
Social and Ethical Collapse: The Outcome of Scientific Exploitation in the Invisible Man

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the intricate relationship between science and society as depicted in H. G. Wells's "The Invisible Man", highlighting the consequences of scientific misuse on social life. Utilizing a qualitative approach and the literature-based sociology framework proposed by Diana Laurenson and Alan Swingewood, the research reveals that the protagonist's misuse of scientific knowledge leads to his social ostracism and widespread hostility. As a result, he becomes the subject of an unyielding chase and meets a tragic end.

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Introduction

This examines how breakthroughs in science and technology have fundamentally redefined human thought patterns and problem-solving approaches in modern society. The discussion powerfully emphasizes how these innovations permeate every layer of daily life, actively shaping both societal norms and personal value systems. Through its exploration, the work masterfully reveals science and technology's capacity to radically alter multiple dimensions of human experience, spanning domains like interpersonal connectivity, pedagogical practices, moral frameworks, and cultural evolution.



The internet stands as a quintessential example of technological advancement, embodying the pervasive integration of innovation into daily existence. Its role as an indispensable communication tool underscores its centrality in bridging global interactions. Additionally, the paper explores the profound influence of social media in contemporary culture, enabling people to forge relationships and exchange narratives irrespective of physical distances or chronological boundaries. This dynamic interplay highlights how technology transcends traditional constraints, reshaping how humanity connects and collaborates in an increasingly interconnected world.

The focus of this discussion explores the complex issue of classifying and safeguarding particular scientific findings from the broader populace. It highlights the potential for the misuse and exploitation of scientific information by individuals with nefarious motives, thereby underscoring the critical necessity for diligent oversight of scientific progress.

Moreover, it compellingly argues that while scientists may not be directly accountable for how their findings are used, the consequences of such discoveries can be both unforeseen and profound. This underscores the importance of carefully considering the ethical implications of scientific advancements before they are widely shared.

The idea that science should remain free from value judgments is challenged by the possibility of harmful misuse or misinterpretation of scientific knowledge. The text insightfully points out that when science interacts with societal values, the risk of danger arises. Without ethical guidance, science can indeed become hazardous and reckless.

Science, much like a double-edged sword, holds the capacity to drive both advancement and devastation. This duality underscores the critical need for ethical reflection in scientific endeavors and the importance of safeguarding against the misuse of scientific discoveries.

The potential for the misuse of science stems from the reality that scientific knowledge can be twisted to serve individual agendas, leading to harm for people or society as a whole. This reinforces the vital role of ethical guidelines and oversight in both scientific research and its real-world applications.

Scientists, embodying the pinnacle of human intellect and curiosity, also bear the responsibility of ensuring their discoveries are not exploited for harmful purposes. This calls for a balanced integration of scientific inquiry and ethical consideration.



The Victorian era witnessed remarkable scientific progress, which left a lasting impact on both art and literature. Beyond its artistic appeal, literature acts as a mirror to society, encapsulating the historical, cultural, and moral dimensions of its time. Both art and literature possess the power to foster personal accountability and awareness. Writers employ vivid descriptions and thought-provoking expressions to immerse readers in authentic experiences.

This underscores the multifaceted nature of literature, showcasing its capacity to encapsulate the complexities of human life and inspire both personal development and societal awareness. It serves as a testament that literary works are not just imaginative creations but profound explorations of the human experience.

Exploring Victorian-era authors like Charles Dickens or Mary Shelley offers a window into the intricate relationship between science, art, and literature of the time. Similarly, examining literary creations across diverse eras and cultures illuminates how they capture the essence of shared human struggles and aspirations, showcasing literature's timeless resonance.

The fusion of scientific themes and storytelling has evolved into its own literary category: Science Fiction (Sci-Fi). This genre, as Gunn (2020, p. xii) notes, is defined by its transformative potential, rooted in its imaginative frameworks. A key element within Sci-Fi is the “novum”—a speculative concept that distinguishes the fictional universe from reality (Roberts, 2016). Visionaries such as Jules Verne and H. G. Wells laid the groundwork for this genre, crafting narratives that continue to shape its boundaries and possibilities.

This research explores the societal repercussions of the misuse of science, focusing on the portrayal of characters in H. G. Wells' visionary work, “The Invisible Man”. It examines how the unethical application of a scientific breakthrough within society can lead to detrimental consequences. While humanity has undeniably benefited from scientific advancements, it is equally important to recognize the destructive potential that arises when scientific innovation is wielded without moral integrity.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Invisible Man: A Scientific Vision

H. G. Wells' “The Invisible Man” (1897) stands as a seminal work in Victorian literature, celebrated for its exploration of science's ethical limits (Gahatraj, 2021). The novel's enduring legacy is reflected in its numerous film adaptations, including “The Invisible Man” (1933), “Abbott and Costello Meet the



Invisible Man” (1951), “Memoirs of an Invisible Man” (1992), “Hollow Man”(2009), and the 2020 remake of the same title. At its core, the story serves as a cautionary tale, critiquing humanity’s dangerous ambition to transcend natural limitations through unchecked scientific experimentation. Through its narrative, Wells interrogates the complex relationship between scientific progress and societal norms, presenting diverse perspectives on how innovation intersects with human values (Sirabian, 2001). By framing the consequences of scientific hubris through the experiences of various characters, the novel scrutinizes society’s perceptions of technology and its potential to disrupt moral and social frameworks (Singh, 1984).

The allure of invisibility holds a magnetic, almost primal fascination—a paradox of wonder and dread woven into human imagination. To vanish from sight is to wield a power both liberating and unnerving: the ultimate escape from society’s watchful gaze, its judgments and demands stripped of their weight. With such an ability, boundaries dissolve. Doors left ajar become portals to secrets; whispers drift freely to eager ears; the invisible observer slips unseen into lives and spaces, gathering knowledge unchecked. This concept is no modern fantasy. Its roots stretch deep into antiquity, echoing through myths and philosophies. Long before modern tales, Plato’s “Republic” spun the legend of the Ring of Gyges—a trinket that cloaked its wearer in shadow, igniting debates about morality and temptation (Williams, 2010). Invisibility, it seems, has always been more than a trick of light; it is a mirror reflecting humanity’s hunger for freedom—and the peril of what we might become with it.

H.G. Wells, renowned for blending scientific inquiry with literary imagination, crafted “The Invisible Man” as his third notable work. His academic journey began with a scholarship to England’s Royal College of Science, where his rigorous training in the sciences—culminating in a zoology degree—laid the groundwork for his groundbreaking science fiction narratives (McDonnell et al., 1982). Beyond fiction, Wells contributed to scholarly essays and educational publications, reflecting his dual identity as both scientist and storyteller. He once humbly framed himself as “a student of science who happens to be a storyteller,” emphasizing the interplay of these realms in his writing (McLean, 2009). McLean (2009) highlights “The Invisible Man” as Wells’s inaugural “scientific romance” grounded in a relatable social context, arguing that the novel’s enduring relevance lies not in its fantastical premise alone, but in its probing examination of how scientific ambition collides with societal ethics. Here, Wells shifts focus from mere technical marvels to the tangled moral webs they unravel, inviting readers to question progress’s human cost.



“The Invisible Man” chronicles the tragic arc of Griffin, a genius physiologist whose revolutionary experiment strips him of visibility—and humanity. Blinded by hubris, his invisibility morphs from scientific marvel into a weapon of unchecked tyranny. Once driven by intellectual curiosity, Griffin succumbs to delusions of grandeur, viewing himself as untouchable and above societal laws. His newfound power fuels a descent into moral ruin: he plunders, assaults, and murders indiscriminately, imposing a self-proclaimed “Reign of Terror” to satiate his hunger for control. Society, once awed by his intellect, ultimately unites to dismantle his chaos, ending his life in a violent reckoning.

The narrative stands as a stark allegory: scientific prowess, devoid of ethics, becomes a harbinger of destruction. Griffin epitomizes the “mad scientist” archetype—a figure who weaponizes knowledge for personal gain, spurning accountability. Singh (1984) underscores this, asserting that Wells’ work declares scientists “irrevocably bound to moral and social duty, regardless of circumstance.” Griffin’s fate is not merely tragic but self-inflicted, a testament to how selfishness corrodes genius, rendering it a force of annihilation rather than progress. His story echoes a timeless warning: power without conscience is a path to ruin.

B. Sociological approach by Alan Swingewood and Diana Laurenson

The sociological perspective in literary studies traces its origins far back in intellectual history. Scholars adopting this view maintain that literature inherently emerges from social contexts, arguing that creative works remain fundamentally intertwined with societal realities. This analytical lens enables researchers to investigate patterns of human behavior within collective settings while exploring connections between artistic texts and the cultural environments that shaped them. As noted by Fadillah and colleagues (2022), such methodology examines how individuals navigate communal dynamics while simultaneously analyzing how texts both reflect and respond to the historical circumstances of their creation. Among varied interpretations within this tradition, theorists like Alan Swingewood and Diana Laurenson have developed unique frameworks for understanding literature's social dimensions.

Swingewood and Laurenson (1972) assert that sociology and literature maintain an intrinsically linked, inseparable bond. Despite operating in distinct scholarly domains, they argue that both disciplines converge in their foundational perspectives on human existence. Through a sociological lens, literature engages deeply with humanity’s lived realities—exploring how individuals adapt to their environments and yearn to reshape them. In this view, literary creations emerge as deliberate endeavors to mirror and



reconstruct the complexities of societal structures, reflecting the dynamic interplay between human agency and collective experience (Swingewood & Laurenson, 1972).

Swingewood and Laurenson's "The Sociology of Literature" (1972) outlines three methodological frameworks for analyzing texts. The first, and most widely recognized, treats literature as a "documentary archive", viewing creative works as reflective mirrors of their historical moment. A second framework shifts focus to the "creative process", interrogating how an author's social milieu—their class, cultural environment, or ideological context—shapes the thematic and stylistic contours of their writing. The third approach centers "reception", examining how audiences within specific temporal and cultural settings interpret and assign meaning to literary works.

At its core, the Sociology of Literature investigates the symbiotic relationship between artistic expression and collective human experience. As Spector and Kitsuse (1977) observe, literary texts often function as coded critiques or exposés of societal tensions, translating abstract social phenomena into narrative form. Through imaginative language, authors distill complex realities—systems of power, cultural norms, or collective struggles—into stories that resonate with readers (Afiah et al., 2022). This interplay confirms that literature is neither created nor consumed in a vacuum; it is inextricably rooted in the soil of social dynamics.

Applying this theoretical lens to H.G. Wells' "The Invisible Man" allows for a nuanced exploration of how the novel mirrors, interrogates, or subverts the social anxieties and structural inequities of its Victorian-industrial context, revealing the text as both a product and critique of its time.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design, systematically analyzing textual data through bibliographic investigation. The primary analytical material derives from H.G. Wells novel "The Invisible Man", supplemented by scholarly articles, critical texts, and credible secondary sources. Utilizing Swingewood and Laurenson's sociological framework, the analysis interrogates the societal consequences of scientific exploitation depicted in the narrative, tracing how the text reflects tensions between technological ambition and collective ethics. By synthesizing narrative excerpts with theoretical insights, the research illuminates the interplay between literary representation and lived social realities, particularly how Wells work critiques the destabilizing effects of unregulated innovation on human relationships and community structures. This approach positions the novel as both an artistic creation



and a cultural artifact, enabling a critical examination of how unchecked scientific ambition disrupts communal bonds and moral boundaries.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

H.G. Wells's literary legacy is deeply rooted in narratives that intertwine scientific innovation with human drama, from time-travel paradoxes to extraterrestrial threats and morally unhinged inventors. Among these, "The Invisible Man" (1897) remains a seminal text in the science fiction canon, dissecting the catastrophic consequences of unchecked scientific ambition (Sayeau, 2005). The novel follows Griffin, a reclusive scientist whose groundbreaking experiment renders him invisible—a feat he wields not for progress but for chaos. Unshackled by accountability, Griffin exploits his newfound power to unleash terror on a rural community, embodying the peril of knowledge divorced from ethics.

Griffin's transformation marks a descent into megalomania. Upon achieving invisibility, he reflects, "My head was already teeming with plans of all the wild and wonderful things I had now impunity to do" (Wells, 2019, p. 142), foreshadowing his spiral into criminality. Scholars like Singh (1984) argue that Griffin's invisibility magnifies his hubris, fueling acts of theft, violence, and psychological torment. His reign of terror underscores a cautionary theme: scientific advancement, while transformative, demands vigilance to prevent its misuse (Sekar, 2018). Wells's narrative thus serves as both innovation and warning—a duality that cements its relevance in debates about science's societal responsibilities.

A. Social Negation

Set against the rustic backdrop of 1890s Sussex, England, H.G. Wells' "The Invisible Man" immerses readers in the insular world of Iping, where villagers fixate on their land, the skies, and one another's affairs. Wells paints these country folk as boisterous, opinionated, and deeply suspicious of outsiders—a community where gossip flows as freely as ale in the local pub. Griffin, the enigmatic stranger swathed in bandages, becomes an instant spectacle upon arriving at Mrs. Hall's inn. His refusal to conform—skipping church, blurring Sundays with weekdays, and shunning social rituals—fuels whispers that spiral into wild theories: Is he a criminal? A madman? A heretic?

The village operates as a collective organism, its residents dissecting Griffin's every move. Children flee from his "Bogey Man" silhouette, while adults trade theories over pints, their curiosity curdling into hostility. As Cantor (2010) observes, Iping is a place where "everybody minds everybody's business," a trait that clashes violently with Griffin's reclusive defiance. When Mrs. Hall confronts him over unpaid



bills and his eerie secrecy, his explosive response—“I’ll show you who I am!”—culminates in a horrifying spectacle: bandages unraveled, invisibility revealed, and the Vicarage thief unmasked.

Now exposed, Griffin flees, his notoriety spreading through newspapers. His invisibility morphs from scientific marvel into a weapon, enabling thefts and escapes that mock the law. Yet his downfall lies not in his experiments but his arrogance. Reuniting with Kemp, he proposes a “Reign of Terror,” believing his power elevates him above humanity. But as scholars note (Arafah et al., 2020; Hasyim et al., 2020), Griffin’s toxic self-concept—viewing himself as a godlike “terror”—seals his isolation. Rejected even by a fellow scientist, he becomes a specter of his own making: a man erased not just physically, but morally, by his contempt for the very society he sought to dominate.

Wells masterfully dissects rural psychology through fragmented perspectives (Bergonzi, 1961), framing Griffin’s tragedy as a collision between individualism and communal judgment—a reminder that invisibility, in the end, cannot hide the human capacity for both brilliance and self-destruction.

B. Trapped by the Society

Kemp, once Griffin’s academic peer, emerges as a stark contrast to his former classmate’s moral decay. McLean (2009) frames Kemp as embodying H.G. Wells’ vision of the heroic scientist—a principled foil to Griffin’s unbridled narcissism. When Griffin unveils his plan to unleash a “Reign of Terror,” Kemp’s horror crystallizes into resolve. “He’s deranged,” Kemp declares, his voice trembling with urgency, “utterly devoid of humanity. His mind is a vortex of self-interest and cruelty. What I’ve heard today—his reckless violence, his hunger for control—we must stop him before he drowns this world in blood” (Wells, 2019, pp. 177-178).

Handcock (2013) notes how Kemp’s labeling of Griffin as “inhuman” transforms the threat from personal to societal—a call to collective action. As both scientist and citizen, Kemp bridges reason and duty, rallying authorities and villagers alike. Under his direction, the community becomes a fortress: doors bolted, powdered glass scattered to cripple Griffin’s stealth, ports and stations sealed. Even the air hums with vigilance as police and civilians unite in an unprecedented hunt.

Though their collaboration traps Griffin, humanity’s darker impulses surface. The invisible fugitive, cornered and exposed, meets a grim end not by strategy but by mob fury—beaten to death in a surge of collective rage. Kemp’s triumph thus carries a bitter edge: the hero’s logic prevails, but the victory is stained by the very savagery he sought to quell.

V. CONCLUSION

The Invisible Man unveils a provocative lens through which to examine the complex interplay between scientific progress and societal well-being. Though science is commonly celebrated as a force for human advancement, its unchecked application in misguided hands reveals a perilous duality. Griffin's narrative epitomizes this tension: a genius whose groundbreaking innovation becomes a weapon of chaos, twisted by egotism and moral decay. Rather than elevating humanity, his invisibility—a marvel of discovery—descends into a tool for manipulation and terror, casting him as both outcast and public menace. This stark transformation underscores a critical truth: scientific inquiry, while neutral in intent, demands ethical stewardship to prevent its metamorphosis into an agent of harm. The consequences of such corruption ripple beyond individual ruin, fracturing trust in innovation and destabilizing the social fabric. By dissecting Griffin's descent from visionary to villain, this analysis confronts the shadowy crossroads of ambition and responsibility, urging vigilance in how society navigates the immense power—and peril—of unfettered scientific possibility. Ultimately, the tale serves as a cautionary blueprint, illuminating the need to anchor progress in collective ethics rather than personal gain.

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