BOOK REVIEWS

H. G. WELLS, *ANN VERONICA: A MODERN ROMANCE*, EDITED BY CAREY J. SNYDER (PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO: BROADVIEW, 2016) ISBN 978-1-55481-230-1 (PB), DIGITAL (PDF), DIGITAL (EPUB) $12.95 [EMELYNE GODFREY]

Edward Linley Sambourne might have been described as a 'Kodak fiend'. The *Punch* illustrator secretly took photographs of young women out and about and captured images of naked models when his wife Marion was not at home, developing the results in his private dark room. It is therefore apt that this Broadview edition of *Ann Veronica* features Sambourne's sneaky snapshot from 1908 of a girl walking across the street, obliviously looking down at a book in her hand. This could be a girl of our own era, her absorbed posture suggesting that she is busy tweeting on her mobile.

As well as being a book about free love, *Ann Veronica* is also an exploration of the act of observing. Wells has a peculiar talent for magnification, taking us from a general historical overview to an analysis of minds of his characters. We see this technique in *The War in the Air* (1908): 'And presently he too was going out into a world of change and wonder, bowed beneath a load of potatoes and patriotic insecurity, that merged at last into a very definite irritation at the weight and want of style of the potatoes.' At the start of *Ann Veronica*, Wells's heroine is also shown at a moment of emotional and societal transition, travelling unchaperoned by train, that method of transport which reconceptualised notions of geography and speed, resulting in the reorganisation of time, with British clocks being officially standardised in 1880. Commuting from London to the suburbs, Ann Veronica sits daringly with her feet on the seat, and decides to assert herself. She *will* tell her father that she *will* attend a ball. Knowing that she is 'under the eye of the world', the twenty-one-year-old young woman 'rage[s] inwardly', an internal rebellion which occurs at a specific point on the axis of time, on an afternoon at the end of September.

Although *Ann Veronica* is not classed as a scientific romance, the genre for which Wells is arguably best known, the writer nonetheless brings a scientific flavour to this love romance. (And on this note, it should be mentioned that although the Broadview edition is titled *Ann Veronica: A Modern Romance* and is based on the T. Fisher Unwin text, the title in my own copy of the T. Fisher Unwin first edition is *Ann Veronica: A Modern*

Love Story). *Ann Veronica* is a laboratory experiment in novel form. Wells explores how a woman eager for life and liberty behaves when the variables around her are changed, when she meets a variety of Edwardian characters, including fruitarians, suffragettes and sinister, self-styled chivalric suitors. The hero, Capes, also possesses Wellsian attributes. He is a biologist. He is also a married man and has been a co-respondent in a divorce case; Wells was indeed the respondent cited in the court minutes of June 1894 when Isabel was filing for a divorce, with 'Amy Robbins' named as the co-respondent. Looking at the plot, I think that despite clear differences in literary merit, there are some striking similarities between *Ann Veronica* and E. L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011) in that both intelligent female protagonists are around the same age, desire independence, encounter danger in the form of rapacious older men, defend themselves physically from attack, meet and fall in love with a flawed hero with whom they eventually start a family. Both novels, too, define themselves against Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (published in book form in 1892), with James's novel making overt references to Hardy while Wells's heroine, who might have been considered a 'fallen woman', is allowed to survive, unlike Tess or Elizabeth Gaskell's Ruth. That Ann Veronica can, unpunished, pursue her hero and act on her own desires terrified critics, famously provoked the ire of the *Spectator* and precipitated a nationwide campaign against this 'poisonous book'. The movement to have the novel banned from libraries and denounced in pulpits has been much discussed in scholarship. Critics were concerned that if women were allowed to do what they liked, family life and the state would crumble. Just as *Fifty Shades of Grey* might be considered a female fantasy or a disturbing promotion of male dominance, *Ann Veronica* also invited readers to argue whether the novel was an expression of a feminist mind-set or a depiction of a woman ultimately being controlled by her partner who was 'better stuff than herself'.

Carey Snyder is well suited to editing this volume. She has specialised in New Woman Fiction, suffrage literature and Modernism, and brings her expertise to this lively, considered and critically engaged reprint of *Ann Veronica*. Her introduction, which is neatly organised in several sections, covers the subjects which one would expect to see: a biographical context of the novel, Wells's affair with Amber Reeves and the creation of the character of Ann Veronica, the Fabians and an exploration of Amber's later achievements, including her work in the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Munitions during WWI and her post-war writing career. There is also a discussion of Wells and the *New Age*. Another section looks at the

suffragettes' real-life Trojan Horse raid, a campaign during which Ann Veronica finds herself arrested. Snyder looks at the views of Rebecca West and Teresa Billington-Greig on Christabel Pankhurst's rhetoric, and Appendix H: A Reception of *Ann Veronica* includes reactions to Wells from the American journalist Freda Kirchwey, contributor to the *New Age* Beatrice Hastings, and Katherine Mansfield. There is however no reference to Elizabeth Robins, the prominent suffragist, writer and friend of Wells and the Reeves family who assisted Amber following her affair with Wells. She famously denounced Wells's 'dolly view of women' in her well-received hit, *The Convert* (1907). 'Until I read *Ann Veronica* I did not know how meanly you thought of the movement', she told Wells in a letter. I would also like to have seen the scathing review of *Ann Veronica* which appeared in the Women's Freedom League magazine, *The Vote*. In her teasingly titled section 'A New Woman Novel?', Snyder importantly reminds us that George Egerton's fiction provides two examples of women who are not punished for their sexual transgressions and in this, she builds on Sylvia Hardy's earlier observations on the novel in her Everyman edition of 1994. In terms of scholarship, Snyder has clearly read widely. There are, for instance, references to Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie's *H.G. Wells: A Biography* (1973) and Margaret Drabble's introduction to the Penguin edition of 2005, and *The Wellsian*'s 2011 special issue on *Ann Veronica*. What is missing is Michael Sherborne's *H. G. Wells: Another Kind of Life*, a surprising omission given the publicity that the biography has received since its publication in 2010. Sherborne discusses Wells's hitherto unpublished letters to Amber's daughter Anna Jane in the 1930s, when Wells reveals that he is her father and, infuriatingly enough, questions her choice of boyfriend!

Scholars who are new to Wells and the literary landscape in which he was writing will find that the carefully chosen material in the Appendices offers a direct access to all the influences that orbit the novel. These subjects include Wells's and Henry James's debates and falling out over the function of the novel, extracts of suffragette speeches and photographs from the Museum of London. There is also an excerpt from John Ruskin's 'Of Queens' Gardens' (1865), a piece of essential reading which allows readers to fully appreciate the nature of the love declarations of self-styled knight and proponent of the 'separate spheres' ideology, Hubert Manning, a figure of fun in the novel who tries to woo Ann Veronica. When she discusses Ruskin's vision of the world with Manning, it is clear that Ann Veronica's information is gleaned from the results of the Census returns of Great Britain in 1901 when she states that there were around a million more women than

men by the 1900s. In an accompanying footnote on page 141, Snyder writes that 'the "superfluous" or "redundant" woman problem had been energetically debated ever since 1851, when a census determined that there were roughly 750,000 more women than men in the UK'. These statistics are not followed up with a source to support this information. Is she referring to the 1881 Census of England and Wales (not the UK) in which the population of women to men was shown to be roughly 718,000? This is unclear. Another point which needs amending and occurs twice in the Broadview edition is the editor's statement that in 1918 women over thirty were given the vote. However, only women over thirty who met certain property and educational qualifications were entitled to vote.

The value of Appendices section lies in the breadth of topics that the abstracts cover, and this is valued over offering complete reprints of the articles. In many cases, readers must return to the original sources to read the source in its entirety. This applies to the reprint of John St. Loe Strachey's review of *Ann Veronica* for the *Spectator*, a key contemporary piece which should have been included in its full form as it is in Patrick Parrinder's *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage* (1972). The expurgated version which appears in the Broadview edition does not include the final section and therefore misses the bite from Strachey's original campaign review in which he uses Dr Johnson's words: 'My dear Sir, never accustom your mind to mingle virtue and vice. The woman's a –, and there's an end on't.' In *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), Wells writes that Strachey 'said in so many words that Ann Veronica was a whore'. An excerpt from *Experiment in Autobiography* is included in the Broadview edition and so it might have been beneficial to have Strachey's comment and Wells's response appearing within this volume.

Given the recent popularity of the film *Suffragette* (2016) and the publicity surrounding the Edwardian martial arts instructor Edith Garrud, who inspired the depiction of Helena Bonham Carter's character in the film, it was a delight to see a reprint of the famous Arthur Wallis Mills cartoon 'The Suffragette that Knew Jiu-Jitsu' (1910). Ann Veronica uses her knowledge of Japanese martial arts to fend off an attack from Mr Ramage who has designs on her. Having researched the historical and literary context behind Edith Garrud's achievements for a number of years, I was particularly excited to learn something new: even the jujitsu scenario might have been inspired by Amber Reeves's life as her Cambridge dormitory offered lessons in jujitsu. Both Snyder and her research assistant, Hannah Koerner, have provided the reader with a gem in the way of a reprint of Amber Reeve's

college photograph, alongside the better-known photograph of Amber and her daughter. Even the Acknowledgements pages are of scholarly interest, as Snyder mentions her acquaintanceship with Amber's granddaughter, Dusa McDuff. In sum, this is a hearty and accomplished edition of Wells's novel, replete with scholarly verve and personality.

LINDA DRYDEN, *JOSEPH CONRAD AND H. G. WELLS: THE FIN-DE-SIÈCLE LITERARY SCENE* (LONDON: PALGRAVE, 2015) ISBN 978-1-137-50011-3 (HB) £55.00 [JOHN BATCHELOR]

One of the most striking of Joseph Conrad's many reflections on the nature of his own art is in this letter to William Blackwood, written on 27 May 1902, in which he defends himself from the charge that his writing is excessively slow. A recent conversation with Blackwood has stung, clearly. Conrad protests that his writing is 'as good as I can make it' and designed so that 'the whole story in all its descriptive detail shall fall into place' (when the reader has reached the last page). 'This is my method based on deliberate conviction. I've never departed from it.' He is neglected by a vulgar commercialised literary market (in the age of 'Besants, Authors' Clubs and Literary Agents') but he refuses to be as swift 'as the present public (incapable of fixing its attention for five consecutive minutes) requires us to be at the cost of all honesty, of all truth, and even the most elementary conception of art.' His own work, by contrast, is scrupulously attentive and observant, 'nothing but action – action observed, felt and interpreted with an absolute truth to my sensations (which are the basis of art in literature).'[1]

He does not here refer to the difference between his sales and those of his young friend H. G. Wells, but the contrast was plain to see, and it must have hurt. Since his sensational debut with *The Time Machine* (in 1895), Wells had by 1902 written and published some fifteen further volumes which included some of his most famous titles, including *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds* and *Love and Mr. Lewisham*. It was natural for Conrad to take refuge in the defence that his relatively slow progress, as against someone like Wells, was a penalty for his dedication to high art. Henry James felt the same. Both of these more mature men were initially bowled over by Wells's personal charm, puppy-like

[1] Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies, eds. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, in 9 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983-2007), vol. 2, 416, 418.