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Editorial

When I became editor of the *Wellsian* there was a slight doubt in my mind whether I'd be able to find enough material to produce an issue every year. Seven years later, such has been the growth of interest in Wells, the problem has become how to fit everything in! This time around we have managed to accommodate six substantial articles, two of them lengthy ones, each with its own distinctive approach but all linked by a common theme: the birth of the future from the past, and the problems (literary, political and philosophical) which this transition entails both for Wells and for his readers. I hope you find the arguments they put forward as stimulating as I have, and also that you look forward as much as I do to reading the 1992 issue of the *Wellsian*.

M.D.

Patrick Parrinder
New Worlds for Old

"I am English by origin," wrote H.G. Wells in the 1930s, "but I am an early World-Man and I live in exile from the world community of my desires."[1] All three parts of this statement - Wells's English origins, his international outlook, and his sense of exile from a longed-for new world - deserve to be emphasized, though it is his militant sense of world citizenship which most obviously sets him off from other writers of his time. A founder of P.E.N. (Poets, Essayists, Novelists), he was elected international president of that organization in 1934. In the same year, some of his admirers banded together to form the first H.G. Wells Society. They debated whether to change its name to the Open Conspiracy (after Wells's book of 1928 advocating a

popular movement for world government), but in the end they decided to call it Cosmopolis.[2] The Cosmopolitans, like thousands and perhaps millions of Wells's readers, had been inspired by the gospel of human unity that he had expounded in primers such as *The Outline of History* (1920) and *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1931), in pamphlets and newspaper articles, and in novels and stories since the end of World War I.

By 1934, as a result of well-publicized meetings with Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin, Wells had briefly become a kind of unofficial world statesman. His project of high-minded conversations with world leaders was soon overtaken by events, but his son, Anthony West, has claimed that between the wars he did "as much as any man then living to create the climate of opinion in the middle ground that was to make the creation of the United Nations and the establishment of the European Economic Community ... inevitable."[3] Many others have seen Wells as a failed prophet of world order, however. For some, his visions of global and cosmic integration in such works as the future-history novel *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) and its movie version *Things to Come* (1935) can now be relegated to the storehouse of discredited collectivist fantasies.[4] But Wells is a complex writer, whose literary career spanned five decades and who continues to command attention largely as a result of the imaginative intensity of his early work - the sequence of classic science-fiction novels, the social comedies, and (to a much lesser extent) the novels of ideas that he wrote before 1914.

Though he may be called the prototype of the modern politically-conscious international writer, Wells's cosmopolitanism emerged from the peculiar conditions of the late nineteenth century. Describing himself as an "early World-Man", he invoked the Darwinian outlook which had been impressed upon him by his great biology teacher T.H. Huxley. *Homo Sapiens*, the World-Man, was, he believed, struggling to evolve out of the divided humanity of the era of sovereign nation-states. Only by evolving into World-Men could humanity survive the modern industrial age in which, for the first time, the species was capable of bringing about its own extinction. Wells's ideal of world government was first conceived at the height of the age of European imperialism, and in some respects he preached a kind of super-imperialism which remained rooted in

the ideology of Empire. Though an outspoken critic of conventional imperialism, he looked to a new civilization unified in its attachment to Western rationality, with a centralized government run by a scientific elite and combining moral authority with military strength.

The years 1880-1920, during which nearly all of Wells's major literary works were written, now appear not only as the heyday of competitive world-conquest but as the period of a resurgence of cultural nationalism in England itself.[5] Wells had little or no political sympathy with the advocates of "Englishness", but his English origins are unmistakable and his early writing did much to fix a certain image of ordinary English life in his readers' minds. It is, therefore, necessary to describe Wells's Englishness in order to appreciate his wider outlook. He may be classed as a "provincial" writer in more than one sense of the term. No doubt there is something to be said for his attempts to construct a religion of humanity without Comte and a socialism without Marx, but his hostility to these two thinkers partly reflects his sense that their methodical, system-building habits were alien to the English mind.[6] On a more positive note, he is provincial in that he grew up on the underside of the British class system - he was the son of a small shopkeeper and a lady's maid - and his early life was spent in the small towns and villages of South-East England. He was not a Londoner by birth or upbringing, and it was thanks to the newly-instituted scheme of government scholarships for needy students that, at the age of eighteen, he moved to the metropolis. Wells was later to recreate the scenes of his Home Counties childhood with warmth and nostalgia in novels such as *The Invisible Man* (1897) and *The History of Mr Polly* (1910), written when the new rural ideal of Southern English life was emerging.

No sooner has he imagined a rural idyll, however, than Wells sets out to disrupt it - as both *The Invisible Man* and *Mr Polly* bear witness. Wells's own father, we are told, "grew up to gardening and cricket [he played for Kent], and remained an out-of-doors, open-air man to the day of his death"[7] - what could be more English than that? Yet Wells seems to have inherited his restlessness from his father who (as his son recalled in 1906) "still possesses the stout oak box he had made to emigrate withal, everything was arranged that would have got me and my brothers born across the ocean, and only the coincidence of a business opportunity and an illness of my

mother's, arrested that."[8] Joseph Wells had tried and failed to break free from the routine of life in the Home Counties. His son was luckier and more successful. As his narrator, George Ponderevo, says in *Tono-Bungay* (1909), "One gets hit by some unusual transverse force, one is jerked out of one's stratum and lives crosswise for the rest of the time, and, as it were, in a succession of samples. That has been my lot ... "[9] George reaches the heights of London society as a result of his uncle's runaway success with a patent-medicine business, but at the end of the novel, like Joseph Wells, he seems to be looking away from Europe towards the New World. He has become a naval architect whose pet project (a destroyer) "isn't intended for the Empire, or indeed for the hands of any European power." "I have come to see myself from the outside, my country from the outside - without illusions," George adds.[10] This was certainly Wells's aim.

I shall argue that, metaphorically and to some extent literally, the New World was the necessary foil to the bankrupt Old World in Wells's writing. In a 1915 study of *The World of H.G. Wells* which was much the best book written on its subject during his lifetime, Van Wyck Brooks argued that there was a natural affinity between Wells and his American readers. "His mind ..." wrote Brooks, "is a disinherited mind, not connected with tradition, thinking and acting *de novo* because there is nothing to prevent it from doing so."[11] Wells's sense of disinheritance may doubtless be attributed to his insecure childhood (the family broke up when he was thirteen) and to the disastrous physical injury which brought him near to death as a young adult; nevertheless, such experiences are common enough. One frequent recourse of the disinherited is an aggressive, chauvinistic identification with the aims of a particular group or society, and this is a prime cause of modern nationalism; but Wells's identification, instead, was with the global aims of modern socialism and modern science. It was likely, also, as a "disinherited" writer, that he would veer between autobiographical fiction and outright fantasy; his was too restless an imagination to stay for long in secure possession of a particular social world, as Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope had done. In later life Wells took such opportunities as came his way to travel the world, and for a time he maintained a house in France. These experiences were reflected in the widening horizons of his autobiographical novels, but they only sharpened his sense of the global need for reconstruction and change. He remained in exile from the community of his desires.

In both fictional and non-fictional forms, Wellsian autobiography follows the conventional shape of the *Bildungsroman*, in which the hero progresses from narrow origins to a position reflecting the author's general view of human life. Wells's heroes may be divided into those who share his authorial consciousness (reflected in the title of the triumphal final chapter of his *Experiment in Autobiography*, 'The Idea of a Planned World'), and those who do not. The latter - comic heroes such as Kipps, Bert Smallways, and Mr Polly - remain limited, provincial and English. Art Kipps, an orphan growing up in New Romney in Kent, finds his first home in the backyard and kitchen of his uncle's shop in the High Street, and especially in the corner under the ironing-board where, with the aid of an old shawl, he makes a cubby-house. This "served him for several years as the indisputable hub of the world."[12] The wider horizons opened up for him as a young man by a timely legacy leave no lasting impression, and finally we see the mature Kipps happily ensconced in another small High-Street shop, this time in Hythe (which is only a few miles from New Romney). Alfred Polly, too, begins in obscurity and ends in a similar though more contented state at the Potwell Inn, a deeply rural (and highly unlikely) English Rabelaisian paradise. Bert Smallways, in the scientific adventure-story *The War in the Air* (1908), gets carried off from Dymchurch beach on the Kent coast in a balloon, and is then involuntarily transported across the Atlantic with the Kaiser's Zeppelin fleet. Bert witnesses the aerial siege of New York and a full-dress battle at Niagara Falls between German and Japanese aviators. He falls into possession of the plans for a new flying-machine, which he is able to personally hand over to the President of the United States. But Bert is still a Kentish shop-boy at heart, and the President sends him back to England, where he is reunited with his Edna and settles down in his home town of Bun Hill; meanwhile, industrial civilization is destroyed by war and plague. In *The Outline of History* Wells famously described human life as a "race between education and catastrophe,"[13] and in Kipps, Polly and Smallways he outlined the comedy of stubbornly uneducated lives, not World-Men but little Englishmen, who could take no part in that race.[14]

Kipps and Polly had been sent to dingy private schools. In *The History of Mr Polly*, Wells uses a memorable image to indicate what a proper education might have done for his hero:

> I remember seeing a picture of Education - in some place. I think it was Education, but quite conceivably it represented the Empire teaching her Sons, and I have a strong impression that it was a wall-painting upon some public building in Manchester or Birmingham or Glasgow, but very possibly I am mistaken about that. It represented a glorious woman, with a wise and fearless face, stooping over her children, and pointing them to far horizons. The sky displayed the pearly warmth of a summer dawn, and all the painting was marvellously bright as if with the youth and hope of the delicately beautiful children in the foreground. She was telling them, one felt, of the great prospect of life that opened before them, of the splendours of sea and mountain they might travel and see, the joys of skill they might acquire, of effort and the pride of effort, and the devotions and nobilities it was theirs to achieve. Perhaps even she whispered of the warm triumphant mystery of love that comes at last to those who have patience and unblemished hearts ... She was reminding them of their great heritage as English children, rulers of more than one-fifth of mankind, of the obligation to do and be the best that such a pride of empire entails, of their essential nobility and knighthood, and of the restraints and charities and disciplined strength that is becoming in knights and rulers ...
>
> The education of Mr Polly did not follow this picture very closely.[15]

The picture of education belongs in the bombastic tradition of Victorian political allegory. Wells's mockery distances him from the representation of the "pride of empire," though the passage certainly draws on the romantic allure of imperialist mythology. Characteristically, Wells sets out to channel such feelings in the direction of cosmopolitan idealism. In *The Outline of History*, there is an illustration by J.F. Horrabin showing Britannia, Germania, Marianne and other "Tribal Gods - *national symbols for which men would die* - of the Nineteenth Century." Nevertheless, in the *Autobiography* Wells attributes his childish sexual awakening to his "naive direct admiration for the lovely bodies, as they seemed, of those political divinities of Tenniel's in *Punch*, and ... the plaster casts of Greek statuary that adorned the Crystal Palace."[16] The picture of Education stands somewhere between these figures and the representation, in Wells's *Modern Utopia*, of a Utopian coin portraying not Britannia, as the old English penny piece did, but "Peace, as a beautiful woman, reading with a child out of a great book, and behind them are stars, and an hour-glass, halfway-run."[17] In *Mr Polly*, imperial Education is beckoning to the horizon at dawn rather than reading to her children at twilight, suggesting a stirring of energies no longer present in Utopia.

Just as the picture of Peace excludes the adult male (normally

associated with violence), the picture of imperial Education offers no position for the disinherited. In that respect, it is simply irrelevant to the needs of *Mr Polly*, and remains no more than a dream for Wells himself. He could not aspire to "nobility and knighthood", nor could he march toward the "great prospect of life" in a straight line. Instead, disentanglement from the confined world of his upbringing came on Wells very suddenly. Van Wyck Brooks, no doubt influenced by George Ponderevo's reflections in *Tono-Bungay*, expressed this as follows:

> The world of shopkeeping in England is a world girt about with immemorial subjections; it is, one might say, a moss-covered world; and to shake oneself loose from it is to become a rolling stone, a drifting and unsettled, a detached and acutely personal, individual. It is to pass from a certain confined social maturity, a confused mellowness, into a world wholly adventurous and critical, into a freedom which achieves itself at the expense of solidity and warmth.[18]

It is profoundly significant, in this light, that Wells launched his literary career not with autobiographical fiction (this was to come slightly later) but by leaping with one bound from the familiar to the exotic, from the Home Counties to the "wholly adventurous and critical" world of his short stories and scientific romances.

In many of the early stories the theme of escape is paramount, as the hero undergoes an "out of the body" experience (extending, in 'Under the Knife', to a cosmic journey to the other end of the galaxy), or disrupts the frame of experience in some way (as in 'The Man Who Could Work Miracles', where Mr Fotheringay manages to stop the earth's rotation). The geography of imperialism is reflected in stories such as 'In the Avu Observatory' set in Borneo, 'The Treasure in the Forest' and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* in the South Pacific, 'Aepyornis Island' in the Caribbean, 'The Empire of the Ants' and 'The Country of the Blind' in South America, and 'The Pearl of Love' in ancient India, not to mention 'In the Abyss' on the ocean bed and 'The Crystal Egg' on Mars. In other stories the homely English setting is disrupted by strange events, which are often exotic in the strict sense. "'New Genus, by heavens! And in England!'"[19] exclaims the entomologist Hapley, confronted by the phantom of a strange moth in an airtight laboratory somewhere in Kent ('The Moth'), while 'The Flowering of the Strange Orchid' takes place in a Home Counties greenhouse. Davidson, in 'The Remarkable Case of Davidson's Eyes' simultaneously experiences life in London and on Antipodes Island.

In the preface that he wrote for *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories* (1911), Wells looked back on the spontaneous and, as it were, irresponsible conception of his early stories.

> I found that, taking almost anything as a starting-point and letting my thoughts play about it, there would presently come out of the darkness, in a manner quite inexplicable, some absurd or vivid little incident more or less relevant to that initial nucleus. Little men in canoes upon sunlit oceans would come floating out of nothingness, incubating the eggs of prehistoric monsters unawares; violent conflicts would break out amidst the flower-beds of suburban gardens; I would discover I was peering into remote and mysterious worlds ruled by an order logical indeed but other than our common sanity.[20]

This passage is rich in Wellsian motifs. The apparent interchangeability of the settings is very notable, though it may be added that, where the "little men in canoes" were a staple of late Victorian adventure-fiction, the violent conflicts in suburban gardens are typical of Wells's scientific romances. In *The War of the Worlds* (1898), the first Martians land at Woking in Surrey, where Wells was then living. The initial idea for the story came from his brother Frank. Wells, who had just learned to ride a bicycle, "wheeled about the district marking down suitable places and people for destruction by my Martians.'[21] Today the sandpits on Horsell Common near Woking are still instantly recognizable to a reader of *The War of the Worlds*. Nevertheless, in the many media adaptations of the book its original setting has almost invariably been discarded; the local realism of the story, which works out triumphantly on the printed page, turns out to be interchangeable after all. In Orson Welles' 1938 adaptation for CBS radio the Martians land in New Jersey, while in George Pal's 1953 movie version they attack Northern California. A mass panic comparable in scale to that aroused by the Orson Welles dramatization has been reported from Ecuador, where in 1949 a "localized version" of *The War of the Worlds* broadcast in Quito led to a riot in which the crowd stormed and set fire to the radio station.[22] Wells's tale had proved to be universal even if his chosen setting was highly particular.

The Wellsian scientific romance combines irresponsible imagination with the disciplined working-out of the initial hypothesis. To that extent, it reflects the scientific ideal and may even run parallel to the processes of scientific explanation. Its cosmic outlook is based in late nineteenth-century physics and astronomy and, above all, in the vistas of earth history opened up by the

discovery of evolution and the geological record. When Wells dreamed of "peering into remote and mysterious worlds" or of "incubating the eggs of prehistoric monsters," he was turning his scientific studies to imaginative account. The notion of "peering into" strange worlds irresistibly suggests the telescope or microscope. In later years he would claim that the "central fact" of his student years spent in the South Kensington laboratories and dissecting-rooms, and in the galleries of the new Natural History Museum, was his attendance at Huxley's course in Comparative Anatomy. With that as a foundation he acquired "what I still think to be a fairly clear, and complete and ordered view of the ostensibly real universe ... I had man definitely placed in the great scheme of space and time."[23] Such a movement from the particular to the universal remained essential to his notion of disciplined imagination, as is clear from a famous exchange with Joseph Conrad which he records in his *Autobiography*. Lying on Sandgate beach, the two men debated the best way to describe a boat that they could see riding out in the water:

> it was all against Conrad's over-sensitized receptivity that a boat could ever be just a boat. He wanted to see it and to see it only in relation to something else - a story, a thesis. And I suppose if I had been pressed about it I would have betrayed a disposition to link that story or thesis to something still more extensive and that to something still more extensive and so ultimately to link it up to my philosophy and my world outlook.[24]

For Wells, in other words, it is not just a boat but a specimen, a model - as likely as not, a model of social experience and social relations. Both his science fiction and his social fiction rely on different kinds of model-building.

In science fiction, Wells's most influential model was doubtless the "Man of the Year Million", originally proposed in a fanciful short story, but later overtly incorporated into *The War of the Worlds*, and covertly into *the Time Machine* (1895) and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901).[25] The man of the year million consisted of little else but a hand and an enormous brain; all other physical organs had atrophied, or they were no longer needed. Wells's Martians and his Grand Lunar are realizations of this idea of the future man; his degenerate Eloi and Morlocks, who flourish a little short of a million years hence, are the products of an equally drastic course of physical evolution. After 1901 Wells abandoned these fictions with their allegorical glimpses of the far future and, as Van

Wyck Brooks put it, "domesticated himself in his own planet and point of time"; but he still based his fiction on the use of models or specimens. Both Kipps and Mr Polly are occasionally seen in this light. In *Tono-Bungay* the social analysis is held together by Wells's modelling vision of Bladesover, the country-house on the Kentish Downs, as a "complete authentic microcosm" of traditional English society.[26] George Ponderevo's understanding of his world is decisively influenced by his upbringing in the servants' quarters of the great house. His later escapades, which include a buccaneering mission to tropical Africa, only confirm his hunch that England and its Empire are permeated by the "Bladesover system", which is now subject to spreading hypertrophy and decay. Scientific invention, represented by George's experimental naval craft and his flying machines, and commercial enterprise, represented by his uncle's fraudulent ventures, flourish as best they can in the interstices of this structure. The voyage down the Thames at the end of the novel is a symbolic rejection of an England weighed down by its history.

George Ponderevo is not a limited hero like Kipps and Mr Polly, but a first-person narrator whose confused strivings after the ideal of disciplined imagination evidently reflect Wells's own. He finally professes his faith in science, "the remotest of mistresses,"[27] but in another respect he is a shameless adventurer, as Wells himself was. In a 1911 article, Wells described the literary life as "one of the modern forms of adventure. Success with a book ... means in the English-speaking world not merely a moderate financial independence but the utmost freedom of movement and intercourse. One is lifted out of one's narrow circumstances into familiar and unrestrained intercourse with a great variety of people. One sees the world."[28] After *Tono-Bungay*, Wells's fictional heroes also tend to become promiscuous globetrotters. In part, this is an expression of the needs of disciplined imagination: the prospect of life unfolded in the picture of Education in *Mr Polly* must be tested and known at first hand by a hero aspiring to full consciousness, as George Ponderevo does. But it also reflects the change in Wells's own experience that accompanied his growing prosperity, and the principle of opportunism inherent in autobiographical fiction. Five years after *Tono-Bungay* with its concern with the Condition of England,[29] Wells collected his essays on a variety of subjects and gave them the appropriate title *An Englishman Looks at the World*.

Certainly he never wrote a conventional travel book. The things

that he saw in foreign countries were, on the whole, like the boat riding at anchor off Sandgate beach; they had little appeal to the irresponsible side of his imagination. Where he was most effective was in pioneering a certain kind of twentieth-century reportage, in which travel takes the shape of a frustrated but ever-hopeful pilgrimage towards an imagined political new world. Both *The Future in America* (1906) and *Russia in the Shadows* (1920) are books of this sort, as are the much less durable *Washington and the Hope of Peace* (1922), *Stalin-Wells Talk* (1934), *The New America: The New World* (1935), and his record of a visit to Australasia, *Travels of a Republican Radical in Search of Hot Water* (1939). All these books recount the official travels of one who was already a public figure. Given the moral conventions of the time it is useless to speculate on what sort of book *The Future in America* might have been had Wells felt able to confess (as he did in his posthumous volume of autobiography) that, after calling on Theodore Roosevelt at the White House, he had spent the rest of the satisfying afternoon with a black prostitute. Similarly, his writings about the Soviet Union were never complicated by any analysis of his close relationship with Moura Budberg, who is now alleged to have been a Soviet agent.[30]

One clear advantage of *The Future in America* and *Russia in the Shadows* over the novels that were contemporary with them is their sense of history in the making. Nothing that Wells could put into a novel could rival his account of a meeting with Lenin, "The Dreamer in the Kremlin," even though *The World* Set Free (1914) had already included a portrait of a fictional world leader. Nevertheless, the fictional pilgrimage or Grand Tour is an integral part of the sequence of works, beginning with *Ann Veronica* (1909) and *The New Machiavelli* (1911), which are usually known as the "discussion novels" (or "prig novels"), but which increasingly become globetrotting novels as well. In *Ann Veronica* the love between the heroine and Capes is sealed by a wordy honeymoon in the Swiss Alps. *The New Machiavelli* returns to the Alps for a high-minded walking-tour. *Marriage* (1912) also features an Alpine walking-tour, which proves inconclusive since the hero and heroine, Trafford and Marjorie, abandon their knapsacks in order to enjoy the hospitality of a rich industrialist with a Swiss holiday villa. The Traffords finally decide to make a further pilgrimage to a real wilderness, spending a winter in a hut in the midst of Labrador. Like the

Samurai (the ruling-class of *A Modern Utopia*) the Traffords need to survive the test of the wilderness in order to emerge as "new selves" capable of fulfilling their true human potential. International tourism takes the place of the call of the wild in *The Passionate Friends* (1913) and *The Research Magnificent* (1915), turgid books which would hardly claim our attention were it not that they could be described as the ultimate globetrotting novels. Stratton, in *The Passionate Friends*, goes out to volunteer in the South African War. "It isn't my business to write here any consecutive story of my war experiences," he tells the reader, and it is his general reflections on imperialism and world development which take over the narrative.[31] Later, in similarly reflective vein, he visits the United States and India (where he survives an encounter with a tiger), and becomes a frequent traveller to world peace conferences. Much the same is true of Benham in *The Research Magnificent*. After the usual forays to Switzerland and Italy, he decides to go round the world, and sets out for Moscow. Russia to him is merely Britain writ large:

> St Petersburg upon its Neva was like a savage untamed London on a larger Thames; they were sea-gull-haunted tidal cities, like no other capitals in Europe ... Like London it looked over the heads of its own people to a limitless polyglot empire ... One could draw a score of such contrasted parallels. And now [Russia] was in a state of intolerable stress, that laid bare the elemental facts of a great social organisation. It was having its South African war, its war at the other end of the earth, with a certain defeat instead of a dubious victory ...[32]

Once in Moscow, Benham is involved in "trying to piece together a process, if it was one and the same process, which involved riots in Lodz, fighting at Libau, wild disorder at Odessa, remote colossal battlings in Manchuria, the obscure movements of a disastrous fleet lost somewhere now in the Indian seas ..."[33] Meanwhile, his companion is enjoying a love-affair with a half-Russian, half-English mistress picked up at the Cosmopolis Bazaar. Later, in an increasingly fragmentary narrative, Benham's curiosity takes him to India and China and then to South Africa, where he is killed in a riot.

In these unsatisfactory works Wells was pioneering an idea of "revolutionary sightseeing" - a kind of compulsive travelling to the world's trouble-spots - which was later to become a regular feature of twentieth-century life and a source of livelihood for writers and journalists. In *Mr Britling Sees It Through* (1916), however, the Great War virtually confines the Wellsian hero to his country home in

Essex, and the novel is all the better for it. For Wells himself, the best that can be said about his sequence of voraciously philosophical globetrotting protagonists is that they turned his mind to the writing of history. *The Outline of History* was a text book for the world, intended to supplant the popular nationalistic versions of history which, Wells believed, had contributed to the catastrophe of the First World War. The *Outline* and its successor *A Short History of the World* (1922) have been frequently revised and remain in print today. They were deservedly successful and continue to be valued - by Asian and American readers, among others - for their attempts to displace the Eurocentric versions of world history engendered by the age of imperialism. Wells's study of history was part and parcel of his search for a new world, since the *Outline* ends not in the present but in the near future. In its original serial publication, the final volume had on its cover a map of the world without political subdivisions, entitled "The United States of the World". The text of the first edition concluded with a discussion of "The Next Stage in History", arguing for the necessity of a federal world government.[34]

If historiography eventually becomes prophecy in Wells's hands, travelogue turns much more quickly into utopian vision. In *A Modern Utopia*, once again, he starts out by using the device of the Swiss walking-tour. As the narrator and his disputatious companion descend the pass leading from Switzerland into Italy, they find that they have been miraculously transported into Utopia, which is represented as a parallel planet at the other end of the galaxy. In due course their explorations bring them back to Utopian London, and, standing in the dignified colonnade which in Utopia corresponds to Trafalgar Square, they find themselves back with a bump in the familiar city. This is not quite the end of the story, for Wells's narrator, travelling away on the top of a bus, imagines the figure of an apocalyptic angel towering over the Haymarket. The trumpet sounds, and he has a momentary vision of "a world's awakening" to the Utopian spirit.[35] This vision from the Book of Revelations helps to explain why Wells's literal travel-writing is so much feebler than his accounts of journeys in time or to parallel worlds. What interested him was the cosmic promise of a new world, which only the imagination could envisage.

Though *The Future in America* describes a visit to an actual New World and contains some memorable impressions of the United States, it begins and ends with those open-ended invocations of the

future - the speculative metaphors, the sense of continuing inquiry, the sentences tailing off into suspension-points - which by 1906 were becoming Wells's trademark. The first chapter, an essay in self-reflection called 'The Prophetic Habit of Mind,' poses the aim of his transatlantic voyage as being "to find whatever consciousness or vague consciousness of a common purpose there may be, what is their Vision, their American Utopia, how much will there is shaping to attain it..."[36] At the end of the book, after an exhilarating but inconclusive search for that consciousness of purpose, he describes another apocalyptic fantasy, though this time it is subdued and understated. Looking back at the skyscrapers which by then composed the New York skyline, he is irresistibly reminded of "piled-up packing cases outside a warehouse." Out of them presently will come "palaces and noble places," and "light and fine living," or so he affirms.[37] Though this rhetoric is commonplace, the packing-case metaphor momentarily shows Wells at his best, in that it deconstructs New York's monumental buildings and treats them as mere disposable containers for the energies of the people who live in them. Although the New World (inevitably) failed to measure up to Wellsian standards, it remained a source of possible new worlds.

The ultimate New World was the conquest of space. However, space travel tends only to appear as a source of rhetorical uplift at the end of his works - as in *The Discovery of the Future* (1902), for example, or in *Things to Come* . The popular fiction of space adventure was, on the whole, the creation of writers such as Edgar Rice Burroughs, together with a generation of Wellsian followers such as Robert A. Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke (not forgetting his more intellectual disciple Olaf Stapledon). *The First Men in the Moon* was Wells's one contribution to this genre. Here the lunar landscapes, in which T.S. Eliot found "imagination of a very high order,"[38] are dominated by the shock of the sunrise after the long lunar night, and by the hectic growth of vegetation in the low lunar gravity. This is, quite explicitly, a description of a strange new world, compared by the narrator to the miracle of the Creation. The two lunar travellers, Bedford and Cavor - the prospector and the disinterested explorer - are engaged on a conventional imperial mission. At times the obstacles they face are comparable to those of a desert or tropical jungle, but the forms and colours of the vegetation which composes the lunar landscape are also reminiscent of an enormously distended suburban rock-garden. It is, also, a pastoral

world, with Selenite shepherds tending the flocks of grazing mooncalves. All this would suggest that Bedford and Cavor have journeyed from Kent, the "Garden of England," to a place which, however, strange, is another garden-world. More familiar garden-worlds are found in some of Wells's visions of the future, from *The Time Machine* to his later utopian books. In 1924 he confessed that his imagination took "refuge from the slums of to-day in a world like a great garden, various, orderly, lovingly cared-for ..."[39] This is plainly an Edenic Vision, but it is also a very English one, belonging to the world of (for example) William Morris's *News from Nowhere* and Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of To-Morrow.*

In *The Time Machine,* and again in *Men Like Gods* (1923), the urban and industrial landscape has reverted to that of a country park, such as Uppark in Sussex where Wells's mother was housekeeper and his father had worked as a gardener. The landscape of *The Time Machine* can still be appreciated by a visitor to Richmond Park in Surrey. In the eight hundred thousand years which have elapsed between the nineteenth century and the period of the Eloi and Morlocks, a garden-city civilization has come and gone, leaving behind it the great ruined buildings in which the decadent Eloi huddle for shelter. *Men Like Gods* presents another parkland scene, complete with distant snow-capped mountains and tame wild cats. A party of Earthlings accidentally enters this paradise as a result of a utopian experiment in rotating time-space planes; and they do so from a location in the Home Counties, as they are motoring away from London on the Great West Road. Here, and elsewhere, Wells's anxiety to put Southern England behind him is only equalled by his determination that the "garden world" which replaces it will be reminiscent of the England his characters have left. At such times he reminds us of an earlier English visionary writer, William Blake, who sang of building Jerusalem, the perfect city, in the English countryside, and who saw "Another England" in 'The Crystal Cabinet':

Another England there I saw
Another London with its Tower
Another Thames and Other Hills
And another pleasant Surrey Bower

However, there is another analogy which fits Wells's vision of new worlds, and that is with the pioneer's or colonist's mentality. If the colonist's first priority is to destroy all links with the homeland,

the second priority is to construct a new settlement which at once fulfils the promise of a better society and serves as a memorial to the homeland. Some such logic must have inspired the New England settlers, as well as all other pioneers in the white-settler lands who gave to their new homes in the wilderness familiar British and European names. Wells's deliberate cosmopolitanism and his proclamation of world citizenship remain important and worthwhile ideals, but his deeper affinity is with the New World spirit, even though he himself was never tempted to emigrate. The destruction which many emigrants must have wished on the homelands they were leaving is enacted in *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The War of the Worlds*, as well as in *Mr Polly*, where the hero's failed suicide attempt fortuitously succeeds in burning down Fishbourne High Street. In *Tono-Bungay*, the Wellsian hero George Ponderevo is a spiritual emigrant who passes the whole of English society in review before bidding it an embittered farewell. But Wells's novels also anticipate the dreamed-of return to and utopian reconstruction of the homeland, and it is this compound sense of otherness superimposed on Englishness, of an old world irresistibly giving way to a new one, which inspires his most imaginative writing.

Notes

1. H.G. Wells, *H.G. Wells in Love*, ed. G.P. Wells (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p.235.
2. See David C. Smith, *H.G. Wells: Desperately Mortal*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p.333.
3. Anthony West, *H.G. Wells: Aspects of a Life*, (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p.132.
4. See, e.g., Leon Stover, *The Prophetic Soul: A Reading of H.G. Wells's "Things to Come"*, (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland, 1987), passim - though Stover also claims major intellectual and artistic significance for *Things to Come*.
5. See Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, (London, Croom Helm, 1986) passim.
6. On Comte, see H.G. Wells, 'The So-Called Science of Sociology,' in *An Englishman Looks at the World*, (London: Cassell, 1914), pp.192-3. On Marx, see Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography*, (London: Gollancz and Cresset press, 1966), I, pp.263-4.
7. H.G. Wells, *Autobiography*, I, p.54.
8. H.G. Wells, *The Future in America*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1906), pp.24-25.
9. H.G.Wells, *Tono-Bungay*, (London: Macmillan, 1909), p.3.
10. Ibid., pp.492, 493.
11. Van Wyck Brooks, *The World of H.G. Wells*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1915), p.178.
12. H.G. Wells, *Kipps*, (London: Macmillan, 1905), p.5.
13. H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, (London: Cassell, 1920), p.608.
14. Cf. Richard Brown, 'Little England: On Triviality in the Naive Comic Fictions of H.G. Wells,' in *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens* 30 (October 1989), pp.55-66.
15. H.G.Wells, *The History of Mr Polly*, (London: Nelson, 1910), pp.16-17.
16. Wells, *The Outline of History*, p.529, and *Autobiography*, I, p.80.
17. H.G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1905), p.72.
18. Brooks, *The World of H.G Wells*, p.134.
19. H.G. Wells, *Complete Short Stories*, (London: Ernest Benn, 1927), p.307.
20. H.G. Wells, *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories*, (London: Nelson, n.d. [1911]), p.iv.
21. Wells, *Autobiography*, II, p.543.
22. Michael Draper, 'The Martians in Ecuador,' *Wellsian*, n.s. 5, (Summer 1982), 35-36.
23. Wells, 'Scepticism of the Instrument,' in *A Modern Utopia*, p.376.
24. Wells, *Autobiography*, II, p.619.
25. H.G. Wells, 'The Man of the Year Million,' *Pall Mall Budget*, (Nov. 16, 1893), 1796-7.
26. Wells, *Tono-Bungay*, p.9.
27. Ibid., p.346.
28. 'Mr Wells Explains Himself,' quoted in Patrick Parrinder, *H.G. Wells*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1970), pp.5-6.
29. See David Lodge, *'Tono-Bungay* and the Condition of England,' in *Language of Fiction*, (London:Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp.214-42.

30. See Anthony West, *H.G. Wells: Aspects of a Life*, pp.143-146.
31. H.G.Wells, *The Passionate Friends*, (London: Macmillan, 1913), p.105.
32. H.G. Wells, *The Research Magnificent*, Essex edn., (London: Ernest Benn, 1927), pp.258-259. The final suspension points are Wells's own.
33. Ibid., p.262.
34. H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, (London: Cassell, 1920), pp.601-608.
35. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*, p.369.
36. Wells, *The Future in America*, p.21.
37. Ibid., pp.358, 359.
38. T.S. Eliot 'Wells as Journalist,' in *H.G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Patrick Parrinder, (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p.320.
39. H.G. Wells, *A Year of Prophesying*, (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p.351.

Iain Wakeford

Wells, Woking and *The War of the Worlds*

Editor's Note:
As Patrick Parrinder observes in his essay 'New Worlds for Old,' much of the power of The War of the Worlds comes from the vividness with which it integrates its fantastic story into a closely-observed picture of the Home Counties and the suburbs around London. The story has since been transplanted to several more exotic locations, which it has laid waste with comparable success, but readers of Wells's book naturally continue to wonder about the original setting. Exactly how true to life was it? What alterations did Wells make to the landscape, and why? And how much of what the Martians destroyed in fiction survives today as fact?

Some academics will dismiss such questions as marginal to an appreciation of the narrative. Here at the Wellsian we take a different view. Literature is, among other things, a form of communication through which individuals share and develop their experience of the world. It is a coming to terms - reflecting and reflecting on, simplifying and amplifying, celebrating and cursing, the places, people and passions which have been part of its author's life. Bearing all this in mind, we are pleased to reprint from the Woking History Journal the following topographical guide to The War of the Worlds. In order to help bridge fiction and history, the anonymous narrator of the story is referred to simply as "Wells," which as its author said elsewhere (First Men in the Moon, Ch.20) "seemed to me to be a thoroughly respectable sort of name" for such a purpose.

M.D.

One night, before the Martians landed, Wells went for a walk with his wife.

> "From the railway-station in the distance came the sound of shunting trains, ringing and rumbling, softened almost into melody by the distance - It seemed so safe and tranquil."

Woking Station at that time was an important railway junction with its own goods yard. The sound of the trains was very familiar to him as his real home was in Maybury Road, opposite the railway. In the book, however, he elevates himself up on Maybury Hill so that he has a clearer view of the action (and a much larger house).

Many believe that the house Wells modelled his home on was Maybury Knolle, which has a clear view across to Horsell Common and Ottershaw. But that house is believed to have been built by W.F. Unsworth in about 1897-8 - so Wells could not have used it as the model for his book. The fact that Wells's friend George Bernard Shaw lived at Maybury Knolle a few years later has helped some people to jump to the wrong conclusion. There are other large Victorian houses on Maybury Hill which were in existence in Wells's time, and one closer to Maybury Hill Road would fit better with later descriptions, as we shall see.

On the night of the first cylinder landing, he was at home in his study. Although Wells saw nothing of the falling star, his friend Ogilvy the astronomer did, and thinking that a meteorite lay somewhere between Horsell, Ottershaw and Woking, rose early to find it. "Find it he did, soon after dawn, and not far from the sand-pits."