



## A Scientific Romance

*Ronald Wright*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

# A Scientific Romance

*Ronald Wright*

## A Scientific Romance Ronald Wright

It is 1999, and David Lambert, jilted lover and museum curator, is about to discover the startling news of the return of H. G. Wells's time machine to London. Motivated by a host of unanswered questions and innate curiosity, he propels himself deep into the next millenium. As he sets foot in the luxuriant but menacing new landscape, he soon begins to explore the ruins of his life, a labyrinth of erotic obsession and remorse involving his old friend Bird, and Anita -- the beautiful, eccentric Egyptologist they both loved, mysteriously dead at thirty-two.

*A Scientific Romance* is a book of surpassing creativity and intelligence, as evocative as it is cautionary.

## A Scientific Romance Details

Date : Published January 15th 1999 by Picador (first published 1997)

ISBN : 9780312199999

Author : Ronald Wright

Format : Paperback 360 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Time Travel, Science Fiction Fantasy

 [Download A Scientific Romance ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online A Scientific Romance ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online A Scientific Romance Ronald Wright**

---

## From Reader Review A Scientific Romance for online ebook

### Ron Charles says

In the year 2500 it turns out that Oprah was right: Don't eat the hamburger.

"A Scientific Romance," by Canadian author Ronald Wright, is the latest warning from the dystopia department. It's been only a few months since John Updike published "The End of Time." Century marks have a way of inspiring such portents. In fact, Wright's novel picks up where H.G. Wells left off in "The Time Machine" a hundred years ago.

In 1999, David Lambert is a young archeologist from Cambridge, England trying to recover from the death of his brilliant girlfriend. His interest in antique machines leads him to an old letter from H.G. Wells, predicting the imminent reappearance of the device that inspired his classic science-fiction tale.

Driven by curiosity to pursue this clever hoax, David finds his skepticism blasted away when the Victorian engine crashes into the present and gives him an opportunity to escape his grief and failing health.

Looking ahead, he considers his future role as an expert on the past: "I can identify all those things my future colleagues have defined, in the way baffled archaeologists always do, as 'ceremonial objects': Rubik's cubes, wind chimes,...Franklin Mint models of the starship Enterprise. I can account for the fame of Warhol."

When he arrives in the year 2500, however, London offers none of the solace or employment he hoped to find. Completely abandoned, the city has lost its fight against nature. The sun burns freely through an atmosphere without ozone. The Thames sprawls far beyond its old banks through a tropical chaos of crumbling monuments and buildings. Crocodiles slink along the shore, competing for food with enormous feral house cats.

The forest has taken its revenge, a cleansing retribution for the arrogance of the 20th century's faith in "the divine right of things." mad cow disease has destroyed thousands of years of husbandry, the careless use of antibiotics has generated super-resistant viruses, and industrial waste has rendered human life almost impossible.

David tries to confront this lush but disastrous world as a trained professional, but he digs as much into the city's future as into his own past. Recording his findings on a solar-powered laptop, he muses, "Archaeologists are necromancers, not astrologers; aspiring to hindsight, not prognostication, though like astrologers we scan for patterns in events. And the price is loss of innocence."

Indeed, as he considers the carelessness and betrayal that led to his lover's death, David comes to realize his own participation in the collapsed culture that lies before him.

Wright's description of the dilapidated city and his analysis of the social and economic forces that led to this disaster are haunting and troubling. Dark as such apocalyptic warnings can seem, however, they're generated by a profound faith in mankind's ability to perceive the dangers ahead and change course. If Wright were a true pessimist, he wouldn't bother to raise such a compelling alarm.

It's unfortunate that the novel's frank sexual content makes it inappropriate for young readers who have enjoyed Orwell's "1984" and Huxley's "Brave New World," because Wright has written a tale of great suspense and insight. Here is a novel to remind us of our responsibilities to one another and our planet.

"One thing seems clear enough," David writes in horrible isolation, "nature didn't clobber us, except in self-defense."

<http://www.csmonitor.com/1998/0429/04...>

---

### **rabbitprincess says**

Wow. This was a stunning book. Compelling, emotional, original, and just plausible enough to make you worry (if you're the worrying type).

---

### **Bookthesp1 says**

A post-dystopian, Wells pastiche where *The Time Machine* (à la Wells) actually exists giving the lead character an opportunity to discover the future whilst ruminating on his past- chiefly in the form of a lost love and a lost best friend. This is a brave book in that the single narrative voice is present for most of the book along with descriptions of a totally transformed Britain and hints of social breakdown and state of emergency type history narrative lost in the mists of global warming and post pandemic apocalypse. That there is some resolution and a few key narrative gears is due to the confident writing liberally interspersed with quotation and allusion from our well educated narrator. Not quite HG (Horribly Good) and not quite Wells but a different and sufficiently well written idea that is well executed and ultimately satisfying.

---

### **Sarah Fishburn says**

I wanted to love it. It has so many elements I love. Instead I found it dull, plodding, heavy, and overly cerebral. It seemed to strive for wit, but was encumbered with convoluted threads of vague portent and overwrought sentimentality. Maybe I missed the point and it was meant ONLY to be tongue in cheek.

---

### **John says**

This book was sent to me by someone as a gift. This is always a dangerous thing to do. The best way to get me to read a book is to somehow make that difficult for me. For example, you might suggest that the book is very hard to find because only one hundred copies remain after a warehouse fire and when ever one turns up, fist fights ensue. However, I had just finished **The World Without Us**, which I found a totally compelling read, and the subject of **A Scientific Romance** is tangentially related to that book, although, of course, this one is a novel. The narrator comes across H.G. Wells' time machine in a London basement and uses it to travel into the future, about five hundred years. This is to greatly abbreviate a rather overly complex and rather irritatingly postmodern plot. He discovers that global warming has partially flooded London and turned it into a tropical ruin, with no signs of recent human life. This suited me just fine, but not the narrator, who persisted (by heading north all the way to Scotland) until he found some surviving humans. Then, as always happens in stories like this, everything degenerates into irony, and one begins to skim. Happily, the narrator has got mad cow disease and his past eventually catches up with him, as happens to us all. To be recommended for the surrealistic landscape of a ruined London buried in dense jungle and the narrator's friendship with a black panther, but just barely. I could easily have skipped this book.

## Michael says

I read this book back in high school, forced to read it. And I must say, it really felt forced, because the book was terrible. I can only sit and wonder what the hell went through the teachers' minds as they picked this book, it was awful.

The book is about this guy David who has grown tired of life currently; his best friend, Bird (who is really the famous saxophone player Charlie Parker) and he had a falling out, and the love of his life Anita, has died. David ends up discovering H.G. Wells' time machine as it comes back into the present time. Faced with the hardships of the current situation, he decides to go into the future. He believes that in the future, there may be a cure to what killed Anita, which is Mad Cow Disease. Of course, you know that when someone goes to the future, you always get some crummy dystopian world. In the future, much of civilization is demolished and he struggles to get by in life.

The story spends a portion in present day England, a portion in the dystopian future, and a portion in the past exploring David's past (through him recalling experiences). It goes back without much indication so I can see someone getting confused as to what's going on quite easily. I always found it was easier to determine these in film because they could grayscale or use some sort of screen effect, but that's another story.

So why is it so bad?

Well, David is the worst character I think I've ever read about. All he ever does is cry that Anita is dead or how life sucks. He never does crap and just sits there moping, and it gets really annoying. "Oh my god, Anita is dead, I should just jump off a building or something". "Anita is dead, may as well go 1000 years into the future because I can't live without her". It's really just too much to sit and read that crap. Most people, I think, share this opinion. It's like when you go through a bad breakup and you're sitting for days (or weeks) thinking about the relationship. Except he goes into the future to escape and never stops thinking about it.

The story itself is also quite terrible. David doesn't like present. David finds way to go to future. Future ends up bleak. I have no quarrel with dystopian literature. I mean, there are several books that are classics and worth reading. But at the same time, this book doesn't do much. The only real character in this book, aside from Anita and Bird in flashbacks is David. And since David just sits around crying that Anita is dead, the story doesn't do much. The odd thing is that David is portrayed as quite a logical person, because he plans what he wants to do. Because of that fact, you get to spend more time with just David and no plot. And believe me, the height of the plot isn't much. There really isn't much in the plot, so much so that when David finds a cat, it's a big deal.

The references to the things this book makes, such as H.G. Wells and Charlie Parker, who are amazing authors and amazing musicians respectively, is to put them to shame. It's really that bad of a book. Nobody who I know read it (and this is over 100 high school students) has enjoyed it. They read it because they wanted to do well in class, or alternatively, didn't read it because it was garbage.

I've spent a lot of time analyzing the book, because we can't just read books, we need to see the themes and junk, and there's little this book offers. The points it makes are not new, it's just a collection of some stuff put into one terrible book. And even if somehow, the themes are worthwhile paying attention to (which I never thought true), it still should not be the point that the story should suffer. Is it not possible to write a book that is entertaining and has themes worth paying attention to? I don't think a book is worth reading if it sucks, no matter how good the themes are.

I urge anyone and everyone not to read this book. It's not just bad, it's dreadful. It's a dystopian present to have to read this book. I'm sure you'll read other reviews and read the book, but don't say I didn't warn you. Better off just reading H.G. Wells' Time Machine and scrap this crap.

---

### **Richard Thompson says**

I read and enjoyed several of Wright's non-fiction books over the last year and I was aware that he had written a novel as well, so when I spotted this soft-cover edition on the clearance table at Book and Co. I picked it up on a whim. Maggee and I were between read-alouds at the time, and I suggested that I read her a sample few pages of this one, and it turned out to be a real "find". David Lambert, an archeologist whose special field is nineteenth century technology (and the works of H.G. Wells) comes into possession of a document supposedly written by Wells that tell of his relationship with a young woman scientist at the turn of the century, a young woman who built a time machine in which she set of on a journey that would, hopefully, take her to the beginning of the year 2000. Wells urges the holder of the document to go to the address of her workshop in London on the eve of the millennium to see if the she and the machine arrive at the appointed time. The machine arrives, but she doesn't. Lambert eventually use the machine to travel another five hundred years into the future. A fascinating read. We both enjoyed it a lot.

---

### **Deodand says**

I wasn't sure I was going to finish this at 50 pages. The first part of the book seems poorly put-together and doesn't draw the reader to seek the conclusion. I was predicting the ending by that point and I was pleased and surprised to find that my expectations were wrong. It took a strange turn.

I didn't like the ending either, and yet here I am giving it three stars. Maybe I'd give it 2.5 if I could.

---

### **Carmen says**

I really enjoyed this book although it took a while for me to get used to the style of writing and to get into the story. It was a clever homage to the Wells story and an interesting commentary on the future of our world.

---

### **Peter says**

Ronald Wright's books on the Maya were always important to me and this novel, I believe his first, had everything going for it...dystopian vision (always a sure winner with me but then I might be a pessimist) and

a wise sense of work that had come before. Want a stark vision of how it might all turn out...read this before you read his marvelous Massey Lecture on progress.

---

## Magdelanye says

This was my second reading of this book, and how glad I am that I went with the nagging conviction that this was indeed the book I needed to read next, for I got much more out of it this time.

Our hero is an archeologist of his own past. Even before his flight in the time machine, he is obsessed with his old lover and the unsatisfactory triangle with her other lover, his best friends. The details are revealed haphazardly but what seems to drive him the most is the desperate hope that he will eventually be able to calibrate his return to a time before it all flew apart.

Published in 1997, inspired by the works of H.G. Wells, *A Scientific Romance* is not romantic, unless you consider brooding about lost love romantic. It offers a grim forecast of a bleak future in such a way as to nail the reasons why to our current way of life. He does this without being evangelical and indeed his arduous trek throughout Britain, while studded with symbolism and loaded with irony, is well paced.

I never did warm to our neurotic hero, but I was pleased when it turned out that he was, after all that, a caring, decent individual willing to go that extra mile, for love. And his analysis is so bang on, and he rarely panics, so that he is able somehow to throw his message across time so that we may wake out of our stupor and change our ways before they destroy us.

---

## Tom Quinn says

All you Goodreaders know already, I'm sure, that H.G. Wells invented the concept of the time machine. Time travel had been written into stories before, but as an accidental journey. Wells gave the traveler agency and control in the form of the time machine, not a portal you fall through or a spirit who kidnaps you or an overlong sleep that you awaken from, but a conscious choice to travel and, by spinning some dials and pulling some levers, control over where (that is to say, when) you're going. It's really fascinating stuff, this literary history and analysis of the origin of tropes, and absolutely nailed to perfection here by Ronald Wright.

He gives us a narrator both pompous and overeducated, a guy who casually talks about Gauguin and Egyptology and jazz, but yet still warm and human and likeable. When I first started reading, I recoiled at what I saw as similarities to *The Story of B*, a book I loathed, but this narrator has human foibles we can all relate to. I was pleased by its surprisingly captivating format, which hints at a rich past between former friends turned enemies without expressly detailing it - much like real life, the way we talk about the past when we know something ugly happened back then. All this compiles into a richly developed inner character and a story that is very human in its emotional depth, filled with a lot of literary and historical allusions which are fun and yet not labored, despite the grandiose prose constructions:

Archaeologists are necromancers, not astrologers; aspiring to hindsight, not prognostication, though like astrologers we scan for patterns in events. And the price, of course, is loss of innocence. Who since Freud can feel anger or joy, love or jealousy - can operate as a social creature - without a chill self-awareness on his shoulder whispering of animal and childhood terrors, of shit and sex and death? So it is with us. The rear-view mirror breaks up the parochial landscape of the present. And our costly reward is to know that no culture is normal or

inevitable; that none has a patent on wisdom or a guarantee of immortality; that civilizations, like individuals, are born, flourish, and die; that the very qualities which bring them into being - their drive, their inventions, their beliefs, their ruthlessness - become indulgences that in the end will poison them. (83)

3.5 stars out of 5. It starts strong enough: a well-executed example of the book-within-a-book framing device, a new take on H.G. Wells' now-classic story with a bit of self-parodying that makes it light and not overserious. And lovers of purple prose will enjoy the lavish language constantly on display. But the Lewis-and-Clark excitement of exploration in the world of the distant future runs too long, and things go off the rails in the third act. Speculation about our current cityscapes as future ancient ruins is offset jarringly by debauched erotica that pops in and out seemingly with no purpose and there's a vein of oh-so-1990s dread of HIV and mad cow disease (not to mention references to CD-ROM!) which seems ironically antiquated already, in this reader's estimation. It's too weighty to call light reading, and yet too pulpy to take seriously.

---

### **Milele says**

I love literature that is literary... this book is full of quotes of poems and prose. The biggest inspiration is HG Wells *The Time Machine*, in fact I wish I'd read that already, although *A Scientific Romance* stands on its own.

---

### **Jill says**

I'm a completionist. I want every colour of nail polish, my favourite band's every remix, and I have a really, really hard time not finishing a book.

Often, that results in some frustrating, 1-or-2-star reading experiences. This one started out that way -- and for the first time in recent memory, I was going to give up. "No more of this boring pseudo-Wellsian garbage, no more!...okay, a little more." And I'm really, really glad I kept on.

See, I didn't have a summary of the plot going in -- I found this, skimmed the style, liked the one-sentence thematic blurb, and went for it. So the beginning was fucking boring and I had no idea where it was going. But! Once the story actually starts (in part 2), it turns into a very cool time-travelling post-apocalyptic archaeological adventure.

I wish there'd been more time spent discovering the secrets of humanity's demise (especially instead of all the mostly-weird religious stuff when David meets the surviving tribes), and more time spent making use of the premise. The whinging about Anita got boring real fast, and I still don't understand why it was a necessary component -- had it just been a straight adventure story rather than an epistle to a dead chick, I probably wouldn't have banged my head against the desk so often in that first bit.

That said: fun, creative, an enjoyable throwback to turn-of-the-century catastrophic fiction, and also maybe I should read summaries of books sometimes.

---

## **Donna says**

Unsettling and provocative examination of how human behaviour contributes to our demise. Set in the UK of the future, the character trips forward in time with all his 'baggage' (including his reasons for time travel) and comes to face the nature of our being. Imagine facing the "ladder of technology which is missing the bottom rungs" or a warmer earth climate where our indoor plants thrive and GMOs survive. animals survive

---