

Entwined Consciousness: The Internalized External Narrative of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*

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I. Introduction: What is the Entwined Consciousness?

In 1895, H.G. Wells published his first novel, *The Time Machine*. An instant success, the story recounted the events of one man's journey through an incredible, nearly unfathomable span of time. The Time Traveller begins his journey in Victorian England, at his home in Richmond. As the Time Machine does not move through space, the Time Traveller more or less spends most of his adventure within the vicinity of his old neighborhood, albeit several hundred thousand generations in the future. His first stop takes him to the distant age of the Eloi and the Morlocks, an era of illusory peace where the two class-divided descendants of man have turned into predator and prey in the otherwise unfathomable year of 802, 701. After a perilous eight-day stint in this small snippet of human evolution, the Time Traveller continues to move farther and farther into the future, until he eventually witnesses the final stages of a fully atrophied Earth's demise. Never having found the enlightened future he had hoped to discover, the Time Traveller gloomily returns to his own period. Upon his arrival back in the late 19th century, he feels a deep compulsion to narrate his recent experiences, and does so to a more or less receptive audience of his peers.

The novel possesses an overlapping, multifaceted narrative. There is the "main story" which recounts a remarkable series of events in the otherwise average life of a principal character. At the same time, there exists a "secondary story", a frame through which this "main story" is delivered. At two separate dinner parties which occurred roughly three years before the fictional penning of the novel, the narrator—who will henceforth be referred to as "the Chronicler"—had heard an explanation of the groundbreaking science behind time travel. A week later, he was one of a handful of witnesses to the firsthand account of a self-proclaimed time-traveler. Within the fabricated context of the narrative, *The Time Machine* is presented as

the Chronicler's memories of these two utterly remarkable Thursday evenings. The Chronicler chooses to relay his recollection of the event as if he had transcribed these exceptional moments as they came to pass; he positions his readers in the midst of memory, so that they might also experience the Time Traveller's narrative as if they too were among his original audience.

Before venturing any further, it is necessary to acquire some terminology which will help to better flesh out this deeply interwoven narrative. In the second edition of his compilation, *Beginning Theory: an Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Peter Barry discusses two types of narration derived from the philosophy of Gérard Genette which are referred to as heterodiegetic and homodiegetic. The former type of narrator, the heterodiegetic, is not a part of the narrative he or she narrates; this figure does not have any role in the events that they are depicting. However, the latter classification of narrator, the homodiegetic, does in some way have a part to play in the narrative; this narrator is capable of expressing the narrative from his or her personal experience.

In the context of Wells' *Time Machine*, the Time Traveller seems like a homodiegetic narrator; he has undergone the perilous enterprise of time-traveling, and has returned to share his adventures with friends and acquaintances. However, such a perspective relies on the original narrative of the Time Traveller that was, in the fictional context of the story, actually relayed by him; his transcribed narrative is exactly that: transcribed, and not by his own hand. Because the Time Traveller's story has been written down by the Chronicler, it does not fall under the purview of stemming from individual experience with the communicated event, even though this narrative is being represented as coming literally from the Time Traveller's mouth. Therefore, the "main story", or the dictation of the Time Traveller's adventures in the future, can be categorized as a heterodiegetic narrative which masquerades as a homodiegetic narrative.

The Chronicler, however, acts a strange hybrid of homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration. On the one hand, he narrates from memory, thereby imbuing his story with the personal component necessary to the homodiegetic perspective. On the other hand, in his presentation of the Time Traveller's narrative voice, he falls into the category of a heterodiegetic narrator; in attempting to recreate and represent every aspect—an immense coupling of sensation and sense which categorically ranges from the realm of the physical to those of the mental and the existential—of the Time Traveller's journey into the future, the Chronicler overreaches the boundaries of his personal interaction with such a narrative. The Chronicler never went into the future. He does not know firsthand what such an experience would be like; the Time Traveller, presumably, is the only person who has ever freely traversed from one age to the next. Because of the Chronicler's lack of participation in this adventure, he also falls under the category of a heterodiegetic narrator.

This divided but entangled narrative functions as a pervasive entwined consciousness split between an Internal I (the I within the quotation marks) and an External I (the I without). It is an overwhelming awareness that each narrative and narrator relies on the other to shape and to support his story. In a framed narrative constructed like the one featured in *The Time Machine*, it is impossible to distinguish between the two components of this entwined consciousness; between who is and who is not speaking—the narrative voice is functionally and irrevocably intertwined. Furthermore, the effects of this externalized internalization are more or less visible in every single component of *The Time Machine*. To illustrate the subtle oozing of this entwined consciousness into the entirety of *The Time Machine*, an examination of one of the novel's more central themes—the ultimate future of man as rooted in the social and biological evolution of society—will follow a more in-depth analysis and outlining of this concomitant narrative form.

II. Refining the Entwined Consciousness: The Overlap of Narrative Voice and the Retention of Narratorial Authenticity

In order to fully perceive the entwined consciousness' more extensive effects on the novel, one must grapple further with the concept of heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narration as described by Peter Barry. All of these investigations will lead to the conclusion that the entwined consciousness is structured so that it is most hospitable to the maneuvering and the manipulating of memory. Before interpreting these two terms, Barry discusses two types of narrator; the one functions more or less as an omniscient, disembodied voice, while the other can be easily thought of as a 'character-narrator':

One kind of narrator (the kind that often goes with a zero-focalised narrative) is not identified at all as a distinct character with a name and a personal history, and remains just a voice or a tone, which we may register simply as an intelligent, recording consciousness, a mere 'telling medium' which strives for neutrality and transparency...The other kind of narrator is the kind who is identified as a distinct, named character, with a personal history, gender, a social-class position, distinct likes and dislikes, and so on. These narrators have witnessed, or learned about, or even participated in the events they tell. (Barry 233-234)

Barry argues that the terms heterodiegetic and homodiegetic can only be applied to the latter version of narrator, the character-narrator. The Time Traveller and the Chronicler are character-narrators, because they both operate as significant participants within their narratives, and yet they do not meet all of Barry's criteria for this particular distinction. In fact, the Chronicler and the Time Traveller are in some ways more stylistically aligned with the former type of narrator, which closely resembles a 'documented cognizance.' Neither man is especially "distinct," especially when it comes to their appearances and personal lives; the Time Traveller, for

example, is portrayed as an incredibly intelligent collection of partially formed and animated body parts:

The Time Traveller (for so it will be convenient to speak of him) was expounding a recondite matter to us. His grey eye shone and twinkled, and his usually pale face was flushed and animated. The fire burned brightly, and the soft radiance of the incandescent lights in the lilies of silver caught the bubbles that flashed and passed in our glasses. Our chairs, being his patents, embraced and caressed us rather than submitted to be sat upon, and there was a luxurious after-dinner atmosphere when thought runs gracefully free of the trammels of precision. And he put it to us in this way—marking the points with a lean forefinger—as we sat and lazily admired his earnestness over this new paradox (as we thought it) and his fecundity. (Wells 31)

It is important to note that this portrait of the Time Traveller is one that has been assembled by the Chronicler; regardless of whether the Time Traveller has been described inside or outside of quotation marks, his character has in some way been affected by the Chronicler. The Time Traveller's physicality consists of a few 'snapshots.' His fragmented, rudimentary image is an effect produced by the constraints of memory. The Chronicler has not neglected to describe the full form of his friend; more likely, he is 'incapable' of doing so because he does not clearly remember him. Notice that even the room that the men occupy is just as ethereal and incomplete as the Time Traveller. The Chronicler ultimately seems to recall very little about the setting; he mentions the glowing fireplace and how the artificial lighting reflected the bubbles in his champagne, but he does not remark on much else in the rooms. Years later, these are the remaining bits and pieces of this man and his home which have survived in the recesses of the Chronicler's memory.

The Chronicler makes a point to depict the Time Traveller as an ebullient genius. His animated exuberance is very clearly contrasted with the lazy listlessness of his listeners. While they lounge in some extraordinarily comfortable chairs—which were, according to the

Chronicler, designed and constructed by their host—the Time Traveller strives to make sense of some of the universe’s darker mysteries, an occurrence which the Chronicler portrays as rather commonplace for his friend. The overall effect of this part of the passage seems to indicate that the Time Traveller casually unravels enigmas for sport.

Finally, a very obvious obscuring of identity occurs: the Chronicler very pointedly does not name the Time Traveller. He chooses instead to refer to him as a pseudonym. Unlike the other men gathered at the dinner party, whose identities are likewise omitted, he is not known by his occupation. The Chronicler does not christen him as an eccentric inventor or an accomplished scientist. He designates him as a human being who is capable of freely traversing time, granting him a highly exceptional and unique title which individuates him from the more mundane figures of the Provincial Mayor and the Psychologist. At the same time, however, the identity of this man has been reduced to his primary function within the story; he is the man who has traveled through time, and so he shall be henceforth known as the Time Traveller.¹

Meanwhile, not a word is spared to describe the Chronicler’s physicality, profession, and exterior existence. The Time Traveler’s gender is stated, but the Chronicler is *assumed* to be masculine. Neither of their class positions is delineated, although by examining the weekly dinner parties, the décor, and the stated situations of the people who dine at the Time Traveller’s home, it is possible to try to infer what their social statuses might be.² Regardless of what conclusion one comes to, the point of the matter is that these simple facts—the basest building blocks which are used to define most literary characters—are ultimately left unclear.

¹ This is not the only instance in which the Chronicler purposefully disguises the Time Traveller’s identity; at the end of the novel, he omits his last name when inquiring about his whereabouts.

² One could argue that the Time Traveller is presumably well off financially, as he seems to possess ample enough time and funding to design and build his fantastical creations.

However, the Chronicler and the Time Traveller also cannot be fully categorized by the descriptions of Barry's first type of narrator, the documented cognizance. It is true that the Chronicler and the Time Traveller's primary function is that of telling. Most of the novel takes place in quotation marks and—aside from the brief glimpses of the time machine—none of the Time Traveller's story is ever actually seen; it is *heard* or *read*. At the same time, these two figures are characters who participate in a narrative; they act. The Time Traveller, as viewed directly by his audiences (his acquaintances and his readers), eats, changes his clothing, drinks, and demonstrates his inventions. The Chronicler likewise sits, follows, participates in conversation, and witnesses. While they do appear more as 'disembodied voices' whose sole purpose is to speak or to transcribe, both of these narrators are far too embodied within their respective narratives to be categorized as detached narrators.

Neither are they impartial. Within his hybrid narrative, the Chronicler does attempt to maintain neutrality to a certain extent. The narrative (as transcribed by the Chronicler) and the characters that inhabit it are allowed to question the Time Traveller's claims about time travel and the fourth dimension. However, these moments do not generally seem to produce any doubt or apprehension; in fact, they expel any anxieties because the Time Traveller is granted the ability to better explain his theories and technology. These reoccurring interrogations of the Time Traveller also illustrate the Time Traveller's exceptional brilliance and extraordinary ability to reason (as portrayed, anyway, by the Chronicler).

When the Chronicler strives for transparency, he usually does so in the pursuit of the "truth." On several occasions, he ensures that the narrative swears to the validity of the Time Traveller and his assertions. These validations can occur on multiple levels because the Chronicler can personally attest to the Time Traveller's credibility from within the narrative and

from without. For example, when the altered clock-piece vanishes into the future, the Chronicler makes it very apparent that there is no possible way that the Time Traveller could have tricked them:

And now I must be explicit, for this that follows—unless his explanation is to be accepted—is an absolutely unaccountable thing. He took one of the small octagonal tables that were scattered about the room, and set it in front of the fire, with two legs on the hearth rug. On this table he placed the mechanism. Then he drew up a chair, and sat down. The only other object on the table was a small shaded lamp, the bright light of which fell full upon the model. There were also perhaps a dozen candles about, two in brass candlesticks upon the mantel and several in sconces, so that the room was brilliantly illuminated. I sat in a low armchair nearest the fire, and I drew this forward so as to be almost between the Time Traveller and the fireplace. Filby sat behind him, looking over his shoulder. The Medical Man and the Provincial Mayor watched him in profile from the right, the Psychologist from the left. The Very Young Man stood behind the Psychologist. We were all on the alert. It appears incredible to me that any kind of trick, however subtly conceived and however adroitly done, could have been played upon us under these conditions. (Wells 35)

In this passage, the Chronicler takes several steps to ensure that his homodiegetic narrative about that atypical Thursday evening will be rid of any doubt. He begins by stating that an event which has yet to be alluded to at this point in the narrative would be absolutely impossible if not for the Time Traveller's formerly contested theories. The Chronicler suddenly utilizes a more "explicit" form of narration, suddenly imbuing his narrative with a previously unseen amount of precision and clarity. He painstakingly records every inch of the room and the positions of each dinner guest within that heavily occupied space. The Chronicler mentions that the room was brightly illuminated, allowing the Time Traveller's audience to view the proceedings unhindered and unobscured. On a more metaphorical level, the illumination of the room might also serve as a device which indicates that there is something honest and revelatory about this moment. In

concluding this passage, the Chronicler once more asserts that no deception or chicanery could have possibly ever occurred; the disappearance of the timepiece into the future *must* have occurred, as the Time Traveller later claims, and if the timepiece was able to move forward in time at a faster rate than the shackled human consciousness, then the Time Traveller's theories about time travel *must* be correct.

The Time Traveller, however, has little desire for neutrality as a narrator and as a character within his narrative; he recounts his adventures as he experienced them, and insists on the validity of his personalized statements. Despite his eventual knowledge that the Morlocks, although terrifying, colorless monstrosities are biological offshoots of humanity, he favors the Eloi because they appear to possess passions which more closely resemble the simplest of human emotions. And as Joshua Stein points out in "The Legacy of H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*: Destabilization and Observation", the Time Traveller refuses to apply anything but his 19th century perspective to the nearly unrecognizable world of 802, 701. His perspective, however, must not be "neutralized" in the transcribed narrative. The Time Traveller must be a convincing, biased, and individualized narrator because he is supposed to masquerade as a homodiegetic narrator.

And so it becomes readily apparent that neither of these narrators can be completely categorized by Barry's two types of narrator. The Chronicler and the Time Traveller are much too complex to be boxed as one or the other, but they do personify certain characteristics of each narratorial form. They are bodies who have lived through certain extraordinary events and who possess a strong desire to record their experiences. Such a hybridization better allows the narrative to better invoke the labyrinthine effects of memory and remembrance. After all,

everything in the novel is a memory or based off of a memory, regardless of whether that memory comes from the Chronicler or from the Time Traveller.

The entwined consciousness extends beyond a simple subversion of the division between character and non-character. In investing itself in two narrators, the entwined consciousness also blurs the line between authorial voices. Within the fictional framework of *The Time Machine*, the Chronicler is an author and the Time Traveller is his character. At one point in time, the Time Traveller was an author himself; when he told his original story after his return from the future, he composed a narrative which would encompass the entirety of his experiences. Such authority would be completely lost to him in this transcribed narrative composed by the Chronicler, as the Time Traveller no longer has the power to construct his own story; as a character, he has forfeited the ability to create and structure his homodiegetic narrative. However, because the Chronicler establishes the entwined consciousness by allowing his friend to speak as a version of himself, some of this authorial capacity seems to be restored to the Time Traveller. In his essay, “Taking It as a Story: The Beautiful Lie of *The Time Machine*”, Robert Crossley helps to explain this offering of restricted vocal agency:

In writing down the invention known as *The Time Machine*, the narrator ensures that his friend will not simply *be* a story but will be allowed to *tell* his story—at least as reinvented by the narrator. (16)

As the ‘author’ of this ‘piece’, the Chronicler grants his friend the narratorial authority that he had originally possessed on that atypical Thursday evening. The memory of this moment when the Time Traveller exerted his oral authorship has been preserved, but it also has been altered. The novel is not just a series of events as they occurred; if it was just a summary of the Time Traveller’s exploits in the future then there would be no reason for the Chronicler to give his

friend a voice. It is a conglomeration of two invoked memories—a joining of the thoughts and feelings of two minds, *an entwined consciousness*.

One final aspect of the entwined consciousness must be discussed before any reading of its function within the story can occur. In his work, *Fictions of Discourse: Reading Narrative Theory*, Patrick O’Neill examines the ‘embedded narratives’ of Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*. He comes to several conclusions that will be useful comparisons and contrasts to the entwined consciousness:

Thus Isabella’s hypodiegetic³ oral narrative, for, example, though it appears on the page in quotation marks as if issuing directly from her lips, ‘actually’ reaches the reader only at two removes, filtered first through Nelly Deans’ likewise oral account to Mr Lockwood and then through the written narrative of Mr Lockwood himself. So who is really ‘narrating’ here? Is it more important that we are reading what Isabella said, or what Nelly says she said, or what Mr Lockwood says Nelly said she said? How many possible alterations of style, emphasis, effect, and perhaps even fact may in principle have taken place in this multiple transmission? Whichever way we may wish to decide such questions as readers, however, it is clear that the relationship between nested narratives is always one of mutual relativization: while the embedding narrative is ultimately always in a position to colour fundamentally our reception of an embedded narrative, it may itself always in turn be challenged or even displaced together by the narrative it embeds. (65)

The main story of Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* is occasionally two times removed from the “original source.” Such a large degree of distance seems to stray into the territory of hearsay more so than the single level of removal present in Wells’ *Time Machine*. From O’Neill’s description, it seems that such a recondite narrative loses much in translation, as if it was fighting with itself. And yet, despite this conflict, O’Neill notes that it is impossible to separate one voice

³ A term used by O’Neil which signifies that a narrative possesses three diegetic layers, i.e. there is ‘a narrative embedded within a narrative which in turn is embedded within a completely separate narrative.’

from the others. Attempting to interpret who is “speaking” at any given time generates an incredible amount of potential readings. Thinking of the narrators as a joined entity, however, prompts a new way of “reading” the text, as an account of a few memories which have been based on an understanding of the memoirs of another.

Finally, the “rift” that O’Neill mentions does in fact occur in *The Time Machine*. In Wells’ novel, such a divide prompts questions of authenticity which extend beyond the usual worries about the narrative’s validity. These are not queries which ponder the honesty of the Time Traveller and the memory of the Chronicler in order to subvert the narrative; they are questions which help to project a screen of realism into the story which attempts to further validate the Time Traveller’s story.

III. Memories of the Past: the Entwined Consciousness as it Appears in the Story

To better illustrate the ramifications of the narrative's entwined consciousness, one should examine its functions within the fictional framework of the story. Several of the effects of the entwined consciousness reinforce the idea that memory has been invoked by both of the novel's narrators. As has been already stated, *The Time Machine* begins rather abruptly, at the tail end of a dinner party. There is little to no introduction to the characters, their personal histories and their intentions; the Chronicler does not initially acquaint his readers with the setting, nor does he acquaint them with the purpose of this meeting. From the very start, the focus of the novel's opening passage is placed entirely on a strange, enthusiastic, and unnamed man—The Time Traveller—and his mysterious proposition. The narrative's emphasis on the Time Traveller is so great that the Chronicler does not even bother to introduce himself until the fourth page of the novel, when he interjects within the narrative and memory, as a participating character, to speculate and marvel on the remarkable theories posited by the Time Traveller:

“Then there is the future,” said the Very Young Man. “Just think! One might invest all one's money, leave it to accumulate at interest, and hurry on ahead!” “To discover a society,” said I, “erected on a strictly communistic basis.” “Of all the wild extravagant theories!” began the Psychologist. “Yes, so it seemed to me, and so I never talked of it until—” “Experimental verification!” cried I. “You are going to verify *that*?” “The experiment!” cried Filby, who was getting brain-weary. “Let's see your experiment anyhow,” said the Psychologist, “though it's all humbug, you know.” (Wells 34)

This is a questioning of the narrative's authenticity which emanates from *within* the heterodiegetic story. The Chronicler and his friends are skeptical of the theories posited by the Time Traveller; they joke about his claims, ultimately referring to them as “humbug.” Despite this light and unreceptive atmosphere, notice the second exclamation made by the Chronicler. He alludes to a demonstration—an experiment, as Filby so helpfully adds—of these theories which

will ultimately prove the Time Traveller correct. Like in the opening passage of the novel where the fragmented image of the Time Traveller cheerfully deconstructs his newest enigma, the interior of the homodiegetic story—its Internal I— is constructed by the Chronicler to simultaneously configure itself to his memory of these past events while striving to diminish any and all doubt which might try to dispel the entwined narrative.

The exterior component of the homodiegetic narrative—its External I— also attempts to maintain this careful balance between authenticity and substantiation. Unsurprisingly, the Chronicler becomes a more potent figure in the story when he operates outside of any quotation marks. After all, it is in this extraneous realm where he has the most authority as a narrator; outside of the plot, he possesses complete and total authorial command. One of the best examples of his external capacities occurs during the marvelous unveiling of the Time Traveller's half-finished time machine:

I remember vividly the flickering light, his queer, broad head in silhouette, the dance of the shadows, how we all followed him, puzzled but incredulous, and how there in the laboratory we beheld a larger edition of the little mechanism, which we had seen vanish from before our eyes. Parts were of nickel, parts of ivory, parts had certainly been filed or sawn out of rock crystal. The thing was generally complete, but the twisted crystalline bars lay unfinished upon the bench beside some sheets of drawings, and I took one up for a better look at it. Quartz it seemed to be. (Wells 37)

The Chronicler remembers pieces of the moment, once more demonstrating a fragmented remembrance; images have left an impression on his memory, painting a blurry backdrop for the assembled group to glide through. Light and shadow figure into this passage as they have before. Here, however, they are not revelatory, but transitional; the scene shifts seamlessly from one area to the next, without any real display of movement. The overall effect is dreamlike, as if the memory has not recorded the journey from the salon to the laboratory. The Chronicler

remembers the destination and what happened there, but not the moments in-between each area. To put it more clearly, the ‘camera’ has cut from Point A to Point B, without ever really showcasing the road which connects them.

In a similar vein, the Chronicler depicts a general air of confusion and disbelief, as he did with the extended dialogue featured in the previous passage. Despite these feelings of disquiet, however, a conglomerate of “we”—and not a lone “I”—are the stated witnesses to the disappearance of the timepiece into the future. Now they are the beholders of an even larger machine which resembles the one that had literally just vanished right before their eyes; the notable increase in size of this machine implies that the machine is a vehicle capable of supporting and transporting a human being. That such an object—which is stated to resemble the smaller—functionary creation, was in the process of being constructed can only reaffirm the Time Traveller’s theories.

Most importantly, however, this passage physically positions the Chronicler in the memory. Whereas in the previous passage he was a disembodied voice, now he is an active observer who possesses the corporeal agency to reach and touch the incomplete pieces of the time machine. If any ‘doubting Thomases’ have somehow managed to retain their skepticism after the vanishing of the timepiece, it will be difficult for them to maintain such feelings after the Chronicler has professed to having touched the time machine.

The heterodiegetic narrative—or, the Time Traveller’s story about his experiences in the future—combines several of the effects present in the novel’s homodiegetic narrative. Recall that the words ‘said’ by the Time Traveller fall outside of the Chronicler’s realm of experience. He has never time travelled. He has never been to the year 802,701. He has never received the gift of a flower from the Eloi. He has never seen a colony of Morlocks in the half-light, nor heard the

unceasing thrum of their infernal machines. He has never been attacked by a mutated crustacean-like creature as the planet slowly suffocated around him. The Time Traveller's narrative is pure invention based on distant memory. The Chronicler has only *heard* about these things, and he has only heard of them *once*.

Despite this lack of common experience, the Chronicler attempts to recreate nearly every single moment of the Time Traveller's eight day journey into the future. The desperate but effective attempts by the Chronicler to simulate the speech and the experiences of his friend stretch towards imbuing the Time Traveller's account with another level of realism. Take, for example, one of the passages devoted to describing not only the process of time travel, but also the *sensation* of the experience:

“I am afraid I cannot convey the peculiar sensations of time travelling. They are excessively unpleasant. There is a feeling exactly like that one has upon a switchback—of a helpless headlong motion! I felt the same horrible anticipation, too, of an imminent smash. As I put on pace, night followed day like the flapping of a black wing. The dim suggestion of the laboratory seemed presently to fall away from me, and I saw the sun hopping swiftly across the sky, leaping it every minute, and every minute marking a day. I supposed the laboratory had been destroyed and I had come into the open air. I had a dim impression of scaffolding, but I was already going too fast to be conscious of any moving things. The slowest snail that ever crawled dashed by too fast for me.” (Wells 42)

The language that the Chronicler utilizes in trying to re-imagine the experience of time travel is composed of faded, incomplete images and gorgeous metaphors which scratch at the surface of feeling, motion, and interiority. Whether or not the Time Traveller articulated the process of time travel in such terms will never be known. Nevertheless, with the aid of the Chronicler, the Time Traveller is able to feel, see, and suppose. Both of the narratorial voices are speaking simultaneously in this embedded narrative, thereby invoking the entwined consciousness.

IV. The Evolution of Mankind: the Entwined Consciousness and Thematic Representation

Having studied the entwined consciousness in relation to the narrative's structure and then the story itself, it is now necessary to examine its thematic significance. Like most of Wells' novels, *The Time Machine* is concerned with the evolutionary fate of humanity. This crucial topic of continuous growth pertains to two very specific realms: the biological and the social. The former refers to the traditional Darwinian evolution, in which a species adapts to changes in its environment over time by selecting the most favorable traits. The latter, however, monitors the environment in which man must adapt; the technologies and morals of mankind which play a large role in shaping its surroundings should be objectively evaluated to safeguard the furthest future imaginable. In order to produce the best possible outcome for the "later" descendants of the "present" humanity, these two areas must be irrevocably intertwined. Furthermore, for mankind to properly and prosperously progress, it must carefully track its growth in each of these domains to ensure that its optimal future can always be secured.

In *The Time Machine*, social problems are the root cause of unfavorable biological evolution. After the banishment of the enslaved lower classes to a mechanistic underworld, the human species grew into two very different creatures: the fairylike Eloi and the beastly Morlocks. The old slaves have become the new bloodthirsty lords of the Earth, while the now enfeebled descendants of the once omnipotent rich have been turned into their complacent and pacified cattle. Frank McConnell aptly depicts the horror latent in such a harsh, quasi-cannibalistic division between the biological descendants of humanity: "Not until the end of his stay in 802,701 does he come to the full realization of that world's terror, the realization that the two distinct species into which man has evolved are now predator and prey, acting out a massive and bloody ritual of self-consumption" (79-80). In the distant world of 802, 701, the children of

man harvest and devour their biological siblings; the observation of such bestial savagery deeply unsettles the Time Traveller—who had expected to discover a perfected and enlightened society of academics—and paints a rather bleak future for mankind.

Instead of opening this section with an examination of the event which created this sharp divergence in man's evolution, this analysis will begin by scrutinizing man's descendants, because it is only after one has inspected and understood these terrible products of human decision and the corruption of temporality that the true horror of this partite future will be allowed to sink in: time has caused the Eloi and the Morlocks to barely resemble the human beings that they once were; they are shadows of humanity—twisted ghosts who possess humanoid shapes and humanlike behavior—and these abject similarities in such foreign creatures make the Eloi and the Morlocks all the more horrifying. Furthermore, these childlike elves and their simian counterparts are implied to be descended from the English people, because the machine is only capable of moving through the fourth dimension of time. The sophisticated, industrious, and hyper-civilized citizens of the great empire on which the sun never set have been reduced to gibbering, frivolous children and white macabre apes; such a realization would certainly shock and appall any of Wells' contemporaries, and it certainly seems to resonate deeply with his characters, the Time Traveller and the Chronicler.

However, the anxiety created by these two species extends beyond a simple comprehension that these creatures were once human. The Eloi will serve as an excellent starting point in this quest to fully realize the disquiet externally projected by the Chronicler in the Time Traveller's transcribed narrative. After all, as one examines these sprite-like creatures in increasing amounts of detail, the more foreboding their existence becomes:

He was a slight creature—perhaps four feet high—clad in a purple tunic, girdled at the waist with a leather belt. Sandals or buskins—I could not clearly distinguish which—

were on his feet; his legs were bare to the knees, and his head was bare. Noticing that, I noticed for the first time how warm the air was. He struck me as being a very beautiful and graceful creature, but indescribably frail. His flushed face reminded me of the more beautiful kind of consumptive—that hectic beauty which we used to hear so much... In another moment, we were standing face to face, I and this fragile thing out of futurity. He came straight up to me and laughed into my eyes. The absence from his bearing of any sign of fear struck me at once. Then he turned to the two others who were following them and spoke to them in a very strange and very sweet and liquid tongue (Wells 45). The Eloi are depicted as elegant and angelic human miniatures. Their beauty is immediately apparent to the Time Traveller, but after a second look at their sublime forms, he discovers an underlying ambience of extreme debility. He notices that these people are “indescribably frail” and “consumptive.” There is an overwhelming, incommunicable aura of emaciated infirmity which encompasses their entire physical form. The Eloi are bareheaded and only garbed from the thighs up, an image which even more closely associates them with ailing children.

So much time has passed that the speech of the Eloi has degenerated from anything which even remotely resembles the English language. There is no harshness to their speech; their words are the very definition of mellifluous, a quality which seems as if it might belong to some sort of perfected form of communication. However, as the Time Traveller quickly learns, there is no complexity to their speech. In fact, the language of the Eloi is so simple that the Time Traveller achieves full fluency in their honeyed tongue within two or three days. Furthermore, the Eloi can only express the most rudimentary of concepts. Their sentences are short, often only consisting of a few syllables. When confronted with the Time Traveller’s verbosity and impressive command of language, they are completely incapable of comprehending his meaning.

Their language is not the only simple component of these downscaled fairy creatures. The Eloi cannot seem to focus for any period of time which extends beyond a few minutes. They are

painted as a listless, lazy, and inattentive bunch; they flit from attractive object to attractive object, caring little for anything of substance. Their movements and rationales seem to be firmly rooted in an immature childishness; they do not seem to be capable of ever moving beyond this state, as the Time Traveller believes that intellectual growth is no longer a part of their nature. Whether this utter lack of focus and shallow inclination towards beauty is an inherited quality from their ancestors, the rich, or is a newfound trait derived from their domicile and bovine role in the year 802, 701 is ultimately unknown.

Their clothing also produces a sense of anxiety which is externally amplified by the Chronicler. The Eloi wear what one might consider to be simple garments; their wardrobe consists of leather belts, colorful tunics, and intricate sandals. None of this is particularly remarkable until one realizes that such accoutrements require a degree of skill that the Eloi are not capable of imitating. They are never engaged in any industry; they do nothing but frolic and play. Furthermore, the Eloi do not possess any of the requisite materials needed to make their elaborate apparel; cows, the usual suppliers of leather, have been rendered extinct, there are no dyes handy to color their motley cloth, and these people do not even know what technology is. How then, are they able to clothe themselves? Where do these products materialize from?

In describing these creatures and these materials as he has, the Chronicler embeds the narrative with a pervasive sense of dread. Although the Time Traveller eventually comes to the conclusion that something else must exist in this reimagined Eden, the Chronicler implants his discussion of the Eloi with several seeds of disquiet. There is supposed to be a resonating sense of something not quite right about the continued existence of these innocent invalids. They are not to be idealized, they are to be pitied.

The Morlocks are depicted as being more competent and industrious than the Eloi, but they are also portrayed as monstrous animals. Where the Eloi are sympathized with, the Morlocks are rendered Other. When the Time Traveller climbs down one of the planet's many access holes to the underground, he encounters a pack of Morlocks:

It was all very indistinct: the heavy smell, the big unmeaning shapes, the obscene figures lurking in the shadows, and only waiting for the darkness to come at me again... In a moment, I was clutched by several hands, and there was no mistaking that they were trying to haul me back. I struck another light, and waved it in their dazzled faces. You can scarce imagine how nauseatingly inhuman they looked—those pale, chinless faces and great, lidless, pinkish-grey eyes!—as they stared in their blindness and bewilderment (Wells, 66-67).

Descriptions of these creatures are also much more indistinct than the ones which strive to encompass the Eloi. One possible explanation for this that utilizes the entwined consciousness is that the Time Traveller never truly got a good 'look' at the Morlocks, which means that the Chronicler might have had less to work with when he described them in the transcribed narrative. After all, the Time Traveller only ever glimpsed the nocturnal Morlocks when a brief flash of light can pierce the inky blackness that heralds their arrival.

The absence of a concrete image means that the Chronicler must base his work once more in tenuous wisps and perceived sensations, like he does in the passage where the Time Traveller describes the penultimate experience of time travel. The inability to fully realize just what a Morlock might look like makes them all the more terrifying. Furthermore, the Morlocks are portrayed as monstrous, ape-like beings. They possess features which are like those found on a man, and yet these features have somehow been eerily altered by the passage of time. In a way, their devolution is much more apparent than the Eloi's; they resemble the chimpanzees from which man is believed to have biologically "sprung."

It is important to note, however, that while the evolution of man has been witnessed by the Time Traveller, he has never actually viewed the process of evolution. He would have to be an immortal entity which watches and waits for hundreds of thousands of years in order to observe the painstakingly slow changes that would occur as humanity began to adapt to its new circumstances; it would be eons before the Morlocks' vision acclimated to the rayless underground, and ages before the Eloi began to shrink in stature. Therefore, the Time Traveller sees two of the products of man's evolution; he does not actually see them morph from human beings to humanoid or human-like creatures. Despite his inability to witness the full transformation of his species from man to manlike, the entwined consciousness of the Chronicer and the Time Traveller is able to piece together a possible explanation of the future's evolutionary divide:

The Upper-world people might once have been the favoured aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants; but that had long since passed away. The two species that had resulted from the evolution of man were sliding down towards, or had already arrived at, an altogether new relationship. The Eloi, like the Carolingian kings, had decayed to a mere beautiful futility. They still possessed the earth on sufferance: since the Morlocks, subterranean for innumerable generations, had come at last to find the daylight surface intolerable. And the Morlocks made their garments, I inferred, and maintained them in their habitual needs, perhaps through the survival of an old habit of service. They did it as a standing horse paws with his foot, or as a man enjoys killing animals in sport: because ancient and departed necessities had impressed it on the organism. But, clearly, the old order was already in part reversed. The Nemesis of the delicate ones was creeping on apace. Ages ago, thousands of generations ago, man had thrust his brother man out of the ease and the sunshine. And now that brother was coming back—changed! (Wells 68)

Within this passage, there is most certainly a rather pointed warning about continued class conflict. The predecessors of the Eloi—the rich and powerful elites—banished the predecessors

of the Morlocks—the impoverished working classes—to some sort of overcrowded, mechanical city in the pitch black depths of the planet; such a move seemingly freed the rich from the burden of the poor, and enabled them to live in unending comfort for the rest of their conceivable lives. Meanwhile, the enslaved and discarded poor toiled away in their new subterranean slums, providing and creating everything that the rich would ever need to maintain their hedonistic pleasures and comfortable lifestyle. This allegorical tale of displacement and greed quite clearly condemns any harsh separations or divisions between the upper classes (“the Upper-world people”) and the lower classes (their “brother [men]” who were “subterranean for innumerable generations”).

But does this warning stem from the Time Traveller or from the Chronicler? Parts of the text which are like this one tend to seem more like a social critique than like a detailed summary of the Time Traveller’s exploits. These deviations from the narrative’s plot may not be the thoughts that the Time Traveller had during his experiences. It is entirely possible that they might have occurred to him as he recapitulated his voyage into the future; the mere act of talking about his experiences could have granted him a new perspective mid-speech. Or, these asides might have never belonged to the Time Traveller, and are instead products of the Chronicler’s musings on his friend’s tale. It is impossible to determine which of the two narrators have come to the conclusion that the Eloi were once the elite and the Morlocks their impoverished masses. Even if this explanation of mankind’s future was never even conceived by the Time Traveller in his original narrative, this passage, the result, is still a collaborative effort. No matter who thought of what, this conclusion was able to come to fruition because of the entwined narrative; one man heard the words of another, and then depicted them as the above passage.

The real horror, however, has yet to manifest itself. Having examined the results and the ultimate cause, one must realize that all of this tragedy and self-consumption came about because of a single, irrevocable choice; the callous decision of rich and the powerful to isolate and sequester the poor thousands and thousands of years ago has brought unforeseeable and dire consequences upon their descendants. They no longer possess any real power; their lack of exercise and the absence of any real hardship have left them docile and unassuming. And while the impoverished masses have finally seized control of their lives and their livelihoods, they have usurped their uncaring masters at the cost of their humanity.

This passage assigns an enormous gravity to human choice. Actions have effects which last for “ages”; they have consequences which span “innumerable generations.” The story of the Eloi and the Morlocks is supposed to chastise its audience, and warn them that all decisions, regardless of their relative sizes, can provoke unimaginable consequences. But the outcome of man might not be the dystopic Eden of the Eloi and the Morlocks. If mankind changes its course for the better, a more pleasant future might be achieved. After all, human choice is granted an unprecedented amount of power in *The Time Machine*; if enough will is exerted, humanity might be capable of altering an established future.

V. The Return Journey: Concluding Remarks

In creating such a strong impression of memory and by continually validating it, *The Time Machine* can be read as the eulogy of a dear friend. The entwined consciousness allows one man to celebrate not only the incredible achievements of his friend, but to also immortalize his unique essence as the Chronicler remembers it:

He, I know—for the question has been discussed among us long before the Time Machine was made—thought but cheerlessly of the Advancement of Mankind, and saw in the growing pile of civilisation only a foolish heaping that must inevitably fall back upon and destroy its makers in the end. If that is so, it remains for us to live as though it were not so. 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—shrivelled 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 heart of man. (Wells 90)

It has been three years since the Time Traveller's departure back into the ever-flowing time-stream, and despite knowing what the future might be like several hundred thousand years from his 'now', the Chronicler remains hopeful in the conclusion of his homodiegetic narrative. The final paragraph of *The Time Machine* demonstrates many of the stylistic effects caused by the entwined consciousness that have been discussed in this piece: it speculates about an event based on memories of that event (what the proper way to go about living should be, in the wake of what shape the future might take); it validates the Time Traveller's story one last time with the reemergence of the unknown flowers (the physical proof of his friend's journey which the Chronicler has held on to); and it treads a thin line between the External and Internal I (the thoughts of the Chronicler and the thoughts of the Time Traveller exist on a similar plane). However, this conclusion also results in a breaking of the entwined consciousness. Their

narratives will no longer coexist, because their stories are no longer intertwined. In telling the story of *The Time Machine*, the Chronicler has laid his friend to rest.

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