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SCIENTIFIC IMAGINATION WITH DEMONIAIC COGITATION IN H. G. WELLS'
THE INVISIBLE MAN

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ABSTRACT

H. G. Wells – an Englishman of gigantic genius – is one of the most marvellous, meditative and meaningful exponents of the science fiction. Indeed, he was a prolific, productive and fruitful author who produced scientific novels such as *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man*, *The First Men in the Moon*, *The Food of the Gods and How It Came to Earth*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *The War of the Worlds* with the advent of indelible name and fame. As a consequence, he as well as the French writer Jules Verne is called the father of science fiction. His name would always be recollected, brighted and lighted with the lamp of scientific imagination. Broadly speaking, his vision of science fiction is nothing but a renovative and dedicative advocacy pioneering in the scientific domain of English literature. Through this contemplation, he emphasized the fact that the novelistic stream could acquire its place in scientific gleam also. As a matter of fact, his literary talent searched a sort of new dimension that mingled novelistic deliberation with scientific meditation.

If Shakespeare was expert in the discipline of dramatic diction, H. G. Wells was expert in the stream of scientific fiction. More or less, his literary talent is found incomparable when it is evaluated in the territory of novelistic experimentation. Hence, he is called the Shakespeare of science fiction. His scholarly production was vast and varied. As a result, his novelistic imagination is the new genre of scientific recommendation in the literalistic world. Through his scientific and socialistic meditation, he had essayed to warn the human race of the hazards that might be arisen if scientific and industrial inventions were not obstructed or steered in positive direction. *The Invisible Man* – a sort of scientific imagination – is a simple and lively story of an antisocial and eccentric scientist, Griffin, who invented a kind of drug that could convert a living being into an invisible form or figure. He swallowed the drug subsequently and became invisible. Now he would utilize his invisibility to carry out the affairs of cheating, stealing and demoniac feeling. Moreover, he was visible only after he had worn clothes, spectacles, whiskers, artificial nose and wide brimmed hat. With the assistance of his invisibility, he stole clergyman's housekeeping money, robbed the shopkeeper of all his cash and misbehaved Mrs. Hall by springing bedroom chair into the air. Furthermore, he knocked down the constable, Mr. Jeffers unconscious when he tried to arrest him and killed many innocent persons. On being invisible, he executed numerous misdeeds and never performed good feats. Undoubtedly, this is the effect of his devilish spirit that fettered his human soul and played a prevailing role. However the novel is concerned with a scientific dream, it has a dominant source of diabolic stream. Thus, this paper, basically, highlights H. G. Wells' scientific imagination in the novel – *The Invisible Man* that is resulted in demoniac cogitation.

Keywords: Science, invisible, demoniac, imagination and cogitation etc.

INTRODUCTION

H. G. Wells – an authentic brainiac of English domain – was a prolific, productive and plenteous writer who generated the innovative genre of literary dimension that is known as science fiction. From the commencement of his novelistic career, he continued to write with tremendous vigour and unceasing strength, as a result, he produced many science fiction novels, short stories, histories and socio-political books. As a matter of fact, his literary genius initiated a sort of scientific contemplation that blended both novelistic and scientific aspects simultaneously. Moreover, he along with the French author Jules Verne is entitled the father of science fiction. In case, Shakespeare was dexterous in the domain of dramatic diction, H. G. Wells was skilful in the discipline of scientific fiction. On account of his invaluable literary production, he is called the Shakespeare of science fiction. The simple and straightforward analysis of *The Invisible Man* seems to suggest that scientific inventions may be fruitless and fatal if they are tinged with demoniac cogitation. More or less, it is a matter of consideration that scientific progression must be pursued in the light of societal benefaction. In his meditative and reflective works he is more impressive, thought-provoking and entirely amazing than any other author of science fiction. Broadly speaking, *The Invisible Man* is nothing but a brimming reservoir of experimentation displaying the hazards of unrestrained invention that becomes a source of terror and destruction. Praising him as an exponent of science fiction, Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin rightly comments:

“Mary Shelley planted the flag on the new territories, but Wells explored them, settled them, and developed them. Writers as far apart from Wells – and from one another – in geography and temperament as Yevgeny Zamyatin in Russia and Jorge Luis Borges in Argentina called Wells master and praised his work. And his influence on the science fiction tradition in the English-speaking world is so great as to be incalculable.”¹

Meaning of the Thematic Terms– ‘Scientific’ and ‘Demoniac’– in reference to *The Invisible Man*: Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines the term ‘scientific’ as ‘pertaining to, or

engaged in the application of science, as opp. to traditional rules or natural skill’;² while the stream of ‘science’ is ‘a branch of knowledge or study dealing with a body of facts or truths systematically arranged and showing the operation of general laws.’³ Moreover, it is ‘a systematic knowledge of the physical or material world gained through observation and experimentation’.⁴ On the other hand, the meaning of ‘demoniac’ is ‘possessed by a demon or an evil spirit’.⁵ The illustrations of these two terms are closely related to the word-picture of *The Invisible Man*. In addition, a deep and thorough study of the novel makes it clear that the novel – *The Invisible Man* has the sole scientific stream that is flowing with demoniac theme. The invisibility of Griffin is a scientific invention that is resulted with cruel and inhuman deeds though his invisibility may be used in heavenly and humane feats.

What is an invisible man? A walking emptiness, a disembodied voice uttering mad and dangerous things, a threat both anarchic (he can do anything he wants) and intimately terrifying (he may be right next to you). But also, because he is a walking emptiness, a violation of the natural order of things, he is a peculiarly virulent threat to the comfortable everyday assurances of “normal” life – in which men are decent to one another precisely because they can keep an eye on one another.⁶

The Invisible Man: A Study of Scientific Imagination with Demoniac Cogitation: In reality, *The Invisible Man* is the tale of an antisocial, eccentric and diabolic scientist, Griffin, who invented a sort of medicine that has the peculiar power to transform a living creature into an invisible feature. Previously, he experimented his invention on a cat, subsequently, he himself devoured the medicine and became invisible. On being invisible, he does not do good deeds but carries out evil feats. Afterwards, he reaches the small village of Iping and takes shelter in an inn which belongs to Mrs. Hall. When his money was spent, he entered a clergyman’s room and stole his money. The word-picture of the incident is quite-revealing here:

The facts of the burglary at the vicarage came to us chiefly through the medium of the vicar and his wife.... They heard the chink of money, and realized that the robber had found the

housekeeping reserve of gold – two pounds ten in half-sovereigns altogether. At that sound Mr. Bunting was nerved to abrupt action. Gripping the poker firmly, he rushed into the room, closely followed by Mrs. Bunting. “Surrender!” cried Mr. Bunting, fiercely, and then stopped amazed. Apparently the room was perfectly empty.⁷

Mrs. Hall and her husband suspected Griffin because of his strange behavior, so they entered his room to know more about his abnormal activities. At the same time, Griffin invisibly went into the room and drove out them by flinging furniture in the air. Thus, they came out of the room and could not understand Griffin’s actuality and physicality.

Mrs. Hall heard a sniff close behind her head as it seemed, and, turning, was surprised to see Hall a dozen feet off on the topmost stair. But in another moment he was beside her. She went forward and put her hand the pillow and then under the clothes.

“Cold,” she said, “He’s been up this hour or more.”

As she did so, a most extraordinary thing happened – the bed-clothes gathered themselves together, leapt up suddenly into a sort of peak, and then jumped headlong over the bottom rail. It was exactly as if a hand had clutched them in the centre and flung them aside. Immediately after, the stranger’s hat hopped off the bed-post, describing a whirling flight in the air through the better part of a circle, and then dashed straight at Mrs. Hall’s face. Then as swiftly came the sponge from the washstand; and then the chair, flinging the stranger’s coat and trousers carelessly aside, and laughing dryly in a voice singularly like the stranger’s, turned itself up with its four legs at Mrs. Hall, seemed to take aim at her for a moment, and charged at her. She screamed and turned, and then the chair legs came gently but firmly against her back and impelled her and Hall out of the room. The door slammed violently and was locked. The chair and bed seemed to be executing a dance of triumph for a moment, and then abruptly everything was still. (*The Invisible Man*, pp. 179-180.)

The people of the village are now intensively suspicious of the scientist. He likes to remain in his room at all the times and does not like

to be disturbed by anyone. Moreover, he has not paid his rental bill, so Mrs. Hall again goes to him and a conversation starts between them:

“Look here, my good woman –” he began.

“Don’t good woman *me*,” said Mrs. Hall.

“I’ve told you my remittance hasn’t come –”

“Remittance indeed!” said Mrs. Hall.

“Still I daresay in my pocket –”

“You told me two days ago that you hadn’t anything but a sovereign’s worth of silver upon you –”

“Well, I’ve found some more –”

“*Ul-lo!*” from the bar.

“I wonder where you found it!” said Mrs. Hall.

That seemed to annoy the stranger very much. He stamped his foot. “What do you mean?” he said.

“That I wonder where you found it,” said Mrs. Hall.

“And before I take any bills or get any breakfasts, or do any such things whatsoever, you got to tell me one or two things I don’t understand, and what everybody is very anxious to understand. I want to know what you been doing t’ my chair upstairs, and I want to know how ’tis your room was empty, and how you got in again. Them as stops in this house comes in by the doors – that’s the rule of the house, and that you didn’t do, and what I want to know is how you did come in. And I want to know –”

Suddenly the stranger raised his gloved hands clenched, stamped his foot, and said, “Stop!” with such extraordinary violence that he silenced her instantly.

“You don’t understand,” he said, “who I am or what I am. I’ll show you. By heaven! I’ll show you” (*The Invisible Man*, p. 183.)

Thus the stranger becomes furious and displays that he is, indeed, invisible. He starts to do the demonic deeds and then the people are seen terrified and running here and there.

Every now and then, the invisible man starts beating people up and breaking things: “his temper, at no time very good, seems to have gone completely at some chance blow, and forthwith he set to smiting and overthrowing, for the mere satisfaction of hurting.” (*The Invisible Man*, p. 200.) Everyone else, including Marvel, runs away.

Naturally, the invisible man breaks every window at the inn, cuts the telegraph cable, and does some other damage just for fun.

A short distance behind him, people hear the sound of panting and a pad like hurrying bare feet. Soon cries of "The Invisible Man is coming" are heard in the streets along with the slamming of doors as people bolt into their houses.

The Invisible Man introduces himself to Kemp. He is Griffin, of University College. He explains that he made himself invisible, but is wounded and desperately in need of shelter, clothes and food. Kemp loans him a dressing gown along with some drawers, socks and slippers. Griffin eats everything Kemp can rustle up and finally asks for a cigar. He promises to tell Kemp the story of his bizarre situation but insists that he must sleep first as he has had no sleep in nearly three days. And then he went to sleep.

Once upon a time, he became so cruel that he killed his own father because he had no money to continue his experimentation as he tells Kemp:

"And after three years of secrecy and exasperation, I found that to complete it was impossible – impossible."

"How?" asked Kemp.

"Money," said the Invisible Man, and went again to stare out of the window.

He turned around abruptly. "I robbed the old man – robbed my father."

"The money was not his, and he shot himself." (*The Invisible Man*, p. 218.)

Griffin explains how he had found lodging in a boarding house on Great Portland Street. After his father's funeral, he went to his apartment to continue with his experiments. He successfully made a piece of cloth disappear, then he tried his process on a stray cat. The cat was not entirely successful, as the animal's eyes and claws never completely disappeared. A day later, afraid, lest his equipments reveal too much information, Griffin smashes the items and sets fire to the house. Believing that he has covered his tracks with impunity, he begins to imagine all sorts of "wild and wonderful" things he will be able to do under the cover of invisibility.

In the hope of getting some clothes and dark glasses, he enters a costume shop and finds a

pile of old clothes. Hearing the noise that was made by the invisible man, shopkeeper tried to lock him but it was impossible as the invisible man had taken a costume of old clothes along with all the money that he could find and goes away in the street. The invisible man illustrates his inhuman incident to Kemp:

"I had to get out of that house in a disguise without his seeing me. I couldn't think of any other way of doing it. And then I gagged him with a Louis Quatorze vest and tied him up in a sheet."

"Tied him up in a sheet!"

"Made a sort of bag of it. It was rather a good idea to keep the idiot scared and quiet, and a devilish hard thing to get out of – head away from the string. My dear Kemp, it's no good your sitting glaring as though I was a murderer. It had to be done. He had his revolver. If once he saw me he would be able to describe me –" (*The Invisible Man*, p. 240.)

Once, when he was talking with Kemp, his inner feelings in which he wants to establish 'a reign of terror' are expressed. Just like a Satan, he longs to strengthen his demoniac power and set up a 'Reign of Terror'. The following delineation reveals the same:

"And it is killing we must do, Kemp."

"It is killing we must do, Kemp," repeated Kemp. "I'm listening to your plan, Griffin, but I'm not agreeing, mind. Why killing?"

"Not wanton killing, but a judicious slaying.

The point is they know there is an Invisible Man – as well as we know there is an Invisible Man. And that Invisible Man, Kemp, must now establish a Reign of Terror. (*The Invisible Man*, p. 244.)

In this reference, reflection of Frank McConnell is quite revealing: "The Invisible Man proposes a "Reign of Terror," but in fact his intended empire of fear and violence never gets beyond a comparatively petty, suburban apocalypse".⁸

But very soon, Griffin comes to know that Kemp has betrayed him and conspired against him. As a matter of fact, he wants to get Griffin caught so that his ill-doings may be stopped. Everyone else seems to hunt him with guns and dogs. Furthermore, Kemp advises the people that they should try to prevent the Invisible Man from eating

and sleeping. In spite of all these unfavorable occasions, Griffin continues his homicidal deeds as he kills Mr. Wicksteed:

Mr. Wicksteed was a man of forty-five or forty-six, steward to Lord Burdock, of inoffensive habits and appearance, the very last person in the world to provoke such a terrible antagonist. Against him it would seem the Invisible Man used an iron rod dragged from a broken piece of fence. He stopped this quiet man, going quietly home to his midday meal, attacked him, beat down his feeble defences, broke his arm, felled him, and smashed his head to a jelly. (*The Invisible Man*, p. 249.)

When Kemp goes against him, he writes a threatening letter to him. Through the letter Kemp comes to know that Griffin is going to take charge of Port Burdock. Further, the letter illustrates that Griffin would kill Kemp sooner or later. In point of fact, he becomes more offensive and murderous:

"You have been amazingly energetic and clever," this letter ran, "though what you stand to gain by it I cannot. You are against me. For a whole day you have chased me; you have tried to rob me of a night's rest. But I have had food in spite of you, I have slept in spite of you, and the game is only beginning. The game is only beginning. There is nothing for it, but to start the Terror. This announces the first day of the Terror. Port Burdock is no longer under the Queen tell your Colonel of Police, and the rest of them; it is under me – the Terror! This is day one of year one of the new epoch – the Epoch of the Invisible Man. I am Invisible Man the First....Death starts for him today." (*The Invisible Man*, p. 251.)

Griffin runs in search of Kemp and reaches his house. He bashes the windows of Kemp's house and thus he makes his presence known to all. The people want to catch him, so a terrible battle grows between Griffin and the gathering crowd. During the battle, another man – Adye – is shot. But, when Griffin grasps Kemp, the drudgers knock Griffin down. It was a final fight between the gathering crowd and the Invisible Man. The Invisible Man loses the battle as he was alone and there was a large crowd to crush him on the spot:

"When at last the crowd made way for Kemp to stand erect, there lay, naked and pitiful on

the ground, the bruised and broken body of a young man about thirty. His hair and beard were white – not grey with age but white with the whiteness of albinism, and his eyes were like garnets. His hands were clenched, his eyes wide open, and his expression was one of anger and dismay." (*The Invisible Man*, p. 261.)

Like Dr. Moreau, Mr. Griffin of *The Invisible Man* represents science gone astray and dehumanized by its own power. Though Wells deliberately makes the science of his books fabulous, his scientists are very real indeed. He has a vivid sense of scientific attitudes and conveys with vigor the behavior of men for whom research and discovery outweigh all human values. Griffin's invisibility makes him something at once more and less human. His needs drive him to acts of thefts and violence, of course, but his disposition as a scientist had led him to undervalue the ordinary lives around him even before he succeeded in making himself invisible.⁹

Conclusion

Finally, it is right to argue that Griffin carries out a number of misdeeds under the umbrella of his invisibility and does not utilize his energy of invisibility for the welfare of the whole humanity. In fact, he longs to establish a reign of terror and slaughter everywhere. It is nothing but the result of his demoniac cogitation. Undoubtedly, it can be inferred that he has a devilish soul that shackled his spirit of humanity. However the novel is having a dominant source of scientific imagination, it is, to a great extent, recommended with diabolic destination.

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7. *The Complete Science Fiction Treasury of H. G. Wells* (New York: Avenel Books, 1978), pp. 177-178. Hereafter, the name of the novel with page numbers is noted parenthetically.
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