Assignment 01

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**Introduction**

*She was exactly like a child, she wanted to be with me always* (Wells, 1895). Herbert George Wells is one of the prominent Modern novelists. His first novel *The Time Machine* (1895) is regarded as the first Science Fiction novel. This novel brought a new subject under this genre that would last for centuries: science fiction. This novel appealed to a large number of audiences and obliged the writers to write beyond the limits of time. This book is justifiably considered a typical *Modern* as it discusses the subjects which were never discussed in history, but this author also could not defamiliarize him from the Victorian values. Victorian era is famous and perhaps the last era in the history of Britain when citizens were supposed to strictly follow the social roles defined by the government and where women were not equal to men rather their subjects. Women were defined as a feeble and fragile human class who were supposed to obey men in every aspect of life. Men used to judge them and define them and they were supposed to embrace those judgments and definitions (Gough, 1993). This was the result of a long European tradition where everyone believed the words of William Shakespeare: *Frailty thy name is a woman*. This tradition was preceded by almost all the Classics and succeeded by the Romantics and Victorians. There is a credit for Henrik Ibsen who wrote portrayed Woman revolt against this long subjugation albeit he was condemned in the start appreciated after the First Phase of Feminism. Wells also follows this tradition in his novel *The Time Machine* (1895) where his protagonist The Time Traveler defines the Eloi heroin Weena humorously and disgustingly. He portrays her a feeble, fragile, and childish character who is wholly dependent on him for her survival.

**Misogyny in The Time Machine**

Weena is one of the major characters of the novel and the narrator introduces her in a way that itself seems misogynistic. Misogyny is defined as a dislike towards women, but Mary Wollstonecraft believes that disregarding women's sex is also misogyny. She argues in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* that women are considered fragile because they accept the role of fragility in society. She writes: “I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves” (Wells, 1895). She argues that men disregard women and show 'misogyny', but the woman who always dreams to have a man who would lift the burden of their life cannot claim that they are being subjugated unjustifiably until they show will power to lift their burden at their shoulders. The Time Traveler introduces Weena in the Chapter-V calling her a like child who would always keep following him in the pursuance of safety: “She tried to follow me everywhere, and on my next journey out and about it went to my heart to tire her down, and leave her at last, exhausted and calling after me The Time Machine rather plaintively” (Wells, 1895). Then he shows as he does not care about her affection rather, he does not care about love and affection when he is on a mission unlike Weena who is continuously under the feelings of compassion towards him: “But the problems of the world had to be mastered. I had not, I said to myself, come into the future to carry on a miniature flirtation. Yet her distress when I left her was very great, her expostulations at the parting were sometimes frantic, and I think, altogether, I had as much trouble as comfort from her devotion” (Wells, 1895). The narrator might attempt to express that he is a caring but practical kind of person but a woman is still an emotional kind of creature even in the year 701,802 AD.

Weena appears as she has been taken as a metonymy who represents the whole woman class. The narrator reveals that Weena does not dare walk away once she meets with The Time Traveler. She plays around him like a child and gets abnormal when she sees fire. He lits fire and Weena claps and jumps as a child does after watching a magic show. She is sensitive and caring for him like a typical woman of the Victorian era: an era recently preceded by Wells. She does not dare to leave her kinsmen when it is night outside because she and all her community fears from darkness and they sleep together in a large hall. She insists the Traveler to accomp0nay her in that hall and sleeps peacefully with him. Wells shows that a woman is still softhearted even after hundreds of thousands of years have been passed. Wells’ hero The Traveler appears as a typical Victorian hero of Jane Austen who comes to the help of a woman. The Traveler saves the life of Weena and it is the time when Weena becomes acquainted with him. She shows gratitude to The Traveler by kissing his hands (Wells, & Hammond, 1927). It was a custom in the Europe of the 19th century that women of some regions used to kiss the hands of their women although some women of the elite classes had also this privilege that some men used to kiss their hands. It is possible that Wells' heroine Weena belongs to the elite class of Whites. It is also apparent that Weena's kinsmen Eloi are the descendants of the Whites and the Morlocks who appear as the cannibal villains are dark-colored who could be the descendants of the Blacks. Here, we also see some racist factors in the novel.

Although *The Time Machine* (1895) is considered a Modern novel, but the misogynistic features of the novel make it a Victorian novel because a woman has been treated differently in the latter literature as compared to this book. Modern literature starts to give a woman a prominent and less-dependent role than in the previous ages. Wells' heroine Weena is a fragile woman who appears as a silly child albeit she is a grown-up woman. She always takes refuge in The Time Traveler and cannot save her life if he is not there to help her out from the chaos (Suvin, 1975). One notable ill-treatment of Wells with this gender is that his heroine dies ignobly with a little fire and his hero does not care much for this loss rather he is happy because she preferred to sacrifice her life instead of being approached by the Morlocks. Additionally, he is also happy because he has found his Time Machine. This kind of ill-treatment with women is little in Modern and Post-modern literature. *To the Lighthouse* (1927) by Virginia Wolfe can be considered the first novel which rebelled against the passive role of women in literature. Lily Briscoe is the chief character who does not dream about sleeping in the arms of a strong or nobleman rather she is pursuing Self-Esteem and she pities Mrs. Ramsay whose life is being wasted by serving a man (Mr. Ramsay), his friends, and his half a dozen children. Post-modern literature is rich with examples where women are not mere fragile characters rather, they are strong enough to face any kind of challenges posed by life. Women are portrayed as the heroes of the stories. The series of *Resident Evil* (2002) directed by Paul Anderson, The *Hunger Games* (2012) directed by Gary Ross, and *Red Sparrow* (2018) directed by Francis Lawrence are the prime examples of such literature. Apart from that, the movies and novels of Post-modern age are generally consisting of multiple heroes and female heroes are also portrayed as equally competent, intelligent, and powerful enough characters who can stand by their male co-actors. Unfortunately, the first sci-fi novel which was published by H.G. Wells lacks this unique feature.

**Conclusion**

*The Time Machine* (1895) is the first sci-fi novel and it is a commendable piece of literature, but H.G. Wells could not free his mind of patriarchal and misogynist thoughts prevailing in Europe for centuries. Misogyny does not only mean to hate women rather disregarding them and defining them as weak creatures also come under this definition. Wells’ heroine Weena is the only female character in this novel, the story talks only about men although it appears as a gender-less society (Sommerville, 1994). We cannot assume that Wells wants to show a society where gender does not matter and it is not a thing to be mentioned: a belief typical to Marx. It is because Wells has portrayed a female character Weena and has explained her thoroughly. She appears as a weak and childish woman who is dependent on the hero The Time Traveler. It reminds us Ibsen’s Nora who is ‘skylark’ of her husband Torvalds Helmer. Wells' hero is an adventurous kind of person who does not care about love, affection, and his life when he is out on an adventure. He might have lost his life when he travels the second time to gather proof of his adventures.

**References**

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