BOOK REVIEWS

WELLS'S WORDS – OR WORDSWORTH'S?

H. G. WELLS, *THE TIME MACHINE AND OTHER WORKS*, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY LAURENCE DAVIES (WARE: WORDSWORTH CLASSICS, 2017) ISBN 978-1-84022-7383 (PB) £1.99; *THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU AND OTHER STORIES*, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY EMILY ALDER (WARE: WORDSWORTH CLASSICS, 2017) ISBN 978-1-84022-740-6 (PB) £1.99; *THE INVISIBLE MAN AND THE FOOD OF THE GODS*, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY LINDA DRYDEN (WARE: WORDSWORTH CLASSICS, 2017) ISBN 978-1-84022-741-3 (PB) £1.99; *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS AND THE WAR IN THE AIR*, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY ANDREW FRAYN (WARE: WORDSWORTH CLASSICS, 2017) ISBN 978-1-84022-742-0 (PB) £1.99; *THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON AND A MODERN UTOPIA*, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY DAVID STUART DAVIES (WARE: WORDSWORTH CLASSICS, 2017) ISBN 978-1-84022-744-4 (PB) £1.99; *KIPPS AND THE HISTORY OF MR POLLY*, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY JONATHAN WILD (WARE: WORDSWORTH CLASSICS, 2017) ISBN 978-1-84022-743-7 (PB) £1.99; *THE CRYSTAL EGG AND OTHER STORIES*, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY CEDRIC WATTS (WARE: WORDSWORTH CLASSICS, 2017) ISBN 978-1-84022-739-0 (PB) £1.99 [PATRICK PARRINDER]

Founded in 1987 and originally priced at £1, the Wordsworth Classics series provides 'inexpensive editions designed to appeal to the general reader and students'. It is, therefore, no accident that Wells has been included in this paperback series in 2017, the year in which the UK and European post-mortem copyrights in the works that he published during his lifetime finally lapsed. There is now a commercial free-for-all in which, turning to the reverse title page of the new volumes, we find that 'copyright' in these Wellsian texts is claimed by the publisher, rather than acknowledging that they are in the public domain. On the same page in each volume, there is a fulsome dedication to the publisher's husband, replacing, for example, Wells's own dedication of *The Time Machine* to his mentor W. E. Henley.

Unfortunately, these are not the only signs of a lack of respect for the integrity of Wells's authorship of these much-loved works.

There is much to be said for unpretentious cheap editions of Wells, as those of us who first encountered him in, for example, Pan Books can testify. But paperbacks aimed at the student market and boasting of their academic credentials deserve somewhat closer scrutiny. Unlike the classics series published by Broadview, Everyman, Modern Library, Oxford, Penguin and others, none of the Wordsworth Classics editions has a named editor. Instead, each volume begins with a biographical essay by our Wellsian colleague Simon J. James (who is also featured prominently on the publisher's website), followed by an introduction, bibliography and endnotes by a scholar with, in all but one case, a specified university affiliation. There is no 'Note on the Text', and such information as is very occasionally given about the text that has been followed is sparse, hard to find, and frequently unreliable. But in order to write their annotations the academic introducers must have read through, and in some cases possibly emended, the text supplied by the publisher. They are at least partly responsible for the state of Wells's texts as they appear under the Wordsworth imprint.

Turning, then, to Laurence Davies's introduction to *The Time Machine and Other Works*, we find a helpful and well-sourced discussion of the gestation of Wells's early masterpiece, followed by a footnote that includes the baffling claim that 'This Wordsworth Edition is based on the British text of the first book form' – in other words, that published by Heinemann in 1895. 'Based on' perhaps contains some wriggle room, but the claim is profoundly misleading since Heinemann 1895 consists of sixteen named chapters, including such memorable titles as 'In the Golden Age', 'The Sunset of Mankind' and 'The Further Vision'. The Wordsworth text follows Wells's much later revision in having just twelve untitled sections (which it mislabels as 'Chapters'). This is only one respect in which the text follows Wells's later revisions, although the word 'Carolingian' at the beginning of the so-called 'Chapter Seven' has no textual authority whatsoever. For a scrupulously reliable reprint of the 1895 *Time Machine* one must consult Nicholas Ruddick's 2001 Broadview edition.

The other texts included in the *Time Machine* volume are 'The Chronic Argonauts' and *When the Sleeper Wakes*. The latter is also said to be 'based on the original book form', but here we are dealing with a text that the introducer or publisher has bowdlerised. On page 260, a man in the crowd denounces Ostrog's Black Police as 'Damned darkies'. What Wells actually wrote was 'Damned niggers'. (This word, by the way, has been allowed in

the Wordsworth *Crystal Egg and Other Stories*.) As Gareth Davies-Morris has pointed out, the 1960 Dover reprint of *When the Sleeper Wakes* contained a similar, though possibly more extensive, bowdlerisation. According to Davies-Morris, this constituted a 'well intended' but 'misleading – and certainly unapproved – expurgation'.

One thing we will not find in *The Time Machine and Other Works*, or in the other Wordsworth volumes, is any discussion or acknowledgment of the body of textual scholarship on the works concerned. For example, buried in Andrew Frayn's notes to *The War in the Air* is the information that this text does not follow the UK first edition. Why not, we might wonder? In fact – like several other volumes and, I presume, for commercial cost-cutting reasons – it is the US first edition that seems to be followed. The Wordsworth *Island of Doctor Moreau*, for example, carries the subtitle *A Possibility*, which only appeared in the US edition. The respective merits of the US and UK first editions of Wells have been debated in the recent past by scholars such as David Lake, Robert M. Philmus and John Clute, but of this Wordsworth's student readers will learn nothing. They will, however, have to cope with some flagrant errors inherited from these early editions, errors that were subsequently corrected either by Wells himself or in editions published in his lifetime.

In *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, for example, the Foreword as printed by Wordsworth tells us that Edward Prendick 'passed out of human knowledge' at longitude 105'E, which would put him on the island of Sumatra in what was then the Malay Archipelago rather than in the middle of the Pacific, where he is later found in an open boat belonging to the missing schooner *Ipecacuanha*. The *Ipecacuanha*, we are told, sailed 'from Africa' with a puma, an animal found in the wild only in the Americas. Three pages later, however, we learn that it actually sailed from Arica, which Emily Alder's note duly informs us is a port in Chile. She seems not to have noticed the discrepancy, which results from a misprint in the first American – but not the first British – edition. (The error over longitude is present in both early editions.) The Wordsworth Classics *Invisible Man*, once again, generally follows the text that was published in New York in 1897 by Arnold (not, as we are told on p. 30, by Harper Brothers). Hence we learn in Chapter 26 that 'Every passenger train along the lines of a great parallelogram between Southampton, Manchester, Brighton and Horsham, travelled with locked doors'. This is a strange parallelogram indeed – but geometrical sense was eventually restored when Wells changed the typesetter's 'Manchester' to 'Winchester'. In *The War in the Air*, Bert Smallways looks down from the

German airship at New York and 'Lower Island Sound', another mistake later corrected – but not in this Wordsworth edition – to Long Island Sound. However, at least the Wordsworth text of *The War of the Worlds* avoids the absurdity, found in the first and many other editions, of having the narrator cross Putney Bridge northwards to arrive in 'Lambeth' rather than Fulham.

The introductions and, especially, notes to these volumes vary hugely in length and in quality. Cedric Watts provides forty-five highly informative pages of notes to Wells's short stories, while Linda Dryden's notes to *The Invisible Man and The Food of the Gods* cover a perfunctory two-and-a-half pages, and *The First Men in the Moon and A Modern Utopia* has no notes at all. The reprinting of *The Food of the Gods* is particularly welcome, although Dryden's introduction struggles against her evident distaste for a book which she sees as far inferior to *The Invisible Man*. Andrew Frayn, introducing *The War in the Air* alongside *The War of the Worlds*, shows no such embarrassment. He gives a lively account of Wells's futurological prescience, reminding us that, in describing aerial warfare, Wells was entering territory 'for which a vocabulary had yet to be created'. The introduction to *Kipps and The History of Mr Polly* begins by boldly declaring that these two novels are 'every bit as revolutionary' as Paine's *Rights of Man* and the *Communist Manifesto*, a claim that is all the more welcome for its pardonable exaggeration. But only in *The Crystal Egg and Other Stories* do we find an introduction that is not just engaging but critically ambitious. Cedric Watts has put his personal stamp on this anthology of thirty-four short stories and, unlike the other introducers, he conveys the impression of taking editorial control rather than merely performing the task for which he has been hired. Watts emphasises Wells's variety together with his mastery of the short fictional form, and offers detailed commentary on his influence on later writers such as Borges, Golding and Nabokov.

Watts's selection of stories will disappoint some by its exclusions, such as 'The Moth', 'A Dream of Armageddon' and 'The Story of the Late Mr Elvesham'. For 'Aepyornis Island' and 'The Empire of the Ants' one must turn to the *Moreau* volume, where they are printed as makeweights. 'The Sea Raiders' for some reason appears in both volumes, although in Watts's version the title is inexplicably hyphenated. (The only authority for this, so far as I know, is in the text – though not the contents page – of Wells's 1927 *Short Stories*.) Disappointingly for readers who would like to explore the full range of Wells's short fiction, Watts cites neither the 1927 volume and its many reprints, nor John Hammond's 1998 collection of *The Complete Short Stories*. Moreover, the order in which the stories are arranged in

Watts's volume is unexplained and distinctly odd, being neither chronological nor thematic and bearing no relation to Wells's own ordering of them in his various published volumes. The notes, however, would be hard to improve upon.[1]

It would be tedious to pick out the various errors in the other introductions and sets of notes, although rather too many can be found. (I was particularly disappointed to find Laurence Davies repeating the old *canard* that 'little Rosebery' in *The Time Machine* is the name of a racehorse, a myth that was disproved in a scholarly article by Nicholas Ruddick in 2001 – as anyone googling 'little Rosebery' will quickly discover.) It is easy to imagine young readers, new to Wells, who will be fascinated and thrilled by these volumes, and the fact that they have been published testifies to the belief that reading Wells for the first time can still change people's lives. At the same time, I would firmly suggest that citations of Wells's writings from the Wordsworth Classics editions should be permanently banned by *The Wellsian* and other scholarly journals. The texts are simply not reliable or consistent enough.

H. G. WELLS, *CHRISTINA ALBERTA'S FATHER* (LONDON: PETER OWEN, 2017) ISBN 978-0-7206-1939-3 (PB) £9.99; *MR. BLETTSWORTHY ON RAMPOLE ISLAND* (LONDON: PETER OWEN, 2017) ISBN 978-0-7206-1943-0 (PB) £9.99 [PATRICK PARRINDER]

Since the copyrights in Wells's works published during his lifetime have now lapsed, we may hope to see new editions of a number of his lesser-known titles. Already, the 2015 Penguin reprint of *The Rights of Man* (1940) seems to have enjoyed an unexpected success. Now Peter Owen have republished his novels *Christina Alberta's Father* (1925) and *Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island* (1928) with excellent new introductions by Michael Sherborne.

Blettsworthy, it is true, has never been entirely forgotten. Most notably, its curious blend of scientific romance and contemporary

[1] Watts, however, echoes many previous scholars in giving the first publication of 'The Door in the Wall' as being in the *Daily Chronicle* on 14 July 1906. A study of the British Library microfilm of this newspaper shows no trace of Wells's story. In fact, it was printed in a special Summer Supplement published on or around 7 July, and not – at least, in this instance – bound in with the daily newspaper. No surviving copy has yet been traced.