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من الإنسان إلى الشبح: قراءة ما بعد-إنسانية لرواية هيرت جورج ويلز الرجل الخفي

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المستخلص:

يتقصى هذا البحث رواية "الرجل الخفي" (١٨٩٧) للكاتب إتش. جي. ويلز من منظور نظرية "ما بعد الإنسانية (Posthumanism)", بالاستناد إلى الأطروحات التي قدمتها "ن. كاثرين هايلز" في مؤلفها البارز "كيف أصبحنا ما بعد إنسانيين" (١٩٩٩). يُجسد تحوّل غريفيين إلى كائنٍ شديد الخفاء مفهوم الانفصال: أي تجريد الذات من الجسد المادي، الذي يُصبح معيَّبًا باختزاله إلى مفهومٍ معلوماتي. تمهد الرواية لموضوعات محورية في فلسفة ما بعد الإنسانية، مثل تقويض الذاتية الإنسانية التتويرية، وانهيار الروابط الأخلاقية والعلائقية، والمخاطر المتأصلة في تقديم الإدراك والاستقلالية على الوجود المادي الجسدي. تحلل الدراسة مواضيع نزع التجسيد، والغطرسة العلمية، والهوية الطيفية، وتبعات التحول "ما بعد الإنساني" لتوضيح كيف هاجم "ويلز" الوهم الطبوائي المتمثل في تجاوز المادة. فبدلاً من التحرر، أدت حالة غريفيين "ما بعد الإنسانية" إلى العزلة، والانهيار الأخلاقي، والتهديد بالمحو الوجودي الكامل. يصور البحث "ويلز" كرائد استبق السجلات الراهنة حول التكنولوجيا والأخلاق وإعادة تشكيل المفهوم البشري في عصر يتسم بالتقدم العلمي والثقافي المتسارع.

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From Human to Spectre: A Posthuman Reading of H.G. Wells' The Invisible Man

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Abstract

This Paper investigates H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* (1897) through theoretical posthumanism. Drawing on ideas of N. Katherine Hayles' important work, *How We Became Posthuman* (1999). Griffin's metamorphosis into a highly invisible being exemplifies disentanglement: the stripping of subjectivity from corporeality, which is rendered defective as it is reduced to an informational concept. The novel foreshadows key posthuman themes, such as the degradation of Enlightenment humanism subjectivity, the breakdown of relational and ethical relationships, and the inherent risks of prioritizing cognition and autonomy over corporeal existence. The study examines the themes of disembodiment, scientific hubris, spectral identity, and the repercussions of posthuman transformation to show how Wells attacks the utopian illusion of transcending materiality. Rather than liberation, Griffin's posthuman situation leads to isolation, moral collapse, and the threat of erasure. The research portrays Wells as a forerunner, anticipating current debates on technology, ethics, and the reconfiguration of the human in a period of rapid scientific and cultural progress.

Keywords: disembodiment, embodiment, N. Katherine Hayles, posthumanism, *The Invisible Man*.

1.Introduction

Herbert George Wells is an English novelist, journalist, sociologist, and historian. He was born on September 21, 1866, in Kent, England, and died on August 13, 1946, in London. Wells' life is a major story in its own right. He was one of the most successful authors of his time, and a character at the centre of the age's political and artistic discussion. Wells appeared destined for obscurity when he left school in 1880 at the age of 13, but he defied anticipation and turned into one of the world's most famous writers. Wells wrote traditional science-fiction stories such as *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The War of the Worlds*; re-created the Dickensian novel in *Kipps* and *The History of Mr Polly*; and was the progenitor of postmodernism in empirical fiction. He put similar effort into his wildly



promiscuous love life, which included affairs with renowned authors such as Dorothy Richardson, Rebecca West, Odette Keun, and Russian spy Moura Budberg. Until he died in 1946, Wells had creative and ideological disagreements with everyone from Henry James to George and Churchill to Stalin. He is still a divisive character, with some calling him a philistine, misogynist, and racist, while others hail him as a major writer, a globalization prophet, and a human rights progenitor. (Sherborne, 2010) .

Wells' intelligent view was set up on his confidence in science as a transformative strength. He explored themes such as development, human perfectibility, and the moral boundaries of scientific development. His novels regularly carped about social injustice, imperialism, and unchecked technical strength. Wells visualizes future societies formed by reason and collaboration while warning of disastrous consequences if humanity fails to change ethically alongside scientific evolution (Sherborne, 2010).

Wells' *The Invisible Man*, published in 1897, is considered a base piece of early science fiction. It mixes speculative physics with deep philosophical reconnoitring of the human state. As part of Wells's greater gathering of scientific romances, the novel examines the reflection of unrestrained scientific aspiration, the brittleness of societal identity, and the loneliness that results from breaking normal rules. The novel orbits around Griffin, an intelligent but ethically problematic scientist who advances a way to make himself invisible, only to spiral into madness and vehemence as he becomes progressively isolated from society (Wells, 2018).

This text touches on the ever-increasing surveillance, social alienation, and breakdown of order that has not just been transposed to the modern environment, where technology plays an unprecedented role everywhere in public and private lives. Wells' narrative capability broadens from *The Invisible Man* to involve whole parts of humanity, which made him a truly witty author. He could share not just as a speaker but also as a critic in public disputes.

Wells' *The Invisible Man* follows Griffin, an illustrious but unsettled scientist who discovers a method to make himself invisible. Escaping London after setting his landlord's house burning, he nestles in the village of



Iping, where his privacy and violence arouse doubt. Griffin's invisibility presents strength without security: he can't eat, sleep, or live unseen without consequences. He requests help from Dr. Kemp, displaying his plan to establish a "Reign of Terror." Betrayed and chased, Griffin descends into madness and cruelty. Finally pursued by townspeople, he is hit to death, detecting the tragic cost of unchecked aspiration and disembodiment.

The study aims to investigate the implications of embodiment, identity, and disembodiment in Wells' *The Invisible Man* through a posthumanist lens. It also aims to highlight Wells' foresight of current discussions on subjectivity and monitoring, as well as to criticize the quest for scientific autonomy devoid of ethical obligations.

Today, posthumanism is a widely accepted critical discourse in the social sciences and humanities. The idiom "posthuman", promoted in the 1980s, indicates to "various conditions in which humans might have modified themselves so extensively by cyborgization and genetic engineering as to liberate themselves from the traditionally recognized 'human condition'", and "Posthumanism", an origin of posthuman, is a term employed with regard "to schools of philosophy after humanism" (Stableford, 2006, p. 401). On posthumanism-related issues, there isn't, however, a consensus. For example, Ivan Callus and Stefan Herbrechter(2012) state that posthumanism considers how modern biotechnology and technoculture impact people by reevaluating the identities and integrities of both humans and non-human creatures. John Lechte (2001) believes that posthumanism is "a category which derives from developments in cybernetics and information technology that have fuelled the quest to reproduce and reconstruct the human being" (p. 332).

According to Scott Gilbert (2017), posthumanism aims to "complicate the humanist boundaries dividing the human from the other-than-human, the subject from the object, and the self from the other" (p.4. Posthumanism investigates the idea that some fundamental feature of our humanity is changing or has already changed. It discusses the traits and qualities that define our humanity to distinguish what aspects of us will (or have) changed to fabricate us something other than human.



A sort of human subjectivity is likewise being lost, according to most humanism, which holds that humans as conventionally constituted are vanishing. A new subjectivity emerges in post-humanism, one that re-centers peripheral figures as new subjects and decenters the human. These could be cyborgs, robots, or even living things. This could be deemed as “the end of a certain understanding of the human, an ‘end of Man’ as the Enlightenment subject conventionally associated with (especially nineteenth century liberal) humanism” (Bould, 2009, p. 269).

Posthumanism is an interpretation of the Self as contingent, variable, and as challenging and renouncing the hierarchical dichotomies of other/self, female/male, human/nonhuman, and nature/culture (Heffernan, 2003). The primal phenomenon of posthuman subjectivity has a long history, extending back before human civilization. However, concepts like "posthuman" and "posthumanism" have only just come to be contentious issues and the subject of arguments. They have produced new theories, ways of thinking, and ways of talking about the pattern of human-nonhuman communication. The downfall of humanity and the consequences of the past, present, and future. The topic continues to captivate humanity, and from the final periods of the twentieth century to the present, a wide domain of philosophers and thinkers have attempted to describe and theorize posthuman subjectivity in numerous unique ways with a wide range of results. Theorists like Nancy Katherine Hayles, Cary Wolfe, Rosi Braidotti, Robert Pepperell, and Karen Barad, among many others, have provided critical and philosophical explanations that have influenced a large portion of the existing discussions and debates surrounding posthumanism. With strong concerns about the claimed primacy, independence, and respect of mankind as a lauded kind in liberal humanistic broadcasts, they have ardently attempted to re-evaluate the human's place in the cosmos. According to them, the concept of human agency has become extremely contingent and unpredictable, relying on a fleeting set of conditions. The fundamental tenet of posthumanist philosophy is that humans now interact with other beings in a variety of ways as a result of cosmic entanglements. As a result, the self is no longer seen as an independent being (Pirnajmuddin & Mousavi, 2022).



As such, posthumanism “isn’t posthuman at all—in the sense of being ‘after’ our embodiment has been transcended—but is only posthumanist, in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself” (Wolfe, 2010, p. xv). Posthumanism classifies a historical breath in which the human and non-human subjectivities have been harshly converted because of “the embeddedness and entanglement of the ‘human’ in all that it is not, in all that used to be thought of as its opposites or its others”(Wolfe, 2003, p. 193)

The "nonhuman" is raised in a situation to create its own environment, while the "human" is devalued for its incapacity to exceed the limitations of the corporeal body and cognitive intellect. According to Hayles (1999), posthumanism holds the promise of an ideal and consistent symbiosis "that will be conducive to the long-range survival of humans and of the other life-forms, biological and artificial, with whom we share the planet and ourselves," rather than anti-humanism or the end of the world (p. 291).

How advances in science and technology have changed our perception of what it means to be human. One of the main points is that the Enlightenment ideal of the independent, logical, and cohesive subject is challenged by the posthuman condition. Rather, fragmentation, fluid borders, and the decentring of the body as the focus of identity are characteristics of the posthuman self. According to Hayles, knowledge can be considered more important than material embodiment under the posthuman paradigm, where "consciousness is no longer seen as the seat of identity" (Hayles, 1999, p. 2). This perspective, which reduces the body to a "support system" for informational processes, comes from cybernetics and computer science. Human identity turns into docile and regularly merges with networks, technology, and synthetic systems.

Hayles (1999), however, is not arguing for a complete disembodiment, but a clear pattern of posthuman thought that continues to respect biological and even material originality as a root ethic. She supports a posthuman visibility that upholds "embodiment as an essential component of human experience" (p.5). From this viewpoint, the posthuman is not an



anti-human stance but rather a remaking of what it means to be human in response to technological mediation. In this sense, Hayles offers a wide understanding of posthumanism that stresses the existing interplay between machine and mind, and between code and flesh.

2. Discussion

2.1. Disembodiment and the Information Body

H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* features the idea of disembodiment. It is strongly linked with N. Katherine Hayles' critiques of posthumanism. Hayles believes that posthuman reflections overlook the materiality of the body. According to him, identity is a stream of information that comes out clearly in the form of a body. The above interpretation explains Griffin's condition, in which his becoming an invisible man turns out to give an empirical example of the posthuman stimuli that detach consciousness from the body; stimuli that, in his case, cause catastrophic significances. "The bedclothes 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." (Wells, 1987, p. 36) Griffin's ghostly absence is brightly reinforced as an existing being rather than just a mere non-footing, but only over movement and power. Hayles also likens Griffin's transformation to "a pattern of information," affecting changes in a world where he is not physically there. Like facts that can be conveyed, stored, and affected without a concrete form, his being is no longer tied to a steady, sensible body. Thus, this very separation from embodiment makes a sensibility of disturbance: the material world responds to a hidden agent, underscoring the tension at the heart of Hayles' argument. He argues that information severed from the body invites disorder, sensitive distance, and profound discomfort.

"I could not go abroad in snow—it would settle on me and expose me. Rain, too, would make me a watery outline, a glistening surface of a man—a bubble." (Wells, 1987, p.120) This quote describes Griffin's delicate situation as an existence characterized by obscurity. The most normal elements, like rain or snow, threaten to reveal his invisibility by delineating the contours of a body that no longer exists. This paradox is harmonious



with Hayles' allegation that embodiment can't be fully abandoned. The material always returns: even as Griffin visualizes himself free of physical chains, the world insists on recurring to him. He converts into a ghost apparition, plagued by the remains of physicality, rather than a liberated intelligence.

In addition, the metaphor of turnover into a "bubble" highlights how unsettled a posthuman identity that has been broken from the body is. Like Griffin's new life, bubbles are fleeting, brittle, and translucent. His disembodied condition makes him vulnerable to exposure to pantheistic erasure, rather than authorizing him. According to Hayles, the human experience is fundamentally material, existing, and personified; Griffin's drop into invisibility shows the posthuman dream's defeat at its most extreme. His shortage of corporeality results in marginalization and madness rather than transcendence.

So, it is possible to view Wells' depiction of Griffin as a critique that prefigures Hayles' own concerns: that human sense, identity, and intellectuality are sapped when the body is removed in favour of missionary abstraction. The incapability to fully escape embodiment is highlighted by the outward appearance of action and ecological summaries that frequently betray Griffin's material existence. Although his body is hidden, (the bed linens) he employs retain the shape and weight of a reposing body, exposing that he still takes space, requires sleep, and extends physical pressure. Likewise, (rain and snow) detect Griffin by tracing the contours of his motion: raindrops clutch to his hidden skin, while footprints show in snow, mapping his track. These substantial and environmental vestiges make a paradox in which Griffin's body is both absent and inevitable, detecting the deeper instability of posthuman subjectivity as Hayles considers it.

The Invisible Man reveals the lived experience of Griffin, who shows us that upon rejecting the body, one pays a heavy material and moral price. Griffin is not immune to hunger, weariness, pain, cold, and wounding, although he is invisible. His inability to hide his eating and sleeping, and being exposed to the weather and bodily assault pretend that incarnation is not completely erasable. In social terms, invisibility makes him vague and



detaches him from reciprocal relations and liability. Due to his isolation, Griffin's paranoia intensifies and he suffers an ethical collapse as he increasingly sanctifies violence and domination. According to the posthumanist approach, immediate developments anticipate Hayles' critique of disembodied subjectivity: when cognition is abstracted from embedded weakness and relation, moral responsibility dissolves. According to Griffin's destiny, posthuman takeover is illusory, and embodiment is required for moral subjectivity and social signification.

2.2. Scientific Hubris and the Collapse of the Humanist Subject.

Griffin's journey in *The Invisible Man* is not merely a physical, but also a deeper alteration, progressing from a fragmented and dehumanized posthuman condition toward an ideal of enlightenment with intellectual, autonomous subjectivity. The quotes— "giving drugs to a cat is no joke... I whipped out some chloroform, applied it"(Wells,1987, p. 102). "In a moment I had him by the collar; something ripped, and he went spinning out into his own passage"(Wells,1987, p. 10) — makes for a disturbing reading: the erasure of proper limits in the name of scientific supremacy. In all of these instances, Griffin's transition from a self-reflective, feeling human to an unfeeling, instrumental agent is revealed. This change is compatible with N. Katherine Hayles's critiques of posthuman subjectivity.

According to N. Katherine Hayles' definition of the posthumanist idea in *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), the humanist topic is conventionally rooted in physical existence, ethical agency, and intellectual autonomy. These underpinnings are upended by the posthuman condition, which sets competence, control, and informational abstraction ahead of commitment and sympathy. This collapse of the humanist ideal is portrayed by Griffin's metamorphosis in *The Invisible Man*. His search for scientific dominance over the body leads him to see people and their relations as either test subjects or problems to be settled.

This alteration notifies a more widespread collapse of the humanist paradigm. Griffin performs a posthuman logic in which the mind becomes a calculating system of tasks, and the body is dependent. His decisions are founded on utilitarian dialectics rather than the ethical principles that often



influence human performance. Griffin behaves cruel trials on animals, steals money and resources to bear his invisibility, violates innocent individuals, and in the end states a campaign of terror to oblige his volition on society. These actions prove his treatment of others as mere devices for achieving personal strength. His absence of sympathy and his nonchalance to the consequences of his conduct exemplify disembodied subjectivity that Hayles reviews, a subjectivity that is incoherent from the stabilizing force of human connection and physical vulnerability.

Griffin's willingness to damage ownership, do injury, and cross ethical lines for egoistic ends is a prime example of the risky course of scientific haughtiness in a posthuman context. Humanity isn't raised when the quest for awareness and technical development is separated from humanist essentials; rather, it is reduced. According to Hayles, without the curbing influence of embodiment, ethics deteriorates, identity is cracked, and the self runs the risk of becoming a machine that is only encouraged by functional needs. Griffin's descent demonstrates that rejecting moral responsibility and physical boundaries does not lead to transcendence or eminence; rather, it results in ethical degradation, alienation, and the ultimate collapse of the humanist subject.

2.3. The Spectre as a Posthuman Figure.

The spectre in *The Invisible Man* represents the collapse of the conventional humanist subject from a posthumanist viewpoint. *In How We Became Posthuman* (1999), N. Katherine Hayles makes the case that posthumanism destroys the Enlightenment's perfection of the self-reliant, ethically-centred individual by privileging input patterns, technological intercession, and distributed cognition over independent agency, ethical coherence, and incarnated human subjectivity within current techno culture disputes globally. This perturbation is materialized in Griffin's metamorphosis into an unseen figure. It is essentially a spectre that removes bodily form and breaks the connection between the human form, identity, and ethical responsibility.

Griffin is turned into a type of pure task via invisibility, where an operational existence free from conventional constraints takes the place of



sensible human characteristics .This transformation happens after Griffin has totally perfected and irreversibly applied the invisibility procedure to his own body, especially following his flight from London and his retreat into isolation at Iping. This is like how posthumanism prioritizes awareness and disembodied intelligence over bodily embodiment. Griffin collapses empathy, relational basis, and ethical restraint while winning strategic and predatory department due to his liberation from bodily sensibility. As a reflection of the posthuman threat, Hayles classifies cognitive capacity as disconnected from the corporeal and interconnected human state—his invisibility makes it easier to obligate acts of aggression, theft, and jugglery.

"I remember the shock I had when striking a light—there were just the round eyes shining green—and nothing round them" (Wells, 1987, p. 103). This quote sums up a picture of Griffin as an abnormal creature separated from the rest of human form, but who has certain human organs. Without their humanizing facial surroundings, the eyes—a traditional emblem of identification and discrimination—are made spectral and otherworldly. Based on posthuman theory, therefore, this means a disconnection of identity from the material human form, indicating a being that operates in limbo between materiality and nothingness, presence and absence.

Thus, the spectre marks the risk and promise of posthuman modification. It elucidates freedom from corporeal constraints and weakness, but it equally elucidates how the abandonment of human characteristics, such as feeling, frailty, and rationality, can result in proper decay and exile. For Griffin, this posthuman condition goes together with isolation and destruction, together with the catastrophic danger that humanity may still damage itself in the prosecution of its own technological and scientific goals.

2.4. Consequences of Becoming Posthuman.

The journey of Griffin in *The Invisible Man* is symbolic of the evil consequences one experiences for transgressing the embodied human presence. Griffin's transition into a hidden figure performs N. Katherine Hayles' posthumanism separation of materiality and embodiment, which makes the body expendable in pursuit of autonomy and power.



One major effect of posthumanism is an avalanche of intellectualization. After he lost the power of sense-of-identity, Griffin loses personal connections and fellow-feeling. His inability to be seen means he is cut off, or his own people become obstacles or something to use against him. The risk of social trust and social responsibility is impacted by inadequate outdoor space. That embodiment is a component of moral recognition, not a mere bodily condition.

The destabilization of ethics is another influence. Griffin is released from social repression because he has no form to anchor him in general vulnerability, but this freedom displays itself as predominance, violence, and jugglery. This dichotomy is exposed by posthumanism: though scientific or technical superiority can increase force. It can also reduce humanity's capacity for pathos. Instead of sublimeness, Griffin's condition results in degeneration into a delusive life where force is bought at the expense of ethical collapse.

Griffin's request, "What is the good of the love of a woman when her name must needs be Delilah?" (Wells, 1987, p. 127), indicates not an immediate moral transgression but a crucial withdrawal from relational incarnation. In Hayles' terms, moral subjectivity protrudes from embodied interdependence and affective relation; Griffin's suspicion of intimacy decreases human relations to calculable menaces rather than sites of trust. By breaking himself from relational chains, he borders the posthuman conception Hayles ~~cash~~—one in which agency is abstracted from sympathy and physical vulnerability. This disconnection later allows for another ethical collapse, one where the respective being comes to apply a utilitarian dialectics in identifying others not as moral others but in terms of utility.

Ultimately, the posthuman condition reveals a foreign threat of erasure. Griffin eventually became a liminal being due to his invisibility. The invisibility caused Griffin to need an identity, but he was neither entirely human nor other. When the mysterious body is revealed once again, the futility of renouncing embodiment is revealed in his death. His experiment with posthumanism creates more doubt than progress. The search for total



independence from the human world could undermine the material foundation of subjectivity.

Conclusion

This paper analyzes Griffin's journey in *The Invisible Man* and reveals the necessary ambivalence of posthuman transference. While invisibility seeks to provide freedom from the prison of the body. It also causes a disruption of the relational and regulatory frameworks of human subjectivity. As proposed by Hayles (1999), the role of embodiment is essential in the construction of identity, ethics, and relations with other beings. Griffin's conscious denial of his body leads him not to liberation but to isolation and hostility, culminating in a collapse of his ethical values. He occupies a liminal space, a kind of ghost-like being who is neither human nor other, thereby disturbing certain notions of the self and of social recognition. The restoration of his physical form after death underscores the impossibility of escaping embodiment; it presents the body not as a limitation but as a necessary basis for any meaningful sense of subjectivity.

From a posthumanist viewpoint, Griffin's turnover serves as an exemplary story about the uncritical pursuit of scientific and technological superiority. Wells explains the impairment of human personality when autonomy and liberalism are followed without ethical reverberation. The story expounds that force without sympathy does not result in sublimity, but in aversion. *The Invisible Man* threatens current disputes on surveillance, identity, and the posthuman state, highlighting the dangers of separating knowledge from embodiment and the singular from community. Wells critiques the clemency of disembodied mastery while also confirming the significance of negotiating new types of incarnation that reserve vulnerability, rationality, and ethical responsibility.

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