

Imagining the Future: a view of progress in H. G. Wells' science fiction

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Abstract

Progress is a crucial concept in all science fiction. This literary genre resorts to literature in order to test a scientific hypothesis which is supposed to bring the positive emotions ensuing from progress. Four books by H. G. Wells provide the literary corpus for this paper. Three are fictional narratives – The Island of Doctor Moreau (1896), The Invisible Man (1897) and The Country of the Blind (1904). The first one revolves around a scientist devoted to control evolution and speed its pace in order to create a wholly rational new set of beings; the other two bring us into contact with two male characters whose main trait is to be invisible to the eyes of the communities they arrive at (an English Sussex village and a South-American valley, respectively). A third narrative, A Modern Utopia (1905), mixing essay and fiction, is set on a planet exactly like ours, with the same continents and islands, seas and moon, botanic species and animals, but differently organised. Although diversely constituted, all these books conclude that progress must always have a collective scope instead of fuelling personal ambitions.

Keywords: Progress, H. G. Wells, future, science fiction, happiness

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