

## 瑪麗雪萊的「科學怪人」和威爾斯的「時光機器」 所預見的未來世界

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### 摘要

瑪麗雪萊的「科學怪人」和威爾斯的「時光機器」是兩本極具創造力與想像力的科幻小說。瑪麗雪萊描寫科學怪人的誕生導致了一場無法收拾的悲劇，威爾斯利用時光機器，穿越時空預見艾洛伊族(Eloi)和莫洛克族(Morlocks)兩個截然不同的世界。作者們運用豐富的想像力洞見未來可能的世界，然而科幻小說的目的並不僅止於此。科幻小說通常是用來探索人的定位及其在宇宙中的定位，而且這些科幻故事都是架構於當時最先進卻令人困惑的知識基礎上。本文將從瑪麗雪萊和威爾斯的寫作背景探討故事主題與背後所傳達的訊息，以及人物的代表象徵與故事中所提出的問題究竟給了生活在知識科技爆炸時代中的人類什麼樣的警告。

**關鍵辭：** Mary Shelley(瑪麗雪萊)， H.G. Wells(威爾斯)， 科學怪人，  
時光機器， Eloi (艾洛伊族)， Morlocks(莫洛克族)

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## The probable future world forecasted in Mary Shelly's 'Frankenstein' and H.G. Wells' 'The Time Machine'

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### Abstract

Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' and H.G. Wells' 'The Time Machine' are science fictions of creativeness and imagination. The creation of Frankenstein causes a tragedy beyond man's control. The Time Machine takes readers to experience a journey through time and space to meet "Eloi" and "Morlocks". The authors see a vision of the probable future world. However, there is more to discuss in science fictions. "Science fiction is the search for the definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand on our advanced but confused state of knowledge."<sup>1</sup> This paper is to identify themes and the messages the authors convey to scholars, enumerate the characters that appear in the novels and recognize who or what they represent, and find out the conclusions or universal questions that the authors express to people who are living at the age of advanced technology and knowledge.

**Key words:** Mary Shelley, H.G. Wells, Frankenstein, The Time Machine  
Eloi, Morlocks

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<sup>1</sup>Aldiss, Brian .(1973) *Billion Year Spress* Weidenfeld & Nicolson

## The probable future world forecasted in Mary Shelly's 'Frankenstein' and H.G. Wells' 'The Time Machine'

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### I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" and H.G. Wells' "The Time Machine" have been known well for great classics of science fiction. As is the case with all worthy literature, these works can be read and appreciated on several levels. Many of us read the two books when we were children and enjoyed them as stories of fantasy and adventure. Now as adults, scholars, and students of future studies, we have an opportunity to consider them in the spirit in which they were written.

Science fiction is a work contributed by science, fantasy and novel. The perfect combination of science and fantasy makes great science fiction. Lots of technology forecasted in science fiction such as the submarine in '20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.' by Jules Verne, the tank and air war in H.G Wells' novels and descriptions of spacecrafts, computerization, robots and bioengineering in science fiction have become realities\ in the modern world. But technological forecast is not the only purpose of science fiction. What needed to be considered more seriously is the impact of new technology on our future life. The value of science fiction is to discuss and think about the ideas generated from science and fantasy the authors attempt to convey to readers.

This paper is to evaluate the two books in terms of the message they convey to us as scholars, identify the main points, issues and questions that the two authors pose, and enumerate the characters appearing in the novels and identify who or what they represent. We are also to identify the conclusions and universal questions that the authors express. By applying the "test of time" question to them for further discussion-are the questions or issues explored still pertinent today? The accuracy of the authors' forecasting abilities is to be commented and evaluated as well as the general utility value of the works in question.

### II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

#### A. Industrial Revolution

In addition to the exciting and fantastic adventure of exploring the future, warning is the main purpose that science fiction leaves readers to ponder. In order to discuss the themes in 'Frankenstein' and 'The Time Machine', it is useful to

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understand the historical context in which they are written. 'Frankenstein' (1816) was written in a period of dramatic change—the first industrial revolution or the revolutionary period of 1780 to 1830. There was a strong conviction in England, in the early Victorian times, that rapid future changes would take place and there were wide differences of view about the extent to which they would be beneficial.<sup>2</sup> As time passed, the problems of industrialism were seen as defects that could be eliminated and the underlying change was generally seen as beneficial. The new fruits of chemistry, physics, mathematics, etc. were seen as contributing to a future in which increasing knowledge would give increasing power over nature, and consequently increasing wealth. People generated big vision of science and believed that science could dominate the universe. As Howard Rosenbrock noticed, “the Victorian situation led to the danger of complacency”<sup>3</sup>. Mary Shelley recognized the danger and foresaw the perils of the newly born technological society, inherent in scientific research and the exploitation of nature. It is also important to mention that 'Frankenstein' was written during a certain period of crisis in humanism: the failure of the French Revolution<sup>4</sup>. It is clear that shifting polarities of revolution mark the novel, which reflects the clash of the sensualism with the brutal reality of the revolution and the radicalism. Mary Shelley perceived the dangers of radicalism and abstracted idealism as we can distinguish from what she wrote in her Journal:

“I respect such when joined to real disinterestedness, toleration and a clear understanding.... I earnestly desire the good and enlightenment of my fellow creatures...but I am not for violent extremes, which duly bring on an injurious reaction.”<sup>5</sup> In the case of

'The Time Machine' (1895), the historical context is very similar to 'Frankenstein's, again we are confronting with the problems of the end of 19th in England. It provided a perfect imaginative structure for H.G. Wells' swift ruminations on human nature, and its daring suggestions of technological advancements to come thrilled and frightened his readers.

## B. Against Mother Nature

Frankenstein, the scientist who created Demon he later on called a monster, had an attempt to gain power over God behind the scientific projects, to take place of God in relation to his creation. In doing so he has violated Charles Darwin's (1809--1882) theory of evolution, which holds that all species of plants and animals developed from earlier forms by hereditary transmission of slight variations in successive generations, and natural selection determines which forms will survive. The scientist tried to break

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<sup>2</sup>Rosenbrock, Howard. A New Industrial Revolution? In: *Machines with a Purpose* pp635-37

<sup>3</sup>Rosenbrock, Howard. A New Industrial Revolution? In: *Machines with a Purpose* p.636

<sup>4</sup>Botting, Fred. (1991) *Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory*. pp198-9, Manchester University Press

<sup>5</sup>*Introduction to Frankenstein*, Penguin Edition 1992, p.xli

the law of the nature. This ambition is also very close to capitalism. The capitalists exploit nature's resources for both commercial profit and political control. Here we can perceive the most far-reaching effect of the scientific revolution---nature was perceived as a dead system moved by external rather than inherent forces. The manipulation of nature was identified within a mechanical framework, the values of which were those based on power, fully compatible with the directions taken by commercial capitalism.<sup>6</sup> For Frankenstein, the human and animal organs, bones, and flesh he had collected to create the monster, were nothing more than the tools of his trade. Nor are they different from his scientific instruments. This was a dehumanized behavior with the help of technology controlled by the industrial scientist. What even more ironic is that the product of this technological revolution had the power to destroy his creator. Shelley's message is clear: a morally irresponsible scientific development can release a monster that can destroy human civilization itself. As the creature declares, "Remember that I have power;... I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master..."<sup>7</sup> The catastrophe caused by the scientific revolution was foreseen by Mary Shelley as a warning of the danger in technological development of modern science for us. Although we are not able to re-give life to dead bodies, recent research in genetic engineering and biochemistry and the technology of clone have brought the opportunities to manipulate life forms. The probable negative consequences caused by the modern science and the responsibilities scientists should take must be evaluated cautiously when we boast our advanced technology and knowledge. When creating scientifically, look it holistically. Do not create something we do not control.

### C. Class Prejudice

With the similar historical context it was written, 'The Time Machine' again has revealed social problems of industrialism of his own age seen as defects that could be eliminated. When the industrial revolution was sweeping Europe, the human beings were experiencing the paradigm shift from agricultural to industrial society. People possessing capital were enthusiastic about pursuing ambitiously and aggressively increasing the wealth and the power over nature by exploiting socially inferior workers. What H.G. Wells hated most was the hierarchy firmly rooted in British society in which he grew up and was one of the victims under the class prejudice. The cruelty of class prejudice evolved people into two groups: leisured classes and inferior workers. The rich leisured classes greatly enjoyed and pursued the pleasure and comfort and beauty while the workers were living in the dark, ignorant, ugly side of the world and getting continually adapted the conditions of their labor.

The novel follows the adventures of a hypothetical Time Traveler who journeys into the future to find that humanity has evolved into two races, both recessive: one, peaceful Eloi-vegetarians who tire easily, living on the surface of a kindly earth full of

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<sup>6</sup>Merchant, Carolyn. (1990) *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. P193, Hamper San Francisco

<sup>7</sup>Shelley, Mary.(1992) *Frankenstein*. Penguin edition p.162

abundant natural resources and splendid architecture; the other, the Morlocks, a more active but debased, carnivorous and predatory race, living underground, preyed cannibalistically on the surface-dwellers, who they help to preserve by taking care of the operation of machines in the under world. By creating two sub-species of the future, Wells found a voice for his feelings about the extent of the intolerable prejudice in England and what this was doing to people. The Eloi, according to the hypothesis of the Time Traveler, are the descendents of the leisured classes; the Morlocks of the workers. He did not romanticize either the upper classes, the Eloi, or the lower class, the Morlocks. He simply showed them slowly moving from each other and becoming two entirely different species. H.G. Wells applied the metaphor to dig out the dark side of contemporary social problems. Obviously, it is a warning alarm giving a lesson with deep meanings to his readers and offers fascinating food for thought about the world of the future underpinned with both Darwinian and Marxist theory, particularly to the greedy, leisured capitalists. If the unequal social position can not be changed, the capitalists continue to exploit the labors, part of the nature; this may direct the whole towards to the catastrophe. The Eloi gradually lost their intelligence and abilities because they enjoyed themselves too much and became lazier and were preyed cannibalistically by the Morlocks. After narrowly escaping from the Morlocks, the Time Traveler undertakes another journey even further into the future where he finds the earth growing bitterly cold as the heat and energy of the sun wane. Horrified, he returns to the present, but soon departs again on his final journey. This is H.G. Wells' pessimistic vision of future. Although he does not preach, there is sadness in the story. As the story narrator concludes in the epilog " But to me the future is still black and blank-is a vast ignorance, lit at a few casual places by the memory of his story. And I have by me, for my comfort, two strange white flowers-shriveled now, and brown and flat and brittle-to witness that even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the hear of man."<sup>8</sup>

### III. UNIVERSAL QUESTION

Mary Shelley and H.G. Wells have drawn readers' attention to pertinent questions of universal issues through picturing the forecasted future world, now our modern world.

#### A. Frankenstein Complex

Frankenstein complex indicates that people's fear of uncontrollable situation resulted from applying advanced technology to human beings. For example, the technology of clone has been a controversial issue. For those who need this technology to obtain cloned organs for implantation, the technology of clone would be greatly supported. However, from a different angle, this issue would dramatically impact on social morality and conscience. The aim of technology is to benefit human

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<sup>8</sup>Wells H.G. (1995) *The Time Machine*. Dover Thrift edition p76

beings, not to lead to a catastrophe. The possible reason to cause devastating results is not the existence of advanced technology, but how people apply it.

## B. Intelligentsia versus Victims

Although the welfare of laborers has greatly improved, people are more aware this unequal and inhuman social problem and start to change for a better world. For example, in 1996, customer and labor groups in USA protested against at purchasing Nike shoes. They showed their anger about Nike exploited workers in its factory in Indonesia and implemented inappropriate corporal punishments on workers in Vietnam. As a result, people refused to buy Nike shoes. This caused that Nike's business declined and its stock-market prices went down sharply. To react immediately to the boycott, many good-brand companies required severely their factories located in foreign countries to obey exactly the labor law; otherwise the companies would cut orders. This issue had a significant impact on the enterprises, which eventually built ISO international standards or asked the third institution to exam if the factories carried out labor rights exactly. This system has positively enhanced the relationship between capitalists and laborers. Laborers should be treated equally.

While people in developed countries are enjoying the fruits of IT age, in which the rich are becoming richer, people in poor third countries are locked out of a wealthy world. These countries are short of information technology, talented people and money to develop domestic economic and to afford compulsory education. The number of uneducated children is very high. The contrast between the poor in third countries and the rich in developing or developed countries reflects the future world forecasted by H. G. Wells where is composed of two groups-intelligentsia (Eloi) and victims (Morlocks).

## IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to point out the common ideas shown in the two novels. First, both novels indicate the contrast between science and morality and a comparison of capitalists and laborers or intelligentsia and victims. Second, both fictions convey that the belief of nonexistence of God would be dangerous. If human beings and science try to gain power over God or break the natural system, the imbalance between human and nature will increase finally. We, as human beings, are part of nature and we depend on her, as much as she depends on us. There is no possible existence of one without the other. Besides, we ought to have sympathy of concerning about human kinds. The two novels also forecast the probable events needed to think deeply when we deal with keeping a balanced system in which nature, technology and human civilization are involved. Are science and technology really going to improve the world and make our life better? Does human civilization really bring great progress for everyone? The answers may be uncertain and ambiguous in the future. And we cannot stop the revolution of human beings. However it is important to continually ask the logical questions, supply the best answers and share.

them in our society. Also when we confront with the paradigm shifts, we should learn to be willing to accept the need of change instead of violating the natural rules and adapt the change to see a new world

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