

THE ACCLAIMED OUTSIDERS: JOSEPH CONRAD AND H.G. WELLS

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Öz

Eleştirilen Ancak Benimsenen İki Aykırı Yazar: Joseph Conrad ve H.G. Wells

Makalenin amacı aynı dönemlerde yazan Joseph Conrad ile H. G. Wells'in yaşamın amacı, insan doğası, insanın geleceği konularıyla ilgili düşüncelerini ve roman anlayışlarını, yani bu görüşlerin ne şekilde aktarılması gerektiğine ilişkin yaklaşımlarını, karşılaştırmalı olarak ele almak, böylece bu iki yazar arasındaki fikir ve sanat bağlamındaki ayrılıkları ve de benzerlikleri ortaya çıkartmaktır. Ancak temel amaç genel olarak sunulan bu farklılıklar ve benzerlikler aracılığı ile insanın gelişimine ne gibi katkılarda bulunmuş olabilecekleri konusunda düşünce uyandırmaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İnsan Doğası, Yaşam, On Dokuzuncu Yüzyıl, Yirminci Yüzyıl Başı Sosyal, Politik ve Ekonomik Sistemler, Roman, Birey, Kitle Zihniyeti, Yabancılaşma

Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to introduce a comparative study of Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells with special reference to their concept of life, understanding of human nature, man's future, and of the novel, the purpose being not only to highlight the differences but also trace the similarities between these two novelists whose ideas as regards many issues seem to clash with each other, and thereby provoke thought on how they may have contributed to the progress of man.

Keywords: Human Nature, Life, Nineteenth Century, Contemporary Social, Political and Economic Systems, Fiction, Individualism, Mass Mentality, Alienation

According to a plebiscite in 1914 the 'greatest living novelist' was Thomas Hardy. He was followed by H.G. Wells. The other writers of those years, Joseph Conrad, Henry James, George Moore, Arnold Bennett, J. M. Barrie, Rudyard Kipling, and Charles Garvice all came after Wells in popularity. Swinnerton, on the other hand, claimed that Wells's *The World Set Free* which depicted a world engulfed in chaos and from which Leo

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Szilard had received his inspiration for atomic energy, the idea for nuclear reaction (see below) which was later used in the making of the atomic bomb was the second most popular work after Conrad's *Chance*, which, though focusing on the chance element in human affairs that had also preoccupied Wells's mind, displayed his artistic concerns, that is his search for different narrative styles, for new ways of dealing with the practices of contemporary social, political and economic systems (which Wells too attacked) in a fashion recalling certainly not Wells's but Dickens's. (Mizener, 1972:254)

Statistics undoubtedly offer an idea as to the tastes and demands of the reading public (see below). They also suggest that though each writer was unique, they were complementary to each other despite all their differences. However, although the view that opposites do not negate each other but complement each other was central to his thinking, the scientifically minded and Darwin influenced H. G. Wells, thinking that the world was rushing headlong into a global catastrophe, was convinced that his works (scientific fantasies, utopias, histories, comedies of adaptation) devoted to 'salvaging' mankind were of greater importance than any other writer's works. For instance, rather in the manner of an overseeing power, Wells recorded that Conrad who, having seen it as 'his first "important" recognition', was 'excited by a review I wrote of his *Almayer's Folly* in the *Saturday Review*' and "became anxious to make my acquaintance". (Wells, 1934:615) Maybe partly for this reason, Conrad, as he himself wrote, had 'affectionately offered' *The Secret Agent* - 'this simple tale of the XIX century' - to H.G. Wells, whom he had called, rather sarcastically, 'The Chronicler of Mr Lewisham's love, the biographer of Kipps and the historian of the ages to come'. The sarcasm (if there is any) was certainly one witty way of expressing the differences of opinion which, as is apparent in Conrad's statement, primarily stemmed from their different understandings of literature. (Conrad, 1993:5) (Aubry, 1927:323) Wells, whom the modernists refused to call an artist or a novelist, never attempted to call himself an 'artist'. As his intention was 'to get somewhere', and not as soon as possible but sooner than the possible, he sought to write as straight as he could 'So', he declared, 'I came down off the fence between Conrad and Wallas' meaning that he was a 'journalist', not an 'artist' despite all the artistic merits of his early scientific romances. (Wells, 1934:615) Relatively, quite befitting someone who spoke 'as straight as I can', he openly announced that

I find very much of Conrad oppressive, as overwrought as an Indian tracery and it is only in chosen passages and some of his short stories that I

would put his work on a level with the naked vigour of Stephen Crane. I think Tomlison's more loosely written *By Sea and Jungle* is more finely felt and conveys an intenser vision than most of Conrad's sea and jungle pieces. (Wells, 1934:623)

So, even though Conrad had ended one of his letters to Wells with the words, 'I salute you', Wells naturally felt that 'we never really "got on" together. I was perhaps more unsympathetic and incomprehensible to Conrad than he was to me. I think he found me Philistine, stupid and intensely English.' (Wells, 1934:618)

On one hand Wells's idea of Novel and his openly expressed thoughts on Conrad's fiction and on the other hand Conrad's mastery of irony and his comments on Wells which may be said to have culminated in his words, 'I salute you', tempt the reader to read Conrad's 'salute' (that is his appraisal) as rather sarcastic. However, it may not be wrong to claim that it is also possible to read it as an acknowledgement of Conrad's appreciation of some of Wells's 'art' and views. Conrad, for instance, as Wells records, was 'perplexed and irritated' by 'the frequent carelessness of my writing, my scientific qualities of statement', 'my indifference to intensity'. Yet on the other hand, Conrad applauded Wells's expression of even the most fantastic speculations about the human conditions that also disturbed him with scientific precision, that is his 'scientific eloquence', because (or paradoxically even if) it appealed 'not to the passions [...] but to the reason'. (Aubry, 1927:323)

Hence the purpose of the paper is to compare these two writers whose probably one major common point was that they both were some kind of experimentalists. Conrad, calling himself a modernist, experimented with narrative techniques. Wells, on the other hand, in the critical words of G. K. Chesterton (their rather 'retrospective' contemporary who defied futuristic concerns) as 'the historian of the babe unborn' experimented with ideas concerning the fate of *homo sapiens*. But even more importantly, both were experimenting with forms or ideas for the same reason: each sought to render human mind flexible -an anxiety which may have resulted, still more paradoxically, from lives both similar and not so similar.

Both Conrad and Wells lived in a world which they felt they did not belong to. Conrad spent most of his life in unfamiliar lands and eventually settled in a land, where he was still "the other" despite his being acknowledged as an acclaimed writer, as is also evident in B. Russell's

comment that ‘ “Amy Foster”, a sort of caricature autobiography [conveys] the feeling of being incurably “foreign”’. Wells, on the other hand, was the restless, the impatient, and the intolerant outsider in the social environment and even on the planet he was born in.

It seems that despite his 'strong' 'love of England,' Conrad had some good reasons to 'feel incurably foreign' on the island where he settled down. (Russell, 1956:88) For instance, Wells, like Henry James, saw Teodor Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski as 'the strangest of creatures' with 'gestures' 'very Oriental indeed'. Relatively, he had 'found something as ridiculous in Conrad's persona of a romantic adventurous un-mercenary intensely artistic European gentleman carrying an exquisite code of unblemished honor through a universe of baseness'. Nor was B. Russell's view any different: 'My first impression was one of surprise. He spoke English with a very strong accent'. (Bertrand Russell, Portraits from Memory, 86) Therefore, it has followed that 'Heuffer [Ford Madox Ford] helped greatly to “English, him and his idiom” ‘, who also according to Wells ‘spoke English strangely’. (Wells, 1934:615, 618 , 621)

So probably what the country he loved and also what the exotic lands (China, for instance, wherein his purse was stolen), that is, both the promising and dangerous faraway places ('Youth'), what the sea 'wrapped in mystery', and the deck and the jungle -'stages' where 'tales of hunger and hunt, violence and terror' were displayed and where man's 'inner worth' was tested in the 'supreme disaster of loneliness and despair' and revealed to himself and to others meant for Conrad, the familiar Bromley with its butcher slaughtering animals in the next door garden, the underground scullery from where Wells watched 'the misery of the boots' in a society of class distinctions, and the Cosmic Force which as suggested by Huxley's interpretation of Darwinism did not respect man's ideals meant the same for Wells (Conrad, 1998:81) It can be said that Conrad's rather paradoxical view that 'The sea (which) never changes, and (whose) works for all the talk of men are wrapped in mystery' is also almost identical with Wells's concept of a Cosmic Force which defied all human explanations. (Conrad, 1998:81)

Disenchantment -though as Bertrand Russell had also noted that Conrad's 'feeling for the sea and England was one of romantic love'- signals at a fear of a precarious existence. In Conrad's case disenchantment had culminated in the fear or the image of 'lying face down in a puddle', the body being 'muddy' ('Amy Foster'), of "being buried in a muddy hole" (*The Heart of Darkness*), or being 'under the net' ('An Output of Progress') (Russell, 1956:86; Conrad, 1997:118) In the undernourished science student

Wells's case (also fostered by his adherence to Darwinism which signaled to a precarious hold in the universe for all species including the 'human animal'), it had led to a fear of imminent disappearance whether it be in familiar London sites or in some remote time in the unknown future, or in the abysses of the seas or earth, or in the fathomless depths of the infinite universe.

As Bertrand Russell had also claimed, 'tragedies of loneliness and fear of what is strange occupied a great part of Conrad's thought and feeling, [and] both come in *Amy Foster*'. (Russell, 1956:88) Significantly, this view about Conrad was also common to Wells. In fact, because he too was almost always haunted with the fear of imminent dissolution, Wells's comment on Conrad may be said to reflect Wells's own state of mind as well: 'his [Conrad's] deepest theme is the simple terror of strange places, the jungle, night, the incalculable sea; as a mariner his life was surely a perpetual anxiety about hidden [...] vices.' (Wells, 1934:617, 618)

Ironically, their awareness and fear of the threatening implications of the unknown had in a way rendered their minds capable of perceiving life with all its contradictions and complexities. This, in turn, had led to the conviction that salvation lay in mental flexibility as opposed to rigidity of thought, that is, dogmatic way of thinking. In one of his letters to Wells, Conrad expressed this view which Wells had reduced to a motto -'Meet or Shirk' or 'Adopt or Perish'- and insistently endorsed throughout his life as

The future is of our own making [...] the most striking characteristic of the century is just that development, that maturing of our consciousness which should open our eyes to that truth –or that illusion. Anything that would help our intelligence towards a clearer view of the consequences of our social action is of the very greatest value –and, as such, a guide, I salute you. (Aubry, 1927:323)

Even though he had grave doubts about its possibility, Conrad had realized that survival existed only in becoming beings with clear minds. As also furthered below, he feared, and probably much disliked, the ordinary man, that is the masses whom Hitler -who, ironically, as Bertrand Russell recorded, had destroyed Conrad's house- described as being 'slow moving.' (Payne, 1975:263-264) Conrad's description of Kayerts and Carlier in 'An Outpost of Progress' clearly and effectively discloses the reasons of his dislike or fear of the ordinary man, of his thinking that beings 'incapable of independent thought' are not only self-destructive but also have the potential to destroy what good is in man and in society. Yet, like Wells's portrayal of

‘small man’, Conrad’s description of Kayerts and Carlier is the expression of a criticism directed not necessarily to the common man himself, but primarily to the systems -or ironically, men like Hitler - that seek to produce them:

Society, not from any tenderness, but because of its strange needs, had taken care of those two men, forbidding them all independent thought, all initiative, all departure from routine [...] .They could only live on condition of being machines [...] they were lifelong prisoners who [...] do not know what use to make of their freedom [...] their faculties; [...] (They were) incapable of independent thought. [...] .The two men understood nothing. (Conrad, 1997:6, 8)

Hence Conrad’s artistic concerns -his exploration of the possibilities of the framed short story, his several ways of telling a story, his employment of double and irony, his paradoxical statements- provide a more complex, paradoxically a sounder view of things, thereby freeing human consciousness from dogmas, prejudices, preconceived ideas, and awakening the reader to the urgency of being capable of seeing things in all their shades.

Conrad’s desire to make his readers as over hearers of all the voices in his works 'collaborate with the author' and think over all partial or competing, yet complementary interpretations is apparent in his Preface to *The Secret Agent* which he ironically called ‘A Simple Tale’: ‘Applying an ironic method to a subject of that kind, was formulated with deliberation and in the earnest belief that ironic treatment alone would enable me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity’. (Conrad, 1993:6)

He stressed the same idea in *The Sea Stories*: ‘In everything I have written there is always one invariable intention, and that is to capture the reader’s attention’. (Conrad, 1998:7) In a manner recalling Socratic irony or as if he himself were one of the narrators in his own stories (like Marlow who invites his hearers to see the voyage as one ‘ordered for the illustration of life’, ‘a symbol of existence’), Conrad invited his reader to greater intelligence. (Conrad, 1997:xiii) Put alternatively, his works, on another level, were attempts to inculcate in his readers what Wells called, ‘an inquiring mental habit’: ‘But what is the subject of “Falk”? I personally do not feel so certain about it. He who reads must find out for himself.’ (Conrad, 1998:6, 7)

Both for Conrad and Wells, one's 'finding out' things 'for himself', one's discovering the potential of the evil inherent in man or in nature, one's discovering the true meaning of life (if there is such a thing) was very important; because, Conrad, as the lonely individual in, in Andrew Marvell's words, 'far other seas and other worlds' of prejudices and perils, had found it out for himself. It was he himself who had realized that mental flexibility and greater brain capacity were the major prerequisites of survival.

On the other hand, Wells's early precarious existence as an underfed student from the lower middle class and later his acquaintance with Thomas Huxley the greatest interpreter of Darwinism which underlined the uniqueness of phenomena, the unpredictability of nature, and man's being at the mercy of cosmic forces had made him eventually see scientific thinking -progressive reasoning process- as man's only saviour in a universe of unthought of perils. Mr Polly for instance, the Wellsian equivalent of Kayerts and Carlier, who suffering from mental 'indigestion' cannot find out things for himself, by himself, is meant to be an attack on contemporary institutions which to Wells failed to 'inculcate [...] the method of discovery', hence furnish man with the capacity of exact thinking, exactness of expression. (Wells, 'Science in School and After School' 1894:525-526) So Wells, who held that 'not knowledge, but a critical and inquiring mental habit, is the aim of scientific teaching' employed the scientific method particularly in his scientific fantasies, urging his readers to think in a flexible way rather than in a strict positive-negative manner. (Wells, 'The Sins of a Secondary School Master' 1894: 1-2; 'Science in School and After School' 1894:525-526) The antithetical way of analyzing things, constantly introducing arguments opposite to what was suggested previously and looking at life both from the human and the cosmic standpoints (*The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*) would, just as the Conradian detachment or the Conradian irony would do, liberate consciousness from rigidity of mind which Wells believed led to 'cyclic delusions' -the greatest threat to man's permanence in a universe whose working was beyond his comprehension.

Thus, to free the mind from all that hindered seeing things clearly, Conrad (who looking at things from a distance saw [and showed] the unthinking man as being the greatest danger to his kind) experimented in narrative techniques. Wells, on the other hand, experimented with genres (scientific fantasies, social comedies or comedies of adaptation, world histories, and progressive utopias -each utopia representing a different stage in human evolution), thereby, in a way, becoming the doubles of himself: a

scientific romancer with a view of a bleak cosmic determinism, a utopian almost obsessed with mental and physical growth, a historian, and a self-assumed world leader -one both annoying and fascinating the world politicians of his day -Lenin, Stalin, Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, and Franklin Roosevelt.

In Wells there is no unreliable narrator in Conrad's sense. Yet, his antithetical/ paradoxical treatment of man, life, and science -which corresponds to Conradian unreliable narrator or Conradian irony- in fact made him create some kind of doubles: Moreau and Griffin who abuse science are the doubles of Prendick and Kemp -the humane scientists from The Royal Society (of Science); the small people devoid of rational thinking (like the folk in 'Amy Foster') or the Giants with merely physical power are the doubles of the Giants with mental power (*The Food of the Gods*); the Botanist in *A Modern Utopia*, who rejects change because he, though a scientist, is 'blind to the fact that' life is 'a mystery' and that 'things [are] constantly changing' is the double of the narrator who craves for individual and social progress which he believes can be achieved only by freeing the consciousness from dogmatic delusions. (Wells, 'The Rediscovery of the Unique' 1891: 106-111)

Still more paradoxically, Wells's sinister doubles have doubles in themselves -doubles possessing qualities Wells celebrated: for instance, though misusing their discoveries for selfish pursuits and exemplifying some kind of dogmatic arrogance, Moreau or Griffin is not passive; both have experimental minds. And as some kind of experimentalists somehow liberated from the 'thought edifice of our great grandparents', they shout at Wells's contemporaries whom Wells believed to be superstitious, complacent, and excessively emotional: 'Fools'. They, somehow, recall, for instance, the rather cunning and experienced Makola who (as one of the creators of hostile conditions in the white man's 'outpost of progress' in Africa, the 'heart of darkness') watches Kayerts and Carlier who lack clear thinking rather mockingly, in fact as some specimens stranger to themselves and their environment.

In a way experimenting with narrative techniques or ideas, in Wells's words, 'that perpetual quest [...] of the unassailable truths of being' meant constantly offering new speculations that could be most shocking for the turn of the century reader. (Wells, 'J. F. Nisbet' 1899:502-504) Yet, the plebiscites hint that somehow the writers offering bizarre speculations or demanding the transvaluation of values were rather popular even though, as Bernard Shaw recorded, they were 'call[ed] all manner of opprobrious names'. (Bergonzi, 1961:13) Most likely the bizarre

speculations or the taboo subjects stimulated late Victorian, or *fin de siècle*, appetite for the unusual (see below). More importantly, it seems that, as again Shaw pointed out, the public did 'secretly adore' such writers for they saw them 'as their saviour from utter despair.'" (Bergonzi, 1961:13)

If Conrad and Wells were seen as saviours, this was because, as already mentioned, both had a strictly moral purpose as was, for instance, also underlined by Bertrand Russell. Russell's recognition of Conrad as 'a very rigid moralist (having) a certain outlook on human life and human destiny' can also be extended to Wells as Conrad himself had hailed Wells as some kind of an educationist: 'You were the one honest thinker of the day'. (Russell, 1956:86, 87; Aubry, 1927:16)

Paradoxically, if put again in Conrad's words, theirs was 'a mind much too simple to be perplexed by anything in the world except man's idle talk for which it was not adapted'. (Conrad, 1998:5) So, no doubt, the man with 'the idle talk' would be shocked by the experiences, the fictionalized versions of these experiences, or/and highly imaginative speculations of Wells and Conrad who had salvaged themselves from shocking/unexpected occurrences through individual initiative and will power. So salvation (that is, the realization that the notion that nature *per se* had a *telos*, a purpose in conformity with human ideals [against which Darwin had provided decisive evidence] was a fallacy and the awareness that drawing a social and moral ethics from the amoral working of Nature was insidious) could be attained only if men were shocked. In other words, shocking the reader meant educating the reader.

Conrad's assertion that 'Falk is absolutely true to my experience of certain straightforward characters' and that he 'combined' 'a perfectly natural ruthlessness with a certain amount of moral delicacy' was even more so relevant to Wells -the rebel child of the late nineteenth and the twentieth century, who believing that the role of science was 'not to keep up the courage of men but to tell the truth', had unhesitatingly declared that 'blasphemy' was quite befitting 'to my self-respect'. (Conrad, 1998:7; Wells, 1934:234,324, 44) He debased the contemporary man as if he were the scientist looking at them under a microscope, or as one of a superior race (a Martian perhaps), or as the amoral cosmic process: His contemporaries 'dreaming themselves the highest creatures in the whole vast universe' were -with their 'fussy little lives' on 'this little globe'- like 'children', or even 'the transient creatures [bacteria] that swarm and multiply in a drop of water', (Wells, 1975: 30; Wells, 1981: 30, 34) So he chided them: 'O foolish creature!'. (Wells, 1975: 30) Furiously and unremittingly,

he reminded them of the chance element central to the working of the evolutionary process. 'She will [...] debase us to the mean feebleness of the rabbit or the slimy white filthiness of a thousand of her parasitic inventions'. (Wells, 1976:82) Thus, his fantasies showed how the *homo sapiens* whom he referred to as 'a decadent humanity', 'inhuman sons of men', 'ape-like figure[s]', 'ant-like' creatures, creatures 'far less than any monkey', rats, lemurs, 'poor amphibian', 'little figures', 'the white Things', 'the thing' or even as 'a reddish mass of rock' – a 'really monstrous crab-like creature', the 'crawling' 'sinister apparition' would be 'swept out of existence' 'in the unknown future' 'in a few million years -a trifle in comparison with the enormous lapses of geological chronology'. (Wells, 1981: 30, 34, 40, 58, 59, 76; Wells, 'A Vision of the Past', 1887:206-209)

However while the restless Wells with a sound scientific background spoke out his discontentment with contemporary man's anthropocentric sense of his importance, his 'serene' 'assurance' of 'his empire over matter' furiously and in a far too straightforward fashion, Conrad sounded somehow apologetic about the shocking elements in his works, probably because, as already mentioned, despite all the favourable reception he had, he may have been still made to feel himself in Britain like the cast-ashore Slav in 'Amy Foster'. So it was not unlikely that Conrad who, for instance, upon Bernard Shaw's comment 'my dear fellow, your books won't *do*' had asked 'Does that man want to *insult* me?' would naturally start for instance *The Secret Agent* by saying that (Wells, 1934:615, 618, 621-622)

The thought of elaborating mere ugliness in order to shock, or even simply to surprise my readers [...] has never entered my head. In making this statement I expect to be believed, not only on the evidence of my general character but also for the reason, which anybody can see, that the whole treatment of the tale, its inspiring indignation and underlying pity and contempt, prove my detachment from the squalor and sordidness which lie simply in the outward circumstances of the setting. [I am] certainly [...] not thinking of going out of my way to look for anything ugly. [In] telling Winnie Verloc's story to its anarchistic end of utter desolation, madness and despair, I have not intended to commit a gratuitous outrage on the feelings of mankind.(Conrad, 1993:2,3)

Again in the Preface to his *Sea Stories* he claimed: "My intention in writing "Falk" was not to shock anybody". (Conrad, 1998:7)

Both Conrad and Wells knew that ‘taboo’ subjects such as cannibalism or terrorism -and in Wells’s case also his much questioned idea of ‘free love’- would offend the delicacy of critics as, for instance, reflected in one article in *The Athenaeum*: ‘The horrors described by Mr. Wells in [*The Island of Dr Moreau*] very pertinently raises the question how far it is legitimate to create feelings of disgust in a work of art.’ (Basil, 1895:615-616) Conrad, on the other hand, himself recorded that ‘Falk’ ‘offended the delicacy of one critic’. That ‘one critic’ was his wife, Jessie Conrad who probably was representing the views of the reading public. (Conrad, 1998:6)

However, though Conrad claimed that ‘conscious invention had little to do with’ his incidents or characters, both Conrad, the modernist in narrative techniques, and Wells, the novelist of ideas, were displaying, as timely warnings, man’s inherent beastliness - that is, in Conrad’s words, ‘feelings people really know nothing’ and the ‘poignant miseries and passionate credulities of a mankind always so tragically eager for self-destruction’ or, in Wells’s words, spasms of hatred so puzzling to man himself, his being basically ‘a brute’. (Conrad, 1998:6; 1993:3; Wells, ‘Human Evolution’, 1896:594) Conrad stressed that his stories, for instance ‘Falk’, was about ‘a perfectly natural ruthlessness’, ‘rage’, ‘a sort of [...] unforgiveness’, ‘scorn, and cunning’. (‘Typhoon’) (Conrad, 1998:28, 51) Wells’s assertion that Conrad’s ‘deepest theme [is] the hidden structural vices of [...] untrustworthy man’ was in fact relevant to Wells’s own writings. (Wells, 1934:618) And significantly, Wells’s idea of Overman who was to transcend all inner and outer limits and limitations had, paradoxically, resulted from the post-Darwinian fear of what R. L. Stevenson called ‘man’s black secrets’, “the devil (that) had been long caged”, and what Conrad called “a mean little beast”. (Stevenson, 1993:13, 49) (Conrad, 1998:6,7)

The setting in both writers often function as the major stimulant of ‘the heart of darkness’ or the darkness in the heart. In the Wellsian story it is the cosmos, the future, the outer world, the abyss, or, paradoxically, the very familiar environments; in the Conradian story it is ‘impenetrable night’, the ‘impenetrable’ jungle, the sea, or the exotic lands which Conrad described as ‘so old, so mysterious, resplendent and somber’ and ‘full of danger and promise’, the ‘fascination’ of which he ‘knew’ (Conrad, 1997:86, 93, 94) Kayerts and Carlier who ‘ascend arm in arm, drawing close to one another as children do in the dark’ of the unknown or in the dark of Africa, soon emerge ‘burst[ing] with indignation’ and ‘snarl[ing] and ‘howling “I will shoot you....like a dog”’. The appalling disintegration of the pair reminds the disintegration of the future men (or man’s disintegration in

the future) -the Eloi and the Morlocks (*The Time Machine*), the Londoners trampling on each other (*The War of the Worlds*), the complacent Iping Villagers' panic and failure to cope with the unexpected with the arrival of Griffin (*The Invisible Man*), or Dr Moreau's Human Animals' or Animal Humans' who on another level represent man's evolution in reverse. Again such beastliness as one killing the other for 'a lump of sugar' in the heart of Africa -as in the case of Kayerts and Carlier, or other 'terrible and cruel misfortunes' on high seas such as men 'being eaten after death' ('Falk'), or anarchists organizing bomb outrages in the heart of London remind one of the carnivorous Morlocks fattening on the other human species Eloi, Dr Moreau experimenting on live flesh, or the highly technological extra-terrestrials (the future man on another level) sucking human blood (*The War of the Worlds*). (Conrad, 1998:141, 133) Again, the dislike of the folk of the Eastbay shores of the lonely Slav in 'Amy Foster', or 'winning a wife at cards from another captain' ('Falk') recall Wells's Invisible Man terrorizing the Iping villagers, hence eventually being hunted by those whom he hunted, or the villagers pelting the 'Angel' with stones (*The Wonderful Visit*). (Conrad, 1998:144) In all, man's savage elements inherited from his ancestors have taken the place of Original Sin.

Both Conrad and Wells were also conscious of the various forms of madness or obsession, in Wells's words, 'the rigid reasonableness', 'the trim clock thought' or in Conrad's words the 'perverse unreason', which Conrad held 'has its own logical processes' like Verloc's blowing up the Greenwich Observatory or in a way the amoral or/and unethical scientist', that is, for instance, Moreau's and Griffin's unremitting passion to establish a Reign of Terror over the beasts/human animals/ordinary men. (Wells, 'The Rediscovery of the Unique' 1891:110; Conrad, 1993:3) Hence it may not be wrong to say that Bertrand Russell's comments on Conrad's outlook can again be extended to Wells: 'He [Conrad] thought of civilized human life as a dangerous walk on a thin crust of barely cooled lava which at any moment might break and let the unwary sink into fiery depths.' (Russell, 1956:87)

Man could sink into 'fiery depths' also because of one other inner hostility which Conrad, like Wells, expressed again with reference to the animal kingdom: 'Man may smile and smile but he is not an investigating animal. He loves the obvious. He shrinks from explanations.' (Conrad, 1993:2) Conradian 'people of obscure minds, of imperfect speech' and Wells's 'units' may be said to fit in S. T. Coleridge's man with a 'spontaneous consciousness' who fails to 'penetrate' into the deeper meanings of human life as opposed to those who have a 'philosophical

consciousness (men like Conrad and Wells). Conrad would not put his hesitations about man's mental proclivities as bluntly as the early Wells whose mind was full of gloomy forebodings did. Yet, for instance, the mental faculties of the ordinary folk occupying the shores of Eastbay, or of the motley group of political fanatics in London or others in *The Secret Agent*, or the captain in 'The Typhoon' who, though 'present[ing] no marked characteristics of firmness or stupidity', was 'simply ordinary, irresponsive, and unruffled' and 'had no pronounced characteristics' suggest that Conrad would not disagree with such Wellsian thoughts that 'Professor Lloyd Morgan's dog experimenting on Professor Lloyd Morgan with a dead rat or a bone would arrive at a very low estimate indeed of the powers of the human mind', or that 'the Anglo-Saxons are [...] so sentimental'. (Conrad, 1998:11; Wells, 1894:683; 'The New Optimism', 4)

Still more paradoxically (and this is from where their mixed feelings for man, their viewing him, in Conrad's words, with 'indignation', 'contempt', and 'scorn as well as [...] pity', hence such artistic concerns as ideas of double or irony may have stemmed), they were aware of, again put in R.L. Stevenson's words, 'the province of good' as well as the 'ill which [...] compound man's dual nature'. (Conrad, 1993:2; Stevenson, 1993:42, 4) He himself may be an unreliable narrator or his proclamation may be ironic, yet the Conradian character's determination to discover 'how good a man I was' and his celebration of his 'feeling that I could outlast the sea, the earth, and all men' recalls the Wellsian Giant's, the 'Children of the Boom's longing 'To grow out of these' 'darknesses, into greatness and the light!' [...] 'Till the spirit shall have driven fear into nothingness.' (Conrad, 1993: xiii; Wells, 1904: 260) Wells, who initially (that is, when viewing *homo sapiens* from the cosmic standpoint) saw man as almost nothing in the infinite universe, later, as 'the historian of the future', came to regard the 'unfathomable distance' between man and 'the Milky Way', the 'very bright' stars which almost always 'dwarfed my own troubles and all the gravities of terrestrial life' as a measure and the symbolic expression of man's cosmic potential. (Wells, 1981: 57) So as early as the very beginning of the twentieth century, he was talking about even space travel, the one 'miraculous' consequence of mental growth: 'A day will come when beings who are now latent in our thoughts' 'shall stand upon this earth as one stands upon a footstool,' 'and reach out their hands amid the stars.' (Wells, 1902:3)

Man's infinite capacity or aspiration for action -like Marlow's, the Youth's- his ephemeral struggle for significance and meaning even when 'surrounded by an impenetrable night' may have both amused and

impressed Conrad. (Conrad, 1997:xiii) Yet his ‘enlisting his [reader’s] sympathies [...] within the limits of the visible world and within the boundaries of human emotions’ or again such assertions as ‘all my moral and intellectual being is penetrated by an invincible conviction that whatever falls under the dominion of our senses must be in nature and, however, exceptional, cannot differ in its essence from all the other effects of the visible and tangible world of which we are a self-conscious part’ suggest that Conrad did not necessarily entertain the Wellsian aspirations for transcending particularly physical borders. (Conrad, 1998:7, 151) Therefore, it may be claimed that Conrad’s oscillation between hope and despair as regards human destiny resulting from this awareness of the duality in man -man’s credulities and supremacy over the matter- was not as intense as Wells’s whose deeper pessimism, paradoxically, was clad in greater optimism as displayed in such ideals as the ‘Overman’, ‘Men Like Gods’, beings with immense physical growth as well as mental growth.

Thus, despite all their disagreements concerning the idea of the novel or narrative techniques, Conrad, who had his own doubles within himself, hailed *the Wells with his own doubles, his own 'secret sharers'* as the 'realist of the Fantastic': “At bottom you are an uncompromising realist.” (Aubry, 1927:319, 310) As a realist, Wells was immensely interested in social and political issues. Hence, as a voluntary world statesman rushing from Kremlin to White House and from White House to Kremlin to convince the world statesmen to accept or support his idea of a ‘Planned Socialistic World Order’, Wells resented that Conrad who ‘talked with me mostly of adventure and dangers’ and who in ‘less familiar topics [...] was often at a loss’ ‘was incredulous that I could take social and political issues seriously’. (Wells, 1934:617, 618, 616)

Conrad did not seek to embark on any ‘man making process’, that is, create a new breed of man as Wells sought to do. He did not entertain such notions or ideals culminating in such titles –or mottos- as ‘mankind in the making’ or the ‘salvaging of the civilization’. Nor did he formulate ideals like a socialistic world state wherein all diversities -social, national, racial, religious, gender- were eliminated. Yet, though he was not interested in political systems, though he did not have any systematic political thought, he certainly had political feelings: for instance, as is manifest in *The Secret Agent* or *Under Western Eyes*, he had a dislike of both Czarist and revolutionary Russia and somehow a fondness of China. And therefore, he had a certain outlook on human destiny as well. His assertion, for instance, ‘all the bitterness of those days’ (in Belgian Congo in 1890), all my puzzled wonder as to the meaning of all I saw –all my indignation at masquerading

philanthropy', or his ironic title 'An Outpost of Progress' entail (as well as a revelation of man's dark potentials) a criticism of contemporary social and political systems. (Conrad, 1997:ix) His tales of hunger and hunt, loneliness and hopelessness may be read as tales of man's being a victim of cosmos or of powers beyond his control as well as of inner hostilities; yet, they also hint at his seeing the day's systems -or no systems- as being rather morally not so tolerable. His cross-cultural background, in fact, would make him a good observer or a critic of all contemporary systems - imperialism, expansionism, the day's democracies -or the absence of democracies.

However, it may also be argued that -as also his words to Wells testify, 'What surprises me is to find you so strangely conservative at bottom'- Conrad's point of view was not so modern though he claimed he was modern. (Aubry, 1927:319, 310) He seems to have favoured the older tradition that discipline should come from within. Because he feared that the discipline imposed from without -the merely external discipline- could culminate in some form of despotism, hence in the disappearance of the free individual or individual choice, Wells's imposition of the idea of a ruling Scientific Elite (such as the order of Samurai in *A Modern Utopia*), scientific conditioning, or/and the concept of a highly technological socialist state as the sole way of securing *homo sapiens'* future hold in the universe would sound totally totalitarian to Conrad. His comment that Wells did not care for humanity, but thought man could be improved was one clear expression of his rejection of all kinds of conditionings, which he believed, as already mentioned, would 'forbid' men 'all independent thought, all initiative', and allow them to 'only live on condition of being machines' of 'lifelong prisoners who' 'do not know what use to make of their faculties'.

To conclude, what Wells learned in Thomas Huxley's class in the Normal School of Science and observed in the lower middle-class suburbs of London, Conrad learned in foreign lands and on the high seas revealing that 'who hath known the bitterness of the Ocean shall have its taste for ever in his mouth' meaning -on one level- that the sea 'inter-penetrates with life: it is in a subtle way a factor in the problem of existence and' is 'always in touch with men, who, bound on errands of war or gain, traverse its immense solitude'. 'Such a thing happen[ing] on the high seas, appeared to me a sufficient subject for meditation'. (Conrad, 1998:81; Conrad, 1998:ix, 5) It seems that experience, observation, and meditation revealed that Nature was unpredictable (hence, man's place in the universe was precarious) just as, for instance, Falk 'find[ing] himself unexpectedly involved both on [life's] ruthless and its delicate side' or Wells's Prendick finding himself on Dr

Moreau's Island of horrific experimentations. (Conrad, 1998:7). Second, experience, observation, and meditation also suggested that man faced a threat to his ascendancy or permanence not only from outside but also from within. In other words, man who thought that he was in full control of all the elements within him and in the greater world he lived in, was being 'watched' by forces both from within and without.

Thus, when talking about the possibility of human beings being watched as a specimen from an outer world, Wells, the self-assumed observer, had not excluded the possibility that 'Even so, it may be, [that] the [observer] himself is being curiously observed' as he wrote in the *Pall Mall Gazette* to which Conrad had also contributed with 'light and satirical' works. (Wells, 'Through a Microscope', 1894:3) Indeed, Wells could not escape the criticism of the world he sought to study, display, attack, and educate. As his apologies for evoking the reader's scorn also suggest, neither could Conrad -despite all his moralistic concerns or his intention to evoke sympathy for man's desperation. Yet of the two writers, Wells certainly was the more controversial one. While the Modernists criticized him for writing 'as straight as he walked', others assailed him for his rather unusual speculations/suggestions about science, or gender, or contemporary systems, his futuristic proclamations, or his prophesying man-made global catastrophes wherein the misuse of science is presented as the most horrifying destructive force. Leo Strachey, for instance, saw his scientific fantasies, all meant to be timely warnings, as 'capable of poisoning the minds of those who read it'. (Strachey, 1909:846) Ford Madox Ford, too thought that 'Mr Wells hypnotized the world into believing that almost any horrors of Science and the Machine are inevitable', that 'he had a certain hand in bringing about the era of [...] thoughtlessness?' (Ford, 1924:57) Quite ironically, it seems that, his warnings about all sinister inclinations and intentions, as also Ford Madox Ford had claimed, 'had prepared our minds for those horrors'. (Ford, 1924:57) Vera Brittain, for instance, commenting on the trench war in August 1914, wrote that 'one feels as if reading a Chapter out of one of H. G. Wells's war books, like *The War of the Worlds*' (Brittain, 1981:356); it is recorded that on October 6, 1944, 140 pilotless planes (with bombs guided by radio) of the Ministry of Aircraft Production seemed 'to have come from Wells's scientific fantasies'. (Milne, 1977:78) More importantly, his scientific forebodings intended to warn man against the abuse of science by sinister men seemed to be a source of inspiration for war devices: Rupert Brooke, though humorously, thought of 'blow(ing) up Europe with one of Mr. Wells's machines' (Keynes, 1968:572); in the First World War Sir Llewellyn Woodward, exploring the possibility of new ways of attacking offered the idea of 'armoured vehicles across the country',

claiming that the notion of ‘land cruiser’ ‘was not new; H.G. Wells already mentioned them in a novel’ (he was probably referring to ‘The Land Iroclads’). (Woodward, 1967:40-41)

As Conrad’s voice, unlike Wells’s, was not one prophesying man-made or cosmic catastrophes, he was never accused of paving the way to such global disasters. He may, therefore, have felt that he too was entitled to attack Wells. He could have been deliberately speaking as an ‘unreliable narrator’ or in an ironic tone when he was writing to Wells, that is, commenting on what Wells propagated and how he propagated it:

Whatever may be the differences of opinion it cannot be denied that A.F. [Anatole France] apart from being a great master of prose is one of the finest minds of our time. If he has not understood you completely he has certainly apprehended your value. (Aubry, 1927:26)

Yet, paradoxically, he was also speaking as one other man of unusual mental capacity who well knew that ideas/elements in a work often opposing each other make it more complicated, that is, paradoxically, offer a more complete hence a sounder view of things, thereby rendering it, with all its hidden meanings and associations, less understandable. In fact, J. P. Priestley’s appraisal that Wells was ‘a popular educator on a world scale’, should be extended to Conrad for the very reason that, despite all his reservations about Wells’s understanding of art and some of his ideas or ideals, he too had felt himself obliged to acknowledge that ‘There is always something beyond [Wells’s] books’, so ‘uncommonly *fine*’. In other words, though Galsworthy claimed that “Conrad (a painter’s writer) is perhaps the best specimen I can think of as a pure artist (there is practically nothing of the moralist in him) among moderns” (Clay, 1962:123), Conrad too may deserve to be called a kind of ‘a popular educator on a world scale’ leaving behind a ‘world, wider than that of Western Man, a world he helped to educate deep in his debt.’ (Priestly, 1962:275, 277)

Conrad and Wells, as opposites -namely as ‘complementaries’ (Wells saw opposites not as things negating each other but as things complementing each other)- will continue ‘to educate’ mankind, because, even though Conrad had ‘agreed that the times have changed’, he ironically ‘now and then falling silent [...] gazed at the sights of the river.’ (Conrad, 1998:81) The river leads to the sea, the ‘Sea’ which Conrad repeatedly presented as something that ‘never changes’, thereby, probably reminding his readers of the co-existence of both despair and hope in the sea of life. (Conrad,

1998:81) And if this is the case, then it may not be wrong to say that there will always be a 'The End of the Tether' as Conrad enunciated or a 'The Mind at the End of Its Tether' as was the title of Wells's last work written in 1944 in a world engulfed in strife unlike the one he cherished and envisioned in *Men Like Gods* (but the one similar to that in *The War Set Free*). Yet, it must be noted that Conrad's 'barbarous crowd' or 'man on the deck' described as 'a mean little beast' or Wells's Griffin or Dr Moreau with his human/animal subjects etc. or all the dark scenes in the works of these two Great Liberators -of Conrad, the Master of ironies and of Wells, the Master of paradoxes- were all meant to liberate man from 'perverse unreason', hence pave the path to a saner world. (Conrad, 1998:28; 1997:36)

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