A MATTER OF TIME. AN ANALYSIS OF TIME TRAVEL IN THE MEDIA AND ITS POSSIBLE SOCIAL FUNCTION

Ceccherelli A[*]

Department of Enterprise Engineering, University of Rome Tor Vergata, Rome, Italy

Abstract: Even in ancient cultures, temporal experience was represented and narrated in different ways. For centuries, time travel has captured the human imagination. Although the first modern story dates back to 1733, it was probably only with the publication of *The Time Machine* by Herbert G. Wells in 1895 that this subject became a popular theme, used as a main or background topic in literature and film, and later in tv series, comics, video games. Even in scientific papers, it quickly became a hotly debated topic. In short, for more than 100 years, time travel has continued to capture the public imagination and has become a mass topic. This paper uses desk research methodology, narratological and mediological approach to analyze about 1,500 fictional works on time travel. The analysis suggests a categorization of the works into different types of plots based on the prevailing movement through time, such as journeys into the future, into the past, anywhere and time loops. The study reveals that around 60% of the stories involve journeys into the past, with motives ranging from exploratory expeditions with a tourist or educational perspective to journeys aimed at solving personal or collective problems. The conclusion proposes hypotheses as to why time travel remains a popular topic in today's imagination, and why this distinct predilection for backward movement emerges. It explores the potential relationship between the difficulty of imagining the future and society's perception of the social contract, particularly during a time in history when trust in societal institutions is increasingly in question.

Keywords: time travel, media, social function, imaginary, narratives, retrotopia

Introduction

The idea of time travel is firmly part of our imagination: "we are obsessed with the idea of time travel and the possibilities it offers us to venture into the past, to meet iconic figures and amend mistakes, or to travel to the future to discover our place in history" (Jones & Ormrod, 2015, p. 5). Novels, short stories, films, comics, TV series and video games have narrated and continue to tell adventures that are sometimes unbelievable, sometimes surreal, often dystopian or metaphysical, and not infrequently sentimental. Occasionally time travel is taken for granted as a mere narrative pretext.

Temporal experience has been represented in different ways already in ancient religious and mythological traditions, from Hindu to Jewish to Japanese (Yorke & Rowe, 2006). According to Jones and Ormond (2015), there are at least four categories into which the different representations of

*Corresponding Author's Email: alessio.ceccherelli@uniroma2.it

temporal dislocation as they appear in cultural traditions can be grouped: *re-creation*, "that brings the present into the past through ritual"; *re-enactment*, which "returns the past to the present through dramatization"; *projection*, which "offers a line of sight through time, for example where a prophecy, an auger or an oracle foretells the future or elucidates a problem of the past"; *dislodgement,* where either "an individual steps outside of time", or "two different time zones coexist", or "an individual moves into a different time state from the rest of the narrative world" (Jones & Ormrod, 2015, pp. 10-11).

Beyond this kind of time-travelling archaeology, the first modern tale to mention is probably *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* (1733) by Samuel Madden, followed by *L'An 2440, rêve s'il en fut jamais* (1771) by Louis-Sébastien Mercier, and *Anno 7603* (1781) by Johan Herman Wessel. Nevertheless, it was in the 19th Century that the theme began to recur in literary production, also thanks to works by well-known authors: *Rip Van Winkle* (1819) by Washington Irving, *The Galoshes of Fortune* (1838) by Hans Christian Andersen, *A Christmas Carol* (1843) by Charles Dickens, *A Tale of the Ragged Mountains* (1844) by Edgar Allan Poe, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) by Mark Twain (Gleick, 2016).

The true watershed is *The Time Machine* of 1895, which gave its author Herbert G. Wells instant fame in the international arena. The novel consciously fits into the philosophical and scientific discourse of those years. It uses language and cultural references that allude to the discoveries of physics, thus making a decisive contribution to a debate that has become classic and to which famous names such as Albert Einstein, Kurt Gödel, Stephen Hawking, and Roger Penrose have contributed. This debate is still alive in the current scientific literature. In April 2022, a team led by Physicist Barack Shoshany of Brock University in Canada illustrated in an article in *The Conversation*, "Time travel could be possible, but only with parallel timelines" (2022), a theory based on parallel timelines that is fully compatible with our understanding of time and causality closely linked to general relativity. In two papers submitted to *Physical Review A* (2021) and *Physical Review Letters* (2022), Physicists Venkatesh Vilasini, from Eth Zurich, and Roger Colbeck, from the University of York, propose a complex solution to the famous grandfather paradox or consistency paradox. Even today, numerous studies focus on the nature of space and time, the physical basis of time travel, causal loops, chronological protection, and much more. Just do a quick search on Google Scholar: from 2018 to date, the search key 'time travel physics' returns 18,000 scientific articles; with the key 'time travel possible' the results go up to 30,700, but in this case, we also more generically cross over into the fields of psychology and philosophy.

Interestingly, many of these studies explicitly refer to narratives and figures from the imaginary, as if the imaginary provided the stimulus and fuel for philosophical and scientific abduction. It is a kind of virtuous circle: human imagination stimulates scientific curiosity, which in turn fuels imagination, on and on. Consider how and to what extent the novels of Jules Verne, Isaac Asimov, and Philip K. Dick

have anticipated many of humanity's discoveries and achievements (moon travel, robotics, virtual worlds).

Therefore, this article aims to study how different media and different narratives have dealt with one of the inaugural themes of science-fiction and fantasy literature and what it may represent at the level of the imaginary and society today. This reflection follows and expands on the considerations of Wittenberg (2013) and the above-mentioned Jones and Ormond (2015), the two most comprehensive studies concerning the success of time travel in the media, to attempt an interpretation from a sociological perspective. The theoretical basis of reference is that of media metaphors (McLuhan, 2011; Ragone, 2019) and of studies of the imaginary (Durand, 1960; Durand, 1996; Appadurai, 1996). The imaginary is intended as a cauldron of images that individuals, groups and society have produced, preserved, and transformed throughout human history. However, it is also the dynamic process of this production, preservation, and transformation (Grassi, 2012), capable of continuously generating symbols, images, and narratives (Ragone, 2015). These narratives contain, or are in their entirety, metaphors of what is happening on a social and cultural level: they symbolically synthesize fears, desires, drives, and aspirations that manifest in reality. On the one hand, the imagery reflects what has happened or is happening, thus performing a symbolic-social function of problem-solving (Lukács, 1908/1974; Lukács, 1950); on the other, it anticipates changes, mutations, and practices that emerge in the social substratum and that may become relevant in the following years: artists are radars, antennas of the race capable of picking up signals that are not perceived by the masses (McLuhan, 1964), and the representations they elaborate perform an anticipatory function, a function of preparation for future scenarios, in some cases of premeditation (Grusin, 2004; Grusin, 2011).

Materials and methods

Let us start with some already available numerical data. According to a Canadian website, there are 2196 films containing some form of time manipulation, including feature films and short films ("The Quintessential List of Time Travel Cinematic Movies", 2022). The same site also provides data on episodes in TV series: 353 series mainly based on this theme, plus 968 regular series, for a total of more than 2200 episodes that stage or refer to time travel ("The Quintessential List of Time Travel episodes in TV Series", 2022). The count is updated to December 2022 and does not consider stories about parallel universes, alternative universes, space-time dimensions or references to cryogenics.
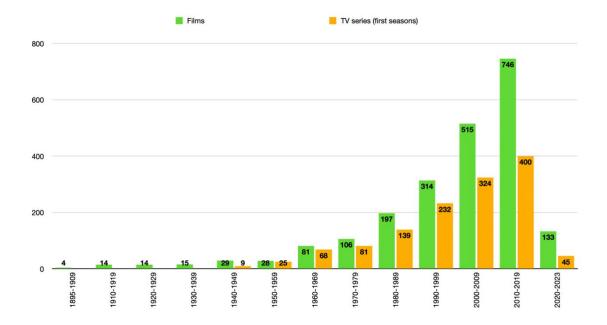
Figure 1: Trend over the years of time travel films and tv series

These are decidedly high numbers, which also have an upward trend over time, as seen in Figure 1. The chart was created by subdividing the films and TV series present on the site by decade, taking into consideration - for the TV series - only the year of the first season. Indeed, in some cases (such as *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who*), time travel stories are one of the central features of the series and recur constantly; in other cases, there is no continuity over the years, and the temporal positioning risked being inaccurate.

This growth is of particular interest and allows us to introduce our specific research on a smaller sample than that taken by the Canadian website but more varied in media. We identified around 1,500 literary, film, television and video game works whose plots are present on various web sources[1]. First, we searched for works on Wikipedia pages in different languages (English, French, Italian, German and Spanish), starting with time travel listings in fiction. Then, we considered other specific sites listing works of fiction (Goodreads; La Biblioteca Galattica) by choosing time travel as a selection criterion. Finally, we used the 'time travel' category to filter the Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ and Apple TV + catalogues.

The works have been divided by medium and decade, identifying 1895 (the year of publication of Wells's *The Time Machine*) as the watershed. Overall, there are 1526 works: 482 novels and short stories, 588 films, 259 TV series and 197 video games. As far as TV series is concerned, only the year

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[1] This research takes up and extends what has already been analyzed in a previous work (Ceccherelli, 2022), where 710 works were considered.

of the first season was considered. Self-published works were not taken into account. The result is summarized in Figure 2, compiled from the data in Table 1.

Table 1:   Trend over the years of time travel in the analyzed media

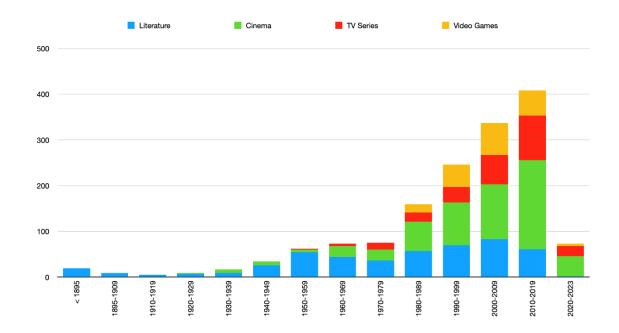| < 1895	Literature	Cinema	TV Series	Video Games	TOTAL
1895-1909	19	0	0	0	19
1910-1919	9	0	0	0	9
1920-1929	5	0	0	0	5
1930-1939	7	2	0	0	9
1940-1949	9	8	0	0	17
1950-1959	26	8	0	0	34
1960-1969	54	6	2	0	62
1970-1979	44	24	5	0	73
1980-1989	36	24	15	0	75
1990-1999	57	64	20	18	159
2000-2009	70	93	34	49	246
2010-2019	83	120	64	70	337
2020-2023	61	195	97	55	408
< 1895	2	44	22	5	73
	482	588	259	197	1526

Figure 2: Trend over the years of time travel in the analyzed media

The upward trend is also evident here, albeit with a few jumps, as between the 1970s and 1980s. Much depends on the diversity of media available: while in the beginning there was only literature, over time cinema, TV, and video games were added. The more media platforms, the more stories, and the

investments from the so-called culture industry (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/1972) grow as the available platforms increase (Van Dijck, Poell & De Waal, 2018). This is true, but it is not enough. The growing trend is, in fact, also discernible within every single medium, in some cases more, in others less.

Another fact is interesting to consider, and it is the one that our research mainly addresses. It concerns what we call the 'prevailing temporal direction', that is, the initial or predominant movement with respect to the timeline. Where does the time travel take place? Into the future, as in *The Time Machine*? Into the past, as in Robert Zemeckis's 1986 film *Back to the Future*? Or is it an ever-repeating cycle, as in *Groundhog Day*, the 1993 film by Harold Ramis?

Using the analytical tools offered by semiotics, particularly narratology (Genette, 1969; Genette, 1972; Chatman, 1978), we analyzed the plots of the 1526 works by grouping them according to the prevailing temporal direction. The synopsis of a story indicates, in fact, at least the initial movement of the time journey: the main characters move to another historical epoch, or characters from other ages suddenly appear in the story. When the information on the above-mentioned pages was insufficient, we looked for more precise information on other sites to determine the temporal direction.

Below we offer some examples considering different media and periods.

Wells's *The Time Machine* tells of an inventor who creates a machine for moving through time and travels into the future to 802,701 AD when human beings have evolved into two species, the Morlocks and the Eloi. The temporal direction is from the present towards the future. It is an initial or prevailing direction because the Time Traveler then makes the reverse journey back to the present.

Take the novel *The House of Arden,* published by Edith Nesbit in 1908: "A boy named Edred Arden inherits the title of Lord Arden and the dilapidated Arden Castle. He and his sister Elfrida search for the lost treasure of the Ardens and, with the help of the magical Mouldiwarp, they travel back in time searching for clues" ("The House of Arden", 2022)[2]. In this case, the initial temporal direction is from the present towards the past. In Harlan Ellison's *Soldier from Tomorrow* (1957), the movement is always backward but from the future to the present: "A soldier travels from back to the future to warn the world of its path towards global conflict" ("List of time travel works of fiction", 2023).

Another example, more recent, is taken from the cinema. The Australian film *Dr. Plonk*, from 2007, focuses on "a scientist and inventor who, in 1907, determines that the world will end in 101 years.

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[2] As far as references to Wikipedia entries are concerned, we have applied the guidance provided in the APA-style webpage: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples/wikipedia-references

However, he is ridiculed for his beliefs and invents a time machine to collect evidence from the future to prove his case. But each visit he makes to 2007 only causes him more problems, and he eventually becomes a wanted man" ("Dr. Plonk", 2023). In this case, the temporal movement is continuous between present and future; the characters are constantly going back and forth, which is functional to the development of the plot. The same applies to the 1984 film *The Cold Room*: "Carla is experiencing two realities, one in the 1980s when she is Carla Martin and another in 1936 when she is Christa Bruckner" ("The Cold Room", 2022). Here, the shuttle is between the present and the past.

The 2012 French video game, *Tales of Maj'Eyal*, developed by Nicolas Casalini, is described as a "modern tiled rogue-like game allows to time travel some turns back and change the history, or some turns forward and peek the future using particular abilities of Chronomancy-related classes" ("List of games containing time travel", 2023). Here, the movement is both towards the past and the future, so there is no prevailing direction, and the characters move everywhere. The same happens in *Time Travelers Never Die* (2009), a novel by Jack McDevitt, where the protagonist "receives a package from his mysteriously disappeared father, with four devices and a note instructing him to destroy them. Soon, Shel discovers that the devices can take you anywhere at any point in time" ("List of time travel works of fiction", 2023).

Let us end with the time loop. One of the earliest examples is a short story by Frederik Pohl, *The Tunnel Under the World*, published in 1955. The protagonist finds himself repeating the same experience repeatedly; only he realizes this while all the other inhabitants of the town continue to live their lives as if everything were normal. A more recent example is the TV series *Russian Doll* (2019-2022) produced by Netflix, where "a woman named Nadia who is caught in a time loop as the guest of honour at her seemingly inescapable 36th birthday party one night in New York City. She dies repeatedly, always restarting at the same moment at the party, as she tries to figure out what is happening to her" ("Russian Doll (TV series)", 2023).

We carried out the identification of the temporal movement on all 1526 plots. In some cases, it was not possible to associate specific directions. These stories handle temporal manipulation in a particular way, such as multiplying timelines or opening to alternative space-time dimensions, up to the multiverse concept.

Results

We have identified five possible macro-types containing more specific types: Forth, Back, Back/Forth, Everywhere, and Time loop.

In the *Forth* type, the journey is from the past into our present, typically with characters or events to defend against: the past is seen as a threat averted or a mistake not to be repeated. Alternatively, the

journey is from the present into the future, for exploration or necessity, and we usually become aware of the potentially catastrophic consequences of actions in our present.

The opposite movement is contained in the *Back* typology, where the journey occurs either from the future into our present or - much more frequently - from the present into the past. There are various reasons for this: to correct a few things that have made the present problematic and unlivable, or to prevent someone's death or a catastrophe, to prevent history from changing, or to act so that a love affair (in crisis or ended in the present) takes a different path and ends positively. However, the journey to the past can also take place for tourism, learning, curiosity or escapism, by observing historical events as if one were a tourist or explorer. In some cases, the protagonist decides to stay in the past.

In *Back/Forth,* the movement between past and present, or between present and future, is continuous, in a kind of shuttling to solve a problematic situation. It is a particular type, which does not favour one direction or the other, but neither does it provide for total freedom as in the following type.

In *Everywhere*, journeys head for different periods, in a movement that tends to be directionless, and taking the process of spatialization of time initiated in Wells's novel to its extreme consequences.

Finally, in the *time loop*, a particular form of movement towards the past, one relives the same day or period and has to find a way out of the vicious circle to live in the present better.

We can associate certain dominant or prevalent functions with these movements. Even in this case, the association of a work with a function is not clear-cut, and we do not speak of exclusive functions.

The first two have an 'exploratory' nature, and the characters undertake the journey almost always out of explicit desire. These are typical circumstances in children's literature, where an exploratory journey into the past is nearly the norm. In the *tourist-exotic* function, the motivation for the voyage links to curiosity and a desire for escapism, mainly found in adventure or comedy stories. An example is *Vintage Season* (1946) by Lawrence O'Donnell (joint pseudonym of C. L. Moore and Henry Kuttner), where "time travellers from the future experience wonderful seasons and spectacular events in the past" ("List of time travel works of fiction", 2023). Another one is Chad Oliver's *Mists of Dawn* (1952), whose story "follows the adventures of adolescent Mark Nye when he is accidentally transported to the Stone Age by his uncle's time machine" ("Mists of Dawn", 2022).

The second function has similar aspects but with a more explicit *educational* value: the purpose of the journey is to take a closer look at historical events in the past or what may happen in the future to become aware of the consequences of our present actions. Even in this case, the tone is mainly adventurous or didactic. Wells's *The Time Machine* and Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* fit into this

function, as does the French film *Flashback* (2012): "After celebrating her court victory, Charlie is given a ride by a magical taxi driver, Hubert, who causes her to travel through time to different moments in French history, as well as events in Charlie's own life and the life of her parents, so that she learns about the previous struggles of women to gain equality, and also gains a better understanding of her own mother's life and struggles".

The other two functions are 'restorative'. They serve to solve problems, which may be individual (we are therefore talking about *personal problem-solving*) or social and global (we are talking about *collective problem-solving*). Although not the norm, the former includes comedies, romances, and nostalgic stories. Two recent examples are the American film *When We First Met* (2018) by Ari Sandel: "A guy in love uses a photobox to travel back in time to change his life"; and the Japanese film *Hello World* (2019) by Tomohiko Itō: "A man travels in time from the year 2027 to relive his school years and to correct a bad decision in his life" ("List of time travel works of fiction", 2023).

Collective problem-solving, on the other hand, is typically associated with action stories and the catastrophic or dystopian genre. Very famous and successful contemporary examples are *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) by Anthony and Joe Russo and the Netflix TV series *The Umbrella Academy* (2019-2022), based on the homonymous comic book series written by Gerard Way and illustrated by Gabriel Bá.

The dominant functions are not always applicable. Sometimes, the stories use time travel as a narrative device without specific scientific, philosophical or psychological motivation. It has *crossover* and exotic setting value for famous characters or couples, such as Duffy Duck and Speedy Gonzales (*See Ya Later Gladiator*, 1968) or the Three *Stooges* (*The Three Stooges Meet Hercules*, 1962).

The clustering into five macro-types of temporal movements allows us to obtain some statistical data shown (Table 2, Figure 3).

Table 2:   Frequency of time travel types

< 1895	Forth	Back	Back/Forth	Everywhere	Time Loop	Other	TOTAL
1895-1909	6	6	2	2	1	2	19
1910-1919	3	3	0	1	0	2	9
1920-1929	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
1930-1939	5	4	0	0	0	0	9
1940-1949	5	9	0	2	0	1	17
1950-1959	8	19	0	2	2	3	34
1960-1969	14	39	3	4	2	0	62
1970-1979	16	39	3	10	1	4	73
1980-1989	18	42	5	7	1	2	75

1990-1999	16	100	8	19	6	10	159
2000-2009	16	150	7	41	8	24	246
2010-2019	33	191	12	49	15	37	337
2020-2023	52	240	14	38	37	27	408
< 1895	12	35	6	7	10	3	73
	207	879	60	182	83	115	1526
	13,6%	57,6%	3,9%	11,9%	5,4%	7,5%	

Figure 3: Frequency of time travel types

Of the 1526 works analyzed, 57.6% show a prevalent backward movement, and to this is added a 5.4% of time loop, which is a return to the past, albeit repeated continuously. The preference for backward movement is thus clear, almost 2/3. As for the rest, 13.6 per cent tell stories projected mainly into the future, 11.9 per cent use time as a spatial scenario to move at will, and 3.9 per cent are characterized by a systematic movement between forward and backward. For the above reasons, it was impossible to associate 7.5% with any of the macro-typologies identified.

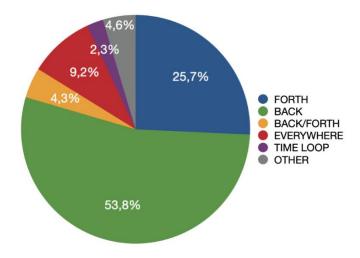However, the propensity for the past has become more evident in the last 40 years.

Figure 4: Frequency of time travel types up to the 1970s
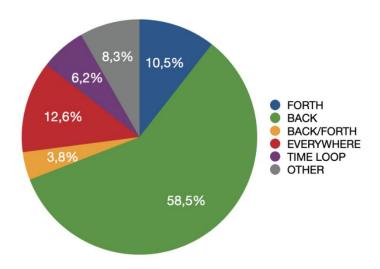

Figure 5: Frequency of time travel types since the 1980s

If we break down the data into two separate graphs (Figures 4 and 5), we can see that up until the 1970s, the percentage of journeys into the future was significantly higher: 25.7% versus 10.5%. Although a constant throughout the twentieth century and beyond, looking towards the past thus seems to be more insistent at the turn of the millennium.

The overall time trend for the types of travel is in Figure 6, where some things stand out.
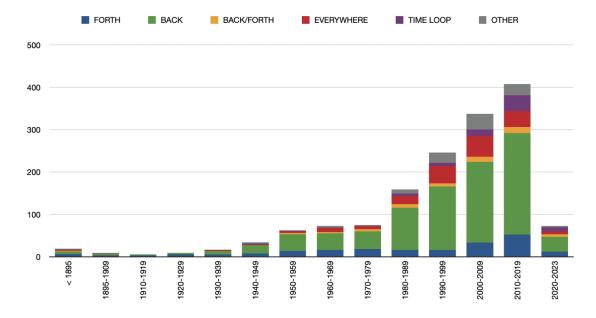
Figure 6: Trend over the years of time travel types

Firstly, until the 1930s, there was no apparent preference for travelling backward. The backward movement begins to take over in the 1930s, and even more so from the 1940s, probably in conjunction with the fear (first) and certainty (later) of the Second World War. Moreover, from the 1980s onwards, the share of stories based on other typologies, in particular *Everywhere* and *Time loop*, increases, as does that of stories that cannot be easily classified. It could signify a more diverse media landscape, influenced by the logic of the network and cyberspace, where space and time are often blurred, accentuating the perception of time as a traversable space.

The last data processing concerns geographical distribution. More than half of the works (51.1%) are exclusively or mainly US productions. Of the other nations, only the UK and Japan participate with a high percentage (11.1% and 10.7% respectively). Next are France with 4.1%, Canada with 3.3%, South Korea with 2.9% and Italy with 2.5%. Below is a chart of the nations that contributed at least 1% of the total (Figure 7).
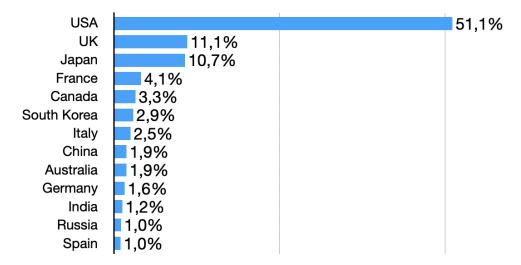
Figure 7: Geographical distribution of time travel stories

Regardless of the individual percentages and considering that the sources from which we collected this data are English, Italian, French, Spanish, and German, it is essential to note that 44 nations reported time travel at least once, demonstrating that the theme is also transversal geographically. As a possible research development, it would be interesting to consider 'non-Western' sources to understand better *how much* and *how* the theme is also used in other cultures.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to Wittenberg (2013), time travel narratives are closely related to epistemic shifts in scientific thought. The first phase, from 1880 to 1905, takes Newton's mechanical universe and Darwin's evolutionary theory into account; the second, between the 1920s and 1950s, is influenced by Einstein's relativity; a third, beginning in the 1950s, is organized around quantum physics, string theory and the concept of the multiverse.

It is a fascinating consideration that merely describes types of time travel and relates narrative imaginary and scientific processing. Instead, our point of view wants to reflect on the relationship between this imaginative capacity and what happens at a social level, i.e. how the imaginary reflects social practices, fears, and drives and simultaneously influences them. The significant proliferation of time travel would then, first and foremost, demonstrate a neurosis of identity, that is, the inability of the modern and late-modern individual to accept the natural passage of time. The many and varied attempts at manipulation recounted in the works analyzed manifest the desire to force one of the significant limitations imposed on individual freedom. This freedom would like to emancipate itself from the natural and physical constraint of time (and therefore of the end). In particular, the insistent gaze towards the past (around two-thirds of the stories) can be read as a symptom, emerging in the imagination, of a growing fear

towards the future and a distrust of the very concept of society. Not a few recent sociological analyses question this precisely.

In one of his latest works (2017), Zygmunt Bauman outlines the current tendency to imagine the past as a kind of retrospective utopia, a place of memory in which everything seemed to be able to develop in a better way than it did. On the same wavelength is Simon Raymond (2011), who focuses on media consumption practices and the growing nostalgia trend towards the past music scene. Fifteen years ago, Helga Nowotny (2008) questioned the relationship between human curiosity and the uncertainty arising from scientific discoveries: the more human beings advance in terms of cultural and scientific evolution, the more their fear and fragility towards knowledge and, consequently, towards the future increases.

Two French thinkers make us reflect on the disintegration of the concept of society. In *Fin des sociétés* (2013), Alain Touraine reflects on society, historicizing this concept and showing how it is not a given but a stage in human evolution. The 'social' categories that he sees in the process of disintegration supplanted the 'political' categories two centuries ago. Today's idea of society is increasingly challenged by individualistic practices induced mainly by the logic of consumption and neoliberal capitalism, defined as extreme. Éric Sadin (2020) also draws from liberalist and neoliberal premises on the end of a shared world: the individual takes over, becoming a tyrant with respect to collective aims, transforming the social assembly into a multitude of individuals.

The dystopian world imagined by Wells does not question the social significance of Morlocks and Eloi, although community values and not social values are already in evidence there, and society as such relies on a violent conflict between the two races/classes. Today, however, society as an inter-individual and supra-individual glue is experiencing a profound crisis, and the scenarios described by time travel are often terrifying. It is more and more a risk society (Beck, 1986/1992) that looks to the future with fear, "a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk" (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, p. 209). A burnout society (Han, 2015) that places the late-modern individual in a state of continuous stress and risk of depression, at the center of an economic and power system based on unbridled competition and a "surveillance capitalism" that monitors our purchasing behaviour and anticipates our future desires (Zuboff, 2020).

Amid this scenario, the human imagination dreams of escaping from the meshes of time, from a future that is not only uncertain but potentially dystopian, and returning to a time when the degree of entropy was (seemed) more controllable. Thus, on the one hand, time travel stories have a compensatory and consolatory function (they delude us that it is possible to make up for mistakes made, personally and collectively), and on the other, a warning function. In both cases, they sublimate the distress that is manifested at the societal level.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

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