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Sinopsis

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Although it is less often read than such Wells novels as THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, the basic story of THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU is very well known through several extremely loose film adaptations. Pendrick, a British scientist, is shipwrecked--and by chance finds himself on an isolated island where Dr. Moreau and his assistant Montgomery are engaged in a series of experiments. They are attempting to transform animals into manlike beings.

Wells, a social reformer, was a very didactic writer, and his novels reflect his thoughts and theories about humanity. Much of Wells writing concerns (either directly or covertly) social class, but while this exists in MOREAU it is less the basic theme than an undercurrent. At core, the novel concerns the then-newly advanced theory of natural selection--and then works to relate how that theory impacts man's concept of God. Wells often touched upon this, and in several novels he broaches the thought that if mankind evolved "up" it might just as easily evolve "down," but nowhere in his work is this line of thought more clearly and specifically seen than here.

At times Wells' determination to teach his reader can overwhelm; at times it can become so subtle that it is nothing short of absolutely obscure. But in THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU, Wells achieves a perfect balance of the two extremes, even going so far as to balance the characters in such a way that not even the narrator emerges as entirely sympathetic. It is a remarkable achievement, and in this sense I consider MOREAU possibly the best of Wells work: the novel is as interesting for the story it tells as it is for still very relevant themes it considers.

It is also something of an oddity among Wells work, for while Wells often included elements of horror and savagery in his novels, MOREAU is not so much horrific as it is disturbingly gruesome and occasionally deliberately distasteful. This is not really a book than you can read and then put away: it lingers in your mind in a most unsettling way. Strongly recommended.