

Argumentative essay on herbert wells machine imperialism and classism

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Of all accomplished novels by H. G Wells, *The Time Machine* most resists a twenty-first century readers' effort, to pardon Wells from the accusation of being an imperialist. Indeed, it is clear that imperialism is a vital element in H G Wells novels. Wells imbues his texts with colonial and occupation components that require separation between the future and the present and momentary pleasure, particularly those delights associated with the self-centered British conquerors exemplified by *The Time Machine's*, *The Time Traveler*. Wells' story from a post-modern eye represents an imperial Britain wallowing with forces of technology that it uses to conquer non-suspecting native people of the world. For a people to be accepted as trustworthy, they have to play along with the Time Traveler and accept, in so many ways, that he is superior and intellectually adept than them. Remarkably, though, *Time Machine* is one of Well's work that attracted timely reception and acknowledgement arguably because of the unusual depiction of the two concepts of time. In my opinion, *Time Machine* depicts the English psych at the height of the industrialization with respects to other class and relationship with colonies.

Paul Cantor and Peter Hufnagel who are two famous H. G. Well's critics among others, states that " Wells' time machine reveals the profound connection between imperialism and modernism" (p. 54). This description asserts *Time Machine* is not only a representation of the future in literature in terms of applying the literary tactics of modernism, but also a story of Britain empire's increasing expansion on a global stage. In the view of Roger Luckhurst , another critic of Herbert Wells, *Time Machine* attempts to " sustain a sense of progress towards utopia of communism, gender, equality,

and sexual differentiation, and freedom from labor and decline (p. 36).

According to Luckhurst, The Traveler is a victim of the dogma of “ Survival of the fittest” (p. 37), and as a result, the inability of man to control himself and science leads to the demise of man.

Herbert Wells “ The Time Machine” is probably one of the greatest pieces of science fiction. In the story, Wells documents the adventure tales of the Eloi and of a new underworld people called Morlocks. The main protagonist, Time Traveler defies the sense of time and space while travelling to places in the underworld where no one had ever travelled. While in his adventure, the Time Traveler, is forced to face the fear of forests, new people called Morlocks. Written at the height of European industrialization, one would not be wrong to associate the traveler’s adventures with the English contact with the new world in America, Africa, and India. In fact, Cantor and Hufnagel have argued that Time Machine exhibits features of a post-“ colonial literature”(41). However, Cantor & Hufnagel argue that Wells Time Machine demonstrates an English society struggling with retaining its pure form. “ In the course of its imperialist expansion in the nineteenth century, Britain believed that it was conquering the world, but in certain respects it actually surrendered to the forces it assumed under its control,” writes (Cantor & Hufnagel, p. 41). Whereas Time Machine is science fiction, it is also a tale of British expansion.

Roger Luckhurst warns readers of Time Machine to be wary of dissonance and inadequacy in the story as demonstrated in the Time Travelers’ inconsistency with facts about the adventure. (p. 36). This is ironic compared to influence of science in the story. While reading Time Machine, one cannot

fail to take notice of the dense science particularly demonstrated in the theories, explanation of invented machines and understanding of time. The use of science is perhaps another demonstration of imperialism. The adeptness in science provides reason for the arrogance of the British and their claim of intellectual superiority. In chapter two, the narrator says that “ I think that none of us believed in the Time Machine. The fact is, Time Traveler was one of the men who are too clever to be believed: You always suspected some subtle reserve, some ingenuity in ambush, behind his lucid frankness” (Wells, 13). Roger Luckhurst points out that the influence of science and British intellectual superiority as portrayed by the Time Traveler accrues from the influence of science and the works of people like Charles Darwin. Social Darwinism could thus be considered a perspective while reading the novel. In the view of Luckhurst, Darwins views “ reinserted the Anglo-Saxon claim to be the apex of human development” (p. 37). However, this intellectual perfection is illusionary considering the inconsistency of the narratives of the Time Traveler.

Paul Cantor and Peter Hufnagel describe Weena’s relationship with Time Traveler as “ Pocahontas motif” while the native woman plays the role of an ideal mate. The psych of the European master still views her as less than human. In the absence of civilized woman, the savage woman provides comfort that comes with women. However, this role is cancelled because that native woman poses the threat of “ miscegenation” and has to be killed to create room for a European woman (p. 40). In the novel, Time Traveler kills Weena inhumanely in a wild fire that he sets off.

Paul Cantor and Peter Hufnagel also highlight the imperialist undertones of

Wells' work. According to them, imperialism is demonstrated by how the two natives interplay with Time Traveler. Even though the Eloi and the Morlocks can also represent the social divisions during the Victorian age in Britain, they also represent the two types of natives that European explorers meet in the new lands. There is usually the good tribe and the wicked tribe. The appropriate tribe is peaceful, submissive and accepts the European traveler as the master without questioning. On the other hand, the evil tribe usually described as savage, beastly, warlike and rebellious (p. 38). The archetype of tribes correlates with Time Machines distinction of the Eloi as the righteous people and the Morlocks as the evil people. In the view of Paul Cantor and Peter Hufnagel, tribes are categorized to provide a reason for European conquest and colonization. A collaborative tribe admits inferiority to the Europeans and thus accepts colonization while a rebellious tribe is wild and savage and would be best helped by European colonization.

In addition to providing a postcolonial view of Wells' Time Machine, Luckhurst presents a critique of Marxist critique of the novel. Luckhurst talks about the way the high and low social classes of the Victorian era developed, creating the correlation between Morlocks (working class) and Elois (high class). While presenting a socialist critic, Luckhurst emphasizes the oneness that the Time Traveler had with the Morlocks. Although the Time Traveler disregards the Morlocks, Wells portrays them as sharing tastes of meat, bloodlust and victims of distorted nights (p. 38). Because of a rapid triumph of capitalism, the utopian dream of intellectual organism is destroyed prematurely by suicide signifying the fall of capitalism. In the end, "man had not remained one species, but had differentiated into distinct

animals (p. 42). This implies that Luckerhurst implies the subdivision of the society, not between races like Cantor and Hufangael, but on the haves on the have-nots.

While reading Time Machine two themes come out, first is the colonial theme and the second is the theme of societal struggle for perfection with science and technology. The central focus of the novel is thus, how science and technology influenced human interaction during the nineteenth century.

Works Cited

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