

both 'The Star' and *The War of the Worlds* of Wells's faith in the resilience of humanity and in the ability of its technologies to survive catastrophes of apocalyptic proportions do not eclipse the fact that the overwhelming majority of both texts remains focused on humanity's need to comport itself with greater humility, and to recognise that its technological achievements never legitimate the prideful behavior in which it indulges.

Additionally, the fact that Wells uses the verb 'scorched' to describe the actions of his cyclists at the end of *The War of the Worlds* suggests that Wells intends these cyclists to signify that the humans who were spared the Martian onslaught have not been chastened and have not learned much by way of meekness. The verb 'scorched' would have been a loaded word for the contemporary Victorian reader, for 'scorchers' was a derogatory term used often at this time to refer to cyclists reviled for their reckless and dangerous high-speed racing through crowded streets. It was, in short, a term synonymous with brash and boorish cycling practices. As one contemporary writer put it, by way of maligning the scorcher: 'The scorcher sees little, hears little, and is conscious of little but the exhilaration of the moment. [...] Scorching is a form of bicycling hardly to be commended.'<sup>33</sup> Put simply, the scorcher is a representative of that type of human being Wells's novel has been condemning throughout its pages: the prideful person living only in the present, and one behaving with complete self-interest and disregard for the welfare of others. Granted, Wells's 'scorchers' could be said to be doing something praiseworthy and for the common good in his depiction of them. They are, after all, doing the important and surely appreciated work of delivering the news of the Martian defeat. However, the verb 'scorched' here still suggests there is something unsavory about the way the cyclists are going about doing their work of proclaiming this news. They are still riding, it seems, in a manner suggestive of self-importance and of swagger, and not at all in way indicative of having learned profound lessons about how to comport oneself with greater meekness and humility.

This essay has argued that the references to the bicycle throughout *The War of the Worlds* play a fascinating and integral role in the work's overall attacks on human arrogance. Through the novel's repeated references to humans being made to feel vulnerable, insignificant, and subjugated during the course of the Martian invasion, it is clear that Wells employs his text to castigate humans for believing that their recent technological successes guarantee them continued supremacy over the earth. As McLean puts it, the novel undermines such a belief in human supremacy by showing the reader that 'viewed from a cosmic

<sup>33</sup> Maria Ward, *Bicycling for Ladies* (New York: Bretano's, 1896), 79. For more on "scorchers," see Ritchie, 137; Smith, 183-203; and Norcliffe, 181-187. For another Victorian-era description of "scorchers," and of how detested they were by people like the police due to the cyclists' aggressive riding style that often harried other road users, see the 1896 essay by Stephen Crane entitled 'New York's Bicycle Speedway' in *The Literary Cyclist: Great Bicycling Scenes in Literature*, ed. James E. Starrs (New York: Breakaway Books, 1997), 255-6. In this piece, Crane clearly uses the verb "scorched" to refer to cyclists known as scorchers: "When the scorcher scorches beyond the patience of the law, the bicycle policeman, if in sight, takes after him" (256).

standpoint which reveals the fragility of terrestrial life, the need for humanity to abandon its anthropocentric preconceptions and co-operate as a means to combat its precarious position in the natural order becomes imperative.'<sup>34</sup> This essay has shown how Wells, despite the perceived technological sophistication of the 1890s safety bicycle and despite the singular levels of enthusiasm for cycling at the time the novel was being written, depicts the cyclist in a surprisingly negative light and as a person inhabiting as much as anyone else the 'precarious position in the natural order' described above by McLean. Although not representing the end of his engagement with issues of transportation and of cycling, the association Wells establishes in *The War of the Worlds* between bicycles and human arrogance makes his text a singular one from cycling's 'boom years.' Additionally, this association between cycling and arrogance helps explain Wells's startling shift in tone towards the bicycle that occurs between *The Wheels of Chance* and *The War of the Worlds*.

**BOOK REVIEW:** David C. Smith, *The Journalism of H. G. Wells: An Annotated Bibliography*, ed. Patrick Parrinder, with a descriptive index by Mike Ashley (Haren: Equilibris, 2012), 431 pp.: ISBN 978-90-5976-000-4 (Hardcover) € 119; ISBN 978-90-5976-015-8 431 (PB) € 78. [Keith Williams]

This monumental volume is a worthy memorial to one of the most significant Wells scholars of recent years, David C. Smith (formerly Bird Professor of American History at the University of Maine), who passed away in 2009 before completing this herculean labour of reclamation lasting nearly four decades. (Appropriately it took another Wells scholar of comparable calibre to finish it: Patrick Parrinder, Vice-President of the H. G. Wells Society and Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Reading.) Smith is best known to the Wellsian community as editor of four volumes of *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells* (1998), (with a fifth posthumously to come) and for his authoritative biography, *H. G. Wells: Desperately Mortal* (1986). The annotated biography is also a fitting memorial to Wells. Acutely aware of the entanglement between class privilege and Highbrow aesthetics in the Britain of his time, Wells often belied the quality of his own literary gifts as novelist and short story writer by insisting his vocation, first and foremost, was that of 'journalist'.

Published with financial support from the Science Fiction Foundation and from the scholarly expertise of the H. G. Wells Society, it is the first volume to make comprehensively visible the 'lost continent' of Wells's actual journalism. Its main bibliography inventories and describes over 2,000 items, from Wells earliest undergraduate essays on education and social injustice (which remained a constant and theme in his work) in *The Science Schools Journal* of 1886, to

<sup>34</sup> McLean, 101.

the two articles just prior to his death in 1946. In these last, his political passionateness and zest for life seems undimmed: he bluntly called on George VI to abdicate because of alleged financial links with Oswald Mosley, but also contributed to a more sanguine dialogue with fellow writers about bohemian post-War living in Regent's Park (in *Socialist and New Leader* and *The Times*, respectively).

Overall, the book reminds us of the astonishingly prolific and polymathic interventions which H. G. Wells made over the course of a sixty year writing career, as someone from lowly origins who rose to be one of the first recognisably global public intellectuals of the modern age, whose face and voice become known across the world through radio and newsreel appearances. As reflected in his journalistic output, Wells's life and contacts read like a planetary 'Who's Who' of the powerful and influential in his lifetime, many of who sought or received his counsel on an encyclopaedic range of matters: he could obtain access to Lloyd George, Stalin and Roosevelt; met with Chaplin, Gorki and Disney; engaged in heated disputes with the likes of Henry James, Winston Churchill and George Bernard Shaw. Wells commented on topical events and tried to diagnose and predict the processes shaping the modern world: from the social and political impact of Darwinism and the decline of empire to the coming of global communications and computing; from the emancipation of women and birth control, to the rise of pseudo-scientific totalitarianisms and the post-Second World War order; from a world illumined by gaslight to one lit up by atom bombs. As this book overwhelmingly testifies, Wells campaigned indefatigably, sometimes waywardly, for many of modernity's most enlightened objectives – popular scientific education, freedom of expression, universal human rights and, most important of all, the idea of moving beyond competing nationhoods, towards world government as the only rational guarantee for the species against the suicidal misdirection of its own genius (an objective Wells began promoting well before what he optimistically dubbed, 'The War that Will End War').

The sheer range and intellectual flexibility of Wells's copy is continually surprising: he protested equally against the censoring of Radclyffe Hall's pioneering lesbian novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, as against Nazi book burning; despite his reputation for promoting authoritarian state socialism, he was an early advocate for strengthening British democracy by proportional representation; Wells's insistent position on eugenics, at a time when Francis Galton's argument for selective breeding was regarded as proven by many across the political spectrum, was that the sheer complexity of genetic inheritance made any programme to engineer human elites nonsensical, both scientifically and morally. Wells's article 'Concerning Cat Athletics' has to be one of the bizarrest special interest titles pre-Youtube. The volume displays Wells's agility across the gamut of journalistic formats, showing him equally at home in broadsheets and illustrated papers, in literary magazines and

heavyweight scientific periodicals. Himself an exceptional product of the first prising open of educational opportunities from the rigid mid-Victorian class system, Wells's unpatronisingly 'broad brow' approach (as he termed) – sometimes prophetically insightful, at others wider of the mark – would galvanise successive generations of a new mass-readership on all kinds of topical issues, through the proliferation of new popular publications from the 1890s onwards.

The compilers have arranged their materials specifically to highlight Wells's longer-term relationships with particular newspapers and periodicals, some of which are still publishing actively. Precisely because so many others are now consigned to the archive, each is painstakingly identified and given insightful historical context in a special Descriptive Index provided by Mike Ashley, which forms an important historical gateway to the volume. Preceding the main annotated bibliography, there is also a chronology of published collections of Wells's articles and short stories, as well as of pamphlets and letters. The main annotated bibliography is augmented with an appendix of more than 300 'Conjectural Items', listing unsigned articles in which Wells's distinctive stylistic or thematic 'fingerprint' has been speculatively detected, albeit not conclusively authenticated. There are separate appendices of Wells's reported public speeches and interviews, as well as a non-exhaustive, but nonetheless richly varied appendix of miscellaneous news items about Wells, his works and opinions. A double index, by title and general subject, completes the apparatus. There are forgivably rare mismatches between bibliographic item numbers and entries: e.g. 1417, indexed with the intriguingly supernatural title 'Communism and Witchcraft', turns out to be listed as 'Olive Branches of Steel: Should the Angels of Peace Carry Bombs', advocating militant Post-Great War disarmament. However, it has to be noted that some descriptions of items are fuller and more informative than others, although this isn't always based on their potential significance: e.g. the 1934 *New Statesmen* serialisation of Wells's conversations with Stalin are oddly not described in any detail at all.

The sheer heft of this volume reflects the temporal and planetary scope of its subject matter. It will be an invaluable resource and guide, not just for current and future Wells researchers and lay enthusiasts for his work, but for anyone interested in key political, scientific and cultural controversies from the late-Victorian period through the first half of the last century and their on-going consequences for our own age. Most of all, it furnishes a permanent foundation for challenging more selective and decontextualized representations of the development of Wells's thought (exemplified by the 'gotcha' scholarship of John Carey's 1992 *The Intellectuals and the Masses*) in properly balanced and historically nuanced ways.