

famous in some way of other and therefore likely - as in Wells's case - to know and write to people who are also well-known. I suppose, too, that we feel letters are more open, more self-revelatory than published writings. This way we feel, we can know what the writer is *really* like. This an area that John Hammond looks at in his review: the way in which David Smith's selection gives us insights not only into the various facets of Wells's work and interests but also into different aspects of his character - his generosity and loyalty to old friends, for instance. After reading these letters, I did feel that I knew H.G. better than I had before, warts and all. Maybe that *is* what letters are all about.

Sylvia Hardy

STOVERISM ONCE MORE

H.G. Wells. *"The Invisible Man: A Grotesque Romance": A Critical Text of the 1897 New York First Edition, with an Introduction and Appendices*. Ed. Leon Stover. 239 pp, index. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1998. \$49.50. ISBN 0-7864-0410-8.

H.G. Wells. *"The First Men in the Moon": A Critical Text of the 1901 London First Edition, with an Introduction and Appendices*. Ed. Leon Stover. 321 pp, index. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1998. \$55. ISBN 0-7864-0411-6.

Leon Stover is a retired professor of anthropology at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, whose campus was designed by the architect Mies van der Rohe. Mies's aesthetic gospel, repeated time and again during the mid-twentieth century heyday of modernist architecture, was that "Less is more". Stover, who regards Miesian architecture in much the same light as he regards Wellsian socialism, might take as his slogan "More is more". Certainly those who have seen the earlier volumes in his "Annotated H.G. Wells" series will know what to expect from the books under review.

As Wellsians, we all owe a considerable debt to Stover's provocations. He is (despite my reservations below) deeply versed in Wells's works, and, as Michael Sherborne put it in an admirably judicious review of the earlier "Annotated H.G. Wells" volumes (*Wellsian* no.19), he may be considered "Wells's most perceptive detractor since Chesterton". Sherborne, like other reviewers, felt obliged to point out

the many shortcomings of these editions of the scientific romances. Stover is loquacious, frequently swamping the Wellsian text in repetitive and partisan commentary; his annotations are often fanciful and sometimes grossly inaccurate; and rather than considering the scientific romances on their own merits, he (mis)reads the earlier Wells in terms of the later Wells. Unfortunately, the new editions repeat most of the same arguments and exhibit all the same faults that their predecessors did.

At first glance, one might imagine that they were formidable pieces of scholarship. Stover's introductions and annotations are littered with parenthetical references in the somewhat intimidating form known as "MLA style". Even the barest factual statement is given a reference: Stover needs a 1902 Baedeker to assure us that Smithfield was London's central meat market, and the (somewhat irrelevant) information that the former Italian prime minister Aldo Moro was murdered by the Red Brigades in 1977 is credited to "Pickering *et al.* 1922: 514" (*The Invisible Man* 22). But here, as often, reference is not what it seems: the date "1922" is obviously a misprint, and "Pickering *et al.*" turn out to be the editors of *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, one of the numerous general reference books from which Stover derives much of his information. We have the parade of continuous scholarship but not the reality, and sometimes the standard reference works are misused. His reading of *Brewer's Dictionary* seems to have persuaded Stover, on no other evidence, that the cocoanut shy at Iping on Whit Monday was in fact an "illegal cockshy". Trying to work out what has led Stover to this unsupported conclusion, we realise that he has confused Whit Monday with Shrove Tuesday, which was once an important day in the cockfighting calendar (*The Invisible Man* 101).

Apart from standard reference books, the highest proportion of Stover's MLA-style citations are of works by Stover himself, and by H.G. Wells. Even the innocuous statement that Wells was a Bachelor of Science and Fellow of the Zoological Society has to be glossed "(Stover 1996b: 2,n)", though all this means is that the same information was given in Stover's edition of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. When Stover mentions Ernest Renan's *The Future of Science* (1891) he adds that "Wells's familiarity with th[is] work, and his frequent reliance on it, is documented in "Stover (1987a: 88f)" (*The First Men in the Moon* 31). The reader who turns to Stover's book *The Prophetic Soul* in search of the promised documentation will be heavily disappointed. Likewise, Stover's claim that *Brave New World* is a satire on Wells's managerial utopia in *The First Men in the Moon*,

might have been thought to need a bit of argument by way of support. But all that we get is "Stover 1996b: 54,n". Stover seems to think that his point is strengthened by the fact that he has said exactly the same thing on a previous occasion.

The quotes from Wells can be more seriously misleading. Stover frequently cites, without warning and as expressions of Wells's beliefs, words which were actually spoken by fictional characters in his novels. He puts words into Wells's mouth: for example, the statement that "Early and late Wells described his writings as a 'Literature of Power'" (*The Invisible Man* 9) is literally untrue, and unsupported by the two citations given. He invents quotations, saying of the film *Things to Come*, for example, that "Wells himself called it 'a propagandist film [for] Wellsism' (in G.P. Wells 1984: 73, 172)" (*The Invisible Man* 2, repeated on p.22 and elsewhere). The quotation is a figment of Stover's imagination. On page 172 of *H.G. Wells in Love* (edited by G.P. Wells) Wells calls *Things to Come* a "propagandist film", and on page 73 he uses the word "Wellsism" in a totally different context. He never speaks of "Wellsism" in association with *Things to Come*. Stover's quotations cannot be trusted.

The reader may ask whether any of this really matters, and some of it does not much matter. When Stover gives the wrong date for John Bunyan's imprisonment, or misconstrues Wells's phrase "probationary assistant", or mislocates Watling Street, or derives the word "dilettante" from the French rather than the Italian, we may put it down to carelessness and amiable eccentricity. When he calls Sir Jabez Flap "Sir Flap" or misunderstands the words "Now, now!" spoken by a customer at the Coach and Horses at Iping, we are faced with the vagueness about things English that is (with honourable exceptions) so widespread among American academics. But there are more serious points at issue. Stover can call Wells's Martians and Selenites "socialist" if he wants, but he cannot claim that Cavor's "brief sentence of eight words", "In the moon, every citizen knows his place", "sums up the new ethic of the managerial revolution" – which Wells supposedly supports and Stover abhors – since Wells makes George Ponderevo say exactly the same thing about the traditional England of *Tono-Bungay*: "In that English country-side of my boyhood every human being had a place. It belonged to you from your birth like the colour of your eyes, it was inextricably your destiny".

The *Tono-Bungay* quotation is one that we would not necessarily expect to find in Leon Stover's writings, but there are some quotations from Wells which go

against Stover's interpretation of "Wellsism", and yet which he cannot ignore.

Readers since Bennett have enjoyed Wells's portrayal of the Selenites as a kind of Swiftian satire; Stover asserts, on the contrary, that the slave society presided over by the Grand Lunar was intended by Wells as a utopian prophecy of the future World State. But there is still the awkward fact that Wells in 1933 described *The First Men in the Moon* as an attempt to "look at mankind from a distance and burlesque the effects of specialisation". How does Stover explain this quotation away? Burlesque, he assures us, is not the same as satire; Wells's burlesque is not necessarily a sign of disapproval; in fact, he intensely approves of Selenite society. Bernard Bergonzi had earlier observed that "the extravagant descriptions of the Selenite world suggest a satirical intention, but the general effect is extremely ambiguous". But ambiguity is exactly what Stover will not allow to the early Wells.

Patrick Parrinder

THE POLES OF WELLS'S PARADOXICAL GENIUS

H.G. Wells. *The Complete Short Stories of H.G. Wells*. Selected and edited by John Hammond. 883pp, appendix and bibliography. London: J.M. Dent, 1998. £30.00 ISBN 0-460-87964-2

I have taken the title of this review from a statement on the dust-jacket blurb of this new edition of Wells's short stories. It declares with an alliterative flourish that H.G. Wells was a master of two fields of fiction, "the magnificently extraordinary and the memorably mundane", and, it is claimed, these two "poles" come together most effectively in his short stories. The arrangement of stories in this book bears out this contention, and also gives a sense of plenitude. The stories are grouped according to the chronology of their publishing, and are listed on the contents page under their original titles – "Twelve Stories and a Dream" and so on – with the uncollected stories at the end. "The Country of the Blind" appears, therefore, in "The Door in the Wall and Other Stories" group, and at the end of the book Hammond includes the revised version of the story, together with an appendix comprising Wells's introductions to both versions.