

of Weena in *The Time Machine* produced widely differing views. Alex Boulton's wide-ranging paper examines Wells's "The Country of the Blind" in terms of recent post-colonial theory and shows the story to be both part of an ancient and continuing literary tradition and an ironic response to it.

S.H.

### Contributors

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Kyle Patrick Hardin

## A Response to Tom Miller's "H.G. Wells and Aldous Huxley"

Recently, the *Wellsian* (Winter 1994, No. 17) featured an article by Tom Miller entitled "H.G. Wells and Aldous Huxley". On page three, Miller writes that

[T.H. Huxley's] most important fictional treatment by Wells came in *The World Set Free*. . . . Huxley's manner of lecturing is brilliantly described as well as his impact on an audience, in Wells' account of a lecture by Professor Rufus. The identification must be beyond dispute as the lecture is set in Edinburgh, where Huxley delivered the lectures later published as *Man's Place in Nature*. . . .

It is certainly possible that Wells drew from his first-hand experience of T.H. Huxley's lecturing mannerisms, but to say that Professor Rufus is T.H. Huxley is at best a simplification, and ignores the other personality whom Wells drew from for the lecture in *The World Set Free*, namely Frederick Soddy.

There are many reasons to suspect that Rufus is at least in part Soddy. For one, Soddy's book, *The Interpretation of Radium* is the acknowledged inspiration for Wells's book about atomic war, and Soddy's book was itself based on his lectures on radium which he had delivered in Edinburgh. Even more convincing is Wells's admission that his story owed "long passages to the eleventh chapter of [Soddy's] book." The best example of such a borrowing is Rufus's lecture. Below I have included two excerpts, one from Soddy's book and the other taken from Rufus's lecture in *The World Set Free*.

The art of kindling fire is the first step towards the control and utilization of those natural stores of energy on which civilization even now absolutely depends . . . . With reference to the newly recognized internal stores of energy in matter we stand today where primitive man first stood with regard to the energy liberated by fire . . . . At the climax of that civilization the first step of which was taken in forgotten ages by primitive man, and just when it is becoming apparent that its ever-increasing needs cannot indefinitely be borne by the existing supplies of energy, possibilities of an entirely new material civilization are dawning with respect to which we find ourselves still on the lowest plain – that of onlookers with no power to interfere. The energy which we require for our existence and which Nature supplies us with but grudgingly and in none too generous measure for our needs, is in reality locked up

in immense stores in the matter all around us, but the power to control and use it is not yet ours. (Soddy 232-33)

Given that knowledge . . . mark what we should be able to do! . . . It would mean a change in human conditions that I can only compare to the discovery of fire, that first discovery that lifted man above the brute. We stand today towards radioactivity exactly as our ancestor stood towards fire before he had learnt to make it . . . This — this is the dawn of a new day in human living. At the climax of that civilization which had its beginning in the hammered flint and the fire-stick of the savage, just when it is becoming apparent that our ever-increasing needs cannot be borne indefinitely by our present sources of energy, we discover suddenly the possibility of an entirely new civilization. The energy we need for our very existence, and with which Nature supplies us still so grudgingly, is in reality locked up in inconceivable quantities all about us. (*The World Set Free* 23-24)

So while it is possible that Rufus's mannerisms are derived from Wells's memory of Huxley's seminar, it cannot be denied that Rufus is to a large degree a fictionalization of Frederick Soddy.