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## SCIENCE FICTION AND H.G. WELLS

Dr. ANURUDDH SINGH SENGAR

Associate Professor, Bansal Institute of Engineering & Technology, Lucknow

E-mail: [singhanuruddh899@gmail.com](mailto:singhanuruddh899@gmail.com)



Dr. ANURUDDH SINGH  
SENGAR

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### Abstract

In this paper we discussed about the purpose of H. G. Wells and science fiction. It is mainly to answer the theoretical questions: To know what science fiction is and what role fantasy plays in it. Similarly, an acquaintance with theoretical approaches to Fantasy may help us to realise its role as mode of thinking in science fiction. Science is an integral aspect of life in the twentieth century which has witnessed the fundamental metamorphosis in the patterns of life as a consequence of scientific and technological developments. Science fiction has two faces one pointing to the world of fantasy and other to reality. The two elements, fantasy and reality chiefly control the thematic content of science fiction.

**Keywords:** Willing suspension of disbelief, Metamorphosis, Manifestation and Paramount.

### Introduction

In its initial phase, Science fiction was criticised as a brash, emotionally dry, and a commercial form which appeared in Pulp Magazines but today it is an established genre of fiction. Readers from different spheres of life are turning to it as an important "Sign of times." The supreme blend of fantasy and reality as exhibited by H.G. Wells is luring more and more readers. Karel Capek's Play *R.U.R.* opened a new vista in the development of science fiction and Huxley's *Brave New World* widened its scope. In our time, after Isaac Asimov, science fiction has become as important as the social novel and touches man's all aspects of life.

### The Study

The purpose of the present undertaking is to explore the relationship between Fantasy and reality in the major British Science Fiction from 1890

to 1970 in their diverse manifestations. Herein an attempt has been made to find answer to the following questions: (1) Why does a writer create fantasy? (2) How does a writer make fantasy acceptable to the readers? and (3) What is a writer's approach to reality?

The period 1890 to 1970 is selected for the exploration because science fiction acquired an independent status as a genre with the novels of H.G. Wells who was a pivotal figure in British Science Fiction from 1890 to 1914.

In 1964, Michael Moorcock's editorial writings in *New World* paved a way for the emergence of the *New Wave* in British Science Fiction. J.G. Ballard, a leading British Science Fiction writer in 1960s anticipated Moorcock's Clarion call by creating the apocalyptic Science fiction, and shaped the *New Wave* in this way. The *New Wave*

preceded British Science Fiction after 1960s.

During the Victorian England, the Industrial Revolution accelerated the transformation in the Material aspects of human life. The steady flow from the rural, agricultural setting to an urban factory-based environment had brought about a significant change in the way of life in England. Alongside came a new awareness of life. The works of Erasmus Darwin on Natural History, Dalton on atom, Mesmer on animal Magnetism and Galvani on bio-electricity contributed significantly to it. Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1818) is an important Science fiction which owes to the scientific speculation of its time, the researches on bio-electricity and basis itself on the hypothetical, assumption regarding an animated Monster. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1866) is a fictional representation about the ambivalence of human nature and in it Dr. Jekyll, the epitome of Victorian respectability, transforms himself into the shape of the Criminal Hyde as a result of taking a chemical concoction. After Mary Shelley and Stevenson, H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, Arthur C. Clarke, contributed significantly to British Science Fiction. In the modern time, science fiction came to be recognized as a distinct literacy genre, and it is important to know various distinctive features of science fiction.

### 1) Literature of Change

Science Fiction presents wonder, action and romance and performs its role as literature of change. As Arthur C. Clarke in his *Kalinga Award Speech* explains it, the Science Fiction writer "by mapping out possible futures as well as a good many impossible ones... encourages in his readers flexibility of mind, readiness to accept and even welcome change- in one word, adaptability."<sup>1</sup>

The Science Fiction writers have focused attention on overpopulation, pollution, ecological imbalance, automation, mind manipulation, transplantation of tissues, travel in space, encounter with aliens etc.

### 2) Dependence on Science

The Science Fiction writers create a non-existent condition on the basis of the hypothesis or the Primary assumption or the basic premise which

is based on accepted principle, a fact in science. "What-happens-if...." approach is basic to the most Science Fiction. Essential to science fiction are scientific or technological instruments. Science fiction often transports a character to the other world, but the entry to the other world is always dependent upon a scientific or technological device. The central concern, however, remains the effects of science on Man. Ben Bova observes: "Perhaps this is the ultimate role of science fiction to act as an interpreter of science to humanity.... only knowledgeable people can wisely decide how to use science and technology, for human kind's benefit."<sup>2</sup>

### 3) Predominance of Ideas

The most characteristic feature of the genre is the predominance of ideas over everything else. The plot stands or falls by the idea. Characters themselves are sometimes ideas personified, and the narration is the exposition of an idea which is drawn almost exclusively from the Sciences- Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Geology and their applications in science and technology.

### 4) Extrapolation

Science Fiction is frequently set in the future and has often been called *Futuristic Fiction*. This rests on the effects of science and technology on man in future. Sam Lundwall writes:

Science Fiction does not predict the future, except accidentally. It extrapolates, it amplifies, it magnifies. It deals with changes, the nature that inevitably must change our world whether we like it or not. How we will react to these changes and how they will effect our lives, that is the rub.<sup>3</sup>

Science Fiction extrapolates scientific, social or political, changes related to the present time into future. Ben Bova views that Science Fiction opens as many futures as possible for man, and states "Science fiction writers are not in the business of predicting future. They do something much more important. They try to show the many possible futures that lie open to us."<sup>4</sup>

The common denominator of these views is the orientation to the future, the foreseeing capacity of science fiction for the possible effects of science

and technology upon man.

### 5) Symbol, Metaphor, Allegory

Science Fiction yields its meaning when we consider its devices and artifacts as symbols of wish fulfillment, hope, anxiety and fear; its altered setting and alien characters as metaphors of human predicament and manifestations of human nature; its plots as loose allegories of human life.

### 6) Modern Mythology

In our own time, when scientific progress and technological advancements have changed the face of the earth, human beings need new myths to explain the inexplicable, to give shape to their unconscious racial and personal obsessions and to recreate their new archetypal images. Science have taken the place of old gods in the minds of many people. Science fiction as the literature translating the ideas of science into the fictional situations may be expected to take on the role of the new mythology.

The different distinctive features such as change, dependence on science, predominance of ideas, technique of extrapolation, new symbols, metaphors and modern mythology based on science, constitute the genre of science fiction. Different researchers have approached science fiction taking into consideration some of its distinctive features. Let us examine these various approaches to science fiction.

In 1926, Hugo Gernsback, the founder of the first speciality magazine of science fiction, tried to demonstrate the category "Scientification" (his term for the genre) as "a charming romance intermingled with scientific facts and prophetic vision."<sup>5</sup>

By "Scientification", he means the Jules Verne–H.G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe–type of story, a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision. Kingsley Amis defined science fiction to an audience of literary scholars at Princeton in 1958 as "That class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesised on the basis of some innovation in science and technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether

human or extra-terrestrial in origin."<sup>6</sup> Science fiction creates a world which may seem impossible but it is based on scientific ground. The situation may be either human or extra-terrestrial in origin.

John W. Campbell, the most influential editor that this genre had, wrote in 1952: "Fiction is only dreams written out; Science Fiction consists of hopes and dreams and fear (for some dreams are nightmare) of a technologically based society."<sup>7</sup> He proposes that Science Fiction should be viewed as a literary medium akin to science itself. Scientific methodology involves a precipitation which not only explains the known phenomenon but also predicts the new and still undiscovered phenomenon.

Sam Moskowitz considered Science Fiction as "a branch of fantasy identifiable by the fact that it ceases the willing suspension of disbelief...by utilizing an atmosphere of scientific credibility for imaginative speculation in physical science, space, time, social science and philosophy"<sup>8</sup>. This view envisages that science fiction is related to fantasy. The two important aspects of science fiction are willing suspension of disbelief and scientific credibility.

Robert A. Heinlein, in his essay, 'Science Fiction : Its Nature, Faults and Virtues' defines science fiction as "realistic speculation about possible future events based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present and one through understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method."<sup>9</sup> According to him, science fiction deals with realistic speculation about possible future in scientific way. It is based on the adequate knowledge of the real world.

The different approaches to science fiction unfold that on the one hand, science fiction points to fantasy, and, on the other to reality. It is important to point out here that reality is understood in different ways. The practitioners of the mimetic mode narrates the familiar, usual, known experiences, strictly adhering to facts, and faithfully represents the outside reality. The stream of consciousness writers asserted that reality is in a state of flux, and they tried to give a moment to moment record of changing reality. To them, reality is not static but dynamic. The psychological novelists

like D.H. Lawrence used traditional techniques to explore psychological reality by focusing on that part of human personality which is submerged in the subconscious. To them, reality is internal. We have learned to doubt interpretability of what we see or learn. Scientists have to reconcile themselves to one kind of uncertainty. They cannot fix both position and momentum of an electron anymore than they can pin a butterfly to a cork and still expect to study its flight patterns. Ultra-violet rays are not visible without the help of a spectrometer. Science has made it hard for us to ignore the illusionary nature of our sense data.

From the standpoint of psychologists, reality is a name that we give to something which emerges out of the interaction between the inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective. Our normal day to day experiences can be very well narrated in the "realistic terms". However, for the expression of the unfamiliar, unusual and strange experiences such as an encounter with aliens, we need an altogether different mode. That is where the fantasy mode come significantly into play. Fantasy does not copy empirical world but creates a world which follows its own laws. It deals with a world which does not exist in empirical sense; it deals with the unknown, unseen and unfamiliar world.

However, the term, fantasy mode needs not to be viewed reductively, it cannot be understood in the same sense. The science fiction writers have made an innovative use of this mode and critics have examined it from variety of angles.

Science fiction, at present, makes us realize the reality of life as it is: our universe, our planet, our life on this earth, our DNA and our sociological, biological and economic life. It also throws light on the future life of mankind on this physically earth and poses the problems that we can face thousands of years ahead. The future is fluid and science fiction suggests options for us to choose and the options can be chosen epistemologically, not by mere guesswork.

Well's contribution to science fiction is immense and of paramount importance.

When Mary Shelly wrote *Frankenstein* (1818), science fiction had neither a name nor any recognition as an independent form of literature. After Mary Shelley, there was a prolonged gap. The popularity of the form dramatically increased in the later Victorian decades with Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and William Morris's *News From Nowhere* (1890). After Mary Shelley, Stevenson and William Morris, H.G. Wells is the pivotal figure in British Science Fiction. Wells who began publishing in the mid-1890s attributed an independent status to science fiction and established it. Mary Shelley planted the flag on the new territories but wells explored them, settled them and developed them.<sup>10</sup> This is partly because of his mastery of a range of representative themes of time travel in *The Time Machine* (1895), of biological mutation in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), of invisibility in *The Invisible Man* (1897), of the alien-Invasion in *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and partly because his stories embody a new generic combination. *The Time Machine* portrays the process of evolution to the very end of time. *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is a tale of a scientist who turns animals into men; a comment on the co-existence of the noble ideals and base appetites in the same person. *The Invisible Man* shows how a man who has become entirely different is hounded by the mob to the point of no return, reminiscent of the persecutions of the Frankenstein's monster. *The War of the Worlds* (1898) is a powerful documentary on an imaginary Martian invasion of the Earth as seen by an ordinary English man. *The World Set Free* (1914) concerns with the catastrophic world after nuclear warfare and then the rise of the world state. Besides Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the detective stories, turned to science fiction during the period ranging from 1890 to the World War I. Characterisation coupled with humour and science lifted his *The Lost World* (1912) above the level of an average adventure story. It brings the present into the contact with pre-historic past. Professor Challenger leads an exploring party to the mountains up the Amazon to fulfil his quest in search of living reptiles who had survived after the Jurassic period. In *The Poison Belt* (1913), he for-sees the poisoning of the atmosphere of the earth, and gives a

humorous treatment to the catastrophic story. Doyle has used fantasy as a mode, and he has raised the adventure story to the level of science fiction and incorporated humour in it. The effective use of fantasy as a mode is made by Wells, a single dominating figure in the realm of science fiction in the period from 1890 to World War I. In this chapter, the following representative fiction, *The Time Machine* (1895), *The War of the Worlds* (1898) have been selected for a detailed exploration.

Wells lays stress on the principle of a single premise in fantasy which he explains in his preface to scientific romances:

As soon as the magic trick has been done the whole business of fantasy writer is to keep everything else human and real. Touches of prosaic detail are imperative and a rigorous adherence to the hypothesis. Any extra fantasy outside the cordial assumption immediately gives a touch of irresponsible stillness to the invention. So as soon as the hypothesis is launched the whole interest becomes the interest of looking at human feelings and human ways, from the new angle that has been acquired.<sup>11</sup>

The principle of adherence to a single premise seems to Wells the only possible way of giving credibility to the fantastic. The fantastic world, 'Where anything can happen', seems to him simply uninteresting and foolish, and as such it has no right to exist. He emphasizes upon rigorous adherence to the hypothesis, use of commonplace terms and human touches in fantasy so as to make it acceptable to readers.

In *The Time Machine*, Wells himself makes fantasy acceptable to readers by providing a scientific and rational ground to the hypothesis so that it sounds reasonably rational. The basic assumption in the fiction is that a man travels to a remote future by treating time as the fourth dimension. Length, breadth and height are the other accepted dimensions and time is an assumed dimension. The narrator rationally argues the possibility of this fourth dimension as under:

'Scientific people', proceeded the Time Traveller, ..."Know very well that Time is only a kind

of space. Here is a popular scientific diagram, a weather record. This line I trace with my finger shows the movement of barometer. Yesterday it was high, yesterday night it fell, then this morning it rose again, and so gently upward to here. Surely mercury did not trace this line in any of the dimensions of space generally recognised? But certainly it traced such a line and that line, therefore, we must conclude was along the Time Dimension."<sup>12</sup>

The Time Traveller asserts to the Medical Man and to the Psychologist that there is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of space. Our consciousness moves along with it. It is this fantastic assumption which the writer wants his readers to accept without hesitation. Once this assumption is accepted, the writer describes the mechanism of the time machine following a realistic model. The time machine is a glittering metallic framework, scarcely larger than a small clock and very delicately made. There is ivory in it and some transparent crystalline substance. The Time Traveller says to the Medical Man, Filby, psychologist and the provincial mayor:

Now I want you clearly to understand that this lever, being pressed over, sends the machine gliding into the future and this other reverses the motion. This saddle represents the seat of a time traveller. Presently I am going to press the lever and off the machine go. It will Vanish, Pass into the future Time, and disappear..... Look at the table too and satisfy yourselves there is no trickery (9).

He invests the mechanism of the time machine with precise and familiar details. Besides the realistic description of the mechanism of lever, the fantastic beings, Eloi and the Morlocks, are presented in a realistic way. They have human features like face, hands, legs, body. The eyes of Morlocks are like those of owls and cat. Nothing serves so well for the authenticity of fantasy as the authenticity of human reactions to the events. The Time Traveller's courage, strangeness, fear and anxiety are real. His task to venture into the unknown future world is adventurous, and he can fulfill his purpose because of his immense courage. When he travels to the future world unknown to him, he experiences strangeness of everything, the

sick jarring and swaying of the machine and above all, the feeling of prolonged falling. When his time machine is lost he becomes helpless in a strange world, and experiences as actual physical sensation in his throat and feels as if his breathing has stopped. As the narrator puts it, "I suppose it was the unexpected nature of loss that maddened me. I felt hopelessly cut off from own kind - a strange animal in an unknown world" (44). He feels like one who is isolated from human beings on the earth. He is a stranger desirous of visiting some unknown world, he seems to be over-anxious to get out of it. In a Colossal ruin near the great house, he notices the glaring eyeballs in the darkness and experiences the terror of darkness. "I was oppressed with perplexity and doubt", he says, "Once or twice I had a feeling of intense fear for which I could perceive no definite reason.(63)" Oppressed by perplexity, doubt and intense fear in the future world, his sense of security is threatened.

Wells makes fantasy acceptable by providing it the rational ground of science and by investing the strange new world with familiar details. While the land remains strange and unfamiliar, the emotions and feelings are maintained at the level of real.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Industrialization, had received a momentum. Textile mills were opened in Manchester and new industries were launched in urban areas. The age of machines was set in and the process of migration of the rural population to the urban areas was initiated. New products were manufactured and jobs were made available to workers. As a consequence of the rise of Industrialization, the two classes, the rich and the poor, the industrialists and the workers were formed in the industrial society of the 1890s. The rich class, the industrialists exploited workers as a consequence of aggregated money power in the hands of the few. Wells is dissatisfied with this aspect of the contemporary reality. Thirty years later, Wells was to define this problem in definite terms:

There can be little question that the existence of this irresponsible rich class, so

conspicuous in contemporary life, involves very considerable waste of human resources, vulgarization of youthful imaginations and a widespread demoralization of potential producers. Moreover, it carries with it the possibility of powerful, irrational interventions in the political and general mental life of the community."<sup>13</sup>

He isolates this aspect of the contemporary reality– the irresponsibility of the rich class and exploitation of workers and deems it as a significant sign of the time further; he studies its future implications. In *The Time Machine* he extrapolates his dissatisfaction with contemporary reality in the future society in the year 802, 700, and presents us an enlarged, vivid picture of it in a set of two types of creatures who differ from one another in more respects than in what they resemble.

In the future world, the Time Traveller finds mankind housed in splendid shelters. The population is balanced. Diseases are stamped out. There is no danger of war or solitary violence; no danger from wild beasts. He feels: "It was natural on the golden evening that I should jump at the social paradise." Besides these utopian aspects of the future society, the Time Traveller finds men of the eight hundredth millennium beautiful and graceful but frail and child like with a "dresden China type prettiness." Evolution has smoothed the features of mankind, but removed strength along with ruggedness. The Eloi, the upper world people, live on the crust of the earth. These people who pursue pleasure, comfort and beauty are the descendants of the present day 'haves'. They can recruit machines to enjoy the life of ease without effort. This very dependence on machine brings about the decay of their powers.

They are content to live in ease and delight, making use of the labour of their fellowmen. The narrator observes: "... very pleasant was their day, as pleasant as the day in the field. Like the cattle, they knew no enemies and provided no needs (97)." Assured of their wealth and comfort, they favour aristocracy and exploited their mechanical servants, the Morlocks. The Eloi stand for the industrialists, masters, capitalists and oppressors. The Morlocks are the 'have nots' who become adapted to the

conditions of continuous labour. Although they are assured of their lives and their work, they live in caverns inside the earth in inhuman conditions. Thus, they are reduced to the level of mechanical servants who are deprived of their spirit. The Time Traveller observes to artificial under world:

Beneath my feet, then, the earth must be tunnelled enormously, and these tunnelling were the habitat of the new race. The presence of ventilating shafts and wells along the hill slopes everywhere, in fact, except along the river valley showed however were its ramifications. What so natural, then, as to assume that it was in this artificial under-world that such work as was necessary to the comfort of the daylight race was done? The notion was so plausible that I at once accepted it, and went on to assume how of this splitting of the human species (59-60).

In the future world, the earth appears to be enormously tunnelled inside and there are ventilating shafts and wells along the hill slopes. The Time Traveller travels along the tunnel inside and at last sees a vast arched cavern which stretches into utter darkness. The noise of machinery gets louder. The under-world is stuffy and oppressive as the narrative goes:

Necessarily my memory is Vague. Great shapes like big machines rose out of the dimness, and cast grotesque black shadows, in which dim spectral Morlocks sheltered from the glare. The place, by the by was very stuffy and oppressive, and the fail habitus of freshly shed blood was in the air.... The Morlocks at any move carnivorous (67).

Inside the earth, at depth, the Morlocks live in an abnormal condition. In caverns, they work on machine for the sake of the upper- world people, the Eloi. They are no better than slaves, subjected to the tyranny of their masters, the Eloi, who enjoy the fruits of their toil. The Morlocks have no freedom whatsoever and it is thought to be the right especially of the Eloi. The Time Traveller sees the exploitation of the Morlocks by their masters:

They were there, they would no doubt have to pay rent, and not a little of it, for the ventilation of their caverns; and if they refuse, they would starve or suffocated for arrears. Such of them as were so constituted, as to be miserable and rabillious would die; and, in the end, the balance being permanent, the survivors would become as well adapted to the conditions of underground life, and as happy in their way, as the upper-world people were to theirs (61).

If the Morlocks refuse to pay money for their residential charges, they are made to starve or sometimes to suffocate for arrears. Their is a miserable condition. If the Morlocks is attempt to rebel against the Eloi, an attempt to revolt is suppressed, using an iron hand. In this world, the penalty for revolt is nothing short of death. In contrast to the exploited condition of the Morlocks, the Eloi are free to roam anywhere, and enjoy anywhere. With no work, they live in ease and delight upon the labours of their fellowmen. Commenting upon the anti-utopian form of the future society, Damon Knight writes:

From a Parodied Morrisite model ("Communism" says the Time Traveller at first sight) through the discovery of degeneration and of persistence of class divisions, he arrives at the anti-utopian form most horrifying to the Victorians a run-down class society ruled by a grotesque equivalent of the nineteenth-century industrial proletariat.<sup>14</sup>

The Time Traveller knows that the roots of the Eloi Morlock situation go back to the slowly widening gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots'. The narrator writes:

At first, proceeding from the problems of our own age, it seemed clear as daylight to me that the gradual widenin of the present, merely temporary and social difference between the capitalist and laborer was the key to the whole position (60).

The Time Traveller is aware of contemporary reality of exploitation of workers, which he observes in the relationship between the Eloi and the Morlocks in the future world, in magnified and intensified form.

The two classes, the capitalist and the labour are formed in the future industrial society, and the class division is rigid. He feels that the exploitation of the Morlocks by the Eloi, leading to their degradation to an inhuman level, is the logical culmination of the contemporary reality of the exploitation in the industrial society of the 1890s. Kagarlitsky Yu has rightly pointed out:

*The Time Machine* was a remarkable triumph for the young satirist. In *The Time Machine*, he depicted the logical consequence of contemporary social and economic order which was generally regarded as natural and normal.<sup>15</sup>

To Patrick Parrinder, the Eloi and the Morlocks represent degeneration of human civilization.<sup>16</sup> According to Wells, the class conflicts lead to degeneration of human civilization and degradation of human life. Excessive dependence on machine atrophies human features. The episode of the Eloi and the Morlocks, although a demonstration of evolutionary decline seems to embody a warning of the possible consequence of the greed, complacency, and the rigid class division of the present society. The overall effect of all this is that in this machine age, man's mind weakened.

The last decade of the nineteenth century is notable for the scientific advance which was to affect human society. Researches in astronomy have changed some of our fundamental concepts about cosmos. The Victorians were curious about the reddish Planet Mars. What made them feel fascinated was the popular belief that there was life on this red Planet—a notion which was reinforced by Schiparellis. An interesting account of this intense belief is to be found in Mark Hillgas's article 'The First Invasion from Mars'<sup>17</sup> Wells accepts the contemporary reality of the popular interest of the Victorian people in Mars and considers it as an important sign of the time. This provides him the necessary excuse for the fantasy in *The War of the Worlds* (1898), which enables him to present it in a

magnified form for the purpose of stress.

In the fiction, The Martians, whose motives are quite incomprehensible to man, treat humans as though they were an obsolete race. This Darwinian fable, depicting an interplanetary struggle for survival, is the most influential of all alien contact stories. The narrator mentions that a great light was on the illuminated part of disc. Hundreds of observers, see the flame for ten nights and think of it as the result of some Volcanic eruption there. The first cylinder buries in England's sand, gathers to see the 'meteor'. The cylinder is artificial, hollow with an end that screws out. Each cylinder is a monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pines and smashing them aside. Tripod is a walking engine of glittering metal; articulate ropes of steel dangling from it and the clattering tumult of its passage mingling with the riot of the thunder. The Martians are inside the cylinder, and their peculiar appearance is due to evolutionary changes in their body. Their mouth is surrounded by the tentacles which are used for rapid movement and for blood sucking. Their body organs are modified for practical purposes. The whole complex apparatus of digestion, which makes the bulk of our bodies, does not exist in the Martians. They do not eat, much less digest. Instead, they take the fresh living blood of other creatures, and inject it into their own veins. The physiological advantage of the practice of injecting blood is more if one thinks of the tremendous waste of human time and energy required by digestive process. Men go happily or miserably depending upon whether they have healthy livers or sound gastric glands. But the Martians are lifted above all these organic fluctuation of mood and emotion. They are absolutely without sex, and therefore, without tumultuous emotions that arise from the difference among men. For reproduction they follow the budding process. They wear no clothing. They are evidently more sensible to changes of temperature than we are, changes of pressure do not affect their health seriously. So the Martians are more resistant and more evolved than human beings in some respects. They communicate among themselves with a peculiar sound, "Ulla, Ulla, Ulla." They experience heaviness of movement due to the



greater gravitational pull of the earth than that of Mars.

The Martians cause heavy destruction and finally drive human beings to the brink of defeat. A Metallic Tripod smites the Heat-Ray out of the funnel. In one night the valley is reduced to ashes. They discharge the Black smoke by means of rockets. The narrator highlights the mighty strength of the Martians which are able to paralyse human forces:

The Martians are able to discharge enormous clouds of black and poisonous vapours by means of rockets. They have smothered our batteries, destroyed Richmond, Kingston, and Wimbledon and are advancing slowly towards London, destroying everything on the way. It is impossible to stop them.<sup>18</sup>

They are the agents of death. They are not merely a handful of small sluggish creatures, but "They are minds swaying vast mechanical bodies"; and they can move swiftly and smite with such power that even the mightiest guns cannot stand against them. Before the mighty power of the Martians, the human race is feeble. The Londoners are sick of fear; they are stirring, running and sleeping. The advance scientific and dreadful weapons like 'Black-Smoke' and 'Heat-Ray' prove the superiority in the war power of the Martians against the human race. They destroy the important areas of London, explode stores of gun powder that they come upon; cut every telegraph wire and wreck the railways here and there. Farmers are out to defend their cattle-sheds, granaries and ripening root crops with arms in their hands. In Sunbury along the roads, there are dead bodies lying in contorted attitudes, horses as well as men, overturned carts and luggage, all covered thickly with black dust. The narrator says: "That pall of cindery powder made me think of what I had read of the destruction of Pompeii (788)." Commenting upon their superb intelligence and the comparative littleness of mankind, Mark Rose writes:

The contrast between the greatness of the Martian intelligence and the littleness of mankind that dominates the novel's opening recalls the familiar contrast between the greatness of the cosmos and human

littleness. Indeed, what Wells has done is to transfer the usual attributes of the physical cosmos-vastness, coldness, indifference- to the Martians. Significantly, the Martians in their fighting machines dwarf men physically, even as their great brains dwarf our intellectually. Their weapons- the heat ray, the poison gas are depersonalizing instruments of mass slaughter, and attempts to communicate, with them are as fruitless as if they are literary a force of nature."<sup>19</sup>

The Martians' reign of horror and terror shocks the people and they imagine what World War I and the Post-World War I hold in store for mankind. Wells' concern for civilization is evident from the way he presents the Martians as the advanced race, and Man's complacent and confident assumption of future and his place in the universe is roughly shaken. P.K. Krishnamoorthy, observes that Wells's fantasy in *The War of the Worlds* shows how fragile is the stability of our society in the face of the unknown.<sup>20</sup>

In fantasy, the imperialism of the Martians meets its nemesis at the hands of the terrestrial bacteria against which, they have no immunity. As Patrick Parrinder says this is by no means a single minded, anti-imperialist tale since the Martian's Path of escape from their native planet is one which mankind must eventually follow.<sup>21</sup> Wells's Epilogue hints strongly that the two races are destined to compete for the mastery of the universe:

We have learned now that we cannot regard this as being fenced in and a secure an abiding-place for man;

we can never anticipate the unseen good or evil that may come upon us suddenly out of space. It may be that in the larger design of the universe this invasion from Mars is not without its ultimate benefit for men; it had robbed us of that serene confidence in the future which is the most fruitful source of decadence, the gifts to human science it has brought enormous, and it has done much to promote the conception of the commonwealth of mankind... it may be, on the other hand, that the destruction of the

Martians is only a reprieve. To them, and not to us, perhaps, is the future ordained (827).

The ultimate benefit that the invasion may have brought about is scarcely utopian. Even the 'conception of the commonwealth of mankind' seems to be intended, in this context, only to turn the human race into a more efficient military unit. To mark Hillegas, *The War of The Worlds* is obviously intended to attack human complacency, as the narrator himself reminds us while discussing the benefits which "In the larger design of the universe", have come from the invasion.<sup>22</sup>

The desire to rule over others and to subdue others in the very germplasm of living beings whether they belong to the earth or to Mars. That is the reality. Here we have the source of all imperialism which leads to wars. We subjugate others, thinking that we are superior. But, set against a more powerful foe, we appear to be dwarfed. Through fantasy in *The War of the Worlds*, H.G. Wells highlights the insufficiency of the human race which seems helpless against the more powerful foes. In a way, it is a warning against complacency and smugness— the typical by-products of the Victorian belief that the scientific advance contains solutions to all problems. We must not forget that human beings on the planet earth are tiny specks in the vast cosmos. He highlights the littleness of mankind in the presence of the mighty, malevolent aliens and satirises the egoistic tendency of man who thinks that he (man) is the only powerful being in cosmos. Wells hints at 'The commonwealth of mankind'; the urgency of uniting together keeping aside our difference, and avoid a catastrophe for the betterment and upliftment of human society.

### Conclusion

Science Fiction suggests a hybrid form of novel, partaking of both ordinary fiction and elements of Science. One of the unacknowledged pleasures of reading Science fiction is that it challenges readers to decide whether what they are reading is within the bounds of the possible. The degree of a willing suspension of disbelief varies from one novel to another.

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