evil as well as the Eloi weren’t pure good, he finally saw the system that had gotten humanity in these situations. “It shows how the Capitalist system destroys all human relations. The working class has lived underground for so long that it has evolved into a distinct species. The Morlock run out of food and are forced to hunt down Eloi, whom they now breed like cattle. Morlock lost their humanity due to a long process of exploitation and persecution. They terrorized and took revenge on Eloi.”(Basuki, p.42) Essentially once upon a time Eloi was the rich who were slaving the working class, and they continued to live through their trades. Eloi may not be cannibals but they were the reason why Morlocks had become this “evil”, and they were the reason why Morlocks were forced to live underground for thousands of years, as their ancestors. Which is also supported in “The Empire Of The Future: Imperialism And Modernism” by; “The revenge of the Morlocks upon the Eloi has

been read-quite rightly-as the lower classes of Victorian Britain turning tables on the upper classes.”(Cantor, Peter, p.52)

Time traveller wanted to protect good Eloi from the evil Morlocks, with his new discovery of their fear of the fire. Using this he created a false hope for Eloi and himself with matches which is an example of a situational irony. The match was supposed to protect the Eloi in the meantime, hurting Morlocks. Though it resulted in killing both. By trying to destroy what he sees as evil, he unintentionally damages what he believes is good. With that he loses all his hope and finally decides to leave this place now which had become “evil” and finally decides to get back his time machine for good. With this use of irony, Wells wanted to mark how much the lines are blurry between good and evil. Because, now the time traveller should also be evil too, he killed both the good and the evil. He ended up breaking his binary thinking on evil and good as one Eloi and Morlocks as he understood that Morlocks are what they are now because of the class struggle they encountered over the years which gave their low morality level a reason. So he places less blame on the Morlocks as the novel comes to an end and the reasons between the contrast of the two species becomes more clear.

3. Conclusion

Through the novel, H.G. Wells had criticised the terms good and evil by making the reader question the underlying truth between the two dystopian species; Eloi and Morlocks. The comparison between the beautiful Upper-Worlders vs the animal-like Under-Worlders while questioning his own morality and what action led humanity to their downfall. Although the time traveller mostly sides with Eloi, the good, it can still be seen that his hate towards Morlocks in the end is not as strong as the start, because he started to understand this is the rule of nature. In the end the time traveller had realised with his idea of Utopia turning into an

evil world, was just how life works. The weak will die and the strong will survive and humans would do anything for survival; it's always been like this and always will be. There was once the British Elite, who gained power from the workers and British workers who worked, wasting their life for survival. Then there is the year 802,701 where the Eloi live together and under the sun to survive, meanwhile Morlocks use them as livestock for the same reason, survival. Wells does not present this as pure evil, instead he justifies their reason with the moral and social critique by the society. He criticises a system where humanity tries to overpower and undermine each other using reversal of roles to display the consequences which also leads to understanding the irony and the moral side clearly as the perspective changes. As the novel progresses the importance of the language by Wells becomes clear as they play an important role in this change by time traveller. By the use of these, Wells wants to demonstrate that the prejudice can not be trusted and before determining terms good and evil morality of the both sides must be considered. Therefore this indicates the portrayal of good and evil and answers to the question "How does H.G. Wells portray the concepts of good and evil through the depiction of the Eloi and Morlocks in *The Time Machine*?"

There are many aspects in the past that aligns with the future, such as; British Elite and Workers couldn't exist without each other. Elite couldn't have the work done they wanted and the workers would die of starvation, same case with the Eloi and Morlocks. The Eloi couldn't find themselves new clothes, or fix their buildings if Morlocks don't use them as livestock, meanwhile Morlocks wouldn't be able to survive without the meat Eloi provides to them. As shown through the imagery, metaphors, symbols, tone, juxtapositions, and irony in the novel; these are all part of life and always will be, the mutualism situation in nature cannot be changed. Therefore these factors that shape morality must be considered as Wells did with using symbolisms, metaphors and irony. As long as there is life, there will always be

goodness and evilness, but never one in all, never the pure good and the pure evil will exist in nature. As long as humanity exists, no matter the form, the good and the evil will always come within.

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