Examining Child Oppression in H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* Through Structural Analysis

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Abstract

This article applies Claude Levi-Strauss' structuralism to examine how child oppression is symbolically encoded in H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895). Focusing on binary oppositions such as Eloi versus Morlocks and light versus darkness, the study identifies narrative patterns that construct Eloi as infantilized, passive beings and the Morlocks as dominant, adult-like predators. Through the analysis of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships among key narrative units (mythemes), the novel reveals a mythic structure of vulnerability and domination. By interpreting these structural patterns, this study offers a focused reading of Wells' portrayal of power, dependency, and systemic exploitation within a speculative future society.

Keywords

Binary Opposition, Child Oppression, Mytheme, Structuralism, *The Time Machine*

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INTRODUCTION

The structural method in literary studies shifts the focus from individual interpretation to the deeper patterns and systems that shape meaning. One of its main tools is the notion of binary opposition, which consists of two opposed notions that symbolize the way the human mind arranges experience. Myths, literature, and culture are built on similar mental structures, particularly opposing relationships like light/dark, human/beast, or powerful/powerless, according to structuralism, which was created by Claude Lévi-Strauss in the late 1950s (Patil, 2022). In order to help readers, make sense of chaos and uncover hidden meanings that reflect common thought patterns, structuralists contend that literature employs repeating frameworks.

H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) is structurally aligned with structuralist theory. The future utopia visited by the Time Traveller offers a striking contrast between two highly developed human species: the Eloi, delicate, childlike beings living above ground in peace and sunlight, and the Morlocks, bestial, subterranean beings who service machines in darkness. Initially interpreted as a division between laborers and aristocrats, the novel subverts this class expectation when the Morlocks are found to prey and dine on the Eloi. While earlier scholars (e.g., Juraj, 2018) have interpreted this dynamic in the context of Victorian class struggle, the symbolic positioning of the Eloi as helpless, infantilized subjects allows this to be read on a more basic structural level based on child oppression.

The phrase "child oppression" refers to a systemic circumstance in which children, due to their age, dependence, and lack of agency, are subjected to uneven power relations, often marked by violence, exclusion, and exploitation (Sánchez et al., 2022; Martinello, 2020; Snow, 2009). Children are perfect candidates for control since they are usually portrayed in literature as innocent and helpless. In The Time Machine, the Eloi are emblematic of oppressed innocence due of their frailty and resemblance to children. The Morlocks, in turn, stand for institutional power, predatory conduct, and adult domination.

Not much research has been done to analyse the Eloi–Morlock connection as a mythic structure of child oppression, particularly utilizing Claude Levi-Strauss's framework of binary opposition and mythemes, despite the novel's broad scholarly attention. That need is met by this investigation. Thus, the goal of this research is to examine how The Time Machine structurally depicts child oppression through the binary opposition between Eloi and Morlocks utilizing Lévi-Strauss's ideas of mytheme and structuralist narrative mapping.

In accordance with Alomar's (2024) idea that narratives are made up of several opposing mythemes structured syntagmatically and paradigmatically, this study will identify and classify narrative components that build the Morlocks as dominant adult figures and the Eloi as subjugated children. This approach not only reveals the novel's underlying mythological structure, but also demonstrates how speculative fiction encodes enduring patterns of vulnerability and domination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In defining the basic concept of structuralism, Zidan (2023) stated that by emphasizing the underlying structures and processes shaping and arranging the text's components, structuralism places a high value on how the text communicates meaning. It seeks to identify the fundamental patterns and laws that influence many facets of human culture, language, and society by placing a strong emphasis on the study of structures and interactions.

Binary opposition was defined by Claude Levi-Strauss (1963), as he started that based on the concentric perception, the only distinction is that the opposition is inherently uneven in terms of social and/or religious standing. Then relating to the concept of binary opposition, Levi-Strauss concluded that binary structure is used to describe the difference between classes instead of its relationship as the ternary structure. Ternary structure defines the relevance between two individuals in a dichotomy just like what he explained in the case of South African's marriage.

The area of language where the formula for tradition achieves its lowest truth value is myth. According to such perspective, despite all the arguments put forward to the contrary, it should be positioned on the spectrum of verbal expressions at the end opposite to that of poetry. Myth is language, which operates at a very high level, where meaning essentially manages to transcend the linguistic foundation upon which it continues to roll (Levi-Strauss, 1963).

Claude Levi-Strauss (1963) in his book explained the definition above with an illustration of a poetry. Such literary work cannot be translated fully and literally since the contained distortions, while the mythical value will always be maintained. It does not depend on features, such as syntax or particular style, but in the story itself, so do other literary works. Therefore, He identified myth as a distinctive unit, which is called mytheme.

Zidan (2023) then explained the definition of mytheme based on Levi-Strauss' finding (1963). He elaborated that Levi-Strauss found two contradictory key elements. The first is the undervalued blood kinship (Oedipus killing his father, Laius) and the inflated blood tie (Oedipus marrying his mother, Jocasta). The second concerns opposing theories of how humans came to be, namely whether they were born of the soil or via sexual activity. The study of myth by Levi-Strauss focuses on the underlying structural patterns that give myths their meaning and importance rather than the narrative sequence of tales. According to his theory, the basic structure of the human mind—the structure that influences all human organizations, objects, and knowledge forms—can be revealed by this language model of conflicting binaries. Thus, all those pictures above describe what mythological system is and more strongly emphasize the previous aspect of binary opposition.

Related to the study of the novella *The Time Machine*, there are some previous researches analysing particular work. The first one is conducted by Jiaxin Li (2022) in Jinan University, China. This research was entitled *From the Perspectives of Attitude System: A Corpus-based Study of The Time Machine,* where there this study intends to

investigate Wells's use of *The Time Machine* to convey his worries about the split of socioeconomic classes and the decline of human society. The method being used in this study is quantitative method, which is specifically Corpus-based method under Appraisal theory by Martin and White. This particular study provides Informing calculated expression by the novella author to determine his actual demeanor and way to describe it. As a result, Wells exhibits a more favourable attitude toward the Eloi and the human civilization it represents, even as he uses more critical attitudes to express his hatred for a separated manufacturing society, similar to the Morlock (Li, 2022). The similarity from this previous study and current paper is the analysis of *The Time Machine* (1895) in both works primarily centre on the disparate representations of Eloi and Morlocks. Both examine social hierarchy, oppression, and degradation in the narrative. However, Li's research (2022) uses Systemic Functional Linguistics' Appraisal Theory (Attitude System), which focuses on lexical evaluation (feeling, judgment, appreciation), in conjunction with corpus-based frequency and semantic tagging. It interprets Wells's own attitude through word patterns and emotional tone rather than the narrative framework. It does not analyse the structural organization of the story's meaning using narrative dichotomies such as child/adult, light/dark, or predator/prey. The current study then bridges this gap by systematically decoding the mythic framework of the novella and highlighting the underlying cultural and psychological implications of oppression, especially through narrative action and infantile imagery.

The second previous study is enacted by Sari (2022) previously that is entitled *the Implementation of Marxism in the Time Machine by H.G. Wells*. According to Sari (2022), she gained the result that there was social inequality happened in the novella, which was proven on the contradictive distinctions between Eloi and Morlock. By seeing the difference of physical appeal, behavior, and their habitat condition where Morlock live underground and overwork under the Eloi's world, it gives crystal depiction that there is Marxism action occurred there (Sari, 2022). The strength that can be used as similarity from this previous study to the current analysis in that Sari (2022) explains class differences through Eloi and Morlocks; it is consistent with the idea of subjugation from one social class to another. Yet, because this previous study leverages Marxist theory to highlight socioeconomic class strife and places emphasis on capitalism, industrialism, and exploitation rather than the structure of narrative, it excludes characters that are binary, myth-based roles, and images of children. Using Levi-Strauss's structural method to map oppression as binary myth (e.g., light vs. dark, innocence vs. power) adds fresh depth to the field.

The third previous research is conducted by Basuki and his other partner of researchers (2023) in Universitas Jember, East Java which entitled *Decadence as the Effect of Capitalism in H. G.Wells' the Time Machine.* The purpose of this study is to comprehend and educate the reader on the novella's important structure, which features binary oppositions. Following that, it seeks to inform and comprehend the reader about English social structures, which serve as the novella's historical backdrop.

Lastly, it seeks to comprehend H.G. Wells' perspective on capitalism and how it leads to moral decay in humanity. For seizing the study goals, these extant researchers applied Genetic Structuralism method by Lucien Goldman as the research design. This research then resulted that Eloi represented the upper-class of England society during Victorian era, who experienced moral decadence due to the prosperity and wealth they enjoyed back then. Meanwhile, Morlocks represent the lower-class who work for the rich people to seize the idle life for their family. In the result, they became stronger, firm and resilient in facing the dominance by the upper-class (Basuki et.al., 2023). The benefit that can be used from this previous research is that there is a contrast being explored between the working-class Morlocks and the upper-class Eloi; moral deterioration is revealed by the application of Genetic Structuralism. Meanwhile, this work emphasizes moral deterioration and socio-historical critique using Lucien Goldmann's genetic structuralism rather than guided narrative structure. Thus, it does not examine Eloi's childlike qualities as a symbolic structure or mythemes as narrative functions. This new study adds a formalist dimension by focusing exclusively on narrative-level opposition and applying Levi-Strauss' structuralism.

The next extant study is conducted by Bashota and other colleague of researchers (2022). This study aims to analyse The Time Machine's criticisms of the political, social, and cultural domains and evaluate how technology will impact society going forward from a post-humanist standpoint. and analyse how myth and metaphor are used in the narrative. By applying the post-humanist literary theory, qualitative close reading, and symbolic interpretation of elements, such as Time Machine and White Sphinx, it is shown that because of the split of class and technology, the portrayal of technology as both progressive and hazardous, and the legendary fear of degeneration, Eloi and Morlocks represent a gloomy future (Bashota et.al., 2022). Based on the explanation of this previous study, either this extant research or the current paper contains of social class division being discussed by using Eloi and Morlocks, and literary theory is employed to explain power relations. Meanwhile, because this previous study only emphasizes posthumanism, with a focus on the future metaphor and the effects of technology, Eloi and Morlocks are not assessed using myth-based structural binary ideas such as innocence versus dominance or child vs adult, nor does it analyse child oppression. The structuralist method adds something new by using Levi-Strauss' mytheme analysis.

Finally, the fifth previous study is recently conducted by exploring the conflicts between the hazards that technology poses to human well-being and its progress in the human world. This study aims to apply the ideas of Digital Humanism, analyse the ethical ramifications of technology, and analyse class divide, moral deterioration, and technological exploitation in The Time Machine. By using the method of qualitative philosophical study, thematic close reading, and theoretical and purposeful sampling, it has shown that in addition to contributing to moral decay and class oppression, Eloi and Morlocks illustrate the division in society between work and leisure, and digital humanism is put forth as a means of striking a balance between innovation and ethics

(Naqvi et.al., 2025). By understanding this previous study, the similarity with this current study is the portrayal of the Eloi and Morlocks in The Time Machine as a dystopian critique on social class divide is examined in both papers. Additionally discussed are themes of oppression and power imbalance in human evolution. Nonetheless, using the paradigm of digital humanism, this earlier study explores the ethical implications of technological growth, highlighting the ways in which unchecked advancement results in dehumanization, reliance, and class exploitation. Hence, the mythic patterns in the story and the symbolic structure of the characters are not examined in this earlier study. Instead of the formalist and myth-based storytelling structure, it is based on ethics and philosophy. By interpreting The Time Machine through binary oppositions such as child/adult, light/dark, and predator/prey, bolstered by mythemes, the current research closes this gap and provides a novel narrative perspective on the mythological logic of oppression.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study examines how child oppression is shown in H.G. Wells' The Time Machine using a descriptive qualitative approach (Furidha, 2024), and the structuralist theory of Claude Levi-Strauss. The core data consists of selected excerpts from the novella that illustrate the structural distinctions between the Morlocks and the Eloi. These passages were selected through close reading because they were thematically related to juvenile vulnerability, terror, dominance, and physical contrast.

In order to completely reach the aim of the study, the exposure of structuralism by Claude Levi-Strauss is implemented through binary opposition and mytheme scheme. We must ascertain the binary opposition and comprehend the nation's culture, mindset, and spirit in order to identify the unconscious structure. According to Levi-Strauss, the binary opposition is a crucial component of thought and a mytheme. This theme does, in fact, represent the ancient form of the yearning to recognize the world (Aimukhambet et.al., 2017).

The analytical procedure consists of three main components. First, mythemes—here referred to as the smallest significant narrative components, such as an event, emotion, or setting description—were discovered through in-depth reading. These were noticed when they proposed potential binary contrasts (e.g., Morlocks' violence versus Eloi's helplessness). Second, these mythemes were grouped into binary oppositions using a coding table that tracked recurring oppositional themes (e.g., light/dark, surface/underground, child/adult). These were analyzed both paradigmatically (by theme cluster) and syntagmatically (in the sequence of their narrative) using Lévi-Strauss's technique (Ayu Everina, 2021).

To preserve interpretive rigor, only textual units that appeared at least twice in the narrative or were bolstered by structural analogies (e.g., repetition, contrast, or symbolic framing) were employed as primary evidence. Existing scholarly interpretations were reviewed in order to triangulate symbolic meanings. Instead of

testing a hypothesis, the goal was to reveal the deeper structural logic of how child persecution is encoded through the binary structure of the novel.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis on Herbert George Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) novella applies structuralism approach, which is the classification of binary oppositions and mythemes to describe the contradictive difference between Morlocks and Eloi. The table below conclude the analysis of how Morlocks are described as the oppressor of Eloi.

Table 1. Binary Opposition and Mythemes between Morlocks and Eloi

Binary Opposition	Mythemes
Privileged (Eloi) vs. Unprivileged (Morlocks).	- Eloi live on fertile, sunlit surface, surrounded by beauty and ease (p.36, 41). - Morlocks live in a dark, suffocating underworld full of machinery and blood (p.69-70). - Eloi fear the darkness, Morlocks become active and hunt at night (p.70, 74).
Children (Eloi) vs. Grown-ups (Morlocks)	- Eloi are described as physically weak, identical, and behaviorally similar to 5-year-olds (p.28-31, 37, 54-55). - Morlocks are physically stronger, industrial, capable of mechanical operation and predation (p.60, 69).
Helpless child (Eloi) vs. Intelligence (Morlocks)	- Eloi cannot swim, think critically, or plan; they are easily startled and passive (p.31, 54). - Morlocks set traps (e.g., White Sphinx), operates machines, and maintain their ecosystem underground (p.104, 113).
Oppressed (Eloi) vs. Oppressor (Morlocks)	- Eloi's population is controlled and stable (p.41, 43); they are compared to livestock (p.65, 70). - Morlocks prey on Eloi, dragging them into darkness, and are implied to breed and feed on them (p.70, 81).

The structure above is gained from selecting the related serial of sentences and scenes as the mythemes to result each binary opposition. Being added with the information on the page number, those samples are the key components to describe binary opposition between Morlocks and Eloi in the theme of child oppression. Every binary idea is interconnected to each other and gradual along on every part of the whole binary opposition. There are also other samples from the novella that support each binary idea, which are fully discussed on the discussion of this paper.

1. Underprivileged Beings versus Privileged Creatures

The first depiction of structure between Morlocks and Eloi in the narrative is the place where each of them come from, along with different features on their habitats that make their whole living conditions contrasting each other. This contrasting difference then becomes the lead of the binary opposition being indirectly spoken by the protagonist, which is said:

> *It is odd, too, how speedily I came to disregard these little people. I went out through the portal into the sunlit world again as soon as my hunger was satisfied (p.36).*

> *The calm of evening was upon the world as I emerged from the great hall, and the scene was lit by the warm glow of the setting sun (p.36).*

> *A pair of eyes, luminous by reflection against the daylight without, was watching me out of the darkness (p.59).*

> *I lit a match, and, looking down, I saw a small, white, moving creature, with large bright eyes which regarded me steadfastly as it retreated. It made me shudder. It was so like a human spider! (p.60)*

According to Claude Levi-Strauss (1963), he stated that binary opposition takes focus on the uneven difference that is inherently separated; thus, there is no relationship between the two different classes being concerned on. By observing the sequence of quotes above, it is clear that there is a difference between the creature who lives in the daylight world and the ones habiting in the darkness. This difference is also proven based on how the protagonist's reaction towards each situation. When with the daylight creatures, he enjoyed and felt comfortable with how the condition of the world those little people live in, which was by the warmth of the glowing sunset. But when he got himself in the darkness, he met the totally different creatures along with their terrorizing physique, which made him trembled when facing them, unlike the previous ones.

Then, there are some statements by the protagonist that expose the comparison of how advantageous the life of Eloi on the Upper-world is, while Morlocks have the other contrary living in the Under-world. They are:

> *The air was free from gnats, the earth from weeds or fungi; everywhere were fruits and sweet and delightful flowers; brilliant butterflies flew hither and thither. The ideal of preventive medicine was attained. Diseases had been stamped out. I saw no evidence of any contagious diseases during my all stay (p.41)*

> *'I was in an agony of discomfort. I had some thought of trying to go up the shaft again, and leave the Under-world alone. But even while I turned this over in my mind I continued to descend (p.69).*

> *The air was full of the throb and hum of machinery pumping air down the shaft (p.69).*

> *But I said to myself, 'You are in for it now,' and, feeling my way along the tunnel, I found the noise of machinery grow louder (p.70).*

> *'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 faint halitus of freshly shed blood was in the air (p.70).*

Binary opposition will gain a meaning if there are two elements opposing each other, where the non-existence of one component will affect the absence of the other one; therefore, binary oppositions are connected to one another in terms of structure and other system of binary opposition can overtake it (Telaumbanua et al., 2024). After viewing the samples of quotation above, it can be seen that there is a gap of life between Eloi and Morlock in each of their world. Eloi is privileged with the abundance of their food resource that is tangible everywhere. Their Upper-world is also totally clean from any pollutions, and the land has no track of flaws like diseases or fungi that can stain the ideal depiction of their life on surface world. Meanwhile, Morlocks live in the world that definitely harmful and extremely dangerous for a live-being. There is no any glimpse of light, full with noisy and disturbing machinery system around them along with suffocating air even featured with a horrifying scent of blood. It shows there is no existence of healthy and ideal life in Morlocks' residence, unlike the Eloi has. Based on the elaboration of binary opposition above, there are two contrasting elements between the lives of Eloi that is vanished in Morlocks' that concludes how privileged the Eloi race is, while Morlocks are the underprivileged creatures. By these total differences, the ease of life has affected Eloi the way they live, which makes them unaware of Morlocks using that as their chance. This will be elaborated on the upcoming parts of binary oppositions.

2.   Grown-up Wights and Children Characters
       The next binary concept is the difference on their physical appearance. Both characters look dramatically distinguished. Either Morlocks or Eloi has a shape of

body that is affected by the condition of surrounding environment like previously being explained. In terms of the physical difference, they are told in the narrative:

> *He was a slight creature—perhaps four feet high—clad in a purple tunic, girdled at the waist with a leather belt (p.28).*

> *Indeed, there was something in these pretty little people that inspired confidence—a graceful gentleness, a certain childlike ease. And besides, they looked so frail that I could fancy myself flinging the whole dozen of them about like nine-pins (p.30).*

> *My impression of it is, of course, imperfect; but I know it was a dull white, and had strange large greyish-red eyes; also that there was flaxen hair on its head and down its back (p.60).*

> *I lit a match, and, looking down, I saw a small, white, moving creature, with large bright eyes which regarded me steadfastly as it retreated. It made me shudder. It was so like a human spider! (p.60)*

Chunmei (2018) stated that structuralism approach is supported by the main idea of binary opposition, which are components in a system depend on their differences to result a meaning, where they actually complete each other in a structural way beside the contrasting relation. According to the quotations above, there is a crystal difference between Eloi and Morlocks on their physical appearance. Eloi there is described as a little wonderful beauty that seems fragile and weak. Meanwhile, the protagonist sees Morlocks in a view of disgust and horror. With the shape of a beast-like, the Time Traveler is intimidated unlike his impression of Eloi. In order to gain a meaning from this contradiction, there are few next statements from the protagonist in the story, where he says:

> *The mouths were small, with bright red, rather thin lips, and the little chins ran to a point. The eyes were large and mild (p.31).*

> *I looked at the half-dozen little figures that were following me. Then, in a flash, I perceived that all had the same form of costume, the same soft hairless visage, and the same girlish rotundity of limb (p.37).*

> *Twice I fancied I saw a solitary white, ape-like creature running rather quickly up the hill, and once near the ruins I saw a leash of them carrying some dark body. They moved hastily (p.57).*

> *Living, as they did, in what appeared to me impenetrable darkness, their eyes were abnormally large and sensitive, just as are the pupils of the abysmal fishes, and they reflected the light in the same way. I have no doubt they could see me*

in that rayless obscurity, and they did not seem to have any fear of me apart from the light (p.69).

Contradiction or negation determines the idea of binary opposition, where through the relationship with the contradictive components will give meaning and significance. Binary opposition holds pivotal idea of structuralism that works beyond abstract thoughts or points, which is understood as mutually exclusive terms like black and white or day and night (Memon et al., 2021). Based on the all of the selected sentences above, there is a opposing criteria between Eloi and Morlocks. Eloi's physique takes a shape of child, which appears like a fragile pretty figure and little weakling. All Eloi also look similar, which indicates that there is no variety of physical appearance between each of them and there is no sign of growth as well. Meanwhile, Morlocks' bodies are various, along with the monstrous emergence which is brutally contrasting with Eloi looks like. Another concerning feature that Morlocks have is their nocturnal eyes that enables them to see in the dark. Their body has adapted to the circumstance of environment where they live. Relating to the definition of binary opposition idea previously, it gives meaning that Morlocks have experienced an evolution on their physique, while on the other hand, there is no sign of growth on Eloi that their body just constantly stays on a small child figure.

3. Intelligent Souls and Childish Weakling

Beside their physical forms, both Eloi and Morlocks are also contradictive on their characteristics and behaviors. This opposing element then becomes the next binary concept that more strongly depicts what they are. They are told in the narrative:

Then one of them suddenly asked me a question that showed him to be on the intellectual level of one of our five-year-old children— asked me (p.31).

It happened that, as I was watching some of the little people bathing in a shallow, one of them was seized with cramp and began drifting downstream. The main current ran rather swiftly, but not too strongly for even a moderate swimmer. It will give you an idea, therefore, of the strange deficiency in these creatures (p.54-55).

The bronze panels suddenly slid up and struck the frame with a clang. I was in the dark—trapped. So the Morlocks thought. At that I chuckled gleefully. I could already hear their murmuring laughter as they came towards me. You may imagine how all my calm vanished (p.104).

That gives you the exact distance from my little lawn to the pedestal of the White Sphinx, into which the Morlocks had carried my machine (p.113).

Binary opposition recognizes the complimentary features and structural interdependence of the paired notions. This viewpoint is consistent with the larger

ideas of structuralism, which maintains that comprehension of meaning and structure in language, culture, and other thought systems depends on the interactions between components (Novitasari & Widyaningrum, 2024). In term of the opposing component, there is a gap between Eloi and Morlock on the samples above, which is their intelligence and capability. Eloi is a merely vulnerable little creature who cannot do nothing to take care of itself. The protagonist even clearly says that Eloi is built in a five years-old child body, which firmly indicates that this thing is totally a little helpless child.

Meanwhile, Morlocks are way more advanced than Eloi. Morlocks have a capability to trap the Time Traveler inside of the White Sphinx, the man who is known as a professor in the story. Such intelligent human who came with an advanced technology has been fooled with his own technology itself as a bait. Being added with the facts of where they come from, it becomes another strong evidence that Morlocks master the machinery system in that world, including the majestic White Sphinx. In those cases, there is another binary concept has been resulted that Eloi is just a puny kid, while Morlocks are the adaptive and capable being who control the whole machinery system.

4. The Oppressor and the Oppressed Children

The final binary opposition being produced from Eloi and Morlock is the oppressed and the oppressor. Eloi, which is described as a pure, innocent child character is being oppressed by the Morlocks that have ability to survive and adapt. It is proven on the quotations in the narrative, which are:

> *Some way down the central vista was a little table of white metal, laid with what seemed a meal. The Morlocks at any rate were carnivorous! Even at the time, I remember wondering what large animal could have survived to furnish the red joint I saw (p.70).*

> *The enemy I dreaded may surprise you. It was the darkness of the new moon. Weena had put this into my head by some at first incomprehensible remarks about the Dark Nights (p.74).*

> *And I now understood to some slight degree at least the reason of the fear of the little Upper-world people for the dark. I wondered vaguely what foul villainy it might be that the Morlocks did under the new moon (p.74).*

> *And then I thought once more of the meat that I had seen. I felt assured now of what it was, and from the bottom of my heart (p.81).*

> *These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon—probably saw to the breeding of. And there was Weena dancing at my side! (p.81)*

Every story is made up of several conflicting mythemes that can be interpreted both vertically and horizontally, according to Levi-Strauss. A collection of binary oppositions will be found in a contradictory relationship to one another by classifying and reading them vertically (Alomar, 2024). There are three phases of process in gaining binary opposition, one of them is finding the mytheme that can be a sentence, series of sentences, and scenes in a narrative (Ayu Everina, 2021). By taking an observation on selected scenes above, it can be seen that Morlocks corrupt Eloi physically and mentally. Darkness makes Eloi scared because Morlocks can adapt with it. With their physical advantageous, Morlocks are able to use the night time as their chance to hunt Eloi. Their success is proven when the protagonist finds out that the Morlocks does eat Eloi as their daily meal resource.

Opposing with Eloi as herbivores from the previous part of discussion, Morlocks are carnivorous. It also needs to be concerned as well that the Time Traveler mention the Dark Nights in a particular way of utterance, unlike any other general nights. It means that there is a dark fact hiding behind it that makes Eloi even the protagonist himself afraid, and also totally way contrasting with the day time when Eloi goofing around along with the beautiful sunshine and vibes around them like the protagonist describes in the first binary concept. The picture of the scary nights has affected Eloi's minds, where their body have potential to be preyed. By this reality, it can be comprehended that Morlocks have oppressed and dominated little Eloi as their survival resources, which is the idea of the final binary opposition. The Morlocks' total control over the Eloi is made evident via a series of narrative descriptions that reflect the basic structure of their dystopian society. The Time Traveler observes that the surface-dwelling Eloi seem happy and peaceful:

> *It was natural on that golden evening that I should jump at the idea of a social paradise. The difficulty of increasing population had been met, I guessed, and population had ceased to increase (p.41).*

This delusion of bliss is quickly dismantled as the narrative exposes a deeper imbalance. The Eloi population may be decreasing as well as remaining stable, based on the following:

> *I had mastered the problem of the world— mastered the whole secret of these delicious people. Possibly the checks they had devised for the increase of population had succeeded too well, and their numbers had rather diminished than kept stationary. That would account for the abandoned ruins (p.43).*

As the story reveals a deeper imbalance, this illusion of bliss is swiftly destroyed. The following suggests that the Eloi population may be declining or staying the same:

The too-perfect security of the Upper-worlders had led them to a slow movement of degeneration, to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence. That I could see clearly enough already. What had happened to the Under- grounders I did not yet suspect; but from what I had seen of the Morlocks—that, by the by, was the name by which these creatures were called— I could imagine that the modification of the human type was even far more profound than among the 'Eloi,' the beautiful race that I already knew (p.65).

However, the Morlocks have adapted to their new environment, dwelling underground and hunting in the dark: On the other hand, the Morlocks have become more adaptive, living underground and hunting under the shadows:

It occurred to me even then, that in the course of a few days the moon must pass through its last quarter, and the nights grow dark, when the appearances of these unpleasant creatures from below, these whitened Lemurs, this new vermin that had replaced the old, might be more abundant (p.66)

The structural antagonism between the two species is emphasized in these passages: the Eloi are helpless, young prey, while the Morlocks are predatory, dominant powers. The underlying linkages and patterns that give a story its meaning are highly valued in structuralism, according to Zidan (2023). Their interactions with the Morlocks establish a structural framework that normalizes oppression because the Eloi are outnumbered, outpowered, and defenceless against the Morlocks' nightly predation. This reflects a deeper mythic pattern of vulnerability versus domination inherent in the social structure of the future world. The Morlocks' total domination and repressive control are confirmed by the Eloi, who represent innocence and weakness, being completely obedient inside this society.

CONCLUSION

This study examined child oppression in H.G. Wells's The Time Machine using Claude Levi-Strauss's structuralist theory, focusing on binary oppositions and mythemes. The connection between the Morlocks and the Eloi reveals a symbolic system of dominance, in which the Morlocks are predatory oppressors and the Eloi represent defenceless, infantilized victims. This duality reflects the deeper mythic structure of vulnerability vs control in the tale. By applying structuralism to this power dynamic and integrating symbolic representations of oppressed childhood into the explanation of class struggle, the study adds something new to Wellsian scholarship.

This approach enhances our understanding of Wells's imaginative vision while also providing new avenues for literary interpretation. Future studies could apply this structuralist paradigm to other Victorian science fiction works or look at how comparable power imbalances are handled in contemporary speculative narratives. Though it may not always aim to reflect reality, speculative fiction is a powerful instrument for encoding enduring societal systems through myth and symbolism.

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