

1. Lovat Dickson, *H.G. Wells: his turbulent life and times*, London: Macmillan, 1969, 1972 (Pelican), p.214.

Michael Draper La Signification de Wells

Patrick Parrinder and Annie Escuret eds. *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens 30: Studies in H.G. Wells* (October 1989) 200 pp. 70 francs

H.G. Wells seems to have been one of the few famous Englishmen not actively hostile to all things French. *Au contraire*, he spoke and read the French language with some fluency, admired the writings of Rabelais, Flaubert and Voltaire, and from 1924 to 1929 largely based himself in France. (For anyone who may have missed them, the recollections of his cook-housekeeper are printed in *Wellsian* 7. "He was above all very polite," she assures us, " - for an Englishman, you know!")

Now, as Britain and France come closer together in the European Community, and the two halves of the Channel Tunnel are slowly being drilled towards one another with a fair chance of eventually meeting somewhere in the middle, it is highly appropriate that the French academic journal *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens* should be devoting a special issue to Wells, an Anglo-French prophet of international co-operation. Made up of nine substantial articles (seven in English, two in French) assembled by Annie Escuret and former Chairman of the H.G. Wells Society, Patrick Parrinder, the journal is undoubtedly an important contribution to Wells scholarship and one which illustrates the diversity of current approaches to Wells.

The textual analysis of Wells's work, variously pioneered in the *Wellsian* by David Lake and Bernard Loing, is represented here by two stimulating and informative studies. Robert Philmus examines the process of revision behind *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, refuting in so doing "the Jamesians' contention that Wells was a literary hack," while David Hughes performs a similar, and similarly rewarding, piece of analysis on *The War of the Worlds*.

No one who has found Kenneth Bailey's examination of Wells's "filmic imagination" in the present *Wellsian* to be intellectually refreshing will want to miss his companion piece in *Cahiers*. Cryptically entitled 'The Road to Cheasing Eyebright,' this major essay is a groundbreaking attempt to trace the way Wells's imagination worked and to bring out the full associative significance of certain images in his writings (literary, pictorial, even geographical).

Two of the essays may sound familiar to members of the Wells Society. David Smith's indispensable account of 'Winston Churchill and H.G. Wells' was originally delivered as a lecture to the Society at a special meeting in London in April 1989. Richard Brown's 'Little England,' an ingenious new approach to the comic fiction as "a comedy of smallness and reduction," which I would like to see expanded into an entire book on English narrative, made its debut at the Society's International Symposium in 1986.

It is a short step from Brown's consideration of "social and sexual inhibition" to Anne Simpson's 'Struggling with the Family in the Novels of H.G. Wells' and Josette Ducamp's 'La Signification Historique de *Ann Veronica*.' Wells's attempts to reconcile individual desire and social propriety may not have resulted in a satisfactory formula for human relationships, either in his writings or his private life, but they offer rewarding material for discussion, especially with regard to his 'treatment' of women. The two essays here seem to indicate that we have at last got beyond simple feminist denunciation of Wells to a more considered and historically aware analysis of these important matters.

Finally, the French connection is underlined by Patrick Parrinder's bibliography of Wells criticism in French and Bernard Loing's 'H.G. Wells et la Revolution,' which looks knowledgeably at Wells's ambivalent portrayal of revolution and revolutionaries, though it makes surprisingly little reference to Wells's hatred of Napoleon. It may be that after two hundred years Bonaparte is still a difficult topic for Anglo-French discussion!

Of all the items which appear in this special Wells issue of *Cahiers* there is not one which would not be worthy of a place in the *Wellsian* itself - and what greater praise could there be? If you would like to purchase a copy of the journal, send 70 francs (only payments in francs are accepted) to Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens, Université Paul Valéry - B.P. 5043, 34032 Montpellier Cedex, France. Cheques should be made payable to M. Le Regisseur de Recettes des Publications

CORRESPONDENCE: A letter from Harry M. Geduld

Dear Sir,

In her review of my critical edition of *The Time Machine* [Wellsian 12], your reviewer, Sylvia Hardy, takes me to task for assuming "apparently unquestioningly, that the Atlantic Edition of *The Time Machine* is the definitive text." In so doing, she is admittedly echoing David Lake's non-review of my edition which appeared in a 1988 issue of *Science-Fiction Studies*. Since she has such a high opinion of Dr Lake's judgements, I would like to draw her attention to Dr Lake's 1979 article in that very same journal, in which he repeatedly refers to the Atlantic Edition as "the final text" and "the final version" and describes it in a footnote as "the present standard text (with minor verbal revisions, deleted headings, and altered chaptering)." In his 1988 non-review he stated: "There are *a few readings* (italics mine) where Well's [sic] last word is not the Atlantic Edition but *The Scientific Romances* (London: Gollancz, 1933)." Patently, although Dr Lake has made a big palaver about my "unreliable" copy text, he actually agrees with me that the basic copy-text should be - as it is in my critical edition (*The Definitive Time Machine*) - the Atlantic Edition. In the lengthy response to his non-review that I sent to *Science-Fiction Studies*, I discussed his idiosyncratic preference for variant readings from *The Scientific Romances*, and I suggest that your reviewer would benefit by taking time out to read my observations. In addition, before she hastens to accuse anyone else of perpetrating textual errors, I would recommend her to the practice of carefully correcting the typos in her own reviews. She might, among other things, manage to provide a consistently correct spelling of the name of the author or editor of the book she is reviewing.

Sincerely,

Harry M. Geduld, Bloomington, Indiana, USA.

Lest this spirited defence gives readers the wrong impression, I feel bound to point out that Sylvia Hardy's review was in many respects a favourable one, praising the book for its introduction, notes and textual comprehensiveness. She did have reservations about pedantic explanations of the obvious, on the one hand, and, on the other, certain academic digressions which would be of little benefit to the student. These made her uncertain for whom the book was intended. She also repeated the contention of David Lake, a notable expert in the field, that the text was defective in some respects. Readers may follow that dispute, as Dr Geduld suggests, in the pages of *Science-Fiction Studies*. (See our list of 'Recent Books and Articles on Wells' for further details). As to typographical errors in the *Wellsian*, these are not the responsibility of individual contributors but of the editor, who can only plead that, being human, he is also fallible.

M.D.

CORRESPONDENCE: The Mystery of the Missing Page

A Further Afterword to 'The Current Texts of Wells's Early SF Novels: Situation Unsatisfactory'

In issue 12 of the *Wellsian*, in the concluding half of his two-part article on the texts of the early scientific romances, David Lake observed that ever since the first American publication of *The First Men in the Moon* the original Chapters 6 and 7 of the text have been shortened and combined in US editions, deleting Bedford's first glimpse of the lunar landscape and, in so doing, reducing the book from twenty-six to twenty-five chapters. Dr Lake commented that a definitive text would have to incorporate the cut since it seemed to represent Wells's final intention, but could nonetheless preserve the lost description in an appendix.

By July 1989, however, (too late for inclusion in last year's *Wellsian*)

Dr Lake had had second thoughts on the matter. He pointed out to me in a letter that the cut version makes remarkably little sense.

The chaps in the sphere move abruptly from blackness and misted up windows to light outside and clear windows within the space of one sentence - and there is a reference to "these hummocks" which are only mentioned previously in the cut portion. I think it suspicious that the cut is almost exactly one page long.

His theory to account for these difficulties was that a page of the typescript had got lost when the American edition was set and, since the dislocation still made superficial sense, no one noticed the problem. This included Wells himself, who went on to use the defective version as copy text for the Atlantic Edition.

By August Dr Lake had come up with a persuasive explanation for how the mistaken cut could have occurred. He had been looking through *The Collector's Book of Science Fiction by H.G. Wells* (Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1978), a facsimile reprint of some of Wells's early work as originally published in magazines, when he noticed that the mysterious deletion constituted exactly one page of the *Strand Magazine* serial version, namely p.32 of the January 1901 issue. Could it be that the typescript sent to America was copied from the magazine, with one page accidentally left out? It could indeed - for the American text shows other signs of influence from the *Strand* text (the placing of commas, for example). Presumably Wells wrote his revisions for the US edition onto a copy of the *Strand*, just as he had earlier revised *The Time Machine* utilising pages from the *National Observer* serial version.

Sad to say, after all that detective work (right down to suggesting the name of the guilty typist, Wells's cousin Bertha Williams), Dr Lake cannot actually claim the credit for being the first person to spot what must have happened. In a letter to me of January 1990, Chris Little, a Lecturer in Physics at the University of St Andrews, in Fife, advances the same theory and points out that it had been suggested previously, in Peter Haining's *H.G. Wells Scrapbook* (London: New English Library, 1978) pp.104-5. Worse, by February Dr Lake had discovered he had been 'scooped' by a massive fifty-six years! The mystery of the missing page had, it turns out, been noted in the *Times Literary Supplement* for 3rd August 1933, p.17, column 4.

One intriguing question remains, did anyone draw Wells's attention to this item in the *TLS*? It's hard to believe that it can simply have passed him by. The last I heard, Dr Lake was trying to get hold of the 1934 Knopf edition of *Seven Famous Novels by H.G. Wells* to see

whether Wells took the opportunity this edition offered him to rebuild the American text into the original twenty-six chapters. By 1934, however, Wells had little interest in the details of his early fiction, so it is doubtful whether, even if he knew of the defect, he would have taken the trouble to remedy it. Contemporary Wellsians, on the other hand, will doubtless be keen to hand on to posterity that delightful, imaginative, historic and thought-provoking document, *The First Men in the Moon*, in the best state possible. I for one look forward to the publication of a definitive edition, with the miraculous touchdown on the Moon preserved in its full glory.

M.D.

RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES ON WELLS

compiled by Professor Patrick Parrinder, Head of the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Reading

'Current Selling Prices: The Fiction of H.G. Wells', *Book and Magazine Collector* 54 (September 1988) pp.46-51.

GORMAN BEAUCHAMP 'All's Well That Ends Wells: The Anti-Wellsian Satire of *Brave New World*' in *Utopian Studies II* ed. Michael S. Cummings and Nicholas D. Smith, Lanham, Maryland (University Press of America) 1988.

MARIA TERESEA CHIALANT 'A Proposito dell' Isola del Dottor Moreau' in *Nel Tempo del Sogno: Le forme della narrativa fantastica dell' immaginario vittoriano all' utopia contemporanea* ed. Carlo Pagetti, Rome (Pleiadi) 1989, pp.75-93.

MICHAEL DRAPER 'The War Against Little Green Men' *Times Higher Education Supplement* 836 (11th November 1988) p.13.

LAWRENCE GOLDSTEIN *The Flying Machine and Modern Literature* Basingstoke (Macmillan) 1986. Chapter 4 is on 'Wells and *The War in the Air*.'