influenced by the sounds from the butcher's yard next door to the family's Bromley home, where the animals spent the night before they were slaughtered: Wells (n.1) Vol.1, p.40. Such impressions are important; I.J. Guillotin may have been inspired to invent his machine for relatively humane executions because his family lived near a place of execution and his mother miscarried after hearing the screams of a criminal broken on the wheel: A. Soubiran *The Good Doctor Guillotin* (transl. M. MacCraw; London, 1964) p.23.

118. Chapter 11.

119. I. Porges *Edgar Rice Burroughs* (New York, 1975) Vol.1, pp.135,213,561; E.B. Holtsmark *Tarzan and Tradition* (London, 1981) pp.82-3.

120. W.M.S. Russell and C. Russell (n.107) p.177.

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Wells's Short Stories

J. Kagarlitski

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In this extract from his preface to Wells's Short Stories *(Moscow: Pravda, 1981), Professor Kagarlitski discusses the short stories as part of the 1890s' reaction against scientific positivism. Despite their astonishing variety, he argues, they can all be brought under a single heading. They are "stories of the unfamiliar", stories of a "Second World" more spacious and more fulfilling than the primary world of the characters' everyday existence.*

Did Wells treat science as a factual source? Undoubtedly. He always aimed for the highest possible degree of factual accuracy. But if one compares Wells with Jules Verne, it will at once be noticed how little scientific or technical information his work contains. Wells needs facts for his story-line and not *vice versa.*

Indisputably, his scientific activities have an influence on his artistic method. He is very sparing in his artistic resources; the correlation of parts in his work is always precisely calculated. But compare Wells's work with that of the English naturalists (since the naturalists particularly prided themselves on the scientific foundation of their method), and the difference is immediately obvious. "Damned greyness" is how Wells described *The House with the Green Shutters*, a novel by the naturalist writer George Douglas. Wells could not fully accept even George Gissing, the most talented of the naturalists and a close personal friend.

For Wells the most important thing about science was the breadth of the horizons which it revealed. His work occupies unthinkable dimensions of time and space. He writes of people in the Stone Age ('A Story of the Stone Age'), and of people in the unimaginably distant future (*The Time Machine*). He writes of alien planets and of the universe as a whole ('The Star', etc). He writes of aerial flight ('Filmer') and of a descent to the depths of the ocean ('In the Abyss'). Science was for Wells yet another way of understanding man. In this respect the most important branch of science for him was biology, to which he was introduced by T.H. Huxley. *The Science of Life* (1930) was the title he gave to a lengthy popular survey of biology, which he wrote together with his son G.P., and Julian Huxley, the grandson of his teacher. G.P. Wells is now a famous zoologist and a Fellow of the Royal Society; he is Gip with whom Wells once entered the Magic Shop. Wells attached no less importance to *The Science of Life* than to his literary writing, considering that the aim of both was identical. Wells always tried to communicate to the reader his perception of the variety and wholeness of life.

Hence the enormous thematic range of his stories, their emotional and stylistic variety. Just think of what there is in them! Semi-detective stories and humorous detective stories, mystery stories, stories whose main aim is to portray a typical representative of a particular social group, and stories which deal with the problems of the universe.

Very often their subject-matter is provided by a particular scientific fact. Conan Doyle has a story called 'The Blue Carbuncle', in which a thief steals a valuable

jewel by hiding it in the crop of a Christmas goose. It is quite possible that this story gave Wells the idea for his famous 'A Deal in Ostriches', which he wrote ten years later. After all, why bother to force precious stones into a goose's gullet when an ostrich will swallow them for pleasure? Then there is 'The Triumphs of a Taxidermist'. Once again there is nothing particularly unusual in it; people have been forging stuffed animals for centuries, so cleverly in fact that European museums take a great deal of care before purchasing any stuffed specimen. When, for example, a stuffed duck-billed platypus was first brought from Australia it was declared a forgery — no such animal could exist, the zoologists claimed! The artificial manufacture of diamonds was another problem that Wells was not the first to pose ('The Diamond Maker') — it had been thought and written about long before him. In short, Wells does not actively seek scientific sensations — all he needs is the basis for an interesting story.

The same can be said of stories (primarily early ones) such as 'The Stolen Bacillus', 'The Flowering of the Strange Orchid', 'In the Avu Observatory', and 'Aepyornis Island'. We have become accustomed to calling them science-fictional, but is this, strictly speaking, really correct? Or, to put it another way, can the term "science-fictional" be applied equally to all of them?

The somewhat later stories can certainly be described as science fiction. 'The Remarkable Case of Davidson's Eyes' and 'The Plattner Story' are forerunners of the whole area of contemporary science fiction which deals with the idea of intersecting universes. The same can be said of the 'Story of the Late Mr Elvesham'; this story occupies a prominent position in the development of science fiction as a literary genre. After Wells a large number of novels were written — at times with very clear social criticism — about attempts to subordinate the consciousness of other people, or what would previously have been called the transmigration of souls. Wells himself understood — before others did so — the enormous and not yet fully utilized possibilities which lay hidden in his story. Not long before his death (it is now impossible to establish the precise date) he based the film-script 'The New Faust' on this story. Here he raises the question of how the past attempts to subjugate the future, just as he had done in his anti-Fascist story *The Croquet Player*.

Nevertheless it is hardly possible to classify Wells's short stories as a whole as science fiction. A pathetic shopkeeper unintentionally eats some mushroom or other which makes him brave enough to at last put his house in order — is that really science fiction? A man for years looks after his uncle, who writes book after book and, believing that his nephew reads them all avidly, inserts his will into the last of them; the nephew fails to discover it before someone else squanders the inheritance — where is the science fiction in that? Can the term be applied to such stories as 'The Hammerpond Park Burglary', 'The Treasure in the Forest', 'Jimmy Goggles the God' or 'Mr Ledbetter's Vacation'? These are perhaps better described as detective stories, but without the traditional detective, and at times with a noticeable touch of humour. Wells, in contrast to Conan Doyle, prefers to describe the incident itself, not the process whereby the secret is revealed. In his youth Wells had been somewhat influenced by Poe, and there are times at which he is on the point of being drawn towards the sinister, but the humorist in him always wins

through. In contrast to his contemporary Jerome K. Jerome Wells did not devote himself entirely to humour, but of the three leading storytellers of the late nineteenth century Wells alone has inherited the humorous tradition of Dickens. How clumsy and heavy-handed Kipling's attempts seem! How far removed from any concept of humour is Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes! And, by contrast, how often Wells succeeds in making us laugh! What if not humorous is his story 'The New Accelerator' — a work which to all appearances is science fiction? And is it really so difficult to classify as humorous such fantastic stories as 'The Man Who Could Work Miracles' and 'The Truth about Pyecraft'? Sometimes Wells gives us a fine combination of the humorous and the terrifying, as for example in 'The Inexperienced Ghost'. A year later he wrote a recognised masterpiece in this genre — 'The Magic Shop'.

In genre and in subject-matter Wells's stories are so varied that at first glance one cannot find a classification to cover all of them. Nevertheless, such a classification is possible.

They are stories of the unfamiliar.

It was by means of stories of the unfamiliar that the English *novella* established itself. If you leaf through *The Pickwick Papers* you will notice that all the inserted *novellas* are stories of the unfamiliar. Look through Dickens's short stories and you will see that the ones which come closest to our modern concept of a *novella*, and are at the furthest remove from the essay, are precisely those concerned with unfamiliar topics. For readers discovering Kipling for the first time, the most typical "stories of the unfamiliar" are those which are packed with Indian exotica, full of the most original human types and liberally sprinkled with Indian words. All this is equally true of everything Conan Doyle wrote about Sherlock Holmes — not only the adventures that he and his friend Dr Watson have, but the man himself and his amazingly idiosyncratic personality.

That which the English reader of the 1880s and 1890s (and to some extent of the subsequent decades as well) regarded as unfamiliar is the exotic, the fantastic, the humorous (one should again recall Jerome K. Jerome), the grotesque, linked to unusual subject-matter or to an unusual way of looking at the familiar.

Which of these aspects of the unfamiliar does Wells prefer? None of them — or rather, all of them at once.

His stories deserve to be called "stories of the unfamiliar" precisely because he is prepared to accept the unfamiliar in all its forms and manifestations and to use all its aesthetic possibilities. Of course, as with all writers, some things come easier to him than others; he makes us laugh more often than he frightens us. But one cannot call him the antithesis of Poe. He is attracted by the whole spectrum of human feelings and ideas seen in all their complex interrelationships. At times he succeeds in adding a touch of horror to the amusing, of wisdom to the naive, of the transcendental to the mundane; these are the moments of his triumph as an artist. Here we see the same striving to grasp the whole of reality, to comprehend the totality of the world which was the distinguishing mark of Wells as a thinker.

One ought not to find any contradiction in this. The end of the century was marked

in England by a widespread reaction against positivism, which by this time had become something like the official ideology of the Victorian era. Positivism is a trivial systematizing doctrine which claimed to bridge the gulf between materialism and realism; in fact it did no more than substitute a superficial description of the laws of nature for a thoroughgoing study of them. By the 1890s it was rejected by all those who sought to comprehend the world. And the world needed to be comprehended anew. The era of free enterprise capitalism was coming to an end, the relations between social classes were changing, a new scientific revolution was beginning. In these circumstances positivism seemed the most glaring embodiment of mental inertia and bourgeois smugness.

It was this reaction against positivism which brought together such different people as Wells and the neo-romantics (a group to which Stevenson, Kipling and Conan Doyle belonged). Kipling set up the romance of empire in opposition to the dull course of bourgeois existence, and Conan Doyle a cleverly-planned and brilliantly exposed crime ("There's the scarlet thread of murder running through the colourless skein of life, and our duty is to unravel it, and isolate it, and expose every inch of it", declares Sherlock Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet*). To the same end Wells uses the romance of scientific discovery, both of the social and the physical world, man and the universe. Yes, he was quite close to the neo-romantics, but how unlike them he was!

He was aware of this himself and used to emphasize the difference. He for example very much disliked his story 'Pollock and the Porroh Man' — it was too nearly a work which could have been written by a neo-romantic. Furthermore, he regarded the neo-romantics with considerable suspicion. Were they not continually being drawn towards something called "art for art's sake"? He even suspected his friend Joseph Conrad of this. Of himself he said: "I never simply 'depicted life'. Even in the most apparently objective books I have written there is criticism of things as they are and a call for change." He demonstratively termed himself a "journalist" rather than an "artist". In actual fact he was a real artist — but of a special kind. (Every artist, if he is a real one, is special.) Moreover there was within Wells, both as man and as artist, something that gave birth to romantic motifs.

The young hero of "A Slip under the Microscope" now and again remembers William Morris's *News from Nowhere*. This book was one of the primary sources of Wells's socialist ideas. As a student he went to meetings that Morris used to organize in a sort of conservatory beside his house. Morris's socialism became firmly imprinted in Wells's soul. He was perfectly aware that Morris's ideas were utopian, that Morris dreamt of building a socialist society founded on closeness to nature, manual labour and the free association of artisans, but there was something unusually attractive in these ideas for him. The dreams of a completely different life, full of satisfaction, mutual understanding, beauty and tenderness, to which the boy from a Bromley crockery shop had once surrendered himself, assumed the shape of socialist doctrine now that he was a student of the natural sciences, sitting listening to William Morris or for the umpteenth time turning the pages of Morris's poetic book. It remained with him for ever. All the time there lived in his mind a Second World, so firm that it seemed to exist in reality somewhere alongside him. It was capable of adopting the quasi-scientific shape of a parallel (or

intersecting) universe, of taking the appearance of life on Mars ('The Crystal Egg'), or simply sounding like a nostalgic fairy-tale (as in 'The Door in the Wall' or 'Mr Skelmersdale in Fairyland'). The precise form that this Second World took is not important. Although changing in external appearance, this world never left Wells's side.

There was in all this no departure from the principle, proclaimed by Wells himself, of the involvement of art in society. It too was a call to change, and a loud call at that. After all, how unlike this humane, poetic Second World was the familiar world in which his characters actually lived.

Spade House Dialectic: Theme and Theory in 'Things to Come'

Leon Stover

...the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come.
Shakespeare (sonnet CVII)

I

When in 1900 H.G. Wells built his first home, he called it Spade House. The architect wanted to put a heart-shaped letter plate on the front door, but Wells had him turn it upside down. In its new aspect it was a spade.[1]

Used as a mark on playing cards the spade is a broad sword, from Latin *spatha* cognate with Greek *spathé*, a shovel for turning soil. The spade in its dual meaning is an apt heraldic device for a writer who termed himself a socialist "Radical", a word which "suggests going to the roots of things. It also suggests weeding and digging."[2] Sword and spade proper thus combine in one figure to represent radical socialism's action program, already nicely reduced in Proudhon's famous motto, *destruam et aedificabo* ("I will destroy and I will build up"). The front door of Spade House is emblazoned with a device of the destruction-construction dialectic, one that signifies both weapon and tool. The spade is a revolutionary instrument that at once clears the way for the Wellsian Utopia, a world socialist state, and founds it. Revolution means "death and birth, putting an end to old things and beginning with new things."[3] Utopia does not come of itself. "Nothing comes of itself except weeds and confusion."[4] Socialism can burgeon forth and be new only after the weeds of reaction have been eradicated; "the builder and maker with the first stroke of his foundation spade uses force and opens war against the anti-builder."[5]

Again, to invert the heart is itself a figurative act of revolution, a downing of the anti-builder whose emblem heart is. Turning it around raises the spade against all that heart stands for — exclusive love and sexual possession, ownership and private