

did indeed declare that ‘cycle tracks will abound in Utopia’ in his *A Modern Utopia* (1905), but he was not the author of the slogan: ‘When I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race.’

The study includes an appendix with detailed notes, a comprehensive bibliography, as well as a name and subject index. Its seventeen illustrations are carefully chosen, some showing photographs of Wells and his family on bicycles, others presenting relevant documents or advertisements. Withers’s fluent style will appeal to both an academic and general readership. Although there are occasionally errors (the publication of *Anticipations*, for instance, is erroneously given as 1902), the author generally demonstrates a deep knowledge and understanding of Wells’s works. There are some redundant statements, for example, the virtual reiteration of a sentence in two places in the same chapter (48, 50); and some readers may also ask themselves if the author’s reference to Deleuze’s and Guattari’s concept of ‘assemblage’ in the chapter on ‘Warfare’ was really necessary in order to understand his argument. These are minor points, however, which cannot diminish the overall quality of the work. In all, *The War of the Wheels* represents a fascinating study, not only for Wellsians and cycling enthusiasts, but also for all those who are interested in a hitherto largely neglected area of modern literary and cultural history.

***THE WHEELS OF CHANCE BY H. G. WELLS, WITH A STUDENT GUIDE TO THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL. ED. JEREMY WITHERS (BRIGHTON, PORTLAND, TORONTO: SUSSEX ACADEMIC PRESS, 2018). ISBN 978-1-84519-889-3 (PB) £14.95 (UK) / \$22.95 (US) [UNA BROGAN]***

In this innovative scholarly edition of H. G. Wells’s 1896 novel, Jeremy Withers provides a valuable resource for understanding and engaging with *The Wheels of Chance* and its context. The editor’s inclusion of an introduction, a map of the protagonist Hoopdriver’s cycle journey, notes on the text and discussion and essay questions all contribute to produce a didactic tool that will be appreciated by both teachers and students of Wells.

Jeremy Withers, an assistant professor at Iowa State University, is an important authority on both Wells and cycling literature. To date he has published a number of articles on bicycles in Wells’s novels, as well as a 2017 monograph, *The War of the Wheels: H. G. Wells and the Bicycle*. He is the co-editor of the collection *Culture on Two Wheels: The Bicycle in Literature and Film* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016), to which he contributed a chapter on Wells.

Withers's fifteen-page introduction gives biographical information on the author, historical context on cycling at the turn of the century, and a brief discussion of motifs in *The Wheels of Chance*, such as the New Woman, drapery and the New Man, reading and escapism, and nature writing. The novel's contribution to the popular 'New Woman' literary genre via the controversial character of Jessie is outlined, and some interesting lines of enquiry about the troubled masculinity of the cycling draper hero are opened up. Withers draws attention to the importance of the recurring theme of reading, highlighting for instance the many references to high- and low-brow literature and the act of reading itself, seen – like cycling – as a means of escape from the drudgery of daily life. He also points to a somewhat neglected area of study (one that Withers nonetheless explores in *The War of the Wheels*): the main character's vibrant interactions with the plant and animal world. Wells's overlooked focus on the natural world leads Withers to invite readers and critics to engage in a more 'environmentally-informed discussion' about the novel. Overall, Withers's analysis of the novel in the introduction is light and accessible, avoiding academic jargon and opening up various avenues by which to approach the text. Those already familiar with the text may regret that there is little engagement with existing studies on *The Wheels of Chance* by critics such as Simon J. James, Yoonjoung Choi and Hiroshi So. Nonetheless, these studies and others are listed in a succinct and well-organised bibliography of works which deal specifically with *The Wheels of Chance*, but also those that engage more broadly with areas, such as the history of cycling or Victorian literature.

The introduction also includes a brief history of the text and information on its reception. *The Wheels of Chance* first appeared in serialised form in Jerome K. Jerome's magazine *To-day*, before being published as a novel by J. M. Dent in 1896, accompanied by forty illustrations by J. Ayton Symington (these are not included in the present edition, though one appears on the cover). In the same year, a US edition was published by Macmillan, which featured a number of revisions by Wells. The text was further revised by Wells for the fourth edition in 1901, and again for its inclusion in the seventh volume of the 1925 *Works of H. G. Wells*, known as the Atlantic edition (published by Unwin in the UK and Scribner's in the US). Withers adopts the 1925 Atlantic edition as the copy text for this edition, noting that the majority of changes made were minor, with the exception of the ending. As Simon J. James remarks in his analysis of these revisions, the ending becomes notably more optimistic in the final cut. This mostly concerns the character of Jessie, who, in contrast to the submissive

figure portrayed in the 1896 edition, expresses a radical desire to ‘go about freely by myself’ and have ‘a room of my own’.

While previous editions had already included an introduction to the text (Bernard Bergonzi’s in the 1984 Dent edition, for instance), Withers is the first editor to have supplied a fully annotated version of this novel. The 191 notes on the text aim at making the novel accessible to those unfamiliar with its social, historical and geographical setting. Place names are contextualised (being given a graphic illustration in the map), slang words are defined, and contemporary references are clarified. The many literary figures and works cited within the pages of the novel are explained to the reader, and Withers takes time to provide historical context for a range of terms, events and political movements. This meticulous annotation facilitates students’ approach to the work, especially those unfamiliar with the British context. However, British readers may find certain notes superfluous or inexact. For instance, a stone is defined as a measure of weight that is ‘equal to *about* fourteen pounds’, the term ‘slap-up’ is considered ‘nineteenth-century slang’, and a note on the various denominations of coin used in the novel – pounds, sovereigns, sixpence, shillings – states that a pound ‘is the official currency of the United Kingdom and is roughly equivalent to an American dollar’, without giving the modern equivalence or stating that these are historical denominations. Yet overall, the notes furnish a rich and valuable backdrop to the novel. Engagement with the text is further facilitated by the suggested discussion questions and essay topics at the end of the volume. These draw attention to the major themes of the novel and invite students to engage with them in the light of various novels by Wells or other authors and with the help of critical methodologies, such as ecocriticism or gender theory.

This volume updates Wells’s classic cycling tale for a new audience, while actively encouraging critical engagement with the text. The introduction, bibliography, map and notes bring Wells’s story to life for new audiences and facilitate the work of those approaching the novel as an object of study.

**JEROME BOYD MAUNSELL, *PORTRAITS FROM LIFE: MODERNIST NOVELISTS AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY* (OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018) ISBN 978-0-19-878936-9 (HB) £20 [MICHAEL SHERBORNE]**

I once read a mediocre book about autobiographies (fortunately for the author, I have forgotten its name) which treated Wells’s 1934 *Experiment in*