The technic and technicism as means of mythologization of utopian and antiutopian narrative in the Romantic and Wellsian fiction

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the image of the machine in G. Wells’ myth creating, first of all in his novel “The war of the worlds”, in comparison to the theme of automates in the Romantic literature. Romanticism constructed the ambivalent reality in which, on the one hand, people behaved as a doll, and, on the other hand, lifeless and mechanical automats played the role of the live creatures and the social individuals, with success. So far as the person is irrational, all these mechanisms are reflections of the mechanical reality that fills Romantics with pessimism and disappointment. In Hoffmann’s fantastic novels we can see conflict between live and died in human person, nature and society, but in Wellsian apocalyptic fantasy the machine operated by Martians, becomes a fatal threat for a man as a biological being and a social individual. Motives of technicism and biologism co-act in the novel, creating an original version of fin de siècle myth.
H. G. Wells’ role in the formation of the conceptual priorities in the modern science fiction, including utopian and antiutopian genre, as well as his activity as a myth-creator is widely recognised. But in the humanities, special attention has not been paid to the machinery in Wells’ writings in this context. On the other hand, the influence of Romantic literature on him has not been studied in details. So, this paper is devoted to the question of what role a machine plays in Wellsian mythmaking and how it corresponds, firstly, with the biological motives in his novels and, secondly, with the similar problematics in the Romantic culture.

“Science fiction is the mythology of the modern world”, Ursula K. Le Guin declared in the collection of essays on fantasy and SF (Le Guin, p. 61). She specially emphasized that SF like any mythology does not need replacement by the rationalism which is not capable to explain and describe the ethical, psychological, emotional aspects of human existence fully. During millennia the traditional myth searched and found ways of penetration into this level of life. But in the world which science and technology form and change, the new myth creating was needed, and Wells initiated this process, first of all in his novels “The Invisible Man”, “The Island of Doctor Moreau”, “The Time Machine”. “The War Of The Worlds” thematically and aesthetically refers to this cycle, which Wells defined as romance. At the same time the last novel belongs to that genre space where the novel – prevention, novel – catastrophe, distopia and anti-utopia coexist. Finally all this variety of narratives opposes to the descriptions of a perfect and fair society without threats and disproportions and can be defined as social and philosophical fiction. Besides, “The War Of The Worlds” is written in the epoch of neo-romanticism in the literature and so-called fin de siècle in the moral and social life and it evokes interest to all the mysterious, supernatural, miraculous as well as the awful and the ominous.

In Wells’ first novels utopian expectations and antiutopian predictions co-exist, and not always it is possible to delimit them. Despite of the fact that Wells was educated in the spirit of the ideology of positivism and scientific and technical progress it was he who, however, subjected it to careful art examination here. While “The Time Machine” is written mainly in utopian traditions, F. McConnell defines “The Island of Doctor Moreau” as a satire on the human nature (McConnell, p. 120), and the island itself as a symbol of a totalitarian model. Wells gave rise to both utopian and antiutopian genres in the fiction of the 20th century.

By the beginning of Wells’ literary career Utopia had had a long history in the European culture. At the same time, utopia itself contained the internal contradiction when all were equal, but some more equal than the others, etc.; when life appeared ordered and rationalised, but thus heartless, boring, deprived of love, poetry, creativity, etc. Anti-utopia in its pure form had not existed till the 20th Century, but nevertheless Utopia had always the back side which attracted the European intellectuals more and more, inspiring them on irony, satire, grotesque and other comic means. These ones, depending on a context, including the political one, were directed on the exaggerated expectations of the enlightened mankind for a happy future,
as well as this enlightened mankind itself with its wars and other absurd and silly occupations. Wells’ fiction embraced the art experience of Swift, Voltaire, etc., but it played a unique role in the history of both fantasy and Utopia. In Wells’ novels we can see the first samples of anti-Utopia, which aren’t limited by the form of an ideological treatise, but combine the fictional form with the depth of problematics. Wells’ technical ideas and forecasts provided actually a scientific character of his fiction, and the intellectual saturation and a mythological paradigm gave original and perspective character to it. Both the intellectual atmosphere *fin de siècle* and obvious romantic analogies played a significant role in this process. Jules Verne is well known for his many technical innovations too, but he hadn’t the idea of technicism as the basic element and a new powerful stimulus of European culture entering the epoch of world wars, mass social shocks and technological cataclysms.

Wells was the first mythmaker, who embodied the essential themes of a modern civilization in science fiction. At the same time his early novels are filled with symbolism and allegory. His gravity of the problems and myth making were combined with the ambiguity, parody, play. Wellsian myth often acquires ironic character.

In fact, Romantics already unmasked their own myths, including a pantheistic one. In the fantastic stories by E. T. A. Hoffmann not only unnatural, false outpourings of feelings in the open air and in the context of the nature often look not quite seriously, but also the nature itself is perceived with the increasing irony, and even cautiously. In E. V. Andrienko’s opinion, the semantics of such negative Hoffmann’s character as Klein Zaches, has obviously a mythological character and it is based, first of all, on images of the low chthonic level of Indo-European outlook (he is compared to strangely cartilaginous wooden stick; a split radish, a small alraun; an ugly mandrake). The tragedy of Zinnober and his grotesque, ridiculous death can be explained by the fact that he could never overcome the break between the vegetative and spiritual worlds (Andriyenko, p. 139). Romantics design both dualistic and ambivalent reality in which people behave like dolls; on the other hand, something lifeless, mechanical successfully plays role of a living being and a social individual. True, Romantic mechanical dolls express rather the results of their observations above the life of a person and a society, a symbol of lie and imperfection, the falsity of the world around and the officials and philistines without soul and imagination who occupied it, than represent the image of the machine. The evil is in a man, but it can act as an external force, first of all in an image of a double or a mechanical doll, an automatic device. This other man-made reality reflects an unnatural and false one, which is directly given sensually. The last one has not yet opposed to a man but it can acquire a mysterious power above him. Ludwig and Ferdinand are delighted with the musical automates of the professor X in the novella “Die Automate” (The Automaton) but the nature in the professor’s garden, working as a mechanism, horrifies the friends as well as the most cool observers, hearing air music on the island Ceylon, cannot get off the feeling of deep horror and heart-rending compassion with these sounds of nature which so terribly reproduce human cries.
Tzvetan Todorov defines the fantastic as a narration balancing on the verge of the real and the imagined. “The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty... The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event” (Todorov, p. 25). These means of balancing between the dream and the reality, a valid world and the illusion are originated from the Romantics, and it means both an unreal character and an awful tone of a narrative. The awful needs an internal conflict, a doubt, whether the overcome improbable is really possible, as Z. Freud formulated it. Awful is real, impossible not by its essence, but by a degree, and quite probable principally at the same time. Therefore, the myth is not awful, except, perhaps, the eschatological one, which does not explain the genesis and does not tell a story, but predicts death and catastrophe, making them real, close and inevitable things.

Todorov doesn’t pay special attention to a science-fiction genre though he relates it to the type of narrations in which the fiction is limited by the initial supernatural assumption as in “Die Verwandlung” (The Metamorphose) by Kafka. It is natural, because science fiction, especially of social and philosophical type, doesn’t quite fall under his definition. Actually in science fiction the initial assumption is connected to a technical hypothesis, instead of an existential situation. Science fiction is based on fantasies about the influence of the imagined or predicted scientific and technological phenomena on a society and a man. But Wells in the 1890 romances combined this genre orientation with a wide outlook and metaphors.

On the one hand, Wells followed romantic devices in the creation of a fantastic effect (according to the terminology of Todorov). In “War of the worlds” some uncertainty in the reality of the described events, the subjectivity of interpretations, and the incompleteness of the information are emphasized repeatedly. Wells used traditional devices of a romantic gothic, for example, balancing between composure and madness; psychological influence of the closed space, especially basement; forcing of fear and horror as well; uncertainty sharpened by hunger. At the same time, Wells entered technical and scientific terminology in his narrative, and it weakens the effect of the awful, because it displaces perception of the reality, but Wells uses other ways to evoke fear and horror, including myth-creating. Hoffmann's reader doubts whether there is a living being or the automatic device before him. Wellsian automat becomes the destructive force, which is controlled by Martians and forms a single whole with them.

The mythologization of the machine is present in many Wells' writings. So, the machine is idolized in the story “The Lord of the Dynamos”: “Look at that,” said Holroyd; “where’s your ‘eathen idol to match ‘im?... Kill a hundred men. Twelve percent on the ordinary shares,” said Holroyd, “and that’s something like a God” (The complete short stories, p. 286). If here a man himself idolizes the machine and becomes its victim both physically and spiritually; the spirit of the Machine “operating” through “savage” Azuma-zi then, in “War of the worlds” the machine from the very beginning resists a man.
It is known, that Wells was interested in the opportunity of life on Mars during several years, and this theme was widely discussed in the early 1890s, so Martians very much suited for a role of the opponent of earthmen. Besides, Wells was a firm supporter of the theory of evolution according to which all kinds are involved in a constant, frequently severe, struggle for existence. The conflict between Martians and mankind is a hypothetical variant of such a struggle. At the same time the question is rather about realization of those forecasts, which concerned the possible ways of evolution of a human body than about opposition of the beings of various biological or racial nature. It is confirmed by practically full conformity of Martian organism to the look of the “Man of the Year Million”, embodied in Wells’ same sketch of 1893. “Without the body the brain would, of course, become a mere selfish intelligence, without any of the emotional substratum of the human being” (The war of the worlds, p. 143), as happened to the Martians who have embodied, thus, some kind of the ideal of “a superman” to which aspired Moro and Griffin, each of them in his own way. The description of cephalopods in Wells’ story of 1897 “The Sea Raiders” reminds us up to details the image of the Martians in “The War Of The Worlds”: the same feelers, a strange outgrowth above a mouth and big intelligent eyes and the same aggression against a man. The further development of a being with excessive development of brain in Wells’ prose is Grand Lunar from the novel “The First Men in the Moon” – the same person of the millionth year. As a rule, the hypertrophied brain is peculiar to all Selenites, but in the rest their ugliness is various – we can see lopsided beings, with enormous shoulders, very spidery ushers, and a squat foot attendant; curious, almost trumpet-faced; extremely swift messengers with spider-like legs and ‘hands’ for grasping parachutes. The structure of many Selenites is especially adapted to that task which they are intended to carry out. For example, some of them were being compressed in jars to become machine-minders of a special sort. Cavor justifies similar methods, comparing them with “earthly method of leaving children to grow into human beings, and then making machines of them” (The scientific romances, p. 605).

The look of Martians is ugly from the point of view of human anatomic integrity. A big greyish rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear; the peculiar V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip, the absence of brow ridges, the absence of a chin beneath the wedge like lower lip, the incessant quivering of this mouth, the Gorgon groups of tentacles, the tumultuous breathing of the lungs in a strange atmosphere; this description in general is directed to evoke fatal horror and disgust. Their way of eating out is especially repulsive, though it does not prevent Wells to argue further on physiological advantages of an injection and even to compare it with our carnivorous habits. Such features of Martian organism, as the absence of sleeping and sexual method of increasing and corresponding emotions are unusual also. The main point, however, is submission of the bestial to intelligence. In the novel Wells gives one of the first descriptions of beings in which all biological needs are almost suppressed, however the
hypertrophied development of intelligence has led to the original mutation of all organism. Meanwhile, our imagination about the beauty and the aesthetic norm in general in all their varieties are very closely tied with observance of harmony, proportion and measure. Let’s recollect Professor Dowell’s head from A. Beliaev’s well-known fantastic novel. It is that body which focuses brain activity in it, but in absence of all other parts a body itself hardly makes any attractive impression both from the aesthetic and the rational point of view. On the one hand, it inspires fear; from the other hand it evokes the repellent feeling of the most disgusting biologism, like a cut hand or foot.

Exaggeration itself is rather a metaphor inherent in the European intellectual Utopia of Early Modern Age, inspired by the Rabelaisian imagination. The idea that “his brain at the top of him will… be five-and-thirty feet or so above our level” (The scientific romances, p. 663) attracts Bensington in his thoughts about the future of the child–giant already in “The Food of the Gods” very much. Huge hens, monstrous wasps, aggressive rats from this novel lose to Martians in mythological persuasiveness. The images of huge animals and insects, despite of their gigantism, don’t have a gloomy and menacing character. The basic emphasis here is made on utopian belief that the food of gods will wake grain of eternity, which dozes in a man, and will provoke him on spiritual and moral growth.

Gigantism often evokes the doubt that a man creates some artefact independently (it’s enough to remember some theories concerning the Egyptian pyramids), it is the certificate of sacral, mythological, religious value of an artefact. Tiny art products, on the contrary, obviously testify to intentness of human mind and sleight of hands (horseshoes put on the steel flea by Lefty and his companions in the story by Nikolai Leskov).

The nature is not limited to any sizes; in any case it is secondary and imperfect in comparison with divine power and divine plan. The nature cannot surpass God. At the same time the machine is the creation of a man, and having acquired extraordinary abilities and the huge sizes, it suppresses its creator and becomes something like God that inverts it into sacral power, and the narration itself into something like a myth.

Though Martians themselves have not the extraordinary sizes, but together with the killing machines they make impression of the monstrous giants, which have come to us from the ancient myths. Mythologization of narrative is strengthened by the fact that the image of giants as huge anthropomorphic beings relates to mythical times. Giants appear, as a rule, to be tied with chaos. In Wells’ novel they immerse all ground in chaos: “A monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pine trees, and smashing them aside in its career; a walking engine of glittering metal, striding now across the heather; articulate ropes of steel dangling from it, and the clattering tumult of its passage mingling with the riot of the thunder” (War of the Worlds, p. 76). Martians seemed to the storyteller and the priest that “they moved, as it seemed to us, upon a cloud, for a milky mist covered the fields and rose to a third of their height” (p. 110). Puffs of green smoke squirted out from the joints of the monster
limbs remind us about a dragon. “Giants in armour, sir. Hundred feet high. Three legs… They carry a kind of box, sir, that shoots fire and strikes you dead” (p. 85), the gunner shares his impressions talking to the storyteller. The lieutenant tries to describe the look of Martians and motives of their behaviour, resulting from habitual logic and familiar matters, but from his words the mythological version appears, being based not only on the eyewitness evidence, but a professional militant from whom it would be possible to expect more calmness and analyticity.

In “The War of the Worlds” some archetypical plots interact, but the eschatological myth takes the central place. The question is not only about a doomsday, the completing of a life in its normal forms, but about abnormal and catastrophic tempo and forms of such changes. Besides as a rule, these changes are caused by external forces, which even more emphasize all horror of the situation for the man, who is not able to change something. Christian eschatology assumes a certain happy end, rescue, not for everybody, but for those who will find themselves among the chosen for their just life and personal moral efforts. In the positivistic apocalypse the strongest in spirit survives, piety is not enough, rather on the contrary, a man here appears in the situation of the hardest test of his own humanity, spirituality, and morality, that in many respects puts him out of both good and evil and justifies much for the sake of life, family values and patriotism. A total and unknown earlier scale of destructions emphasizes the apocalyptic character of the catastrophe: “Never before in the history of warfare had destruction been so indiscriminate and so universal”; “Never since the devising of gun-powder was the beginning of a battle so still”. In “War of the worlds” Martians establish an empire of terror about which the Invisible Man could only dream, and with much wider scope. Wells’ imagination easily applies to the images, which are familiar already by “The Island of Doctor Moreau” and “The Time Machine”. Symptomatically, Wells compares current events with the earthquake, which destroyed Lisbon, advanced post of the Catholic Church in Western Europe.

The water filled with blood is a typical example of the Divine anger. There are a lot of eschatological symbolism in the novel in general. Some details of the plot remind, for example, book Isaiah 63, where there is the image of God’s revenge as operation of the wine press: vine is blood. We can also note seven golden candlesticks; seven stars in His right hand; seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; seven horns and seven eyes of a Lamb, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth; seven seals; seven angels and seven trumpets; seven thunders; a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns; a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns; the seven last plagues; seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. It is known that seven relates to the sacral numbers used in various mythological schemes, including eschatological ones. In the Revelation this number indicates the amount of stars in the right hand of God, removed seals, sounded angels, pans of the Divine anger, a beast with seven heads. In “War of the worlds” the falling of each of the seven
first cylinders, but not the subsequent three ones is separately described. In this case the place and time of the event are not indicated, and we know about the event from a brief mention about this issue in the second part of the book. Eyewitnesses perceive the falling cylinders as stars, but it is falling of a star that accompanies the pipes of the third and the fifth angels. It’s interesting that in the first case thereof “the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter” (Revelation, 8:11). Let’s remember that the Martian invasion is accompanied by similar natural cataclysms: the rivers turn into a red swamp, grown with red weed fronds which “were watery, and had a sickly, metallic taste” (p.126). The star which fell after a sound of the fifth pipe, “opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit” (Revelation, 8:9). Coming Martians use not only the thermal beam killing and destroying all around, but also the gas shrouding a surface of the ground by huge clubs of the black poisonous smoke which they let out by means of rockets.

In the fifth chapter the application of a thermal beam followed by a luminous greenish smoke is described. Then the hissing passes into a humming, into a long, loud, droning noise. A beam of light out of the pit turned wedge of people into white flame; the fire spreads to a forest, trees and hedges and wooden buildings nearby. The impenetrable darkness alternates with intolerable shine; dazzling flashes with a black gloom. Lightning is mentioned some times. In the wood “the hail, which was pouring down in a torrent, fell in columns through the gaps in the heavy foliage” (p. 77); “the storm water was sweeping the sand down the hill in a muddy torrent” (p. 78). Even pillars of fire “became pillars of bloodshot smoke at the first touch of day” (p. 83). The storyteller seized by fear and horror finds out that he is the only person to have survived after this fiery tornado. The eschatological motives in the novel are emphasized by religious exaltation of the priest, which transforms into madness, and a sincere prayerful impulse of the storyteller.

Let’s remember also that according to the text of Revelation when the star which has opened a well of a chasm, falls, from the formed smoke appears the locust combining in their look biological, mythological and technical elements, in total creating a frightening and unique mythological image. It was said also that their faces were as the faces of men; at the same time, the locust is similar to the horses prepared for a war, and it has the teeth like lions’. Thus, the locusts “had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle” (Revelation, 9:9). The next image which appears in the text of Revelation, are horses and their horsemen who had “breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone” (Revelation, 9:17). Martians actually also represent the result of mutation of a human body, that reaches practically in full the loss of human likeness, at least external, and the close similarity with such biological organism,
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as an octopus. Actually, in both cases before us there is an original combination of human, animal and mechanical likeness, a frightening unit of refined machine and disgusting biologic, created as harmful for people. The mankind enters the war with its own future in the way, which Wells considers as the most probable one. In both cases invasion of the mankind’s runners is accompanied by a strong noise and roar. In general, the attack of Martians makes the impression of simultaneous revelry of all natural forces and coming back to a chaotic state of the world: “The air was full of sound, a deafening and confusing conflict of noises – the clangourous din of the Martians, the crash of falling houses, the thud of trees, fences, sheds flashing into flame” (p. 92). The fiery phenomenon becomes the most powerful force; the trees with a loud crash turn into fiery columns; the water under a beam boils and turns into vapour. Thus, the tree, the ground, the fire, the water, all the basic material elements are being mixed up, mutually change one into another, even more emphasizing the returning of all the world in a certain primary condition. The growing impression of the disorder is stressed by the feeling of the events’ absurdity: many refugees “sufficiently sabbatical to have assumed their best clothes”. On the other side of the Thames, which has not been damaged, peace and calmness reign: “The inn was closed, as it was now within prohibited hours... Nothing was to be seen save flat meadows, cows feeding unconcernedly for the most part, and silvery pollard willows motionless in the warm sunlight” (p. 89). In particular, it should be explained by the fact that the inhabitants perceived Martians as the giant men who would be defeated inevitably.

The anatomic and physiological characteristics of Martians resembles the careful analysis of a biological organism which has not been examined yet but whose reality, however, does not call in question. The people perceive Martians as intelligible beings, and even anthropomorphise them, but they lose their human essence themselves as the danger increases. Wells compares Martian with Briareus, one hundred-hand giant from an ancient Greek myth, in the other place – with mechanical Samson. Note that in the Greek mythology Briareus is the son of Uranus and Gaia, a monster with sixty heads and one hundred hands. The symbolism of this image is many-sided. On the one hand, Briareus is connected with a chthonic cult, but on the other hand, he helps those who establish the reasonable order in the struggle with Titans, make the world more rational, intelligent, ordered but it is the intellect that dominates in the structure of the Martian organism.

While the storyteller becomes the witness, first of all, of natural catastrophe, which is caused by Martians indirectly, his brother reproduces in his story a social disaster in all its dynamics. When the well-being becomes under threat as well as the lives of those who enjoyed the fruits of colonialism, on the contrary, in a man of the Victorian epoch, all the biological, animal, brutal in his nature, that was suppressed by hypocrisy and vanity in the routine of every-day life, wakes up, seeding him on the lowest stages of biological hierarchy. A biological trend is revealed in naturalistic description of such moments as well, and in reproduction the pictures of death and destruction, disintegrating not only a social body,
but also a physical one with all the repellent details, it can be both remains of people torn to pieces by Martians, and scattered bones of several cats and rabbits and the skull of sheep. But though he tried to gnaw the parts of these in his mouth, there was nothing to be got from them. Wells does not miss a chance to compare a man who was in the situation when it is very hard to save something human in self (story-teller), to an animal, in this case like a rat leaving its hiding place. A bit later the gunner on behalf of Wells assimilates the people to ants who are so helpless before Martians as the real ants before the people. For Wells it is obvious that the self-satisfied and self-confident mankind is not ready to Martian invasion. But, on the other hand, we cannot answer for sure a question whether this event will be a good lesson for people. And the gunner’s mentioning about behaviour of London inhabitants, who remain there after a mass escape from the largest European mega city just at the moment when, apparently, the scales of catastrophe are obvious to anybody, testifies to it. Only madness or intellectual and spiritual blindness can explain the behaviour of “painted and ragged drunkards”, men and women, who crowded Regent Street, dancing and shouting till the dawn, and having turned on the electricity in London and turning tragedy into a carnival.

While the attack of Martians is described in apocalyptical and mythological tones, the version of their destruction has the “humiliating” character, by the cause of pathogenic bacteria, which a thousand times lose to Martians in size. Martians perish not owing to physical, technical or intellectual power of mankind. There is no such a hero who would take on a mission of rescue of mankind as it usually happens in the Hollywood blockbusters. The struggle occurs in the flora world as well: the unusual red grass, which accompanies Martian invasion, covers the ground by the thickets, then dies similar to the conquerors whose death comes from the beings of a lower biological nature. Wells’ Martians are not super beings. They are genderless and they actually have only one hypertrophied part of body that is the head. Martians hardly move on the ground because the atmosphere of our planet is heavier than their native one. They are helpless without their machines; moreover, the machines appear quite vulnerable too. So, there is some kind of a “reduced”, or, possibly, ironical version of the apocalypse, the destroying of an integral mythological image before us. The machine becomes an original continuation of a Martian body, and after his destruction similar to a living organism, a “body”, having lost the “head”, the hypertrophied brain, drove along in a straight line for some time until it struck the tower of Shepperton Church (!), smashing it down, swerved aside, blundered on and collapsed with tremendous force, and shot a spout of water, steam, mud, and shattered metal far up into the sky. On the other hand, motions of Martians are driven to automatism. Though intellect emancipates man from the rest of the living beings, but it is incorporated in us biologically. Its excessive development has changed their nature so that they, actually, have ceased to be high-grade living organisms and in many respects were transformed into something similar to a robot or a machine, which is used by Martians as the continuation of their own body.
In the novel the machine becomes a symbol of a new technical and militarised century. Due to their advanced intelligence Martians have created a such powerful weapon, as the thermal beams (laser), capable to destroy the whole cities; tripods with one hundred feelers making them mobile, and even flying machines which in 1898 remained outside the technical opportunities of a man. The thermal beam appeared already in stories of J.-H. Rosnyainé “Les Xipecuz (1887; transl. as The Shapes, 1968)” and Edvard Bulwer-Lytton’s novel “The Coming race”, but the idea of fighting tripods was coined by Wells. The people also apply all possible arsenal of arms against Martians, however without result. As it was already said, the war started by Martians, reflected a change in the character of the war before 20th century and predicted those destructive global wars, which amazed mankind in the coming century. The war of the worlds has no attributes of honest competition; Martians are perfidious, ruthless and bloodthirsty. At the same time, Wells shows the relativity of technical progress: always a weapon can be invented against which the achievements of any civilization are powerless: the bacteria to which the human body over the past centuries of evolution has had the time to adapt turned out to be the unexpected enemy for Martians. By the way, it is possible to see in this Wells' tune of plot one more his prediction, namely about bacteria as the fatal weapon.

Not once Wells refers the seen by the storyteller to the facts from a scientific life and periodicals of his time. The storyteller remembers the pamphlets in which the fighting machines, similar to those, which are used by Martians, were described. He remembers these illustrations to show how far technical perfection of Martian machines has exceeded all expectations. “They were no more like the Martians I saw in action than a Dutch doll is like a human being” (The War of the Worlds, p. 143). It is typical that at first sight the multi-hand machine seemed to the story-teller to be a living being; even considered in all details, a bit later it appears much more alive, than the Martians laying near it. Those who operate this machine practically are deprived of anthropomorphism and spirituality, in their organism everything is subordinated to the hypertrophied brain.

Thanks to the features of his education and interests, Wells as nobody else of visionaries, was aware of the biological evolution theory. It allowed him to unfold a wide panorama of occurring events in which various forms of life cooperate, and the beings of various biological natures enter the fatal fight among themselves. Despite of domination of intelligence and brain above corporal functions and needs, Martians represent, first of all, a biological organism in one of its most repellent forms, in the form of the octopus. He lives far from human eyes, on depth that adds even more mystery to him and leaves a plentiful field for imagination of seafarers, scientists and inhabitants, who endow him additional opportunities and abilities. But this organism becomes a single whole with the machine entering the fight with a man.

The motive of technicism inter-acts with biologism, and the machine itself appears the hostile force whose danger grows even more due to its continuation of a biological body. With Wells, not technicism, but the machine itself designs a myth. A man resists both the nature and the machine. The deepest
meanings of the culture, which also are a secondary reality in comparison with
the nature, concentrated at a level of tragic consciousness of the man of the 20th
century, and their loss turns to the apocalyptical catastrophe, but it strengthens
greatly a mythological component in the novel. Despite of technicism and
scientific validity of Wellsian fiction, it appeals to the emotional sphere of a
man, first of all surprise and fear. F. McConnell sees the reason of the success
of War of the Worlds in the image of Martians as monsters from another world,
meanwhile as Martians are newcomers not from space, but from time, from
the future of the mankind. Martians personify horror of the future world war,
horror of reason, extremely developed by the cost of full refusal of emotions.
The victory over them means a victory over the chaos and the establishment
of space. What will be this new order like? How instructive will be an
occurred accident for people? Wells leaves the answers on these questions to
the imagination of the readers. Dying, Martians evoke somewhat like pity
and sympathy, and a wide picture of destruction of the mankind reminds the
deserved punishment for violation by people over their own nature intended
for creativity and love.

Automatic devices and mechanical dolls in the romantic prose are
materialization of the outward world, its heartless and alienation to all the
poetic and to the person in general. In the Romantic narrative machinery is
represented at the level of Doppelganger, automat, mechanical doll, or the
double. Double is the same doll, reproducing the original image but as soon
as the double appears an initial image loses the uniqueness and autonomy.
For Romantics machine is an irrational force. So far as man himself is
irrational, all these mechanisms reflect the unnatural reality, which inspires
Romantics with pessimism and disappointment. In Wellsian fiction the
machine gets an independent life, becomes a threatening force for a man.
Moreover, Wells puts both man and machinery in the context of the theory
of evolution. For Romantics pantheism opposed a technical approach but
for Wells the biological power was combined with the technical one and it
was supported by it; similarly, in the first case the machine was a symbol
of necrosis of the human soul, in the second case it was a projection in
the future of mankind, and Wells fully possessed the gift of prediction,
especially as to technical inventions.

Wells’ satire, especially in “The Island of Doctor Moreau” and in
“The Time Machine”, often reaches a critical point, but even more often
it is difficult to define its orientation unequivocally, it is ambiguous and
indistinct. The most important point Wells has demonstrated is that the
world in which we live is deprived of stability and it is rich in critical,
unpredictable, fantastic situations. Wells was influenced by Swift’s satire
but, in his turn, he affected greatly the subsequent visionaries who have
used satirical methods.

We keep on the opinion of G. Woodcock who considers anti-
Utopias as a part of the utopian literature. But anti-Utopia takes a special
place among all genres of the fantastic literature in the 20th century, firstly
due to its social and philosophical tendency; besides, it solves the problem
of resistance at the level of interaction between man and machine. Most of
the researchers agree that anti-Utopia is a crisis of Utopia in its traditional understanding. K. Kumar marks that though H. Wells himself didn’t write any Utopia in the strong sense of this word, he was the leading apostle of Utopia in the science. His apocalyptic vision of the accidents related to science, became a source of distopias and anti-Utopias in the 20th century (Kumar, p. 168). The science fiction in the person of H. Wells stimulated the development of all kinds of a utopian genre in the 20th century. Nevertheless it refers, first of all, to the literature about various epidemics, accidents, global cataclysms and world wars, which presents a huge stratum of English fantasy of the last century. These ones are opposed by a branch of English social and philosophical fiction related to a light Utopia, translating the supernatural conflict between Good and Evil into a fantastic and mythopoetic perspective. I mean, first of all, epic by J. R. Tolkien and other samples of the “fantasy” genre. The second tendency prevails in the modern culture. The shift of the reader’s interest towards such genres as a fantasy marks a metamorphosis similar to that one having transformed a myth into a fairy tale. The fantasy continues to bewitch, but it has not frighten yet because the real nightmares in the 20th century exceeded the most pessimistic expectations of the epoch fin de siècle, it has lost its sacral character, and the machinery became the routine, which leaving for pastoral idyll is not obviously possible for a modern man.

Reference


