

Book Review: *The Sea Lady: A Tissue of Moonshine. A Critical Text of the 1902 London First Edition, with an Introduction and Appendices*, by H.G. Wells, ed. by Leon Stover (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001). xii, 170 pp. ISBN 0-7864-0996-7. \$49.50. Order line: 1-800-253-2187. [By John S. Partington]

Of all the seven volumes in Leon Stover's 'Annotated H.G. Wells' series, *The Sea Lady* is the most valuable for two reasons: firstly, it is the most difficult story of the series to obtain nowadays, with it being unpopular when first issued in 1902 and rarely reprinted since; and secondly, it contains the least number of Stover's by now infamous footnotes! Indeed, much of Stover's commentary in this critical edition was made in his 1989 *Wellsian* article, "H.G. Wells and *The Sea Lady* – A Platonic Affair in the 'Great Outside'". By Stover's reading, the mermaid of the novel's title is a metaphysical revolutionary casting scorn on earthly politics and advocating individual death for the collective good (though to Stover, 'collective' here means a regimented Fascist-Communist illiberal anti-humanistic totalitarian police state as supposedly outlined by Henri Saint-Simon). Ignore the extremes in this reading, however, and Stover's interpretation of *The Sea Lady* becomes legitimate. Chatteris, the politician-to-be, experiences a crisis of belief and seeks release from the normalcy of his political career and his stilted emotional life. The sea lady offers him an outlet for escape and the reader is left puzzling over what kind of choice Chatteris actually has – a continuation of his humdrum life or ecstatic death in the sea. By choosing the latter, one is made to think of other types of death in pursuit of pleasure such as drug overdoses or high-speed car crashes and Chatteris's choice becomes easier to believe (even if still difficult to endorse). Where Stover's reading becomes difficult to endorse, however, is when he sees Chatteris's choice as anticipating the death of the individual at the hands of Communist, Fascist or Nazi totalitarianism. *The Sea Lady* does not suggest this choice in the least. It is to be hoped that Stover's critical text will enthruse others to read the fantasy critically and elevate Wells's charming tale to the position I think we all in the H.G. Wells Society believe it deserves. For now let us be grateful that it is back in print, albeit at an inflated price.

Book Review: H.G. Wells and Youth – Introductory Studies of Wells, 1990-2001
[By John S. Partington]

John Hammond, *A Preface to H.G. Wells* (Harlow: Longman, 2001). xiv, 225 pp. ISBN 0-582-40472-X. £14.99.

William J. Boerst, *Time Machine: The Story of H.G. Wells* (Greensboro, NC: Morgan Reynolds, 2000). 112 pp. ISBN 1-883846-40-4.

Don Nardo, *The Importance of H.G. Wells* (San Diego: Lucent, 1992). 111 pp. ISBN 1-56006-025-5.

Brian Murray, *H.G. Wells* (New York: Continuum, 1990). 190 pp. ISBN 0-8264-0468-5.

In the many discussions held concerning the rise and rise of Wells's literary reputation since the 1960s, we rarely consider the attitude of school children and university undergraduates towards his life, work and thought. Indeed, in relation to school children, 'life' and 'thought' might seem inappropriate fields to the innocent minds of those many would simply want to urge to read and enjoy reading. However, a glance at the overviews of Wells published since 1990 reveals the importance placed upon Wells's private and personal life by authors who aim their studies at youthful readers.

The earliest of the studies I will look at briefly in this review is Brian Murray's *H.G. Wells* from 1990. Murray is clearly writing for an undergraduate audience and in this he succeeds very well. Although a biographical opening chapter is standard these days in author studies, Murray also includes chapters looking specifically at 'Wells and Women' and 'The Reputation'. These not for sensational purposes but rather attempting to coax the student into seeing Wells's literary achievements in the light of his private life, both in terms of his intimate relations and his world-political role. Whilst Murray does not discuss the varying theoretical approaches to literary research, he is clearly urging students to experiment with psychoanalytical and new-historical methods of interpretation amongst others. Another strength of Murray's book is the equal weighting he gives to Wells's scientific romances and his realist works of the Edwardian period, as well as including a useful (though perhaps not detailed enough) chapter on 'The Later Novels'. I consider this a strength as