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H.G. Wells and the Empire: The Artist and the Intellectual

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ABSTRACT

H.G. Wells and the Empire: The Artist and the Intellectual aims to reconstruct H.G. Wells's (1866-1946) artistic engagement in relation to the power politics of imperialism. The thesis takes into account the vast fictional and non-fictional output of the author, averagely from the age of New Imperialism to the adjacent rise of the first totalitarian movement in Italy in the 1920s. The present work will reveal Wells's ambivalent and revolutionary standing in the British Empire, while also exploring his anti-fascist crusade. Literary criticism, I contend, has long neglected this crucial intellectual aspect of Wells's career. Since Bernard Bergonzi's pioneering study *The Early H.G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances* (1961), critical focus has been extensively devoted to Wells's evolutionary thinking, establishing a canon which largely obscures Wells's magnitude in terms of political commitment. For decades, only the early corpus of the British writer has been taken into serious critical consideration (1890-1899); criticism, as consequence, has overlooked Wells's artistic position in British culture of the past century. Only rapidly mentioned in Raymond Williams's seminal *Culture and Society* (1958), Wells was probably the most famous and influential intellectual on the planet in the first half of the twentieth century; however, after his death, Wells has incurred a progressive critical oblivion. The emergence of post-colonial studies in the 1970s, equally, have paradoxically disregarded Wells's artistic and intellectual prominence in European imperial culture. *H.G. Wells and the Empire* purports to fill this cultural gap, by historicizing the author's public activity in the context of imperialism.

1. Introduction: *A Portrait of the Artist*

"The more completely life is lived the more political a man becomes."

H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934)

In 1946 the *Sydney Morning Herald* commented that Wells's passing had marked unequivocally a transition "into a blackness" that "we can only imagine":

> Without men like Wells, we should be much poorer. While they are alive to make themselves heard, men of good-will feel comparatively safe. When they are dead, the world is left to the mercy of the book-burners, the Communists, the Fascists, the Ku Klux Klan, the extremists of all kinds, the frightened little men with big whips. That is why, one says, with the death of Wells, that the lights are going out in Europe.[1]

In similar tones, following the departure of Herbert George Wells's mind from planet Earth, the African American intellectual William Edward Burghardt Du Bois writes in a column for the *Chicago Defender* that H. G. Wells, "who lies dead in London, was one of the few of the world's Great, whom I felt justified in calling Friend. It is a cherished memory that only last November, I sat in the home

[1] "Wells and His Legend," *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 1946. UIUC, RBML. H. G. Wells Papers, Folder SEC-W-116.

where he succumbed to diabetes and whispered with him as he sat 'busy dying'."[2] Wells was one of the world's major figures within the former British Empire, praised all over the world and attacked for his views on equal measure. Presumably the most influential Anglo-Saxon thinker of his age enjoying global fame, Wells "stood," as Sarah Cole rightly puts it, "for something in his culture; he was a writer but also, almost, a living principle."[3] Although largely forgotten and his legacy unacknowledged, in Walter Warren Wagar's estimation, Wells "was the first twentieth-century writer to predict and dramatize the political, economic, social, and religious crisis in contemporary Western civilization."[4] He was born in 1866, ten years before the Prime Minister Disraeli promoted Queen Victoria "Empress of India;" he would die in the twentieth century, many decades later in 1946, in a world dramatically changed but still essentially animated and governed by national interests. In this extended span of time Wells published prolifically fiction of the most diverse modes and genres; along with non-fiction, including scientific and socio-political journalism, essays, not least his titanic historiographical work: *The Outline of History* (1920).[5] From 1933 to 1936 he was elected, following John Galsworthy's mandate, second President of the International PEN association ("Poets, Essayists, Novelists"); from this authoritative position he could indict Nazis' intellectual censorship. In 1940, at the outbreak of WWII, Wells finally acted as the leading figure behind the internationally acclaimed *Sankey Declaration of the Rights of Man*, a progressive manifesto which strikingly anticipates the liberal values promoted in the forthcoming "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948).[6]

Du Bois had first met H. G. Wells at the Universal Races Congress in London, back in 1911, and since then he began to find in the "keen, humorous, cynical and yet kindly" Wells, who "had both knowledge and sympathy with the American Negro," a valuable ally in the struggle for civil rights. Du Bois's eulogy is particularly insightful to open a discussion on Wells, bringing to the front the main traits, and arguments of debate, for our literary-political portrait. He writes:

[2] William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, "The Winds of Time," MS September 1946, 1. *W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries*.
[3] Sarah Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow: H. G. Wells and the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 11.
[4] Walter Warren Wagar, *H. G. Wells and the World State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 271.
[5] This major educational work, intended to eradicate nationalist conceptions of history, covered the origins of the world from the appearance of biological life to the aftermath of the Great War; it was the best-seller of the twentieth century. Wells's biographer David C. Smith (1986) describes it as "one of the more significant and widely read books of our century (249); In 2019, Sarah Cole notes that *"The Outline* today remains one of the most widely read history books of all time" (11).
[6] See D. Gert Hensel, "10 December 1948: H. G. Wells and the Drafting of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *Peace Research* 35 (2003): 93-102; John S. Partington, "Human Rights and Public Accountability in H. G. Wells's Functional World State," in *Cosmopolitics and the Emergence of a Future*, ed. Diane Morgan and Gary Banham (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 163-90.

> Popularly, Wells is known by his phantastic novels and essays interpreting science to the half-educated [. . .] But Wells primarily was a Socialist; a scientist, pupil of the great Huxley, who saw that the planning of life, and especially of work and wealth is the only answer to the problems of poverty, nationalism and war. War particularly distressed and angered Wells by its inherent stupidity. One of his last prophecies was the self-destruction of the present species of human beings for sheer, dumb blundering, in the face of miracles of science.[7]

This memoir presents an approximation of the figure of H. G. Wells as it has survived in popular culture, and by and large in literary history – namely, Wells the Scientist-Artist discussing the possibilities and dangers of science;[8] but Du Bois prioritizes, with good reasons, Socialism as Wells's all-encompassing credo. Socialism was the inner life of his aesthetic and political ends. Throughout his career, Wells's Socialism anticipates, as final horizon, the superseding of competitive imperialism and the establishment of an efficient "World State," which is at its basis inclusive and irrespective of ethnicity and religious creed. What is often sidelined in criticism, and it is a matter of lexical and semantic accuracy, is that the Wellsian propaganda for the World State revolves around not primarily "nation-states," but Empires.

In this study I intend "imperialism" under Edward W. Said's framework as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory."[9] Empire, in this context, can also result primarily into a centralized power structure mostly based on unequal gains, and filtered at "Home," as Peter J. Cain and Antony G. Hopkin write, as "a superb arena for gentlemanly endeavour, the ultimate testing ground for the idea of responsible progress, for the battle against evil, for the performance of duty, and for the achievement of honour."[10] The critics comment on the crucial feature of imperialism: "What matters for purposes of definition is that one power has the will, and, if it is to succeed, the capacity to shape the affairs of another by imposing upon it. The relations established by imperialism are therefore based upon inequality and not upon mutual compromises of the kind which characterise states of interdependence."[11] Wells's textual world, while adhering to an idea of *responsible* progress, recurrently dismantles the inherent hypocrisies beneath British gentlemanly order; above all, he rejected the romantic receptions of Empire culturally constructed on the semantics of "honour." Since the 1890s Wells was a perennial antagonist of assertive nationalism and Kipling's imperial mythology. Nevertheless, as political theorist Duncan

[7] "The Winds of Time," 1-2.
[8] For specific studies on Wells and science see, in particular, Bernard Bergonzi, *The Early H. G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961); Roslynn D. Haynes, *H. G. Wells: Discoverer of the Future. The Influence of Science on his Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1980); Steven McLean, *The Early Fiction of H. G. Wells: Fantasies of Science* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[9] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 9.
[10] Peter J. Cain and Antony G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism 1688-2015* (London: Routledge, 2016), 53.
[11] Ibid., 59.

Bell also remarks, "prior to the First World War, Wells was torn between a patriotic impulse to defend the British empire, a visionary enthusiasm for imperium as a model of postsovereign political order, and disdain for imperial greed and hubris."[12] The British writer came to advocate alternative visions of world government based on co-operative tenets beyond militant imperialism. Still, under Wells's liberal imperialist framework, Empire, in all its controversies, *must* indeed aspire to represent a progressive force "against evil, for the performance of duty." Imperialism was to Wells a synthetic process leading to equal human intercourse; as a trustee for the World State, the British Empire could only be effective beyond self-sufficient policies and racial closures.

His social vision thus progressively involves an intellectual rebirth to overcome the limits of aggressive imperialism through a cultural revolution against conservative tendencies; he would later term the world revolution under the name "The Open Conspiracy." More specifically, as John S. Partington claims in his political study *Building Cosmopolis*, Wells started as an "advocate of international cooperation in the Edwardian period," and "came to desire," in the aftermath of the Great War, "the merger of national sovereignties into functional transnational bodies in every department of state, from armaments and world policing to world health and education controls."[13] On the whole, Partington stresses the fact that from "1901 and the 1930s and 1940s Wells experienced a gradual development of his worldview, though no significant changes in outlook."[14] This is a point which I share with the critic throughout this study. Often, criticism has underrated the continuity in Wells's artistic and political thought. John R. Reed similarly specifies that Wells's worldview, "while it developed and evolved over the half century of his career, remained coherent and mainly consistent – more so than with most men of letters."[15] Wells himself recalls around the end of the 1930s, that "by '88 I saw the world, not precisely as I see it to-day, but much more as I see it to-day than as I saw it in 1880. There has been a lot of expansion and supplementing since, but nothing like a fundamental reconstruction."[16] Writing from a twentieth-century perspective, Wells bitterly acknowledges that the will of the present "disintegrating British Empire" lacks "the slightest disposition to amalgamate with anything else on earth. Its ruling motive is the fear of dispossession."[17] Towards the end of his life, the British author perceived that the Empire, still anchored to self-sustaining conceptions inherited from the nineteenth-century tradition, seemed antithetical to any broader and collectivist plan.

[12] Duncan Bell, "Founding the World State: H. G. Wells on Empire and the English-Speaking Peoples," *International Studies Quarterly* 62 (2018): 874.
[13] Partington, *Building Cosmopolis: The Political Thought of H. G. Wells* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), 1.
[14] Ibid.
[15] John. R. Reed, *The Natural History of H. G. Wells* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982), ix.
[16] Wells, *The Fate of Homo Sapiens: An Unemotional Statement of the Things that are Happening to Him Now, and of the Immediate Possibilities Confronting Him* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1939), 10.
[17] Ibid., 73-74.

The present study is meant to be a revisionist work within both the Wellsian and the wider literary canon. In many ways, it shares its ambition with two other recent publications focussing on his public persona: Sarah Cole's *Inventing Tomorrow: H. G. Wells and the Twentieth Century* (2019), and Wells's latest literary biography *H. G. Wells: a Literary Life* (2019) by Adam Roberts.[18] These two excellent and crucial studies were being written at the same time. Despite their main distance in terms of structure and thematic focus, they both go in the same direction: resurrecting Wells and an idea of literature and modernity which we are not entirely familiar with. In Adam Roberts's view, "Wells was a literary artist of immense, underappreciated talent, a writer whose literary genius, whilst it must of course be central to a literary biography, deserves to be resurrected in a much broader cultural context too."[19] Roberts's literary biography cleverly, and necessarily, follows Wells's development across all his prose writing output. He claims that one fundamental duty of the literary critic in reading Wells's non-fiction, is to filter the author's "ideas as living quantities, to pay Wells the compliment of taking them seriously *as* ideas, rather than as quaint artefacts of a bygone age."[20] Wells's views, whether accepted or rejected, are still ingrained in our culture. Similarly, I do exclude *a priori* a focus on the fictional text alone. There is a necessity to understand Wells in his public role in society. For the same reason, a fuller understanding of Wells's political intention behind the craft of his art is consciously prioritized. In 1986, John Huntington, one of the most informed Wells's scholars, had already acutely remarked that "to properly appreciate Wells," we must consider that his "art cannot be adequately accounted for by conventional aesthetic values, that his is an aesthetic which finds value in specific political and historical ideas and issues."[21] *H.G. Wells and the Empire* follows these critical coordinates – it challenges formalist approaches and focuses explicitly on authorial intention to probe into the power of the work of art to intervene and cause change in the world. Avoiding what John Farrell reframes as the "*textual fallacy* – the notion that the text is meaningful purely on its own," the author role emerges in all its textual, extra-textual pre-eminence. Dealing with authorial intention, however, does not mean delving into psycho-analytical grounds; it rather understands, as I hope this study will re-assert, that "writing of any kind is an intersubjective public

[18] Sarah Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow: H. G. Wells and the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019); Adam Roberts, *H. G. Wells: A Literary Life* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). Another study, dated but still informative, which purported to re-integrate Wells's fame and not only within the science fiction canon, is Jean-Pierre Vernier, *H. G. Wells et Son Temps* (Rouen: Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 1971).
[19] Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 430.
[20] Ibid., ix.
[21] John Huntington, "Rethinking Wells," *Science Fiction Studies* 13 (1986): 206. Huntington here reviews the works on Wells by John Batchelor, *H. G. Wells* (1985), John R. Hammond, *The Man with a Nose and the Other Uncollected Short Stories of H. G. Wells* (1984) and William J. Scheick, *The Splintering Frame: The Later Fiction of H. G. Wells* (1984). He observes that "in order to influence the understanding and evaluation of Wells in any significant way, we are going to have to take on the detailed ideas and the explicit political stances to which Wells committed himself, which Hammond and Batchelor generally ignore, and which Scheick consciously avoids."

practice, not the mere projection of personal subjectivity."[22] Imperialism may be the only fruitful background for a long-due revival of Wells, as author and intellectual, in contemporary criticism.

Sarah Cole claims in her study that "the signal fact of England's geopolitical orientation during Wells's life, empire has a strange and equivocal place across his writings," that "it is there, most prominently, in the form of allegory."[23] Empire is not Cole's focus, but she provides valuable insights especially in her conclusions. As she puts it, Wells "did write directly about empire at times" and his "views are expressed openly in his work, but he seems to have done his real imperial thinking in his allegories, which so often defy the affordances of the form and push straight to the point, exposing the violent power politics its inequities perpetuate around the world."[24] Shifting her critical judgement on the early scientific romances, thus keenly challenging non-political interpretation of the early Wells, Cole tends nevertheless to underrate the dedicated discourse on empire that runs throughout Wells's larger corpus – whether fictional or non-fictional prose. He was a major imperial theorist. The critique of competitive imperialism, rather than occupying "a hide-and-seek place across his work,"[25] is, I will argue the very macro narrative behind the Wellsian imagination, interplaying with evolutionary thinking. What is truer, on the contrary, is that empire in particular occupies a hide-and-seek place in the critical evaluation of Wells's work. While the topic of imperialism surfaces virtually everywhere in Wells's fiction, and can be safely identified as Wells's overarching concern over his career, its treatment has peculiarly attracted little attention in literary criticism, and never a comprehensive study.[26]

Wells's prose works, either scientific romances, short stories or novels, intriguingly reveal a dialogue with the author's journalism; I argue, precisely, that Wells's artistic vision began to question the triumphs of the British Empire as a self-sufficient, political-moral unity since the very 1890s and remained consistent throughout his career as artist. The continuous critique of the competitive imperialist system constitutes the *fil rouge* of his artistic and political thought. No imperial novelist, I contend, has been so coherent and thematically centred than Wells. As early as 1901, with the publication of his first major socio-political forecast, *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress Upon Human Life and Thought*, he writes sardonically to a friend: "'Anticipations' is designed to undermine and destroy the monarch, monogamy, faith in God &

[22] John Farrell, *The Varieties of Authorial Intention*: *Literary Theory Beyond the Intentional Fallacy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 9-10.
[23] Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow*, 308.
[24] Ibid., 309.
[25] Ibid., 311.
[26] The most valuable overview can be found in Patrick Parrinder, *Shadows of the Future*: *H. G. Wells, Science Fiction and Prophecy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), 65-80. See also Paul A. Cantor and Peter Hufnagel, "The Empire of the Future: Imperialism and Modernism in H. G. Wells," *Studies in the Novel* 38 (2006): 36-56.

respectability & the British Empire, all under the guise of a speculation about motor cars & electrical heating."[27] Indeed, we confront here a typical Wellsian wit. But in a sense these words are to be accepted at face value. Wells the atheist was a public teacher, a prophet of his own ideas and, most importantly to remark, an iconoclast subject within the borders of the former Empire and its monarchic institution.[28]

His ruling idea centred around the recurrent, albeit often vague, concept of "Education" which is more transparently summed up by Wagar as "a functional, organic term that would comprise all the mental activities of the collective being of humanity."[29] Back in 1896, Wells already comes to a "novel definition of Education, which obviously should be the careful and systematic manufacture of the artificial factor in man."[30] Borrowing from Huxley's rejection of Spencerianism, the idiosyncratic Wellsian concept of "Education" is to Wells the result of thought, reasoning and discussion, including the language of literature, which elevates man from his animalistic, self-assertive inheritance of the struggle for existence. The tenets of Education are fundamentally non-aggressive and, as I aim to validate, Wells's view of Education has constantly discarded scientific racism while being fervently anti-nationalistic. Instead of priding on the cultural mythology of "our 'race', on our country, on our class, on our 'set'," Wells points to the urgency for progress to sacrifice the mental constructions around the Self - namely, the blinding "egotism of our self-consciousness."[31] In the congested year of 1939, he thus attacks the intellectual closure deriving from traditional, nationalist teachings of history:

> I put it to you that if we want the world to become a consistent whole, we must think of it as a whole. We must not deal with states, nations and empires as primary things which have to be reconciled and welded together, if we want world peace, we must deal with these divisions as

[27] Letter from H. G. Wells to Elizabeth Healey (July 2, 1901). *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 1, ed. David C. Smith (London: Pickering & Chatto), 379.
[28] Like the protagonist of *The World of William Clissold* (1926), Wells identifies as "an English republican," one "puzzled by the readiness of liberal-minded English people to acquiesce in and conform to the monarchy" (vol. II: 313). In his *Experiment in Autobiography* Wells describes, lively, his mother's obsession with Queen Victoria and his early lack of enthusiasm for imperial worshipping: "I heard too much of the dear Queen altogether [. . .] Various, desperate and fatiguing expeditions to crowded street corners and points of vantage at Windsor, at Chislehurst near Bromley (where the Empress Eugénie was living in exile) from which we might see the dear Queen pass; - 'She's coming. Oh, she's coming. If only I could see! Take off your hat Bertie dear', – deepened my hostility and wove a stout, ineradicable thread of republicanism into my resentful nature" (*EA* 1: 46-47).
[29] Wagar, *H. G. Wells and the World State*, 122.
[30] Wells, "Human Evolution, an Artificial Process," in *H. G. Wells: Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction*, ed. Robert Philmus and David Y. Hughes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 217.
[31] Wells, *A Thesis on the Quality of Illusion in The Continuity of the Individual Life in the Higher Metazoa, with Particular Reference to the Species Homo Sapiens* (London: C. A. Watts & Co., 1942), 32, 8. This text was Wells's DSc thesis in science that he achieved towards the end of his career.

> secondary things which have appeared and disappeared almost incidentally in the course of a larger and longer biological adventure. Education can wipe them out completely.[32]

Education could be the antidote to egotist partisanships. Such a co-operative revolution in society was to be promoted by Wells through fictional or non-fictional works. Ideally both, and by this he lived in a continuous experimentation with hybrid prose writings.

Empire, however, is not an isolated capitalist machine; it also endemically implies aggressive competition amongst Powers for global control and ascendancy to national prestige. It was a dream based on profit, but also racial imagination. Wells, as Du Bois's eulogy recalls, was also a vehement critic of the new totalitarian wave. The connections with nineteenth-century imperialism, as Hannah Arendt's pioneering study would extensively show in 1951, were indisputably traceable.[33] The morph into totalitarian forms of government was a consequence of previous political attitudes. Ironically, critics have generally downplayed, if not straightforwardly ignored, Wells's anti-fascism, highlighting instead the totalitarian streak beneath the concept of a unified and ordered World State.[34] Nevertheless, Wells himself had, as early as in the 1920s, denounced the violence perpetrated by the emerging Fascist State in Italy and indicted its revival of imperial ambitions. Unpublished archival materials, mostly from the Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RBML) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, will contribute to clarify our understanding of Wells's engagement. In now forgotten, yet highly insightful novels like *Meanwhile: The Picture of a Lady* (1927), *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham* (1930), and *The Holy Terror* (1939), he further elaborated his critique. From this standpoint, Du Bois applauds the author's paramount attention to the necessity of an equal distribution of wealth amongst human communities; stressing Wells's consistent opposition to racial injustices, and his hostility for any form of violent nationalism. There is a crucial preliminary aspect to pinpoint: Wells's utopian thinking and political outlook avoided enclosure. To localize Wells's ideological imagination, Maxim Shadurski suggestively writes in his recent *The Nationality of Utopia: H. G. Wells, England, and the World State*, that utopia is to be read "as a content-based, spatially and temporally locatable, and iconoclastic phenomenon," contending "that utopia renegotiates, subverts,

[32] Wells, *Travels of a Republican Radical in Search of Hot Water* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939), 99.
[33] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973 [1951]).
[34] Speaking of *Anticipations* (1901), Lovat Dickson (1971), amongst other readers, has noted that "in more than one aspect Wells's new society has an uncomfortable suggestion of strong-armed fascism about it, and with a sense of shock in the Sixties one is suddenly aware that the heaven Wells dreamed of in 1900 bears a distinct resemblance to the 1984 hell imagined half a century later by George Orwell" (*H. G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times*, 89). Chapter 2 will deal in depth with this controversial text through a contextual political analysis of Wells's liberal imperialism.

and transcends national discourse as a means to achieving post-national ends."[35] Envisioning England through utopian scenarios was Wells's first step towards Cosmopolis.

As cosmopolitan thinker, Wells was not attracted, as Joseph McCabe's *H. G. Wells and His Creed* (1944) carefully underlined, in narrow-minded, geographically delimited socio-political analyses. The main object of study for him was "race" as synonym for mankind: "Wells always uses the map of the world. He is concerned with the race, not Britain or 'the future of the Empire'," and that kind of thing."[36] No wonder that in 1922 Sir Henry Arthur Jones could write a vitriolic book entitled *My Dear Wells. A Manual for the Haters of England*, lambasting the author for his collectivist views.[37] Because of Wells's dangerously radical perspectives under a self-sufficient polity, he proved to be a strongly controversial public figure, first in the age of New Imperialism, then from the 1920s onwards under the rise of far-right extremisms. Du Bois can thus conclude the evaluation of Wells, framing him as an intellectual who relentlessly "dared public opinion. He suffered pain and incurable disease. He was crucified. He did not die but arose from the dead and sits today at the right hand of God."[38] Bertrand Russell, a long-life intellectual friendship of Wells, saw him primarily as "a liberator of thought and imagination [. . .] an important force towards sane and constructive thinking, both as regards social systems and as regards personal relations."[39] Similarly, the journalist and major literary critic Desmond MacCarthy concluded that "no writer contributed more to the moral and intellectual make-up of the twentieth century man and woman."[40]

It was a widespread feeling which is now lost. George Orwell's portrait of Wells may be received as uchronia to undergraduates in literature or those unfamiliar with Wells's true standing:

> Thinking people who were born about the beginning of this century are in some sense Wells's own creation. How much influence any mere writer has, and especially a 'popular' writer whose work takes effect quickly, is questionable, but I doubt whether anyone who was writing books between 1900 and 1920, at any rate in the English language, influenced the young so much.

[35] Maxim Shadurski, *The Nationality of Utopia*: *H. G. Wells, England, and the World State* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 12.
[36] Joseph McCabe, *H. G. Wells and His Creed*: *An Examination of the Chief Constructive Proposals in Literature* (Girard: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1944), 6.
[37] Henry Arthur Jones, *My Dear Wells. A Manual for the Haters of England. Being a Series of Letters Upon Bolshevism, Collectivism, Internationalism, and the Distribution of Wealth Addressed to Mr. H. G. Wells* (London: Eveleigh Nash & Grayson, 1922). This book was the second edition to Jones's *My Dear Wells*, already appeared in 1921.
[38] Du Bois, "The Winds of Time," 2.
[39] Bertrand Arthur William Russell, "H. G. Wells: Liberator of Thought," *The Listener* (September 10, 1953). UIUC, RBML. H. G. Wells Papers, Folder SEC-W-109.
[40] Desmond MacCarthy, *Memories* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1953), 138.

> The minds of all of us, and therefore the physical world, would be perceptibly different if Wells had never existed.[41]

The assessment of Wells's position for posterity presents a series of complications. During his life he was *the* artist incessantly attacked and deplored, precisely for meddling pervasively into the congested affairs of international politics. After all, Jamesian aestheticism and High Modernism would establish that intervening ideologically in world affairs would corrupt any pure ideal of art. As of today, Wells is still unjustly bearing the signs of the crucifixion. Paradoxically, the writer who was "one of the few world's Great"[42] has almost disappeared from the annals of both literary and historical studies. Sarah Cole correctly remarks in her revisionist work *Inventing Tomorrow* (2019) that "to resurrect Wells today is to rediscover the literary landscape of the first half of the twentieth century, and yet, perhaps more importantly, we find in Wells a path that literary culture chose not to take, and are invited to think anew about some of the century's ingrained assumptions about literary values and ambitions."[43] But not only that. As the present doctoral thesis aims to show, H. G. Wells is the necessary and long forgotten figure through which we can foster a fuller understanding of the development of imperialism in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century - in its social, political, and literary dimensions. An interdisciplinary approach, it is evident, is mandatory for any new perspective concerning the author and his cultural surrounding. In *A Short History of English Literature* (1940) by Ifor Evans, the scholar correctly stated that "no one can well understand the early twentieth century, in its hopes and its disillusionments, without studying Wells."[44] With a note of surprise we can now safely ascertain that literary history has, to its detriment, long done without such a precept. In his *Experiment in Autobiography* of 1934, Wells observes that "to many young people nowadays I am just the author of the *Invisible Man*;"[45] with hindsight, despite the jocular tone of a world's celebrity, he was fundamentally right.

A selection of criticism from the past century, in a dialogue with contemporary criticism, will then be of great help in the reconstruction of the artistic and intellectual character of Wells. My objective is to trace, at the same time, the causes of the strange effacement of a world's giant. Greg Bear goes as far as to call Wells's prejudiced critical reception by the establishment as "a literary crime. It's a convoluted caper, pulled off by passionate and dedicated career criminals who robbed

[41] George Orwell, "Wells, Hitler and the World State," in *Critical Essays* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1946), 87. Originally published in *Horizon* (August 1941).
[42] Du Bois, "The Winds of Time," 1.
[43] Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow*, 2.
[44] Ifor Evans, *A Short History of English Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1940), 181.
[45] Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866)*, vol. 2 (London: Faber and Faber, 1984 [1934]), 561. Henceforth abbreviated as *EA* 1 and *EA* 2, followed by page number.

Wells and his child, modern science fiction, of their true rank in the history of twentieth century."[46] While the crime metaphor stands convincingly, and the fall of a major pillar in the development of Western literature is a fact, Bear's discussion tends to overlook what is probably the true nature of the crime in this plot: which is, specifically, the very relegation of H. G. Wells as a genre author. This is not to say, clearly, that Wells's own renown as a key figure in the tradition of science fiction is misleading, a distorted understanding of the author in itself or, even worse, that science fiction is not a serious literary form – far from it.[47] Following Carl Freedman, Chapter 5 insists that "of all genres, science fiction" is rather "the one most devoted to the historical concreteness and rigorous self-reflectiveness of critical theory."[48] Yet, critical insistence on the literary genius of Wells's "scientific romance" has largely overshadowed H. G. Wells's role as the public intellectual he was; intellectual, without justifications for the word. "Intellectual" is not to be intended as label-badge of mere prestige, but as a well-inscribed cultural role. Amongst the meanings of "intellectual" in the culture of the early twentieth century, Wells certainly embodied the one, often in the plural form "intellectuals," "associated with 'intervention' in politics, especially on behalf of a radical or even revolutionary cause."[49] The term entered the English field after the famous Dreyfus Trial. In the 1920s, according to Anatole France, Wells thus represented "the greatest intellectual force in the English-speaking world."[50] Although literary criticism still tends to avoid defining Wells as intellectual, this is what he also stood for in his culture. The only discernible reason not to adopt the term "intellectual" with Wells, for literary scholars, is to perpetrate the form of prejudice deriving from Modernist canonization built on Wells's exclusion from the cultural scene of the twentieth century. Also, through lucid historical awareness, scholars should understand, above everything else, that the word in the 1910s represented a lexical novelty in the English language. H. G. Wells, and I believe presumably more than any other thinker of Great Britain, greatly contributed to contour the semantics and the wide-spread establishment of the term "intellectual" in the political sense. This study purports

[46] Greg Bear, "Introduction," *The Last War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), vii.
[47] For an informed overview on the genealogy of science fiction, and one which help us frame Wells's own use of the tradition of "fantastic writing," compare Adam Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction*, 2nd Ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). As he interestingly puts it, and without ascribing a specific Father figure to the genre, SF would be "the direct descendant of the Reformation" (vi). On the crucial role of Wells within the genre of science fiction see, obviously, Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). For Wells and his role as "prophet" see, for example, Keith Ferrell, *H. G. Wells: First Citizen of the Future* (Lanham: M. Evans, 1983).
[48] Carl Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), xvi.
[49] As reference text I point to the rich and historically accurate study by Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 24. His vast approach sheds light on the meanings of what constitutes – and constituted – the British "intellectual." For methodological reasons, the critic does deal with H. G. Wells's specific artistic and political ideas only incidentally.
[50] Quoted in Sidney Dark, *The Outline of H. G. Wells: The Superman in the Street* (London: Leonard Parsons, 1922), 7.

to clarify throughout its chapters the point of *coincidence* between Wells's artistic and intellectual activity in relation to Modernism.

In 1915 Van Wyck Brooks remarked that Wells was an "'intellectual' rather than an artist; that is to say, he naturally grasps and interprets life in the light of ideas rather than in the light of experience;"[51] but, to adopt a fitting term employed by the same enlightened American critic, Wells could be defined as "an artist of society" to whom Socialism was in itself "an artistic idea."[52] I would also add that fiction was to him a moral-aesthetic object finding its synthesis between political values and aesthetic principles. Immensely inspired by Plato's *Republic*, the utopian horizon as an alternative to current power structures characterizing the competitive imperialist system, is at the centre of Wells's works; this, from the early romances to all the twentieth century novels focused on the imperial scene like *Mr Britling Sees it Through* (1916) or *Meanwhile* (1927). Wells's most identifiable utopian and anti-utopian patterns, of course, surface in *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899), *A Modern Utopia* (1905), *In The Days of the Comet* (1906), *Men Like Gods* (1923) and *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933); it would be a critical blindness, however, to limit Wells's utopian framework to these productions alone, while not dissecting instead the utopian charge throughout his prose writings, including his non-fictional works such as *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution* (1928). It follows logically that Suvin's claim that "utopia is not a genre but the *sociopolitical subgenre of SF*" is to be discarded for a fuller understanding of Wells as polymath writer defying genres perimeters.[53] Utopia may be reframed, instead, as a non-generic bounded discursive space of alterity.[54]

The true literary death of H. G. Wells in contemporary criticism can be traced and summarized in Bernard Bergonzi's *The Early H. G. Wells: a Study of the Scientific Romances* (1961). In his pioneering, appreciative study of the author's early scientific works, the critic could claim that "Wells, at the beginning of his career, was a genuine and original imaginative artist, who wrote several books

[51] Van Wyck Brooks, *The World of H. G. Wells* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1915), 153.
[52] Ibid., 42, 40.
[53] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 76.
[54] For a pioneering study on Wells and the following tradition of the twentieth-century loss in utopian faith, see Mark R. Hillegas, *The Future as Nightmare: H. G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). Crucial for Wells's utopian and anti-utopian imagination is also John Huntington, *The Logic of Fantasy: H. G. Wells and Science Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); according to Huntington, Wells moved from "undirected thought" to "directed thought," that is to say, he shifted from complexities of his early works towards a general simplification aspiring to the dogmatic, the political. While it is true that Wells becomes increasingly active in politics, the critic exaggerates the difference between the early and late Wells in terms of ironical commitment. Irony remains Wells's main device throughout his fictional output, from *The Time Machine* (1895) to *The World of William Clissold* (1926). For a balanced and particularly informed study of Wells's literary theory across genres, the reference text is Simon J. James, *Maps of Utopia: H. G. Wells, Modernity, & the End of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Strictly related to our discussion on Wells, utopian texts and the discourse on nationality, see Maxim Shadurski, *The Nationality of Utopia.*

of considerable literary importance, before dissipating his talents in directions which now seem more or less irrelevant."[55] Wells's early fiction is presented by the critic, wrongly, as an aesthetical production of mere imagination, exempt, apparently, from ideological intrusion. His early works of science fiction are opposed to Wells's supposedly artistic impoverishment of his overtly political novels and utopias of the twentieth century. Apart from the debatable truth of this statement, nothing in the whole trajectory of literary criticism, affecting in parallel all other disciplinary fields, could damage Wells's reputation more than the rationale of this judgement. Indeed, Bergonzi does nothing but voice a long-established prejudiced view on Wells's later fictional output, circulating at least since the publication of his first major forecast of world's government in *Anticipations* (1901). *H.G. Wells and the Empire* implies, however, that this stance on Wells's literary evaluation is highly misleading, and for two now evident reasons. First, from the specific context of our analysis on Wells and imperialism, this interpretation has long obscured and diminished the political intertextuality and ends of the early "scientific romances;" the scientific, evolutionary discourse of his early works, in fact, interplays with the imperial discourse in elaborate fictional strategies which are still being overlooked. Secondly, and most tragically, Bergonzi's opinion points straight to the idea that a direct involvement in political affairs – through and outside fiction – leads inevitably to the corruption of the artists and their art. It also rises the major fallacy which arbitrarily stigmatizes the use of fictional modes as a site of socio-political innovation; Wells's novels were, at their basis, open criticism of political institutions with the explicit, authorial purpose of *provoking change* into a community and its seats of power. The novel envisioned by Wells, as the author himself advocated, was "an important and necessary thing indeed in that complicated system of uneasy adjustments and readjustments which is modern civilization."[56] Yet, under Bergonzi's critical framework, a true artist, to remain so, ought not to aspire to address the "irrelevances" of national and international affairs.

From a Marxist approach, Fredric Jameson's tenet that all "cultural artifacts" are "socially symbolic acts," and that "there is nothing that is not social and historical – indeed, that everything is 'in the last analysis' political'," is even the more valid when we consider the evolution of Wells's literary output and its standing within the theorizing of literature and its mechanisms.[57] As Jameson

[55] Bergonzi, *The Early H. G. Wells*, 22.
[56] Wells, "The Contemporary Novel," in *An Englishman Looks at the World: Being a Series of Unrestrained Remarks Upon Contemporary Matters* (London: Cassell and Company, 1914), 148.
[57] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002 [1981]), 5. Moreover, and crucially for a full-fledged investigation on Wells's corpus of prose writings, it also true that "the convenient working distinction between cultural texts that are social and political and those that are not becomes something worse than an error: namely, a symptom and a reinforcement of the reification and privatization of contemporary life" (4). From Jameson's perspective, such a separation "reconfirms that structural, experiential, and conceptual gap between the public and the private, between the social and the psychological, or the political and the poetic, between history or society and the 'individual', which – the tendential law of social life under capitalism – maims our existence as individual subjects and paralyzes our thinking about time and change just as surely as it alienates us from our speech itself."

phrases it, "the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions."[58] Wells thought the textual realm precisely as an instrument to generate alternative visions of culture in which conflicting ideas could be gathered and openly discussed, confuted and digested. As an author, he was fundamentally interested in ideas in society and their effect on the so-called "Mind of the Race" constructed as a multitudinous entity; in the process, he diminished altogether the pre-eminence of introspection, individualization, and self-characterization.[59] The reality is that the field of British literature between the 1890s and the 1920s, as though at a crossroad, has periodically demanded full-fledged loyalty either to an aesthetic ideal of Art (the "Henry James-High Modernist method" and its hieratic vocation), or the frantic world of politics (the lesser-known "Wellsian method" and its iconoclastic vocation). Obviously, such a neat separation is more of a theoretical abstraction than a distinguishable phenomenon in the practice of fiction; all literature, in fact, finds its ideological realization and aesthetic achievement between the two poles. James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, for instance, are not "apolitical writers" as some critics have often put it;[60] nor Wells is a mere pamphleteer deficient of style. Of the two observations, nevertheless, the latter is still more widely arbitrarily shared. This crucial point thus requires far-reaching reflections on art and its direct impact on society which will accompany this study throughout its pages. In order to rediscover Wells, we need to recentre the focus on the Author figure. There are many windows in the house of fiction – all are respectable, and the building is one.[61] Henry James and H. G. Wells were two acknowledged pillars in the tradition of the novel. One, as Carthage with Rome, succumbed; but, as William J. Scheick has aptly commented, "culturally we inevitably encounter him directly or indirectly, and no critical exorcism has been able to rid our literary heritage of his lingering spirit. He is a permanent resident of the haunted house of both our fiction and our 'literate subconscious'."[62] Wells informs *all* literary discussions.

[58] Ibid., 64.
[59] A term first appeared in the novel *Boon, the Mind of the Race, the Wild Asses of the Devil, and The Last Trump. Being a First Selection from the Literary Remains of George Boon, Appropriate to the Times* (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1915).
[60] To contradict the view of modernism as an apolitical movement, see in particular Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1995). On Virginia Woolf, see Kathy J. Phillips, *Virginia Woolf Against Empire* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994) and Anna Snaith, "Leonard and Virginia Woolf: Writing Against Empire," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 50 (2015): 19-32.
[61] On the original debate on art and its function between Wells and his contemporaries, see especially Raymond Williams's concise discussion in "A Parting of the Ways" section in *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 119-39. See also the introduction by Patrick Parrinder to *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 1-31. For other major treatments, see Simon J. James, *Maps of Utopia* and Sarah Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow*, especially 1-57.
[62] William J. Scheick, "Introduction: H. G. Wells and the Literate Subconscious," in *The Critical Response to H. G. Wells* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 15.

The literary relationship between James and Wells is now well-known and recorded.[63] The two entertained a respectful and even passionate literary friendship since 1898. James saw an immense force and genius in Wells, considering him one of the best living novelists; above all, he adored Wells's cheeky and lively irony. Almost neighbours in Southern England, they formed with Joseph Conrad, Stephen Crane and Ford Madox Ford, an informal literary circle where the art of fiction was displayed, discussed, and debated. It was a fruitful literary dialogue which developed the future of the English novel.[64] But all good things come to an end, and Wells eventually parted ways with Henry James in 1914. The chronicle is notorious amongst specialists: the Master wrote a destructive criticism of Wells in *The Times Literary Supplement*, and Wells replied with a ferocious parody of James in *Boon* (1915), marking the end of their friendship.[65] The honest truth, as Wells would imply in 1934, was that they "were both incompatibly right" (*EA* 2: 493). Since Leon Edel and Gordon N. Ray first recollected their correspondence, adding a critical introduction which was biased more towards James than Wells, subsequent criticism has tried either to praise and consolidate James's triumph, depicting Wells as an inexpert literary man in the field of literature, or, as only in most recent discussions, there has been an attempt to balance the account with more critical objectivity. In general, it constitutes as of today an implicit factionist war; in part, their quarrel is also the shadow of the *querelle célèbre* erupting in the Two Cultures debate between Frank R. Leavis and Charles P. Snow, nicknamed by Leavis as "the spiritual son of H. G. Wells."[66] The difference is that

[63] Much has been written on the correspondence and friendship with James. The reference text is Leon Edel and Gordon N. Ray, *Henry James and H. G. Wells. A Record of their Friendship, their Debate on the Art of Fiction, and their Quarrell* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1958). See also E. K. Brown, "Two Formulas for Fiction. Henry James and H. G. Wells" *College English* 8 (1946): 7-17; Vincent Brome, "Henry James versus H. G. Wells," in *Six Studies in Quarrelling* (London: Cresset Press, 1958), 75-102. See the insightful study by Robert Bloom, *Anatomies of Egotism: A Reading of the Last Novels of H. G. Wells* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977). Biased towards Wells, see Anthony West, *H. G. Wells: Aspects of a Life* (New York: Random House, 1984), 40-52. For more recent and insightful discussions see Douglas Keesey, "So Much Life with (So to Speak) so Little Living: the Literary Side of the James-Wells Debate," *The Henry James Review* 6 (1985): 80-88; compare especially Gloria McMillan, "The Invisible Friends: The Lost Worlds of Henry James and H. G. Wells," *Extrapolation* 47 (2006): 134-47.

[64] Wells lived in Sandgate, James at Rye; Crane at Brede and Ford at Aldington. For a detailed biographical report see Nicholas Delbanco, *Group Portrait: Joseph Conrad, Stephen Crane, Ford Madox Ford, Henry James, and H. G. Wells* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1982) and Miranda Seymour, *A Ring of Conspirators. Henry James and His Literary Circle 1895-1915* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

[65] James's article was entitled "The Younger Generation," published 19 March and 2 April 1914 in *The Times Literary Supplement*. A reprinted version appears in Edel and Ray, *Henry James and H. G. Wells*, 178-215. James, who valued unity above everything else, indicted Wells's excessive discursiveness, while also attacking Wells's authorial obtrusion in his novels; Wells, through the narrator of *Boon*, replied that "in all his novels you will find no people with defined political opinions, no people with religious opinions, none with clear partisanships or with lusts or whims, none definitely up to any specific impersonal thing" (*Boon* 105). Critics have generally interpreted the clash in terms of master-disciple relationship, authorial envy, class conflict and, more simply, artistic divergence. The last of the three reasons is perhaps more authentic.

[66] I will return to this intellectual debate in Chapter 3 and 4. Frank Raymond Leavis, *The Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 66. See Collini's rich introduction, 1-51. See also the critic's introduction to the companion piece of the original lecture by Charles P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, ed. Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), vii-lxxiii. On Wells and Snow see Nina Afanasyeva, "C. P. Snow and H. G. Wells: A History of their Acquaintance, Friendship and Influence," *The Wellsian* 25 (2002): 52-58.

James's texts and ideas on art are known and revered in literary criticism and university courses, whereas Wells, as Gloria McMillan has ironically but truthfully put it in 2006, remains "as little studied as a minor poet from the Outer Hebrides (perhaps less studied than they, because regionalist Scots poets have their critical defenders in visible places such as the *PMLA*)."[67] In 2021 the situation has been changing, but one has still to inform students that H. G. Wells did live and write, copiously, well beyond 1898.

James primarily insisted on the importance of selection and developed psychological insights in novelistic characterization; precision of statement and elaborate, complex prose, defines James's oeuvre. Wells, on the contrary, an English master of irony in Laurence Sterne's tradition, came to envision an instrumental use of the novel, identifying it as the most powerful social production, capable, in synergy with all other critical linguistic activities, to change and reform, ambitiously, the political asset of the British Empire.[68] Although the Master was an aficionado of Wells's science fiction, and early Dickensian novels like *Kipps. The Story of a Simple Soul* (1905), he also tended to criticise Wells's excesses of simplification and self-revealing practice with the novel form. The emergence of personality in fiction, in fact, became increasingly Wells's favourite technique, as *The New Machiavelli* (1911), *Boon* (1915) or *The World of William Clissold* (1926) exemplify. However, James, contrarily to what it is usually believed, also appreciated, with some reservations, Wells's utopian works and sociological excursions: "I can't take you up in detail. I am under the charm. My world *is*, somehow, other; but I can't produce it. Besides, I don't want to. You can, and do, produce yours – so you've a right to talk."[69] So, in reading Wells's socio-political treatises, he could comment enthusiastically: "and the humanity and lucidity and ingenuity, the pluck and perception and patience and humour of the whole thing place you before me as, simply, one of the benefactors of our race."[70] Wells never turned his back to art, as the myth goes, but he increasingly turned to other prose discourses *as well*.

Wells's standing as a "writer" has practically always been under revision. Since his death in 1946 critics began to wonder about his place in history. What did he signify under the British Empire and to the world? What of his legacy? Wells's body has been vivisected in many parts.[71] He has been

[67] McMillan, "The Invisible Friends," 146.
[68] According to Edel and Ray, "the essential difference between the two lay, however, in the fact that Wells's scientific training, combined with his need for self-assertion, made him an exponent of a materialistic kind of artistry to which James was utterly opposed. Wells could not for long accept beauty and art as ends in themselves" (18).
[69] In Edel and Ray, *H. G. Wells & Henry James*, 76. James himself wrote his own sociological work after his American tour between 1904 and 1905 under the title *The American Scene* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1907).
[70] *H. G. Wells & Henry James*, 94.
[71] Vincent Brome, one of Wells's early biographers, writes: "There were, in fact, before long, many Wells. Having nine lives, he craved and achieved a tenth." From "Preface," in *H. G. Wells* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951).

received as scientific romancer, as novelist, as historian, as sociologist, as political propagandist; most prominently as a teacher and prophet. Ideologically controversial, he has also been baptized as champion of freedom as well as a proto-fascist; an anti-imperialist as well as a jingo; at times, the portrait is that of a an Anti-Semite and fundamentally Eurocentric racist camouflaged under Kantian universalism. In the 1990s, John Carey and Michael Coren in particular, have written two major indictments of the author.[72] Although their stance presents the evident bias of prejudice and a severely inappropriate use of selective reading which further complicates and darken the picture, the two critics expose some major illiberal aspects of Wells's thought which exist and must be addressed in detail. In John Batchelor's words, Wells remains today "a mass of contradictions;"[73] indeed, he requires renewed and focused attention. There is an urgent necessity to more clearly demystify the question of Wells's alleged proto-fascist, out-out imperialist and racist tendencies. John S. Partington comments that "Wells is constant throughout his life in his anti-racism, a point often ignored or distorted by his critics."[74] Wells's radicalism could complicate his own liberal ideas, but Partington is fundamentally right. It is critical, therefore, to highlight both his flaws and merits in a contextual discussion, through the analysis of new data and without textual selections either to praise or convict the author. As a preliminary observation, David Smith's assertion that "there is less racism in the writings of Wells than virtually anyone in public life at that time,"[75] is realistically valid only inasmuch one clarifies that Wells's intolerance is typically directed against nationalism, and not race.

Wells's staunch impatience for nationalism, with all its limitations and poor generalizations, certainly stimulates thought, defying labels and common agreement amongst his critics. Nor it is correct to say, furthermore, that Wells was not a patriot himself. He has always lambasted romantic patriotism and militant nationalism alike, yet England was his intellectual motherland and despite all resistances to his anti-establishment ideas of pooling imperial self-sufficiency, a genuine faith in his English-speaking national identity never really faltered. In Edward M. Earle's suggesting phrasing, from his enlightening 1950 article, Wells was a "British Patriot in Search of a World State."[76] The "British Empire," Wells already argued in the early decade of the King Edward's reign, "had to be the precursor of a world-state or nothing," in cooperation with other Great Powers (*EA* 2: 762); his

[72] John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*: *Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Michael Coren, *The Invisible Man: The Life and Liberties of H. G. Wells* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993). John S. Partington, the most authoritative commentator on Wells's political thought, deems the accusations general misconceptions, and an injustice towards Wells's inclusive cosmopolitanism (*Building Cosmopolis*, 6). For a concise discussion on the partisan, fractured reception of Wells, see Patrick Parrinder, "The War of Wells's Lives," *Science Fiction Studies* 38 (2011): 327-33.
[73] John Batchelor, *H. G. Wells* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), ix.
[74] Partington, *Building Cosmopolis*, 52.
[75] Smith, *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, 202n1.
[76] Edward Mead Earle, "H. G. Wells, British Patriot in Search of a World State," *World Politics* 2 (1950): 181-208.

political stance strenuously took ideological distance from the conception of "the Empire of the clenched fist" whose agents "wanted to subdue" the world "to their conception of what was British."[77] The idea of World State, nonetheless, is intrinsically envisioned within the frame of Western empire building.[78] In the aftermath of the Great War, campaigning for a liberal, co-operative reconstruction, Wells comments for instance in regards to the League of Nations: "A League of Nations that is to be of any appreciable value to mankind must supersede imperialisms; it is either a super-imperialism, a liberal world-empire of united states, participant or in tutelage, or it is nothing."[79] From this perspective, it may be suggested that to interpret "World State" as synonymous with "World Empire" is not *per se* a lexical complication – on the contrary, the symmetry strikingly renews the attention on the bond between Wells's specific cosmopolitanism and the imperial thinking of his age.

Since the emergence of post-colonial studies, literary criticism has traditionally conferred Kipling the primacy in terms of the interrelations between fiction and empire. If we follow Said's view in *Culture and Imperialism*, "only Conrad, another master stylist, can be considered along with Kipling, his slightly younger peer, to have rendered the experience of empire as the main subject of his work with such force."[80] Unfortunately, this critical evaluation, still immensely influential in the academia, completely ignores and erases a key figure of British literature and imperial culture. There has always been, in fact since the 1890s, another imperial Voice: the voice of H. G. Wells. Although apparently at the two opposite poles of the political spectrum, both Kipling and Wells coincided in devoting their authorial career to the betterment of the British Empire. Their artistic vision, and public prominence, is tied to their political action. Nicholas Delbanco notes that in the last century the two authors "wielded very public power," stressing that "no living writer is more powerful than in their heydays were Kipling and Wells."[81] Always outside parliamentary politics, like Kipling, and as artist, Wells was the most active commentator and dramatizer of imperial discourse and policy during the first half of the twentieth century. The world discussed his proposals, read his books, wrote books about him, and his name became a trademark in the international press; some admired him while others despised and discarded with scepticism Wells's imperial views and utopianism behind his proposals. He was a writer, in its most inclusive connotation, who also happened to have written engaged science fiction, and Wells's peculiar intellectual framework was defined precisely by such

[77] Wells, "What is the British Empire Worth to Mankind? Meditations of an Empire Citizen," in *The Way the World is Going: Guesses & Forecasts of the Years Ahead* (London: Ernest Benn, 1928), 118.
[78] See, especially, Duncan Bell, "Founding the World State." For a contextual discussion on imperialism and anti-imperialism, including Wells, see Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[79] Wells, *The Outline of History. Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*, vol. 2 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), 564. All subsequent references will appear in the text abbreviated as *The Outline*, volume, page number.
[80] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 132.
[81] Delbanco, *Group Portrait*, 31, 197.

imaginative activity. Brian Aldiss famously proclaimed Wells "as the Prospero of all the brave new worlds of the mind, and the Shakespeare of science fiction;" perhaps, he was simply the Shakespeare of a post-Darwinian age. Certainly he was "*sui generis*."[82] It was the Wellsian Age.

To conclude, situating Wells's fiction and his idea of World State within the controversial context of imperialism and its literary expressions can help us frame the author from a new angle. At the core and in its most immediate result, the desire for a World State purported to be a major revolutionary reform, and final replacement, of the British Empire – I contend, that especially in the 1920s Wells embodied the revolution that England had, at "Home," but never was. It is true he did not shake the establishment, in the end, but Wells's voice was always stubbornly audible. In Perry Anderson's pioneering study "Components of the National Culture" (1968), the scholar memorably diagnosed the intellectual apathy of England's intelligentsia;[83] the name of Wells does not figure, strangely, amongst England's Socialist and revolutionary movements. Without Wells England appears, in Anderson's article, as a dormant nation; in the following sections I will thus re-think Wells's standing within Britain's intellectual culture. His writings exposed consistently the logical fallacies beneath competitive imperialism and racial supremacy on biological grounds which would eventually lead to totalitarian thought. In this sense, he invested literature with the most ambitious pedagogical intent. The British intellectual conceived the literary object as a pragmatical reaction to arrest and eradicate the individualistic drive of rampant nationalism. In 1920, universally claiming that "our true nationality is mankind," he famously wrote: "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe" (*The Outline of History* 2: 580, 594). To the paramount interrogative that goes, here expanded: "Art makes nothing happen?" Wells replies that as a public act of collective participation, art could even re-shape the empirical world. As literary scholars, it would be advisable to amplify Wells's voice. It may revive too, *a way of happening, a mouth.*

* * *

H.G. Wells and the Empire is therefore divided in four other sections. The discussion in Chapter 2 "Wells, between World State and World Empire," deals firstly with the author's worldview, imperial vision, and the intellectual legacy with previous political schools. I will shed more definite light on Wells's liberal imperial vision through a fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue with major criticism of intellectual and political thought; prominent in the discussion are the valuable works on the author by W. Warren Wagar, John S. Partington and Duncan Bell. Wells is an eclectic writer; criticism must

[82] Brian Wilson Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1973), 132.
[83] Perry Anderson, "Components of National Culture," *New Left Review* I/50 (1968): 3-57.

necessarily adapt. Too often, a lack of critical dialogue between literary studies and experts of political thought has caused a series of problematic misinterpretations of the author's ideology. The chapter also expands on the crucial influence of Thomas Henry Huxley in Wells's evolutionary and political thinking; from the 1890s to 1946 the Huxleyan framework will shape Wells's worldview and artistic inspiration. Less acknowledged by Wells's critics, however, the discussion also highlights the pragmatist outlook Wells inherited from William James's philosophy that led him, even more fiercely, to discard categories of race and nationalities as universal absolutes; in other words, Wells's constant rejection of scientific Darwinism is a necessary step for the success of the World State. Finally, by considering Wells's revolutionary notion of "The Open Conspiracy," as the thinker developed it as early as the 1890s, the chapter concludes with a textual analysis of *The World of William Clissold* (1926). This novel, badly neglected yet strongly experimentalist, extensively dramatizes Wells's intellectual career against self-sufficient imperialism. I contend a critical re-evaluation is essential for an understanding of Wells's artistic engagement and unique technique of self-revelation. The novel testifies the harmonious fusion between the "Artist" and the political "Intellectual."

Chapter 3 "Death of the Author, Death of the Intellectual," aims to situate more specifically Wells's theory of engaged art in relation to the Empire. To clarify his views, I first explore his complex position in literary theory. In the light of *Clissold*, I address one of the most controversial point in literature: the question of the author. I argue that H. G. Wells, although unacknowledged in literary theory, occupies a major role in the "Death of the Author" concept. I trace a genealogy of thought from Roland Barthes to American New criticism and the establishment of Leavis's Tradition in order to show how Wells, as world figure, came to be removed from the world scene of both literary and intellectual culture. The discussion then continues to explore varieties of anti-authorialism by recentring the attention on the debate on art in Great Britain between the 1890s and the 1920s. My preferred foil throughout this study will be Ford Madox Ford in particular. Criticism has typically focused on the James-Wells debate alone; but few authors, I argue, allow us to understand Wells more than his literary friend-enemy Ford. The Chapter will thus re-consider Wells's theory of art exposed in his literary-political manifesto "The Contemporary Novel" (1914). Often ignored, and obscured by Virginia Woolf's critique and Modernist canon, this early essay addressed directly questions of Empire. The political novel *The New Machiavelli* (1911) will then be put under critical scrutiny as a full-fledged "imperial novel."

Progressing from Wells's theory of art, Chapter 4 "The Call of History: The World Intellectual" thus explores extensively both Wells's fictional and non-fictional output from the Great

War to the aftermath of the conflict in 1920s. My focus will centre around his proposals for an intellectual rebirth as the author relentlessly presented it both in the novel form and his journalistic activity; crucial for any discussion on Wells and imperialism, I will first expand the contents of his majestic historiography book *The Outline of History* (1920). Unnoticed by criticism, in this best-selling narrative Wells did launch the most serious critique of the twentieth century against the other major voice of the Empire: Rudyard Kipling. This historiographic work, in the tradition of Voltaire, would confer Wells unprecedented world fame and authority in the world scene. However, he would also come to embody, as evidence shows, the most revolutionary figure of the British Empire. In the light of his public performance throughout Wells's career, the section purports to clarify the author's precise intellectual and artistic position by reconsidering the legacies with the English tradition as well as Wells's indebtedness to Zola's political intellectualism. The final section of the discussion will then explore, also through unpublished materials held at the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Wells's anti-fascist crusade during the 1920s. The British intellectual's opposition to the rise of the first totalitarian experiment in Europe will shed light on Wells's imperial vision and artistic uniqueness. In the 1920s, the Italian ex-Prime Minister Francesco Saverio Nitti (1919-1920) and the major Italian anti-fascists, including the historian Gaetano Salvemini, would hail Wells as the international, progressive voice of democracy; after an excursion into the author's anti-fascism, I will explore the complexities of the novel *Meanwhile* (1927) in exposing both the terror policy of Fascism and the nationalist excesses of British imperialism. The chapter will close by reassessing Wells's intellectual and artistic position through George Orwell's lenses in his seminal essay "Wells, Hitler and the World State" (1941).

Finally, Chapter 5 "Re-thinking the Canon of Colonial Fiction" will attempt to clarify Wells's early artistic design. The first section will begin, through a logical thread, from *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) and its picture of a corporative State Wells envisioned as early as 1899 in the age of New Imperialism; significantly, the author started to work on the plot as early as 1896, after publishing *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. For decades critical reception of Wells has applied a marked dividing line between scientific romance and novel in terms of political ideology; as a matter of fact, Wells's intention to reform the imperial system has always characterized his artistic imagination. Starting from a discussion on a rare interview of the author, "What I believe" (1899), I will sketch through the author's early treatment of imperialism in his major romances. To conclude the work of critical revisionism I will therefore present a more extensive case study through a contextual analysis of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* in relation to Robert Louis Stevenson's critique of imperial policies.

2. Wells, Between World State and World Empire

"The Empire was a convenience and not a God."

H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934)

Wells's political thought has been considered at length in W. Warren Wagar's *H. G. Wells and the World State* (1961), followed by John S. Partington's *Building Cosmopolis: The Political Thought of H. G. Wells* (2003).[84] These comprehensive works tackle indeed the World State in relation to imperialism, but their focus is not thematically centred on these cultural interrelations. Wells's anti-fascism, moreover, a crucial ideological standing which is part of his anti-imperialist crusade of the 1920s, barely figures as a major issue within his political thought. This should not come as a surprise, given that even in *Mussolini and the British* (1997), Richard Lamb could discuss on Italian Fascism and Great Britain without mentioning the major socio-political thinker and journalist of the British Empire. Most recently, Gregory Claeys in *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (2010) and especially Duncan Bell's essential findings, have shed more light on Wells's ideal form of government. These studies put Wells's World State in relation to the specific trends of nineteenth-century, and early twentieth-century varieties of liberal imperialism.[85] Claeys, for instance, other than convincingly linking the underrated influence of Comte's positivist notion of "Religion of Mankind" with British anti-imperialist thought, has also ascribed H. G. Wells to a group of imperial thinkers which he defines as "'Social-Imperialist', or more properly 'Socialist-Imperialist'."[86] This political cluster, including Robert Blatchford, J. Ramsay Macdonald, Keir Hardie and Henry M. Hyndman, along with the Fabian Society of which Wells was a prominent member, would represent "a large and very clear majority of socialist opinion in this period, indeed," Claeys specifies, "virtually all of the

[84] By Wagar see also "H. G. Wells and the Scientific Imagination," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 65 (1989): 390-400; "Science and the World State: Education as Utopia in the Prophetic Vision of H. G. Wells," in *H. G. Wells Under Revision. Proceedings of the International H. G. Wells Symposium, London, July 1986*, ed. Patrick Parrinder and Christopher Rolfe (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1990), 40-53; for a recent critical perspective not fundamentally dissimilar from *H. G. Wells and the World* State, see Wagar's "Critical Introduction" to *The Open Conspiracy: H. G. Wells on World Revolution* (Westport: Praeger 2002), 3-44; Wagar's last contribution, which confirms his preceding thoughts and takes into account both Wells's fiction and non-fiction, is *H. G. Wells: Traversing Time* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004). By Partington, see also, in particular, "The Death of the Static: H. G. Wells and the Kinetic Utopia," *Utopian Studies* 11 (2000): 96-111; "H. G. Wells and the World State: A Liberal Cosmopolitan in a Totalitarian Age," *International Relations* 17 (2003): 233-46. Already mentioned, and as a useful concise analysis, compare "Human Rights and Public Accountability in H. G. Wells's Functional World State."

[85] See especially the accurate works by Duncan Bell, "Pragmatism and Prophecy: H. G. Wells and the Metaphysics of Socialism," *American Political Science Review* 112 (2017): 409-22; "Founding the World State: H. G. Wells on Empire and the English-Speaking Peoples;" "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist," *Modern Intellectual History* 16 (2019): 863-95; see his latest crucial contribution, *Dreamworlds of Race: Empire and the Utopian Destiny of Anglo-America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

[86] Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics*, 226.

most influential socialist writers of the day, with the notable exception of Bax."[87] If literary interest in Wells "remains," in Michael Sherborne's estimation, "a minority pastime," we may note as well that Wells's revival in political studies is only a very recent phenomenon which deserves more academic dedication.[88] Let us then proceed in order, through a preliminary review of these critical works, with the intent of framing a solid sketch of Wells's thought: the idea of "World State."

Wagar first published the most insightful analysis of Wells's cosmopolitan model in 1961, that is only fifteen years after Wells's death. *H. G. Wells and the World State* was written under the climate of Cold War political hostility, in which international co-operation between major geopolitical powers seemed largely out of fashion; and not significantly dissimilar from Wells's age. Hannah Arendt, after all, sharply perceived that in "historical terms" the 1960s risked to become a retrogression "on an enormously enlarged scale, where we started from, that is, in the imperialist era and on the collision course that led the World War I."[89] To the informed Wells's reader this precise statement echoes the quintessential motif of the author's anti-imperialist propaganda during the interwar period.[90] History as repetition. Similarly to John S. Partington, Wagar's *H. G. Wells and the World State* shares the fundamental conviction that, although adjusting his thought and shifting alliances in the course of his long career, Wells "remained all his life a reasonably consistent thinker."[91] For Partington, this coherence is even more pronounced and is pointed out as "perhaps the most striking aspect of Wells's political thought throughout his life."[92] This latter point is often underrated especially by literary critics dealing with Wells's ideology, and which is of paramount priority to highlight. Quite correctly, Wagar stresses the key fact that Wells was an anti-Victorian, "the champion *par excellence* of socialism, science, and moral emancipation," the nemesis of religious dogmas and the establishment;[93] yet, despite his boisterous propaganda, he presumably lacked the political skills to put into practice effectual change. Wells also was, as many critics have noted, temperamentally a poor leader. In this regard, Wagar avows a certain reluctance with the title of his monograph, holding that Wells's proposals were, paradoxically, those of a State "without politics," so that "World State" is somewhat misleading.[94] Plato's *Republic* was a major model to

[87] Ibid.
[88] Michael Sherborne, *H. G. Wells: Another Kind of Life* (London: Peter Owen, 2010), 349.
[89] Quoted from the preface of July 1967 of Part Two: "Imperialism" in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, xviii.
[90] In the age of wall-building, Trumpism, Brexit and far-rights competitive manoeuvres, we see again the spectre of this political inheritance.
[91] Wagar, *H. G. Wells and the World State*, 10.
[92] Partington, *Building Cosmopolis*, 1.
[93] Wagar, *H. G. Wells and the World State*, 18. On Wells and socialism compare 98-118. For a fuller discussion, see David Smith's rich biography of the author, *H. G. Wells: Desperately Mortal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 89-134; see also the excellent updated discussion in Sherborne, *Another Kind of Life*, 170-90. Specific on Wells, socialism, sex and the Fabian Society is Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *The Life of H. G. Wells: The Time Traveller* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987).
[94] Wagar, *H. G. Wells and the World State*, 211.

him, Wagar correctly notes. The critic remarks that Wells's World State proposals are often vaguely sketched. To a major extent and primarily, the Wellsian State is a State of words and open criticism, not of concrete political reconstruction. The intolerance for national self-assertion, furthermore, with Wells's preference for Western major powers as the origins of the coming world revolution, often exposed him to accusations of "fostering Western cultural imperialism, at a time when Western intellectuals were growing more and more sympathetic to Eastern philosophy and religion."[95] Wagar wrote this in 1961; but in the new emerging post-colonial studies Wells occupies a substantially invisible presence.[96]

Wagar's approach is that of an intellectual historian; from the outset his main merit is in recognizing that Wells stands as a gold mine for the history of ideas, belonging to "a species of intellectual almost extinct in our time," traceable to the French Enlightenment that produced Voltaire.[97] In his life, Wells more than once was compared to the French *philosophe*; he obviously found pride in the association. [98] Wagar, whose 1960s critical method deals in fact with both fiction and non-fiction, albeit without any specific theoretical awareness of fictional voice, claims that "the very directness of his approach, his determination to educate and preach and guide, spoiled his art."[99] As one would expect, as historian he does not deal in-depth with the complexities of the literary object; furthermore, Wagar's persistent de-politicization of Wells's early works has contributed to a critical disregard of the political significance of Wells's early fiction. As he puts it, the scientific romances "were written primarily as entertainment, to shock and excite and amuse," conceding at least that "each was a perfectly sincere indictment of Victorian complacency."[100] Albeit unwillingly, Wagar minimizes the Wellsian role of Education in fiction, of art as favourite instrument to raise awareness, along with its role of guidance to specific anti-nationalist conduct. The lack of interest in imperialism, especially in the nineteenth-century Wells, allows Wagar to assert in an article, as late as 1989 that:

> All we can say with assurance from the available evidence is that what most forcefully engaged

[95] Ibid., 256.
[96] Only recently, there has been renewed interest in Wells's science fiction. The major contribution is John Rieder, *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008). See also Patricia Kerslake, *Science Fiction and Empire* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007). The rest of Wells's canon is still to be explored. An insightful reading is, however, in Benita Parry's study of Wells's Edwardian novel *Tono Bungay* in *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London: Routledge, 2004), 148-61. In general, for the interface of science fiction and colonial studies see also the recent valuable contribution by Simone Brioni and Daniele Comberiati, *Italian Science Fiction: the Other in Literature and Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).
[97] Wagar, *H. G. Wells and the World State*, 4.
[98] Albert Guérard, "New History: H. G. Wells and Voltaire," *Scribner's Magazine* 76 (1924): 476-84.
[99] Wagar, *H. G. Wells and the World State*, 32.
[100] Ibid., 82.

> the mind of H. G. Wells in the early and middle 1890's was the theory of evolution and its bleak implications for the future of *Homo sapiens*. He seldom if ever referred, at the time, to the burdens of Empire or the menace to England of foreign aggressors or the prospects for global conflict in an age of soaring progress in science and technology.[101]

Wagar's original works are still valuable and well structured, but some of the critic's authoritative observations and omissions are, partly, the main reason why there is not yet a full-fledged study on Wells and empire. It is a critical stance that informs also his most recent *H. G. Wells: Traversing Time* (2004), although, here, he explicates more clearly that Wells always conceived "the scientific romance as a medium of literary and ideological enterprise."[102] In this updated study, for instance, his reading of *The War of the Worlds* is not primarily that of "a devastating critique of European imperialism" as critics have often remarked.[103] On the contrary, Wagar often sees, and not alone in criticism, the early Wells more as a progressive Victorian indeed, yet inescapably caged in race-thinking, supporting "racist ideologies" he would later reject.[104]

In general, Wagar, albeit appreciating Wells's cosmopolitanism, remarks that the utopian imagination of Wells from 1890 to 1905 in particular, but even beyond, is one "overwhelmingly secular, steeped in the weltanschauung of modern Western science, technologically advanced, and inimical to any contrary creed or way of life."[105] This is a half-truth; Wells undoubtedly envisioned Europe and the United States as major leading forces in the progress of mankind, but in Wagar's analysis on the World State, Wells's Eurocentrism is at times overstated and poorly generalized. Partington rather remarks, in this regard, that Wells's cosmopolitan thought, "while decrying imperialism," also "supported empire pooling and education and investment to raise the colonial peoples to the economic level of their erstwhile exploiters."[106] More evidence now informs us, in truth, of a figure of Wells deeply aware of imperial affairs and sensible to its multicultural issues since the early 1890s. This is not to say, however, that Wells was a champion of colonial independence; throughout his life he prioritized instead the idea of World State while bypassing national exigencies. Inevitably, his European radicalism seems incurably stubborn and difficult to reconcile with his cosmopolitan aspiration.

Related to this totalising aspect of Wells's thought, and crucial to our analysis, there is another major issue with Wagar's critical position which has already been commented by Partington. Wagar, although himself an admirer and advocate of Wells's co-operative proposals, tends, in effect, to

[101] Wagar, *H. G. Wells and the Scientific Imagination*, 391.
[102] Wagar, *Traversing Time*, 199.
[103] Wagar, *Traversing Time*, 54.
[104] Ibid., 57.
[105] Ibid., 107.
[106] Partington, "H. G. Wells and the World State," 233.

exaggerate Wells's distrust for the democratic apparatus.[107] The Wellsian ideal for a global World State, since 1901 with *Anticipations*, reiterates a government directed by elites, functional technocracies composed of intellectuals, scientists, engineers, teachers; this progressive group of men and women points to an intellectual reform while minimising militarism. It is established on open participation and voluntary basis in which parliamentary politics nonetheless lose their power. It is essentially a movement of members mostly raising from outside the seats of power, not within. On such grounds, Wagar goes as far as to claim that "nothing in his fundamental assumptions inclined Wells to sympathy with the democratic ideal. For Wells, what counted most in life was the emergence of quintessential humanity from the animal chaos of lower nature."[108] Wagar's studies never imply, however, that Wells ever flirted with Fascism during the 1920s and beyond; on the contrary, he stresses the thinker's detachment from the emerging nationalist partisanships, insisting that "it would be a gross distortion to brand him a protofascist," an advocate of race extermination or a class enthusiast.[109] Wells's elitism had something of the religious. And in fact, as Wagar himself observes in *H. G. Wells and the World State*, "in one special sense Wells could accept 'democracy': when he took it to mean equality of opportunity. . .democracy was the fellowship of all men in the racial adventure."[110] Partington thus corrects Wagar's indeterminacy by claiming, more accurately, that "Wells was not an anti-democrat, but rather an anti-parliamentarian. Throughout his life he aimed to reform democracy, not overthrow it," as Fascism and enemies of the liberal thought longed for.[111] Shedding light on Wells's anti-fascist activism of the 1920s, ignored by both Wagar and Partington, may finally disentangle the anti-democratic paradox in Wells's thought.

John S. Partington's study, on the other hand, while correcting and validating, as we have seen, some of Wagar's points, is even more ambitious. Unlike Wagar, Partington prioritizes Wells's non-fictional output. The critic's thesis openly purports to situate Wells alongside David Mitrany as founder of the functionalist school of international relations.[112] The place of Wells in world-government theory has not received due acknowledgment. In his attempt to revive Wells's legacy in the political thought of the second half of the twentieth century, Partington's criticism is more politically specialized than his predecessor, connecting Wells's political thought with the major

[107] Wagar claims in a conference of 1986: "I have produced academic studies of H. G. Wells and taught H. G. Wells in my courses, all my efforts are colored by the belief that H. G. was fundamentally correct. His central conviction, that civilization would collapse unless the right sort of people got hold of it and replaced the system of sovereign nation-states with a secular and socialist world polity, is correct." ("Science and the World State," 41). Despite various reservations to aspects of Wells's political thought, for Wagar perennial enthusiasm and belief in Wells's universalism, see also his "Critical Introduction" to *The Open Conspiracy: H. G. Wells on World Revolution*. See also, from *Traversing Time,* "A Personal Prologue," 1-4; and "A Personal Epilogue," 274-77.
[108] Wagar, *H. G. Wells and the World State*, 164-65.
[109] Ibid., 166.
[110] Ibid., 171-72.
[111] Partington, *Building Cosmopolis*, 11.
[112] Ibid., see especially 149-78.

currents of international and cosmopolitan models of the age. Wells's thinking arose, in effect, in the heyday of the cult of nation-state, when nationalism turned into the competitive arena of the late nineteenth century "New Imperialist" phase.[113] The political theorist J. A. Hobson, who envisioned nationalism as a vital force of progress, in 1901 could nevertheless analyse that "a militant Imperialism can cultivate and maintain" nothing more than a "false form of *exclusive* nationalism which has its essence in hostility towards other nations;" this type of aggressive nationalism posed itself as a threat, Hobson claimed, to a "true *inclusive* nationalism" able to override competition and hold a moral union.[114] As Partington notes, Wells's co-operative thinking stems from the general crisis of Western liberal thought in identifying with the new ideal of expansive and aggressive nationalism; the new ideological metamorphoses betrayed the progressive, liberating drive characterising nationalism for first half of the century. Although prior to the Great War Wells sketched – albeit vaguely as in *Anticipations* (1901) – some forms of internationalism, his overarching design of cosmopolitan thought, appearing since 1901, saw the unification of humanity under one World polity; we could say, while imagining a smirk of disapproval on Wells's face for the term, a World Empire.[115]

The main merit of *Building Cosmopolis* for literary scholars interested in Wells's ideology, is presumably Partington's insistence on the influence Thomas Henry Huxley's theories had on the author and the idea of "Education" emerging since Wells's early writings.[116] Wells's scholars have always agreed, with the striking exception of Leon Stover, that Huxley's evolutionary thinking affected Wells's worldview to great extents.[117] Unlike Wells, Huxley manifestly disdained Socialism and was always cautious not to meddle directly into politics; nonetheless, his theory had strong implications for social and political action. Singularly observing humanity from a scientific outlook, shaped on Huxley's refutation of harsh late nineteenth-century Darwinian individualism, Wells gradually planned a social revolution based on co-operation and State efficiency.[118] Natural selection

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[113] In the vast literature, for further discussion see for example John M. MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Jose Harris, "Political Theory and the State," in S. J. D. Green and R. C. Whiting, *The Boundaries of the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Edward Beasley, *Empire as the Triumph of Theory: Imperialism, Information, and the Colonial Society of 1868* (New York: Routledge, 2005). Updated, the classic by Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

[114] John Atkinson Hobson, "Socialistic Imperialism," *International Journal of Ethics* 12 (1901): 55.

[115] More analogous to an Empire of Mankind in positivist terms.

[116] Wagar, on the other hand, in *H. G. Wells and the World State* fails to understand the genealogy of Wells's Education concept, stating that it is a vision recurring especially after the Great War.

[117] Leon Stover, "Applied Natural History: Wells vs. Huxley," in *H. G. Wells Under Revision*, 125-33. On Wells and Huxley the reference text is Haynes, *H. G. Wells: Discoverer of the Future*; particularly insightful and updated with new perspectives is also Jan Vanvelk, "Listening to the Silence: Huxley, Arnold, and Wells' Scientific Humanity," *Victoriographies* 5 (2015): 72-93.

[118] For a contextual discussion on Huxley's evolutionary theories and their intellectual and political impact see William Irvine, *Apes, Angels, and Victorians*: *The Story of Darwin, Huxley, and Evolution* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1955); Harmon Zeigler and Ronald F. Howell, "Comments on the Political Scientism of Thomas Henry Huxley," *Social Science* 39 (1964): 79-88; Michael S. Helfand, "T. H. Huxley's 'Evolution and Ethics': The Politics of Evolution and the

meant death, it did not provide justice; humanity, linked to the animal realm, was nevertheless different and its triumph and salvation, although bleak and perhaps unattainable under nature's competitive force, lied in the necessary fight for ethics.

Huxley originally distinguished between the "cosmic process" of the strife and struggle for existence, and the "ethical process" resulting from moral action in civilisation. The latter, in Huxley's view, would be the human, and humane artifice to combat man's animal egotism. The ethical process defined by Huxley is not set apart from the cosmic process; it is rather a synthesis, a balance of antithetical forces in which the former brings self-restraint while the latter demands self-assertion. In the concluding paragraph of the Prolegomena to his influential 1893 lecture *Evolution and Ethics*, Huxley anticipates Wells's rationale for the World State: "That which lies before the human race is a constant struggle to maintain and improve, in opposition to the State of Nature, the State of Art of an organized polity."[119] John S. Partington, particularly attentive to this framework, states that Huxley's ethical principles constitute the "unusual ideological foundation" behind Wells's political thought.[120]

Similarly, the political thought scholar Duncan Bell terms Wells's model a "bold and idiosyncratic cosmopolitan socialist vision."[121] Wells's thinking, shaped through Huxleyan ideas, thus presents roots radically different from liberal individualism or the Marxist tradition whose incessant stress on class-conflict ideology, as we shall see, Wells incessantly attacked.[122] Furthermore, in harmony with Huxley's theories, as Duncan Bell has amply demonstrated, Pragmatism and especially William James's philosophical views, played a key part in Wells's thinking. From Wells's debt to a nominalist metaphysics derives his perennial refutation of classes, absolutist truth and classifying systems – thus including his antagonism for racial taxonomies and cultural categories of nationality and sovereignty. James's pragmatism, strongly nominalist, as he conceived it, presented scepticism for any "abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed

Evolution of Politics," *Victorian Studies* 20 (1977): 159-77; Leonard Tivey, "T. H. Huxley: Ethics and Politics," *The Political Quarterly Publishing* (1998): 170-76; see also Bell, "Pragmatism and Prophecy." Also compare the analysis by Klára Netíková, "T. H. Huxley's Evolution and Ethics: Struggle for Survival and Society," *Electronic Journal for Philosophy* 26 (2019): 4-18.

[119] Thomas Henry Huxley, "Prolegomena [1894]," in *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1894), 44-45.

[120] Partington, *Building Cosmopolis,* 2. Partington is reacting to Leon Stover's view, according to whom, "far from adhering to it [Huxley's theory], Wells contradicts it," embracing instead the cosmic process of natural selection ("Applied Natural History," 125). While Stover's analysis results fragile in misunderstanding Huxley's division between ethical and cosmic process, he is correct in stressing Wells's admiration for another thinker, William Winwood Reade and his major work, *The Martyrdom of Man* (London: Trüber, 1872).

[121] Bell, "Pragmatism and Prophecy," 409.

[122] Marxism is inevitably related with Wells's literary output and the genre of science fiction since its early days. Texts like *The Time Machine, The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *When the Sleeper Wakes* witness the ideological response of the author to the criticalities of class conflict. On science fiction and Marxism see especially *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction,* ed. by Mark Bould and China Miéville (London: Pluto Press, 2009).

principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins."[123] Rather, James insists that the pragmatist "turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power." It is then evident that Wells's faith in the individual, beyond facile classifications, adhered to a philosophy of action promoting to follow "the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality and the pretence of finality in truth."[124] Duncan Bell is correct; Huxley's framework is necessary but not sufficient to determine Wells's thinking. In Bell's ground-breaking re-evaluation of his philosophical ideas, the critic claims that Wells was in fact "the most high-profile pragmatist political thinker of the opening decades of the twentieth century;"[125] Wells's debt to pragmatist philosophy has paradoxically gone unnoticed, although during his life many thinkers, William James included, acknowledged Wells's fundamentally pragmatist approach to life.

Finally, regarding Wells's imperialist vision, and by consequence his authoritarian vein, Duncan Bell's work has contributed significantly. The definition he offers of Wells's World State is valuable for its clarity. For Bell, Wells "advocated a vanguardist cosmopolitan socialism."[126] Its cosmopolitanism was defined by the priority "to replace the system of sovereign states and empires with a world state;" and it was socialist because in the attempt to build a universal brotherhood, as a religion, Wells fought the "depredations of capitalism." Finally, it was vanguardist since it foresaw that "the primary agents of change – and the ideal rulers of the future society – were a transnational technocratic elite."[127] Bell sees in Wells, without doubt, "the twentieth century's most prolific, original, and influential advocate of the world state."[128]

Focussing particularly on Wells's thought in the first decade of the twentieth century, Bell considers the author's early proposals for a global order, from *Anticipations* (1901) to *A Modern Utopia* (1905), which he correctly envisions as a variation on the theme of liberal imperialism. In particular, his critical gaze highlights Wells's political desire for the establishment of a regional union composed of "English-speaking peoples" as a first step towards the World State; the critic has convincingly brought to light Wells's fascination for the re-unification of the British colonial Empire with the United States. It is a project particularly characterising the government prospectus appearing in *Anticipations* (1901) and *Mankind in the Making* (1903); but which Wells, in fact, never entirely abandoned.[129] As a matter of fact, many political commentators shared in the nineteenth century the idea of a wider federation, a "Greater Britain" globally acting as civilising agent; Wells took part,

[123] William James, "What Pragmatism Means," in *Pragmatism and other Essays* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), 25.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Bell, "Pragmatism and Prophecy," 409.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Bell, "Founding the World State," 867.
[129] For a detailed political discussion see also Duncan Bell's treatment in *Dreamworlds of Race*.

prominently, in this imperial-building discourse.[130] Precisely, Bell remarks that Wells strongly believed that "the British empire – at least if governed properly – could serve as a civilizer-general, combating ignorance and spreading progressive institutions and values."[131] In doing so, "it could help to dissolve nationalism and prepare people throughout the world for the emergence of a new universal order."[132] Wells originally flirted with the idea of an Anglo-American polity, co-operating with other powers; in the end, however, Wells himself ascertained the improbability of such a synthesis, and his subsequent world-models are less exclusive from a regional point of view. Progressively, as Bell notes, Wells's political thinking became increasingly hostile to empire, but he remained nonetheless confident in an idea of liberal, beneficious Empire acting as a trustee for a world polity - the coming World State.

Pivotally, Duncan Bell argues that in the early twentieth century, Wells "grounded" his ideas "in language rather than race. He was adamant that the 'English-speaking peoples' not the 'Anglo-Saxons' furnished the basis of unity;" nonetheless, given the blurred borders between race and language, he "never managed to escape the imaginative grid of global racial hierarchy, and despite his ostensible critique of race science," in "his account of the New Republic" Wells "reinscribed a racialized geopolitical vision."[133] Not even in the fundamentally Westernizing sketch of *Anticipations*, however, Wells does celebrate the self-sufficiency of the British Empire or scientific racism; moreover, the future global order imagined and directed by Great Powers, as Bell observes, "was likely to be Anglo-*American*,"[134] with the seats of power of this English-speaking union residing beyond the Atlantic, presumably in Chicago. Bell is also illuminating in ascertaining Wells's constant antagonism in respect to the racial theories legitimating expansionism and biological supremacy: "the climacteric of Rhodes's politics, Wells suggested, was genocide enacted on a global scale."[135] And Rhodes himself was an advocate of Anglo-American co-operation like Wells. In criticism this is not often disambiguated; Lewis Samuel Feuer's rapid association of Wells with Rhodes, for instance, somewhat simplifies their multi-faceted visions within the complex political scene of Anglo-Saxon unionism.[136] The scientific discourse significantly informs Wells's imperial vision. This is also clear from Wells's early works.

Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and

[130] Bell, "Founding the World State." For a contextual analysis of the "Greater Britain" ideal and the various, multifaceted meanings of Empire this term comprised, see Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain. Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
[131] Bell, "Founding the World State," 877.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid, 868.
[134] Ibid., 870.
[135] Ibid., 872.
[136] Lewis Samuel Feuer, *Imperialism and the Anti-Imperialist Mind* (New Brunswick: Transactions Publishers, 1989), 124.

Thought (1901) is Wells's first extensive political inquiry, and now mostly known in criticism for Wells's grim dive into eugenic imagination: "And the ethical system of these men of the New Republic, the ethical system which will dominate the world-state, will be shaped primarily to favour the procreation of what is fine and efficient and beautiful in humanity – beautiful and strong bodies, clear and powerful minds, and a growing body of knowledge" (168). Retracing and adapting Huxley's thinking for his utopian scopes, for Wells is therefore necessary "to check the procreation of base and servile types, of fear-driven and cowardly souls, of all that is mean and ugly and bestial in the souls, bodies, or habits of men" (168). The World State must be founded on rational thought: in his socio-political treatise the author also condemns pseudo-scientific judgements, writing that "unobservant, over-scholarly people talk or write in the profoundest manner about a Teutonic race and a Keltic race, and institute all sorts of curious contrasts between these phantoms, but these are not races at all, if physical characteristics have anything to do with race" (*Anticipations* 123). His scientific and pragmatist outlook asserts, rather, that "this nonsense about Keltic and Teutonic is no more science than Lombroso's extraordinary assertions about criminals, or palmistry, or the development of religion from a solar myth" (124).[137] *Anticipations* certainly presents a decidedly authoritarian State, his desire for the quintessential humanity reveals Wells's intolerance as utopist and statesman. In the Wellsian World State death is still in the horizon. The chosen technocracy of the New Republic, Wells makes it clear, will kill (with opiate!) if necessary and, "will have little pity and less benevolence" (168); but, as Partington has written, anticipating Duncan Bell's observations, "as terrible as Wells's policies are, they are not racially determined. . .His test is efficiency, not race."[138] Equally, Bryan Cheyette points out to Wells's rejection of out-out racism.[139] As early as 1905, in *A Modern Utopia* Wells theorizes more fully on race in the dedicated Chapter X "Race in Utopia":

> The great intellectual developments that centre upon the work of Darwin have exacerbated the realization that life is a conflict between superior and inferior types, it has underlined the idea that specific survival rates are of primary significance in the world's development, and a swarm of inferior intelligences has applied to human problems elaborated and exaggerated versions of these generalizations. These social and political followers of Darwin have fallen into an obvious confusion between race and nationality, and into the natural trap of patriotic conceit. . .A book that has had enormous influence in this matter, because of its use in teaching, is J. R. Green's *Short History of the English People*, with its grotesque insistence upon Anglo-Saxonism. And just now, the world is in a sort of delirium about race and the racial struggle. (218)

[137] To critically understand, beyond self-righteous speculations, how Wells rejects social Darwinist thinking and racism, see Bell, "Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as Social Scientist." On the controversies of *Anticipations* see especially John S. Partington, *Building Cosmopolis*, 49-64; and Bell's recent contextual analysis in *Dreamworlds of Race*, chapter 4 "Artists in Reality: H. G. Wells and the New Republic," 152-202.
[138] Partington, *Building Cosmopolis*, 52.
[139] See Bryan Cheyette, "Beyond Rationality: H. G. Wells and the Jewish Question," *The Wellsian* 14 (1991): 41-64.

Wells is here attacking the "bastard science" (219) of scientific thought applied to international relations: Science, he indicts, should not be addressed to condone racial conflicts.[140]

He writes: "'Science' is supposed to lend its sanction to race mania, but it is only 'science' as it is understood by very illiterate people that does anything of the sort – 'scientists'' science, in fact" (220). Wells recommends instead to read the progressive and informative study by Dr. Joseph Deniker, *The Races of Man* (1900), and William I. Thomas's paper "The Psychology of Race Prejudice" (1904), stating that "save for a few isolated pools of savage humanity, there is probably no pure race in the whole world" (220). W. E. B. Du Bois in 1946 would recall in his eulogy on Wells: "to me his greatest word was that blast against race prejudice, as the most evil thing in the world – 'the very worst!'"[141] In 1907 Wells wrote a famous indictment on the press against violence and racial segregation: "I am convinced myself that there is no more evil thing in this present world than Race Prejudice; none at all. I write deliberately – it is the worst single thing in life now. It justifies and holds together," Wells underscores, "more baseness, cruelty and abomination than any other sort of error in the world. Through its body runs the black blood of coarse lust, suspicion, jealousy and persecution and all the darkest poisons of the human soul. . .It is a monster begotten of natural instincts and intellectual confusion" whose threat must be fought "against by all men of good intent, each in our own dispersed modern manner doing his fragmentary, inestimable share."[142] A recent troublesome distortion of Wells's constant rejection of Social-Darwinism appears in Adam Roberts's otherwise flawless literary biography. The critic, on the traces of Coren's objectively falsifying biography and John Carey's *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, anachronistically associates Wells with totalitarian thought, boldly claiming that a book like *Anticipations* "exemplifies, to a truly remarkable degree, everything Hannah Arendt lays out in her great study *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951);"[143] Roberts selectively quotes from Wells's text, and concludes that "her book still figures as a remarkably *en pointe* account of *Anticipations*, with this one difference: that everything Arendt deplores, Wells valorises."[144] But Roberts's liberal and legitimate evaluation results into a fragile

[140] Wells's narrator elaborates on the topic: "In the popular imagination of Western Europe, the Chinese are becoming bright gamboge in colour, and unspeakably abominable in every respect; the people who are black – the people who have fuzzy hair and flattish noses, and no calves so to speak of – are no longer held to be within the pale of humanity. These superstitions work out along the obvious lines of the popular logic. The depopulation of the Congo Free State by the Belgians, the horrible massacres of Chinese by European soldiery during the Pekin expedition, are condoned as a painful but necessary part of the civilizing process of the world. The worldwide repudiation of slavery in the nineteenth century was done against a vast sullen force of ignorant pride, which, reinvigorated by the new delusions, swings back again to power (219-20).

[141] Du Bois, "The Winds of Time," 1.

[142] See Wells, "Race Prejudice," *The Independent* 62 (14 February 1907): 381-84. Compare also Wells's indictment of American and European racism in *The Future in America* (Chapter XII "The Tragedy of Color").

[143] Roberts, *H. G.* Wells, 110.

[144] Ibid.

generalization which, on available textual evidence and contextualised reading of his works, *Anticipations* included, does not accurately reflect Wells's early thought on race, nationality and empire-building. The literary biography, somewhat unexpectedly, also omits entirely the discussion of *A Modern Utopia* and its progressive visions on race and imperialism; nor does it address Wells's public opposition to totalitarian movements during the 1920s.[145]

Wells memorably mocked Rhodes's racial fantasias in *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), in private correspondences and throughout his works. But the picture is wider. Neither W. Warren Wagar, nor John S. Partington or Duncan Bell deal with Kipling as necessary foil in relation to Wells's imperial thinking. Significantly, Kipling's imperial mythology too, as we shall see, is Wells's major political target and emblem in his fictional and non-fictional works. Similarly to George Orwell, he repeatedly lambasted Kipling from a Left-wing worldview although, one should insist that Wells's World State, in itself patronizing, is not the imperial vision of a classical liberal. A commentator iconically remarked in 1919 that "Kipling could get an audience for tales and ballads and jungle-books; but the moment he tried to speak nationally, he could not get an audience. Even now, they would rather read H. G. Wells."[146] Wells's ascendancy into the imperial public discourse coincides with the historical phase of Tory decline, when Kipling, in Samuel Hynes's slightly overemphasized picture, "was no longer the Voice of Empire but the snapping and snarling voice of an old Tory dog that grew more ill-tempered as it lost its teeth."[147] The figure of Kipling that Wells revealingly offers us throughout his writings, from the imperial satire in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* onwards and especially in *The Outline of History*, is that of a hypocrite and aggressive "typical imperialist" (*OH* 2: 423). Wells, to put him in dialogue with subsequent criticism, subscribes and anticipates Edward Said's post-colonial assessment of Kipling's ethical values. Said memorably denounced, as Wells already did a century earlier, that "behind the White Man's mask of amiable leadership there is always the express willingness to use force, to kill and be killed."[148] The same could be said of Wells, however, rearranging the world himself from the same position of supremacy. In terms of semantic fields, that Kipling has been so long associated with Conrad and never with Wells is a major blunder of progressive post-colonial critique. This sector of the academia has for decades prioritized literary realism over science fiction, while simultaneously embracing the distorted view perpetrated by criticism of Wells as mere genre author.

In truth, Wells's imperial thinking presented evident points of contact with the "Milner-

[145] I will explore extensively this point in Chapter 4.1.1. "The Rise of the Fascist State: An Outline of Imperial Revival."
[146] Katharine Fullerton Gerould, "The Remarkable Rightness of Rudyard Kipling," *The Atlantic* (January 1919).
[147] Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 19.
[148] Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage Books, 1979), 226.

Kipling-Rhodes school of thought" (*EA* 2: 756), at least in terms of scope and ambition adjusting to an increasingly globalised society. It is trivial and misleading to draw a neat distinction between imperialist or anti-imperialist; they were all imperialist minds, in a sense. Even in Wells's cosmopolitan socialist World State, particularly in the early 1901-1905 proposals, the use of violence is justified in the interest of the idealized polity; certainly, he never was the advocate of the early scientific racism outlined by Arendt's seminal study. The distance from the pervading racial tenets of Anglo-Saxonism and the pride in imperial grandeur, situates Wells on a well-identifiable, different political and artistic standpoint. Ideologically, Patrick Parrinder too holds that as a thinker he "did not subscribe to the conventional British imperialism of Kipling or W. E. Henley."[149] More specifically, I contend that Wells's position, as imperial artist, stood for, precisely, the other side of the coin of Kipling's authoritative Toryism, while also opposing Rhodes's racial prejudices and aggressive policies. And he belonged to the same imperial coin; Wells represented, rather, an idiosyncratic counter-narrative to the faith in patriotic imperialism. Remarkably, shifting from the individual to the nation, Wells's Huxleyan framework strenuously rejected the identification of nation-states as biological units engaged in a harsh struggle of existence within the cosmic process.

In conclusion to this introductory overview, it is essential to understand that Wells's model of civilisation is meant to embrace magnitude proportions. It is fundamentally Westernising albeit tending towards a cosmopolitan, kinetic vision of equal citizenship and co-operation. He relentlessly envisions a liberation from the imperialist system and its dependencies; his totalising World State admits, contrarily to what is often implied, admirable cultural diversity. Wells was not a Little Englander reluctant to Western intervention in the colonies, provided that the involvement was beneficial and directed towards, so to say, *supra*-imperial unity. Nor was he ever against exploration *per se*; his economic view on world's resources were utilitarian, and his end-horizon of civilisation was already directed towards space expansionism -- Wells essentially had the ambition of a Rhodes with the vision of a Voltaire. His is an ethical dilemma which his fiction dialectically elaborates. Michael Coren, then, despite the many flaws of his evaluation, is not far from the truth in claiming that "Wells was ever an uneasy combination of English nationalist and socialist cosmopolitan."[150] As imperial subject he despised militant nationalism but thought the English-speaking peoples the intellectual - and artistic - vanguard of the New World. At the core, Wells's scientific humanism longed for improving the species as a whole to save it from catastrophe. He was a boisterous imperial thinker whose "Open Conspiracy," as he termed it, was to reform the means and ends of existing empires. Perhaps he thought too ambitiously. As Ford Madox Ford would iconically re-name him,

[149] Parrinder, *Shadows of the Future*, 67.
[150] Coren, *The Invisible Man*, 40.

Wells aspired to become "Arbiter of the World."[151] As statecraft historical observer, avid reader of Plato and Gibbon, as we shall see in the next sections, he criticised the rationale of the imperial idea, traversing time, throughout a span of time of more than fifty years. His analysis understood that annihilation would result from competition and the fallacy of cognitive categories. It would not be too erratic to see in Wells the prototype of Hari Seldon in Asimov's *Foundation*.[152] Wells was the first "psychohistorian" of modern imperialism; this we can confirm on available evidence.

2.1 The Textual Galaxy of Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy: "Meditations of an Empire Citizen"

In a 1929 key essay entitled *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy*, long unnoticed in criticism, Wells writes in regard to his constant cosmopolitan-imperialist vision: "Leisurely people who are curious about such things may find my entirely ineffective intimations of these ideas in my *Anticipations* (1900, 'The New Republic') and my *Modern Utopia*, which followed close upon the former," remarking that:

> At that time a quite opposite conception of Empire was being glorified by Mr. Kipling, with a vigour and a splendour beyond all comparison more attractive than such well-meaning gropings as mine, and a whole generation was persuaded that our imperial system, which in reality is based on opportunity, compromise, adaptability, the luck of the steamship, and the obsession of our European rivals with the Rhine, was really a system of high and swaggering conquest, to be sustained by the magic of prestige and developed further and higher in a mood of arrogant swagger. We had got our empire by luck and cunning, scarcely aware of what we did, and we were persuaded we had got it by superhuman strength and heroic resolution.[153]

Echoing John Robert Seeley's famous statement on the British Empire according to whom, "we seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind,"[154] Wells posits his imperial thinking against Kipling's heroic patriotism and majestic trumpeting. The trajectory he defiantly offers to the curious reader involves a work of non-fiction, and a fictional work, a utopia. Let us move the clock backward to the nineteenth century.

The year is 1897. Wells writes in an essay for the *Fortnightly Review*: "Our State is militant

[151] Ford, "H. G. Wells," *Mightier than the Sword: Memories and Criticisms* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), 157, 162. This text is immensely insightful and beautifully written. It is puzzling that criticism has scantly commented on it. In Chapter 3 and 4 I will refer again to Ford's portrait of Wells.
[152] Isaac Asimov, *Foundation* (New York: Gnome Press, 1951). Wells died in 1946.
[153] Wells, *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy* (London: Faber & Faber, November 1929), 8-9. This text originally appeared in *The Realist* and *The New Republic* in August 1929. It was also reprinted in Wells, *After Democracy: Addresses and Papers on the Present World Situation* (London: Watts & Co., 1932), 100-116.
[154] John Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1883), 8.

and aggressive, and Mr. Kipling is *its* poet" [emphasis added].[155] The pronominal choice already marks a detachment from the imperial poet. Wells offers a different vision: "Beyond the militant civilised state, many people anticipate a non-militant cosmopolitan civilisation in the future, a condition which such things as the rules of war and the perfect security of non-combatants away from the immediate seat of war foreshadow."[156] In the conclusion of his scientific examinations on the progress of morals in the adjustments of civilisation, thirty-one-year-old Wells concludes:

> Moreover, in Socialism, we have a very complete theory of social organization, necessarily involving a scheme of private morals. And the question for which this paper has been written, with which it may end, is this. Are we not, at the present time, on a level of intellectual and moral attainment sufficiently high to permit of the formulation of a moral code, without irrelevant reference, upon which educated people can agree? The *apparatus of moral suggestion*, the people who *write*, *preach, and teach* that is, needs only too evidently the discipline of a common ideal. One sees the *favourite writer*, alert for the coming of the boom; *the eminent preacher*, facing bishopric-ward, with one eye on the Government and the other on the reporters; *the distinguished teacher* before the camera; *the dexterous politician*, unconscious as to the sources, but precise as to the direction, of that wind of popular feeling that shall presently bear him to power. But a definite stress of effort to determine the development of the public ideals is wanting. And yet one may dream of an *informal, unselfish, unauthorised body of workers*, a real and conscious apparatus of education and moral suggestion, held together by a common faith and a common sentiment, and shaping the minds and acts and destinies of men.[157] [only first italic in the original, emphasis is added]

Prior to this essay Wells had published, amongst other writings, *The Time Machine* (1895) and the more recent *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). In 1896 it is Wells as we know him through literary criticism: the artist in his best, and – allegedly – less ideological imaginative phase. This excerpt contains, however, the author's embryonic vision of global order and his idea of cultural revolution; it is Wells's "Open Conspiracy" inciting coordinated action in the interest of one greater community. He envisions an apparatus of writers (significantly the first public body mentioned by Wells), teachers, preachers and finally, lastly called into question, politicians; Wells's elite is a conglomerate of professionals from various fields acting towards one ambitious co-operative end. There are two pivotal qualities only to define these courageous individuals: unselfishness and voluntary will to reform the moral apparatus of the State through individual suggestions. If necessary, without State prescription. It appears to be an "informal" and "unauthorised" body; it could be already termed a conspiracy, even. The Wellsian design is also exclusive and exclusionary. There will be, apparently,

[155] Wells, "Morals and Civilisation," in *Early Writings,* ed. Philmus and Hughes, 224. Originally published in *Fortnightly Review*, February 1897.
[156] Ibid., 221-22.
[157] Ibid., 228.

no disadvantaged groups to contribute to the shape of world's affairs, because, in Wells's totalizing vision, through the spread of education classes will merge into one idealized, functional middle-class. The change, from the outset, does not appear to originate from the State; the prominent initiators of the revolution are to be found not within the Government, but beyond, in a more progressive and cohesive, transnational instantiation of Habermas's bourgeois public sphere which comprehends both men and women. In theory, its access is democratic, therefore guaranteed to all citizens whose common concern may lead to the formation of an opinion to influence political change; in practice, as Habermas's social agglomerate itself admits criticism, it may result into an exclusive formation of social intervention. Those beyond the pale of Western education and industrialization – the poor, the colonial subjects – are secondary in the decisional progress, and in fact constitute, as "counter publics," a temporary element of resistance to Wells's utopia.[158] Their inclusion in the imagined Wellsian sphere of action, changing and never static, is always foreseen, but most likely in the long-term. Virtually everyone is welcome in the shape of things to come, Wells concedes.

The idea of a world community transcending national boundaries appears in Wells's corpus under various and often idealistic names: the most identifiable are the "New Republic" (prior to becoming a "World State") in *Anticipations* (1901), or a "World State" and "world Empire" in *A Modern Utopia* (1905, 164), presenting a polity directed by educated people called "Samurais;" finally, from the mid-twentieth century onwards, Wells repeatedly propagandizes what is nothing less, nothing more than a cultural revolution under the term "Open Conspiracy," framed as the necessary social action to change the scheme of world civilisation. In 1929 Wells guarantees: "In earlier books I had called the Open Conspiracy idea The New Republic or the Order of the Samurai, but the idea is the same."[159] In his *Experiment in Autobiography* Wells re-states that he "was moving with my generation from a speculative dreamland towards a specific project" (*EA* 2: 746). Around the end of the 1920s, Wells finally declares, against the tradition of nation-states competition: "I pose the Open Conspiracy as the modern scientific opposite and alternative to their semi-romantic, short-sighted, and foredoomed imperialism."[160] A detailed textual trajectory of his World State fictional and non-fictional depictions is therefore necessary not to lose the thread of Wells's imperial thinking. After briefly outlining the concept from early ideas, I will then expand his theory of the later 1920s fully elaborated in his homonymous book *The Open Conspiracy*. The text is acknowledged by W. Warren

[158] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1989). For criticism and the notion of "subaltern counterpublics," see Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80. See also Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: The Mit Press, 1992), 1-48.
[159] Wells, *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy*, 20.
[160] Ibid., 24.

Wagar as Wells's most structured piece of propaganda.[161] Understanding the politics behind the Open Conspiracy plan is the fundamental prerequisite for any literary evaluation on Wells and his utopian vision in any moment of his artistic life.

In terms of statecraft and utopian thinking, as critics have recurrently commented, Wells belongs to the Platonic tradition.[162] Wells's fascination for an elite of self-abnegating individuals to direct the world is fundamentally indebted to Plato's Guardians, a body of illuminated and ethically "just" members who act in the interest of the State. In homage to the philosopher's ideal and functional polity, in *Anticipations* (1901) Wells first refers to the foundation of "a New Republic dominating the world" (*Anticipations* 147). This "naturally and informally organised, educated class," must necessarily represent, Wells claims, "an unprecedented sort of people." This special group, vaguely sketched by Wells as a class of intellectuals, engineers, scientifically trained people, represents a core of educated middle-class of men and women, which is supposed to "be the mass of power and intelligence altogether outside the official state systems of to-day." Like Plato's Guardians, it is made clear that the New Republic must arise in order to supersede the forces egotism, jealousy and aggressiveness inhabiting man's bestial nature (142).

As in Plato, Wells prioritises the interest of the State over the individual, and the sacrifice of the individual's interest is, it directly follows, a vital requirement for the general success of the State to guarantee the happiness of the individual. Individuals, efficient individuals, are the true engine of the community. As Clyde Murley observes, furthermore, despite the paternalistic character of Plato's own Republic, the philosopher is in truth interested primarily in "a high type of human individual, and that this individual, rather than any hypothetical political substantive, is the greatest thing to Plato."[163] It is a mutual process of happiness following Plato's intellectual search for a just society, posing as ideal government alternative to either the lack of control deriving from democracy and its illusion of equality, and its related despotic metamorphosis: tyranny. In suggestive prophetic terms, the New Republic's ultimate goal is to "make this great clearance, a new social Hercules that will strangle the serpents of war and national animosity in his cradle" (147). Because *Anticipations*, apart from being a tract on Wells's eugenics imagination, already characterising Plato's *Republic*, is also

[161] Partington's *Building Cosmopolis* does not explore this important text. The critic, however, also correctly believes *The Outline of History* to be Wells's first manifesto. I will discuss *The Outline* extensively in Chapter 4 "The Call of History: The World Intellectual."

[162] See Michael Draper, "Wells, Plato, and the Ideal State," *The Wellsian* 4 (1981): 8-14. But insightful comparisons are especially Philip Holt, "H. G. Wells and the Rings of Gyges," *Science Fiction Studies* 19 (1992): 236-47; Michael Haldane, "From Plato to Pullman – The Circle of Invisibility and Parallel Worlds: *Fortunatus*, Mercury, and the Wishing-Hat, Part II," *Folklore* 117 (2006): 261-78. For a contextual discussion see Parrinder, *Utopian Literature and Science: From the Scientific Revolution to Brave New World and Beyond* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[163] Clyde Murley, "Plato's *Republic*, Totalitarian or Democratic?" *The Classical Journal* 36 (1941): 420. For a critique of Plato's authoritarian society and tradition see the major work by Karl Raimund Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1945).

first and foremost his first political prospectus to supersede competitive imperialism.[164]

In his later utopian fiction, *A Modern Utopia* (1905), Wells thus goes one step forward in terms of imagination, and a parallel world is now managed by a social stratum recalling Plato's Guardians - in Wells's imagery, this group of chosen, governing elite, identify somewhat bizarrely for a Western utopia as the "Samurais." Again, if valid and altruistic, in this imagined polity anyone of whatever creed or colour can aspire to join Wells's governing elite. As with Plato's Guardians the stress is put on the health of the State; but Wells's pragmatist thinking always conceives of mankind as an agglomerate of unique actors of change. One rule: an indefatigable Will must be at men's heart. Let us return to Chapter X "Race in Utopia." The main objective of the statesman, who "must be a sociologist," is "to promote the disintegration of the aggregations and the effacement of aggregatory ideas that keep men narrow and unreasonably prejudiced one against another" (*MU* 213). The ideal man, therefore, must fight against classificatory thinking. This involves, as already indicated, a rejection of race prejudice and an acceptance of truthful ethnography; the narrator is fiercely ironic: "I am constantly gratified by flattering untruths about English superiority. . .This habit of intensifying all class definitions, and particularly those in which one has a personal interest, is in the very constitution of man's mind. It is part of the defect of that instrument" (216). He insists that "it is not averages that exist, but individuals" (221); amongst all races "there are differences, no doubt, but fundamental incompatibilities – *no!*" (223). After attacking once more "the vast edifice of sham science" the Wellsian narrator begins a series of hypotheses: "Suppose now, there is such a thing as an all-round inferior race. Is that any reason why we should propose to preserve it for ever in a condition of tutelage? Whether there is a race so inferior I do not know, but certainly there is no race so superior as to be trusted with human charges" (224). He then ironically embarks in an exposition of current methods of "exterminating" people:

> Now there are various ways of exterminating a race, and most of them are cruel. You may end it with fire and sword after the old Hebrew fashion; you may enslave it and work it to death, as the Spaniards did the Caribs; you may set it boundaries and then poison it slowly with deleterious commodities, as the Americans do with most of their Indians; you may incite it to wear clothing to which it is not accustomed and to live under new and strange conditions that will expose it to infectious diseases to which you yourselves are immune, as the missionaries do to the Polynesians; *you may resort to honest simple murder*, as we English did with the Tasmanians; or you can maintain such conditions as conduce to 'race suicide,' as the British administration does in Fiji. . .is there, however, an all-round inferior race in the world? (224-25) [emphasis added]

Overtly provocative towards the aggressiveness of imperial policy, the narrator then concludes by

[164] On Plato and, more broadly, eugenic thinking in utopian narratives see Parrinder, *Utopian Literature and Science.*

addressing the reader through the fictional frame: "So the argument must pass into a direct address to the reader. If you are not prepared to regard a worldwide synthesis of all culture and polities and races into one World State as the desirable end upon which all civilizing efforts converge, what do you regard as the desirable end? Synthesis, one may remark in passing, does not necessarily mean fusion, nor does it mean uniformity" (228-29).

On the other hand, Adam Roberts, for example, believes that in that passage, "'Honest simple murder,' in particular, strikes a very uncomfortable tone of *faux* hearty frankness. We might say that Wells in the 1900s could not have foreseen with what hideous sincerity fascist dictators would attempt to put this ethic into practice; except, of course, that Wells *is* actively promoting such action."[165] From my reading of Wells's sharp narrative, I do not think Wells's *A Modern Utopia* is advocating anything of the like; on the contrary, the narrator constructs a utopian horizon through sharp ironical statements in order foster a sense of community based on inclusiveness, while satirising the conservative elements of resistance to Utopia. In general, still, I agree with Roberts's conclusions, in *The History of Science Fiction*, that Wells traces a more general humane vein in his wider canon: "Wells' non-fiction sometimes betrays a dazzle in its author's eyes, compounded as much of his immense popular fame as his tendency to mistake a kind of pitiless extrapolation of anti-benevolence for clarity. But Wells' fiction, most of the time and a *fortiori* at its best, is deeply humane in its mobilisation of all the resources of the imagination for action in the world of men and women."[166] Let us see the question from another angle to understand authorial intention behind the progressive force of *A Modern Utopia* (1905). In the early decade of the twentieth century Wells entered society with his bombastic ideas on statecraft, and made acquaintance with major imperial thinkers of the Empire in "The Coefficient" group; they were all enthusiast for, quite evidently from the name, *efficient* Government and rule. Certainly, as clear from his *Experiment in Autobiography*, Wells at the time was, along with Bertrand Russell, the less interested in supremacist self-sufficient policies and armament issues (*EA* 2: 761-74). Ironically, the group was composed by members Wells genuinely disliked for their fervently nationalist attitudes. But the group allowed Wells to build his Imperial Mind. One of their meeting was held around the following topic: "What part are the coloured races destined to play in the future development of civilisation."[167] Let us peep into the minute.

The opener was H. G. Wells himself. This summary of his formal paper reports: "As regards the position of coloured races, it was suggested that there are two main sets of views which have been

[165] Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction*, 221.
[166] Ibid., 222.
[167] The Coefficients, "XVI. - Minute of discussion on January 16th, 1905, at St. Ermin's Hotel, Westminster. Question – 'What part are the coloured races destined to play in the future development of civilization.' Opener: Mr. Wells. Present: Mr. Amery, Mr. Birchenough, Mr. Haldane, Mr. Hewins, Mr. Newbolt, Mr. Webb, and Mr. Wells," 1-4. *LSE Library Special Collections* – ASSOC 17.

held. The first is the Christian, positivist, or liberal view, which ignores all racial differences, and considers men as not only equal but similar." The second, he continues, "is the old racial view, reinforced during the last generation by the biologic-evolutionary theory, a view which, it was suggested, is found most strongly expressed in Mr. Kipling's writings and in the common theory of the natural supremacy of the white man. Both these views, it was held, rest largely on assumption, for which there is at present nothing like sufficient historical or experimental justification."[168] Despite some ideological differences, it was held that "there is no justification at any rate for suggestion sometimes made that the lowest races should be exterminated, nor even for the view that their proper condition is one of permanent enslavement. . .The general view, in fact was that there was no danger to civilisation in general from the rise of new races. . .Every race has its own merits, and can contribute something towards a common civilization."[169] Between Kipling's view of race and the liberal one, from contextual knowledge, it is clear Wells tended towards the positivist tradition. Although deploring racism, Wells was still certainly articulating some patronizing, and racializing view of world government, as Bell's *Dreamworlds of Race* accurately shows; to function the World State needed the individual, efficient and of any race. This is clear from the future development of his "Open Conspiracy" plan. It is time to explore Wells's design in depth.

The propaganda for an "Open Conspiracy," presumably representing Wells's most well-developed stage of his imperial thinking, requires major commentary to foster a fuller picture of his political and artistic thought. As usual with Wells, his proposal for a global revolution is to be found in fictional and non-fictional prose, evolving gradually from his early works.[170] Wells's utopia is continuous critical re-examination, strongly intertextual. In this regard, Simon J. James acutely observes that "the rewritings of his utopian visions also constitute a kind of forward revision, as if by periodic repetition of the same process of literary creation, reality might each time be improved."[171] Wells's argument for a World State was presented at length in the 156 pages book originally published in 1928 under the full title *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution*, which Wells revised, and expanded, in the 1930s.[172] For the completeness of his exposure, I will here deal primarily

[168] Ibid., 2-3.
[169] Ibid., 3-4.
[170] Of course, as world-leading socio-political thinker, Wells was invited often to speak publicly.
[171] James, *Maps of Utopia*, 125.
[172] *The Open Conspiracy* was first published in 1928 by Victor Gollancz in Britain and by Doubleday in the United States. In 1930 the Hogarth Press by Leonard and Virginia Woolf published a revised second edition entitled *The Open Conspiracy: A Second Version of This Faith of a Modern Man Made More Explicit and Plain*. In 1931, Wells revised again the book, removing the preface and modifying substantially the structure; here, the book was also retitled *What Are We To Do with Our Lives?* Then, in 1933 Waterlow and Sons published a volume including the 1931 edition while reverting the title to the original "The Open Conspiracy." In this 1933 text Wells also made a few minor changes. For more details and further editorial history see Wagar, "Introduction," *The Open Conspiracy*, 2002, 11-12. For major discussion on the reception of the book-manifesto, see Smith, *Desperately Mortal*, 291-94. The notion of an "open conspiracy", under these exact terms, already figures in the mid-twentieth century novel *The Passionate Friends* (1913).

with the 1933 text of *The Open Conspiracy* in relation to imperialism and Wells's Huxleyan framework.[173] Wells, as a matter of fact, already treated the theme fictionally two years earlier in the encyclopaedic novel *The World of William Clissold* (1926), which will be therefore dealt with in the last section of this chapter. W. Warren Wagar believes that *The Open Conspiracy* represented Wells's "Communist Manifesto," although as a thinker he acted as an atypical "free agent" propagandising outside identifiable movements or parties.[174] Wells was, at the time, at the apex of his career – *the* world celebrity and one of the major leading intellectual figures of Great Britain. The book sold well and was praised by many influential thinkers, including Sir Arthur Salter, Bertrand Russell, and the economist John Maynard Keynes. It was discussed widely, willing organizations were founded based on the Wellsian conspiracy, but in the end, to Wells's annoyance, the reconstructing conspiracy did not conquer the world.[175] The irony is that Wells has always been alone; a one-man army who shared his ideas with the world entire in a global conversation between author and *his* readers. At times, he even shaped the things to come. What Wells crucially meant by a World State governed by "Science" was, in fact, not only mere technological or eugenic progress as it is often supposed, but a global necessary awareness of thought in regard to our biological inheritance, the self-assertive flaws inherent in man's animal composition.[176]

Since the first chapter Wells delves, as he did in 1896, into the question of morality, "how we deal with ourselves in relation to our fellow creatures" (51-52). It suddenly emerges his antagonism for militant sovereign-states as political unity. He recognizes that "there must be a reconstruction. A change-over" directed by individuals figuring as "items in a social mass" (53). The Open Conspiracy is described not as a sect, but an open, spontaneous movement of individuals of cosmopolitan mindset (70-3; 131-32), acting outside the militant State and whose "main political idea, its political strategy, is to weaken, efface, incorporate, or supersede existing governments" (121). He explains further: "The Open Conspiracy, the world movement for the supersession or enlargement or fusion of existing political, economic, and social institutions must necessarily, as it grows, draw closer and closer to questions of practical control" (72). Wells is not thoroughly clear, and at times he is contradictory inasmuch as how this revolution is supposed to happen; but it is certainly a cultural reform aiming to influence the current State apparatus, primarily through critical persuasion and illumination (131). It must be "free, open, watchful criticism" (71). Its ambition is to become some sort of "great world

[173] Unless otherwise stated, all references from *The Open Conspiracy* are from the 1933 text published by Waterlow and Sons and reprinted in Wagar, *The Open Conspiracy*, 2002, 47-136.
[174] Wagar, *Traversing Time*, 21.
[175] On the emerging societies on Wells's model see also Smith, *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 3, 303n1, 557.
[176] For a balanced analysis of Wells, science and progress, see Jack Williamson, *H. G. Wells: Critic of Progress* (Baltimore: Mirage Press, 1973).

movement as wide-spread and evident as socialism or communism," ultimately and "frankly a world religion" (122). Wells thus sees two of most urgent necessities driving The Open Conspiracy: a "propaganda of confidence in the possible world commonweal," along with the expressly "immediate practical attempt to systemize resistance to militant and competitive imperialism and nationalism" (116).

Throughout the pages of the Wellsian manifesto he strenuously targets the self-centred patriotic education of sovereign states, whose negative apparatus, in Wells's view, instils in its citizens the habit to "distrust and hate foreigners, salute our flag, stiffen up in a wooden obedient way at our national anthem" (52). He sees the impelling urgency for a homogenous "teaching of universal history and sound biology and protest against the inculcation of aggressive patriotism" (112). An accurate ethnological education is mandatory for the World State to come. He perceives, rather, that "the world commonweal will need its own scientific methods of protection so long as there are people running about the planet with flags and uniforms and weapons, offering violence to their fellow men and interfering with the free movements of commodities in the name of national sovereignty" (86; see also pages 90 and 100 for Wells's disdain for militarism and imperial symbols see also). As an alternative to the imperialist system, Wells advocates a revolution through the establishment of a new system of education, "a socially and politically" revised "system of ideas about conduct, a view of social and political life brought up to date" (52). Above all, Wells understands that "a World State cannot be militant" (70-71), and yet, a system of defence for progressive ideas must be established. "Non-resistance, the restriction of activities to moral suasion is no part of the programme of the Open Conspiracy" (132). Wells is writing in the age of the militant Fascist State; it is evident that to Wells, who never was a declared Pacifist, a non-military policy cannot be included in his counter-nationalist propaganda. How? This is vaguely sketched, but presumably "through the police and military strength of governments amenable to its ideas." In a Churchill's rhetoric Wells sees his idealized members of the Conspiracy "fighting for open roads, open frontiers, freedom of speech, and the realities of peace in regions of oppression" (132). As in earlier versions of the imagined social reconstruction, Wells envisions building new worlds for old; namely, Cosmopolis over Empire. Cosmopolis is meant to impose disarmament and "respect for human freedom in every corner of the planet" (133), even if this ultra-national action is criticized by some as "imperialism" (133). Maxim Shadurski crucially argues that "the Wellsian utopia inscribes a cosmopolitan intent on national predispositions, which makes it neither cosmopolitan nor national, but both at the same time."[177] Wells's Cosmopolitan imperialism is here the more transparent (131-34).

[177] Shadurski, *The Nationality of Utopia*, 56.

But every revolution (or polity, or utopia) has its enemies, or, to put it differently, his elements of resistance. Let us comment upon the dedicated chapter XI "Forces and Resistances in the Great Modern Communities Now Prevalent, Which Are Antagonistic To The Open Conspiracy. The War with Tradition." Wells focusses here on the "'Atlantic' civilizations and communities" (90), the most industrialised nations that, in Wells's rational vision, are to be initiators of change. If, as Wells claims, the Open Conspiracy "rests upon disrespect for nationality" (132), the major opposition will evidently come from those who, even in the aftermath of the Great War, adamantly support a self-sufficient imperialistic conception; all those systems of education sustaining "imperial pride" and the old tradition of conservatism, the monarchy, "the majority of these patriots by *métier*" are to disappear in Wells's post-Open Conspiracy world (91). The worship of patriotism is, metaphorically speaking, a "mental infection" that "could be countered by mental sanitation" (91). Unlike Marxism, the Wellsian conspiracy is not a class development revolution, nor an antagonism between employer and employee, only "a convergence of many different sorts of people upon a common idea."[178] He illuminates on the first actions of the movement: "its opening task must be the elaboration, exposition, and propaganda of this common idea, a steady campaign to revolutionize education and establish a modern ideology in men's minds and, arising out of this," he concludes on the most complex point, "the incomparably vaster task of the realization of its ideas" (89).

In Wells's utopian frame there will be no need even for Parliaments or high public representatives – in the vision of Wells's republicanism, kings or presidents would barely figure, since "loyalty to 'king and country' passes into plain treason to mankind" (90). His re-current disdain for politicians is all the way too loud. "World government" he insists, "like scientific process, will be conducted by statement, criticism, and publication that will be capable of efficient translation" (71). On such basis, Wagar remarks, but poorly generalizing on Wells's text, that "almost every page of *The Open Conspiracy* vibrates with disdain for democracy."[179] Wells the Great Conspirator rather specifies that all current states are temporary institutions:

> The Open Conspiracy is not necessarily antagonistic to any existing government. The Open Conspiracy is a creative, organizing movement and not an anarchistic one. It does not want to destroy existing controls and forms of human association, but either to supersede or amalgamate them into a common world directorate. If constitutions, parliaments, and kings can be dealt with as provisional institutions, trustees for the coming of age of the world commonweal, and in so far as they are conducted in that spirit, the Open Conspiracy makes no attack upon them. (90)

[178] Wagar in *Traversing Time* (192) argues that, in truth and rhetoric apart, the difference between Wellsianism and Marxism is non-existent. They two doctrines were both directed towards the end of oppression systems.
[179] Wagar, "Introduction," *The Open Conspiracy*, 25.

It is not anti-democratic, nor Wells invites any type of subversive *coup d'état* through violence. Wells's enemies are the negators of Cosmopolis (91), to be found particularly in the conservatism of the military tradition, the Church and nationalist education organizations. Wells's cosmopolitan public sphere is fundamentally based, since the 1890s, on education reform whose rationale is inherently and pervasively anti-nationalist:

> The world of education, the various religious organizations, and, beyond these, the ramifying, indeterminate world of newspapers and other periodicals, books, the drama, art, and all the instruments of presentation and suggestion that mould opinion and direct action. The sum of the operations of this complex will be either to sustain or to demolish the old nationalist militant ascendancy. (93)

If educational organizations, Wells ascertains, are held by conservative forces, Wells promotes a liberal revival of "free, open, watchful criticism" (71); his Open Conspiracy aims to generate critical consensus, thus establishing a form of Habermasian "rational-critical debate." Fictional and non-fictional writings, the theatre, and all artistic enterprises in this scheme of opinion enlightenment occupy a decisive role – Wells's manifesto fights for the freedom of language and ideas, of media and communication from conservative State perversion. Wells even crucially posits art on the same level of journalism; we know he would never be pardoned for that.

The Open Conspiracy, seen here as the normative "Wellsian collective sphere," understands on Habermas's lines that "the more people participate as citizens in politics, the closer one comes to the ideal of a public sphere."[180] The "Open Conspiracy" is necessarily "a group of ideas" (110) to disseminate a new ideology; "*fundamentally the Open Conspiracy must be an intellectual rebirth"* (56) [italics in the text]; it begins as a movement of "discussion, explanation," and "propaganda" *beyond* the State apparatus (110). Criticism is Wells's keyword throughout his proposal for world reconstruction. As he puts it:

> The reasonable desire of all of us is that we should have the collective affairs of the world managed by suitably equipped groups of the most interested, intelligent, and devoted people, and that their activities should be subjected to a free, open, watchful criticism, restrained from making spasmodic interruptions but powerful enough to modify or supersede without haste or delay whatever is weakening or unsatisfactory in the general direction. (71)

[180] Michael Schudson, "Was there Ever a Public Sphere? If So, When? Reflections on the American Case," *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 143-63.

Like Habermas imagined community of action, Wells fruitfully envisions a collective group "of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state."[181] Of course, the Wellsian State is still to come but its shape must be decided by men and women from all over the human communities.

As we have seen, however, Wells's Open Conspiracy does originate from the Western civilisation, and here comes the controversies endemical to Wells's cosmopolitan model. He devotes a second major chapter to the forces of resistance to the Conspiracy, by the title "The Resistances of the Less Industrialized Peoples to the Drive of the Open Conspiracy." The author sees that the Western communities "have developed farthest in the direction of mechanicalization, and they are so much more efficient and powerful that they now dominate the rest of the world" (99). He acknowledges, in a vein of critical sincerity and imperial guilt, that "India, China, Russia, Africa present *mélanges* of social systems, thrown together, outpaced, overstrained, shattered, invaded, exploited, and more or less subjugated by the finance, machinery, and political aggressions of the Atlantic, Baltic, and Mediterranean civilization." Moreover, Wells's Eurocentric-Cosmopolitan intervention scheme downplays emerging nationalism of non-Atlantic countries; he remains sceptical of any successful liberation based on national self-assertion which, he claims, would "remain largely indigenous" (99). He also frankly understands, from his dominant liberal imperialist conception, that "they will have their own resistances to the Open Conspiracy," although of a different nature from those encountered by militant Western imperialist powers.

He foresees, in all confidence and defying British conservative opinion, that the "Open Conspiracy may come with an effect of immense invitation," so that "at one step they may go from the sinking vessel of their antiquated order, across their present conquerors, into a brotherhood of world rulers. . .They may turn to the problem of saving and adapting all that is rich and distinctive of their inheritance to the common ends of the race" (100). No wonder that the arch-imperialist Winston Churchill claimed a few years earlier that Wells wanted to destroy the very essence and power prominence of the British Empire.[182] Realistically, to the conception of equal fellowship proposed by the Open Conspirators, Wells himself takes into account antagonism coming from the "less vigorous intelligences of this outer world," to whom "the new project of the Open Conspiracy will seem no better than a new form of Western envelopment, and they will fight a mighty liberation as though it

[181] Habermas, *The Structural Formation*, 176.
[182] See especially Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire. The World that Made Him and the World He Made* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2010), 162-64.

were a further enslavement to the European tradition" (100). A substantial group will indeed, he anticipates, regard the "Open Conspiracy for any signs of conscious superiority and racial disregard." Wells demonstrates a lucid imperial awareness in this passage, still insisting that the scope of the Conspiracy consists, unlike antiquated colonial imperialism, into the very abolition of the West and East cultural dichotomy. What the conspiracy would bring, as he advocates, is exactly an "evolution of a new phase which will make no discrimination at last between the effete traditions of either East or West" (100).

Wells, writing in 1931, then attacks the narrow-mindedness of the Communist party and its sham world revolution, seeing rather at the present phase a link with the "obsessions of Tsarist imperialism" (101). Still, he sees hope in their conversion, or evolution towards an amalgamation into the Open Conspiracy. After all, just like Marxism successfully and admirably eradicated "the kindred superstitions of monarchy" a decade earlier, the Russian system of thought could turn into something greater and less self-centred. Thanks to Russian influence Wells also ascertains, however, the necessary "breakaway from Europeanization" in Asiatic communities. Thus Wells spoke throughout his life in regard to Russia, maintaining faith and inviting a collectivist dialogue with the West.[183] Cold War would represent, we may note, his greatest failure in prophecy. The problem with Russia he notices as of 1931, however, is that it is an immense territory governed by few educated people in which an enormous lack of education is problematically widespread. The Wellsian public sphere requires education, *immanently*, so his normative thinking temporarily excludes Russia and the adjacent Chinese population from the prominent agency in the world revolution. But nothing is axiomatic in a fluid world reconstruction; he, in effect, concedes that "The Open Conspiracy is the natural inheritor of socialist and communist enthusiasms; it may be in control of Moscow before it is in control of New York" (124).

Wells then comes to his conclusions on world affairs, turning his imperial gaze towards India, which remains a "world in itself" (102) and the "Negro world and the regions of forest and jungle in which barbaric and even savage human life still escapes the infection of civilization" (103). Without entering into the entangled polyphony of political theory of what India represented within the British imperial system, we see that Wells laments, as many liberal British commentators had done before, that the flaws lay in the system of education.[184] He writes: "British imperialism prevails, a

[183] Wells's most elaborate treatment on Marxism, in its early post-Revolution phase, is in *Russia in the Shadows* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1920). On Wells and Russia see especially the recent contribution, *H. G. Wells and All things Russian*, ed. Galya Diment (London: Anthem Press, 2019). See also Julius Kagarlitsky account in *The Life and Thought of H. G. Wells* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1966).

[184] For an assessment of India in relation to the British perception with other dependencies, see Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain.*

constraining and restraining influence. . .Britain in India is no propagandist of modern ferments. . .in India the Briton is a ruler as firm and self-assured and uncreative as the Roman." Similarly to Edward M. Forster, Wells rather invites a mutual friendship. Difficult, indeed, but possible. As he believes, imperially, "the Open Conspiracy has to invade the Indian complex in conflict with the prejudices of both ruler and governed." Despite the equal critique on Western imperial aggression, lapses of crude eurocentrism embedded in technological and educational supremacy still accompany these passages. For example, Wells comments on non-European "less alert communities":

> Within these areas of restraint, India and its lesser, simpler parallels in North Africa, Syria and the Far East, there goes on a rapid increase of low-grade population, undersized physically and mentally, and retarding the mechanical development of civilization by its standing offer of cheap labour to the unscrupulous entrepreneur, and possible feeble insurrectionary material to the unscrupulous political adventurer. (103)

Envisioning that modern industrialization will supersede agricultural means of life of "barbaric and savage communities" who "still precariously survive," Wells also recognizes the shameful reality according to which "the dusky peoples, who were formerly the lords of these still imperfectly assimilated areas, are becoming exploited workers, slaves, serfs, tax-payers, or labourers to a caste of white immigrants" (104).

Regarding the complex territories still based on non-progressive master-slave relationship, Wells comments acutely that "the Negro in America differs only from his subjugated brother in South Africa or Kenya Colony in the fact that he also, like his white master, is an immigrant" (104). While discarding theories of racial purity as "phantoms of the imagination," Wells hazards, somewhat naively and grotesquely, that interbreeding, even "controlled and rectifiable" amongst white and black people would reduce on the long run the antagonism deriving from the racial fracture. At the current state of affairs, the racial tension of these regions appears to him immense. Wells underscores that "black labour is made to serve white ends," and that current inequalities of colour worldwide are "tragic issues" within the scheme of civilisation. He writes: "until the colour of a man's skin or the kinks in a woman's hair cease to have the value of shibboleths that involve educational, professional, and social extinction or survival, a black and white community is bound to be continually preoccupied by a standing feud too intimate and persuasive to permit of any long views of the world's destiny." Education would be the only way out. On the basis of the present sketch in international affairs, the author of the Open Conspiracy thus sums up his liberal socio-political overview:

> We come to the conclusion therefore that it is from the more vigorous, varied, and less severely obsessed centres of the Atlantic civilizations in the temperate zone, with their abundant facilities for publication and discussion, their traditions of mental liberty and their immense variety of interacting free types, that the main beginnings of the Open Conspiracy must develop. For the rest of the world, its propaganda, finding but poor nourishment in the local conditions, may retain a missionary quality for many years. (104)

Cosmopolis may arrive, Wells the prophet of empires anticipates; just not today and not suddenly for every member.

The Open Conspiracy, therefore, is an expansion and adjustment on Wells's early ideas on world government and public participation. It is a world community whose activism is open to everyone, but whose decisive action, in its opening phase, is practically denied to a vast majority of members of the greater human community. The Wellsian public sphere is a social process in continuous evolution. Wells thus aspires to educate the world but manifests a poor individual knowledge of the individual educational objectives. Nor, however, we can define his enterprise an elitist failure or hypocritical phenomenon of cultural prevarication. It is, on the contrary, a courageous endeavour from a Western thinker which deserves more attention, certainly tending towards a bold humanitarianism for the collective human adventure. W. Warren Wagar, himself critical of Wells's eurocentrism and anti-democratic tendencies, remarked: "Wells articulated more clearly and forcefully" than any other thinker that "self and local interest must yield to the interest of all humankind;" this little book, as Wagar hoped for in 2003, could probably become "the most important book written in the 20th century," should the nation-states of today listen again to H. G. Wells.[185]

A scientific understanding of humanity was, for Wells, a paramount requirement. In the original preface of 1928, in its first edition of the *The Open Conspiracy,* Wells stated solemnly his religious spirit in the task:

> This book states as plainly and clearly as possible the essential ideas of my life, the perspective of my world. Everything else that I have been or done seems to me to have contributory to or illustrative of these ideas and suggestions. My other writings, with hardly an exception, explore, try over, illuminate, comment upon or flower out of the essential matter that I here attempt at last to strip bare to its foundations and state unmistakably. This is my religion. Here are my directive aims and the criteria of all I do.[186]

[185] Wagar, "Critical Introduction," *The Open Conspiracy*, 30.
[186] Wells, "Preface," *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1928), 7.

Wells aims, like a titan of Science, to embrace the "whole destiny of man, and the whole duty of man," to depict a "scheme for all human conduct."[187] As author he praises the "reader for a patient reading." In dialogic conversation between one speaker and a multitude of receivers, he concludes the preparatory note: "I am discussing whether our species, he and I with it and part of it, is to live or die."[188] Observing society through scientific lenses, the *Open Conspiracy* draws the lines of "the creative forces in our species can be organized and may be organized, in a comprehensive fight against individual and collective frustration and death."[189] This text, as virtually all Wells's writings preceding it, is designed to illuminate an alternative to the harsh scheme dictated by the tyranny of natural selection. The biological enemy, Wells sustains the metaphor throughout the text of *The Open Conspiracy*, is "the patriotic virus under modern conditions of exaggeration and mass suggestion" (86). "Man," Wells fervently re-states in scientific imagination, is "an imperfect animal and never quite trustworthy in the dark. Neither morally nor intellectually is he safe from lapses" (74); inherently he still figures as an incurably "jealous animal whose egotism is extravagant" (109). As a being amongst many in the vast universe he "is still but half born out of the blind struggle for existence, and his nature still partakes of the infinite wastefulness of his mother Nature" (79).

Sarah Cole is thus insightful when she stresses the fact that "waste" is Wells's overarching theme; it is, precisely, Wells's first nemesis.[190] But mankind, Wells trusts while adding optimism to Huxley's schemes, can in fact "escape from the insecurity of an animal which has been evolved and which may presently be degraded or extinguished in the play of material things."[191] Wells's manifesto insists on one single governing Huxleyan principle: beyond ethical co-operation there is only death. Either humanity successfully amalgamates beyond cultural peculiarism into a struggle against Nature's claws, or succumbs to the incessant competition of the cosmic process. The concluding lines of the book reiterates: "The Open conspiracy is the awaking of mankind from a nightmare, an infantile nightmare, of the struggle for existence and the inevitability of war." The Master Conspirator thus ends his manifesto in artistic imagination: "a time when men will sit with history before them or with some old newspaper before them and ask incredulously, 'Was there ever such a world?' (136). *The Open Conspiracy* was, one may argue, his major thrust into utopian thinking.[192] Wells the scientific

[187] Ibid., 7-8.
[188] Ibid., 9.
[189] Ibid., 8.
[190] Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow*, 283.
[191] Wells, "Preface," *The Open Conspiracy* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1928), 8.
[192] Writing to an enthusiast correspondent: "You know my *Modern Utopia*, I suppose. If you compare that with a pamphlet published by the Hogarth Press, *Democracy Under Revision* you will have most of my Utopian notions. Next spring I shall publish *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution* that will be aimed straight at such readers as you and your friends" (*The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 3, 228). The pamphlet mentioned was a lecture delivered at the Sorbonne on 15 March 1927.

utopographer had his point, and *The Open Conspiracy*, although often dismissed by critics as Wells's repetitive World State propaganda, formed more concisely his well-structured tract against competitive imperialism.

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In the aforementioned, key essay *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy* (1929), which does expand interestingly the discussion on empire-building of Wells's manifesto, the experienced thinker reminds the reader: "I have lived through a lot of Imperialisms. I could write a long article on 'Imperialisms I Have Known'. In the days which culminated in the Boer War, I was a strong imperialist. I am often charged with instability because I am now an anti-imperialist, but my case is that it is imperialism which have changed and not I."[193] Looking backward, Wells then further specifies the nature of his imperial thinking: "In those days British imperialism was recovering from Disraeli and it had not yet fallen sick with Joseph Chamberlain.[194] Then as now my ends were cosmopolitan, and my dislike for and opposition to nationalism and nationalist patriotism has never varied."[195] Taking distance from Chamberlain's bombastic rhetoric for the duty and Destiny of a self-sufficient and honourable British Empire, Wells demystifies these partisan enthusiasms as "base, cramping, crippling, unjust, falsifying, and altogether mischievous and degrading forms into which human minds are compressed;"[196] they generate, in other terms, an "impossible jungle of intellectual difficulties in the way to the world state and a rationalized conduct of human affairs." Wells's anti-Chamberlainism would never leave him.

In another article dating from 1927, rarely studied and entitled "What is the British Empire Worth to Mankind? Meditations of an Empire Citizen," Wells ponders on his imperialist stance in similar nostalgic mood: "I have been writing and thinking and talking about the Empire for thirty years. My ideas have changed and expanded; my knowledge has grown, I have moved with the times."[197] Time travelling into the genealogy of his critical thought, he traces a significant "phase of disillusionment about the Empire since 1919 so intense that I have come near to a complete antagonism to 'Imperialism'."[198] Anticipating the imperial discourse exposed in *Imperialism and the*

[193] Wells, *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy*, 7.
[194] See, for example, Chamberlain's glorification of a self-sufficient Empire and his apology of the national mission in "The True Conception of Empire" (31 March 1897), in Joseph Chamberlain, *Foreign and Colonial Speeches* (London: Routledge, 1897), 241-48. For a contextual discussion see also Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*.
[195] Wells, *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy*, 7.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Wells, "What is the British Empire Worth to Mankind? Meditations of an Empire Citizen," in *The Way the World is Going*, 114.
[198] Ibid., 115.

Open Conspiracy, this essay reaffirms Wells's early faith in the "dream" of liberal imperialism, of the British Empire metaphorically figuring as an "open hand" to mankind - a trustee to the World State and world unification; which must not result, at least in Wells's guiding intentions, into mere anglicization.[199] He stresses, tirelessly, his ever-green hostility for "Nationalisms that set themselves up against it. . .I am still – I am even more – anti-nationalist today."[200]

This essay also contains Wells's most elaborate definition of his political view; looking back at the opening of the century he counterposes his "Cosmopolitan-Imperialist idea," shared at the time by Bertrand Russell, to the "Nationalist-imperialist idea" tending towards imperial self-sufficiency which would bring the world to the collapse of the first global conflict. Wells had, through works like *In the Days of the Comet* (1906), The *War in the Air* (1908), *The Passionate Friends* (1913) and *The World Set Free* (1914), and not limited to these, incessantly cautioned against the current state of international politics. Discarding the communist position which *a priori* antagonises "anti-imperialist" policies, Wells understands that imperialisms "are not inherently evil things. To destroy imperial systems with nothing to replace them is simply to leap backward because one is not going forwards fast enough. The British Empire is not a thing to destroy." Wells proclaims, rather, that "it is a thing to rescue."[201] It is a system, antiquated but still capable of a social, political and economic metamorphoses. In his view, the empire is "to be saved from its 'patriots' and its 'patriot Government." Beyond this fallacy of narrow-minded egotism, Wells memorably finishes his valediction: "We want an Empire which is not an end but a means."[202]

To be fair, as imperial thinker Wells has, with hindsight, always made a great deal of semantic ambiguity with the notion of nationalism and patriotism themselves. Following Maurizio Viroli's theoretical framework, a line can be drawn between the concept of patriotism and nationalism. The language of republican patriotism, a progressive political virtue, builds itself on a lexical-semantic cluster of love for one's country, for the "political institutions and the way of life that sustain the common liberty of a people;" to seek for liberty can be, by virtue, extended also beyond national borders without antagonism.[203] This is distinguished by Viroli from nationalism as political vice, which is, on the contrary, associated with competition and aggressive values towards the foreigner.[204]

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[199] Ibid., 118. Cfr. Chapter 1 "Introduction: *A Portrait of the Artist.*"
[200] Ibid., 115.
[201] Ibid., 122.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Maurizio Viroli, *For Love of Country. An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.
[204] See Viroli, *For Love of Country.* For further critical debate on this theoretical distinction see Bernard Yack, "The Myth of the Civic Nation," *Critical Review* 10 (1996): 193-212; Viroli, "On Civic Republicanism: Reply to Xenos and Yack," *Critical Review* 12 (1998): 187-96; Yack, "Can Patriotism save us from Nationalism? Rejoinder to Viroli," *Critical Review* 12 (1998): 203-6. By Viroli, see also his latest contribution *Nazionalisti e Patrioti* (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 2019).

Patriotism, in Viroli's analysis, is precisely an opposing and antidotal means to competitive nationalism, the latter being the manifestation, similarly to Wells's Huxleyan conception, of "bestial lust, diseased luxury, and selfish whim."[205] At times, Wells's imperial discourse adheres to this distinction, and it is discernible his aim to re-define what "patriotism" implies, to cure it from the perversion of nationalism; he defined himself a "cosmopolitan patriot" and lifelong republican.[206] Generally, however, as it appears from the reading of *The Open Conspiracy*, its related texts, and elsewhere in the Wellsian fictional and non-fictional corpus, these terms are employed by the author synonymously and employed in surprisingly idiosyncratic fashion. These blurred semantic boundaries cause no small pains amongst critics for a critical assessment of Wells's political vocabulary.[207]

According to Earle's analysis in 1950, Wells, himself "a British patriot," "like so many others, was not too sharp in drawing distinctions as among nationalism, patriotism, chauvinism, jingoism, and related phenomena;"[208] Adam Roberts, then, is certainly correct in remarking that although "nationalism has been the nursery of uncounted evils in human affairs," Wells "underthinks the concept, and is blind to the ways it mediates a whole nest of crucial human identities, passions and interests."[209] In this undeniable truth lies, I believe, the limits of his cosmopolitan vision. Often, his faith in a socialist cosmopolitanism made him lose sight, in an age already foreseeing the end of empires, the individual peculiarities of national exigencies. Wells's ambitiously encompassing utopian vision could not accurately grasp the regional features of the world. As Arthur Salter realistically commented, while also anticipating the internationalist political development of the following half of the century, "to go from nationalism to cosmopolitanism is to hurdle from a familiar path and start off in an opposite direction along a path that is strange and chocked with underbrush."[210] In many ways that of Wells was an Empire of the imagination; there was too much of the artist in him. For certain he was, echoing Patrick Braybrooke's judgement, "excellent in ideal, but less excellent in achievement in some ways."[211] But I leave the floor to the political theorist for the assessment of his political achievements and legacy. From a literary perspective we resurrect his ideas, in the meanwhile, as the forgotten Voice of Empire in British culture.

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[205] Viroli, *For Love of Country*, 168.
[206] Wells, *The Betterave Papers*, in *The Betterave Papers and Aesop's Quinine for Delphi* (London: H. G. Wells Society, 2001), 29. On Wells's "unwavering republicanism" see McCabe, *H. G. Wells and His Creed*.
[207] For Wells's negotiations between nationalism/patriotism and cosmopolitan values in his utopian fiction, the richest analysis is by Shadurski, *The Nationality of Utopia*.
[208] Earle, "British Patriot in Search of a World State," 187.
[209] Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 311.
[210] Quoted in Earle, 208.
[211] Patrick Braybrooke, *Some Aspects of H. G. Wells* (London: The C. W. Daniel Company, 1928), 148.

2.1.1. Wells's Great Book: *Decline and Fall of Monarchy and Competitive Imperialisms*

Let us approach the evolution of Wells's thinking with a study of the portrait of the writer as an old man, that "cockney Voltaire" (*EA* 2: 369) who had been writing, tirelessly for more than forty years, about Empires, airplanes, bicycles, evolution, God and free love. In 1945, now close to reaching his eightieth year of age, H. G. Wells writes in the preface to his last brief work, *Mind at the End of Its Tether*: "This little book brings to a conclusive end the series of essays, memoranda, pamphlets, through which the writer has experimented, challenged discussion, and assembled material bearing upon the fundamental nature of life and time."[212] It is a strange book, somewhere between pamphlet and (fictional) autobiography. As early reviews of the work testified, the book was "depressing and impatient. It tells one over and over again what its author has stated again and again. . .Read it should you like good writing, but it need not make your fleeting flesh creep, if you have read Wells before;" the adverse reviewer concluded: "Wells hates to be told that he will live chiefly as a writer of beautifully written tales; he hates to be told that as a philosopher he is a failure."[213] Some, even called it "the last literary testament of H. G. Wells," whose "tragedy was that of an artist, seeking to find reality, with a mind, narrowed and iron-curtained by empiricism."[214] *The Tribune*, on the contrary reported that "this generation must realise that the nightmare possibilities envisaged by Wells, the great Pessimist, are the alternative to the world consistently portrayed by Wells, the constructive Optimist – a world physically and mentally cultivated for the happiness, not of classes or nations, but of all humanity."[215] According to Arthur Salter, "*Mind at the End of its Tether* is one of the most tragic of human documents. It displays nakedly both the despair and, under the despair, the disintegration of a mind."[216] In general, subsequent critics have read *Mind at the End of its Tether* as Wells's final despair and pessimist disillusionment about human co-operation.[217] However, following Wells's biographer David Smith, Wells was in fact neither optimist or pessimist, but a realist.[218] From his scientific outlook, mankind could either dominate or succumb like any other species.

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[212] Wells, *Mind at the End of Its Tether* (London: William Heinemann, 1945), v. All subsequent references are shortened as *MET* in the text.
[213] H. T. W. Bousfield, "Observations," *Queen* (1946): 16. (SEC-W-54).
[214] "The Last Testament of H. G. Wells," *The Advocate* (1945): 10. (SEC-W-54).
[215] R. L. Megroz, "H. G. Wells as the Sacred Lunatic," *The Tribune* (December 14, 1945): 15. (SEC-W-54-1)
[216] Arthur Salter, "Apostle of a World Society," in *Personality in Politics*. *Studies of Contemporary Statesmen* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), 180. This book presents a misprint in page numbers. From page 129 it skips through 180; but it is still the same essay.
[217] The son of Wells, Anthony West, has correctly attacked the stereotyped view which sees Wells as a naïf, optimist author obsessed with progress and better future; on the contrary, he traces the constant pessimism throughout Wells's writings since his early nineteenth-century romances. See Anthony West, "The Dark World of H. G. Wells," *Harper's Magazine* 214 (1957): 68-73.
[218] Smith, *Desperately Mortal*, 477. Wells told Curtis Brown: "I want to see it put into type and corrected for the press before I die."

In the Preface of the testament-book, Wells, as a post-Darwinian Prospero is ready to leave the stage: "The greater bulk of that research may now go down the laboratory sink. It is either superseded or dismissed. It will go out of print and be heard of no more" (*MET* v). What critics systematically ignore about this preface, is that on the basis of the research accumulated in his precedent works, Wells here anticipates one last majestic, definitive study of his "fundamental theme" – the title is supposed to be *Decline and Fall of Monarchy and Competitive Imperialisms.* It is the author's recurrent fantasy, re-emerging, to write that quintessentially Wellsian book, "Imperialisms I have Known," which ironically alluded to in *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy* (1929).[219] Of course, Wells is well-aware of the impasse of time, and stoically comments on the improbability of this enterprise. We know he would never craft this indictment on world's policy; although, in a sense, he already published such a genealogical study on imperialism, and back in 1919 under the title *The Outline of History*. This historical narrative was greatly inspired by Wells's early admiration for Edward Gibbon's eighteenth-century historiographic work. Patrick Parrinder intriguingly argues that "perhaps because he did not live to complete this project [*Decline and Fall of Monarchy and Competitive Imperialisms]* the formative influence of Edward Gibbon's great history of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* on Wells's imagination and thought has never had due recognition."[220] Chapter 4 "The Call of History: The World Intellectual" will more fully explore Wells the historian.

It is evident that in 1945 Wells planned to update his political observations in the light of the recent emergence of totalitarianism. As a matter of fact, the last sections of *Mind at the End of its Tether* were meant to be an addition to the 1946 revision of his *Short History of the World*.[221] What we are left with, instead, is this short book of 34 pages only, presenting the delusions of a "Mind" in its conclusive phase.[222] The book reveals a pessimism which is hard to contradict at first sight: "If his [Wells] thinking has been sound, then this world is at the end of its tether. The end of everything we call life is close at hand cannot be evaded. He is telling you the conclusions to which reality had driven his own mind, and he think you may be interested enough to consider them, but he is not attempting to impose them upon you" (*MET* 1). This post-modern testament, Wells anticipates, written from a third person narrative and with many Shakespearian allusions, "demands close reading" (1) - it is worth following the author's guidelines. The author becomes character, speaking

[219] A notable exception is Patrick Parrinder in *Shadows of the Future*, 65.
[220] Ibid. I would add that the critical work which appropriately reveals Gibbon's relevance in Wells's thought is the biography by Michael Foot, *H. G. Wells: The History of Mr Wells* (London: Doubleday, 1995).
[221] Smith, *Desperately Mortal*, 476. *A Short History* was Wells's shortened version of the *Outline of History*. I will fully explore Wells the novelist-historiographer, and world intellectual, in Chapter 4 "The Call of History: The World Intellectual."
[222] Certainly not the first time that Wells played with the mind imagery. In 1934, his autobiography was subtitled as the reflections of a "Very Ordinary Brain."

for and to mankind; the boundary between autobiography and pamphlet are dissolved. As Adam Roberts suggests, "this is Wells's cope-stone work, slender though it is."[223] In many ways, Roberts implies, it is Wells's last artistic riddle following *The Time machine*.

From the throne of his "scientific training," and apparently contradicting any stereotyped vision of himself as prophet, Wells comments that "we live in reference to past experience and not to future events (2). In other terms, given Man's inability to control Time, he re-asserts the fact that "the writer is convinced that there is no way out or round or through the impasse. It is the end" (4). After this note of bleak scepticism, Wells remarks that "the habitual interest in his life is critical anticipation. Of everything he asks: "To what will this lead?" (4-5). Still, he ultimately confirms that the world is gone out of joint and he can see no more through the "Pattern of Things to Come [. . .] he carries about with him this hard harsh conviction of the near conclusive end of all life" (6). He evokes a vision reminiscent of his early scientific romances: "To a watcher in some remote entirely alien cosmos, if we may assume that impossibility, it might well seem that extinction is coming to man like a brutal thunderclap of *Halt!*" (8). Then suggestively turns into Prospero again:

> We pass into the harsh glare of hitherto incredible novelty. It beats the searching imagination. The more it strives the less it grasps. The more strenuous the analysis, the more inescapable the sense of mental defeat. The cinema sheet stares us in the face. That sheet is the actual fabric of Being. Our loves, our hates, our wars and battles, are no more than a phantasmagoria dancing on that fabric, themselves as unsubstantial as a dream. We may rage in our dreaming. We may wake up storming with indignation, furious with this or that ineffectual irremovable general, diplomatist, war minister or ruthless exploiter of our fellow men, and we may denounce and indict as righteous anger dictates.[224] (9)

In this manifestation of delusion, mixed with an anger typical of Wells, the author lambasts egoism in the form of military incompetence and individual adventurism; in other terms, his accusations are directed against the competitive forces which march against progress and the collectivist idea. Under crystal-clear humanitarian lenses, he denounces, as he had done since the nineteenth century, "all those mean, perverted, malicious, heedless and cruel individuals coming into the daylight every day,

[223] Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 422.

[224] Textual allusions to *Macbeth* accompany Wells's performance: "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day. . . .and all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. . . Life . . .struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more . . .a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. . . (9-10). Finally, Wells mentions the bard: "The searching scepticism of the writer's philosophical analysis has established this Antagonist as invincible reality for him, but, all over the earth and from dates immemorial, introspective minds, minds of the quality of the brooding Shakespeare, have conceived a disgust of the stresses, vexations and petty indignities of life and taken refuge from its apprehension of a conclusive end to things, in mystical withdrawal." The anti-academy, iconoclast Wells, in truth, disliked Shakespeare and the mythological canon he represented.

resolute to frustrate the kindlier purposes of man" (9). On the horizon, in the "space-time continuum" of the order of life, he sees extinction only.

The second half of the book maintains the same tone. Echoing the metamorphoses of the early science fiction, he compares himself to "just another ant" without powers to intervene in the world affairs governed by "old prejudices" and "leaders" blind to the true priority of mankind (16). In reference to the most imminent WWII events, more specifically, he sees only "egotistical leaders, fanatical persecutions, panics, hysterical violence and cruelty." Although the author admits that he himself is not devoid of lapses of ignorance, cruelty and meanness, he acknowledges that nonetheless "hates and fights against them with all his strength" (18). This is Wells in all its dialectical contradictions, sincere at his best. John Carey, after all, has acutely commented upon his "imaginative duplicity," noting that Wells "is always nearly in two minds, and this saves him from mere prescription.[225] The verdict on the future of the race is thus pronounced by the scientific voice of the writer, here acting like the God of evolution: "A series of events has forced upon the intelligent observer the realization that the human story has already come to an end and that *Homo Sapiens,* as he has been pleased to call himself, is in his present form played out;" in his place, Wells predicts the emergence of "some other animal better adapted," probably "an entirely alien strain" too, arising from "a new modification of the *hominide*, and even as a direct continuation of the human phylum" (18); but, for sure, "it will certainly not be human," anticipating that "there is no way out for Man but steeply up or steeply down. Adapt or perish, now as ever, is Nature's inexorable imperative." Echoes of the strange voyage of Wells's Time Traveller come to the surface. In Chapter V "*Race Suicide by Gigantism"* Wells stresses the fact that man's place is nature has never been uncontested. History has always been a struggle for life in which each form strived to dominate the scene, before being superseded by another competitor. The "first of these laws," he says, "was the imperative to aggression […] Live more than your brothers, grow larger, devour more" and avoid cooperation (25). These reflections, with hindsight, indicate that if *Decline and Fall of Monarchy and Competitive Imperialisms* was to be published, evolutionary philosophy was certainly to be its prior motif within the genealogy of imperial developments, as always with Wells's thinking.

Mind at The End of Its Tether re-considers men's ambition as Lords of Creation in comparison to Echinoderms, starfish and crinoids; but also Chordata, Sea Urchins and Sea Cucumbers. Wells's *scala naturae* defies Enlightenment solutions by never conferring *Homo Sapiens* a permanent glory. In the few pages of this booklet he discusses the whole cosmos and, starting from the perspective of a "Mind," that of the writer, he expands his observations to mankind and life from a broader angle.

[225] Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, 135.

In this universally expanded Song of Myself, the writer is large, contains multitudes and all living entities.[226] In the last two Chapters, respectively "*The Antagonism of Age and Youth*" and "*New Light on the Record of Rocks*," Wells the Optimist finally remerges. Wells the old teacher of the world, refers patronizingly to the young generation: "He must be a very under-vitalised being indeed to be ready to give in and "take things as they are" (28). The "present writer in his seventy-ninth year," has "lived cheerfully and abundantly – he "is ready to depart." Yet, in these last words professed by a thinker who has observed mankind for more than half a century, Wells aims to invite youth not to give up, and seek change instead. Promoting change, we read through the line, is "a necessary part of the make-up of any normal youngster, male or female." Prospero looks upon the rising multitude of Ferdinands and Mirandas: "We lived essentially, forty years odd ago. The young are *life*, and there is no hope but in them" (28). The close reading suggested by the author at the beginning of his speech, rewards the reader with a hope which was willingly denied in the first sections. Either the reader struggles to understand his or her place in the apocalypse to come – if any, Wells remains vague –, or goes back to world reconstruction, and chooses action, control. Prospero leaves the stage.

As I have tried to show, therefore, critical interpretations which focus exclusively on the negative imprint of *Mind at the End of Its Tether*, fail to understand its fundamental faith in world co-operation and reconstruction. This little book also confirms decidedly Wells's principal frame of thought through which he evaluated the courses of empires and empire-building: evolutionary thinking. The project mentioned in the Preface as *Decline and Fall of Monarchy and Competitive Imperialisms* could have changed, one could wonder, Wells's standing with posterity. Perhaps, even under a different and more refined title, this text could have been Wells's systematic proposal for a practical establishment of a world state; the book that Wells the political thinker never wrote. In this regard Partington writes: "Wells's fault seems to have been, on the one hand, that he broke with organized campaigns for world government (due invariably to the fact that they never went far enough) and pursued his campaign alone and," on the other hand, Partington continues, "that he was not an 'academic' advocate of functionalism and never actually produced a single consolidated book containing his theory of global governance."

Echoing George Orwell's comment on Wells's magnitude in "Wells, Hitler and the World State," Arthur Salter in *Personality in Politics* (1947) commented:

[226] Wells had read Whitman in his youth: "I read everything accessible. I ground out some sonnets. I struggled with Spenser; I read Shelley, Keats, Heine, Whitman, Lamb, Holmes, Stevenson, Hawthorne, and a number of popular novels" (*EA* 1: 305).

> The obituary leader on H. G. Wells in the *New York Times* concluded with the statement that he was the greatest public teacher of our time. This is an arresting, and to some may seem an extravagant, statement. I believe, however, that a sober review of the changes that have taken place during the first half of the twentieth century in the opinions, interests and outlook of the public of the Western world, intellectual, ethical, social and political, will confirm its accuracy. Above all, those who were entering manhood when H. G. Wells was in early middle life, and reflect what Wells has contributed to the environment in which they have since lived, will agree that it is no exaggeration. There have been other great public teachers in this time, but none has so consistently and persuasively taught and exhorted so wide a range of readers. Wells was more than a public teacher, but he was that above all, and in his influence upon two generations none equalled him.[227]

In the present essay on major intellectual figures, Salter describes Wells as an "Apostle of World Order." He is referring, in essence, to Wells's own re-arrangement of England and the world. The issue with Wells, which Salter very well understood and on which Wagar amongst others agree, was that "he could educate and impel, but could not himself organize, command or direct." He was not a leader; the collectivist idea impeded him to think of himself as a Carlylean Great Man in the course of history. Salter also reveals him, as many other commentators had done throughout the first decades of the first half of the century, as the greatest influence on modern thought. Although not framing his portrait on Wells as a literary figure, he laments: "we may, if we will, regret that the genius apparent in his earlier novels was never further developed, that each later novel became or attracted no less an addition to literature. It was a purposed sacrifice;" and his books "retained the form of novels but increasingly became political pamphlets rather than works of art." The politics of empire became his primary sin and destroyed Wells as Artist. Is it true?

2.1.2. *The Life and Opinions of Mr. William Clissold, Businessman: A Novel from a Novel Angle*

In 1926 Wells offered the public a book which was, in his son Anthony West's words, "the strangest of his novels;"[228] the title was *The World of William Clissold: a Novel from a New Angle*. A renowned critical focus on *Clissold'*s artistic complexity in relation to imperial politics is pivotal for a fuller comprehension of the history and development of the English novel. It is in this voluminous fictional work of almost nine hundred pages divided in three volumes that Wells dramatized extensively the revolutionary notion of "Open Conspiracy," in these exact terms, as an alternative to modern

[227] Salter, *Personality in Politics*, 120.
[228] West, *Aspects of a Life*, 105.

imperialism.[229] What is important for this discussion, in the light of the author's manifesto *The Open Conspiracy* previously explored, is to trace the fictional strategies, in reaction but also convergence to modernism, through which Wells manages to convey the unique idea of the Conspiracy as a transnational collective force to overthrow competitive imperialism in the post-WWI years. In the essay *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy* (1929) that I have been employing as main coordinate for the author's imperial thought, Wells referred to the this fictional work as "an attempt to deal with the inevitable growth and possible developments of a huge industrial and financial complex in relation to social and political processes;" the visions in *Clissold*, Wells indicates, "already transcend the boundaries of existing sovereign states, and that they make for a single economic world organization, for Cosmopolis that is and not for Empire."[230] As the socialist author explains, William Clissold embodies a counter type imagination to Lord Melchett's and Lord Beaverbrook's patriotic belief, amongst a majority of authoritative British personalities who represent, to Wells, "what I may call the 'self-sufficient Empire'."[231] Wells firmly admonishes: "I think it is not a very hopeful direction , and I want to state as plainly as possible why I would dissuade them if I could from adopting this self-sufficient imperial idea as the frame of their activities."[232] The novel went into this subversive political direction.

Artistically unconventional, admittedly "unorthodox in shape and approach" (*EA* 2: 500), *Clissold* is a British narrative written in the first person, where William himself, a rich director of the metallurgical and chemical firm "Romer Steinhart & Co." (based on Lord Melchett's Brunner Mond and Co.),[233] writes in form of autobiography a miscellaneous work on life and politics. William tends to specify the nature of his work prose: "This book is primarily autobiographical and not a dissertation upon politics," because, it logically follows, politics is life, and a major part of the individual mental

[229] The book was written between 1924 and 1926. Around March 1925 Wells first informs his agent A. P. Watt about the project: "it is the autobiography of a man of 60 who reviews his world à la Montaigne" (*The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 3, 190). In a letter to Marie Butts, dated 25 February 1926, he seems to have concluded the novel: "I've just finished an enormously big book, *The World of William Clissold*, giving a view of a hard, modern-spirited industrialist. It's been a huge undertaking, a year & a half of hard work. . .I bless it & wish it well," *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 3, 208). It was eventually published in three volumes by Ernest Benn. The first volume appeared in September 1926. It came out during Wells's sixtieth birthday; Clissold and Wells are of similar age. The suggesting ideas of the book were appreciated, amongst several twentieth-century thinkers, by Carl Jung, Henry L. Mencken, Bernard Shaw, and John M. Keynes. In comparison to *The Open Conspiracy* (1928), the novel, very popular at the time, also produced a better income.

[230] Wells, *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy*, 6.

[231] Ibid., 6. Alfred Moritz Mond, 1st Baron Melchett, was a wealthy British industrialist and politician, prototype to William Clissold. He was the owner of the chemical company Brunner & Mond. In the 1920s, after a past as Liberal, Melchett tended towards conservative views; William Maxwell Aitken, 1st Baron Beaverbrook, colossus of the British press and former Minister of Information, was the proprietor of the leading British newspaper *Daily Express*.

[232] Ibid.,7.

[233] *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy*, 5-6.

experience.[234] In this fictional autobiography William vehemently advocates in the end a world revolution through creative propaganda;[235] it is not until the last page of Volume II (at page 601 of a dense Benn edition), however, that Clissold exclaims: "with some hope of results now I can review my world as a whole, balance alien considerations, work out the form of the great revolution that is happening in human affairs and in the human mind" (II: 601). Finally, as caught in a mood of relief, Wells's open conspirator can reveal the reader his prophetic ends: "here I can define at last the Open Conspiracy that arises in the human will to meet and wrestle with the moulding forces of the universe, that Open Conspiracy to which in the end I believe I shall succeed in correlating all my conscious being" (II: 601). Volume III thus opens with the declaration of the narrator extending the Conspiracy plan: "Now with my story told I can come to the gist of my matter. . .opening out before mankind" (III: 611). Being the nexus of the narrator's intention, the final volume must be broadly outlined from the start.

Clissold sees through ambitious lenses, digressing omni comprehensively on political matters. His autobiography is not merely focused on a self, in fact, but it is "bird's-eye view of human affairs" (III: 810). The understanding of himself in the "world" situates his activity as an agent in the changing flux of the universe: "Last night I was on terms with the stars. I was not simply historical and geographical; I was astronomical. I was immense" (III: 862). Individual conscience and racial awareness, that is the human adventure in Wellsian phrasing, go hand in hand. Anticipating the iconoclast ideas of H. G. Wells in *The Open Conspiracy*, William lambasts at length the forces of monarchy, imperialism and patriotism, in favour of cosmopolitanism (III: 622; see also, for instance, 615, 630-33, 640, 735). He imagines a "great metamorphosis" (III: 617) of humanity to change the "customs, rules and institutions of the world" (III: 618), to be achieved through "a propaganda, a literature, a culture, an education" (III: 622). The human intercourse deriving from the intellectual rebirth of the Conspiracy "will not be a world kingdom nor a world empire nor a world state but a world business organization" (III: 635), without "nor emperor, nor president at all; and no parliament of mankind" (III: 644).[236] Countering the aggressive imperialist State, the utopian "World Republic"

[234] Vol. III, 736. Further references are from the three volumes of Faber and Faber Edition, 2008; The page numbers correspond to the original Benn Edition of 1926. Vol. I (1-244), Vol. I (251-601), Vol. III (607-885). All references will include volume number followed by page number.

[235] William Clissold, as writer, divides his manuscript in six books. Vol. I comprises the first two: Book the First: The Frame of a Picture; Book the Second: The Story of the Clissolds – My Father and the Flow of Things. Volume II comprises: Book the Third: The Story of the Clissolds – Essence of Dickon; Book the Fourth: The Story of the Clissolds – Tangle of Desires. Volume III comprises the last two books: Book the Fifth: The Next Phase; Book the Sixth: Venus as Evening Star. The anti-imperialist idea of "Next Phase" corresponds to the world changed by idea of "The Open Conspiracy." The "Next Phase" also appeared under these terms as early as 1914 in *The World Set Free*.

[236] In truth, in the Platonian tradition, William's manuscript refers to the ideal State as the "World Republic" (30 occurrences); at times, it is either a "Republic of Mankind," in Comteian's terms (4 occurrences), or a "World State" (5 occurrences).

will manifest an open disdain for flags and uniforms, even an open "intolerance of armaments and of the making of lethal weapons everywhere;" so that "it will neither expand nor conquer nor subdue nor include the governments of today; it will efface them" (III: 635). *Clissold* envisions progressive change in a post-national human association.

Literature, rather, which is language both written and oral, and everywhere, without a "World Capital" (III: 645), has a primary role in Clissold's kinetic conception; the highest, perhaps, and the most utopian too. The human community "will live very much by and through its literature. Literature will be a form of social intercourse" (III: 671-2), and a system of press unbound from national control will make possible such intellectual growth (III: 678). Therefore, of urgent priority matter, Clissold's "germinating World Republic needs a literature; it has to invade the press; it must develop a propaganda for the young and youthful-minded" (III: 849). Necessarily, William Clissold, like Herbert George Wells, is in search of influential people of all kinds: politicians, businessmen, men of letters, scientists, editors, to promote a wide dissemination of the revolutionary idea; he seeks for intelligent "leading men and outstanding figures with a realization of this creative process" (III: 849) pointing to the abolition of "all accidents of association with nation, caste, party, office or firm" (III: 854). Clissold's role in this cultural metamorphosis does not occupy a leadership position; his individual intelligence is merely part of the global revolution: "I have just compared myself with a prophet, but, after all, that is not quite what I have to be. That is too grandiose a role. I can be neither the prophet nor the leader nor the organiser of a world revolution. I observe it advancing and seek to point it out;" pivotally, distancing his State reform from recent Communist and Fascist revolutions, Clissold re-iterates his liberal view that the Open Conspiracy "is not the sort of revolution that has leaders and organisers" (III: 857).

The "strangeness" of *Clissold* pointed out by Anthony West was a widely shared judgement, and still today the reading of the book can puzzle readers and critics alike.[237] The novel is encyclopaedic in scope; William freely digresses on national and international affairs, rambling through a mind's wit – it is fairly evident that Wells the socio-political thinker surfaces constantly throughout the narrative. In particular, a British reader of the 1920s would find in *Clissold* much of Wells's well-known World State ideology. As E. B. Osborn sardonically remarked in 1926, "the arguments and opinions here set forth are for the most part familiar to all the readers of the Wellsian treatises concerning all things in the Universe and a few others."[238] A recurrent contributor to the arch-conservative *The Morning Post* and antagonistic to Wellsianism, Osborne advanced his

[237] A useful selection of critical reviews of *Clissold* can be found also in *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, edited by Patrick Parrinder.
[238] E. B. Osborn, "Mr Wells's New Novel," in *The Critical Response to H. G. Wells*, edited by Scheick, 140.

diagnosis: "there are symptoms of a story in the book, so far as it has gone, but it is not in the least interesting. The sad truth is that the arteries of Mr Wells *qua* story-teller have become sociologised."[239] Others, on the contrary, genuinely enjoyed the artistic result. Arnold Bennett admitted, for example: "this is an *original* novel. My novels never are."[240] Bennett, long-life admirer of Wells, was "firmly held and much impressed by *Clissold* I;" "but Clissold II" he remarked, was "decidedly better."[241] According to another critic, L. E. Robinson, *Clissold* "both in style and content" was "the most important and interesting which the much productive Mr. Wells has written."[242] L. E. Robinson too, noted that "its leading character" speaks "throughout autobiographically" while representing "his creator's 'point of view';" and precisely for this merit, actually, Robinson's estimation concluded positively on the novel. Wells was ascribed to the "intellectual" category:

> It is an outline of wide-ranging ideas, giving climax to the author's previous striving in this direction. The book is as greatly challenging as it is stimulating to intellectuals, for whom the author frankly hints that he writes. Mr Wells is intellectual. He writes, as anyone familiar with his books may know, with an abundant knowledge.[243]

Jeanne and Norman Mackenzie's biography of Wells, without too much exaggeration, then opens their discussion on the book as "a description of Wells's world" (and, we may ask, what novel does not describe the author's reality?).[244] This novel, consequently, also shares the unfortunate destiny with all other Wells's productions of the 1920s: it is largely discredited for its overt political tones. But to be fair, as Adam Roberts also generously concedes, although the "novel *is* sometimes slackly garrulous," it is "also a much more interesting fictional experiment than it is given credit for being;" and certainly, it is also undeniable, as the critic appreciates, that the "tessellation of fiction and discursive discussion makes for an interesting literary blend."[245]

Rarely read as of today, it remains beyond the pale of English literature syllabus mostly out of prejudice in contemporary reading practices, on the one hand; on the other, being Wells's longest novel embedded in specific historical details, the book does not easily attract a wide unspecialized

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[239] Ibid.
[240] Letter from Arnold Bennett to H. G. Wells, October 1926. In *Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells. A Record of a Personal and a Literary Friendship*, edited by Harris Wilson (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1960), 236.
[241] Ibid.
[242] L. E. Robinson, "What Shall I read? Here are six recent books that merit attention," *The Rotarian* December 1926, 31.
[243] Ibid.
[244] *The Time Traveller*, 344.
[245] Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 333. Colin Wilson too has appreciated Wells's intention in re-shaping the form of the novel, describing the book, rightfully, "as bold an experimental novel as *Ulysses* and, in its own way, as successful" (quoted in Roberts)

readership. Not least importantly, the novel belongs to that suspicious "later fiction of H. G. Wells" whose treatment does not figure, for more innocent chronological reasons, at the opening of literary criticism dominated by the author's early works. It is that type of fiction that Sir Arthur Salter was thinking of in its aforementioned complaint that, in practice, Wells's "books retained the form of novels but increasingly became political pamphlets rather than works of art."[246] Vincent Brome's biography of 1951 perceived even more negatively *Clissold* as "rag-bag fiction, argument, and pure Wellsian soliloquy." [247] To Brome, on the traces of the semi-autobiographical *The New Machiavelli* published in 1911, this novel inevitably "marked another crisis in his [Wells's] writing life." The critic referred to *Clissold* as a disintegration of the novelist himself, immensely obsessed with self-portrayal. Similarly, Norman Nicholson, writing in 1951, identified the tragedy of a career: "With *Clissold*, Wells seems to have felt that his serious work as a novelist was over. He wrote another dozen or so books which may be called fiction, but which are in fact pamphlets or treatises."[248] A large sections of criticism did attack Wells, the author, for his temptation to expand personal ideology in the novel. On this aspect , Arthur A. M. Thomson published a full-fledged parody book, *The World of Billiam Wissold*, which mocked Wells's anti-imperialist crusade under the distorted name "The Open Expiracy": "I and many well-intentioned philanthropists are doing our best to tear down this flag, to root up those traditions, to undermine and eradicate patriotism."[249] Even the critic Patrick Braybrooke, although sympathetic towards Wells's oeuvre and commitment in general, somewhat similarly thought the book more as a sociological treatise than a mere novel.[250] The problem was in the very controversial structure of the novel of the novel; and also the author's intentions were put under public examination.[251]

[246] From Salter, *Personality in Politics*.
[247] Brome, *H. G. Wells*, 179. See also by Brome, *Six Studies in Quarrelling*.
[248] Norman Nicholson, *H. G. Wells* (London: Arthur Barker, 1950), 87. In his assessment on Wells, the critic went as far to describe *Clissold* in imaginary destructiveness which is worth to quote here: "The book, then while taking the general form of a discursive memoire, is actually a series of essays and articles, notes and sketches, neither woven together nor strung together, but rather piled up heterogeneously like those barns on the Cumberland coast built of fragments of slate, fragments of sandstone and cobbles from the shore, and cemented together by a great coating of roughcast" (85).
[249] A. A. M. Thomson, *The World of Billiam Wissold* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1927), 127.
[250] Braybrooke, *Aspects of H. G. Wells.*
[251] The book has, furthermore, attracted considerable gossip by Wells's readers and biographers in the way sex is treated by the author. At times, it is true, although often refuted by Wells, that William's manuscript can be read as a *roman a clef*. Throughout, for example, it is evident that Clissold has a lot in common with Wells's own sexual experience and iconoclast thoughts concerning the fallacies of monogamy; there are also illuminating sections on the question of gender inequality which makes the novel an invaluable insight into prominent cultural issues of the twentieth century. In general, and this is the real troublesome fact in literary criticism, the novel is poorly appreciated in its artistic end. I will therefore not dwell on the ideological aspects regarding gender and well-known biographical details on the author's love life; in other terms, I intend to avoid pointing out biographical correspondences between fictional characters and real-life individuals. These facts are already very well known. See Wells's biographers, but especially Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *The Time Traveller*, 344-45, who are always particularly inquisitive on Wells's sexual life.

Most iconically amongst the averse reception of the book, and creating considerable animosity in Wells, D. H. Lawrence bitterly lamented, after reading the first volume only, that "it is all words, words, words, about Socialism and Karl Marx, bankers and cave men, money and the superman," pointing prescriptively that "so far, anyhow, this work is not a novel, because it contains none of the passionate and emotional reactions which are at the root of all thought, and which must be conveyed in a novel."[252] The book, Lawrence goes on, "is all-chewed up newspaper, and chewed-up scientific reports, like a mouse's nest. But perhaps the novel will still come in Vols. II and III."[253] If extended discursiveness on politics in fiction represented a problematic to Lawrence's artistic sensibility, amongst many other readers, the expectations for volumes of a different nature would remain utterly unmet. The – type of – novel Lawrence envisioned, would simply never arrive from Wells's pen; on the contrary, the more the fictional narrative progresses from Volume I to Volume III, the more the discursive attention focusses on world affairs. In this respect, according to David Smith's evaluation, *Clissold* was in fact "a watershed book in H. G. Wells's fiction. After this book, nearly all Wells's novels (with perhaps *Star* Begotten as an exception) are books of the changing contemporary scene. . .they all deal with contemporary affairs."[254] While this observation makes justice to Clissold's particular relevance in the corpus of the English novel, it is also a huge overstatement; there is no significant difference, it must be fruitfully contended, between *Clissold* and Wells's novels before 1926. *Joan and Peter* (1918), *The New Machiavelli* (1911) or *The Passionate Friends* (1913), are just some of the most obvious examples against Smith's thesis. Contemporary politics centred on a criticism of imperial sovereignty, and a strong didacticism, have always been two main components of the novelist's frame.

Vast as it is, the plot of *Clissold* requires a general introduction along with a series of critical considerations. In truth, there is no real and progressive action as such, and the most intriguing feature of the book is its metafictionality; what we are presented with is this lengthy manuscript of William Clissold, a successful businessman who is attempting to write a book on his life, and especially his ideas. In "THE EPILOGUE, NOTE BY SIR RICHARD CLISSOLD" of the third volume, we eventually understand from William's brother, and not without sudden ironical dismay, that the manuscript, "this book of books" (III: 871), remains incomplete because William Clissold has died in a car accident with his lover Clementina: "No more work was required of him, beyond this strange

[252] D. H. Lawrence, "Review of *The World of William Clissold*," 1926, in *Introductions and Reviews*, ed. by John Worthen and N. H. Reeve (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 279, 283.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Smith, *Desperately Mortal*, 286-87.

book he had so nearly finished."[255] The father of the Clissold brothers was, we are told through a notice published on an almanack, a "Promoter of London and Imperial Enterprises, having been sentenced to seven years' penal servitude by Mr. Justice Ponters for fraud, committed suicide with potassium cyanide as he left the dock" (I: 150). What type of fraud? Clissold's father, also named Richard, was a wealthy businessman of the British Empire "having been found guilty of falsifying the books of London and Imperial Enterprises." (I: 127). From the outset, under the fragile banner of patriotism, Wells subtly unmasks the present imperial system as nothing but a financial-individualistic enterprise.

The overarching impression in reading *Clissold* is that Wells was moved by the ambitious artistic intention of composing a twentieth-century version (one could even call modernist, given its reactionary imprint within the novel tradition) of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*; through a hypothetical jeu d'esprit in the title itself, not entirely hazardous, *The World of William Clissold* points implicitly to *The Life and Opinions of Mr. William Clissold, Businessman*.[256] Sterne was, Wells claimed as early as in the second decade of the twentieth century, "the subtlest and greatest *artist* – I lay stress upon the word *artist* – that Great Britain has ever produced in all that is essentially the novel."[257] In Wells's external and polemic preface "A NOTE BEFORE THE TITLE PAGE," he anticipates: "There is much discussion of opinion in this book. Does that make it anything but a novel? Is it not quite as much 'life' to meet and deal with a new idea as to meet and deal with a new lover?" (I: vii). The flow of Clissold's thoughts is unrestrained. He digresses, interrupts, postpones. Occasionally, he is confused about the book's structure; he is impatient to get to the gist of his matter (III: 755). The writer is satisfied with some sections of his manuscript, whereas others he deems them "bare and abstract" (III: 809). William, at times calm, at times agitated from his working desks between England and France, spans from recounting extensively the private life of himself and his brother Richard (nicknamed Dickon), to their opinions on socialism and empire. In his autobiography, William offers insights of the wealth of the Clissold family and their business in society. Imperialism in the current aggressive and xenophobic phase is amongst Clissold's principal targets: "politics, parties, the governments, and empires of the world to-day are all a swiftly passing show, masking, but growing at last dimly transparent, to reveal," Clissold believes, "the real processes

[255] Clementina was, partially, a fictional portrait of the dutch writer Odette Keun, one of Wells's major intimate relationship and to whom the book is dedicated.: "to Odette Keun, self-forgetful friend and helper." See Sherborne, *Another Kind of Life*, 275-76. H. G. Wells, *The World of William Clissold*, 867.

[256] On Sterne's influence on Wells see especially the insightful study by Hammond, *H. G. Wells and the Modern Novel* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988). On *Clissold*, see specifically 144-158. As Hammond puts it, Wells "expresses his conviction that in writing it [*Clissold*] he was feeling his way towards a new and fruitful approach to the art of fiction" (158).

[257] Wells, "The Contemporary Novel," in *An Englishman Looks at the World*, 155.

that are going in human life" (II: 499). The dedicated discussion, at any rate, is hinted and postponed again by the writer: "But these things belong to a later part of this book" (II: 499). Later, as we have seen, after 601 pages of free thinking, he will finally manage to articulate the long-waited plan for "The Open Conspiracy" in the final Books.

Through *Clissold* Wells dramatizes his imperial ideology: before the war, while William describes himself as becoming a "cosmopolitan," Dickon, a complementary individuality to William, figures as "extremely English" (290). In *Experiment in Autobiography* Wells recalls the writing of the novel: "And the main thread of my thought and writing for all that time was how to realize the New Republic and bring it into active existence" (*EA* 2: 740). The book was, admittedly, composed "in the form of a trial personality" (745). The young Dickon, for example, more of the romantic, enthusiastic type before the war, defends the monarchic symbolism as a cohesive force, whereas William manifests his staunch republicanism and distrust for the army: "the national king, the national uniforms, the national flags and bands. . . they personify and intensify and ensure the national distinction, the separation of the marching, fighting, grabbing Empire from the general business of mankind" (II: 314). During the First World War, the Clissolds are involved in the European catastrophe. Dickon enlists in a logistic position, and William becomes a prominent figure through his work in the Ministry of Ammunition; both will exit the conflict with a sense of waste and disillusionment, directing their activity towards plans of cultural reconstruction. Thus, Wells presents the reader a novel titled "The World" of William Clissold, but is, in truth, equally the world of Dickon.[258] The duality of a mind is successfully constructed by Wells, so much that William himself admits: "watching Dickon and watching the world through Dickon's eyes has been at times almost more instructive than watching it through my own" (II: 281). The Clissolds brothers reveal the hybridity of Wells at its best, of an author torn between his national, British composition, and the rebellious cosmopolitan mindset.

At any rate, William confesses his confusion in recounting "life": "I find it difficult to recover the facts in their order, and about many of my moods I must needs be as speculative now as though I told of the acts of someone quite outside myself" (II: 424). The narrative is peculiarly characterized by captivating interruptions of Clissold himself expressing views on the act of writing; in such episodes we witness him commenting his papers, exposing his anxieties and the priorities of his exposition, while making a series of confessions to his readers on the purpose of life – which must be always, Clissold insists, world-conscious. The reading experience, therefore, consists in witnessing

[258] A whole chapter, and not restricted to this, is devoted to his brother in Book the Third: The Story of the Clissolds – Essence of Dickon.

the intellectual ruminations of a solitary mind, in a room, whose principal interest is prompted on world's affairs. The book can be described as the narrative of a mind in expanding reflections; intriguingly, therefore, *Clissold* is meant to be a bold artistic confrontation with modernist values. Through this long narrative Wells covers intentionally the very realms of the mind of a single character, yet stretching it to the excess by including every field of life worth of critical thought. Wells the novelist thus follows, in part, modernism's artistic priority towards the psychological world, while exploring, at the same time, the turbulent political scene of the 1920s. *Clissold* has, in truth, the object of any novel: life. The manuscript of the dead Clissold is a mine of ideas.

The opening of the novel is particularly convincing. In a fictional passage of, one may say, Beckettian undertones, there is the main character struggling in search of identity; the manuscript opens with William writing gloomily on his papers and reflecting about his place in the world: "Yesterday I was fifty-nine, and in a year I shall be sixty— 'getting on for seventy', as the unpleasant old phrase goes. I was born November, 1865, and this is November 1924. . . I do not want to go yet. I am sorry to have so little time before me" (I: 23, 27). William is a wealthy industrialist and, at the core, equally to H. G. Wells, a British type of "revolutionary. Every year of my life makes me more certainly revolutionary" (I: 199). William/Wells are both radical and republicans. With some variations, well before Volume III, we are presented with embryonic views of Wells's anti-imperialist ideal of *The Open Conspiracy* (1928). In the section "Reincarnation of Socialism" of Clissold's manuscript (Book the Second, §9, Vol. I), he looks forward to "a scientifically conceived world civilisation" which must clear away "the legal standing of such old, obstructive, entrenched rights. . .in a manner essentially illegal – a different legal standing upon them" (I, 199; see also III: 632,634-5), be it peacefully or through intimation of strength. This change, however, can take place exclusively through the "pressures exercised by the sort of people who have a will for the better order. . .I believe that ultimately man, collective man, has to suppress the sovereign independence of any part of the world as against a whole" (I: 199). Clissold is able to see through the control of imperial sovereignties: "He [the individual] cannot get on very much beyond our present sort of civilisation until he has contrived a world currency, a world control of staple production, a world peace – and, in fact, a world state (I: 200)." The new polity is not a white supremacy globe. In terms of race, Clissold's stance reflects a simplified Wellsian pragmatist scepticism: "I do not believe very much in all this modern fuss about races; everyone alive is, I am convinced, of mixed race, but still some of us are more white, some of us more negro, some of us more Chinese than others" (II: 481). Later in the manuscript he expands his views in the dedicated chapter "Race Fantasies" (III: 684-697); Clissold the liberal refuses "to consider even the black patches of the world as a gangrene in the body of mankind or shut any kind of men out of a possible citizenship," not seeing "why all of these

varieties should not mingle and play different parts according to their quality." It follows that "uniformity of type is impossible" in Cosmopolis, and "every race may reveal its own distinctive possibilities of ripeness" (III: 685).

Similarly to Wells's plan in *The Open Conspiracy*, however, Clissold's rationale is also tied, more generally, to echoes of Britain's anti-democratic thought; in Carlylean tones he envisions his cultural elite: "I look for a ripening élite of mature and educated minds. . .I do not look to the mass of people for any help at all. I am thinking of an aristocratic and not a democratic revolution. . .they will be men and women of experience, who have learnt about human affairs by handling them" (I: 200, 204). In *Culture and Society* Raymond Williams rightly saw a trajectory of continuity between Carlyle's "aristocracy of talent" and Wells's imaginary elite;[259] as in the prospectus of *Anticipations*, however, Wells tended more towards Plato's Republic and the guardian idea than any Right-wing, totalitarian fantasy. The economist John Maynard Keynes, who also figures in Wells's novel as an ideal participant of this world reconstruction, noted nonetheless the inescapable and evident controversy at the roots of the Conspiracy: "Clissold's direction is to the Left – far, far to the Left; but he seeks to summon from the Right the creative force and the constructive will which is to carry him there." Keynes notes that William "describes himself as being temperamentally and fundamentally a liberal. But political Liberalism must die 'to be born again with a firmer features and a clearer will'."[260] E. B. Osborne's review expressed a more definite cheap shot view, insisting that Wells was "moving slowly but surely towards the Right, and if his present rate of progress is maintained, he will in almost five years become an unofficial member of the Conservative Party."[261] This criticism sounded, obviously, as anathema to Wells's ears. The young Clissold defines himself as a revolutionary within the current imperial system, thus putting himself in ideological struggle with the blood inheritance of his father who, although not a "villain" (153) in his son's eye, embodies a type of conservative individualism substantially different from Clissold's socialist revival and cosmopolitan outlook. The moral is clear: Clissold's father ended his life in fraud submerged by his ego and lust for a career; by contrast, Clissold's ideas on society, as described in his testament/manuscript, are rooted on a disciplined, Wellsian rejection of egoism. Wells intended Clissold as "a sort of general statement of a new liberalism;" specifically, writing to the anti-socialist and conservative editor of the *Daily Express*, Ralph D. Blumenfeld, Wells acknowledged the ideas in the novel running "flatly counter to what a good Conservative paper is supposed to print."[262]

[259] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London: Penguin Random House, 1963), 221.
[260] John Maynard Keynes, "One of Wells's worlds," *The New Republic*, February 1, 1927.
[261] Osborne, "Mr Wells's New Novel," 141.
[262] *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 3, 209.

But Wells is writing a novel on life, and his artistic agenda is as reactionary as his political views. In regard to the present politicalized manuscript, William Clissold informs that "it is not exactly an autobiography I want to write, and not exactly a book of confessions" (I: 26); he expresses the governing motif behind such writing project: "I want it to be a picture of everything as it is reflected through the brain" (I: 27). In the 1920s, as many other British writers, obviously, Wells too was influenced by Carl Gustav Jung and Sigmund Freud's pioneering theories on the mind.[263] At first sight, Clissold's assertion of freedom in the presentation of received images – belonging more to the school of impressionism – cannot be ascribed to anything typically "Wellsian;" in this regard, rather, the attentive reader would note that the aspiring autobiographer is rather adhering to the well-known inquiry by Virginia Woolf's 1919 inquiry into the quality of the mind, and its ideal representation in literature:

> Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, and incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. [264]

Life shows, does not tell. Being the mind a free system of reception, Woolf advocates for freedom in the writing enterprise. Unlike Woolf's system of impressions, however, Clissold immediately characterises his view on life, seeing as it as if from above, gathering impressions to construct *the* world. Clissold's life, in other words, is not reducible to self-conscious impression. It is an all-embracing view of life calling into question history and the conscience of the entire species. The single individual impression proves to be unsatisfactory to William's mental framework:

> I want it to be a picture of everything as it is reflected in my brain. I want it to be a *comprehensive picture*. The book, as I see it, should begin with my – I suppose I shall have to

[263] Wells met Jung in 1924 and was also friend to Freud. Reflections on the Jungian concept of "persona" are to be found in the first volume of *Experiment in Autobiography*, section §2 "Persona and Personality," see especially 24-37. For further discussion see Michael Draper, "Wells, Jung and the Persona," *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 30 (1987): 437-59.

[264] Virginia Woolf's famous essay "Modern Fiction" was first published in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 10 April 1919 as "Modern Novels." It then appeared in *The Common Reader* (1925). All further references are from Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader. First Series* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1953), 154.

> say – "metaphysics;" it should display my *orbis terrarum*, and then it should come down to the spectacle of mankind as I apprehend it and my place in that history, and so to the immediate affairs of everyday life, to moods, passions, experiences, lessons, and at last to the faith and purpose that sustain me and fill my mind at the present time and make living on worth while. The main objective is that faith and purpose. All the rest will lead up to that, to how and why I accept life and go on living. (I: 27) [italics mine]

William, having stated his purpose, clarifies through a Fordian impressionist metaphor that "it is not my intention to be mystical. It is the world in the crystal I want to write about, this crystal into which I seem to have been looking now and living for nine-and fifty years" (I: 27).[265] The narrator reassures that "all these impressions are bright and immense in my mind" (I: 37). But impressions, in Clissold's brain, tend towards totality, not the momentarily perceived frame.

What is striking, which testifies the extent to which Wells detaches from Ford and Woolf's sensibilities, and situates himself into the experimentalist tradition of Sterne with the novel form, is that William Clissold's prose work is anything but self-centred. Self-consciousness leaves the floor to world-consciousness. A major part of the book, as we have said, is devoted not to William's episodes or life specifically, but to the life and ideas of his brother Dickons in relation to pre and post-war periods; the novel is also composed by long discussions in admirable journalistic prose on the capitalist system (I: 168-169), along with a denigrating "psycho-analysis of Karl Marx" (I: 178-193), or a dense section on "the history of toil through the ages" since 3000 BC (I: 211-245). "This book," William aggressively anticipates, "is not going to be a home of rest for tired readers" (I: 208). Ironically, it is not until Book the Fourth, §1 of Volume II that Clissold realizes he is not adhering to a common pattern of narration: "But now I must come to my own personal history, which perhaps I have kept back unduly. . .to tell the story fairly I must go back to my student days" (II: 407); even then, however, he betrays his premise and does not refrain to discuss collectively the nature and "stress of youth": "The creature is still at bottom the child of Old Man of the rough Stone Age, half-man, half-ape, and wholly egotist;" he further explains that "its adaptation is imperfect, as adolescence comes on there is a struggle between the necessities that keep it tame and social and the deep-seated urgencies of its past" (II: 407), and so forth, for the next pages – the anthropological

[265] In "On Impressionism," memorably, Ford beautifully writes: "For impressionism is a thing altogether momentary. . . Indeed, I suppose that Impressionism exists to render those queer effects of real life that are like so many views seen through bright glass – through glass so bright that whilst you perceive through it a landscape or a backyard, you are aware that, on its surface, it reflects a face of a person behind you. For the whole of life is really like that; we are almost always in one place with our minds somewhere quite other" ("On Impressionism," 173-74). First published in *Poetry and Drama* (1914).

perspective overwrites the individual history. Wells's novel distorts, expands and includes the perceptions of the mind.

The reality is that the ideas of his brother, of himself, of the "race," all coincide. This is the crucial concept that Clissold aims to convey. Wells the "scientific" author lies as a giant behind the fictional frame, a presence beyond the textual space which gives added meaning to the reading experience. The empirical author, voluntarily and radically hidden between the bulk of pages, figures rapidly in the narrative with a singular authorial intrusion which alludes to *The Outline of History*: "My distant cousin Wells – if a character may for once turn on his creator and be frank about him – has written frequently and abundantly of the supreme necessity of education, of that race he detects in human affairs between 'education and catastrophe'" (III: 699).[266] Past, present, future, is what matters to Clissold's manuscript of universal character. Essentially, the protagonist's mind belongs peculiarly to an "idea of the common mental being of our race, this Racial Man to which all our individual lives consciously or unconsciously are contributory and subordinate, as if it were an outcome," he concludes, "of the new biological outlook upon the universe" (I: 89).

William genuinely cares about his miscellaneous work, precisely as much as Wells cares about the novel's inclusive character. Indebted to the rambling modality of *Tristram Shandy*, certain episodes in *Clissold* are ingenious excursions into the art of writing and its expected codes:

> I WISH I knew more of the practical side of literature. I suppose that after a craftsman has written six or seven "works" he learns so well how to set about his business that he writes on strongly and confidently from the very first word, and has—I think Stevenson explains as much somewhere—the end of his book latent in his opening paragraph. But I have been beating about the bush for five sections and making notes for various matters that must come in later, and still I doubt if I have told anything at all about my world. Instead I have written about my childhood and made a sketch of my host at lunch. It is like the way one draws on the blotting-paper in a board-room. Unless—unpleasant thought!—it is the onset of the garrulous stage. . .Perhaps, after all, the proper way is to go directly to the core of the matter. Even though that may mean

[266] The first and only other reference to Wells, wittily, is in Volume I, section §13 "Promethean": "Someone mentioned a distant relative of mine, Wells, who had employed many religious expressions in a book called "God, the Invisible King;" a Manichean book, said somebody, neither Greek nor Hebrew, but Persian. The writer in question had gone very far indeed in this resuscitation of theological terms and in his recommendation of prayer and suchlike exercises. Too fair, said someone. I agreed. I had already talked about that with Wells himself, and it was plain to me that this God the Invisible King of his was not so much God, in the sense in which people understand that word, as Prometheus; it was a titanic and not a divine being." *God the Invisible King* (London: Cassell, 1917) was a controversial theological tract published in 1917 by Cassell. In the aftermath of the war, Wells, tending towards a form of deism, developed an unorthodox idea of a personal "God," equating it to an escape from the self; it was a free idea of God liberated from the restraints of religious dogmas. Fundamentally, the tract was a discourse of reaction against WWII slogans of devotion to "King and Country." It was another contribution towards the establishment of Wells's cosmopolitan World State: "So that if you prefer not to say that there will be no church, if you choose rather to declare that the world-state is God's church, you may have it so if you will" (Chapter the Seventh, "The Idea of a Church," §5 "The State is God's Instrument" 200).

> stiff going for a bit for both writer and reader. How in the most general terms do I apprehend life? (I: 43-44)

Life and its telling are at the centre of the narrator's preoccupations. Section §10 "Irruption of Mimosa" at the end of Volume II, reveals, for instance, Wells's masterful ability in demystifying the mechanisms of the novel. William complains in his manuscript for being interrupted in his writing phase by his lover Clementina, who seems to recurrently dissipate Clissold's (and Wells's) socio-political excursions. More than once, Clementina, "who habitually dismisses three-quarters of human concerns as uninteresting" (209), represents in the book the type of antagonistic force to Clissold's political idealism. Interestingly from a metafictional perspective, she brings, in other terms, the element of beauty – supposedly exterior to prosaic politics – which is a major ingredient of novelistic exploration:

> This morning my work has been interrupted. I have been raided and assaulted by Clementina. She has come into the room with an armful of mimosa, iris, and white and purple stock, and stuck this pretty stuff all over the place. She has made a great disturbance because I was not going to have my lunch out of doors in the sun – they are laying it out there now all over again – and her beastly little animated muff of a dog has chased my grey cat up the Japanese medlar. It is the fifteenth of January, and she declares the Provençal spring arrived. But that is not reason why she should constitute herself Primavera and cumber my study with an excess of flowers. (I: 205)

Excess of political discussion over the ecstatic beauty of flora; that is Clissold's prerogative which Clementina seems to dissolve with her attempt to revive a purely literary moment of descriptive scene surrounding the characters.[267] Proof is that E. B. Osborne, who aversely described the novel as "an orgy of opinions," commented precisely that "there are clever bits of characterisation and descriptions, such as that of a Provencal *mas,* which are like glimpses of a novel that is a true drama in its dramatic setting."[268] Wells was well aware of the possibilities of the novel; but "why," William Clissold asks echoing Wells's external note to the novel, "should one entertain the idea that a man is no more than his face, his mannerisms, and his love affairs?" (I: 206); implicitly asserting the Wellsian view of the characterization: "If a man is to be rendered completely, there must first be the man and his universe, then the man and history, and only after that man and other men and womankind" (I:

[267] In another recounted scene of Volume II, William finds "the nightingales too abundant and very tiresome with their vain repetitions, but Clementina does not agree; her mind has been poisoned by literature, and she does not really hear the tedious noises they make, she hears Keats" (492).
[268] Osborne, "Mr Wells's New Novel," 140.

206). Subtly, and successfully, Wells is willingly counterattacking the traditional plot of the novel based on marriage and love affairs. He rejects, artistically conscious, the fully developed inner feelings of characters; namely, those "passionate and emotional reactions" which D. H. Lawrence found absent in *Clissold* in his critical review. Clementina, as many readers of Wells's later novels, including Virginia Woolf, Ford Madox Ford, and Henry James, is annoyed by William's long-winded sociological discussions; she "seizes upon some pages of this manuscript. 'Oh! Marx!' she cried with a note of disgust. 'Capitalism! Revolution!' She put the sheets down. 'I thought you were writing your life. I thought I was going to read something about you. I thought it was going to be about yourself!" About individual consciousness.

In another moment of metafictional acumen, Clissold's wife inquires towards the end of the manuscript: "'But why should you care for a World Republic you will never see?' asks Clementina, who has set herself with a gathering tenacity to understand what I and this book are about" (744). The whole narrative of William Clissold, as a matter of fact, is a disquisition into the whole human adventure in which the narrator proves to be, from his calm room, incapacitated to think of himself as a single entity – any action, emotional involvement, or individual thought, belong to an ampler narrative; rather, he reflects in the preparatory phase of Volume I that "at last I seem to have gathered everything together, everything essential, into the view from this window. Here I have got the present moment, the long past, the future, and the deep of space. Here for a moment I may pause" (I: 121). Wells stretches the novel to the outer cosmos in order to define human character and life. It is a suggestive perspective on life whose metaphysical trajectory stretches from a localized enclosed space (the mind/the private) to a locus of endless, Wellsian proportions (the world-the universe/the public).

All world's affairs and imperial conflicts thus invade the fictional space of the novel through the extra-textual written word of newspapers visiting Clissold's home. From his quiet small farmer's house in Provence where Clissold is writing, Villa Jasmin, the mind begins its journey through seas and hills, deserts and far-off life, worldwide. It is the eagle-eye of fiction which allows Wells, in Volume I, to escort the English reader abroad; the writer's prose becomes a melting pot of communicative forms:

> On my other table lie the English newspapers of three days ago, and the *Quotidien* of yesterday and to-day's *Éclaireur* and *Petit Niçois*. And there are various London weeklies and the weekly *Times* and *Manchester Guardian*. As I recall what I have read in them to-day the view from my window seems to extend further and further, my boundaries sweep forward across the Mediterranean eastward and westward to Oran and Morocco, to the Atlas, to Egypt and the

> Soudan, to Arabia Petræa and the Yemen, and the Hadramaut, to Basra and Ormuz and India and China, and northward across the Pamir uplands, and on and on until at last they enclose the globe and meet themselves again in a shrinking coil and vanish. Over there in Africa, out beyond the hump of the Estérel and across the waters just over the roundness of the world, the Spanish are retreating before the recalcitrant tribesmen of the Riff under Abdel Krim. It is a hustled retreat, and the Spaniards are losing heavily and are likely to lose more. They can be having no rest to-night. Even now as I write some poor peasant lad from Andalusia or Castile may be writhing in agony with a sniper's bullet flattened among his freshly shattered vertebræ. Down he goes, and if there is no ambulance at hand they may have to leave him to the mercy of the pursuers. Or they may not trust that mercy. I can almost see those scattered figures of distress straggling across vast and lonely and rocky places and the crumpled bodies lying still, until the prowling beasts discover them. That, too, is in my present world as surely as these tranquil hills. (I: 112)

The hybridity of language, which is what Lawrence bitterly attacked, testifies the fact, as Bakhtin recalls, that the novel form is in truth language in evolving development, which "has no canon of its own," since, fundamentally, "only individual examples of the novel are historically active, not a generic canon as such."[269] Clissold reads through various newspapers in his small space and translates the language of news into an informative panorama to be received by the local reader of "Little England." Through it, he/she can now imagine, with the narrator, crude scenes blood, upheavals, and national prevarications. Wells cleverly inserts in the literary language a whole system of extratextual pieces of information, re-instating the novel form, and literature, as an open system to the world. The "tranquil hills" of British life are so abruptly dissolved by Clissold's impressions.

> The Spanish retreat is leaving the French garrisons in Morocco very uncomfortably in the air, and all North Africa, I gather, is uneasy and dangerous—more uneasy and dangerous than the papers will admit. This afternoon there has been a great rattling of machine-guns from amidst the hills beyond Grasse. There is a garrison here of neat yellowish men, Malagasy I am told, and they are polishing up their tactics, for who knows what may happen? The other day as I came here from London I lifted the blind of my sleeping-compartment in the early morning and looked out on that queer contorted country about Toulon, which is so much more Spanish and African than French, and there in the crystalline light of dawn I saw companies of khaki-clad, brown-skinned men with mules and mountain guns engaged among the brown rocks in some manœuvres. A little further to the east in my outlook to-night there are British warships steaming through the darkness to Alexandria. Egypt also is astir. The Sirdar of the Soudan has been very deliberately murdered in Cairo by a band of students, and the new Tory Government in London is showing the strong hand. Beyond the Red Sea, Mecca is in the hands of the Moslem puritans and the king the British set up has failed to recover the city. All along the festering lines of contact between Islam and the Western world there is crisis now. Out of hearing of me, out of sight of me, and yet wonderfully close to my imagination, there must be scores of thousands of human beings at an extremity of stress and excitement to-night because

[269] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Epic and the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 3.

> of reasonless conflicts, disorders of relationship, which are still almost as destructive and fruitless in human affairs as earthquakes and cyclones. (I: 113-14)

And again, Clissold's mind, through the imaginative aid of journalistic prose, flies throughout the borders of the British Empire, from China to Bolshevik Russia, to the racial conflicts of the United States of America:

> These newspapers just faintly visible in the shadow contain, I reflect, much other disturbing matter. There are particulars of religious riots in India, of the struggles of military leaders for power in China; considerable armies are in conflict there; the British Government has refused to ratify its predecessor's treaty with Soviet Russia, and there also trouble gathers. From America there was little to hand to-day except a tale of rising prices and a paragraph about a fight and bloodshed between the Klu-Klux-Klan and a State militia. . . πάντα ῥεῖ, flux universal. It is only because I may sit at this window for so brief a time that I do not see this scene dissolve visibly and pass and give place other unprecedented and equally transitory appearances. Of one thing only can I be sure, that all this goes, peasants and pleasure cities, ships and empires, weapons, armies, races, religions, and all the present fashions of man's life. (I: 114, 116).

The Greek notion of πάντα ῥεῖ (*pantha rei*) recurs throughout the narrative; all is fluid and in evolving phase, empires' courses and consciences.[270] Language too is transient, like Clissold's book which does not reach its end. The novel itself is a passing word on the world.

Before concluding the manuscript of the First Book, widely corrected, and revised by William Clissold, the writer reminds himself and the reader that "at last I feel I have made my ground clear and disposed of my premises, and tomorrow I will go on writing about the more human things of life, about social organization and toil and business and possessions" (I: 116); in a global elaboration of "the hopes and desires of men and women, their loves and their ambitions, their generosities and disregards, and about the change that is going on in all relationships. . .a new phase of history is near its beginning" (I: 116-117). This was the new phase that was, as we have fully explored, a variation of Wells's "Open Conspiracy." And the book can then dissolve, with even William Clissold's mind. Richard Clissold reminds us in the concluding lines of the epilogue: "πάντα ῥεῖ. He [William] too has

[270] There is a well-realized symbolism through water images alluding to the transience of the writing act. In his villa Provençal *mas* we find a fountain with the words inscribed: "There is always a sound of running water about this house. A stream comes down a little channel from above; close by the wall a mouth of stone, with lips like an angry ape's, spouts water into the big washing fountain; below the terrace a dispersed trickle of water falls from a domed niche adorned with an abundance of dripping hart's-tongue and maidenhair fern, into yet another basin of stone. There is a third fountain in a corner where the irises grow, a little terra-cotta affair put there by my predecessor. It has an inscription in Greek letters, a phrase that Heraclitus made: πάντα ῥεῖ, all things flow. There is no enduring thing" (I: 102); in volume III, discussing the New Phase, Clissold writes: "This next mental step has still to be taken even by the majority of educated and intelligent people to-day. They have still to apply πάντα ῥεῖ to their own affairs, to their activities to-day and their plans for to-morrow" (III: 615).

passed. These words, and they are wonderful words and come like a refrain throughout his book, shall be put as his sole epitaph upon his grave" (III: 885). Yet ideas remain and enlarge, because, in the end, all literature is attempt.

To conclude, *Clissold* is a certainly strange novel, and positively so; through the fragments of an individuality it aims to create a collective consciousness. It is by far the most Sterneian of Wells's fictional output of his public. As the title page goes, it is "a novel from a new angle," complex and wide, it is also the most self-conscious assertion of Wells as novelist. In many ways the plot progression is structured indeed, as D. H. Lawrence observed, as a papier-collé. But, what must be acknowledged, is that this wide inclusiveness of journalistic prose and self-reflecting modality is its very artistic force; *Clissold* shows the very plasticity of the novel form and its shapeshifting potential. In an age of formal and thematic innovation in English literature, along with Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) or Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), *Clissold* remains a crucial elaboration on the moral limits of competitive imperialism in the post-war crisis, and, incontestably, this prose work constitutes the most ambitious experiment within Wells's artistic laboratory.

In the last few pages to his *Experiments in Autobiography*, which, very akin to Clissold's work, is more of a "cosmo-biography" (*EA* 2: 610), or a "psycho-political autobiography" (800), H. G. Wells comments, with a note of defiance:

> Some readers will object that this is political discussion and not autobiography. It is political discussion but also it is autobiography. . .I have deliberately put many vivid memories and lively interludes aside, ignored a swarm of interesting personalities I have encountered, cut out great secondary systems of sympathy and said nothing whatever about all sorts of bright, beautiful and pleasant things that have whirled about me entertainingly for a time and then flow off at a tangent. I could write gaily of travels, mountain tramps, landfalls, cities, music, plays, gardens that have pleased me…" (*EA* 2: 781, 823)

He understands: "what remains is the story of one of the most pampered and irresponsible of 'Advanced Thinkers,' an uninvited adventurer who has felt himself free to criticize established things without restraint;" who, the autobiographer continues "has spent his life planning how to wind up most of them and get rid of them, and who has been tolerated almost incredibly during this subversive career" (*EA* 2: 823). With the mind of *Clissold* partially dissected, the next chapter can expand in detail Wells's understanding of art in relation to his contemporaries. The following two chapters thus purport to complete the reconstruction of H. G. Wells the "Advanced Thinker," as he identifies himself; in other terms, Wells's social role situates itself in a complex conceptual entanglement,

between two hot debated points in the academic field: the idea of "Author," still constituting in Compagnon's words "the most controversial point in literary studies,"[271] and the strictly related polysemic category of the "Intellectual(s)."

[271] Antoine Compagnon, *Il demone della teoria. Letteratura e senso comune* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2000), 44.

3. Death of the Author, Death of the Intellectual

And every real artist in words who deserts the occupation of pure imaginative writing to immerse himself in the Public Affairs that have ruined our world, takes away a little of our chance of coming alive through these lugubrious times. And when it is a very real artist with a great hold on the people, it is by so much the more a pity…

Ford Madox Ford, "H. G. Wells." *Mightier than the Sword* (1938)

The return of H. G. Wells may be the return of the Author(s), of person and personality in fiction; of the novel in its multi-faceted forms and its ironical potential. The main "problem" with H. G. Wells's works after 1900, it is now clear, has never concerned a deficiency of statement in his prose; the issue, if any, was primarily in terms of a long suspicious concept: authorial intention. Wells always emerges in his textual world as a sign of the authorial responsibility to promote change; like Socrates in Plato's *Republic*, Wells entertains a rhetoric idea of the novel. We have so far shown there has been a crime in literary history. We have a identified the body (H. G. Wells), along with the driving ideas of the late man; then, we have gathered some major textual evidence in *Clissold*, and recorded a polyphony from many different standpoints. We may now pause on the critical lineage leading to the cultural effacement of H. G. Wells; within a larger critical context, the author's theory of art in relation to the politics of empire will then be fully understood. It is pivotal to bring to the fore a series of theoretical considerations on the authorial profession, which is Wells's primary occupation in society, and his role as public intellectual whose primary activity was devoted to reform the State in its imperialist system. The two coincided. This end was realized both in utopian-oriented works of fiction, as in *Clissold* (1926), or in aggressive essay writings, such as *The Open Conspiracy* (1928). Given this intense, miscellaneous public activity, as we have seen, contemporaries, and particularly from the 1910s onwards began to refer publicly to Wells as an "intellectual."[272] As necessary preliminary clarification, following Stefan Collini, the term intellectual "does not refer to an occupational category," but rather, in a cultural sense, it "designates performance in a role or, more accurately, a structure of relations."[273] The figure of the intellectual, a person of certain cultural standing as I here

[272] For a positive 1920 assessment compare, for example, Ashby Stanley Royal, "The Intellectual Position of H. G. Wells," *Texas Review* 6 (1920): 67-79. A most interesting early study on Wells as full-fledged "intellectual" remains Van Wyck Brooks, *The World of H. G. Wells* (1915) already mentioned in Chapter 1.

[273] Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds*, 52. For Collini, the role of the intellectual "always involves," in a matter of degrees, "the intersection of four elements or dimensions: 1) the attainment of a level of achievement in an activity which is esteemed for the non-instrumental, creative, analytical, or scholarly capacities it involves; 2) The availability of media or channels or expression which reach publics other than that at which the initial 'qualifying' activity itself is aimed; 3) The expression of views, themes, or topics which successfully articulate or engage with some of the general concerns of those publics; 4) The establishment of a reputation for being likely to have important and interesting things of this type to say and for having the willingness and capacities to say them effectively through the appropriate media" (52).

intend it, requires necessarily a vast reception of the person's ideas, the attention, and the heavy debate from a public; the specific quality and contents of views of the single intellectuals, whether vitriolically disparaged or enthusiastically accepted, cannot instead constitutes a fruitful parameter of comparison to define *who* can be identified as "intellectual."[274] Furthermore, as Collini rightly insists in his study, and a major point to avoid crude generalizations with the intellectual category, is that: "the relationship with politics is only *one* form of the larger structure implicit in the relevant sense of 'the intellectual' in English usage" [italics mine].[275] The political sense of intellectual in relation to the British Empire, that is, the extra-institutional cultural activity performed to reform primarily educational and military systems, is the one I am addressing in this discussion.

Defining what Wells represented in terms of social role has never been an easy task. In *Aspects of H. G. Wells*, the critic Patrick Braybrooke would write in 1928: "It is not really easy to say what is the position of Wells to-day. . .At the present time Wells is famous as a novelist, as a writer of sociological and political treatises, as a journalist, as a prophet, as a thinker concerning religious affairs. Wells is conscious of a distinct mission;" Braybrooke remarks that "he is the type of man who is not content to use the literary art to amuse only, he wishes to employ it to instruct, construct, destroy, annoy, and definitely suggest reforms."[276] Wells, he confirms, "is possessed of literary genius of high order."[277] In the literary critic's opinion, comparing the author to Rudyard Kipling's imperial career, Wells's "main value as world reformer, which is obviously his great ambition, is his insistence on something that is perhaps defined as service – not self."[278] As literary scholars, to treat Wells's literary texts in the context of imperialism, being the novel a preferred medium for the author's intellectual activity, we need necessarily an idea of author belonging to the public: vivid, dialogically boisterous, human, and desperately mortal.[279] As Eric Donald Hirsch's historicist point reminds, "all valid interpretation of every sort is founded on the re-cognition of what an author meant."[280] We also need a reading community which is identifiable in history, and, as often the case in human

[274] On the vague semantics, prejudices and cultural expectation from the term "intellectual" in the English-speaking world, see especially the historical discussion by Collini, *Absent Minds*, 1-44.
[275] Ibid., 216. He specifies: "A figure of acknowledged cultural standing who communicates with a true public on, let us say, the question of the meaning of life and death or on ideals of love and sex is neither acting as a member of a group nor 'intervening' in politics: but that figure may quite properly be described as acting in the role of 'an intellectual'" (62).
[276] Braybrooke, *Aspects of H. G. Wells*, 167.
[277] Ibid., 169.
[278] Ibid., 167. In the 1920s Braybrooke was a leading English critic. Two years earlier he also wrote a book on Rudyard Kipling, *Kipling and His Soldiers* (London: The C. W. Daniel Company, 1926).
[279] I shily borrow this "desperately mortal" from David C. Smith's biography. It is an accurate description of Wells's life.
[280] Eric Donald Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 126. Beyond the spheres of the "conscious" or "unconscious" intention, which I do not deem relevant for critical understanding, Hirsch's distinction between *meaning* (the original semantic content of the utterance) and *significance* (all subsequent understanding of the utterance's semantics) contribute, in fact, to understand a text in its original public reception. Writing is primarily a public action. See also Hirsch, "Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted," *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984): 202-25.

intercourses, in a conflict of ethical and political values. Let us then re-trace how Theory, in historical context, put H. G. Wells "the author" aside; it is a trajectory of anti-authorialism which leads us back from Roland Barthes to American New Criticism. From a critical vantage ground, we then may escape certain interpretative dogmas and re-think anew Wells's artistic specificity.

3.1 The Intentional Fallacy and the (Un-)Intentional Death of H. G. Wells

One of the most enduring and controversial myths of modernity in literary theory is undoubtedly the desire for the "Death of the Author." Wells, I contend, although dismissed in all critical debates on the topic, occupies a major role in the "Death of the Author" mythology. The controversial notion first appeared, it is well known, under these terms in Roland Barthes's homonymous essay.[281] Barthes, to liberate the textual experience from the author's presence, famously advocated in 1969 the suppression of the author to the advantage of the reader.[282] Somewhat prophetically, the Death of the Author would coincide, exactly, with the Birth of the Reader. In Barthes's bold design there is also an ideological drive countering capitalist ideology. The author role is fundamentally a bourgeois social representation, so that removing the author represents for Barthes an assertive manifestation of freedom. It is a nihilistic project too, for murdering the author equals to abolishing any tyranny deriving from ampler schemes governing the reading experience. At first, "the Death of the Author" may seem a beneficial *reader-oriented* approach. The critic's de-materialized reader is rather, in abstract contents, "the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology."[283] The evident

[281] The essay first appeared in the American journal *Aspen,* Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Aspen* 5-6, 1967. All subsequent references are from Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-48. It dealt especially, although not exclusively, with the language of poetry, but its influence has been since directed to literature as a whole. On the concept of the Death of the Author the literature is vast. For major criticism see Michel Foucault's 1969 evaluation of Barthes's concept in "What is an Author?" *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113-38. See also Alexander Nehamas, "What an Author Is," *The Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 685-91; Harvey Hix, "Morte D'Author: An Autopsy," *The Iowa Review* 17 (1987): 131-50. For my discussion I am also particularly indebted to the two excellent Italian studies by Carla Benedetti, *L'ombra lunga dell'autore* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1999) and Roberto Talamo, *Intenzione e Iniziativa. Teorie della letteratura dagli anni Venti a oggi* (Bari: Progedit, 2013). For a recent evaluation see Jane Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author. Reading and Writing in Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). The most solid attack on Barthes and the theorical trap of post-structuralism is Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author. Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, 3d edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008). Comprehensive, updated and balanced, which is to be a major reference book in the debate for the years to come is John Farell, *The Varieties of Authorial Intention*. H. G. Wells, strangely, never figures in these critical discussions.

[282] In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973; translated in English in 1975 by Richard Miller) Barthes will tentatively re-insert the author figure as *desire*; but the text, again, remains a fetish object which is *not dialogue*; the author a "jolly," the dead of the bridge without concrete function.

[283] Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 148.

problem lurking beneath such theory, clearly, is that Barthes's reader and textual unity are forcibly exported from their specific historical context and outside society as primarily a communicative space.[284] In "What is an Author?" (1969), also Foucault's semiotics, although less severely and prophetically than Barthes, would famously bypass the author's complexity in history; for the purpose of his paper he shapeshifted the creative entity into a function of the text, setting "aside a sociohistorical analysis of the author."[285] As Carla Benedetti convincingly argues, the theory of Death of the Author only leaves us, readers and writers, with "a devalued idea of art," an "epigonal idea of literature" tending towards paralysis.[286] It is difficult not to share the critic's view, when Wells's disappearance from our critical lenses is mostly the result of a critical aversion endemic to literary interpretation; namely, the aversion towards the Author as human individual, and, by consequence, of the suspicious concept of "authorial intention." Re-thinking Theory in History, through Wells's intellectual presence, may allow us to reflect in-depth on the ingrained habits of literary criticism, indeed; but also on the mechanisms of artistic production of the early twentieth century and specifically involving the authorial responsibility towards the literary object.

We already argued in Chapter 1 that Wells's literary output cannot be accounted from formalist and post-structuralist parameters. Mere aesthetic principles, and a search for critical objectivity focussing on the fictional text alone leads to critical blindness, and an historical vacuum that any serious literary interpretation may desirably escape. After all, in Hirsch's famous phrasing, and outlining a natural and fundamental conception, "there is no magic land of meaning outside human consciousness."[287] Wells's realm is primarily the realm of the ideas, as *Clissold* amply testifies, and responsible intervention; rather, the author's texts are to be intended, in Paul Ricœur's philosophy of action, as conscious acts, that is initiatives with responsibility from *capable human*

[284] Generally, on the fallacy of formalist approaches in excluding the world in the field of literary criticism, see Tzvetan Todorov's book-manifesto, *La Littérature en peril* (Paris: Flammarion, 2007).
[285] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" 115. A series of theoretical distinctions for the "author" concept would be established by structuralist and semiotic traditions, such as Wayne Booth, "Implied Author/Career-Author," or Umberto Eco's "Model Author." The literature is vast; in exemplary fashion compare Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983) and Umberto Eco, *Lector in Fabula* (Milano: Bompiani, 1985); *Sei passeggiate nei boschi narrative* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1994). See also Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1986); Compare also Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Although critically helpful for close-reading, I agree with Carla Benedetti and John Farrell that the plethora of definitions to incapsulate a functional idea of "Author" would somewhat render the scene even more complex; not to say dehumanizing.
[286] Benedetti, *L'ombra lunga dell'autore*.
[287] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 4. Hirsch would return on the concept in "Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted," *Critical Inquiry* 11 (December 1984): "I roundly asserted that 'there is no magic land of meaning outside human consciousness'. That assertion would be true if, godlike, we could serve the whole of human consciousness, past, present, and future. . .Hence there *is* a land of meanings beyond past and present human consciousness – the land of the future. What I should have said originally is that there is no magic land of meanings beyond the whole extent of human consciousness, past, present, and future (202).

agents in their historical present.[288] Ricœur himself, in the tradition of Kant, and tending towards Wells's collective epistemology, believes in a humanity which is a "specie solo in quanto è storia; e, reciprocamente, penso che, perché vi sia storia, l'umanità intera ne debba essere il soggetto, come una sorta di singolare collettivo."[289] The text impacts, under this more convincing view which helps us better frame Wells's art, willingly and energetically, the world.

Developing Ricœur's position, the critic Roberto Talamo has recently suggestively proposed in *Intenzione e Iniziativa* (2013) to speak of "initiative" *in* the text (not *of* the text as the formalist fallacy would imply), rather than the term "intention." While I may not straightforwardly believe literary criticism should renounce using the word "intention," Talamo's view leads also to an advantageous point of semantic disambiguation; in effect, "intention" could misleadingly allude to more unfathomable spheres of conscious and unconscious intention, belonging to the psychological processes of the mind.[290] In Roberto Talamo's ideological analysis, therefore:

> Dal punto di vista dell'iniziativa, l'autore è uno solo, quello reale che si produce nella realtà dei contesti pertinenti attraverso la configurazione intenzionale della sua opera; inoltre l'interpretazione dei lettori di ri-uso (o iniziativa di ri-uso) non è un libero gioco ermeneutico, ma è sempre frutto di una dialogicità responsabile nei confronti della prima iniziativa d'autore: non riconoscere gli autori vuol dire rendere irriconoscibile anche il lavoro critico delle scienze letterarie.[291]
>
> [Translation mine: From the point of view of initiative, the author is only one, the real one who produces himself in the reality of pertinent contexts through the intentional configuration of his work; besides the interpretation of readers of re-usage (or initiative of re-usage) is not a free hermeneutical play, but it is always the result of a responsible dialogicity in regard to the author's first initiative: not acknowledging the authors mean rendering unacknowledgeable also the work of literary criticism.]

Understanding Wells's texts as public dialogue, and mainly *human actions,* is therefore the necessary theoretical step for a concrete revaluation of his literary system. I here also accept Farrell's intentionalist starting consideration in *The Varieties of Authorial Intention* (2017), running closely to

[288] See Ricœur, "L'iniziativa," in *Dal testo all'azione. Saggi di Ermeneutica* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1986); *Tempo e Racconto* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1988); Ricœur expands his theory of action in *Tempo e Racconto*: "These are the phases that the general analysis of initiative goes through: thanks to "I can," the initiative marks my power; thanks to "I do," it becomes my act; thanks to the intervention it inscribes my act in the course of things, thus making the living present coincide with any instant; thanks to the promise kept, it gives the present the strength to persevere, in a word, to last. Thanks to this last feature, the initiative has an ethical meaning that announces the more specifically political and cosmopolitan characterization of the historical present" (translation mine; vol. 3, 355).
[289] Ricœur, *Dal testo all'azione*, 265.
[290] Talamo, *Intenzione e Iniziativa*. See especially 20-26 for Talamo's theoretical development on Ricœur's theory of action.
[291] Ibid., 102.

Ricœur's philosophy, that "the creation of a work of art is a human action, and it is by the presence of intention that we distinguish actions from other behaviour."[292] The author's "initiative" can be detected, indeed, in the textual space; which is, above all, a public performance. As Parrinder observes, "while in the overcrowded and post-Freudian culture of today we are exhorted to find self-realization in the 'inner space' of personal experience, the psychic resources Wells depicts express themselves outwardly, in the exploration of time and space and," the critic well understands it, "in the construction of new societies; they look for their fulfilment to the idea of Utopia."[293] And to desire Utopia we need an idea of the author.

The question of the author is inevitably related to a person's ideology – which includes the realm of politics.[294] In this respect, and approaching Wells's years and the English-speaking context, we can delve more specifically into that intricate genealogy of thought which evolved into the stigma of the author's presence and ideology in literary works.[295] The most immediate origins are to be found in the last two centuries. Barthes himself in his historical excursus traces varieties of anti-authorialism in nineteenth-century French writers (Mallarmé and Valéry; but also in Proust and the Surrealist movement). Mallarmé in particular is the case in point for Barthes, already envisioning the necessary fading (although never a Death in Mallarmé's conception) of the author:

> The pure work implies the disappearance of the poet-speaker who yields the initiative to words animated by the inequality revealed in their collision with one another; they illuminate one another and pass like a trail of fire over precious stones, replacing the audible breathing of earlier lyrical verse or the exalted personality which directed the phrase. The structure of a book of verse must arise throughout from internal necessity – in this way both chance and the author will be excluded . . .some symmetry, which will arise from the relation of lines within the poem and poems within the volume, will reach out beyond the volume to other poets who will themselves inscribe on spiritual space the expanding paraph of genius, anonymous and perfect like a work of art.[296]

Barthes thus promotes his French champion: "In France, Mallarme was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had

[292] Farrell, *The Varieties of Authorial Intention*, 21. Countering the theory of textual semantic autonomy, such humanist view, although unacknowledged by the critic, is strictly related to Ricœur's idea that *all* discourses are actions made by identifiable living individuals in an ethical space (Ricœur, *Dal testo all'azione*, 260; *Tempo e Racconto*, 207).
[293] Parrinder, "Introduction," *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, 3.
[294] Indeed, as Van Dijk puts it, "ideologies are not 'above' or 'between people, groups or society, but part of the minds of its members." Yet, their manifestations are in discourse, which is a public realm. See Teun A. Van Dijk, *Ideology: a Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Sage, 1998), 48.
[295] The classic reference text for authorial voice in fiction remains Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in its second edition.
[296] Quoted in Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 8-9.

been supposed to be its owner. For him, for us too, it is language which speaks, not the author. . .Mallarmé's entire poetics consists in suppressing the author in the interests of writing;" which is the interest of the reader alone, Barthes pretends. Misleadingly adhering to Benveniste's studies on the pronominal system, Barthes wants the act of writing "to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'."[297] However, Barthes largely downplays the cognitive-linguistics features of communication and fails to see that the very utterance of the first-person pronoun represents, in Benveniste's observation, and subsequent studies in linguistics, the quintessential of "human" subjectivity. "Me" [+ human] is what differentiates "I" [+ego (first person)/+human], precisely, from second and third person pronouns [+/- human].[298]

Critics, however, also generally trace the earliest origins of anti-authorialism in the British culture, when Wells himself was alive and prolific as author, opposing any theory of impersonality in art. Specifically, when T. S. Eliot first theorized in *Tradition and the Individual Talent* the necessary and required sacrifice of personality for poetical achievement: "What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality."[299] Between the 1930s and 1950s, on the banishment of the author, American New Criticism would then build its theory of interpretation prioritizing the textual space alone and consequently excluding the author as a dangerous intruder. New Criticism, it is evident, could not admit the giantism of Wells's authorial persona; crucially, one must historically acknowledge that the birth of the theoretical dogma coincides exactly with the death of Wells in 1946. The "Intentional Fallacy" now became theory. Anticipating French post-structuralism, New Criticism had already established its critical lenses on the exclusion of the historical author. Sean Burke, looking at the controversial nexus of the theory, centres the real issue at stake: "the question of the author – along within that of the extratextual referent in general (history, society, the world) – was sidelined or bracketed as the preliminary step toward evolving a formal, internal and rhetorical approach to the text."[300] It is crucial to remark that in the year of Wells's death, in 1946, the American critics William C. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley notoriously introduced the question of the "intentional fallacy," namely the assumption that the

[297] Ibid., 143.
[298] I have written elsewhere on the topic in Tiziano De Marino, *Animatezza: Analisi linguistico-cognitiva* (unpublished BA Thesis, Rome: Roma Tre University, 2013). On the nature of pronouns and the notion of animacy, that is the anthropocentric component of *human* language, compare the pioneering study by Mutsumi Yamamoto, *Animacy and Reference: A Cognitive Approach to Corpus Linguistics* (New York: Benjamins Publishing, 1999). See also John Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). See especially by Greville Corbett, *Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and *Number* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[299] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen & Co, 1920), 47. Eliot famously depicted this sacrifice through the analogy of the reaction of finely filiated platinum (the artist's personality), dissolved when entered in contact with oxygen and sulphur dioxide (the creative moment).
[300] Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 15.

author's intention is not of primary relevance for critical literary consideration.[301] As John Farrell aptly defines it in his study, the intentional fallacy discourse is a "merely theoretical taboo" resulting into an unexplainable but tangible "scholarly neurosis" which is not entirely abandoned in the academia and which, I contend, still affect our understanding of the scopes of art.[302] Originally, The New Critics' essay presented intention as "design or plan in the author's mind."[303] The two scholars originally spoke of "intention" as "the design or intention of the author," which is "neither available nor desirables as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art."[304] The critical priority, thus, is to be channelled on the text itself, as a finished unity of linguistic performances – at the most, a "machine" produced by some "artificer."[305] The critics, as a result, lauded *internal* evidence over *external* data. Biographical details and secondary sources (allusions, letters, journals and all exterior non-literary textual evidence) were to be if not straightforwardly excluded, their support exceedingly minimized. This is where the Author and Wells die.

Wimsatt and Beardsley anticipate precisely Barthes inasmuch as they argue that the "poem is not the critic's own and not the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it)."[306] Insightfully, nonetheless, they understand that the "poem belongs to the public. . .the evaluation of the work of art remains public; the work is measured against something outside the author."[307] Nevertheless, echoing the fallacy beneath the "Death of the Author" mythology, I point to the way to which Wimsatt and Beardsley failed to understand the dialogic nature of literary language, which so necessary to understand Wells's textual world; they did not grasp the communicative essence between authors and readers as speech act participants *both* belonging to a public space and in a mass-oriented extratextual conversation. In this regard, Farrell recently correctly insists that "literature need not be less meaningful or intentionally guided than the language of ordinary life," thus refraining, as Wells's theory of art always advocated, "from connecting literature with higher sources of knowledge or making it a sacred, autonomous

[301] W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy, *The Sewanee Review* 54 (1946): 468-88. All further references are from W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1954), 3-18. Like Barthes's essay, this New Criticism discussion originally considered especially the language of poetry. The discussion on art and the poet's personality was somewhat anticipated, less influentially, by the debate between E. M. W. Tillyard and C. S. Lewis in *The Personal Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939). Wimsatt and Beardsley will return on the concept in W. K. Wimsatt, *Genesis: A Fallacy Revisited*, *The Disciplines of Criticism*, edited by P. Demetz, T. Green and L. Nelson (Yale: Yale University Press, 1968), 193-225; M. C. Beardsley *The Possibility of Criticism* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1970), 16-44.
[302] Farrell, *The Varieties of Authorial Intention*, 9.
[303] Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," 4
[304] Ibid., 3
[305] Ibid., 4.
[306] Ibid., 5.
[307] Ibid., 5-10.

object."[308] As Roberto Talamo correctly re-defines it, the intentional fallacy, a dangerous theorical framework indeed, does not allow us to understand works of literature primarily as an historical acts. It is essential, Talamo insists, "ricollocare gli autori in un'idea complessa di storia [to reposition authors in a complex idea of history]."[309] What New Criticism offered, in practice, was an ethically de-valuated version of literature, significantly un-Wellsian; it was an inorganic idea of text produced by language, which is literary and autonomous, and is artistically self-enclosed in its abstract purity. A work like *The World of William Clissold* became even more dissonant in the tradition of literary studies. *True* art, *pure* art, after all, as the canon came to define it, even prior to New Criticism's prescriptive theorizations, must be impersonal.

New Criticism could not account for H. G. Wells. Nor could the influential British school of Leavis's "Great Tradition," who, in 1948, in haste and anguish discarded Wells on the basis of "an elementary distinction to be made between the *discussion* of problems and ideas, and what we find in the great novelists."[310] Leavis's critical authority could adopt in the notorious debate *The Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow* (1962) the term "crass Wellsianism" to denote everything Art was not about. In his conception, expressed as early as 1932 in the first number of *Scrutiny*, Wells was "a case, a type, a portent," but a thing to remove for the survival of culture and literature.[311] And Wells was, in Virginia Woolf's accurate estimation in 1938, still "the most famous of living English novelists."[312] One year before the establishment of Leavis's canon, the formalist critic Mark Schorer in his influential 1948 essay "Technique as Discovery," focussing on Wells, had already buried the figure of author directly involved in socio-political affairs, once and for all:

> Technique alone objectifies the materials of art; hence technique alone evaluates those materials. This is the axiom which demonstrates itself so devastatingly *whenever a writer declares*, under the urgent sense of the importance of his materials (whether these are *autobiography, or social ideas, or personal passions*) – whenever such a writer declares that he cannot linger with technical refinements. That art will not tolerate such a writer H. G. Wells handsomely proves. His enormous literary energy included no respect for the techniques of his medium, and his medium takes its revenge upon his bumptiousness. "I have never taken any very great pains about writing. I am outside the hierarchy of conscious and deliberate writers

[308] Farrell, *The Varieties of Authorial Intention*, 11. Unfortunately, Wells, spiritual father of all intentionalist criticism, is never mentioned in Farrell's discussion. Farrell also reminds that "scholars of literature often think of fiction as primarily a literary phenomenon, but this is a mistake. There are non-literary fictions of all kinds, from legal fictions to outright lies. Counterfactual thinking, which deploys fiction, is an essential part of everyday life; we make use of fictions about what did not happen to explain what did" (123).
[309] Talamo, *Intenzione e Iniziativa*, 101.
[310] F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), 7.
[311] Leavis, "Babbitt Buys the World," 1932 review of *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* in *Scrutiny* I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 80-83. In the ferocious attack on Snow in *The Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow* Leavis would employ again term "portent" in reference to Snow, "spiritual son of H. G. Wells."
[312] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), 65.

> altogether. I am the absolute antithesis of Mr. James Joyce…Long ago, living in close conversational proximity to Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer, I escaped from under their immense artistic preoccupations by calling myself a journalist."[313] [italics mine]

After selectively quoting Wells's words, and without probing properly into Wells's own theory of art and his relations with James, Joyce, Conrad or Ford, Schorer concludes in all animosity and with satisfied bias: "Precisely. And he escaped – he disappeared – from literature into the annals of an era."[314] Schorer acknowledges with pleasure, but certainly prophetically, that "as James grows," Wells "disappears."[315] The critic's formalist analysis denies the presence of any conscious technique in Wells's fiction. He identifies two major flaws with Wells. First, he attacks Wells's own advocacy that art does not seek for perfection as primary objective; for Wells, art is like journalism because it is transient and therefore, like journalism, it is primarily a vehicle of ideas. In truth, the novel was Wells's most beloved prose form. The second problem for Schorer's critical outlook is exactly the energetic presence of the "author," most precisely the intellectual (and his intention) that figures *inside* and *beyond* (not behind) the work of art.[316]

3.2. The Technique of Self-Revelation

"You must have your eyes forever on your Reader. That alone constitutes…Technique!".[317] Varieties of anti-authorialism have directed, increasingly, the development of the English novel since the 1880s.[318] By "anti-authorialism," to avoid ambiguities, I here intend the methodical commitment, from the literary author, which aims to establish a detachment between literary language and personal ideology, thus rendering the text an autonomous, complete and finite object. Schorer's "Technique as Discovery" logically, and chronologically, re-enacted the anti-Wellsian theory of the novel

[313] Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery," *The Hudson Review* 1 (1948): 73.
[314] Ibid. Schorer's quotations from Wells are from Wells's own "Introduction" to Geoffrey West's first biography of Wells, *H. G. Wells: A Sketch for a Portrait* (London: Gerald Howe, 1930), 13.
[315] Schorer, "Technique as Discovery", 73.
[316] Schorer's analysis focusses on Wells's novel *Tono Bungay* and its autobiographical character; the critic vehemently attacks the novel's socio-political features. Tentative reassessment in defence of Wells were made in 1961 by Kenneth B. Newell, *Structure in Four Novels by H. G. Wells* (Berlin: Mouton, 1968) and David Lodge, *Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel* (London: Routledge, 1966). For a discussion on Wells and his critics, including Schorer's attack, see Richard Hauer Costa, *H. G. Wells* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 131-50. See also J. R. Hammond, "Wells and the Novel," in *H. G. Wells under Revision*, 66-81.
[317] Ford, "Techniques," *Southern Review* 1 (July 1935): 35.
[318] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (2nd edition) remains the most useful reference text for some of the questions I here arise. As he interpreted, on the whole, "the author's judgement is always present, always evident to anyone who knows how to look for it." (20) His rampant disregard for Wells, if not in few minor mentions, constitutes nonetheless the major flaw of this critical inquiry.

promoted by Wells's literary friendships; Schorer, in particular, was critically biased towards a particular Fordian aestheticism.[319] Criticism has so ferociously discussed the relationship between H. G. Wells and Henry James that the literary debates between Ford Madox Ford and Wells have been largely pass unnoticed. [320] Ford, as he beautifully recounted in *Mightier than the Sword: Memories and Criticisms* (1938), identified himself belonging to the school of "Conscious Artists" (including James, Crane Hudson and Conrad); Wells turned progressively, instead, to Ford's disapproval, into a one man "Army," a "Genius" of "Science" who developed into an "Intelligence" and purported to become "Arbiter of the World." In Ford's view, Wells deserted Literature for "politics," a preoccupation also shared by Henry James, and this was his greatest mistake as literary author.[321] In practice, both Ford and Wells, however, as textual evidence clearly reveal, meddled with politics in various degrees both in fiction and non-fiction. Of fundamental importance for cultural studies, Ford presents the artist's business in striking dissonance with intellectual performance, here precisely intended as political activism. Their literary skirmishes, as presented in *Mightier than the Sword*, also represents an early articulation of the Two Culture debate, but despite ideological divergencies in terms of the scopes of the novel, the two remained lively friends throughout. To H. G., Ford remained heartly "Fordie," his old dear nemesis since the Sandgate days.[322] Ford's impressionist outlook sought for the frame momentarily seen, whereas Wells desired, as from above, a geographical mapping of humanity.

Ford, critically averse to Thackeray's obtrusive method, was the spiritual disciple of Flaubert and the theory of impersonal art.[323] Nonetheless, in "On Impressionism" (1914), the author clarifies that "Impressionism" is in fact, "a frank expression of personality."[324] The artist is the most self-conscious person in the creative moment and the sensorial experience necessarily involves a human

[319] For Schorer's appreciation of Ford see, for example, "The Good Novelist in *The Good Soldier*," in *Ford Madox Ford Symposium. Princeton University Library Chronicle* 9 (April 1948): 128-33.
[320] The best account on their literary positions is given Ford Madox Ford himself in "H. G. Wells", *Mightier than the Sword* (1938), 145-65.
[321] Ford, "H. G. Wells." Ford either builds up or reconstruct a funny and insightful scene: "'I remember Henry James talking about Mr. Wells one day, wondering, as it were, what had got into him: 'You'd say. . . .um-um' he said, 'that he had everything. Everything that one can desire. His enviable…his really enviable gift; his enviable…but supremely enviable, popularity. His stately treasure house on the seashore. His troops…his positive hordes of flushed young things bursting new into life…Tempered of course with what in places of liquid entertainment, if you'll pardon me the image, they call a 'splash' of elder statesmen who have seen, pondered, accomplished…Troops, then, of flushed neophytes relieved by the suavely Eminent…Nevertheless, there is this pervading note…this burden…this undersong overtone…of the creaking door…Upon my soul this Fortunate Youth – for compared to myself, *moi qui vous parle*, he is immoderately richly endowed with the splendid gift of youth […]' He drew a deep breath and began again rather quickly: 'You don't suppose…it has been whispered to me….you know swift madness *does* at times attend on the too fortunate, the too richly endowed, the too altogether and overwhelmingly splendid. You don't suppose then…I mean to you too has it been whispered?...that….well, in short…' And very fast indeed: 'That he-is-thinking-of-taking-to-politics?'" (151). Whether this is an imaginative episode or not, it faithfully renders the gap of thought between Wells and his fellow literary friends.
[322] "Fordie" figures in *Mightier than the Sword*. See also Delbanco, *Group Portrait* and Seymour, *A Ring of Conspirators*.
[323] See especially Ford, "Technique," *The Southern Review* 20-35.
[324] Ford, "On Impressionism," 169.

agent. The business has its complexities: "to produce an illusion of reality. . .the Impressionist author is sedulous to avoid letting his personality appear in the course of his book. On the other hand, his whole book, his whole poem is merely an expression of personality."[325] On a theoretical and ideological plan, however, the ideas of "Author" Ford and Wells entertained were fundamentally irreconcilable. Ford, who stood as the fully realized anti-thesis to Wells's conception on the function of fiction, strenuously believed that the author must attempt to suppress his/her presence in the act of novelistic creation to the advantage of (Jamesian) interest and illusion. In the 1924 recollections in *Joseph Conrad: a Personal Remembrance*, although insisting, like Wells, that "the novel is absolutely the only vehicle for the thought of our day" able to "explore every department of the world of thought," Ford firmly admonishes that "the one thing that you can not do is to propagandise, as author, for any cause. You must not, as author, utter any views: above all you must not fake any events. You must not, however humanitarian you may be, over-elaborate the fear felt by a coursed rabbit."[326] Ford thought the literary craft amongst the most complex of creative experiments: "the object of the novelist is to keep the reader entirely oblivious of the fact that the author exists – even of the fact that he is a reading book."[327] Ford does not mention Wells in this specific pivotal passage re-evoking his literary experiments with Conrad on the impressionist novel, but Herbert George Wells was the referent for propagandist "author" Ford had in mind: "It is obviously best if you can contrive to be without views at all: your business with the world is rendering, not alteration" – which means, through means of paraphrasis, not Wells. Ford developed through the years a consistently reader-oriented idea of the novel at the service of reader's pleasure and happiness, in which the author is a solitary figure rendering observations.[328]

Like a "magician" (or a "prostitute"!), the object of novel was to provide pleasure.[329] To achieve the result, therefore, the "first lesson" an author has to "learn is that of humility. Blessed are the humble because they do not get between the reader's legs. Before everything the author must learn to suppress himself."[330] In truth, Ford would agree and follow these theoretical precepts considerably more than his fellow experimentalist friend, Joseph Conrad who, at times, masterfully

[325] "On Impressionism," 323.
[326] Ford, *Joseph Conrad. A Personal Remembrance* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1925), 222-23.
[327] Ibid., 199.
[328] "On Impressionism," 171.
[329] These are terms Ford employs respectively in "Techniques" and "On Impressionism."
[330] Ibid., 207.

resorted in the art of fiction to personal experience and authorial ambiguities.[331] Ford also allows, however, one extreme case, more Wells oriented:

> Let us suppose that you feel tremendously strong views as to sexual immorality or temperance. You feel that you must express these, yet you know that like, say M. Anatole France, who is also a propagandist, you are a supreme novelist. You must then invent, justify and set going in your novel a character who can convincingly express your views. If you are a gentleman you will also invent, justify and set going characters to express views opposite to those you hold.[332]

But in this more allowing paragraph Ford is not addressing political views regarding the State. Besides, Wells was not really a gentleman, and a was a loud, successfully ironic experimentalist in the tradition of the novel. He would not, and would never in effect, accept Ford's theory of characterization as docilely. We shall return to Ford later.

It is time to reconsider, critically, Wells's self-revealing practice in fiction and his long-life struggle precisely against the tempting rhetoric of textual autonomy and author's impersonality. H. G. Wells the British individual, the world intellectual, was often a problem for H. G. Wells the author of fiction. The aversion of critics addressed his very method of art, his technique (because technique was) of involving, as we have seen in *Clissold*, an authorial presence *within* and *outside* the work of art – namely, his resource to the extra-textual world to allow the literary text to fully function. To the detriment of completeness, Wells conceived the literary object as an open narrative. Throughout his life, as Ingvald Raknem meticulously recounts in *H. G. Wells and His Critics* (1962), Wells was criticized incessantly for figuring in his own fiction.[333] Not that Herbert George Wells, in *all* the biographical details and public ideas, appear manifestly in the *dramatis personae*, but his own views on the World State, sexual liberation, Empire-reconstruction and the related "Open Conspiracy," were judged too evident within the illusion of the fictional frame. This type of anti-authorial criticism was not tarnished, it was perfectly on point. The truth is that Wells never intended to silence his ideas; since the early scientific romances he camouflaged them in the textual labyrinth, more and less manifestly, in order to be detected by the reader. It is usually believed that after the early years of the twentieth century, and especially with the publication of *The New Machiavelli*, Wells increasingly

[331] On Conrad's fictional discourse as extra-textual communication see Richard Ambrosini, *Conrad's Fiction as Critical Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); see also *Le storie di Conrad: biografia intellettuale di un romanziere* (Roma: Carocci, 2019).
[332] Ford, *A Personal Remembrance*, 223.
[333] Ingvald Raknem, *H. G. Wells and His Critics* (Universitetsforlaget: Geore Allen & Unwin, 1962). For Wells's biographical analogies with his fictional characters, see especially 73-109.

dramatizes himself in the novel;[334] but evident traces of the empirical author can be detected as back as in the Time Traveller in *The Time Machine*, the narrator of *The War of the World* and the other scientific romances. Nevertheless, throughout his life, he would usually reject the attribution of mere "autobiography" to his works. [335] Wells wanted, strategically, the textual characters to perform an effect of increasing superimposition with reality; his objective was, in other terms, to create a dialogue with the public, explicitly and responsibly as agent in society.

Wells would express more fully his artistic view on author and characterization later in his career. In *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), for instance (§ Digression about Novels 487-504), the aged world-famous author recalls his literary debates with Henry James on the art of fiction. James thought of the novel as a sacred form of literary pureness and manifestation of the artist's unique talent. As a matter of fact, the beauty, and democratic feature of the house of fiction was the diversity of authors' individual ability in conveying impressions; James's idea was, before their rupture, more inclusive than Wells would concede in his *Autobiography*. Significantly, the artist as James envisioned it was a "watcher," detached, and the more refined "the consciousness of the artist" the more realized the literary craft and the vividness of the image.[336] On the other hand, to employ a metaphor, Wells saw the artist as Voice. Wells intended the novel more as an explicit, authorially conscious help to conduct directing social change: "The important point which I tried to argue with Henry James was that the novel of completely consistent characterization arranged beautifully in a story and painted deep and round and solid, no more exhausts the possibilities of the novel, than the art of Velazquez exhausts the possibilities of the painted picture" (*EA* 2: 493). Wells's novels were rather artistically alive thanks to the very personality of the author, transposed, often in ironical commitment, in the fictional frame: "through a new instability, the splintering frame began to get into the picture" (495). Wells thus remarks the fact that "James was very much against the idea that there was a biographical element in any good novel" (493); Wells's conception embraces the naturalist fact that "it is beyond the power of man to 'create' individuals absolutely. If we do not write from models then we compile and fabricate. Every 'living' character in a novel is drawn, frankly or furtively, from life – is filched from biography whole or ins scraps, a portrait or a patch-up, and its actions," he concludes with an enlightening observation against anti-authorialism: "are a reflection upon moral

[334] Bloom, in *Anatomies of Egotism*, does not see self-revelation in Wells's early scientific romances. It is the result of the limits deriving from the non-communicating distinction established by criticism between scientific romance and novel. Wells's personal intrusions, for the critic, would appear from the twentieth century onward. Indeed, comments on authorial intrusion were more common after the twentieth century, but the reason is self-evident: Wells became a world figure after 1901.

[335] As early as 1906, in a letter to a certain Mrs. Tooley (probably a journalist), Wells would affirm: "No books of mine are autobiographical though of course I use all my experiences." *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 2, 228.

[336] Preface to "The Portrait of a Lady," *The Art of the Novel. Critical Prefaces*, ed. Richard P. Blackmur (London: Charles Scribner's & Co., 1934), 46.

conduct. At whatever number or 'removes' from facts we may be, we are still imputing motives to somebody" (493-494). Wells thus sees self-revelation as an authentic mean of extra-textual communication, which is the main function of the novel.

From a 1934 perspective, many years since James's death, Wells reflects at large on the development of the English novel. This passage, again from his *Autobiography*, is rarely explored in literary criticism to the detriment of Wells's conscious artistry. [337] Wells would write:

> That is the conclusion I am coming to now, but I did not have it ready at that time. I allowed it to be taken for granted that there was such a thing as The Novel, a great and stately addendum to reality, a sort of super-reality with "created" persons in it, and by implication I admitted that my so-called novels were artless self-revelatory stuff, falling far away from a stately ideal by which they had to be judged. But now I ask, when and where has that great ideal been realized – or can it ever be realized?. . .I got it really clear in my own mind that I was feeling my way towards something outside any established formula for the novel altogether. . .So I am disposed to question whether the *Novel will have any great importance in the intellectual life* of the future because I believe we are moving towards a greater freedom of truthful comment upon individuals; if it survives I think it will become more frankly caricature-comment upon personalities and social phases than it is as present, but it seems equally probable to me that it will dwindle an die altogether and be replaced by more searching and outspoken biography and autobiography. Stories, parables, parodies of fact will still be told, but that is a different matter. The race of silly young men who announce that they are going to write The Novel may follow the race of silly young men who used to proclaim their intention of writing The Epic, to limbo. [italics mine] (*EA* 2: 494, 497, 502)

With a suggestive, and partly valid premonition of future evolution of the literary system, which anticipates the development of post-modernist narratives, Wells defends authorial presence in the artistic frame; the authorial voice is in Wells's terms also a matter of unavoidable responsibility on the part of the artist as a "perfectly self-conscious writer," as Ford would say.

Already in 1926 Wells would reply to the recurrent type of aggressive anti-authorial criticism in the preface to *Clissold*, insisting on the differences between an author and his fictional characters;

[337] Some lack of ironical proficiency, and a bit of malice in criticism has produced much misunderstanding in framing Wells's concrete views on the novel. Criticism has typically resorted to selective quotations to attack Wells's artistry, in which the author himself, ironically, downplays his own view on the novel, "as much an art from as a market place or a boulevard" (*EA* 2: 489). In his autobiography Wells writes in memorable wit: "He [James] had no idea of the possible use of the novel as a help of conduct. His mind has turned away from any such idea. From his point of view there were not so much 'novels' as The Novel, and it was a very high and important achievement. He thought of it as an Art Form and of novelists as artists of a very special and exalted type. He was concerned about their greatness and repute. He saw us all as Masters or would-be Masters, little Masters and great Masters, and he was plainly sorry that 'Cher Maître' was not an English expression" (*EA* 2: 488-89).

in the authorial note, we see that Wells also regards the author's personality as a crucial component of the textual experience:

> This book, then, *The World of William Clissold*, is a novel. It is claimed to be a complete full-dress novel, that and nothing more. William Clissold is a fictitious character, and his thoughts and ideas throughout are the thoughts and ideas natural to his mental and social type. His is (to the best of his author's ability) his own self and not his author's self, in his emotional reactions, in his hard wilfulness, in his faith, in his political ideas, in his judgements. He is a specimen of modern liberalism, using liberalism in its broadest sense. . .His views run very close at times - but not always – to the views his author has in his own person expressed; nevertheless is it too much to ask that they should be treated here as his own? Naturally his point of view is like Mr. Wells'. That was to be expected. How can one imagine and invent the whole interior world of an uncongenial type? Every author must write of the reactions he knows; he must be near enough to them to *feel* them sympathetically. . .There never was a character created by an imaginative author, from the inside which did not contain this quite unavoidable element of self-projection. Even Hamlet is believed to be a self-projection of Shakespeare. But while this is forgiven and taken for granted in the criticism of most authors, it is made a stock of grievance against the present writer. (I: i-ii)

The polemical preface is a balanced defence of self-revelation in literature and of the author's role in governing the literary craft. Despite hostile criticism to a constant personal intrusion in fiction, I contend that such phenomenon constitutes Wells's major and most interesting technique as artist, adding layers of meaning to the literary object which communicates, explicitly, with the world; through the authorial persona Wells enriches the narrative with unique wit. The oscillation between fictional and real world generates ambiguity, therefore producing aesthetic power and inviting readers' active participation in solving the complexities of the fictional texture. Fiction is still illusion. It is in the fragile boundary between fiction and life that the reader finds the pleasure of reading; the recourse to external evidence situates the literary object into a strongly intertextual and interactive space. Perceptively, also Sarah Cole has recently reconsidered Wells's authorial technique: "the relation of book to self becomes much more revealing and productive when viewed as a praxis, a form of modern self-textualizing that opens up new directions for novelistic exploration."[338] Wells's books are rich of textual hints, inserted by the author in his discernible imperial ideology: the self-revelation is never a simplistic process involving one-to-one correspondence. The author, as a matter of fact, does never figure in one single character, displaying a chorus of opposing ideologies, often within the protagonist-narrator themselves. Yet, unfortunately, as Hammond already underscored in

[338] Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow*, 62. For an excellent analysis on Wells's voice in his fictional corpus, see *Inventing Tomorrow*, 58-69. See also June Deery, "H. G. Wells's *A Modern Utopia* as a Work in Progress," in *Political Science Fiction*, edited by Donald M. Hassler and Clyde Wilcox (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 26-42.

1988, "few critics have acknowledged that in fact many of his narrators are more complex than a first reading would suggest, that in many cases he is at pains to distance himself from the narrator's views and attitudes."[339] Wells rather dilutes himself throughout characters' individualities – but never dissolves. It is a respectable fictional strategy which deserves more serious critical investigation, without the lenses of formalist prejudice.

In the previous chapter we have focused on *Clissold*'s life-writing strategies and its original public reception; it is useful to have the wider picture of the anti-authorial criticism in Great Britain. As H. G. Wells grew in world's fame, and precisely on such grounds, his fiction became to be judged increasingly more as propaganda pieces than art. This, it is well-known, was the most common criticism on Wells's works. Critics largely lamented there was too much perceptible "H. G. Wells" and World State propaganda in his literary prose. Montgomery Belgion, once a "Wellsian enthusiast," wrote in the 1950s a book in which he discussed the author, curiously divided the man in two parts: "Giant Wells," that is "the writer who is also a presence, a disturbance, a world figure, and a giant;" and "Baby Wells," which is "most of the later Wells, the Wells of open conspiracies."[340] The two figures, in fact, coincide; but Baby Wells represents for Belgion Wells's peculiar autobiographical insistence to transpose personal experience into his works of art: "In Wells's novels, further, not only do the subsidiary characters exist only for the sake of the central character, but also this central character is usually Wells himself in some transparent disguise."[341] Wells was an "autobiographical writer," Belgion contends, and the autobiographical element does not make his fiction "less interesting or any the less entertaining." As the critic expressed his point: "it simply prevents the latter from being 'novels' in the accepted sense of the term."[342] Belgion also read this expression of personality as nothing more than an intellectual limitation: "Wells was incapable of believing in the reality of his fellow-beings." Belgion's view is exemplary of anti-authorial criticism with regards to Wells's reception. "Baby Wells" signified authorial protagonism and the dangers deriving from the practice of self-revelation in art.

As Raknem puts it, amongst many other commentators, Wells represented undoubtedly "the most self-referential of the English writer."[343] Sarah Cole too places Wells "among the most autobiographical of the era's writers and the most likely to write himself into his protagonists."[344] Of course, Wells was far from being alone in this experimentation of life-writing which also

[339] Hammond, *H. G. Wells and the Modern Novel*, 16.
[340] Montgomery Belgion, *H. G. Wells* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1955).
[341] Ibid., 17.
[342] Ibid., 13, 17-18. For Belgion, "Wells was incapable of believing in the reality of his fellow-beings."
[343] Raknem, *H. G. Wells and His Critics*, 425.
[344] Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow*, 217.

characterized Modernism, in works for example, such as Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), that Wells also greatly appreciated.[345] Recently Max Saunders has contended that "the 1870s to the 1930s represent a cusp, in which a variety of forms evolve very rapidly, but share a fascination with the fictional possibilities of life-writing forms."[346] Saunders's is an intriguing thesis and immensely rich study; the case remains, nonetheless, that the artistic intention to aestheticize private and public life was also obstructed by a perennial resistance, at least in Great Britain, directed against self-revelatory practice. In other words, in the context of Great Britain (1890-1930) the higher was the intellectual standing, here in the sense of involvement with State politics, the more averse was the criticism. Saunders does not explore at length the ideological and artistic resistance to H. G. Wells, but as intellectual of world fame, artistic sensibilities of the age often asked from Wells a commitment to impersonal art, rather, and not "intellectual" affairs, which are necessarily personal. It is also important to underscore that such an aversion towards the artist who is *also* an intellectual, as a matter of fact, is also characteristic of Western attitudes. As Kirpal Singh has noted, "the East," for example, "has never fully endorsed the doctrine of art for art's sake," where in "India the writer falls into the great and revered tradition of being a seer. In China he occupies the venerable position of a sage."[347] It is a particularly remarkable case in which life, that is empirical experience of politics, directs the very evaluation of the literary object. In relation to Wells's activity, Ford Madox Ford, again, is the foil on which it is possible to measure this resistance.

Ford would write as early as 1911 in *The Critical Attitude* against Wells's authorial intrusion in fiction, altogether categorizing him as an "Unconscious Artist": "His mental career having been one of adventures and discoveries it is a little difficult at all shortly to classify him. He writes without the help of any aesthetic laws, trusting to his personality alone."[348] He equals Wells, disparagingly, to Dickens whom Ford also sincerely disliked. As he continues, developing his anti-authorial criticism: "Mr Wells is the disciple of no technical school. He produces a British novel along the lines of his national temperament. He trusts his personality, he revels in it." Ford then applies a singular separation, not yet sufficiently explored in literary criticism, between artistic and intellectual activity:

[345] See especially Max Saunders, *Self Impression. Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Also compare Timo Muller, *The Self as Object in Modernist Fiction. James, Joyce, Hemingway* (Würzburg: Konigshausen & Neumann, 2010). *Modernism and Autobiography*, edited by Maria di Battista and Emily O. Wittman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Jerome Boyd Maunsell, *Portraits from Life. Modernist Novelists and Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[346] Saunders, *Self Impression*, 11.
[347] Kirpal Singh, "Genius Misunderstood: Toward an Asian Understanding of H. G. Wells," in *H. G. Wells Under Revision*, ed. Parrinder and Rolfe, 56.
[348] Ford, *The Critical Attitude* (London: Duckworth, 1911), 103.

> Mr Wells is also the most prominent novelist that we have. He has his bad moments and he has his astonishingly good ones. . .It is only when he becomes constructive that he grows petulant. . .But the moment you become constructive your theory is an integral part of yourself and you will defend it according to the intensity of its hold upon you until you are worsted in correspondence in the public press or until you have earned the faggot and the halo of martyrdom. *It is perhaps foolish – it is certainly perilous for the imaginative writer to attempt to occupy a position of a man of intellect.* The imaginative writer, in fact, has practically never any intellectual power whatever except in one or other department of life. His business is to register a truth as he sees it, and more than Pilate can he, as a rule, see the truth as it is. [italics mine][349]

Parrinder has read this passage as a tactic, by Ford and the school of "Conscious Artists," to specialize the occupation of the artist, "to take the artist's responsibility to his subject-matter as his sole concern. . . the freebooting, electing approach represented by Wells became deeply suspect."[350] In 1939 Ford would again negatively comment on Wells: "And every real artist in words who deserts the occupation of pure imaginative writing to immerse himself in the Public Affairs that have ruined our world, takes away a little of our chance of coming alive through these lugubrious times," lamenting that "when it is a very real artist with a great hold on the people, it is by so much the more a pity…."[351] Significantly, however, Ford Madox Ford too, like Wells, was not a stranger to "Public Affairs."

In 1907 he published, for example, a heart-felt social history of the English people titled *The Spirit of the People: An Analysis of the English Mind*, which was the final volume of a trilogy preceded by *The Soul of London* (1905) and *The Heart of the Country* (1906);[352] during WWI he also wrote, as Wells prolifically did, a series of articles for the British War Propaganda Bureau.[353] Ford, throughout his life, was much more "Wellsian" than he would admit. Max Saunders concludes, in a defence of Ford the artist, that Ford's "own interest in politics was that of an artist rather than a propagandist: a fascination with political machinations." Of course, Ford could write such insightful fictional works on the imperial scene such as *The Good Soldier* (1915), which Wells greatly appreciated, and the *Parade's End* trilogy (1924-1928).[354] But at the basis of Ford's criticism of

[349] Ibid., 101-102.
[350] Parrinder, "Introduction," *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, 17.
[351] Ford, "H. G. Wells," 165.
[352] See Max Saunders, "'All these fellows are ourselves'": Ford Madox Ford, race and Europe," in *Modernism and Race*, edited by Len Platt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2011.
[353] See for example Joseph Wiesenfarth, "The Art of Fiction and the Art of War: Henry James, H. G. Wells, and Ford Madox Ford," *Connotations* 11 (1991): 55-73; Isabelle Brasme, "The Imprint of the War in Ford Madox Ford's Critical Writings," *E-rea* 17.2 (2020).
[354] The literature on empire is vast. See Ashley Chantler, *War and the Mind: Ford Madox Ford's Parade's End, Modernism, and Psychology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015). See also Robert Green, "Ford Madox Ford's *The Inheritors:* a Conservative Response to Social Imperialism" *English Literature in Transition, 1880,1920* 22 (1979):50-61; Karen A. Hoffmann, "Am I not better than a eunuch?" Narrating Masculinity and Empire in Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*," *Journal of Modern Literature* 27 (2004): 30-46. Saunders, "Empire of the Future: *The Inheritors*, Ford, Liberalism and Imperialism," *The Edwardian Ford Madox Ford*, International Ford Madox Studies 12

Wells, evidently, we can underscore a substantial inconsistency which reveals the plasticity of the "artist" idea and the role of the author in society when it comes to politics.

Saunders writes that "Ford observes political movements with fascination, but feels it is important not to act in them, as he feels a novelist should not obtrude and 'comment' within his fictions."[355] Always in *The Critical Attitude* (1911) Ford indicts Wells's immense ambitions and didacticism in fiction. Interestingly, therefore, similarly to Eliot's theory of impersonality in poetry Ford requires in the novel a form of abnegation in the expression of a self-sacrifice of the author's ideology. Ford underscores that in the artistic enterprise, an author's "intellectual power" must be channelled towards the single individual, not society at large, nor reform: "for the business of the imaginative writer is to stir up and thus to sweeten and render wholesome the emotions."[356] It is a matter of capacity of the artistic talent to Ford. But Wells could never remotely accept to play, even in the textual world of prose fiction, the part of "Pilate," as his friend Ford put it, in a world of inequality. One may remark the extent to which from Ford's censoring understanding of Wells, practically originates Bernard Bergonzi's critical and now pernicious view that "Wells, at the beginning of his career, was a genuine and original imaginative artist, who wrote several books of considerable literary importance, before dissipating his talents in directions which now seem more or less irrelevant."[357] Diverging from Wells's conception, Ford could not see art as transitory business.

As Ford largely testifies, the distrust on H. G. Wells involved exclusively his authorial presence. Wells's characters, being some type of self-revelations of the author, were therefore judged too personalistic, not representing *life*, as modernism would recurrently have it. E. M. Forster offers, on the other hand, a more balanced judgement. In *Aspects of the Novel* (1926) he appropriately described Wells's characterization in fiction, in all its force and limitations. For the writer, Wells was, like Dickens, a "good but imperfect novelist." However, balancing his observations, Forster sees a unique force in Wells's own creative power:

> Or take H. G. Wells. With the possible exceptions of Kipps and the aunt in *Tono Bungay*, all Wells' characters are as flat as a photograph. But the photographs are agitated with such vigour that we forget their complexities lie on the surface and would disappear if it were scratched or curled up. A Wells character cannot indeed be summed up in a single phrase; he is tethered

(Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 125-40; Caroline Patey, "Empire, Ethnology and the Good Soldier" in *Ford Madox Ford's Modernity*, International Ford Madox Studies 12, ed. Robert Hampson and Max Saunders (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 83-102.

[355] Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford. A Dual Life. Volume Two. After the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 207-208.

[356] Ford, *The Critical Attitude*, 106.

[357] *The Early H. G. Wells*. Bergonzi's critical attitude has been explored Chapter 1.

> much more to observation, he does not create types. Nevertheless his people seldom pulsate by their own strength. It is the deft and powerful hands of their maker that shake them and trick the reader into a sense of depth.[358]

Forster believes Wells able to sustain an immense tension throughout his prose works; but not always. This is a crucial issue with Wells, arguably, and especially in his twentieth century fiction; he alternates, within a single work of prose, moments of shattering vividness and captivating socio-political discussion, with occasional lapses of plain discursivity lacking the necessary grip.[359] But there is balance, and much more wit, as in any good novel.

Let us conclude with an initial frame of another major literary figure who is indissolubly tied to Wells's literary life: Virginia Woolf. Woolf, as she clearly expressed her views in *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (1924), judged authorial didacticism the worst business for a literary author. Wells's utopianism, the apex of authorial intention, it logically follows, was anathema to Woolf. She then warmly recommended Mrs. Brown not to rent a house in Utopia. As critic, she admitted she would be perhaps too "prejudiced, sanguine, and near-sighted," but to escape the tyranny of the author was of primary importance to her generation.[360] To her, fundamentally, the literary object had to represent a finite, complete unity in a Jamesian fashion; no author, as higher authority, could demand from the reader to complete the enjoyment through extra-textual channels: "They [The Edwardians] were interested in something outside. . .their books, then, were incomplete as books."[361] The real protagonist of the novel, she insisted, was the "public": the reader who is there not to be instructed but to entertain a dialogical experience with the text.[362] Perceiving Wells as out-out authorial monologism, she obliquely attacked his colossal fame stating that authors should "come down off their plinths and pedestals" and focus on characterization: the object being rendering *life* as it is inwardly felt.[363]

Criticism, however, has never satisfyingly paused on Woolf's reception of Wells; but Woolf allows us to understand, enlighteningly, the extent to which Wells's major concern in the novel was the Empire. In an early, unsigned 1918 review of *Joan and Peter*, the Bloomsbury intellectual pointed out Wells's weakness in exploring the psychological depths of single individuals, while also attacking

[358] E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1954 [1927]), 72.
[359] One may think for example of works like *Tono Bungay*, *The New Machiavelli*, and *The World of William Clissold*.
[360] Virginia Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1924), 11.
[361] Ibid., 12.
[362] Ibid., 19.
[363] Ibid., 24.

directly Wells's authorial intention.[364] *Joan and Peter* is an imperial novel which describes extensively, in 800 pages, the education of two Britons raised by the imperially-minded Sir Oswald. Oswald progressively shifts from serving a liberal understanding of British Empire to despising completely the idea of "New Imperialism" and putting into jeopardy the very concept of "Empire;" in the end he will promote to Joan and Peter a more progressive idea of co-operative human community: "Our lives have got to be political lives. All lives have to be made political lives" (*J&P* 565-56). Wellsianism emerges throughout the characters' discussions: "That England of the Victorian old men, and its empire and its honours and its court and precedences, it is all a dead body now, it has died as the war has gone on and it has to be buried out of our way lest it corrupt you and all the world again" (569-70). In the light of Wells's ideas, then, Woolf summarises the book's content and comments unenthusiastically:

> Mr Oswald Stubland, V.C., a gallant gentleman with imaginative views upon the British Empire. He had believed that the Empire was the instrument of world civilization, and that his duty in Central Africa was the duty of an enlightened schoolmaster. But when his health broke down he returned to the far more difficult task of educating two of the children of the Empire in the very metropolis of civilization. He started off upon a pilgrimage to the schools and colleges of England, asking imaginative questions, and getting more and more dismayed at the answers he received.
>
> 'Don't you *know* that education is building up an imagination? I thought everybody knew that…Why is he to *do* Latin? Why is he to *do* Greek?... What will my ward know about Africa when you have done with him?...Will he know anything about the way the Royal Exchange affects the Empire?...But why shouldn't he understand the elementary facts of finance?'
>
> This is a mere thimbleful from the Niagara which Mr Wells pours out when his blood is up. He throws off the trammels of fiction as lightly as he would throw off a coat in running a race. The ideas come pouring in whether he speaks them in his own person or lets Oswald have them, or quotes them from real books and living authorities, or invents and derides some who are not altogether imaginary.[365]

Virginia Woolf, herself an attentive critic of imperialist politics, was nevertheless particularly hostile to Wells's discursiveness on imperial themes which subordinate the depth of the two young characters, in favour of extended political digressions; Joan and Peter, she complains of Wells's novel, barely figure as individualities:

> But because Mr Wells's ideas put on flesh and blood so instinctively and admirably we are able to come up close to them and look them in the face; and the result of seeing them near at hand

[364] The unsigned review appeared on *The Times Literary Supplement on* 19 September 1918. In the discussion there are all the elements of Woolf's famous criticism on Wells during the 1920s. The review is reprinted in *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Parrinder, 244-47.
[365] Woolf, "Joan and Peter," [September 1918] in *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Parrinder, 245-46.

> is, as our suspicions assured us that it would be, curiously disappointing. Flesh and blood have been lavished upon them, but in crude lumps and unmodelled masses, *as if the creator's hand, after moulding empires* and sketching deities, *had grown too large* and slack and insensitive to shape the fine clay of men and women. . .But if Joan and Peter are merely masquerading rather clumsily at being the heirs of the ages, Mr Wells's passion for youth is no make-believe. The sacrifice, if we choose to regard it so, of his career as a novelist has been a sacrifice to the rights of youth, to the needs of the present moment, to the rising generation. *He has run up his buildings to house temporary departments of the Government.* [italics mine][366]

Similarly to Forster, employing "the creator's hand" metaphor, Woolf makes reference to the titanic presence of the author, underappreciating Wells's artistic intentions and the underrating the imperial deconstruction of the novel. As she perceived it, the Wellsian novel was the opposite of a sincere dialogic experience between text and reader – all words were components of Wellsian monologism. The imperial Author was too large.

In her insightful review, she disappointedly remarked, yet correctly, that Wells "is not isolating one of the nerves of our existence and tracing its course separately, but he is trying to give that nerve its place in the whole system and to show us the working of the entire body of human life."[367] It is possible to see how Woolf regretted, as Henry James before her, the lack of subject selection in Wells's art. James would famously downplay straightforwardly authorial obtrusion as a literary method in "The Younger Generation" (1914). It was a watershed in the relationship with Wells:

> If Mr. Bennett's tight rotundity, then, is of the handsomest size and his manipulation of it so firm, what are we to say of Mr. Wells's, who, a novelist very much as Lord Bacon was a philosopher, affects us as taking all knowledge for this province and as inspiring in us to the very highest degree the confidence enjoyed by himself? - enjoyed, we feel, with a breadth with which it has been given no one of his fellow-craftsmen to enjoy anything. If confidence alone could lead utterly captive we should all be huddled in a bunch at Mr Wells's heels, which is indeed where we *are* abjectly gathered, so far as that force does operate. It is literally Mr. Wells's own mind, and the experience of his own mind, incessant and extraordinarily various, extraordinary reflective, even with all sorts of conditions made, of whatever he may expose it to, that forms the reservoir tapped by him, that suffices for his exhibition of grounds of interest.[368]

[366] Ibid., 247.
[367] Ibid., 246.
[368] James, "The Younger Generation," in Edel and Ray, *Henry James and H. G. Wells*, 189-90.

The Wellsian novel is to James "at any hand every moment 'about' Mr. Wells's own most general adventure."[369] Woolf, it appears, was essentially building her literary commentary of Wells on James's critical heritage. Reasonably, she idealized a dialogic communication *from* the textual space *to* the reader; not *from* author *at* reader.[370] In Woolf's literary contract, the moralist author who works to disrupt the freedom of the textual world had to be removed. The literary text, Woolf more precisely insisted in her discussions on the novel, must have no judges, no Socrateses. The author, as person, must rather bridge "the gulf between the hostess and the unknown guest on the one hand, the writer and his unknown reader on the other," to make "him willing to co-operate in the far more difficult business of intimacy" – that, and that only, "almost instinctively, in the dark, with one's eyes shut," is the important "meeting place" between author and reader. It was one other respectable understanding of literature as communication.[371] With hindsight, not as antithetical to Wells's co-operative intentions of the novel.

Individual characterization in the novel was not a priority requirement in Wells's art; The author, on the contrary, must surface throughout his art in all his social responsibility. Wells's idea of art, one can conclude, reaches cosmic ambitions. In Shelley's tradition, Wells attempted to grant artists the throne of – unacknowledged – legislators of the world. Despite the stereotypical reception associating Wells with anti-Romantic progress, Wells's activity was more akin to the Romantic artist as saviour of society than it is often believed.[372] There is a strong romantic vein at the basis of Wells's career, inasmuch as the author, against any theory of impersonality, regains responsibility for the uttered word.[373] Under Wells's literary structure, therefore, the author becomes character by extension.

[369] Ibid., 192.
[370] In this direction, the opening paragraph of the review of *Joan and Peter* presents a metaphorical prelude to her sharp criticism: "The moralists of the nursery used to denounce a sin which went by the name of 'talking at,'and was rendered the more expressive by the little stress which always fell upon the 'at', as if to signify the stabbing, jabbing, pinpricking nature of the sin itself. The essence of 'talking at' was that you vented your irritation in an oblique fashion which it was difficult for your victim to meet otherwise than by violence. This old crime of the nursery is very apt to blossom afresh in people of mature age when they sit down to write a novel. It blossoms often as unconsciously as we may suppose that the pearl blossoms in the breast of the oyster. Unfortunately for art, though providentially for the moralist, the pearl that is produced by tis little grain of rancour is almost invariably a sham one." (in *The Critical Heritage*, ed. Parrinder, 244)
[371] Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*, 17.
[372] In *Experiment in Autobiography* Wells often praises Shelley's revolutionary outlook. On Romanticism and politics see as reference Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, 48-71. On Wells and Shelley see also Frank McConnell, *The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1981.
[373] On the theory of impersonality see Maud Ellmann, *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987).

3.2.1. "The Contemporary Novel": Author, Empire, Reader

When in "Modern Fiction" (1919) Virginia Woolf famously indicted – in admirable vagueness – Wells as a "materialist," she was not attacking any bourgeois, conservatively Victorian or Edwardian value embodied by Wells's works.[374] She knew, obviously, as much as her husband Leonard Woolf, that Wells was a revolutionary intellectual breaking with traditions and institutions. Leonard Woolf recounts in his autobiography:

> The intellectual, when young, has always been in all ages enthusiastic and passionate and therefore he has tended to be intellectually arrogant and ruthless. . .When in the grim, grey, rainy January days of 1901 Queen Victoria lay dying, we already felt that we were living in an aera of incipient revolt and that we ourselves were mortally involved in this revolt against a social system and code of conduct and morality which, for convenience sake, may be referred to as bourgeois Victorianism. We did not initiate this revolt. When we went up to Cambridge, its protagonists were Swinburne, Bernard Shaw, Samuel Butler in *The Way of all Flesh,* and to some extent Hardy and Wells. We were passionately on the side of these champions of freedom of speech and freedom of thought, of common-sense and reason.[375]

Virginia Woolf, herself a public intellectual, was genuinely annoyed by Wells's artistic intentions and fiercely rejected authorial didacticism in fiction as intensely as Ford Madox Ford.[376] In "Modern Fiction" she thus clustered Wells with the naturalist writings of Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy. In Woolf's categorial divide, Wells was then identified by Woolf as an "Edwardian," with all the negative connotations of formal paralysis that the label "Edwardian" now conveys to contemporary criticism.[377] As she put it: "if we fasten, then, one label on all these books, on which is one word, materialists, we mean by it that they write of unimportant things;" specifying that "they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring."[378] Contrarily to Woolf's negatively static assessment of Wells, however, as the myth receives it in "Modern Fiction" (1919) and *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (1924), Wells was a striking novelty in the literary field of English literature; it was unusual for a successful British novelist to be so seriously and irreverently involved, intellectually, in the public affairs of the British Empire. Not

[374] Woolf, "Modern Fiction" in *The Common Reader*, 152. Virginia Woolf famously pontificated: "It is because they are concerned not with the spirit but with the body that they have disappointed us, and left us with the feeling that the sooner English fiction turns its back upon them, as politely as may be, and marches, if only into the desert, the better for its soul."
[375] Leonard Woolf, *Sowing: An Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1960), 151-52.
[376] On Virginia Woolf as public intellectual, compare *Virginia Woolf, The Intellectual & the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[377] See Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study* (Glasgow: Fontana Press, 1991) for a major discussion on the contradictions of Modernism's strict literary divisions.
[378] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," 152-53.

even Kipling, more interested into romance, ever managed to render the novel, a form he never fully developed, an instrumental tool to imperial re-planification. Virginia Woolf was right in calling Wells's novelistic contents transitory affairs; but with hindsight she clumsily exaggerated, to the mere advantage of her position, in defining them trivial or unimportant.

On a contextual reading of "Modern Fiction" we understand that Woolf critically addressed exactly Wells's imperial ideas in the novel. The revealing truth is that Woolf, far from being "the least apolitical animal since Aristotle," reproached Wells on the basis of the author's overarching treatment of imperial politics in the fiction, making the novel too rhetorical. The Wellsian novel was not a suitable instrument to emotional discovery: "the spirit."[379] In "Modern Fiction," recalling her previous review of Wells's imperial novel *Joan and Peter*, she will re-iterate the same criticism in decidedly harsher judgement: "His mind is too generous in sympathies to allow him to spend much time in making things shipshape and substantial. He is a materialist from sheer goodness of heart, *taking upon his shoulders the work that ought to have been discharged by Government officials*, and in the plethora of his ideas and facts scarcely having leisure to realise, or forgetting to think important, the crudity and coarseness of his human beings" [italics mine].[380] Unlike Wells, and similarly to Ford, Woolf too was not keen to concede the power – and democratic – space of literature to the subordination of political machinery. To Wells, as her 1926 diary entry reported, "in an age when society is dissolving, the social State is part of the character;"[381] Woolf would never submit the mind to an ampler State apparatus.[382] In *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (1924) she would then hit Wells's imperial theory of the novel again: "I believe that all novels, that is to say, deal with character, and that it is to express character – *not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire*, that the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, elastic, and alive, has been evolved" [italics mine].[383] Nonetheless, in the 1920s through the Hogarth Press she

[379] One of Leonard references to Virginia. Berenice A. Carroll, "'To Crush Him in Our Own Country': The Political Thought of Virginia Woolf," *Feminist Studies* 4 (1978): 99. Criticism has finally largely abandoned the apolitical view of Modernism, and especially the exceptionally masculinist view of Virginia Woolf as highbrow, snob intellectual, *par rapport à* Leonard Woolf's political activism. See Cuddy-Kane's monography, but also as indicated in Chapter 1, on Woolf's critique of imperialism compare Kathy J. Phillips, *Virginia Woolf Against Empire* and Anna Snaith, "Leonard and Virginia Woolf: Writing Against Empire." See also contributions such as Helen Carr, "Virginia Woolf, Empire and Race," *Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 197-213; from the same publication, see David Bradshaw, "The Socio-political Vision of the Novels" (124-41). Compare also "'I have had my vision': Empire and the Aesthetic in Woolf's 'To The Lighthouse'", *Woolf Studies Annual* 16 (2010): 95-110. Michèle Barrett, "Virginia Woolf's Research for *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (Leonard Woolf, 1920)," *Woolf Studies Annual* 19 (2013): 83-122.

[380] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," *The Common Reader*, 152.

[381] Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf 1925-1930*. Vol. 3. Ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 90.

[382] After a meeting of Leonard with Wells, Virginia Woolf's entry diary for 9 June 1926 reports: "And the warmth & clamour of Wells's fame seems to reach me, this chilly rainy evening; & I see how, If I stayed there, as he asks us, he would overwhelm me" (90).

[383] Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*, 10.

provided publication to some of Wells's major socio-political works revolving on imperial reconstruction, including the revised second edition of *The Open Conspiracy*.[384] Their difference was essentially an artistic one.

Not as dissimilar from Wells, in fact, her idea of literary commitment too was oriented towards change. As Cuddy-Keane notes, "her primary political involvement focused not on organized committees but on the social dynamics of a literate community and, in particular, on the empowerment of marginalized, repressed, or absent voices;"[385] the critic then rightly underlines that "for Woolf to give her primary attention to social discourse rather than social structures was not an apolitical gesture but the very foundation of her political thought."[386] The reading experience must be free from higher controls of the author's extra-literary designs. Woolf did seek freedom from someone else's ideology: the author. In this direction, *Mrs Dalloway* is just one of the most fully realized works of fiction subtly addressing the tragedy of imperialism. But to Woolf, alluding to imperial reforms in the novel, through political planification, however, and as self-revealingly as Wells did, would equal to a vulgarization of the literary language as a free and uniquely democratic space. Before Woolf criticized Wells's theory, in 1911 Wells had setup, in form of literary manifesto, his whole imperial ambitions with the novel form.

In "The Contemporary Novel" (1911-14), Wells's longest excursion into the criticism of fiction, he makes his didactic point explicit, as author whose social role is to amplify ideas.[387] My aim is to stress the pivotal fact, recurrently ignored, that Wells's important essay is culturally marked on the British Empire and its reform. Wells, the author, subversively envisioned "the incoming tide of aggressive novel-writing" to open the field to a cultural revolution.[388] The essay, is as essential as Woolf's "Modern Fiction" is to the modernist canon. The promethean end of Wells is to reform the intellectual mind of the English people, first, and of the world afterwards. Important, but often forgotten, these reflections on the novel appeared also in its book form in 1914, revised, inside a miscellaneous text including essays dealing with social issues addressing empire, religion and socialism: *An Englishman Looks at the World: Being a Series of Unrestrained Remarks Upon*

[384] They also published, for instance, Wells's *Democracy Under Revision* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927). For more details on the anti-imperialist and democratic activity of the Hogarth Press see the accurate account in Ursula McTaggart, "'Opening the Door'": The Hogarth Press as Virginia Woolf's Outsiders' Society," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 29 (2010): 63-81, and Helen Southworth, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf, The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).
[385] Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*, 39.
[386] Ibid. 40.
[387] This essay was originally a talk given to the Times Book Club in 1911, named "The Scope of the Novel." It then was first published in book form under the present title, "The Contemporary Novel," in *An Englishman Looks at the World* (1914), 148-69.
[388] "The Contemporary Novel," 169.

Contemporary Matters.[389] "The Contemporary Novel," the Wellsian literary manifesto *par excellence*, was meant "to be a sort of pronouncement against the 'character' obsession and the refusal to discuss values. . .in which I argued for an enlarging scope for the novel" (*EA* 2: 495). Revealingly, the essay does not treat much fictional characters *per se*; it rather deals with the admissibility of author projection in characters as a technique. With hindsight, the author, from his immensely authoritative position, was attempting to propose to *all* novelists to discuss one consciousness – not of any specific individual, however, but of the entire human species. The novel is for Wells a fundamental intellectual tool in the development of "modern civilisation. I make very high and wide claims for it," and "in many directions," he claims, "I do not think we can get along without it."[390] The novel is to the author indispensable; Wells's specific views in "The Contemporary Novel" are still little known, apart from sporadic selective citations in literary criticism, that they require a dedicated treatment in light of ampler historical and theoretical considerations.[391]

First of all, in this literary-political piece Wells promotes literature as *the* ideal instrument to awaken the spirit of the nation:

> There is, I am aware, the theory that the novel is wholly and solely a means of relaxation. In spite of manifest facts, that was the dominant view of the great period that we now in our retrospective way speak of as the Victorian, and it still survives to this day. It is the man's theory of the novel rather than the woman's. One may call it the Weary Giant theory. . .the Weary Giant takes up a book. . .He wants to forget the troublesome realities of life. He wants to be taken out of himself, to be cheered, consoled, amused – above all amused. He doesn't want ideas, he doesn't want facts; above all, he doesn't want – *Problems.* He wants to dream of the bright, thin, gay excitement of a phantom world – in which he can be hero – of horses ridden and lace worn and princesses rescued and won. He wants pictures of funny slums, and entertaining paupers, and laughable longshoremen, and kindly impulses making life sweet. He wants romance without its defiance, and humour without its sting; and the business of the novelist, he holds, is to supply this cooling refreshment. That is the Weary Giant theory of the novel.[392]

[389] The imaginative synopsis of the book, in typical Wellsian wit in which the author refers to himself, appears as such: "Blériot arrives and sets him thinking (1) He flies, (2) And deduces certain consequences of cheap travel. (3) He considers the King, and speculates on the New Epoch; (4) He thinks Imperially, (5) And then, coming to details, about Labour, (6) Socialism, (7) And Modern Warfare, (8) He discourses on the Modern Novel, (9) And the Public Library; (10) Criticises Chesterton, Belloc (11) And Sir Thomas More, (12) And deals with the London Traffic Problem as a Socialist should. (13) He doubts the existence of Sociology, (14) Discusses Divorce, (15) Schoolmasters, (16) Motherhood, (17) Doctors, (18) And Specialisation; (19) Questions if there is a People, (20) And diagnoses the Political Disease of Our Times, (21)" (v-vi). "The Contemporary Novel" appears in section 9; section 5, "Will the Empire Live?" addresses specifically British imperialism (33-42).

[390] "The Contemporary Novel," 148.

[391] Some parts of this essay are often quoted when Wells, disappeared literary figure, is put into relation with Henry James in the famous literary quarrel they held in the 1910s. After a careful examination of this work, we will direct our attention to this important literary friendship. The reference text is Leon Edel & Gordon N. Ray, *Henry James and H. G. Wells*. *A Record of their Friendship, their Debate on the Art of Fiction, and their Quarrell* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1958).

[392] Ibid., 148-49.

This specific attitude towards the reading experience, ruled, says Wells, "British criticism up to the period of the Boer war – and then something happened to quite a lot of us, and it has never completely recovered its old predominance."[393] In "The Contemporary Novel" Wells attacks from the outset the complacency of the conservative imperial Englishman; his public target is primarily the male British readership under Queen Victoria's reign. But now, after the Reign of Edward, "both fiction and criticism to-day are in revolt against that tired giant, the prosperous Englishman."[394] The death of the Empress, along with the disillusionment of imperial infallibility revealed during the Boer War, allows Wells to reframe the scope of the novel.[395] The author focusses here on the novel form, but, as Gloria Macmillan also notes, and contrarily to a certain recalcitrant criticism on Wells which attempts to preserve non-political purity in Wells's early fiction, "there is no rigid dividing line between Wells's scientific romances and his socially-critical novels."[396] All Wells's fictional output is intrinsically reformist. Wells himself commented that the scientific romances are "appeals for human sympathy quite as much as any 'sympathetic' novel, and the strange property or the strange world, is used only to throw up and intensify our natural reactions to wonder, fear or perplexity."[397] Not only that; for Wells it has always been "more convenient to discuss sociology in fable" (*EA* 2: 654).[398]

Peter Keating's comprehensive study on the English novel (1875-1914) tends to downplay the impact of historical events in the development of literary forms. The critic, who is also surprisingly attentive to H. G. Wells's standing in general, can nevertheless argue: "As far as the social history of the English novel is concerned, the year 1901 is of little significance."[399] If Wells, quintessential transitional figure as he is, informs literary criticism in any insightful way, I contend, is in the way 1901 *does* mark a watershed in imagination; probably as poignantly as Woolf's 1910 sacred date to her generation.[400] Wells commented, in all his republicanism, that "Queen Victoria was like a great paper-weight that for half a century sat upon men's minds, and when she was removed their ideas

[393] Ibid., 149.
[394] Ibid.
[395] On the Boer War see especially two major and contemporary insightful studies: Arthur Conan Doyle's analysis in *The Great Boer War* (London: Smith Elder & Co, 1900); and J. A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Effects* (London: James Nisbet & Co, 1900). For critical discussion on the loss of prestige of the British Empire during the Boer War see Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[396] McMillan, "The Invisible Friends," 140.
[397] Wells, "Preface," *Seven Famous Novels* (New York: Knopf, 1934), vii.
[398] On Wells and his approach to sociology see the informed essay by Krishan Kumar, "Wells and the So-Called Science of Sociology," *H. G. Wells Under Revision*, ed. Parrinder and Rolfe, 192-217.
[399] Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914* (Glasgow: Fontana Press, 1991 [1989]), 92.
[400] In 1924 in her essay *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* Woolf claimed that "in or about December 1910 human character changed" (4). She was right, as pictorial arts, before literature, inform us about this epistemological shift. Significantly, even in Woolf's case, another Monarch had died just prior the watershed date.

began to blow all over the place haphazardly."[401] An impression along these lines also occurs in the opening scene of *Joan and Peter*: "Early one summer morning in England, in the year 1893 in the reign – which seemed in those days to have been going on for ever, and to be likely to go on for evermore – of Queen Victoria, there was born a little boy named Peter" (*J&P* 1). The opening of the twentieth century sees the imperial mythology of the Dark Continent almost coming to an end; Haggard's plots of imperial heroism, obliquely mocked by Wells's manifesto and recurrently parodied in his scientific romances, resemble conservative ghosts from a past century. Stevenson's anti-imperialist South Seas tales are also gone with the death of the Scottish author. Without an Empress, Kipling's overseas stories have lost their imperial exoticism – and so do Wells's own adventure stories rich of sociological insights.

The truth is that 1901 cannot host anything as exotic, grim and ambiguously captivating as *Time Machine* or *The Island of Doctor Moreau*; the age of geographical unknowingness, exploration – and exploitation – leaves place to the political novel on Empire, primarily re-centred, if we think through Franco Moretti's geography of literature, on the European congested scene and its more well-defined colonial dependences.[402] The corpus is immense; we need to think of texts from a larger perspective: works overly addressing the empire such as *In the Days of the Comet* (1906), *The War in the Air* (1908), *Tono Bungay* (1909), *The New Machiavelli* (1911), or *The World Set Free* (1914), *The Research Magnificent* (1915) are some examples amongst Wells's immense corpus; many of his twentieth-century novels, as *The Passionate Friends* (1913), *The New Machiavelli* (1911) and *Joan and Peter* (1918) are also characteristically reminiscent of the colonial world before Queen Victoria's death. [403] For the sake of clarity, and rediscovery in criticism, these are to be re-framed as "imperial novels." Wells always look backward to bring parallelisms with present imperial affairs. The Atlas of Empire changes its space and action, so does Wells's literary imagination. International competition at the opening of the twentieth century becomes rampant, with Germany figuring as the new arch enemy of imperial race. The Edwardian era begins to embody a cultural space for new-born change; and it is no mere coincidence that after the monarch's passing, since 1901 with *Anticipations*, Wells would elect himself some sort of knight of futurity and semi-official architect of the Empire.[404] When Kipling lost his grip, Wells rose. Indeed, as Samuel Hynes has observed, the Edwardian age

[401] Quoted in Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *The Time Traveller*, 101. They trace this statement in 1913.
[402] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998).
[403] Of course, *Tono-Bungay* has a Conradian subplot staged in exotic setting. Imperial novels such as *The New Machiavelli*, *The Passionate Friends* and *Joan and Peter* always look backward to trace the genealogy of present imperial affairs.
[404] Queen Victoria would die in January. *Anticipations* appeared between April and December 1901 in the *Fortnightly Review*; it was published in book form in November 1901.

was the age of reform – a reform that never really was, but that certainly was relentlessly seeking for progress in an arena of liberal struggle.[405]

It is therefore within this socio-political changing cultural context that Wells, the anti-Victorian Victorian, ponders at the opening of "The Contemporary Novel": "Circumstances have made me think a good deal at different times about the business of writing novels, and what it means, and is, may be; and I was a professional critic of novels long before I wrote them."[406] After having described the Weary Giant theory of the male imperial readership, Wells turns to the other sex: "I do not think that women have ever quite succumbed to the tired giant attitude in their reading. Women are more serious, not only about life, but about books. No type or kind of woman is capable of that lounging, defensive stupidity which is the basis of the tired giant attitude."[407] Expanding his ideal readership, Wells notes that "among readers, women and girls and young men at least will insist upon having their novels significant and real, and it is to these perpetually renewed elements in the public that the novelist must look for his continuing emancipation from the wearier and more massive influences at work in contemporary British life."[408] In a typical Wellsian fashion, the author addresses – normatively and in earnest hope – the youth of both genders. If education must restart and reform the system of the Empire, Wells sees its seeds in the early elements of society. He advocates freedom for the novel, freedom in form and content, "free from the restrictions imposed upon it by the fierce pedantries of those who would define as a general form for it."[409] Rejecting any kind of strict classification from his Pragmatist outlook, he remains sceptical of category-judgements; Wells, liberal in politics as in art, cannot accept nor impose critical assessments prescribing a specific pattern.[410] In truth, "The Contemporary Novel" aims to establish such a pattern. He has a preferred structure in mind. The novel, the author holds, is "to be a discursive thing; it is not a single interest, but a woven tapestry of interests; one is drawn first by this affection and curiosity, and then by that, it is something to return to, and I do not see that we can possibly set any limit to its extent."[411] The novel form is presented by Wells as an open textual space communicating with the world, of immense capacity of content, first of all, and also re-usable; in a way, the author seems to point to the idea that the novel form can be read as an encyclopaedia of ideas. Wells's literature is an open system.

He turns his critical focus to character and society. "The distinctive value of the novel among written works of art is in characterisation," Wells claims, "and the charm of a well-conceived

[405] Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*.
[406] Wells, "The Contemporary Novel," 149.
[407] Ibid., 150.
[408] Ibid.
[409] Ibid.
[410] Ibid., 162.
[411] "The Contemporary Novel," 152.

character lies, not in knowing its destiny, but in watching its proceedings."[412] On the English influence, he expresses his admiration to Dickens's interest in society, to which Wells was often compared to during his life. Hayter Preston in his eulogy of Wells, lamented that "the World was right in asking for more from the greatest English novelist since Dickens;"[413] similarly, R. B. Kerr in *Our Prophets* (1932) argued that "Wells," being the "complete modern humanitarian," developed into a great character novelist equalled only by Dickens," but presumably superior, since "his supreme achievement has been to combine his genius as a novelist with his power as a sociological thinker, a feat never accomplished in the same degree by any other writer."[414] The critic particularly centers the fact that "whatever has been discussed by the best minds in England during forty years can be found in Wells's novels."[415] Nonetheless, as seen in *Clissold*, in terms of intention, novel structure and characters development, Wells is more into the eighteenth-century satiric tradition: Swift, Fielding, Thackeray, and Sterne. Largely unacknowledged by literary critics, before post-WWI Modernism manifested an interest in Sterne's formalist and thematic freedom, Wells had already become disciple of his liberating school of desecrating ideas.[416] Wells directly attacks in his manifesto the "cramping conceptions of artistic perfection," of aesthetic satisfaction in linguistic nobility; he instead wishes to English literature to return preponderantly to "the lax freedom of form, the rambling discursiveness, rights to roam, of the earlier English novel, of "'Tristram Shandy' and of 'Tom Jones'."[417]

According to John Batchelor, Wells "had a theory of fiction which was coherent and responsible, and which underlies his best work, but he failed to defend it as vigorously as he could have done."[418] This is partly true. What critics too have also probably failed to valorise theoretically in Wells's fiction, however, is that as author Wells seeks a form of art able to demystify and provoke reflection through the powerful means of irony – this feature is a constant throughout his fictional output. If Wells believes the "novel the *only* medium through which we can discuss the great majority of the problems which are being raised in such bristling multitude by our contemporary social development [italics mine]," it is because the novel, much more than non-fiction prose or autobiography, allows Wells to engage politics through ampler rhetorical freedom. I here intend irony as discursive practice primarily in Linda Hutcheon's political framework, developed on the

[412] Ibid., 152-3.
[413] Hayter Preston, *Cavalcade* 24 August 1946. UIUC, RBML. Wells Papers. SEC-W-05.
[414] Robert Bird Kerr, "H. G. Wells: The Prophet of Cosmopolitanism," in *Our Prophets* (London: George Standring, 1932), 53.
[415] On Wells and Dickens see Maria Teresa Chialant, "Dickensian Motifs in Wells's Novels: The Disease Metaphor in *Tono-Bungay*," in *H. G. Wells Under Revision*, 97-107.
[416] On Sterne and Modernism compare especially the volume *Laurence Sterne in Modernism and Postmodernism*, edited by David Pierce and Peter de Voogd (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996). On Sterne and Wells see especially Hammond, *H. G. Wells and the Modern Novel*.
[417] Wells, "The Contemporary Novel," 153.
[418] Batchelor, *H. G. Wells*, ix.

Bakhtinian conception of verbal discourse as social phenomenon.[419] Considering literature in its founding dialogical dimension, the scene of irony demands a verbal generic (e. g. the scientific romance, or the novel), the author (the ironist) and an audience (the interpreter). Linda Hutcheon has argued that "irony has an evaluative edge and manages to provoke emotional response in those who 'get' it and those who don't;"[420] ontologically, it is an inclusive social practice as well as exclusionary. Its politics are "transideological" insofar as its ends can be both subversive and conservative. It can also fail, and miserably. Irony needs indeed victims, yet the intention of irony, as Wayne Booth also underscores, is focused on creating a sense of community – it is primarily an intimate act.[421] Above all, "the 'scene' of irony," which is always social and political for Hutcheon, necessarily "involves relations of power based in relations of communication."[422] It is in such communicative space that the Author opens the dialogical pact with the reader, between speaker and receiver in a discursive community, in which a subject "I" initiates the linguistic and ideological exchange.[423]

With regards to Wells, William Scheick revealingly understands in the concluding pages of his critical study, that Wells's narrators are essentially "conspiratorial":

> A Wellsian narrator often pretends a long-standing familiarity with the reader and presents himself as if he were essentially equivalent to any given reader. On the basis of this implied familiarity, he urges the reader to aid him the completion of his story and of his own personality by participating in the Collective Will and thereby bringing the world outside the frame of the novel towards a greater approximation of perfection.[424]

Scheick's evaluation, unfortunately overlooking the nexus of Wells's socio-political ideas, however, does not explore Wells's initiative, which in its de-construction of the novel form through authorial

[419] Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge. The Theory and Politics of Irony* (London: Routledge, 1994). M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*. Hutcheon's post-modern stance, however, is sceptical of irony as "a significant force in the evolution of civilization or anything grandiose like that;" still, she concedes that "it does seem to have been around for a long time, in Western culture at least, and it certainly has been the object of much attention" (2).
[420] Ibid.
[421] Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 27-31.
[422] Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge*, 2.
[423] On "discursive community" Hutcheon clarifies: "My particular sense of the term '*discursive* community' here is not quite the same as that of '*discourse* community' which has been defined as 'a sociorhetorical construct, neutral in terms of medium and unconstrained by space and time' (Swales 1988: 211). Instead, the notion of discursive community (as signaled, I hope, by the Foucaultian echo of 'discursive formations') is not unconstrained at all but acknowledges those strangely enabling constraints of discursive contexts and foregrounds the particularities not only of space and time but of class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual choice – not to mention nationality, religion, age, profession, and all the other micropolitical groupings in which we place ourselves or are placed by our society" (88).
[424] William J. Scheick, *The Splintering Frame: The Later Fiction of H. G. Wells* (Vancouver: University of Victoria Press, 1984), 122. See also 114-23.

obtrusion is always inherently ironic.[425] Even the early scientific romances, and in particular *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, *The War of the Worlds*, and *The First Men on the Moon*, testify to Wells's inheritance of Eighteenth-century writers', and Thackeray's, ironic modalities. Wells was, one may argue with certainty, amongst the most ironic novelist in the English tradition– without any doubt the most prolific. Henry James himself would devour Wells's works on the basis of this discursive skill.[426]

The fictionalized selves – grounded on the authorial fame in the empirical world – allows Wells to obliquely *provoke* and *persuade* the reader. As if in a magic spectacle, the reader is lured and tricked inside the Author's show, in which "victims" of the establishment are exposed – in Wells the targets of irony's politics are typically the imperialist military class, the nationalist politician, and the Englishman of the imperial bourgeoisie; even the time traveller himself. Wells's fiction is never escapist; it is a magnification of the empirical world in *all* its socio-political aspects. Common knowledge of the world is mandatory for a successful occurrence of the irony exchange in the discursive community. Moreover, as Booth specifies: "whatever the ups and downs of critical controversy, historical knowledge, including knowledge of genres, is thus often implied when reconstructing stable ironies: a reconstructing of implied authors and implied readers relies on inferences about intentions, and these often depend on our knowing facts from outside" the artistic frame.[427] Since the well-known Swiftian fantasies of the early romances to his last jocular book *The Happy Turning* (1945), Wells never fails to masterfully entertain the public while also instructing it by persuasive statements.[428] The author figure becomes, therefore, a fictional strategy in his artistic hands. The extra-textual author is an inherent component of the textual architecture; in other words, Wells always establishes an extra-fictional communication directed to subvert a whole system of ideas and power structures. The reading experience to Wells is, ontologically, never sufficient and completed; the reading act demands action beyond the single textual space. The author requires from the reader further readings in an intertextual and extra-textual dimension. It is, above everything, the

[425] On Scheick's limitations in understanding Wells's political thought see John Huntington, "Rethinking Wells."
[426] See James's letters to Wells, but especially the one he sent in November 19, 1905 after reading the satirical *A Modern Utopia*: "Indeed your Cheek is positively the very sign and stamp of your genius, valuable to-day, as you possess it, beyond any other instrument or vehicle, so that when I say it doesn't break the charm, I probably mean that it largely constitutes it, or constitutes the force: which is the force of an irony that no one else among us begins to have – so that we are starving, in our enormities and fatuities, for a sacred satirist (the satirist *with* irony – as poor dear old Thackeray was the satirist without it), and you come, admirably, to save us. There are too many things to say – which is so exactly why I can't write. Cheeky, cheeky, cheeky is *any* young man at Sandgate's offered Plan for the life of Man – but so far from thinking that a disqualification of your book, I think it is positively what makes the performance heroic" (quoted in Edel and Ray, *Henry James and H. G. Wells*, 104).
[427] Booth, *The Rhetoric of Irony*, 133.
[428] For major discussion on Wells's cheerful mood in *The Happy Turning*, see *The Last Books of H. G. Wells: The Happy Turning: A Dream of Life & Mind at the End of its Tether*, ed. Rudy Rucker and Colin Wilson (London: Provenance Edition, 2006).

subtle verbal strategy of irony that makes Wells a compelling writer. In a sense, his characters are marionettes not entirely dissimilar from Thackeray's marionettes-puppets; and we witness Wells himself managing the strings and the red curtain of that Vanity Fair which is the Empire, to be reformed by an artistic Open Conspiracy. Irony is Wells's sharpest edge; it is an edge that cuts in order to create sense of community.

In "The Contemporary Novel," however, H. G. Wells would insist that he resents, to be fair, Thackeray's intrusions, at least in intention.[429] Wells criticizes Thackeray's personality, overtly, and perhaps too hastily, on the basis of "a curious touch of dishonesty;" Thackeray is for Wells not enough sincere, too aggressive and not oriented, evidently, towards building a community between author and reader: "It isn't the real Thackeray; it isn't a frank man who looks you in the eyes and bares his soul and demands your sympathy. That is a criticism of Thackeray," Wells specifies, and shifts his commentary to the literary strategy: "but it isn't a condemnation of intervention."[430] This personal detachment from Thackeray sounds, in truth, somewhat insincere from Wells, given that the metafictionality of *A Modern Utopia* (1905) owes a great deal to Thackeray, rather than, say, Swift. At any rate, in "The Contemporary Novel" Wells's champion is, as we noted with *Clissold* in Chapter 2, Laurence Sterne, "the master to whom we of the English persuasion, we of the discursive school, must for ever recur is he, whom I will maintain against all comers to be the subtlest and greatest *artist* – I lay stress upon the word artist – that Great Britain has ever produced in all that is essentially the novel."[431] Akin to H. G. Wells's wit, Sterne was a subtle master in exposing the fallacy beneath social prejudices through satirical means. [432] In 1926, a seen in Chapter 2, Wells would have published his own *Tristram Shandy*.

Wells thus centres the question of "the author's personality" in fiction, in a passage which is Wells's most developed defence of the author:

[429] Wells, "The Contemporary Novel," 156.
[430] Ibid.
[431] "The Contemporary Novel," 155.
[432] Memorably, in *Tristram Shandy*'s magnificent human(e) couple, in one clever episode corporal Trim naively asks uncle Toby: "A Negro has a soul? An' please your honour, said the Corporal (doubtingly). I am not much versed, Corporal, quoth my uncle Toby, in things of that kind; but I suppose, God would not leave him without one, any more than thee or me – It would be putting one sadly over the head of another, quoth the Corporal. It would do; said my uncle Toby. Why then, an' please your honour, is a black wench to be used worse than a white one? I can give no reason, said my uncle Toby – Only, cried the Corporal, shaking his head, because he has no one to stand up for her – 'Tis that very thing, Trim, quoth my uncle Toby, – which recommends her to protection – and her brethren with her; 'tis the fortune of war which has put the whip into our hands now- where it may be hereafter, heaven knows! – but be it where it will, the brave! Trim! Will not use it unkindly. – God forbid, said the Corporal. Amen, responded my uncle Toby, laying his hand upon his heart" (Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, Chapter 4, LXV, 1767).

> Any comment that seems to admit that, after all, fiction is fiction, a change in manner between part and part, burlesque, parody, invective, all such things are not necessarily wrong in the novel. Of course, all these things may fail in their effect. . .Nearly all the novels that have, by the lapse of time, reached an assured position of recognized greatness, are not only saturated in the personality of the author, but have in addition quite unaffected personal outbreaks. . . I admit that for a novelist to come in person in this way before his readers involves grave risks; but when it is done without affectations, starkly as a man comes in out of the darkness to tell of perplexing things without – as, for instance, Mr Joseph Conrad does for all practical purposes in his 'Lord Jim' – then it gives a sort of depth, a sort of subjective reality, that no such cold, almost affectedly ironical detachment as that which distinguishes the work of Mr John Galsworthy, for example, can ever attain. And in some cases the whole art and delight of a novel may lie in the author's personal intervention.[433]

The question of the author is fundamental to Wells, given that "the novel has inseparable moral consequences."[434] Unlike Ford's theory of literary impressionism, the novel "leaves impressions, not simply of thing seen, but of acts judged and made attractive and unattractive. . .even if the novelist attempts or affects to be impartial, he still cannot prevent his characters setting examples; he still cannot avoid, as people say, putting ideas into his reader's heads."[435] Wells makes it clear that an escape from personality is impossible for the crafter of fiction; the novel is a powerful instrument for cultural change, with strong epistemological foundations. The novel, he claims, "is not simply a fictitious record of conduct, but also a study and judgement of conduct," which, in the ever-increasing conflict of values emerging from the current development of modern civilisation, is going to represent, "in the measure of its sincerity and ability," a primary intellectual space for co-operation.[436] As a cohesive instrument within the social conflict, the novel directs towards social change and unity.

By means of paradox, Wells in the twentieth century is stereotypically renowned for having "deserted" art in the interest of socio-political question; that he wanted to save mankind with "Science" and not "Art;" that, ultimately as Schorer insisted, Wells had "no respect for the techniques of his medium."[437] But this limited vision, a mythology consolidated, again, by the influential criticism of Leavis which would finally erupt in the well-known Two Cultures debate, is far from the reality of facts.[438] Art, as "The Contemporary Novel" shows, has always been fundamental to Wells. Wells inquires rhetorically in his literary manifesto: "In the tremendous work of human reconciliation

[433] Ibid., 156-57. As successful example Wells cites the best-selling *Elizabeth and her German Garden* (1898) and *Elizabeth in Rugen* (1904).
[434] Wells, "The Contemporary Novel," 158
[435] Ibid.
[436] Ibid., 159, 162.
[437] Schorer, "Technique as Discovery," 73. See the previous discussion on the "Death of the Author."
[438] The fallacy of distinction between "Science" and "Art" was perpetrated by Ford in *Mightier than the Sword*. On a defence of Wells, see C. P. Snow, "H. G. Wells and Ourselves," *The Cambridge Mind: Ninety Years of the Cambridge Review, 1879-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 280-85.

and elucidation, it seems to me it is the novel that must attempt most and achieve most. You may feel disposed to say all this: We grant the major premises, but why look to the work of prose fiction as the main instrument in this necessary process of, so to speak, sympathizing humanity together?" Wells discards autobiography on the basis of "an intense self-consciousness" which he finds self-enclosed, egoistic and weakly subjected to personal omission; Wells's rejection of the autobiographic form as a preferred space of ideas, is revealing inasmuch as it sheds light on his conception of the novel as a moment of dialogic exchange.

It is the very authorial artistic intention that unifies society and save mankind from the arena of competition and prejudice.[439] The illusion of the fictional realm puts into action an alternative public sphere communicating with the empirical world. Wells promotes the novel as the preferred space for the circulation of ideas in society. In lucid manifesto-writing, restating his position of author as "one" part of the literary contract, he thus concludes his trumpeting speech to the community of novelists:

> [The novelist] will not teach, but discuss, point out, plead, and display. And this being my view you will be prepared for the demand I am now about to make for an absolutely free hand for the novelist in his choice of topic and incident and his method of treatment; or rather, if I may presume to speak for other novelists, I would say it is not so much a demand we make as an intention *we* proclaim. . .*We* cannot present people unless we have this free hand, this unrestricted field. What is the good of telling stories about people's lives if one may not deal freely with the religious beliefs and organisations that have controlled or failed to control them? What is the good of pretending to write about love, and the loyalties and treacheries and quarrels of men and women, if one must not glance at those varieties of physical temperament and organic quality, those deeply passionate needs and distresses from which half the storms of human life are brewed? *We* mean to deal with all these things, and it will need very much more than the disapproval of provincial librarians, the hostility of a few influential people in London, the scurrility of one paper, and the deep and obstinate silence of another, to stop the incoming tide of aggressive novel-writing. *We* are going to write about it all. *We* are going to write about business and finance and politics and precedence and pretentiousness and decorum and indecorum, until a thousand pretences and ten thousand impostures shrivel in the cold, clear air of our elucidations. *We* are going to write of wasted opportunities and latent beauties until a thousand new ways of living open to men and women. *We* are going to appeal to the young and the hopeful and the curious, against the established, the dignified, and defensive. Before *we* have done, *we* will have all life within the scope of the novel.[440] [italics mine]

This is the call of the novelist, by H. G. Wells which has been lost in literary tradition. This bold appeal to a wider community of agents of change, of an idea of engaged English literature, was also

[439] "The Contemporary Novel," 165. On the importance of "artistic intention" in literary evaluation, which is what *distinguishes* a work of art, see Carla Benedetti, *L'ombra lunga dell'autore*.
[440] Ibid., 168-69.

formulated in similar tones in his ambitious socio-political tract *Mankind in the Making* (1903). Wells here promoted the "writer," in its larger connotation, as the elect member for progress. In absence of other saviours, and given the inefficiency of the present nation-states, the pen alone could lead mankind to better future.

> It may seem to the reader that all this insistence upon the supreme necessity for an organized literature springs merely from the obsession of a writer by his own calling; but, indeed, that is not so. *We who write* are not all so blinded by conceit of ourselves that we do not know something of our absolute personal value. We are lizards in an empty palace, fogs crawling over a throne. But it is a palace, it is a throne, and, it may be, the reverberation of our ugly voices will presently awaken the world to put something better in our place. Because we write abominably, under pressure, unhonoured and for bread, none the less we are making the future. . .We must drive our pens to live and push and bawl to be heard. . .Though that community have cities such as the world has never seen before, fleets and hosts and glories, though it counts its soldiers by the army corps and its children by the million, yet if it hold not to the reality of thought and formulated will beneath these outward things, it will pass, and all its glories will pass, like smoke before the wind, like mist beneath the sun; it will become at last only one more vague and fading dream upon the scroll of time, a heap of mounds and pointless history, even as are Babylon and Nineveh.[441] [italics mine]

So the prophet of English Literature spoke; Empires and State are clay if not sustained by a true intellectual reform in education guided by artistic suggestion.

* * *

In the fifth political essay "Will the Empire Live?" which accompanies "The Contemporary Novel" in *An Englishman Looks at the World*, Wells firmly restates the supremacy of art over the cult of nationalism and armament race.[442] It is one of the most patriotic essays Wells ever wrote, and ideologically focused on the priorities of British imperialism; his patriotism, of course, has the cosmopolitan outlook typical of Wells. Let us see in what degree. The author liberally points out to the urgency of gaining "free consent and participation of its constituent peoples." H. G. Wells looks at the world and the British Empire as a union of individuals of the most diverse types. At first, he observes, imperially and condoning the wrongs of British expansionism that "our Empire, for all its roll of battles, was not created by force; colonization and diplomacy have played a far larger share in

[441] Wells, *Mankind in the Making* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1903), 389-90.
[442] "Will the Empire Live?" 33-42. "The Contemporary Novel" was chapter 9 of *An Englishman Looks at the World*.

its growth than conquest." Yet, violence and conquest had their share in the project and Wells cannot but admit that the imperial union "has been made by odd and irregular means, by trading companies, pioneers, explorers, unauthorized seamen, adventurers like Clive, eccentrics like Gordon, invalids like Rhodes." As usual, Wells goes against Carlyle's "Great Man Theory," addressing his imperial scepticism towards the army and undisciplined explorers, virtually all the "men who made the Empire."[443] Imperial Wells was no admirer of imperial mythology of the Seven Seas.

The fashion in which the Empire was made, did not happen in the orderly way Wells's World Empire would have it. After lambasting in one sentence the heroes of the imperialist tradition, Wells sees exclusively in the "broad creative spirit of the British that the true cement and continuance of our Empire is to be found."[444] It is in the English language, the literature, the art, "rather than fiscal or military unification" that the union must continue its existence.[445] All colonial languages can survive indeed and freely proliferate; Wells's education plan is going to be, at any rate, Anglocentric insofar as "*also* English must be available, that everywhere there must be English teaching" [italics mine].[446] Wells is here exposing a Whiggish understanding of imperial control, in which, characteristically in Wellsian thought, cosmopolitanism policy also emerges:

> not only English literature, but all other literatures well translated into English, and all science and all philosophy, have to be brought within the reach of everyone capable of availing himself of such reading. And this must be done, not by private enterprise or for gain, but as an Imperial function. Wherever the Empire extends there its presence must signify all that breadth of thought and outlook no localised life can supply.[447]

Stefan Collini has argued that "since at least the late eighteenth century and in increasingly official form since the late nineteenth, a crucial vehicle for establishing and negotiating the relevant sense of national identity has been provided by that symbolic and emotionally charged selection of writing known as 'English Literature'."[448] It is certain, and this essay exemplifies it significantly, that Wells

[443] *Men who have made the Empire* (London: Pearson, 1899) was an imperialist book by George C. Griffith. The author here praised, amongst several national heroes, precisely Clive, Gordon and Rhodes. In the foreword the author opened: "The Epic of England has yet to be written. It may be that the fulness of time for writing it has not come yet, or it may be that Britain is still waiting for her Homer and Virgil. Perhaps the matured genius of a Rudyard Kipling, that strong, sweet Singer of the Seven Seas, may some day address itself to the accomplishment of this most splendid of all possible tasks, and then, again, it may be that it is his only to sound the prelude" (xiii).
[444] Wells, "Will the Empire live?" 38.
[445] Ibid., 37.
[446] Ibid., 38-39.
[447] Ibid. 40.
[448] Collini, *Public Moralists. Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 347. On the Whig interpretation of history see also Julia Stapleton, *Englishness and the Study of Politics: The Social and Political Thought of Ernest Barker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); "Political Thought

managed to envision the World State through Englishness. "Will the Empire Live?" reveals an undying Wellsian faith in the British Empire, despite its limitations from the ruling caste – the Empire "which was a convenience and not a God" (*EA* 2: 765). The only means to hold the Empire together, and fulfill its Liberal cosmopolitan aim, is in the proliferation of the English language, that is worth "a hundred Dreadnoughts and a million soldiers."[449]

In brief, to draw the conclusions, the cement of the empire must be found in education and in the free circulation of ideas through a common language. Language, be it literature, science, history, philosophy, is the only cement for progress - imperial Wells argues. So what is the obstacle? The British Empire itself, or, better, the English members of the imperial establishment: "English people do not understand these things. Their Empire is an accident. It was made for them by their exceptional and outcast men, and in the end it will be lost, I fear, by intellectual inertness of their commonplace and dull-minded leaders." Wells ironically puts it: "Empire has happened to them and civilisation has happened to them as fresh lettuces come to tame rabbits." The author's socio-political analysis insists on one single theme:

> Art, thought, literature, all indeed that raises men above locality and habit, all that can justify and consolidate the Empire, is nothing to them. . .Mostly they call themselves Imperialists, which is just their harmless way of expressing their satisfaction with things as they are. In practice their Imperialism resolves itself into a vigorous resistance to taxation and an ill-concealed hostility to education.[450]

The imperial prophet, almost as a Victorian Time Traveller seeing through the shape of history finally concludes: "the sands of our Imperial opportunity twirl through the neck of the hour-glass." In artistic achievement Wells saw the future of the Empire. In this measure, the novel served the Empire while also suggesting reform. After all, Wells's imperial vision, like the novel, cannot be a static form.

3.2.2. *The New Machiavelli; or, The Empire Vivisected*

In 1898 *The War of the Worlds* memorably raised the curtain on the British Empire: "with infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance

and National Identity, 1850-1950" in *History, Religion, and Culture: British Intellectual History*, edited by Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[449] "Will the Empire Live?" 39.

[450] Ibid., 41-42.

of their empire over matter (7);" in 1911 Wells would return on the evoking image, in the novel *The New Machiavelli*, paraphrasing the sentence: "For the most part people went about their business with an entirely irresponsible confidence in the stability of the universe."[451] Before the publication in 1926 of *The World of William Clissold*, *The New Machiavelli* was Wells's most innovative novelistic production and a bold excursion into life-writing.[452] It is one of those "hybrid" and "odd" books Woolf referred to in her essays.[453] The reviewer of *The Times Literary Supplement* commented, however, that the book was "of great interest technically as the most finished example of the form which the novel has gradually arrived at his hands."[454] Wells would ironically term it a "queer confused novel" (*EA* 2: 773), but it had its merits and further consolidated Wells's reputation as the most controversial novelist and amongst the leading imperial thinkers of his age.[455] Similarly to the autobiography written by William Clissold, the novel is the presentation in a first-person narrative of Richard Remington's political and sexual life. Remington is a well-known Member of Parliament, torn between his statecraft ambitions and his love affairs. In the end, love will eventually lead him to follow one path, consequentially escaping the world of politics. Hence, what the reader is confronted with, is a lively *apologia pro vita sua* of the protagonist-narrator, committed to his book after his final detachment from the seat of power, where private and public continuously intertwine. Directly alluding to Wells, the author, Remington is a prolific writer deeply interested in imperial questions; he is also a commentator on major periodicals, like *The Fortnightly Review*, and has written several books on political ideologies, such as *New Aspects of Liberalism*.[456]

As always, Wells aims to blur the boundaries between fictional realm and life. The critical reception of the book was variegated. The positive ones included Upton Sinclair or Joseph Conrad, who would appreciate greatly Wells's political novel. Conrad wrote in his letter: "I know what master-work is when I see it."[457] Even D. H. Lawrence, memorably hostile to *Clissold*, would see its potential.[458] However, since its appearance the novel provoked immense scandal and heated reactions in the cultural climate of Edwardian England, due to its treatment of sex and real-life individuals caricatured in the novel. For example, Beatrice and Sidney Webbs, the two leaders of the Fabian

[451] Wells, *The New Machiavelli* (London: Penguin, 2005), 209. All further references are from this edition.
[452] Wells began to work on the novel in 1908. It was first serialised in 1910 (from May to November) in the recently founded *The English Review* of Ford Madox Ford. Eventually, it was published in January 1911 by John Lane.
[453] Woolf, "Joan and Peter," 247; *Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown.*
[454] Quoted in *H. G. Wells: The Critical* Heritage, ed. Parrinder (186), 19 January 1911.
[455] Wells intended *The New Machiavelli* as "the political companion to *Tono Bungay*." Letter to Frederick Macmillan (October 2, 1910). *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, volume 2, 289.
[456] Wells was since the 1890s a contributor to *The Fortnightly Review*. *Anticipations*, for instance, first appeared on the British magazine. *New Aspects of Liberalism* also alludes to sociological works such as *New Worlds for Old* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1908).
[457] Quoted in Linda Dryden, *H. G. Wells and Joseph Conrad*. *The Fin-de-Siècle Literary Scene* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 169.
[458] For more context see Sherborne, *Another Kind of Life*, 196-213.

Society were mimicked in the narrative as Oscar and Altiora Bailey; the fictional character Isabel Rivers too, Remington's lover, alludes all too evidently to Amber Reeves, one of Wells's intimate friends.[459] Wells saw this literary device not much as "either portraits or caricatures," but "as a sort of parallelism of effect."[460] He also lamented that "unhappily our British criticism was quite incapable of the fine but real distinction between giving a similar figure and, as the vulgar have it, 'putting people into a book'."[461] *The New Machiavelli* was banned by editors on the basis of moral principles, and newspapers as influent as *The Spectator* even refused to review it. Getting the novel published in the cultural bigotry of the Edwardian era proved to be a nightmarish enterprise; Heinemann, for example, denied publication because of its "dangerous (and perhaps libellous) atmosphere."[462] The complex reception, publication history, and analogies between fictional world and Wells's biographical life are so well-known that it is not necessary to inquire further.[463] Richard Remington's book, on the contrary, deserves major attention in relation to empire, rather than sex matters.[464] At the current state, the book is not a favourite text in literary criticism. But *The New Machiavelli* is the empire vivisected; no fictional work in English literature, it may be argued, has critically addressed the ruling class of the British Empire (1880-1911) as extensively, and as frankly, as much as this work. Like *Clissold*, under Sterne's school, *Machiavelli* is also another full-fledged prose work reflecting on the substance of the novel form, addressing the Wellsian conception on the role of art further expanded in "The Contemporary Novel": "In the life of the individual it takes the role that the growth of philosophy, science and creative literature may play in the development of mankind" (*NM* 233).

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[459] In her diary, Beatrice Webb would refer to *Machiavelli* as "the extraordinary revelation of H. G.'s life and character – idealized of course but written with a certain powerful sincerity. Some of the descriptions of Society and of the political world – some of the criticisms of the existing order are extraordinarily vivid – and the book as a whole to a large extent compels agreement with its descriptive side;" although revealing "his total incapacity for decent conduct." At times, Webb perceives too much shallow "Utopianism." Quoted in *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Parrinder, 181.

[460] Wells. Preface to the 1924 collection of Wells's major works of *The Atlantic Edition* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1924), vol 14, ix. Volume 14 comprised only *The New Machiavelli*.

[461] Ibid.

[462] Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *Time Traveller*, 268.

[463] For a full list of real-life figures portrayed in the narrative see Sherborne, *Another Kind of Life*, 196-213; on the controversies and rejections behind the novel's publication by MacMillan, see especially Lovat Dickson, *H. G. Wells* 134-57; for further details see also Jeanne and Norman MacKenzie, *Time Traveller*, 267-71. For more critical reviews, compare *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Parrinder.

[464] Criticism, since the early twentieth century has been captivated, at times, more by Wells's treatment of sex in his Edwardian novels than Wells's socialist critique of imperialism. This is for example the case of *In the Days of the Comet* and *The New Machiavelli*. In the epilogue of the biography by Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, the critics crucify, in all sincerity, all Wells's artistic quality on the basis of his sexual appetites. They decree: "Anyone who reads the whole of his autobiography, or the preceding chapters of *The Life of H. G. Wells* may reasonably conclude that it was the inability to control his erotic drives that tarnished all his brilliances." (451). Absurdity, to the extreme; but it is a common critical stance when Wells is taken into account by academics. For those interested in matters of the flesh and of the heart, *H. G. Wells in Love*: *Postscript to an Experiment in Autobiography* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011) deals with Wells's love affairs and was published as a post-scriptum to his autobiography.

Remington is a politician with great ambitions, all channelled in one direction: reform the British Empire. London, metropolis of "the Agents of the Empire" (243) is the most beautiful and vivid of city to him. He found he managed to gain, as Wells, a position of authority, from which he "could write, and that people would let me write if I chose, as one having authority and not as the scribes. Socially, and politically, and intellectually I knew myself for an honest man" (161); in Remington's self-portrayal, the "political conceptions were perfectly plain and honest. I had one constant desire ruling my thoughts. I meant to leave England and the Empire better ordered than I found it, to organize and discipline, to build a constructive and controlling State out of my world's confusions (162). His life has been devoted to "attack the world in the large manner" (161); but he is no anarchist, clearly. On the contrary, he is all for law and order, tending at times towards Toryism (209), but with a Cosmopolitan streak (263-265). His political views, in fact, bounce characteristically from the Left to the Right spectrum throughout the narrative. Wells thus creates an ambiguous character embodying all the ideological forces governing imperial thinking, spanning from the late nineteenth-century to the first half of the twentieth century. The protagonist-narrator is fundamentally an undecided British type. Michael Draper has straightforwardly interpreted this characteristic feature as a flaw: "not altogether surprisingly, the book is flawed by lack of perspective and long, incoherent arguments," adding that "in this, unfortunately, it is representative of most of Wells's later fiction and so marks the close of his second literary phase."[465] Rather than being a defect in the narrative due to Wells's inability of psychological insights, I argue that Remington's perspective is actually a consistently well-realized polyphony of contrasting views on imperial policy. Through a single mind the author purports to represent a whole culture in a fully-fledged "Condition of England" novel. The imperial mind of Remington is a microcosm, put under the microscope, of the varieties of British imperial thought. In *Machiavelli* the reader finds political discussions including local and colonial policies (see for example Book 3, §2 "Seeking Associates" 266-300); Wells also realistically sketches the competitive European frenzy before the eruption of the Great Conflict. There is then a critical discussion on the role of women under the empire, where Remington defines himself a "feminist" (Book 3, §4 "The Besetting of Sex," 316-329). I shall focus, by thematic necessities, almost exclusively on the first parts of the book dealing with Remington's treatment of the imperial, patriotic education of his youth. In these sections, Wells's use of irony renders *Machiavelli* one of the most beautifully constructed novels by Wells.

In the first Chapter of his book Remington, writing his autobiography from calm Italian lands, roots his parallelism with Machiavelli's political work, *The Prince*. The association is insightful,

[465] Michael Draper, *H. G. Wells* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 6.

given that Niccolò Machiavelli himself (1469-1527) was arrested and tortured on the charge of conspiracy.[466] Also, Machiavelli's *Prince* is the most carefully constructed of books; Remington's work, on the contrary, is a body of political impressions and often naïve statements. Remington equally relevant purpose is exposed: "of those double strands it is I have to write, of the subtle protesting perplexing play of instinctive passion and desire against too abstract a dream of statesmanship" (11).[467] It may be a "futile imitation" of Machiavelli's manual to efficient statecraft, but it is worth writing, because Richard has, in his will, a prophetical Wellsian attitude: "This age, far beyond all previous ages, is full of powerful men, men who might, if they had the will for it, achieve stupendous things" (13). The idealized reader of Remington is "no single man;" he wants to persuade the passion, "the socially constructive passion – in any man…" (13). In this new view, "there is, moreover, a second great difference in kind between my world and Machiavelli's. We are discovering women. It is as if they had come across a vast interval since his time, into the very chamber of the statesman" (13). Remington, it is already clear from the introductory matters, has in mind the type of capable men and women long searched by Wells's Conspiracy plan to substitute imperial egotism.

One of the liveliest and successful section of the novel is in Book I, chapter 2 "Bromstead and My Father." The morally dangerous components of masculinity and militarism are introduced in the narrative; the Empire enters, subtly and ingeniously mocked by Wells, as the main setting of the protagonist-narrator's story. Richard explains how he used to romanticize himself, for example, in the Indian frontier. He "conquered them and garrisoned their land. (Alas! They died, no doubt through contact with civilization)" (19). The ironical note is sharp. He would imagine himself a young imperial hero, the type of explorer who builds empires of the fantasy: "By these territories went my Imperial Road carrying produce to and fro. . .and ending at last in a magnificently engineered ascent to a fortress on the cliffs commanding the Indian reservation" (18); recalling these early images of the British imperial boy, Remington finds "this empire of the floor much more vivid and detailed in my memory. . .sweeping the splendid curves of the Imperial Road into heaps of ruins, casting the jungle growth of Zululand into the fire" (19); but, every empire, even fake ones, may reach their Decline and Fall when Richard's housemaid enters the room: "And in no time all my continents and lands were swirling water and swiping strokes of house flannel. . .that was the worst of my giant visitants, but my mother too, dear lady, was something of a terror to this microcosm," with "a silk

[466] Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* in 1513 and was published in 1532. Between 1513 and 1515 he also entertained a correspondence with his friend, Francesco Vettori, discussing both private and public questions.
[467] Remington's manuscript is divided in four Books: 1) The Making of a Man, 2) Margaret, 3) The Heart of Politics 4) Isabel.

dress with flounces that were very destructive to the more hazardous viaducts of the Imperial Road" (19). Wells is keeping up again with Laurence Sterne's wit. The imperial critique intensifies.

Remington's "microcosm on the floor" is made possible, he reveals, by his father (and not his mother, Richard specifies) who gave him "toys and, I more than suspect, my ideas. . .my father was what is called a man of ideas, but they were not always good ideas" (20); the germ of imperial masculinity emerges: "My father, I am afraid, carried a natural incompetence in practical affairs to an exceptionally high level." Richard's patriarchal and imperial education provided the boy with Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*, "illustrated histories; one of the Russo-Turkish war and one of Napier's expedition to Abyssinia;" fundamental to his imperial education, the reading list comprises "Stanley and Livingstone, lives of Wellington, Napoleon and Garibaldi, and back volumes of *Punch* from which I derived conceptions of foreign and domestic politics" that, Remington notes, "it has taken years of adult reflection to correct" (21). History books at Remington's house were, obviously, Anglo-Saxon centric; so, on the shelves we are informed about the presence of "Wood's *natural History*" and the Anglo-Saxon centric "brand-new illustrated Green's *History of the English People*" (21) – a companion to Columbus too. This is the initial imagery which Remington's education will eventually betray, not fulfilling the imperialist role and shattering the expectancy of the reader. As S. James notes, books like "*Tono-Bungay, The New Machiavelli,* and even *Love and Mr Lewisham* refuse the narrative arc of self-improvement common in the Victorian *Bildungsroman* and repeatedly imply a reader who is expecting a kind of book quite different from what these texts actually turn out to be."[468] James does not specify what type of education; but a peculiarity of Wells's twentieth century novels, in works like *Kipps* (1905), *The History of Mr Polly* (1910), and *The Passionate Friends* (1913), or *Joan and Peter* (1918), is the recurrent presentation of a character's development within the British imperial system; interestingly, what the author crafts is a type of imperial *bildungsroman* which ultimately, however, subverts the imperial education and promises of the protagonists.

Throughout *The New Machiavelli* Wells subtly indicts the fallacies behind the British patriotic system of education, altogether exposing the delusions of Victorian imperialism. The world before 1900 was a shallow competitive structure of social intercourse: "No, the Victorian epoch was not the dawn of a new era; it was a hasty, trial experiment, a gigantic experiment of the most slovenly and wasteful kind" (41); the narrator remains uncertain: "I suppose it was necessary; I suppose all things are necessary." Remington remains critical of the means and results of nineteenth-century overseas imperialism: "That age which bore me was indeed a world full of restricted and undisciplined people, overtaken by power, by possessions and great new freedoms, and unable to make any civilized use

[468] James, *Maps of Utopia*, 39.

of them whatever" (41). In his own youth, he confesses his reader that "the prevailing force in my undergraduate days was not Socialism but Kiplingism. Our set was quite exceptional in its socialistic professions. And we were all, you must understand, very distinctly Imperialists also, and professed a vivid sense of the 'White Man's Burden'" (105). Wells's ideological nemesis is accurately portrayed by Remington. It is worth quoting the description at length in order to avoid selective reading of a crucial and often ignored passage. Nowhere else in the Wellsian fictional corpus there is as vivid and as extended a portrait of Kipling:

> It is a little difficult now to get back to the feelings of that period; Kipling has since been so mercilessly and exhaustively mocked, criticized and torn to shreds; - never was a man so violently exalted and then, himself assisting, so relentlessly called down. But in the middle nineties this spectacled and moustached little figure with its heavy chin and its general effect of vehement gesticulation, its valid shouts of boyish enthusiasm for effective force, its lyric delight in the sounds and colours, in the very odours of empire, its wonderful discovery of machinery and cotton waste and the under officer and the engineer, and 'shop' as a poetic dialect, became almost a national symbol. He got hold of us wonderfully, he filled us with tinkling and haunting quotations, he stirred Britten and myself to futile imitations, he coloured the very idiom of our conversation. He rose to his climax with his 'Recessional,' while I was still an undergraduate. What did he give me exactly? He helped to broaden my geographical sense immensely, and he provided phrases for just that desire for discipline and devotion and organized effort the Socialism of our time failed to express, that the current socialist movement still fails, I think, to express. The sort of thing that follows, for example, tore something out of my inmost nature and gave it a shape, and I took it back from him shaped and let much of the rest of him, the tumult and the bullying, the hysteria and the impatience, the incoherence and inconsistency, go uncriticized for the sake of it. (105)

Then, Remington quotes a few passages from Kipling's verse and comes to his conclusions, in a kind of defensive stance, on the reputation of Kipling, former Voice of the Empire: "he learnt better, and we all learnt with him in the dark years of exasperating and humiliating struggle that followed, and I do not see that we fellow learners are justified in turning resentfully upon him for a common ignorance and assumption" (106). This is Remington's view of Kipling, not Wells's; despite the criticism of Kipling's methods and ideology, there is also an attempt, in Remington's account, to highlight the positive will and devotion to a wider idea of human communion characterizing Kipling's thought. If we export ideas beyond the fictional text, however, Kipling's vision and career was founded on a disciplined and rational order of society, that Wells, for his Socialist World State, had been seeking since the late 1890s. But for Cosmopolis, not Empire and monarchy.[469]

[469] In 1913 Wells will expand his critique of Empire through works of fiction such as *The Passionate Friends* (1913), a novel running close to *Joan and Peter*'s themes. It is a pre-WWI novel describing the progressive disillusionment of the imperialist ideology of Stephen Stratton. Similarly to *Machiavelli* we find a vivid sceptical discussion of the protagonist-

Leaving his imperial reminiscences on Kipling, Remington's attention then immediately switches to other imperial affairs of the late-Victorian scene and describes his progressive disillusionment of the Tory Empire narrative. His mind goes back to his Cambridge memories during the War in South Africa. The perspective of the civilian is presented to the reader:

> I see it in my memory as if I had looked at it through a window instead of through the pages of the illustrated papers; I recall as if I had been there the wide open spaces, the ragged hillsides, the open order attacks of helmeted men in khaki, the scarce visible smoke of the guns, the wrecked trains in great lonely places, the burnt isolated farms, and then the blockhouses and the fence of barbed wire uncoiling and spreading for endless miles across the desert, netting the elusive enemy until at last, though he broke the meshes again and again, we had him in the toils. If one's attention strayed in the lecture room it wandered to those battlefields. (107)

Echoing the memorable scene in *Clissold* where William imagines, in impressionistic frames, outer regions beyond the window, Remington allows the African conflict to enter the novel through a series of sequential images – pieces of newspaper information and war propaganda from the Victorian age informs the civilian perspective.[470] Kipling's rhetoric of Empire, indeed, still influences Remington's youth; but, progressing with the years, the ideological hold begins to fade: "Under Kipling's sway I had a little forgotten the continent of Europe, treated it as a mere envious echo to our own worldwide display. I began now to have a disturbing sense as it were of busy searchlights over the horizon. . ." (108); new less Kiplingesque language, like Meredith's *One of Our Conquerors*, became for Remington "a supplement and corrective of Kipling. It was the first detached and adverse criticism

narrator recalling the moral fallacies of the Victorian colonial scene: "It was a season of Imperialism, the picturesque Imperialism of the earlier phase, and we were all of us enthusiasts for the Empire. It was the empire of the white Man's Burthen in those days; the sordid anti-climax of the Tariff Reform Movements was still some years ahead of us. It was easier for us at Harbury to believe then than it has become since, in our own racial and national supremacy. We were Anglo-Saxons, the elect of the earth, leading the world in social organization, in science and economic method. In India and the east more particularly we were the apostles of even-handed justice, relentless veracity, personal cleanliness, and modern efficiency. In a spirit of adventurous benevolence we were spreading those blessings over a reluctant and occasionally recalcitrant world of people for the most part 'coloured'" . . .Most of us Harbury boys, trained as I had been trained to be uncritical, saw the national outlook in those terms. . .We knew little or nothing, until the fierce wranglings of the Free Traders and Tariff Reformers a few years later brought it home to us, of the commercial, financial and squalid side of our relations with the vast congeries of exploited new territories and subordinated and subjugated population. . .We believed that an Englishman was a better thing in every way than any other sort of man, that English literature, science and philosophy were a shining and unapproachable light to all other peoples, that our soldiers were better than all other soldiers and our sailors than all other sailors. . .Given such ignorance, you know, it wasn't by any means ignoble to be patriotic, to dream of this propagandist Empire of ours spreading its great peace and culture, its virtue and its amazing and unprecedented honesty, – its honesty! – round the world" (*The Passionate Friends*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1986, 140-41).

[470] In general, on Wells's ability to represent the civilian perspective of war in the "total war" novels, including *The War in the Air*, *The World Set Free* and *Mr Britling Sees it Through*, see the analysis by Sarah Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow*, 105-150.

of the Englishman I had ever encountered."[471] Kipling's imagery, however, never completely abandons the narrator's imperial mindset: "'Muddle', said I 'is the enemy'. That remains my belief to this day. Clearness and order, light and foresight, these things I know for Good. . .Muddle! I remember myself quoting Kipling – All along o' dirtiness, all along o' mess, All along o' doin' things rather-more-or-less. (115)."

What is discernible, is that throughout the narrative arc, even after his early youth years, Remington describes himself as divided between a patriotic tension, whose devotion is all for the Empire, and phases of cosmopolitan lucidity, disenchanted moments which evoke more Wellsian liberalism overriding the nationalist-imperialist discourse:

> And a hundred time when I have thought of England as our country might be, with no wretched poor, no wretched rich, a nation armed and ordered, trained and purposeful amidst its vales and rivers, that emotion of collective ends and collective purposes has returned to me. I felt as great as humanity. For a brief moment I was humanity, looking at the world I had made and had still to make. . . (Book 1, 120)

> Here it is my political book comes to an end, and in a sense my book ends altogether. For the rest is but to tell how I was swept out of this great world of political possibilities. . .Yet my aim was a final simplicity. I have sought to show my growing realization that the essential quality of all political and social effort is the development of a great race mind behind the interplay of individual lives. That is the collective human reality, the basis of morality, the purpose of devotion. To that our lives must be given, from that will come the perpetual fresh release and further ennoblement of individual lives. . . (Book 3, 329)

Remington's gradual development turns his political focus beyond party politics, in idealizing an Open Conspiracy-like organization, an elite of people directing "a possibility of coordinating the will of the finer individuals, by habit and literature, into a broad common aim. We must have an aristocracy – not of privilege, but of understanding and purpose – or mankind fails" (267). This new phase can be attained only by leaving behind "the cant of Imperialism" (268). One American critic was particularly puzzled by the novel: Henry James.

It is evident that the hands of the creator emerge from the textual space and attempts to grip the reader's attention. In March 1911, Henry James, who as early as 1905 already saw in Wells "the

[471] For further discussion on Meredith and politics in *One of Our Conquerors* see Gayla S. McGlamery "'The Malady Affecting England'": *One of Our Conquerors* as Cautionary Tale," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 46 (1991): 372-50. As McGlamery observes, "here and elsewhere in the novel, Meredith makes a key point. He calls attention to what he perceives as England's dangerous, unreflective smugness about her position in the world" (344).

most interesting 'literary man' of your generation – in fact, the only interesting," and again, in 1909 "the most interesting representation and ironic genius and faculty, of our Anglo-Saxon world and life. . .vivid and alone, making nobody else signify at all," now reviewed privately *The New Machiavelli*:

I have read you then, I need scarcely tell you, with an intensified sense of that life and force and temperament, that fulness of endowment and easy impudence of genius, which make you so extraordinary and which have long claimed my unstinted admiration; you being for me so much the most interesting and masterful prose-painter of your English generation (or indeed of your generation unqualified),that I see you hang there over the subject scene practically all alone; a far-flaring even though turbid and smoky lamp, projecting the most vivid and splendid golden splotches, *creating* them about the field – shining scattered innumerable morsels of a huge smashed mirror. I seem to feel that there can be no better proof of your great gift – the *N. M.* makes me most particularly feel it – than that you bedevil and coerce to the extent you do such a reader and victim as I am; I mean one so engaged on the side of was and attempts to which yours are extremely alien and for whom the great interest of the art we practice involves a lot of considerations and preoccupations over which you more and more ride roughshod and triumphant – when you don't, that is, with a strange and brilliant impunity of your own, leave them to one side together (which *is* indeed what you now apparently incline most to do.) Your big feeling for life, your capacity for chewing up the thickness of the world in such enormous mouthfuls, while you fairly slobber, so to speak, with the multitudinous taste – this constitutes for me a rare and wonderful and admirable exhibition, on your part, in itself, so that one should doubtless frankly ask one's self what the devil, in the way of effect and evocation and general demonic activity, one wants more.[472]

After this thundering comment, a balanced mélange between disapproval and appreciation, James would highlight the risks of "that accurst autobiographic form," seeing in the absence of authorial detachment a loss of aesthetic realization. Wells was running through a dangerous path for the novelist, James argued. Leon Edel reduces James's comment as mere sarcasm and a final blow on Wells's artistry; still, this Jamesian reflection on the possibilities of art remains one of the most constructive exchange they had on literary methods. Henry James himself, who would so rarely pardon the use of the first-person pronoun as an ideal literary device, could not fully reject "the effect" of the authorial power governing Wells's narrative as one of the most intriguing experiments in literary fiction.[473] Wells replied, in ironic phrasing too: "I think I wholly agree and kiss the rod. You

[472] Letters reprinted in Edel and Ray, *Henry James & H. G. Wells*, 103, 122. The long passage is dated March 3, 1911. Quoted in *Henry James & H. G. Wells*, 126-27.

[473] In the Preface to *The Ambassadors* he would clarify: "Had I, meanwhile, made him at once hero and historian, endowed him with the romantic privilege of the 'first person' – the darkest abyss of romance. . .'Suffice it, to be brief, that the first person, in the long piece, is a form foredoomed to looseness and that looseness, never much my affair, had never been so little so as on this particular occasion. All of which reflections flocked to the standard from the moment – a very early one- the question of how to keep my form amusing while sticking so close to my central figure and constantly taking its pattern from him had to be faced." Quoted in *The Art of the Novel*, 320. James himself, however, at times employed the first-person in some of his stories. For more details on James and autobiography see Jerome Boyd Maunsell, *Portraits from Life*.

put your sense of the turbid confusion, the strain and violence of my book so beautifully that almost they seem merits. But oh! Some day when I'm settled-er if ever, I will do better;" adding also: "I agree about the 'first-person'. The only artistic 'first-person' is the onlooker speculative 'first person', and God helping me, this shall be the last of my gushing Hari-Karis."

In metafictional modality, in *Machiavelli* Wells already stated his anti-Jamesian idea of art: "Art is selection and so is most autobiography. But I am concerned with a more tangled business than selection: I want to show a contemporary man in relation to the state and social usage, and the social organism in relation to that man. To tell my story I have to simplify" (315). Douglas Keesey has remarked that "what is 'major' to James is 'minor' to Wells;" but it would be more helpful to state that what is "minor" to James is "major" to Wells. In James's view, the authorial use of the first-person pronoun led to a dispersion of unity, and lack of authenticity. In James's observations on the first-person narrative in the *Passionate Friends*, for instance, the Master would express again both his admiration and serious doubts on the autobiographic form: "I am too impatient to let you know *how* wonderful I find this last. . .This produces reflections and reserves;" yet James acknowledges that, if he can still perceive some effect: "this is because you have so positive a process and method of your own (rare and *almost* sole performer to this tune roundabout us – in fact absolutely sole by the *force* of your exhibition) that there's an anxious joy in seeing what it does for you and with you." The focus on the author, James saw, was a *force*, a term dear to him in referring to Wells, but also a problem.[474] The Master, would, progressing with the years, find the resistance of his own artistic sensibility too impellent to discount it:

> but my point is that *with* this heart-breaking leak even sometimes so nearly playing the devil with the boat your talent remains so savoury and what you do so substantial. I adore a rounded objectivity, a completely patiently achieved one, and what I mean by your perversity and your leak is that your attachment to the autobiographic form for the *kind of thing* undertaken, the whole of expression of actuality, 'up to date', affects me as sacrificing what I hold most dear, a precious effect of perspective, indispensable, by my fond measure, to beauty and authenticity. . .for what you *have* done has held me deliciously intent and made me feel anew with thanks to the great Author of all things what an invaluable form and inestimable art it is! Go on, go on and do it as you like, so long as you *keep* doing it; your faculty is of the highest price, your temper and your hand form one of the choicest treasures of the time; my offensive remarks are

[474] James read and enjoyed immensely many of Wells's first person narratives, in fact. He deemed *The Time Machine* a masterpiece. *A Modern Utopia* also made him an enthusiast of Wells's mastery of irony. James writes about the first-person narrative of the scientific romance *In the Days of the Comet* (1906) "You *interest* me intensely and that work has done so on every page, having, as it seems to me, extraordinary force and sincerity. You have *force* as really no one has it." Reprinted in Edel and Ray, *Henry James and H. G. Wells*, 111.

but the sign of my helpless subjugation and impotent envy, and I am yours, my dear Wells, all gratefully and faithfully, HENRY JAMES.[475]

As usual with his letters reviewing Wells's works, we find in James's ironic discourse the expression of his most solid doubts on the art of fiction along with his conflicted admiration for Wells's method. Wells would never renounce the technique of self-revelation in fiction and the two artists, famously, took different roads. Critics have usually framed their artistic distance in terms of their divergence on the *function* of the novel; but in fact, their main divergence is one of more pure and simple *technique*. James too, as the published correspondence by Edel and Ray also reveal, was genuinely concerned about political affairs, and enjoyed Wells's Utopian depictions both in literary and non-literary prose. When Wells wrote his sociological analysis in *The Future in America* (1906), James specularly published his *The American Scene* (1907). These were two works which are significantly different in terms of exposition, but still share the same object of inquiry. During WWI, eventually, James also turned increasingly his attention towards the tragedy of world's affairs.[476] One may ask, with hindsight, how Henry James, a long-time admirer of Wells's irony, as well as a convinced opponent of authorial obtrusion, would have received the narrative of *The World of William Clissold*. We can only wonder and imagine a critical observation between fascination and despair.

Let us conclude with a few remarks on Wells's imperial and self-revelatory novel. The novel is primarily a dialogic textual experience between author and the British audience in which the author's *artistic intentions* coincide with the *practical intention* of directing political action.[477] In

[475] Quoted in Edel and Ray, *Henry James and H. G. Wells*, 1913, 173-74; 175-76. Letter to Wells in review of *The Passionate Friends*

[476] On James's reactions to WWI see for example, Joseph Wiesenfarth, "The Art of Fiction and the Art of War: Henry James, H. G. Wells, and Ford Madox Ford." Wiesenfarth shows how the war became an event of supreme importance in James's life.

[477] My observation is possible by adhering to Farrell's useful theoretical distinction between *communicative*, *practical* and *artistic* intention. The key point is that: "Artistic activity, then, can be considered a subsphere of practical activity, but one that is internal to the fabric of the work" (39). Farrell distinguishes the three interrelated spheres: "Authorial intention, therefore, is necessary to make a text into an act of communication. We can see this simply by recognizing the making of the work as an action (34). . .*communicative intentions*. . .have a simple, fixed criterion of success (37). All that communicative intentions require is that a competent reader be able to recognize what they are. . .a literary work can be a complete success from a communicative point of view; we may know just what it was the artist was trying to convey with every sentence; yet their work may leave us completely disengaged," as in jokes (37). Farrell then explains that "at the opposite extreme from communicative intentions are the *practical intentions* that motivate the composition of literary works. By definition they seek some impact on the author's condition or the condition of the world around him that goes beyond the simple recognition of meaning by the reader. Authors compose with various egoistic or idealistic ambitions in mind: to impress others, give them pleasure, earn a living, gain status, sexual opportunities, the power to influence opinion, change the world, or keep the world the same. And, of course, they may compose just for the sake of it. Such practical intentions may have ethical significance. They may affect our attitude toward the author as a moral being and color our experience of the work. But they do not affect its meaning. Rather, they derive from its meaning and entirely depend on it. . .Knowledge of the artist's ulterior motives may affect our attitude toward the work. We may be deeply interested in the broad ethical significance of its creation. But these are not typically conveyed by the work itself" (38). Finally, *artistic intentions* are related to practical ones. These "are located in a zone somewhere between the

Romantic, Burkean aesthetic understanding, Wells looks towards the perfectibility of man; the State, is at the same time agent and space for human perfection. Altering the State towards an ideal of beauty, differently put, corresponds to Wells's *artistic intention*. This was, to the reader, visible in the text itself. The dialogical act does not occur between "text and reader;" rather, the dialogue occurs precisely between Author and Reader(s), with the text as the communicative thread between the two human poles. In the Wellsian novel, the imperial scene in its political and sociological treatment, is the main thematic architecture. Wells's novel typically reflects on the politics of empire – while also addressing a vast array of related themes – in a virtual area of social debate in which the reader is constantly reminded by an obtrusive authorial voice of his/her status as active citizen within the imperial cosmology.

The political novel configures, therefore, the reading experience as an inherently public performance. In *Politics and the Novel*, Irving Howe, discarding Wells's contribution in the tradition of the genre, defined instead the Russian Revolution as historical watershed. The critic defined the "political novel" as "a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting," specifying that it is "a novel in which *we take to be dominant* political ideas or the political milieu."[478] Yet, Wells's particular merit in the twentieth-century, paradoxically unacknowledged in criticism after the 1950s, is to open a critical dialogue by fictional textualization on the experience of empire outside the entrusted institutions of the relative nation-state.[479] If, in Thomas Richard's suggesting phrasing, "an empire is partly a fiction,"[480] we critically trace Wells's authorial attempt to unify, through the textual world, the complex administrative incongruencies of the imperial power. The artistic career of Wells, in the specific, is founded on a rejection of Kipling's

communicative and the generally practical. By artistic intentions I mean the authors' attempts to provide a valuable reading experience by creating literary effects – to move, amuse, perplex, inspire, instruct, or infuriate the reader, using all means at hand – verbal skill, mastery of structure, imagery, metaphor, narrative forms and genres, or the flouting of any of these. . .In all of these we can discern the author's desire to create a certain effect or set of effects and a belief in the efficacy of the means chosen, suggesting a rational fit between belief, desire, and action" (39). Artistic intentions, Farrell specifies, like practical intentions, "differ from communicative intentions in that they do not succeed merely in being recognized by the reader; for artistic success, more than proper understanding is required. . .Artistic intentions are like practical intentions in that they do depend upon success of the communicative intentions which constitute the work, but they differ from practical intentions in being confined to what is visible in the work itself" (39).

[478] Irving Howe, *Politics and the Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

[479] The only study which dedicates a chapter to Wells and the political novel dates back to the 1920s, by Morris Edmund Speare, *The Political Novel: Its Development in England and America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923). This was the first academic study of the political novel as such, and without being apologetic for discussing it. Following H. G. Wells's death, the British author does disappear from critical treatments on the political novel. Compare, for example, Irving Howe, *Politics and the Novel*; this book was first published as early as 1957; Michael Wilding, *Political Fictions* (London: Routledge & Kenan Paul, 1980); Dominick LaCapra, *History, Politics and the Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987). Wells's most surprising absence characterises Stuart A. Scheingold, *The Political Novel: Re-Imagining the Twentieth Century* (New York: Continuum, 2010). A vaster literature of criticism on the political novel focusses particularly on the American scene in the Cold War period. For an overview see Joseph Blotner, *The Modern American Political Novel 1900-1960* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966) and especially the excellent study by John Whalen-Bridge, *Political Fiction and the American Self* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

[480] Thomas Richard, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993), 1.

imperial fiction. If Kipling's plots revolve around the pedagogy on *how to rule* properly the colonial subject, in Wells, the literary world aims to stage a hierarchy-free space of democratic possibilities, and, through author-reader co-operation, the abandonment of unequal power structures. Wells's fiction progressively breaks up with the late nineteenth-century codes of imperial rule, sketching into new political horizons and utopian imagination.

Politics requires representation; analogously, as we have insisted, art requires its author. As artist he was the pioneering figure in Western literature in characteristically managing to establish a synthesis between the apparently noncommunicating fields of art and politics.[481] Empire in Wells is the main topic to be explicitly dissected by the novel's discursiveness in which Wells's own ideology governs and directs, like an all-seeing Platonian Socrates, the whole imperial debate within the fictional frame. The rhetoric structure of Plato's *Republic* is the master-text of all his novelistic production. The realm of art is constructed to subvert, reform the realm of politics through aesthetic power, and therefore reform life. Wells reminds us that Literature is above all positive *action*; action starts from the text and realizes itself in world. The Wellsian novel, finally, is aesthetically meaningful inasmuch fiction initiates the pleasure deriving specifically from human communication and critical debate; and it is political in the way it overtly promotes participation in society, while imagining – through a utopian charge within the novel form – a reconstruction of power hierarchies beyond political partisanships. As artistic prerogative, in simultaneous harmony and dissonance with Henry James and Modernism, Wells's art praises one ideal of *life* and self-expression. H. G. Wells would claim in his autobiography: "the more completely life is lived, the more political a man becomes" (*EA* 2: 781). So the narrator of *Machiavelli*, wittingly overlapping with Wells the author, self-reflectively questions himself: "Somewhere between politics and literature my grip must needs be found, but where?" (163). The answer was in art, one ideal of art.

[481] On the presence of empire in the novel form see especially Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. For a broad historical discussion on the development of novel and the nation in a wider context see especially Patrick Parrinder, *Nation & the Novel. The English Novel from the Origin to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

4. The Call of History: The World Intellectual

"In this we have the key to the ugliest, most retrogressive, and finally fatal idea of modern imperialism; the idea of a *tacit conspiracy between the law and illegal violence*."

H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History* (1920)

During WWI Wells rose as one of the major voices of England in the fight against the Central Powers.[482] He was an Englishman under the Empire; the immediate and priority threat was German imperialism. Wells was no out-out Pacifist and the pen became his primary Lee-Enfield bolt action rifle against the imperial system. He deemed intervention an obligatory course of action for the eventual achievement of the World State. As early as 1914, from his British standpoint the war was meant "to end Kaiserism and Kruppism for ever and ever," *and*, in terms of wider international relations, "Kings and Kaisers must cease to be the commercial travellers of monstrous armament concerns."[483] Not even George V was spared in Wells's war period propaganda.[484] His ideas were clear from the beginning of the conflict; the Entente victory could finally shut down the racial discourse revolving around "pride" and "the cant of cynicism and the vanity of violence, by the evil suggestion of such third-rate writers as Gobineau and Stewart Chamberlain."[485] The threat of a world

[482] Wells's activity in the war has been recollected by Wells's biographers; for a dedicated discussion compare Smith, *Desperately Mortal*, 217-42. For a political account in relation to Wells's World State see Partington, *Building Cosmopolis*, 70-86. As of today, however, there is not yet a monographic work focussing on Wells's output during world conflicts. A rich contemporary analysis, although in French, can be found in Georges Connes, *Étude sur la Pensée de Wells* (Paris: Libraire Hachette, 1926), 285-360. For further illuminating insights see, for example, R. T. Stearn, "Wells and War: H. G. Wells's writings on military subjects, before the Great War," *The Wellsian* 6 (1983): 1-15; "The Temper of an Age: H. G. Wells' message on war, 1914 to 1936," *The Wellsian* 8 (1985): 9-27. Charles R. Keller II, "H. G. Wells and the Great War for Civilization," *The Wellsian* 25 (2002): 3-11; David Glassco, "H. G. Wells's great War Novel: the Triumph of Imagination," *The Wellsian* 27 (2004): 23-37. Michael Sherborne, "Educating Heinrich: H. G. Wells and the Germans," *The Wellsian* 37 (2014): 31-37; Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 233-46. Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow*, especially 105-50. For a rich introduction on war narratives, including a discussion on the prominence of *The War of the Worlds* in the canon of war fiction, see Umberto Rossi, *Il secolo di fuoco. Introduzione alla letteratura di guerra del Novecento* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2008).

[483] Wells, *The War that Will End War* (London: Frank and Cecil Palmer, 1914), 77, 39.

[484] Long-life republican, in the year of the King's coronation Wells ironically writes to an unknown correspondent: "I've cruel duties through May this year & I'm going to a house I've taken in France in June to escape the coronation." *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 2, 326. The coronation occurred on 22 June 1911.

[485] *The War that Will End War*, 90. Michael Coren bizarrely manipulates the picture, presenting Wells as an admirer of Houston Stewart Chamberlain (*The Invisible Man*, 65). Wells would criticise Chamberlain's racist theorizing in his novel *Boon* (1915): "Here is that invalid Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who found a more congenial, intellectual atmosphere in Germany, and this is his great book, 'The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century.' This book has been received with the utmost solemnity in the highest quarters; nowhere has it been handed over to the derision which is its only proper treatment. You remember a rather readable and rather pretentious history we had in our schooldays, full of bad ethnology about Kelts and Anglo-Saxons, called J. R. Green's 'History of the English People;' it was part of that movement of professorial barbarity, of braggart race-Imperialism and anti-Irishism, of which Froude and Freeman were leaders; it smelt of Carlyle and Germany, it helped provoke the Keltic Renascence. Well, that was evidently the germ of Herr Chamberlain" (204-205). *Boon* has been so much analysed in terms of the James-Wells debate that literary critics

under uncontested imperial rule prompted Wells into active participation from his civilian role; some twenty years later during the Second World War he would re-enact his political position under these exact terms. In spite of occasional facile dichotomies between good and evil in his war writings, and faithful to his adamant antagonism for competitive colonial imperialisms, Wells would rarely let himself to jingoist outbursts. Nor his war aims, since the outbreak of the war, envisioned vindicative penalties on the German people. It must be noted that Wells's intellectual fight was not exactly in the service of "King and Country," but for ampler schemes. As Partington has remarked, especially after the Great War Wells's democratic and cosmopolitan outlook consistently intensified.[486] He termed the conflict "The War of the Mind," since "We fight not to destroy a nation, but a nest of evil ideas."[487] Writing for the *Daily Chronicle*, in 1914 he firmly stated: "This is a revolt of the nations against military imperialism. It is not a race issue; it is a world issue."[488] Always critical of militarism, rebel child of the King's Crown, the famous Wellsian motto "The War that Will End War" thus entered the English language from the homonymous book.[489] In this collection of articles on world affairs he already envisioned the age of reconstruction under the form of a revival of liberalism to be rearranged in a "World conference."[490]

The Great War, in Wells's view, could be the major opportunity in mankind's history to finally overcome imperialism in its paroxystic phase; that was the meaning behind the catch phrase, in its public variants, of "the war to end war."[491] The author's public output during the war period is immense. He wrote extensively on the leading newspapers, including *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Chronicle* and *The Morning Post*, also publishing a vast array books directed towards geopolitical reassessment.[492] In May 1918 with Northcliffe as Ministry of propaganda, Wells was then invited to join the propaganda bureau at Crewe House - as one would expect, they quarrelled

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have constantly overlooked its quality both in terms of content and style. See, however, Saunders, *Self Impression* for an excellent contextual analysis of *Boon.*

[486] See Partington, *Building Cosmopolis* or, from the same critic, for a concise discussion, "Seeking Victory from the Jaws of Disaster: H. G. Wells and the Great War," *The Undying Fire* 2 (2003): 65-80.

[487] Wells, *The War that Will End War*, 90.

[488] "Looking Ahead. The Future of the North of Europe," *Daily Chronicle*, 18 December 1914. UIUC, RBML. H. G. Wells Papers, Folder Per-165.

[489] Wells, *The War that Will End War*. With hindsight, George Orwell was wrong in observing that Kipling was "the only English writer of our time who has added phrases to the language" (Orwell, "Rudyard Kipling," *Horizon*, September 1941). On Orwell and Kipling see Richard Cook, "Rudyard Kipling and George Orwell," *Modern Fiction Studies* 7 (1961): 125-35.

[490] Wells, *The War that Will End War*, 62.

[491] See also Wells's explanation in the preface to *In the Fourth Year; Anticipations of a World Peace* (New York: the Macmillan Company, 1918), v-ix.

[492] The titles of his non-fiction books render the idea of Wells's reconstructionist intentions: *An Englishman Looks at the World* (1914), The *Peace of the World* (1915), *What is Coming? A Forecast of Things after the War* (1916), *The Elements of Reconstruction* (1916), *War and the Future: Italy, France and Britain at War* (1917), *In the Fourth Year: Anticipations of a World Peace* (1918), *British Nationalism and the League of Nations* (1918), *The Idea of a League of Nations* (1919), *The Way to a League of Nations* (1919).

soon. The Propaganda Bureau's aims were oriented towards a self-sufficient and anti-foreigner policy that Wells would not condone; in the specific, British newspapers initiated a campaign of xenophobia against German-born British nationals, and the war aims lacked the inclusive breadth oriented towards Wellsian collectivism.[493] In July, therefore, Wells abandoned his position as Government agent. The British intellectual would leave the offices in order to continue his activity, as usual, beyond Government apparatus. His focus now revolved increasingly on world re-arrangement devoid of racial acrimony.

Before a progressive disillusionment from the 1920s onwards with the effectivity of the League of Free Nations, Wells initially came to believe and advocate its establishment as a conscious anti-nationalistic intervention to "do no less than supersede Empire; it must end not only this new German imperialism, which is struggling so savagely and powerfully to possess the earth, but it must also wind up British imperialism and French imperialism, which do now so largely and inaggressively possess it."[494] Colonial competition, Wells acknowledged, had led Empires to the horrible human tragedy. Towards the end of the conflict, his early ideas of world cooperation could finally find a more elaborate and effectual political treatment. Adopting United States federalism as template, the league could finally allow "possessions" to become sovereign-states in a federal model based on equality; of course, such pooling of Empires, which obviously threatened the most conservative imperial establishment, would be a gradual process.[495] Looking elsewhere on the geographic map of Europe, he also believed the League of Nations as a moral and political restraint to "those creations of the futurist imagination, the imperialism of Italy and Greece, which make such threatening gestures at the world of our children."[496] With acute premonition, Wells virtually foresaw the violence of Italian *fasci di combattimento* which were to begin only a year later in the Italian peninsula. To end

[493] For major details see Smith, *Desperately Mortal*, 237-8; Sherborne, *Another Kind of Life*, 232-35. Smith writes that "Northcliffe even recommended, apparently, that he be made a member of the War Cabinet (!)" (237).
[494] Wells, *In the Fourth Year*, 39.
[495] For a detailed political analysis on Wells's war aim and democratic proposals, see Partington, "Seeking Victory from the Jaws of Disaster: H. G. Wells and the Great War." Wells writes in *In The Fourth Year*: " It is the unity of mankind to be the unity of a common freedom, in which every race and nationality may participate with complete self-respect. . .It is the open intention of Great Britain to develop representative government, where it has not hitherto existed, in India and Egypt, to go on steadfastly increasing in the share of natives of these countries in the government of their own lands, until they too become free and equal members of the world league. . .The extra-national 'possessions' the so-called 'subject nations' in the Empires of Britain, France, Italy, and Japan, are in fact possessions held in trust against the day when the League of Free Nations will inherit for mankind" (81-82).
[496] Ibid. For H. G. Wells's ideological distance and points of convergence with Futurism see the interesting essay by Maria Teresa Chialant, "H. G. Wells, Italian Futurism and Marinetti's *Gli Indomabili* (*The Untamables*)," in *The Reception of H. G. Wells in Europe*, ed. John S. Partington and Patrick Parrinder (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005), 205-21.Wells writes of Marinetti: "I can remember that rich voice in London at some dinner of the Poetry Society long before the war, reciting, shouting, the intimations of a new violence, of an Italy that would stand no nonsense, that abjured the past and claimed the future, that exulted in the thought and tumult of war, that was aristocratic, intolerant, proud, pitiless, and, above all, 'Futurist' (quoted in Chialant, 207). Wells wrote this on 9 February 1927 during his anti-fascist crusade. We shall expand on this crucial phase in Wells's career in section 4.1.1. "The Rise of the Fascist State: An Outline of Imperial Revival."

the strife of imperialism, H. G. Well, again, made his assertive call to action from all the "intellectual people" willing to reform the world system driven by nationalist peculiarisms:

> This general stifling of the better intelligence of the world and its release to expression and power, seems to me to be the fundamental issue underlying all the present troubles of mankind. We cannot get on while everywhere fools and vulgarians hold the levers that can kill, imprison, silence and starve men. We cannot get on with false government and we cannot get on with mob government; we must have right government. The intellectual people of the world have a duty of co-operation they have too long neglected. . .It is absurd to suppose that anywhere today the nationalisms, the suspicions and hatreds, the cants and policies, and dead phrases that sway men represent the current intelligence of mankind. . .But we have to get intelligences together, we have to canalize thought before it can work and produce its due effects. . .For that cause every one must become a teacher and a missionary. "Persuade to it and make the idea of it and the necessity for it plain," that is the duty of every school teacher, every tutor, every religious teacher, every writer, every lecturer, every parent, every trusted friend throughout the world. For it, too, every one must become a student.[497]

This call to global co-operation contains evident echoes of the political position elaborated in "The Contemporary Novel" (1914). Wells, in the last year of the conflict was defining his round political intellectual space. The war, obviously, dramatically intensified Wells's artistic vision. He prolifically published novels like *The World Set Free* (1914), *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* (1914), *Boon* (1915); after an engaging activity of journalistic prose, he then publishes his two major works *Mr Britling Sees it Through* (1916) and *Joan and Peter* (1918). As I have indicated, these engaged novels on the imperial scene were the texts that Virginia Woolf looked upon with aesthetic and ideological distrust – despite the humanitarian scope, she filtered them as imperial didacticism.

All these works put to test Wells's socially charged theory of the novel as instrument of change. *Mr Britling* (1916) in particular proved to be an international success in its faithful depiction of WWI trauma, covering the years 1914 – 1915. This piece of fiction masterfully depicts the tragedy of competitive imperialism and reveals Wells's intellectual action at its best. In 1916 Wells had visited in person, somewhat reluctantly, the British, French and Italian fronts, witnessing first-hand the human complexities of war locations and trench life. [498] He started to work on *Mr Britling* in the winter of 1915. The protagonist of the novel is an eclectic and renowned author writing from "home"

[497] Wells, *In the Fourth Year*, 149, 151-52.

[498] *War and the Future: Italy, France and Britain at War* (1917) was the result of his activity as war correspondent. Sherborne in *H. G. Wells: Another Kind of Life* has correctly remarked that "he had resisted previous invitations, partly because he feared that what he saw might unbalance his attitude towards Germany, partly because he did not want to be seen as government propagandist. It is true that Wells had been one of the twenty-five prominent authors summoned by Charles Masterman in September 1914 to discuss how they could contribute to the war effort. However, Wells had shared Chesterton's view that no author worth his salt would suppress reservations about the war's aims and conduct" (232).

on international politics, social psychology, and with "ideas of the utmost profusion about races and empires and social order and political institutions and gardens and automobiles and the future of India and China and aesthetics and America and the education of mankind in general…and all that sort of thing" (*Britling* 10). The Englishman lives in Essex with his family in the fictional village of Matching's Easy. The narrative voice, characteristically intrusive, thus remarks that "the hero and subject of this novel" is a "distinguished man. He was in the *Who's Who* of two continents" (*Britling* 9). As usual, Wells's self-revelatory technique creates *parallelisms of effect* with life to welcome the reader, in ironical modality, in the open and democratic discourse of the novel. Mr Britling, like Mr Wells's *The War that Will End War* (1914), at the outbreak of WWI has also written his rhetoric piece entitled "And Now War Ends." Similarly to *Clissold*, this Wellsian character observes the world from a private, enclosed space; but the environment expands beyond the circumscribed Essex surroundings. The literary language is carefully hybridized by newspapers prose and epistolary passages which cleverly reconstruct the discursive reception of war. The narrative voice, ideologically averse to tribal nationalism, seeks to dramatize the broad colonial and competitive context of imperialism in the congested space of the novel; this is rendered explicit to the readers: "how closely Dower House could play the microcosm to the whole Empire" (*Britling* 116).

And Wells did not intend to craft this novel as a work of art *in* and *for* the present only– it is also a document for posterity. It is often held that Wells wrote transiently for the present; this is not entirely true. His educational intention traverses time: "It will be an incredible thing to the happier reader of a coming age – if ever this poor record of experience reaches a reader in the days to come," to learn "how much of the mental life of Mr. Britling was occupied at this time with the mere horror and atrocity of warfare" (278). Present, past and future, as a matter of fact, coincide. Recurrently, the novel thus also looks back at the nineteenth-century imperialist scene. The external voice informs the reader about episodes of violence in Belgium perpetrated by Germans:

> Then again it would be some incident of death and mutilation in Antwerp. . .the Germans in Belgium were shooting women frequently, not simply for grave spying but for trivial offences…Then came the battleship raid on Whitby and Scarborough, and the killing among other victims of a number of children on their way to school. This shocked Mr. Britling absurdly, much more than the Belgian crimes had done. They were *English* children. At home! . . . It was small consolation for Mr. Britling to reflect that English homes and women and children were, after all, undergoing only the same kind of experience that our ships have inflicted scores of times in the past upon innocent people in the villages of Africa and Polynesia… (279)

The wrongs of the past resonate in the present. The voice is cheeky and uncomfortably critical of the colonial system; it is not satisfied with mere record of facts and factionalist presentation in times of war. *Mr Britling* is far from being a patriotic narrative of imperial complacency; the novel, rather, offers a perspective which transcends the individualistic concerns of British imperialism.

The tutor of Britling's children is as matter of fact a "liberal" young German named Heinrich. Mr Britling, owner of the Dower House wittily reveals: "my household has some amusing contrasts" (63). During the conflict, both Heinrich and Hugh, Britling's eldest son, will die in the tragedy of trench warfare, and the plot progressively reaches convincing tension in describing the loss; it is youth that succumbs, and youth, Wells implies, has no nation.[499] The last chapter of *Mr Britling* in particular reveals Wells's talent in depicting the grimness of warfare. The Englishman, echoing Wells's intellectual activity, is writing an essay on "The Better Government of the World;" his days are characterized by images of conflict and, specifically, "at other times he thought of wounds and the deformities of body and spirit produced by injuries" (408). The individuality of Mr. Britling *feels* the war and becomes an instrument of vision for the reader, with horrific lenses focused on the Western front. Mr Britling sees it *through* and finds, through a constructed recollection, the rotting corpse of his son who lies dead for patriotic slogans of "King and Country":

> At other times he thought of wounds and the deformities of body and spirit produced by injuries. And sometimes he would think of the triumph of evil. Stupid and triumphant persons went about a world that stupidity had desolated, with swaggering gestures, with a smiling consciousness of enhanced importance, with their scornful hatred of all measured and temperate and kindly things turned now to scornful contempt. And mingling with the soil they walked on lay the dead body of Hugh, face downward. At the back of the boy's head, rimmed by blood-stiffened hair – the hair that had once been "as soft as the down of a bird" – was a big red hole. That hole was always pitilessly distinct. They stepped on him – heedlessly. They heeled the scattered stuff of his exquisite brain into the clay… (408-409)

It is a powerful, visceral image; an impression of war in the mind of a nation. Yet Britling mourns the death of his son as much as that of Herr Heinrich – he eventually decides to write a letter to the German parents, but his discursive exposition directs him increasingly towards ampler arguments: "And he had begun to realise that his letter to the old people in Pomerania was becoming impossible. It had broken away into dissertation" (426). The author's intellectual responsibility emerges

[499] On the figure of Heinrich and Wells's opposition to crude jingoism see the accurate reconstruction in Sherborne, "Educating Heinrich." Heinrich was based on Kurt Butow who was in 1913 Wells family tutor. Sherborne writes "just like Heinrich, he was a Pomeranian, a student of philology and a keen violinist . . .He was called up for military service on 2nd August 1914." He survived the war. In July 1918 he wrote to Wells after reading of *Mr Britling*: "What you write about Mr Britling's eldest son, I hope it is not truth but fiction. Mr Heinrich is still alive and further going to do his duty."

intrusively in the last pages of the novel. Britling "turned over the rest of the night's writing presently, *and read it now as though it was the work of another man*" [italics mine]. Through this ironic statement Wells winks at the reader; the following fragmentary notes echo unambiguously H. G Wells's democratic thought embedded in the discourse of rational order: "*Let us make ourselves watchers and guardians of the order of the world. . .Let us pledge ourselves to service. Let us set ourselves with all our minds and all our hearts to the perfecting and working out of the methods of democracy and the ending for ever of the kings and emperors and priestcrafts and the bands of adventurers*" (430) [italics in the original]. The Author has the last word of the fictional narrative. He splinters the frame. If the Great War at "home" could be only imagined, Wells succeeded through language in enriching the reception of a crisis that no essay writing could make justice to - the novel is, after all, primarily an intensifying instrument of empathy.

Critics should re-assess, in fact, the legacy of *Mr Britling*. We are used to think of war narrative in terms of direct participation in the front, but the power of this Wellsian novel lies in its ability to convey the anxieties of the conflict to the reader, who, like the narrator (and the author), stand the fight outside the *inferno* of trench warfare. [500] Through the power of the written word blood paints England's doors. Yet, Britling ends his writings by seeing a light of hope in the general despair: "Let us set up the peace of the World Republic amidst these ruins. Let it be our religion, our calling" (140). The lexis of fragmentation clearly connects and anticipates Modernism's reaction to the Great War. However, by "seeing" through the folly of the conflict, H. G. Wells as author does not aim, as T. S. Eliot, to shore fragments against his ruins; the end is to build an Empire of Man anew, or at least a new faith. Badly neglected, *Britling* remains a magnificently realized experiment in self-revelation and also, as the name itself alludes, Mr Britling stands for any Briton in the experience of war: "'I am Fact,' said War, 'and I stand astride the path of life'" (*Britling* 182).[501] Although Wells's prominence is paradoxically sidelined in the canon of war literature, it is tempting to note how this evocative utterance in Wells's major war novel would most likely function as *the* archetype for W. H. Auden's poem "Spain" (1937): "I am your business voice. I am your marriage. . .I am your choice, decision.

[500] On war narratives see the brilliant study by Peter Jones, *War and the Novelist: Appraising the American War Novel* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976) and his distinction between "combat novel" and "war novel." It is a useful distinction; while combat novels deal with the military fight in itself, "war" novels explore the cultural impact of the experience of war at large, also from the perspective of the individual/public "at home." One of the most perceptive critical treatments of *Britling* can be found in Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow*, 105-50.

[501] It is a prominent paragraph which concludes the first Book and recounts the content of the book: "In this fashion it was that the great war began in Europe and came to one man in Matching's Easy, as it came to countless intelligent men in countless pleasant homes that had scarcely heeded its coming through all the years of its relentless preparation. The familiar scenery of life as drawn aside, and War stood unveiled. 'I am Fact', said War 'and I stand astride the path of life. I am the threat of death and extinction that has always walked beside life, since life began. There can be nothing else and nothing more in human life until you have reckoned with me" (182).

Yes, I am Spain."[502] Wells, after all, was an artistic and intellectual model who taught an entire generation how to relate with war and the oppression of imperial systems; and taught, uniquely, how to *think* Art as instrument of revolution and rebellion against nationalist particularism. As John William Cunliffe remarked in his 1919 history of English literature

> He [Wells] widened the scope of the novel, and reflected powerfully many characteristic tendencies of the thought of his time. His direct contributions to that thought are stimulating and suggestive. He is something more than a good story-teller; and when the historian in a future age wishes to discover what where the material and spiritual discontents, the misgivings and aspirations of the more restless thinkers in England during the quarter of a century immediately before the War, he will find them more adequately and vividly portrayed in the novels of Wells than in the work of any other writer.[503]

The critic made his point. *The New Machiavelli* (1911), as we have seen, written a few years before the war, anticipates, along with *In the Days of the Comet* (1906), *Tono-Bungay* (1908) and *The War in the Air* (1908), all the elements present in Wells's war novels. Three features, principally, are noticeable in Wells's narratives: a perennial scepticism for militarism, the incitation from author to reader towards active global co-operation, and, heritage of Wells's Victorian framework, a strong rejection of social Darwinist thinking.

These very principles also constitute the nexus of Wells's greatest intellectual masterwork published to suture the fracture inflicted by the Great War: *The Outline of History* (1919).[504] It is time to address the work in-depth; the importance of this world history to understand Wells's political intellectualism and ideological position on the ends of Empires cannot be sufficiently overstated. It was written with the constant support of his wife Amy Catherine Robbins and the collaboration of experts and major advisers including Ernest Barker, Harry Johnston, Gilbert Murray and Edwin Ray Lankester.[505] E. M. Forster, reviewing the first volume, defined it as "a great book" and a

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[502] Wystan Hugh Auden, *Spain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937).
[503] John William Cunliffe, *English Literature during the Last Half Century* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1919), 195.
[504] *The Outline of History* is the first of the Wellsian "trilogy" on world education, followed by *The Science of Life* (London: Cassels, 1929) and *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (London: William Heinemann, 1932). For major discussion of Wells in the 1930s and its educational revolution to supersede competitive nationalism see Smith, *Desperately Mortal*, 295-483.
[505] The study was begun in October 1918 and completed, in relatively small time, in November 1919. It first appeared in 24 fortnightly instalments from 22 November 1919 published by Newnes. The maps and illustrations were designed by J. F. Horrabin. Sherborne has tracked that "by the end of 1921 150,000 copies had been sold in Britain and 500.000 in the USA; by the end of 1922 English-language sales were up to a million; ten years later (partly owing to book club editions) two million" (*Another Kind of Life*, 252). The history was translated in many languages including Braille. Historian A. J. P Taylor thought the book "not only still read," in 1966, but also "the best general survey of man's history that there is" (see "The Man Who Tried to Work Miracles," in *Critical Essays on H. G. Wells*, edited by John Huntington).

"masterpiece", ironizing that as "unconvincing as a Samurai or a bishop, he [Wells] has surely come through as a historian."[506] As biographer Michael Sherborne remarks, "the book became an intellectual status symbol everyone wanted to own, and it earned him a fortune."[507] The project, an early representative of "New History," lies somewhere between Voltaire's ambitious *An essay on Universal History, the Manners, and Spirit of Nations: from the Reign of Charlemaign to the Age of Lewis XIV* (1756) and Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1789).[508] Along with Plato's *Republic*, since his early youth in the nineteenth-century Wells had read with fascination these thinkers.[509] Like Voltaire's history, Wells's immense chronology of mankind tends to avoid Eurocentrism, and especially the discursive insistence on national prestige; theological frameworks are scientifically discussed and European racial theories are also frankly discarded as sham science.[510] William E. B. Du Bois, who had famously foreseen that "the problem of the Twentieth-Century is the problem of colour-line,"[511] praised in his 1945 eulogy Wells's long-standing struggle against race prejudice since the opening of the century. The Afro-American intellectual deemed *The Outline* as Wells's best production, along with its limitations: "Of all his books, I like best and least his 'History of the World'. I keep it on my shelves near at hand, and every intelligent man should know it and refer to it. It would be antidote to current conventional history."[512] Still, as scholars have noted, Wells's historiographic focus, in its vastness, mainly centres on Europe and Asia. Du Bois too observed that despite the anti-xenophobic scope, on the whole:

> I keep it [*The Outline*] on my shelves near at hand, and every intelligent man should know it and refer to it. It would be antidote to current conventional history. Yet it does not do justice

[506] Forster, "*The Outline of History*. Review in *Athenaeum*," [1920] reprinted in *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Parrinder, 248.
[507] Sherborne, *Another Kind of Life*, 253.
[508] See Carl Becker "Mr. Wells and the New History," *American Historical Review* 26 (1921): 641-56. For a major discussion on the *Outline* and its legacy see Cole's recent study, *Inventing Tomorrow*, 190-231. David Damrosch has recently also pointed out to the extent to which Wells's ambitious practice may inspire an approach to "World Literature" as well; see Damrosch, "Toward a History of World Literature," *Literary History in the Global Age* 39 (2008): 481-95.
[509] In the first chapter of *Tono-Bungay* (1909) we find indirect evidence of Wells's readings of both Voltaire and Gibbon, along with Swift, Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, and Plato (27). Wells will write about his early plan on the *Outline*: "My idea was at first an outline of history beginning with an account of the Roman and Chinese empires at the Christian era, and coming up to contemporary conditions. It was to be a composite Gibbon, with Eastern Asia included and brought up to date. But it became very speedily plain to me that no such broad but compact historical synthesis by authoritative historians was possible. They lived in an atmosphere of mutual restraint. They would not dare to do anything so large, for fear of incidental slips and errors" (*EA* 2: 717).
[510] For a contextual discussion see William T. Ross, *H. G. Wells's World Reborn: The Outline of History and its Companions* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2002), and especially the chapter "Race and Colonialism," 67-90. For a specialized account on the evolution of Darwinian thinking and the rejection of eugenics in Wells see Richard Barnett "Education or Degeneration: E. Ray Lankester, H. G. Wells and the Outline of History," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science. Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 37 (2006): 203-29.
[511] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*: *Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: McCLurg & Co, 1903), vii.
[512] Du Bois, "The Winds of Time," 2.

> to the Black Race. It does not to be sure omit and traduce it, but it writes world history and largely leaves the Negro out. For this I do not altogether blame Wells himself. His History was cooperative, in which he selected from chosen collaborators, facts and views which seemed to him true. Where in modern history would he find any writer suggesting the Negroid characteristics of Egypt or the world role of black Ethiopia? Despite all this, it is a great book and Wells was a great man.[513]

Rather than depicting Wells as either the all-watching and sinless paladin of mankind *or* a camouflaged White supremacist, therefore, critics should understand the man in its geopolitical context and merits; ethnocentric understanding of the times, it is obvious, occasionally accompany this progressive historical presentation. Certainly, it remains the most progressive piece ever written by a twentieth-century intellectual coming from a dominating imperial power. Antonio Gramsci, for instance, appreciated the non-Eurocentric feature of Wells historiographic works: "It is interesting because it tends to break with the prevailing habit of thinking that history only existed in Europe, particularly in ancient times; Wells discusses the ancient history of China, India, and the medieval history of the Mongols with the same tone he adopts in speaking of European History."[514] According to Gramsci, Wells's treatment is able to show "that from a world standpoint Europe should not be regarded as anything more than a province that considers itself the depository of all world civilization." To Wells, "History is one," and he advocated, admirably, that a "saner teaching of history means a better understanding of international problems, a saner national policy, and a happier world."[515] The book sold up to two million copies within the next ten years; as David Smith has observed, *The Outline* was "the greatest seller of its time, except for the Bible or the Koran," and also provoked a "small revolution" in teaching of history.[516] It was soon translated in a multitude of

[513] Ibid.

[514] Quoted in Paolo Capuzzo and Sandro Mezzadra, "Provincializing the Italian Reading of Gramsci," in *The Postcolonial Gramsci*, ed. Neelam Srivastava and Baidik Bhattacharya (New York: Routledge, 2012), 49. In the specific, in his letters from prison Gramsci is here commenting on Wells's companion book, *A Short History of the World*.

[515] H. G. Wells, *History is One* (London: Ginn and Company, 1919), 13. This was a short pamphlet extracted from his article on the *Saturday Evening Post*.

[516] Smith, *Desperately Mortal*, 250, 258. It was a true cultural phenomenon. According to Smith, "except for the Bible or the Koran," *The Outline* represented "the bestseller of its time." Let me signal a few of the works I managed to consult. See Ivison S. Macadam, *Youth in the Universities* (London: Macaire, Mould & Co,1922), who was President of the National Union of Students of the Universities and University Colleges of England and Wales. The preface is written by Wells. See also H. L. Piner, *The Outline of History. Question Test. 1079 Questions covering all periods and phases of the World's History from the beginning* (New York: The Review of the Reviews Corporation, 1924); E. H. Carter, *A Short History of Mankind. Adapted and Edited for School use from the Author's Short History of the World* (Bombay: Macmillan & Co, 1924); O. Evans, *Suggestion for Practical Work in the World History* (London: Watts & Co, 1929). Wells's history received also many responses to re-assess the validity of its arguments. See for example F. H. Drinkwater, *Footnotes to H. G. Wells* (Birmingham: The Sower, 1922); A famous quarrel, based on theological controversies, occurred between Hilaire Belloc and Wells; see Hilaire Belloc *Mr. Belloc Objects to 'The Outline of History'* (London: Methuen, 1926) and *Mr Belloc still Objects to Mr. Wells's 'Outline of History'* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1926). More general criticism arrived from suspicious professional historians; see for example A. W. Gomme, *Mr Wells as Historian* (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1921).

languages including, sketching in alphabetical order, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Gujarati, Hungarian, Italian (until Mussolini's ban), Norwegian, Japanese, Portuguese, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish – and so forth. In 1933, small wonder, it was thrown into the flames of Nazis' public burning. But somewhere after 1919, the "Wellsian Era," in John Price's phrasing, could soon dawn: "The Motto of today is 'I help myself when and where possible,' the Motto of the 'Wellsian Era' will be 'I server mankind all the time and everywhere'."[517]

John S. Partington considers *The Outline*, rightly so, as Wells's manifesto, and likewise the historian Norman Stone has provocatively suggested that Wells's historiographic works "are, to a degree" his humanitarian "*Kampf*."[518] No observation could be more accurate. It was his *Kampf* against "modern imperialism" which is described by Wells as "essentially a *megalomaniac nationalism*, a nationalism made aggressive by prosperity; and always it finds its strongest support in the military and official castes, and in the enterprising and acquisitive strata of society," sustaining itself "in new money, that is, and big business" (*OH* 2: 500). In part, Wells's definition follows the trail of Hobson's well-known 1902 thesis that the "taproot of imperialism" consisted in its ambition to find new markets abroad.[519] Wells, before Hannah Arendt's seminal study, had already unveiled publicly the uncomfortable truth behind the imperial enterprise: "with a hypocritical pretence of reluctant benevolent effort the European mind prepared itself to take up what Mr. Rudyard Kipling called "the White Man's Burthen" – that is to say, the loot and lordship of the earth" (*OH* 2: 462). Behind the big talk of imperial mythology, as Arendt would famously observe in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and in striking Wellsian prose, there was rampant financial greed, and racism.[520] The search for new capital abroad, based on self-interest and competition amongst European Powers, consequently rendered the imperial idea endemically immoral. National self-profit, Wells

[517] John S. Price, *The World in the Wellsian Era* (London: Priory Press, 1923), 7. This was a prize-essay in the *Daily Herald* competition on the *Outline of History*. Price wrote in his author's forenote: "The essay here reproduced is an honest endeavour to look into the state of the Wellsian Era. I am confident that some such Utopia will arrive some day when Man has perfected himself and his methods of living. I have endeavoured to hold more to a Wellsian Conception of the Wellsian Era than my own personal idea of the coming Utopia, although this latter may not differ from the former in much" (1).

[518] Norman Stone, "Introduction," in *A Short History of the World* (London: Penguin, 2005), xv.

[519] *Imperialism: A Study* (London: James Pott & Company, 1902) 76-99. John Atkinson Hobson was highly critical of civilization and its morphing into a system of "serf-civilization." As early as 1900 in *The War in South Africa* (London: James Nisbet and Co, 1900), for example, he observed that "the white races from a permanent economic aristocracy; no hard manual work is done by the whites." Parasitically, "the entire system of South African society stands upon various modes of coercing Kaffirs into working for the benefit of whites, by invading their territories, goading them to reprisals, depriving them of their land and cattle, breaking down the tribal system, tempting them by strong drink and guns, and in one way or another placing them in such a position of political and economic weakness that they are unable to refuse wage work upon terms by white masters" (292).

[520] See especially the chapter "Race and Bureaucracy" when she discusses the imperial mythology of Kipling and Rhodes's imperial cannibalism under the British Empire, 185-221. She writes: "The fact that the 'white man's burden' is either hypocrisy or racism has not prevented a few of the best Englishman from shouldering the burden in earnest and making themselves the tragic and quixotic fools of imperialism" (209).

acknowledges, means military prevarication through violence; the World State, on the contrary, would aim to render, utilitarianly speaking, raw materials available to everyone with a diplomacy based on mutual gains. Let us restate in our discourse Cain and Hopkin's conception of Empire. The critics observe: "the distinguishing feature of imperialism is not that it takes a specific economic, cultural or political form, but that involves an incursion. Or an attempted incursion, into the sovereignty of another state," so that "the relations established by imperialism are therefore based upon inequality and not upon mutual compromises of the kind which characterize states of interdependence."[521] The end of individualistic imperialism would only arrive, according to Wells's democratic plan, "when the intercourse of nations and peoples through embassies and foreign offices is replaced by an assembly of elected representatives in direct touch with their peoples" (*OH* 2: 500). It is the system of world inequality and competitiveness that incited Wells to take his intellectual stand.

Like Gibbon's majestic intention, on the other hand, *The Outline of History* was intended to draw attention to ancient history concerning the lifespan of Empires.[522] Throughout Wells's study, the Roman Empire poses as model to understand the course of history. In the context of imperialism, as I have indicated (see Chapter 2.1.1.) the publication of *The Outline* was no less than Wells's promised and unrealized 1944 project *Decline and Fall of Monarchy and Competitive Imperialisms.* Certainly, his historiographic work was Wells's own biblical book; it is what Wells had always envied of Christianism, in itself an early form of Socialism before the cage of the Church. *The Outline* was his religion and the major propaganda piece for the World State in historical context. Fundamentally, the structure of the book is a cosmopolitan experiment to dismantle Carlyle's "Great Man Theory." As Orwell noted in his 1941 essay, "the principal villain of his *Outline of History* is the military adventurer, Napoleon." This ideological acrimony is not to be intended, however, dismissively as an idiosyncratic Wellsian whim. In 1782 Gibbon's respectable historiography had already established the normative sanction to the expansionist ambitions of the military man:

> Trajan was ambitious of fame; and as long as mankind shall continue to bestow more liberal applause on their destroyers than on their benefactors, the thirst of military glory will ever be the vice of the most exalted characters. The praises of Alexander, transmitted by a succession of poets and historians, had kindled a dangerous emulation in the mind of Trajan.[523]

[521] Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism 1688-2015*, 59.
[522] On Gibbon's original understanding of the work in the context of the *querelle* between ancients and moderns see Joseph M. Levine, "Edward Gibbon and the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns," *The Eighteenth Century* 26 (1985): 47-62.
[523] Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. by Hugh Trevor-Roper (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 9.

It is evident: this sounds quintessentially Wellsian. Although ignored by critics and biographers, the continuity in the project from the twentieth-century intellectual is a fact.[524] The authorial moral judgement, and the note apparatus accompanying *The Outline* are clear debts Wells owned to Gibbon's masterpiece. Along with Wells's world history, ambitiously spanning from the origins of planet Earth in the vast Universe to the imperialist tragedy Great War, the author also wrote a much shorter companion book, published in 1923 under the title *A Short History of the World*, that was "meant to be read as straightforwardly as a novel is read" (*SH* 9). It is worth sketching also through this concise text. Wells could here describe Napoleon as "an invalid and dying thing. To this day its unburied tradition still poisons the political air" (*SH* 249); but also the "adventurers" of Alexander the Great and all military heroes do not receive gentle treatment. Positive visions of world co-operation, all ends under the incompetence of individual leaders obsessed by power. Gibbon already remarked the extent to which the emulation of Caesar's military expansionism (and not Augustus) sent the Empire into its decline.

In terms of European imperialism, the thread of both *The Outline* and *A Short History* is precisely the following, recurrently reminded by the author: "Approaching the story of Europe as we do from the wider horizons of a world history we can see much more distinctly than the mere nationalist historian how cramping and disastrous this tradition of the Latin Roman was" (*SH* 201). The history of sovereignties, as Wells historian has it, has always been the egoistic attempt, at least since Charlemagne to Kaiserism and Tzarism to impose an "Imperial revival" (*SH* 206). The Roman Empire itself was to Wells a promising project which ended in failure because of a lack of will to create a genuine, equal human organization. The Romans were deficient of Will: "The Roman Empire was after all a very primitive organization: it did not educate, did not explain itself to its increasing multitude of citizens, did not invite their co-operation in its decisions" (*SH* 185). Education was its issue. Nothing new in Wells's view, in fact; as early as 1895 he believed that "The British Empire, like the Roman, was built by dull men."[525] According to the biographer Michael Sherborne, Wells had plans to write some sort of global history since his student days.[526] Of course, Wells was far from being a unique novelty in bridging comparisons between the Roman and British Empire, their ideal of *Pax*, colonial administration and so forth. This became praxis of political thought exponentially in

[524] A biography which is attentive to the influence of Gibbon in Wells's imperial thinking is, however, Michael Foot, *The History of Mr Wells.* Michael Foot (1913-2010), British Labour party leader, also witnessed first-hand the world influence of Wells.
[525] Wells, "Of Cleverness," *National Observer* 9 March 1895. Reprinted in *Certain Personal Matters. A Collection of Material, Mainly Autobiographical* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1898), 96.
[526] Sherborne, *Another Kind of Life*, 251.

the late nineteenth-century, although, as Duncan Bell insightfully remarks, "in elaborating their visions of empire the proponents of Greater Britain almost overwhelmingly eschewed the models presented by both Rome and Greece," in favour of America as a "constructive template for the future."[527] And it was still true for Wells, as we have seen; as Norman Stone notes, "the hero-country in this book is the United States; classless, technological, pacific."[528] The problem for Wells is the conservatism of his Government, the British Empire. In the 1920s the British intellectual did not seek, clearly, any closed project of Greater Britain. A federated Cosmopolis was visible in the political horizon.

In discussing the British Empire in his *Short History* Wells expresses his disappointment for ethno-centric and adventuristic colonial administration. Wells demands as always State efficiency and fruitful co-operation amongst individuals of different cultural backgrounds. He focuses on India in particular: "It was a strange land to them, with a strange sunlight; its brown people seemed a different race, outside their range of sympathy. . .It was difficult for the English to conceive what the life of these countless brown millions in the Eastern sunshine could be. Their imaginations declined the task. India remained romantically unreal," and it was "impossible for the English, therefore, to exert any effective supervision and control over the company's proceedings" (*SH* 263). In another section he writes that "they did not realize that Chinamen and Indiamen could carry on the work of research as ably as Frenchmen or Englishmen. They believed that there was some innate intellectual drive in the West, and some innate indolence and conservativism in the East, that assured the Europeans as a world predominance for ever" (*SH* 322). In *The Outline* he thus prescribes that "all intelligent Englishmen or Englishwomen with a vote owe it to the Empire and themselves to read at least one book dealing with India or Egypt from the native point of view" (*OH* 2: 473n); he proposes a reading list.[529] Wells's pragmatic view on race, as always since *Anticipations* (1901), also leads him to reject the cognitive structures of Nominalism: "We have to remember that human races can all

[527] Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 208. Bell writes: "The political use of imperial history came in two basic forms, one general, the other specific. The former sought to argue, using various examples of imperial rise and decline, that all empires followed the same trajectory; that they eventually collapsed. . .The second usage, which tended to draw on either Greece or Rome, looked instead at specific cases to illustrate the political dynamics that catalyzed the fall. . . .The reasons for, and consequence of, the collapse of Rome under the weight of its own expansive impulse had been imprinted further into British consciousness by the epic work of Edward Gibbon" (218-19). On the persistence of Roman parallelisms in Victorian culture see also Laura Eastlake, *Ancient Rome and Victorian Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[528] Stone, "Introduction," xvi.

[529] He recommends the following works: "For India, Lajpat Rai's *Political Future of India* is to be recommended. A compact book running counter to the views in this text, and giving the Church missionary point of view, is the Rev. W. E. S. Holland's *Goal of India*. William Archer's *India and the Future* is an interesting display of the temperamental clash of a Nordic writer with things Dravidian. It sustains the argument that even the most high-minded Nordic type cannot be trusted to govern other races sympathetically. (See also in that matter Archer's *In Afro-America*.) The Aga Khan's *India in Transition* gives very admirably the views of a liberal Indian gentleman. Sidney Low's *A Vision of India* is still not yet superseded as a picture of India in 1905-6, when the present stir was only brewing" (Ibid.).

interbreed freely and that they separate, mingle, and reunite as clouds do. Human races do not branch out like trees with branches that never come together again;" insisting that "it is a thing we need to bear constantly in mind, this remingling of races at any opportunity. It will save us from many cruel delusions and prejudices if we do so" (*SH* 61). In *The Outline* he expands his scientific observations:

> This tendency to exaggerate classification produces a thousand evils and injustices. In the sphere of race or nationality, for example, a "European" will often treat an "Asiatic" almost as if he were a different animal, while he will be disposed to regard another "European" as necessarily as virtuous and charming as himself. He will, as a matter of course, take sides with Europeans against Asiatics. But, as the reader of this history must realize, there is no such difference as the opposition of these names implies. It is a phantom difference created by two names….(*OH* 2: 169)

Ironically, to the Chapter "The British Empire in 1914," both in *The Outline* and *A Short History*, Wells finally devotes a few pages only in which he highlights either the "despotic British official rule" in Africa or the general inefficiency of the current system (*SH* 327-29; in-between he places a map of the overseas Empires). Of course, Wells thinks through a liberal imperial mindset, and his short discussion does not include *immediate* discourses of national independence, autonomous from the rationally unified World State: "what is wrong," he says, "is not so much that Britain rules India and Egypt, but that any civilized country should be ruled the legislature of another, and that there should be no impartial court of appeal in the world yet to readjust this arrangement" (*OH* 2: 473). Wells's world re-arrangement is always kinetic and never conservative. It is a prospectus of world revolution.

In regards to the Tasmanians, finally, we would expect a humanitarian treatment from Wells; brought to extinction under British rule, it is well-known that Wells in the 1890s with *The War of the Worlds* (1898) was amongst those authors who "popularized the idea of the Aboriginal Tasmanians' 'extermination';" in *A Short History* companion, however, there is no critical commentary and these people are depicted with Eurocentric bias characteristic of late nineteenth-century anthropology.[530] The Tasmanians figure as "a race of human beings at a lower level of physical and intellectual development," whose insular situation essentially cut them from progress: "They seem to have

[530] Benjamin Madley, "From Terror to Genocide: Britain's Tasmanian Penal Colony and Australia's History Wars," *Journal of British Studies* 47 (2008): 79. For further discussion on the genocide question see his rich historical account which puts into dialogue major relevant criticism and witnesses from the nineteenth century. Although critics still does not find complete agreement, Madley concludes that "Tasmania under British rule was clearly a site of genocide" (106). For contemporary accounts, British reception and a detailed chronology of the facts, see also Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

degenerated rather than developed. At the time of their discovery by European explorers, they lived a base life subsisting upon shellfish and small game. They had no habitations but only squatting places. They were real men of our species, but they had neither the manual dexterity nor the artistic powers of the first True Men" (*SH* 51). Certainly, as Stone notes, it is a suspicious paragraph from a representative of the "exterminators" faction. But *A Short History* was, as the author intended it, "not an abstract or condensation of that former work," but a simplified preparation for a more in-depth reading of *The Outline*, where the author moral judgement, in Gibbonian fashion, witnesses major elaboration. It is from that master-text that we need to supplement our reading on imperialism.

In *The Outline* Wells's harsh critique of nineteenth-century imperialism, obviously, gets wider and more caustic. The author's intrusions appear more frequently. In this first historical exposition, Tasmanians are discussed in their Palæolithic arrested development (*OH* 1: 84-85; 138) until the discovery of the Dutch in 1642. He remarks that "they are now, unhappily, extinct" (138). The political invective directed against the British, here emerges uncensored in drawing a sharp comparison with Spanish European exploration, and exploitation, of the American continent:

> At first the only people encountered by the Spaniards in America were savages of a Mongoloid type. Many of these savages were cannibals. It is a misfortune for science that the first Europeans to reach America were these rather incurious Spaniards, without any scientific passion, thirsty for gold, and full of the blind bigotry of a recent religious war. They made few intelligent observations of the native methods and ideas of these primordial people. They slaughtered them, they robbed them, they enslaved them, and baptized them; but they made small note of the customs and motives that changed and vanished under their assault. They were as destructive and reckless as the British in Tasmania, who shot the last Palæolithic men at sight, and put out poisoned meat for them to find. (*OH* 2: 189)

From his early twentieth-century perspective Wells's point is characteristic of his scientific interest and liberal, certainly patronizing imperialism which condemns the wrongs of imperial expansion based on profit. Similarly, in reference to the Congo atrocities of the 1890s under King Leopold II, already mentioned in *A Modern Utopia* (1905), Wells writes:

> Little heed was given to the welfare of the natives in this scramble. The Arab slaver was indeed curbed rather than expelled, but the greed for rubber, which was a wild product collected under compulsion by the natives in the Belgian Congo, a greed exacerbated by the pitiless avarice of the King of the Belgians, and the clash of inexperienced European administrators with the native population in many other annexations, led to horrible atrocities. No European power has perfectly clean hands in the matter. (*OH* 2: 459-60)

Wells reminds the reader, as Conrad famously did before him in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), that "all Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz."[531]

And we finally get to the gist of Wells's indictment on aggressive imperialism. Imperialism as it developed in the twentieth century was the result, as one reads in *The Outline*, of the competitive waste and aggression of the late-Victorian conceptions of rule represented, quintessentially, by the other literary author of imperial affairs: Rudyard Kipling. In the section "How Darwinism affected Religious and Political Ideas"[532] Wells attacks unashamedly the voice of the imperial poet. "Towards the close of the nineteenth century," Wells says, "a crude misunderstanding of Darwinism had become the fundamental mindstuff of great masses of the 'educated' everywhere. . .Prevalent peoples at the close of the nineteenth century believed that they prevailed by virtue of the Struggle for Existence, in which the strong and cunning get the better of the weak and confiding" (*OH* 2: 422). They "believed further", Wells continues, "that they had to be strong, energetic, ruthless, 'practical,' egotistical, because God was dead, and had always, it seemed, been dead – which was going altogether further than the new knowledge justified" (423). Under these new scheme of thought "the ideas of democracy that had ruled the earlier nineteenth century" suddenly vanished, recalls Wells, in place of a "revived admiration for the overbearing and the cruel." It is worth quoting at length this specific passage; we have seen Wells's indirect critique of Darwinism and Kiplingism in *The New Machiavelli* (1911), but now in 1919, with the controversial *The Outline* Wells made his voice audible to the world entire. It was not a mild depiction of the national system. To advance his destructive criticism he recounts the 1899 story "Stalky and Co." by Kipling:

> It was quite characteristic of the times that Mr. Kipling should lead the children of the middle and upper-class British public back to the Jungle, to learn "the law," and that in his book *Stalky & Co.* he should give an appreciative description of the torture of two boys by three others, who have by a subterfuge tied up their victims helplessly before revealing their hostile intentions. It is worth while to give a little attention to this incident in *Stalky & Co.*, because it lights up the political psychology of the British Empire at the close of the nineteenth century very vividly. The history of the last half century is not to be understood without an understanding of the mental twist which this story exemplifies. The two boys who are tortured are "bullies," that is the excuse of their tormentors, and these latter have further been incited to the orgy by a clergyman. Nothing can restrain the gusto with which they (and Mr. Kipling) set about the job. Before resorting to torture, the teaching seems to be, see that you pump up a little justifiable

[531] Joseph Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," in *Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories* (London: William Blackwood, 1902 [1899]), 133.
[532] The section belongs to *The Outline*'s Chapter XXXIX "The Realities and Imaginations of the Nineteenth Century. The Increase of Knowledge and Clear Thinking. The Nationalist Phase" (vii).

> moral indignation, and all will be well. If you have the authorities on your side, then you cannot be to blame. Such, apparently, is the simple doctrine of this typical imperialist. But every bully has to the best of his ability followed that doctrine since the human animal developed sufficient intelligence to be consciously cruel. (*OH* 2: 423)

Indeed, the story's aggressive imperial parable was already attacked as early as 1899 by Robert William Buchanan in "The Voice of the Hooligan;" Kipling was a favourite target indeed to many contemporaries, from Mark Twain to George Orwell.[533] Yet, it is crucial to highlight the fact that no literary and political judgement on Kipling, until Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), was as prominent and resonant in world culture as the one we find in *The Outline*. Wells continues his Left-wing intellectual examination, by bringing attention to another morally problematic aspect of Kipling's imperial story.[534] In this indictment of imperialist fiction Wells also expresses his most acute and enlightening understanding of the fraud alimenting British rule: "the idea of a *tacit conspiracy between the law and illegal violence*" [italics in original], which, one can almost read it through the line, is also the logics of all totalitarian thought Wells would later condemn:

> The head master and his clerical assistant are both represented as being privy to the affair. They want this bullying to occur. Instead of exercising their own authority, they use these boys, who are Mr. Kipling's heroes, to punish the two victims. Head master and clergyman turn a deaf ear to the complaints of an indignant mother. All this Mr. Kipling represents as a most desirable state of affairs. In this we have the key to the ugliest, most retrogressive, and finally fatal idea of modern imperialism; the idea of a *tacit conspiracy between the law and illegal violence*. Just as the Tsardom wrecked itself at last by a furtive encouragement of the ruffians of the Black Hundreds, who massacred Jews and other peoples supposed to be inimical to the Tsar, so the good name of the British Imperial Government has been tainted – and is still tainted – by an illegal raid made by Doctor Jameson into the Transvaal before the Boer War, and by the adventures, which we shall presently describe, of Sir Edward Carson and Mr. F. E. Smith (now

[533] Robert Buchanan, "The Voice of 'The Hooligan': A Discussion of Kiplingism'," *The Contemporary Review* LXXVI (December 1899): 774-89. Buchanan (1841-1901) had indicted Kipling's "intellectual squalor" already in "The Muses in England. Poet, Poetry, and Poetical Criticism" *The Argus* (Melbourne: Australia), 1892. In general on the "White Man's Burden," Mark Twain famously published his satirical essay "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" *North American Review* (February 1901). Edgar Rice Burroughs also published his poem "The Black Man's Burden," *Pocatillo Tribune* 1899. Replies against the White Man Burden concept can be found in the Africa-American clergyman H. T. Johnson, "The Black Man's Burden," *Voice of Missions* 7 (Atlanta: April 1899) and other works; for an overview see especially Willard B. Gatewood Jr., *Black Americans and the White Man's Burden, 1898-1903* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975).

[534] For a contextual discussion of *Stalky and Co.* see especially Don Randall, "Kipling's Stalky and Co.: Resituating the Empire and the 'Empire Boy'," *Victorian Review* 24 (1998): 163-74. As Randall observes, "Stalky, as a figure of fetishistic investment, embodies and stages the contradictions that inhere in Kipling's imperial imagination: the figure acknowledges and represents the inevitable and necessary hybridization of an imperial culture of global proportions, yet safeguards and retains the supposedly unique talents and prerogatives of British 'race'" (172). It is a figure typical of the cosmopolitan, yet racially hierarchized and authoritarian vision of Kipling's Empire. For a contextual discussion see Randall's full study, *Kipling's Imperial Boy. Adolescence and Cultural Hybridity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000). For a rich study on the literary and political contents of the "imperial short story," as defined by Stephen Donovan and Leonard Driscoll, see "Introduction" to the "Special Issue: The Imperial Short Story," *Nordic Journal of English Studies* (2017): 1-11.

> Lord Birkenhead) in Ireland. By such treasons against their subjects, empires destroy themselves. The true strength of rulers and empires lies not in armies and emotions, but in the belief of men that they are inflexibly open and truthful and legal. So as soon as a government departs from that standard, it ceases to be anything more than 'the gang in possession', and its days are numbered. (*OH* 2: 423-24)

In the nineteenth century, and at the time of writing *The Outline*, Wells was not "anti-imperialist," of course; what he reproaches are the methods of violence that characteristically "tainted" the "good name of the British Imperial Government." This, concludes Wells, was the "dignity of government which the crude Darwinism and Kiplingism of the later Victorian years were destroying. Competition and survival were accepted as the basal facts of life." As George Orwell after him, Wells, despite an admiration for the technique of Kipling's stories, could never accept and endorse his romantic imperial philosophy.[535] All his *scientific* romances, as we shall see in the last chapter, put Kipling's imperial vision under critical examination. In particular during the years following the war their political and artistic difference represented the two versions of Empire. Both were literary authors, although, according to T. S. Eliot, Kipling's was no "doctrinaire" or "man with a programme": "Kipling did not, in the sense in which that activity can be ascribed to Mr. Wells, think: his aim, and his gift, is to make people see. . .as you smell India in *Kim*."[536] Wells was the most controversial public intellectual of the British Empire.

After the titanic success of *The Outline* the author became a major pillar of the world. In *The Review of Reviews* could claim that Wells "is to-day probably commanding the largest public audience in the world. Every book he writes is translated in every civilized language. Every article on present affairs is snatched up by syndicated newspapers with gigantic circulations and pirated or quoted by other."[537] In 1920 he had travelled, for the second time to Russia and wrote a book in which he explained the ever-demanding need to global co-operation.[538] The British right looked at Wells

[535] For an appreciation of Kipling's style see *EA* 2 (508). In the introduction to *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* (1941) Eliot tried to mitigate Leftist representations of Rudyard Kipling as a vulgar jingo: "His opinions are not to be considered as the antithesis of those of Mr H. G. Wells. Mr Wells's imagination is one thing and his political opinions another: the latter change but do not mature (30)." Orwell replied that on the morals ground, Kipling, simply put, could not be defended. In his essay "Rudyard Kipling" (1941) Orwell explains: "One reason for Kipling's power as a good bad poet I have already suggested –his sense of responsibility, which made it possible for him to have a world-view, even though it happened to be a false one. Although he had no direct connection with any political party, Kipling was a Conservative, a thing that does not exist nowadays. Those who now call themselves Conservatives are either Liberals, Fascists or the accomplices of Fascists. He identified with the ruling power and not with the opposition. In a gifted writer this seems to us strange and even disgusting, but it did have the advantage of giving Kipling a certain grip on reality." For Orwell Kipling was no out-out "Fascist;" he had a "pre-Fascist" outlook of the imperialist jingo. Orwell also ironically alludes to the author's standing in relation to Wells: "He [Kipling] still believes that pride comes before a fall and that the gods punish *hubris*. He does not foresee the tank, the bombing plane, the radio and the secret police, or their psychological results."
[536] Eliot, *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, 30.
[537] Charles Masterman, "H. G. Wells," *The Review of Reviews*, 22 June 1922.
[538] H. G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*. For major discussion see *H. G. Wells and All Things Russians*, edited by Galya Diment.

with increasing suspicion; Sir Henry Arthur Jones in his book *My Dear Wells. A Manual for the Haters of England* (1922) confessed his intent to write a book "to examine the soundness of the arguments which a popular writer uses in urging us to break up the present social order, and incidentally and consequentially to break up the British Empire."[539] Jones's account, generally ignored by critics of Wells, offers us intriguing perspectives on Wells's imperial vision. He addresses in his work Wells's openness towards Russia: "you obviously regard the British Empire as a monstrous imposture, and you see in its prolonged existence the one great obstacle to the realization of your International theories and designs." [540] In his vitriolic criticism Jones can attack Wells's intellectual position, inquiring "into your methods of 'thinking for half Europe,' and into your capacity for performing the stupendous intellectual operation – in short as a Wellsometer."[541] We know that Wells's intellectual trajectory will lead us to his Open Conspiracy to undermine imperialism. Many commentators in the 1920s attacked vehemently Wells's revolutionary intentions. Iconically, in *The Literature and Art of the Empire* (1924), Edward Salmon expressed the same view: "Mr. H. G. Wells's idea of a world state, from which the strife of the woodland will be eliminated, captivates patriots who are dreamers and conscientious objectors who are not dreamers. It is harmless in itself," but Salmon's insightful imperialist standpoint then explores more seriously Wells's career:

> it becomes noxious when its author makes the British Empire the principal obstacle to its attainment. The very word Empire is an affront to Mr. Wells: *A Modern Utopia* and *Joan and Peter*, separated by twenty years or more in point of publication, are consistent in their belittlement of British Imperialism. Mr. Wells avows his pride in being an Englishman, but how much prouder would he be, one realizes, if such shocking people as Cecil Rhodes and Joseph Chamberlain had never been born to promote a policy of "over-weening," "over-commercialised" "grab" and "hypocrisy." . . . Mr. Wells and Mr. Kipling make a fine study in contrasts, appealing at the same time to one public as they have done for thirty years: the one the apostle of Empire, the other a world state from which the Empire would be eliminated.[542]

Rudyard Kipling appears again as the other side of the coin of the imperial scene. In an interview to Wells in 1929, published in *After Democracy* as "My Point of View," the open conspirator expresses his view against self-sufficient imperialism, also alluding to the gangsterism of the emergent Fascist State in Italy:

[539] Jones, *My Dear Wells*, v.
[540] Ibid., 52.
[541] Ibid., 114-15.
[542] Edward Salmon, "The Literature of the Empire," in *The Literature and Art of the Empire*, Ed. Hugh Gunn (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1924), 152.

> If I am opposed to nationalism and war, it is because these things do not merely represent an immense waste of energy, but because they sustain a cant of blind discipline and loyalty and a paraphernalia of flags, uniforms, and parades that shelter a host of particularly mischievous, unintelligent bullies and wasters; because they place our lives at the mercy of trained blockheads. Militarism and warfare are childish things, if they are not more horrible than anything childish can be. They must become things of the past. They must die. Naturally my idea of politics is an open conspiracy to hurry those tiresome, wasteful, evil things, nationality and war, out of existence, to end this Empire and that Empire, and set up the one Empire of Man. . .I find just that co-operation of men of every race and colour to increase Man's knowledge. We can all be citizens of the free state of science.[543]

Wells aspired to represent the first world intellectual; the twentieth century progressively witnessed this rise. It is necessary, in the next section, to reframe the cultural background of this evolution in terms of literary and intellectual history. In this narrative, Wells is no less central than Zola.

4.1 The Art of Politics

Throughout the twentieth century, progressively from the early success of *Anticipations*, Wells thus became one of England's major intellectual figures, omnisciently active and prolific in-between the worlds of art and politics. Ford Madox Ford is again the best witness to measure Wells's career. In 1938 Ford humorously gives a portrait of the author's alleged departure from the business of Art in *Mightier than the Sword*:

> And Mr. Wells really had for us the aspect of the Dean of our Profession. We regarded him, a little wistfully, as having innumerable things, appurtenances, gadgets, retainers, immense…but immense sales, and influence, and the gift of leadership…And we all should never have any of those things nor ever bask in those public lights. So, in some mystic way, Mr. Wells might have put Literature on the map…That was how it seemed. Alas, he was to become the Lost Leader![544]

H. G. Wells, on his part, looking back to his Sandgate days discussing fiction with Ford, Conrad and James, would label his friends, humorously, as "Open Conspirators" against the English tradition.[545]

[543] Wells, "My Point of View," *After Democracy*, 137.
[544] Ford, "H. G. Wells," 155.
[545] See Miranda Seymour, *A Ring of Conspirators*, 14. She comments on the nature of the "literary group": "In the strictest sense, then, there was no group, no conspiracy. In the more lax sense, whereby creative persons will seek out and form attachments with like-minded neighbours and will privately discuss and publicly review each other's work, a group

He had his point – he was the only trueborn Englishman (Cockney Wells!) of the literary group. The competitive tragedy of the Great War in 1914, followed by the post-WWI imperialist revival of Italian Fascism, prompted Wells's reflection on imperialism towards an increasing intellectual activity to reform *his* British Empire, and the world. He was a revolutionary force in times of geo-political crisis. Before understanding the artistic commitment of the 1920s, we must continue our process of disentanglement in regard to Wells's intellectual position through which we can understand his art. In Ford's essay "English Literature of To-day" of his *Critical Attitude* (1911), as we have seen in Chapter 3 "Death of the Author, Death of the Intellectual, Wells was attacked on the basis of his eclectic intellectual performance to reform politics outside national institutions; to re-plan subversively "as censor of the State," in Ford's phrasing, imperial and world politics through the novel form.[546] Indeed, Ford was genuinely critical and sceptical of Wells's artistic intention. However, Ford's analysis also rightly concluded, in un-prescriptive fashion, that only time would decide the literary evaluation of the author. Ford himself was aware of the fluidity of the literary canon, clarifying that its definition is a matter which is not to the present public to decide, exclusively, but to the future: "For no one canon of Art is right though one or another may seem to suit itself more nicely to the spirit of an age."[547] The interesting phenomenon one notices in British culture is that the idea of literary author and the role of the intellectual have been, as Wells's reception reveals, concepts in dissonance.

In Ford's essay, as early as 1911, Wells is described as "the most intellectually influential figure in England at the present day," and "his influence is so enormous because his writings appeal so much to the imagination of the adolescent and of young middle-aged men."[548] Similarly, another writer who deserted the idealized non-political bias of art, in Ford's view, was Rudyard Kipling; as he regrettably put it, "Mr Kipling set out to attack world problems from the point of view of the journalist's club- smoking room . . .we seem to have lost for good a poet of the highest vitality, a writer the most emotionally suggestive."[549] Again, Kipling and Wells are paired together as the quintessential expression of literature at the service of the State, and not for the immediate benefit of

existed" (16). The reference comes from Ford's 1930 recollection: "Indeed, some ten years or so ago my friend Mr. Wells wrote to the papers to say that in the first decade of this century a group of foreigners occupied that corner of England and were engaged in plotting against the English novel. At the time that appeared to be the sort of patriotic nonsense that occupied our minds a good deal just after the War – but Mr. Wells, as usual, was right. The extent of the conspiracy was this: the works of those three writers whose influence on the Anglo-Saxon – and even to some extent on the British – novel was overwhelming -were united by a common technique and their literary aims were to all intents exactly the same." Quoted from *The English Novel, from the Earliest Days to the Death of Joseph Conrad* (London: Constable & Co, 1930), 136-37. See also *Return to Yesterday* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1931), 21.

[546] Ford, *The Critical Attitude*, 106.

[547] Ibid., 110.

[548] Ibid., 100.

[549] Ibid., 106.

the private individual experience. With a prophetic premonition, Ford also foresees that "Mr Wells' dominion will endure much longer."[550] In his correct analysis, Wells's literary friend can easily ascertain that "young Oxford, young Cambridge, the young men and women of the medical schools and of the provincial universities discuss his ideas with the avidity that their forefathers accorded to Mr Ruskin."[551] Wells's Ruskinian aesthetic discourse around the State is, as a matter of fact, the tenet of his Utopian vision – the concept of beauty and perfection lies, essentially, beneath all Utopian thinking. Ford's statement leads us to pivotal theoretical and historical re-considerations regarding Wells's position in European intellectual history.

Raymond Williams, in *Culture and Society*'s generous selection of Great Britain's major social thinkers, did not dedicate a treatment to H. G. Wells. Given Wells's paramount and unique influence on the British culture, the author's choice can now result legitimately disconcerting. Amongst boisterous Socialist writers, in spite of the fact that Wells was a major exponent of the category, it is rather Orwell that figures in a sympathetic portrait inside Williams's study. The only reference to Wells is in relation to Carlyle's minority culture; for the rest, Wells does not appear neither in the "Interregnum" chapter (1880-1910) nor in William's discussion of the twentieth century, as one would more likely expect to find Wells's intellectual standing.[552] This absence, most presumably contrarily to Williams's Left-wing objectives, also largely contributes to Wells's oblivion in literary and cultural studies. As result, literary critics generally tend to refer to Wells as either a "writer," a "socio-political commentator," a "thinker," a "teacher," a "prophet;" in recent critical re-definitions, as in Sarah Cole's study, Wells is found to be "a generative thinker – arguably *the* generative thinker in the English language."[553] Yet, significantly less in criticism of the author, Wells

[550] Ibid., 103.
[551] Ibid.
[552] Speaking of I. W. H. Mallock's oligarchic thought, Williams briefly comments: "The confusion between government and social contribution, in this argument, is comparatively easy to spot. But the 'aristocracy of talent,' which Carlyle had first defined, was a popular notion in this period, as may be seen in Shaw and Wells" (221). In his 1963 Postscript, however, Williams also promised an expanded treatment to other thinkers, including Wells. His discussion on Wells will eventually appear in *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970), 119-39. Williams reads, in suggesting fashion, the Wells-James debate in terms of social crisis: "There's no choice in the end between those two roads; no separable merits – I mean merit in emphasis – in either. It's like the choice, the related choice – the same choice in other terms – between art as a vehicle, the position of Wells came to argue, and art as autonomous in its own clear circle, the position of James. That, it seems to me, is no choice at all: the terms, the questions, are just records of a failure. . .What matters to us is the crisis itself: where what was and is most creative in the novel – the open response to an extending and active society, the similarly open response to intense and unique and connecting feeling – encountered major difficulties: difficulties of relationship and so difficulties of form: difficulties that connect and disturb through all the rest of our century" (138-39).
[553] Cole, *Inventing Tomorrow*, 106. For a study on Wells the repetitive "writer and social scientist" see Gordon N. Feir *H. G. Wells at the End of His Tether: His Social and Political Adventures* (New York: iUniverse, 2005); Feir's analysis results often imprecise on Wells's political thought. See also, for an accurate review of Feir's analysis, Partington, "Book Review: Gordon D. Feir, *H. G. Wells at the End of His Tether: His Social and Political Adventures*," in *The Wellsian* 29 (2006): 54-60.

is discussed as a full-fledged "intellectual."[554] It is singularly strange, is it not? Equally, Adam Roberts in his literary biography never employs the term. This approach is indeed possible, and there is nothing ontologically flawed to think beyond categories; also, conferring the intellectual label is not to be seen as conferring prestige or anything of the sort. It is rather, as I intend it in the light of evidence far exposed, a question of historical and discursive fidelity which helps us understand the development of British culture. This lexical omission, in fact, may also severely limits the scopes of our understanding of Wells in his original context, obstructing any re-evaluative attempt of his art. Back in 1968, Perry Anderson's seminal study "Components of the National Culture" also bypassed Wells from the specifically "national" tradition of intellectual thought. Anderson's Marxist perspective exposed an absent thesis of the intellectual: "Britain, the most conservative major society in Europe" presented a cultural ataraxy due to its "traditional dormant English Intelligentsia," which was reasonably at ease in the hegemonic stability of the British Empire. Wells, leading revolutionary intellectual of imperialism, is omitted. In the literary sphere, only briefly sketched by Anderson's essay, only Leavis "commanded his subject," and the rest were "White" émigrés (Conrad, James) who never attained a particular intellectual position. Anderson does ignore the fact that Leavis found its own school on the cultural erasure of H. G. Wells's world-conscious understanding of art.[555] As a paradox, Wells then becomes an invisible Left-wing man in this intellectual history between establishment Conservatism and Socialist radicalism. Certainly, Wells tended more towards reactionary cosmopolitanism (collectivism), surely in debt with the Comteian model of the "Religion of Mankind;" but Wells was also English to the bone. Owing more to Burke's view on nature than to Hulme's anti-romantic attitude, Wells believes in the *possibility* of attaining perfection of man. The natural animal can be improved by continuous artificial cultivation; which is, however, different than admitting the *inevitability* of triumph of such artificial process.

Through a historical understanding of the category "intellectual," Wells's public activity was, despite its iconoclastic anti-nationalism, the natural evolution of Victorian England's so-called "men of letters" and professionals with considerable public visibility. These personalities are also identifiable, in Collini's phrasing, as "Public Moralists;" these Victorian thinkers, Collini has argued, did "not speak from somewhere located, mysteriously, 'outside' society," but from within society and

[554] Wagar's pioneering *H. G. Wells and the World State*, apart from underscoring the important legacy with Voltaire, little did to explore Wells the "intellectual" in its twentieth-century development as the term evolved in the usages of Great Britain.

[555] As Collini writes in *Common Reading*: *Critics, Historians, Publics*: "by the 1950s, the imperial role of criticism had become almost commonplace. 'English' paraded its claims to be considered a kind of presiding discipline in the increasingly specialized universities, and the literary critic figured as the very model of the modern general intellectual" (258).

with the direct intention to persuade the public of their ideas.[556] As major activity, the public moralist, which is used by Collini as a by-term to say "Victorian intellectual," fought strenuously against selfishness, and thought "altruism as the heart of all moral virtue." Wells, indeed, did not came from a privileged class as the major Victorian intellectuals, and forcefully rejected the complacent discourse on the "character" of the nation so familiar to Victorian thought; but the intellectual continuity with the tradition, I contend, remains strong and consistent.[557] In his idiosyncratic synthesis of liberal and non-democratic thought, Wells situates himself in the heritage of the political Romantic artist, we said, but also of John Ruskin's artistic envisioning of society, and Thomas Carlyle's aristocracy of talent. Equally, from a consistent rebuttal of Carlyle's "Great Man Theory," however, Wells precisely founded his democratic thought of the Open Conspiracy devoid of totalitarian *duces*.

Of course, the most striking legacy of thought in terms of public action is with Matthew Arnold. Wells's whole career, in fact, was devoted to reform the educational system of the nation.[558] But also, closer to the end of the century, he continues and diversify the path of William Morris's socialism and, obviously, re-works Thomas Henry Huxley's scientific philosophy. After the 1860s, through post-Darwinian frameworks, he reacted to the sociological works of Benjamin Kidd and Herbert Spencer, and thus continue, without in fact any particular rupture, the well-established socio-political discourse revolving around society, prompting intervention to improve the condition of the Empire. In general, as he declared in the philosophical work *First and Last Things: A Confession of Faith and a Rule of Life* (1908), Wells's worldview openly envisioned to "increase the racial consciousness," for men to awaken from "individualized illusion," with the ambitious objective to "perceive his larger self, his universal brotherhood and a collective synthetic purpose to *realise power and beauty*" [italics mine].[559] Wells's lexis is still largely reminiscent of romantic imagery: "it is the form of my belief and that unanalysable something called *Beauty is the light that falls upon that form*" [italics added].[560] Socialism, also an aesthetic vision in Wells, must be unbound from party restrictions: this is a point Wells made particularly clear in 1908 with *New Worlds for Old*.[561] The end horizon of Socialism, a system of democratic and atheist religion with utopian tension, is directed

[556] Collini, *Public Moralists*, 3.
[557] Ibid., 66.
[558] For a contemporary account see F. H. Doughty, *H. G. Wells: Educationist. A Study* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927). For further discussion on Wells's teaching career see J. R. Hammond, "H. G. Wells as Educationalist," *The Wellsian* 4 (1981): 1-7.
[559] Wells, *First and Last Things* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1908), 107.
[560] Ibid., 107.
[561] Wells, *New Worlds For Old*: "Socialism under a great leader, or as a powerfully organized party, would be the end of Socialism. No doubt it might also be its partial triumph, but the reality of the movement would need to take to itself another name, to call itself 'constructive civilization' or some such synonym in order to continue its undying work. Socialism no doubt will inspire great leaders in the future, and supply great parties with ideas; in itself it will still be greater than all such things" (331).

towards social perfectibility. It is clear that if Wells turned to politics as an "Intelligence" (Ford's term in *Mightier than the Sword*), it is because of an artistic ideal operating as the rationale of all his political thought.

In a fashion which is particularly akin to William Morris's socialist outlook, Wells was also a prolific author of imaginative writings in which he expanded his intellectual activity to reform the State. [562] Back in 1915, in *The World of H. G. Wells*, Van Wyck Brooks thus identified Wells's works belonging to the "history and literature, and he presents himself from this time forwards a humanist."[563] The American critic observed, linking Wells to Shaw, that "the main work of Wells has not been to promote any intellectual or economic doctrine, but to alter the English frame of mind. The function of each of these men has been to bring home to the English mind a range of ideas not traditional in it." Brooks, a competent literary critic and social commentator, downplays, it may be noted, the heritage with English political thought; nevertheless, he still transparently acknowledges the close, "grotesque" bond – for an anti-Victorian – with Matthew Arnold's paramount purpose was to reform the educational system.[564] Certainly, more than it is usually believed, Wells's educationist revolution, although more of a scientific type, owed more to Arnoldian anti-individualism than the renowned Huxley's influence, who, in terms of education, did not ever propose any structural reconstruction.[565] Most enlighteningly, Brooks writes in his intellectual biography of the author that socialism was "the very content of his art," underscoring that the "subjective writings" are "personal and artistic in motives."[566] Crucially for any discussion of H. G. Wells he comments:

> In order to understand Wells at all one must grasp the fact that he belongs to a type of mind which has long existed in European literature but which is comparatively new in the English-speaking world, the type of mind of the so-called "intellectual." He is an "intellectual" rather than an artist; that is to say he naturally grasps and interprets life in the light of ideas rather than in the light of experience.[567]

[562] In his autobiography Wells recalls attending Morris's meeting: "William Burton, E. H. Smith and I declared ourselves to be out-and-out socialists and signified the same with red ties. The rest of our set came most of the way with us, but with a more temperate enthusiasm. We trailed off to open meetings of the Fabian Society. . .and we went on Sunday evenings to Kelmscott House on the Mall, Hammersmith, where William Morris held meetings in a sort of conservatory beside his house. He used to stand up with his back to the wall, with his hands behind him when he spoke, leaning forward as he unfolded each sentence and punctuating with a bump back to position" (*EA* 1: 238).
[563] Brooks, *The World of H. G. Wells*, 11.
[564] Ibid., 17. On the traces of Brooks's study, for further contemporary discussions on the legacy with Matthew Arnold see also the contribution made by James Stuart Pratt in *On Contemporary Literature* (New York: Holt, 1917).
[565] For further treatment see Angie Sandhu, *Intellectuals and the People* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007), 13-38; Jan Vanvelk, "Listening to Silence: Huxley, Arnold, and Wells's Scientific Humanity," *Victoriographies* 5 (2015): 72-93.
[566] Brooks, *The World of H. G. Wells*, 38.
[567] Ibid., 153.

This is not to say that Wells was not an "artist;" as if in reply to Ford's scepticism in *The Critical Attitude* (1911), to Brooks "H. G. Wells is an artist, neither more nor less. . .Artist as he is, he has been hotly engaged in practical affairs."[568] The critic left idealisms aside. As Vernier commented, "Wells était devenu une sorte de mythe; il en avait acquis la permanence et le caractère inalterable. . .Plus que un phénomène littéraire, la carrière de Wells fut un phénomène de civilisation."[569] One should remark, precisely, the extent to which Wells's artistic endeavour immensely contributed to the development of the notions of "intellectual" in English culture.

From a historical standpoint, the English term "intellectual," when intended in its specific political connotation, is a heritage of the French term *intellectuel(s)* which originated with the Dreyfus trial (1894-1906). The case centred on the alleged treason of the Jewish army captain Alfred Dreyfus, accused of selling secret military information to foreign powers. Dreyfus, as investigations progressively revealed, did not commit treason. Yet, the efforts from the French Government to cover the truth represented the apex of modern imperialism; a guilt must be found to justify the infallibility of a national military system. It was the greatest *querelle* of the nineteenth century which divided public opinion both in France and abroad. The original controversy became a socio-political arena between *Dreyfusards* (including writers like Zola and Anatole France) and *anti-Dreyfusards* (including the most established writers from the French academy like Maurice Barrès and Charles Péguy). Since Zola's famous indictment in *J'accuse* in the letter to the French President Félix Faure (*L'Aurore*, January 13 1898), the anti-Dreyfusard faction would term, mockingly, the Dreyfusards as *les intellectuels*. On their part, the Dreyfusards soon found pride in the new politically-connotated label revolving around the French revolutionary tenets of Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood. In the age of competitive imperialism, in the British context the *affaire* was often received instrumentally as the supreme event unmasking the inefficiency of the French nation.[570] The term would then leave the original French context and employed abroad, developing new cultural specificities.

[568] Ibid., 40.

[569] Vermier, *H. G. Wells et Son Temps*, 14-15. This is also the main reason why Wells's *Experiment in Autobiography* is rightly described by J. Isaacs as an "epic of ambition and a parable of modern civilization." Quoted in *An Assessment of Twentieth Century Literature* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1952), 21.

[570] The literature is vast. For further discussion, see Christophe Charle, "Champ littéraire et champ du pouvoir: Les écrivains et l'Affaire Dreyfus," *Année* 32 (1977): 40-64. On the British reception of the affair see Ronald K. Huch, "British Reaction to the Dreyfus Affair," *Social Science* 50 (1975): 22-28; A. L. Shane, "The Dreyfus Affair: could have it happened in England?" *Jewish Historical Studies* 30 (1987-8): 135-48. For a contextual discussion on the intellectuals see especially Jeremy Jennings and Tony Kemp-Welch, "The century of the intellectual: from the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie," in *Intellectuals in Politics: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie,* ed. J. Jennings and T. Kemp-Welch (London: Routledge, 2013), 1-24.

The importance of the French *affaire* is evident and remains at the core of every discourse on the intellectual. Leonard Woolf described the event, iconically, as "a turning point in history and European civilisation," and with intellectual figures like Wells, Woolf "felt that, with them as our leaders, we were struggling against a religious and moral code of cant and hypocrisy which produced and condoned such social crimes and judicial murders as the condemnation of Dreyfus."[571] In his account, Woolf continues his legacy discourse by relating the suffocation of liberties of the Dreyfus affair with the subsequent State murders perpetrated by Communism, Fascism, and National Socialism alike. The term "intellectual" itself after the French *affaire*, as Collini has meticulously reconstructed in *Absent Minds* (2006), has been since understood in England also in its political dimension; and especially in its plural form the term tended to convey the meaning of some collective activity of intervention in the political field.[572] Chronologically, the term in England, "from the 1930s witnessed a marked increase. . .increasingly, the term's most obvious referent was provided by those writers (poets above all) who publicly espoused a political position."[573] To modern eyes, this is presumably the most common imagery that acting as "intellectual" involves (belligerent or anti-belligerent manifesto writings, petition signing during war conflicts, occasional interventions in politics *à la* Zola etc. etc.); yet, as we have already clarified in Chapter 3, it is not the only sense beneath the semantics of the term "intellectual." But Wells, as Zola did in France, immensely informed the highly politicized meaning of intellectual in the English-speaking language. And Émile Zola himself, I would argue, certainly informed Wells's own political activism.

As early as 1899, in *The Academy*'s section of the best book of the year, Wells indicates two books by the leading British journalist G. W. Steevens that "have pleased" him and interested" him the most: one is the imperial survey presented *In India*, the other is, by the same author, *The Tragedy of Dreyfus*.[574] Not dissimilarly from Zola's intellectual outlook, Wells throughout his career

[571] Leonard Woolf, *Sowing*, 152.
[572] Russell could write in 1915: "As a matter of fact, my lectures are a great success – they are a rallying ground for the intellectuals, who are coming daily more to my way of thinking not only as regards the war but also as regards general politics. All sorts of literary and artistic people who formerly despised politics are being driven to action, as they were in France by the Dreyfus case." Quoted in Collini, *Absent Minds*, 121.
[573] Collini, *Absent Minds*, 33. From the 1930s, the term became also to assume, with increased frequency, its synonymity function with "high-brow" and general "intellectual snobbery" which has remained to this day (35). In terms of chronology, generally, the term was until 1920 employed in particular to define Left-wing progressive activity; from the 1920s, with the rise of Right-wing movements it ceased to be an exclusivity of Left thinkers. From the 1930s, "intellectual(s)" becomes a term interchangeably adopted by both sides of the political spectrum.
[574] Of course, Well must have debated the Dreyfus trial in private back in the Sandgate days. His group of literary friendships, including James, Ford, Conrad, Crane, was particularly interested in the French *affaire*. On the impact of the trial in the development of English literature see Susan Rubin Suleiman, "The Literary Significance of the Dreyfus Affair," in *The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth and Justice*, ed. Norman Kleeblatt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 117-39. The most extended treatment is also the recent seminal study by Alessandra Crotti, *The Reception of the Affaire Dreyfus in British Literature, 1894-1940* (unpublished PhD Thesis, Rome: "Sapienza" University of Rome, 2019). Author of reports on foreign imperial policies, prior to Churchill, G. W. Steevens was the most famous journalist in England. He arrives at the Rennes process as *Harper's* correspondent and convinced of Dreyfus's innocence, but becomes

vehemently attacked the falsity and inequality imposed, legally, by the institution. In other terms, Wells addressed, as he openly exposed it in his intellectual work *The Outline of History* previously analysed, "the idea of a *tacit conspiracy between the law and illegal violence"* (*OH* 2: 424) characterizing modern imperialism.[575] Wells's archenemy since his early works, after all, is embodied by triad of the conservative forces which famously denoted, as Leonard Woolf also remarked, the Dreyfus affair: Monarchy, Militarism and the Church. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt would, logically, begin her genealogical study with the Dreyfus Affair.[576] Society was to Wells's scientifically based novel, echoing Zola's naturalism in France, a laboratory for the artist-experimentalist to expose the corruption of the establishment. The novel, thus, fulfilled a well-defined social function. It is difficult not perceive an important *fin-de-siècle*, and atheist, iconoclast legacy between Wells's and Zola's visions. The French writer foresaw in his major critical work "The Experimental Novel": "We shall enter upon a century in which man, grown more powerful, will make use of nature and will utilize its laws to produce upon the earth the greatest possible among of justice and freedom. There is no nobler, higher, no grander end. Here is our role as intelligent beings: to penetrate to the wherefore of things," in order to become, the French intellectual continues, "superior to these things, and to reduce them to a condition of subservient machinery."[577] Clearly, in the 1890s Wells was not directly in touch with the French context; but mainly through Arnold Bennett, George Gissing, James's literary circle and also through the English translations of Zola's works by Ernest Alfred Vizetelly, the emerging British intellectual was most likely aware of literary developments beyond the English channel.[578] The relationship between Wells and Zola is largely unexplored,

progressively confused by the contradictory mass of evidence. Still, he will judge Dreyfus's treatment as an excess of inhumanity; his account, biased towards a recurrent British imperial narrative, and vividly reported with the emerging quasi-like modernist technique of New Journalism, tends towards political Dreyfusardism in the way his work represents an attack on the French judicial system. From this typical British standpoint, France is the embodiment of corruption, a decaying imperial power in the future development of civilisation. The "tragedy" of the title implies that while humiliating Alfred Dreyfus, France herself was about to commit suicide in the race of progress. For further discussion on G. W. Steevens and empire see Laurence Davies, "A sideways ending to it all": G. W. Steevens, Blackwood, and the Daily Mail," *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition,* edited by David Finkelstein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 236-58. See also the pioneering work by Andrew Griffiths, *The New Journalism, the New Imperialism and the Fiction of Empire, 1870-1900* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); "Literary Journalism and Empire: George Warrington Steevens in Africa, 1898-1900," *Literary Journalism Studies* 9 (2017): 60-81.

[575] See Wells's discussion on imperialism in *The Outline of History*.

[576] The German scholar writes: "The Dreyfus Affair brings into the open all other elements of nineteenth-century antisemitism in its mere ideological and political aspects; it is the culmination of the anti-Semitism which grew out of the special conditions, so that the main actors of the Affair sometimes seem to be staging a huge dress rehearsal for a performance that had to be put off for more than three decades" (45).

[577] Émile Zola, "The Experimental Novel," reprinted in *The Experimental Novel and Other Essays* (New York: The Cassell Publishing, 1893), 25.

[578] Ernest Alfred Vizetelly (1853-1922) was a war correspondent and the major translator of Zola. See in particular Vizetelly's political prefaces to Zola's works. After the Dreyfus affair Zola became increasingly subject of political-artistic discussion in the English-context. See Vizetelly, *With Zola in England: a Story of Exile* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1899); *Émile Zola. Novelist and Reformer. An Account of his Life & Work* (London: John Lane, 1904). See also the preface to Zola's novel *Truth* (London: John Lane, 1903) where Vizetelly writes: "I feel that the great honour and privilege of my life will consist in having been – imperfectly no doubt, yet not I hope without some fidelity – his

especially in terms of their relative intellectual activity.[579] Despite Wells's objection to authorial impersonality, the paramount sociological interest of the naturalist novel is closer to Wells's social-aesthetic aspirations than we are accustomed to believe.[580]

The association with the French author and prototypical *intellectuel*, of course, did not pass unnoticed. Although without mentioning Zola, Anatole France's evaluation of Wells as "the greatest intellectual force in the English-speaking world" could not be remotely imaginable without implicitly drawing a national comparison to Zola *the intellectuel*, himself direct heir of Voltaire's universalism.[581] *In Etude sur la Pensée* de Wells (1926), George Connes described the English thinker as undoubtedly "le plus grand représentant de l'humanitarisme au début du xx[e] siècle."[582] In terms of the author's novelistic output, Louis Cazamian thus accurately reported in his *History of English Literature*:

> Wells rather reminds one of an anatomical dissection; it reveals to us the depth and inner condition of tissues. This is why it is so instructive; it does not separate, but on the contrary, unites facts and souls, the material and the moral elements of the social organization. It aims at tracing their concatenation, from the dim region where economic forces, silent and all-powerful

spokesman for ten years among many thousands of my race." In 1922, in a memorial to the first lord of treasury Lloyd George, Wells with other writers advocated to grant a Civil List Pension to the English journalist and author Ernest Alfred Vizetelly. The text highlights the merits of Vizetelly as historian, whom Wells remembers for his "connection with the famous Dreyfus case." The memorial positively acknowledges that "for many years the passion of his life was to assist in effecting an improvement in the relations of Great Britain and France" and his historical works "contain a great deal of information which is not to be found in other books, and which is valuable to students and historians of the subjects they [the books] treat of" (in *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 3, 130).

[579] For some discussion on their artistic works, however, see E. D. Mackerness, "Zola, Wells, and "The Coming Beast," *Science Fiction Studies* 8 (1981): 143-48. On Zola's sociology see Francis E. Merrill, "The Sociology of Literature," *Social Research* 34 (1967): 648-59. For a contextual discussion on foreign influences on the English novel see Linda R, Anderson, *Bennett, Wells and Conrad: Narrative in Transition* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

[580] On the general rejection of Naturalism in Edwardian novelists see David Medalie, *E. M. Forster's Modernism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 68. In the major critical work "The Experimental Novel," Zola writes: "The experimental method in letters, as in the sciences, is in the way to explain the natural phenomena, both individual and social, of which metaphysics, until now, has given only irrational and supernatural explanations" (54).

[581] The comment dates around 1921. Quoted, amongst other sources, in Sidney Dark, *The Outline of H. G. Wells*, 7. See also Geoffrey West, Wells's early biographer's comment in *H. G. Wells. A Sketch for a Portrait* (London: Gerald Howe, 1930), 236-7.

[582] Connes, *Étude sur la Pensée de Wells* (Paris: Libraire Hachette, 1926), 478. Contemporary French critics have always been intensely interested in Wells's thought and socio-political activism. Wells, observed Connes, "croit à la toute puissance de l'idée, il a foi aux lumières: on est peut-être justifié à soupçonner que l'idée n'est vraiment puissante que sur ceux qui ne son pas habitués à la manier: peoples jeunes, intellectuels à la première génération, chez qui elle devient une espèce d'ivresse: chez les vieux intellectuels, individus, groupes ou peuples, l'intellectualisme semble bien n'être plus qu'un jeu, qui n'influe pas vraiment sur la conduite, laquelle est dans un autre plan; l'indifférence à l'égard de la pensée est étonnante chez les intellectuels vieillis: répandre universellement la pensée, c'est peut-être la faire tendre de plus and plus vers le dilettantisme et l'impuissance." Édouard Guyot in *H. G. Wells* (1920) already attempted to understand his universal worldview: "on peut avoir horreur de toutes les formes d'impérialisme ou de nationalisme. . .Si les habitudes de la pensée de Wells ne sont pas celles de la majorité des Anglais. . .Le terme de son évolution peut être un cosmopolitisme intellectuel, une interprétation de la vie, une vision des destinées de l'homme qu'aucune préoccupation nationale n'est assez forte pour modifier" (23). See also by Guyot, *L'Angleterre (sa politique intérieure)* (1917), with a preface by H. G. Wells.

> traditions, implicit instincts, are interwoven in the very woof of the established order, to the superior plane where in full light are displayed the public relationships of the classes, official feelings, political ideas and formulae. What a Balzac and a Zola had done in France, Wells did again in England, with less genius than the one or the other, a grasp of the psychology of individuals less strong and safe than that of the first, an intuition of group psychology less vigorous than that of the second, but with a sociological sense more precise than that of either.[583]

Zola died as martyr of the French nation in 1902, almost coinciding with Wells's first virtuous lunge into political affairs of statecraft with *Anticipations* (1901). The French author certainly did set a ground-breaking recent model for the literary author who could act publicly and *responsibly* beyond its literary profession, while also promoting the novel as the most respectable space for sociological investigation.

Differences are also obvious and immense. Zola was indeed the quintessential figure of the political intellectual of modern times; with the Dreyfus case, Zola, despite the universalist drive of France human rights, originally acted in the interest of the French nation and through an absolutist philosophy uncharacteristic of Wells's pragmatism. Wells defined, on the contrary, his specific intellectual performance into a peculiarly cosmopolitan activity.[584] The comparison with Zola in terms of political action, therefore, intended as social role in the public sphere, stands valid only on a superficial level of category and *centrality* in the definition of "Intellectual;" analogies between the two author's individual careers are not particularly useful. It is, as a matter of fact, also misleading: Zola's political exposition in the public is measurable and characteristic to a specific temporal and national context which is significantly divergent from the rapidly evolving twentieth century of Wells. After 1902 the world will face two global wars, new geo-political assets witnessing the advent of the cinema, the radio, and a wider, more globalized dissemination of information. Moreover, Wells's intellectual action typically involved a *continuous* and not occasional dialectic of compromise with the British Government; this practice was exerted on the ideological boundary between antagonism and active identification with the Empire. In spite of this, I would argue that Wells represented a fundamental watershed in the early developments of the semantics of "intellectual(s)," and "artist," inasmuch as Zola did before him by setting the standard. One common denominator is crucial; what the two literary authors have significantly in common is the European cultural scene – the phase of

[583] Louis Cazamian, *A History of English Literature*, ed. Émile Leguois, Louis Cazamian and Raymond Las Vergnas (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 1319.

[584] A most insightful discussion on Zola's nationalism and absolutist thinking can be found in David Weinfeld, "*Les Intellectuels* in America: William James, the Dreyfus Affair, and the Development of the Pragmatist Intellectual," *Journal of American History* 105 (2018): 19-44. Had Zola lived beyond the tragedy of Dreyfus, he would have presumably become increasingly an exponent human narrowness. On Zola's own internationalist vision beyond national self-assertion see, for example, Carmen Mayer-Robin, "Justice," Zola's Global Utopian Gospel," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 36 (2007-8): 135-49.

competitive imperialism evolving at the background of their literary and political action. The Dreyfus case was notoriously the paroxysm of imperialist self-assertion. The following section, addressing Wells's anti-fascist activity, will shed light on this legacy. The figure of the twentieth-century intellectual configurates itself, from a transnational standpoint, as the heir of the new imperialist climate.

Ford Madox Ford so well recollected this cultural development. In the portrait presented in *Mightier than the Sword*, Ford lamented the loss of "Mr. Wells of Spade House. . .when he left off being primarily an imaginative writer and became a politician or something of the sort."[585] The seeds of corruption, to Ford, evolved exponentially with Wells's communion with the Fabian Society, "when he made his determined attempt to capture with the aid of his flushed neophytes one of the most formidable and dangerous political organizations in the British Isles." Ford expresses his antipathy to the Society in a fascinating exercise of humour, while depicting Wells's evolution as world intellectual:

> Mr. G. B. Shaw, as I have said, was one of them and the Sidney Webbs were two. And what I dreaded was that Mr. Wells was contemplating taking hold of that Society, jettisoning the Webbs and Shaws and Hobsons and Radical Professors and Political Economists, and so wading bloodily amongst cracked crowns to the Arbitership of the Universe. He assured me that that was not the case. Never would he think of becoming anything so detrimental as a politician. He was just going to upset the Society for a lark because it was so dull and pompous and because he wanted to introduce some imagination into its methods…and because he wanted to study the methods of politicians. Then he would pull out and write political romances with all the local colour correct. Alas! . . .The rest belongs to History. . .That would be in 1908 or 1909.[586]

Ford's memories, as always, are important documents since through an albeit witty exposition they offer us one of the most accurate reconstructions of Wells *the* British intellectual; that in order to become so, in Ford's aesthetic and Modernist narrative, the author renounced the profession of Art. In many ways, it is possible to note that Ford Madox Ford since the early decade of the twentieth century somewhat anticipated Julien Benda's famous lament in *La Trahison des Clercs* (1927) (translated as *The Treason of the Intellectuals*) that "the men of letters" had come to betray their "role" in the name of political passions.[587]It was a variety on the idealized conception of the Author

[585] Ford, "H. G. Wells," 153.
[586] Ibid., 161.
[587] Benda's essay, as Collini acutely remarks, never mentioned the word "Intellectual" in his essay; and this is because Benda, after all, was referring to "men of letters," writers, in general. Of course, his model was Zola and the French early tradition. But he mistook Zola's political activism as something *above* politics; whereas in fact, of course, the Dreyfus

in society. Benda's essay quoted Rudyard Kipling as English-speaking representatives; Wells did not figure in the essay of the French philosopher; in his essay, after all, Socialism is seen as a full-fledged political passion and, therefore, a symptom of corruption of the *pure* man of letter. Benda and Ford, in practice, were deprecating the same attitude amongst living writers for meddling into the political arena. In the post-war period, referring to the the 1920s, Ford describes with remarkable affection his life-long literary nemesis, devoured by political passions; indeed, such passions were no repellent activism, yet they were overtly political:

> Mr. Wells of those days looked very much like being the Arbiter of the World. . .He was like a portent that flashed from the Kremlin to the White House – as he did only last year again but less prodigiously. . .I hope Mr. Wells goes on being the eternally cheerful politician, the eternally benevolent adviser of humanity, the forever glorified snooper, the noble and ever-victorious Enemy General. And if not, then at least he can have the assurance of leaving behind him a body of sheer literature such as few others of us will have left.[588]

Having established thus far a comprehensive cultural and theoretical background in relation to what H. G. Wells represented in relation to imperialism, we can now investigate further the literary and political affairs of the now Lost Enemy General. We should re-consider, again, this history from a wider angle of the twentieth-century development of imperialist politics. The rise of the first totalitarian movement in Europe will shed additional light on Wells's artistic and intellectual activity. Once more, between Arts and Politics, the author finds his place.

4.1.1. The Rise of the Fascist State: An Outline of Imperial Revival

In 1943, on August the 26th, H. G. Wells was invited as chairman for a meeting by the title "What is Happening in Italy?" held at Wigmore Hall in London. The event was arranged by the Italian Anti-Fascist Federation. The meeting's resolution incited the Italian people "to free themselves from the incubus of alien monarchy of Savoy, from priestly domination, from the perversion of patriotism;" and concluded, in typical Wellsian thinking, that "there is no possible freedom for Italy unless it is an integral part of the world revolution."[589] A few months before, Giovanni Giglio, secretary of the

Scandal was the most political affair of the twentieth century. For a rich discussion on Benda and the inherent contradictions of his essay, see Collini, *Absent Minds*, 279-300.

[588] Ford, "H. G. Wells," 162, 164.

[589] "Italian Anti-Fascist Federation," UIUC, RBML. H. G. Wells Papers, H. G. Wells Correspondence, WELLS-1, Folder W-I-014 (3 September 1943). This chapter stems from the H. G. Wells Society 2019 Annual Conference on Wells and Churchill "Men in the Moon: The Ideas and Correspondence of H. G. Wells and Sir Winston Churchill." I presented a paper revolving around their ideological contrast during the 1920s, entitled: "Imperial Destinies: H. G. Wells, Fascist

Italian Socialist party of London, had already asked Wells to patronise for democratic Italy. As he phrased it, he implored the Socialist world voice of H. G. Wells "to give us a hand – your powerful hand."[590] This should remind twenty-first century scholars of a long-obscured narrative: Wells was the first British leading authority in the struggle against totalitarianism, and it is an unfortunate paradox that even in recent treatments of Fascism and anti-fascism, Wells still figures as an Invisible Man. This critical fallacy applies in fact, as anticipated in Chapter 1, to both literary and historical scholarship. Notable exception in this critical context, in *The Life and Thought of H. G. Wells* (1966) Julius Kagarlitsky recalled that in the 1920s "the struggle against Fascism became Wells's main task.[591] Indeed, Kagarlitsky belonged to the Marxist school, but this does diminish the validity of the statement. In a Wells revisionist conference some twenty years later, the Russian critic would remark again that Wells "was the first major English writer to take a stand against Fascism and he did this at a time when no one could have imagined that the hooliganism of Mussolini's black shirts would develop into Hitler's extermination camps."[592] Since then, the critical oblivion on Wells's anti-fascism begins its silent march. As of today, all works and biographers on Wells have tended to significantly underrate if not straightforwardly bypass the author's political and artistic commitment in the arch of time which stretches, averagely, from 1920 to 1933.[593] Avoiding the intellectual limitations of anachronism we must never forget that the 1920s were still the age of empires, and Wells reflected on the rise of totalitarianism through such lenses. As Kagarlitsky also noted, echoing Arendt's continuity theory, "in England it took little time for Fascist organisations to appear. It was not an imported ideology. It stemmed from the old tradition of Empire demagogy, of which Joseph Chamberlain had been an outstanding exponent;" Kagarlitsky precisely pointed to the fact that "such direct predecessors as the Anti-Semite 'League of British Brothers'" already "existed in 1901-1902. But the Fascist victory in Italy encouraged Fascism in Britain."[594] Fascism represented Wells's

Italy and the Churchill-Bullace Tradition." I thank again all the members of the Society for this opportunity, and also Professor Richard Toye for the informative political discussion following the talk.

[590] "Italian Anti-Fascist Federation to H. G. Wells," UIUC, RBLM. H. G. Wells Correspondence, WELLS-1, Folder I-067 (21 April 1943).

[591] Kagarlitsky, *The Life and Thought of H. G. Wells*, 193.

[592] Kagarlitsky, "Wells the 'Culturologist'," in *H. G. Wells under Revision*, 252.

[593] Michael Foot's biography attempts to dedicate a major focus to Wells's anti-imperial political thinking in the inter-war period. Foot, Labour Party politician, is an admirer of Wells of course, with a political bias for socialist ideas; his biography remains nevertheless an accurate account of the author's career.

[594] Kagarlitsky, *The Life and Thought of H. G. Wells*, 192. For an insightful analysis on the relationship between British Fascism and imperialism see Paul Stocker, "'The Imperial Spirit': British Fascism and Empire, 1919-1940," *Religion Compass* 9 (2015): 45-54. Fundamental for the present chapter, on Fascism and anti-Fascism see the pioneering works by Nigel Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain*, 2nd edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); and Nigel Copsey and David Renton, "Introduction," in *British Fascism, The Labour Movement and the State*, ed. N. Copsey and D. Renton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

perceived threat for the safety of the Empire in vision of the world revolution in which Great Britain had to play, necessarily, a primary function in the order of things.

Wells's disconcerting marginal position in the anti-fascist tradition, therefore, becomes even more troublesome and perplexing if we follow Nigel Copsey's inclusive definition of anti-fascism defined as "a thought, an attitude or feeling of hostility towards fascist ideology and its propagators which may or may not be acted upon."[595] In *Democracy Under Revision* (1927), published by Virginia and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press, Wells avows his clear stance: "I am anti-communist and anti-fascist."[596] The book was one of his many pamphlets intended to reconstruct and review the democratic ideal through a resurgence of liberal values. Certainly, H. G. Wells was politically envious of the quasi-religious success of these movements.[597] What Wells admired in these extremist organizations was their energy and devotion to an idea; which is very different from saying he admired the means and contents of their political thought. While conservative circles in England praised the rise of Fascism either as an interesting experiment in statecraft or a convenient bulwark against the political threat of Bolshevism, as Winston Churchill's 1920s propaganda initially affirmed, Wells counterposed his collectivist proposals for a universal anti-nationalist education.[598] We forget this relevant uniqueness. In the British intellectual's view, most significantly, the threat of Fascism was not an Italian concern only; it was, rather, a global issue for the progress of civilisation whose urgency demanded world attention beyond imperialist interests. Although largely ignored, Wells's form of activism can be conspicuously detected in private correspondences with major Italian anti-fascists; but the major evidence can be recollected in his output as public figure: novels, journalism, speeches. His engagement, as I shall try to show, is an intriguing – sometimes subtle, sometimes explicit – dialogue between fiction and non-fiction, as usual with Wells's artistic output since the Victorian age. In this chapter I shall first focus on Wells's journalistic production and the unpublished correspondences with the former Italian Prime Minister Francesco Saverio Nitti and the historian Gaetano Salvemini.

What remains dominant in the lack of a fuller understanding of the author, on the contrary, is the critical attitude amongst post-1945 critics, to hunt for traces of Fascism in Wells's "Open

[595] Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain*, xvii.
[596] H. G. Wells, *Democracy Under Revision*, 39. The essay was originally a lecture delivered at the Sorbonne on March 15th, 1927. Wells quotes *The World of William Clissold* as text reference of his commitment (see the analysis of *Clissold* in Chapter 2).
[597] For Wells's political reflections see "Doubts of Democracy. New Experiments in Government," in Wells, *The Way the World is Going*: "I want to suggest that we may be only in the opening phase of this sort of political religiosity, both on the left side and on the right side, and that in its development lies the answer to the question of what is to come after democracy" (47).
[598] As indicated in Chapter 1 and 2, Wells's loud criticism hardly figures in this history of British reception of Fascism. See, strikingly, his absence in Richard Lamb, *Mussolini and the British* (1997).

Conspiracy" propaganda; often, in Anglo-Saxon criticism, the resonant label "Fascism" is employed well-before the first totalitarian movement entered the course of history.[599] The reality is that no single work of Wells has ever advocated a self-sufficient, nationalist, and racist Empire remotely associable to Fascist regimes. According to Adam Roberts, with the rise of Fascism, and particularly in the 1930s, "more than once Wells expressed what might be called pseudo-fascist ideas," yet, the critic also lucidly acknowledges his belief that "despite some *flirtations* with the movement, Wells was no Fascist" [italics mine].[600] It is primarily a safe statement; claiming that Wells was no Fascist does not directly imply that he was a strenuous anti-Fascist. This is not explored by the critic. In Roberts's estimate, Wells "repeatedly and clearly repudiated the militarism and nationalism championed by actual fascist movements and his views became more sharply anti-authoritarian in the later 1930s, as events in Nazi Germany showed how illiberal *actual* fascism, applied efficiently enough, could be" [italics mine].[601] The critic also makes no analytical distinction, it appears, between Fascism and Nazism; the analysis downplays the nature of Italian Fascism, which was, in truth, full-fledged illiberal totalitarianism. This recurrent idea of a *flirt* with "Fascism," vaguely defined, risks to be immensely more misleading than informative of Wells's entire career. We need to specifically re-focus our lenses, as critics, on Wells's participation in the struggle against totalitarian movements. The compromising issue is that Roberts's study, amongst others, drastically bypasses Wells's understanding and engagement against totalitarian ideals in the 1920s, while highlighting almost exclusively the "occasional authoritarian streak" of the author, which is, he remarks, "alarming on its own terms."[602] Roberts correctly points to the undeniable fact that after the Great War many Socialists turned progressively towards Fascism. This is, after all, the curious trajectory of Mussolini himself, and also of Oswald Mosley's shift from Fabianism to his Fascist adventurism; so the critic naturally perceives, and here I would say mistakenly, the same danger in Wells's career. Roberts claims,

[599] Leon Stover, Michael Coren and John Carey have been major representants of the trend; to a minor degree Peter Kemp. Most recently, also Adam Roberts has indicated in his readings the Fascist streak in Wells's social vision. On the charge of racism/Fascism see, for example, the recent reassessments by Adam Roberts, *History of Science Fiction*, 218, 220, 221; *H. G. Wells: A Literary Life*, 103-119. In discussing *Anticipations* (1901) Roberts writes in *H. G. Wells*: "Bergonzi is in effect arguing that socialism destroyed Wells as an artist. That's not right, I think; but it is by way of asking the right sort of question, or at least of gesturing towards the question that needs addressing. And by 'problem' I mean: fascism. It is anachronistic to use that term discussing a book published in 1901 of course, but not wholly anachronistic; since *Anticipations* is one of the books that contributed directly to the larger sociopolitical debate that in turn lead to the rise of fascist movements in the 1920s and 1930s. It was one of many, of course; and I'm certainly not laying the blame for this latter development at Wells's door. But the politically authoritarian, eugenicist and racist elements in this work can't simply be wished-away" (104). Roberts is correct in seeing history in its continuity, as Arendt, but "Fascism" is, probably, neither the "problem" in Wells, nor "the right question" we concretely need to address when exploring *Anticipations*; a text which, although presenting a racialized structure, actually rejected scientific racism. The real question with the controversies of the early Wells, which are unbound from, so-to say, "Aryan" racial hatred, as seen in Chapter 2 "Wells, Between World State and World Empire", is rather to re-frame the constant anti-nationalist outlook of his imperialism, along with the ethical limitations of some of his socio-political proposals.

[600] Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 326.

[601] Ibid.

[602] Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 320.

precisely, that "the relevant question for any biography of the man, of course, is how far Wells travelled along this Mosleyan path. And the answer is: not very far. But it's hard to shake the sense, reading *The Elements of Reconstruction* [1916], that the atmosphere of wartime ruthlessness was moving him in that direction. One salient is Empire."[603] There is much confusion and danger of misinterpretation in this view; after the war Wells was continuously attacked, as we have seen, for his insistent propaganda to dissolve the very nature of the self-sufficient imperial system. In the light of our discussions on Wells's liberal imperialism so far exposed, it is necessary to regard Roberts's statement with genuine suspicion. It is clear there is a problem, named "Fascism," worth elaborating in its original context. Wells's anti-fascism is immensely informative for his views on the British Empire.

A theoretical remark on the nature of Fascism is therefore obligatory: I will be treating Italian Fascism throughout, straightforwardly as "totalitarianism," and more precisely in Emilio Gentile's framework, as:

> *cesarismo totalitario*, volendo così definire una *dittatura carismatica di tipo cesaristico, integrata in una struttura istituzionale basata sul partito unico e sulla mobilitazione delle masse, e in continua costruzione per renderla conforme al mito dello Stato totalitario, consapevolmente adottato quale modello di riferimento per l'organizzazione del sistema politico, e concretamente operante come codice fondamentale di credenze e di comportamenti per l'individuo e per le masse*.[604]
>
> *totalitarian Caesarism*, thus wanting to define a *charismatic dictatorship of a Caesaristic type, integrated into an institutional structure based on the single party and on the mobilization of the masses, and in continuous construction to make it conform to the myth of the totalitarian State, consciously adopted as a reference model for the organization of the political system, and concretely operating as a fundamental code of beliefs and behaviours for the individual and for the masses*. [translation mine]

This structure was a gradual process within the dynamic totalitarian experiment. To Gentile, Mussolini was indeed the "cemento ideologico" ("ideological cement") of the Fascist doctrine, as the historian Renzo De Felice has put it, but the Fascist totalitarian experiment cannot be reduced, as often the case in historiography, to mere exaltation of the leader, namely, "*mussolinismo*."[605]

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[603] Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 244.
[604] Gentile, *La Via Italiana al Totalitarismo. Il partito e lo Stato nel regime fascista* (Roma: Carocci, 2018), 155. I am indebted to Gentile's enlightening study for the present analysis.
[605] The notion of "ideological cement" has been elaborated in the studies on Benito Mussolini by the Italian historian Renzo De Felice in *Mussolini* (Torino: Einaudi, 1965-1997).

A serious historiographic trouble originates, as paradox, with Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Hannah Arendt did not categorise Italian Fascism as a totalitarian regime; for the scholar it was originally nothing more than "an ordinary nationalist dictatorship developed logically from a multiparty democracy."[606] The scholar thus also paradoxically sidelined the systematic use of violence of Fascism in the construction of the Fascist State. Emilio Gentile, however, has recently amply exposed the lack of validity of Arendt's thesis, insisting that Fascism *was* indeed totalitarian, and in fact the first one of its kind.[607] The term "totalitarian," for the sake of historical accuracy, was coined in 1923 by anti-fascists and then employed proudly by the same Fascist exponents.[608] Mussolini first used the term in the public arena in 1925.[609] Gentile's critical re-consideration is convincing: on the whole, Hannah Arendt devoted only a few intermittent pages to Italian Fascism, and discarded its totalitarian character on the basis of dubious comparisons with National Socialism, the fully realized, *actual* totalitarianism of her study. The Fascist party, in her view, never intended to override, or become something "above" the State; although *fascistizzare* the State corresponded practically to that type of process. Besides, to Arendt, Fascism was not a form of authentic totalitarianism since the regime never managed to assimilate the Church and the Monarchy; which is inaccurate, since Fascism achieved major compromises with these institutions while largely restricting their autonomy.[610] As final proof of her analysis, Fascism neither recurred to a "Terror" policy, Arendt's major parameter, as extensively as Nazism did, nor established concentration camps; as evidence to her thesis, she superficially observed in a note, and without any reference to Fascists' early political persecutions of 1919-26, that "proof of the nontotalitarian nature of the Fascist dictatorship is the surprisingly small number and the comparatively mild sentences meted out to political offenders."[611] To Arendt, therefore, only in 1938, with the establishment of the racial laws, Fascism would turn to its "real" totalitarian phase. The transparent inconsistency is that the scholar advanced her thesis without sufficiently corroborating it with objective evidence (at times Arendt even recurs to biased Nazi propaganda as critical support), demonstrating a direct lack of knowledge

[606] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 257.
[607] For further discussion see Emilio Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo*. Gentile has treated the controversy also in English as "The Silence of Hannah Arendt: Interpreting Fascism in the Origins of Totalitarianism," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 55-3 (2008): 11-34. See also Bruno Bongiovanni, "Totalitarianism: The Word and the Thing," *Journal of Modern European History* 3 (2005): 5-17. For a criticism of the limitations in Arendt's theory see also Paolo Pombeni, *Demagogia e tirannide. Uno studio sulla forma partito del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984), 441-42.
[608] "Totalitarian" and "totalitarianism" were based on the Italian "totalitario" and "totalitarismo." It would seem that Giovanni Amendola, anti-fascist and eventually killed under the Fascist homicidal machine in 1926, employed the term in his article "Majority and Minority" in *Il Mondo*, May 12, 1923. See Bongiovanni, "Totalitarianism: The Word and the Thing," 5.
[609] See Philip Morgan, "The Construction of the 'Totalitarian' State, 1925-29," in *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2004).
[610] See also the historian Gaetano Salvemini's early study in *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* (London: Cape, 1928).
[611] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 308.

in the specific, cultural and chronological development of the Italian scene. Furthermore, as Gentile meticulously re-traces, most scholarly studies on Fascism before *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, unacknowledged by Arendt's work, did frequently refer to Fascist Italy as a full-fledged totalitarian regime.[612] Still, as Gentile underscores, Arendt's dismissive understanding of totalitarianism has influenced immensely all subsequent scholarship and has been accepted at face value without critical confutation.[613] It is ironical, with hindsight, that the term "Fascism" is employed so indiscriminately in Anglo-Saxon criticism to define "totalitarian" tendencies.

Despite all these important misconceptions, I believe Arendt's study understood one crucial aspect characterizing the emergence of Fascism: its continuity with the tradition of European imperialism, in its "sense of imperialist expansion and typically imperialist adventures."[614] Indeed, Fascism came to expand his foreign policy particularly in the 1930s after the colonial ambitions in Ethiopia, finally leading the regime to the second global conflict. Mussolini on May 9th 1936 could finally proclaim with imperial satisfaction, "after fifteen centuries, the reappearance of the empire over the fatal hills of Rome."[615] We know the trajectory of power of the Fascist State. Beneath the well-known bombastic rhetoric, the regime life, in Alexander De Grand's words, turned progressively into an overtly "racist, imperialist and colonialist" phase;[616] but there is no moment in the Fascist cosmology in which the imperialist ambition – by which I do not necessarily mean the immediate practice in foreign action – is suppressed. As De Grand comments, "Mussolini's personal beliefs remained constant. He believed that imperialism was a law of nature, just as life was struggle, conflict and conquest" and "expansion and the conquest of territory were manifestations of national virility."[617] As early as 21 April 1922, Mussolini avowed in the newspaper "Passato e Avvenire" the

[612] On these critical omissions see Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo*, 315-39.
[613] Also the influential early studies on Mussolini by Renzo De Felice accepted Arendt's dogmatic thesis.
[614] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 259. Arendt writes in Chapter Eight "Continental Imperialism: The Pan-Movements": "As regards the Fascists, their movement had come to an end with the seizure of power, at least with respect to domestic policies; the movement could now maintain its motion only in matters of foreign policy, in the sense of imperialist expansion and typically imperialist adventures."
[615] Quoted in Andrea Giardina, "The Fascist Myth of Romanity": "Every knot has been cut by our shiny sword and the African victory lingers on in the Fatherland's history, entire and pure, as the killed and surviving legionnaires dreamt of and wished. Italy finally possesses its empire. A fascist empire, since it brings the indestructible signs of the Roman Littorio's will and power…An empire of peace, because Italy wants peace for itself and everybody else, and decides for the war only when forced by the commanding, incoercible needs of life. An empire of civilization and humaneness for all populations of Ethiopia. This is present in the tradition of Rome, which, after having conquered, assimilates the peoples to its destiny" (64-65).
[616] Alexander De Grand, "Mussolini's Follies: Fascism in Its Imperial and Racist Phase, 1935-1940," *Contemporary European History* 13 (2004): 127. For further discussion see Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini's Roman Empire* (London: Penguin, 1977). See also Manuela Bertone, "'*Civis Romanus Sum* ": romanità, latinità e Mediterraneo nel discorso italico di Benito Mussolini (1915-1922)," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 95 (2017): 109-18.
[617] De Grand, "Mussolini's Follies", 128. Mussolini, however, in the early years 1914-1923 also publicly rejected the accusation of being "imperialist, in the vulgar sense of the word (212). Quoted from Barone Bernardo Quaranta di San Severino, *Mussolini as Revealed in His Political Speeches (November 1914-August 1923)* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1923). See also 132. In the post-WWI climate he had no choice but confirm a peaceful programme in foreign policy.

nature of the inner spiritual belief of Fascism, which was to be the supreme and genetic heir of the Roman Empire:

> Roma è il nostro punto di partenza e di riferimento; è il nostro simbolo o, se si vuole, il nostro Mito. Noi sogniamo l'Italia romana, cioè saggia e forte, disciplinata e imperiale. Molto di quel che fu lo spirito immortale di Roma risorge nel Fascismo: romano è il Littorio, romana è la nostra organizzazione di combattimenti, romano è il nostro orgoglio e il nostro coraggio: *Civis Romanus Sum*.[618]
>
> [Rome is our starting point and reference; it is our symbol or, if you will, our Myth. We dream about Roman Italy, that is, wise and strong, disciplined and imperial. Much of what was the immortal spirit of Rome is reborn in Fascism: the lictor is Roman, our organization of combat is Roman, our pride and our courage are Roman: *Civis romanus sum*]

And again, anticipating future developments of "Imperial Italy" expansionist project of the 1930s, in a speech delivered at the University of Padua on 3 June 1923 Mussolini exclaims to the enthusiastic crowd:

> We should really be the last of men if we failed to do our clear duty. But we shall not fail. I who hold the pulse of the nation and who carefully count its beats, I who sometimes shudder in the face of the heavy responsibilities which I have assumed, feel in me a hope, nay a vibration, of a supreme certainty which is this: that, by the will of the leaders, by the determination of the people, and by the sacrifice of past, present and future generations, Imperial Italy, the Italy of our dreams, will be for us the reality of to-morrow. (Loud Applause.)[619]

H. G. Wells first investigated the nature of this early imperial imagination characterising the rise of Fascism. He indicted from the outset Mussolini's myth of *romanità* (romanness) as a dangerous rhetorical and practical method in statecraft.[620] Ancient Rome, as Charles Burdett has noted, was "the

[618] Quoted in Bertone, "'*Civis Romanus Sum'*," 109. Translation mine.
[619] Quoted from Quaranta di San Severino, *Mussolini as Revealed in his Political Speeches*, 292.
[620] On the exaltation of the Roman destiny and imagery in the Fascist regime the literature is vast. See, for instance, Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo di Pietra* (Bari: Laterza, 2007); Andrea Giardina and André Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma da Carlo Magno a Mussolini* (Bari: Laterza 2000). By Andrea Giardina see also the concise and useful treatment in "The Fascist myth of romanity," *Estudos Avançados* 22 (2008): 55-76. Compare also the studies by Jan Nelis, "Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of *Romanità*," *The Classical World* 100 (2007): 391-415; "Back to the Future: Italian Fascist Representations of the Roman Past," *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 3 (2014): 1-19. See also the following excellent treatments by John A. Agnew, "'Ghosts of Rome': The Haunting of Fascist Efforts at Remaking Rome as Italy's 'Capital City'," *Annali d'Italianistica* 28 (2010): 179-98; Paul Baxa, *Roads and Ruins: The Symbolic Landscape of Fascist Rome* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Joshua Arthurs, "'Voleva essere Cesare, morì Vespasiano': The Afterlives of Mussolini's Rome," *Civiltà Romana. Rivista pluridisciplinare di studi su Roma antica e le sue interpretazioni* 1 (2015): 283-302; Helen Roche, "Mussolini's 'Third Rome', Hitler's Third Reich and the allure of antiquity: classicizing chronopolitics as a remedy for unstable national identity?" *Fascism* 8 (2019): 127-52. For a study which interestingly frames Fascist *romanità* in terms of utopian discourse see the analysis in Charles Burdett, "Italian Fascism and Utopia," *History of the Human Sciences* 16 (2003): 93-108.

model of a supposedly perfect society that preyed most insistently upon the Italy of the 1920s and the 1930s."[621] In Burdett's suggestive analysis, the Roman Empire thus became the major trope of the regime, in which the imagery of the past turned specifically into the discourse of a future utopia. Few things could dismay H. G. Wells, author of the anti-nationalist *Outline of History*, more than the idea of a new-born Roman Empire whose rule was established on Wells's main point underlying modern imperialism, namely, "*the tacit conspiracy between law and illegal violence*" (*OH* 2: 424; emphasis in the original). As a militant nation-state emulating the military past of the Roman tradition, the Fascist revolution slowly emerged into the geopolitical scene as the prototypical deviance from the cosmopolitan narrative exposed in *The Outline of History*. *The Outline* was banned in Italy and Wells was identified as *persona non grata* by Mussolini himself. In 1928 in *The Universal Aspects of Fascism*, an apology book with a preface by Signor Benito Mussolini, the Fascist member James Strachey Barnes could attack Wells as the major anti-fascist representative of the British Empire:

> Nevertheless, a very erroneous opinion of him [Mussolini] appears to have been conceived abroad. I am not referring to those caricatures which represent him as a pinchbeck Napoleon, a glorified mountebank or a reduced edition of the Renaissance tyrant of the kidney of Eccelino da Romano.* There are also serious people who appreciate his unquestionable genius, but represent him as a materialist . . .
>
> **Cf.* A recent effusion of Mr. H. G. Wells, which, were it not for the wide reputation gained by Mr. Wells as a popular and distinguished novelist, no self-respecting publisher would consider worthy of reproduction.[622]

The note addresses directly the British intellectual. Wells was an acknowledged uneasy voice for the regime and British Pro-Fascists. In the early years of the 1920s Wells turned his intellectual gaze on the Italian Peninsula. It is necessary to trace a chronology of facts.[623] To concretely grasp the contemporary reception of the phenomenon I will sustain my reconstruction with a text written by a contemporary historian and friend of H. G. Wells in the struggle against totalitarianism: Gaetano Salvemini.

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[621] Burdett, "Italian Fascism and Utopia," 96.

[622] James Strachey Barnes, *The Universal Aspects of Fascism* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1928), 27. Strachey Barnes was a prominent lifelong admirer of Fascism. He joined the Fascist party in Italy for the rest of his life and supported actively Mussolini's campaign. *The Universal Aspects of Fascism* was a publication included in the propaganda activities of the *Centre International des Études Fascistes* in Lausanne. He was an anti-Wells by definition. For more details see Claudia Baldoli and Brendan Fleming, *A British Fascist in the Second World War*. *The Italian War Diary of James Strachey Barnes, 1943-45* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

[623] On the chronology of Fascism, see Renzo De Felice. More specific, on the genealogy of the Fascist doctrine, see also Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology, 1918-1925* (New York: Enigma), 2005.

As the Italian anti-fascist and renowned European historian Gaetano Salvemini remarked in his *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* (1928), published in London, Fascism was a phenomenon born out of "Post-War Neurasthenia."[624] The unsatisfactory expansionist resolutions of the Great Conflict had created increasing discontent in Italy and a common enemy was found in the exterior forces of "Bolshevism." Fascism thus emerged, in the Fascist narrative, as the inevitable Revolution to contain the phenomenon. Throughout his history, Salvemini addresses Fascism, in fact, as a conservative force and full-fledged terrorism granted by "authorized lawlessness" and financial support from the Government. The sequence of the Fascist violence, openly and meticulously exposed by Salvemini's long study, is presented as a natural consequence of the aggressive imperialist scene. The Fascist militant scene, of course, already found the spiritual father in Gabriele D'Annunzio and the Fiume campaign of 1919. Mussolini's career, after all, had always been a progressive and placid dethronement of D'Annunzio's authority.[625] In 1918, then, Mussolini's journal *Il Popolo d'Italia* equally claimed Italy's right to "a great imperial destiny, and territorial expansion should be the prime aim regardless of whether the rest of the world approves or not."[626] A year later, in 1919 Mussolini formed the "Italian Fasces of Combat" in Milan and gave shape to a system of extra-legal militia which, in all its stages, represented in Salvemini's accurate phrasing, "the actual backbone of the Fascist Party."[627] After years of physical aggressions to the political opposition and intimidation by Fascist *squadracce* (squadrons), the Fascists then first conquered power in 1922, constitutionally after the Black Shirts's March on Rome.[628] The Italian King Vittorio Emanuele III did not sign the decree of state of siege and, instead, summoned Mussolini in person. So, as Salvemini ironically but

[624] Gaetano Salvemini (1873-1957) had antagonised the rise of the movement since 1919. He was arrested in 1925 and managed to find amnesty in France in the same year. In England, he published his anti-fascist pieces on *The New Statesman.* As exile, *The Fascist Dictatorship* was published by Jonathan Cape, with an introduction by Ramsey Muir. Muir writes in the preface: "Wide as are the differences between the Russia of Lenin and the Italy of Mussolini, they are alike in this, that they have re-established arbitrary or extra legal power, that they use brute violence and terrorism as instruments of government, and that they have substituted dictatorship for self-government. Whether we admire or detest these new methods, it is supremely important that we should understand them" (11). The book was divided in five chapters, with two appendixes: I "The Revolution that never was," II "How the Dictatorship arose," III "The Reign of the Bludgeon," IV "The Right to Kill," V "The Matteotti Murder."

[625] Recently, the writer and historian Antonio Scurati has brilliantly reconstructed this competitive tension in the novel *M. Il Figlio del Secolo* (Firenze: Bompiani, 2018).

[626] Quoted in Richard Lamb, *Mussolini and the British*, 23.

[627] Salvemini, *The Fascist Dictatorship*, 201. For a detailed analysis see also Palmiro Togliatti, *Corso sugli Avversari. Le Lezioni sul Fascismo*, ed. by Francesco M. Biscione (Torino: Einaudi, 2010).

[628] On October 1922 Mussolini notoriously ordered the Fascist march on the Italian capital; in many ways it was an attempted *coup d'état* that the King himself decided to normalize. Rather than deploying State military forces to stop the insurrectionary Fascist paramilitary units, Vittorio Emanuele III offered the Parliamentary position by summoning Mussolini in Rome. On the terror policy and abuse of violence see especially Giulia Albanese's account in *The March on Rome. Violence and the Rise of Italian Fascism* (London: Routledge, 2019); "Reconsidering the March on Rome," *European History Quarterly* 42 (2012): 403-21. For an accurate contemporary account of the march of Rome and the Fascist violence, see also the exposition of facts denounced in 1928 by Gaetano Salvemini in *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy*.

truthfully put it, "Mussolini 'marched on Rome' in a sleeping car."[629] The success of this historical event, foreshadowed by a policy of terror increasingly established by paramilitary forces since as early as 1919, had Mussolini elected Prime Minister by the King of Italy. To the anti-fascist historian it was practically a *coup d'état* where the King functioned as prisoner; from that moment afterwards, he remained a puppet-figure, "a machine for signing decrees" in favour of the despotic bureaucracy of the Fascist regime.[630] In June 1924, watershed in the Fascist ascension to power, the Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti, the most vehement opponent of Fascism, was assassinated; by 1926 most members of the opposition were either killed, like Giovanni Amendola who coined the term *totalitarian*, or ended in exile abroad. In December 1925 Mussolini would adopt the new prestigious title of "Head of Government": the *duce* was now completely in supreme control, no longer concretely dependent even upon the Parliament and with an armed force which responded to his direct orders. By 1925, Italy's press was gagged by the regime and the totalitarian intention seemed to succeed. As Salvemini could observe in 1928, therefore, "the triumph of the dictatorship over all opposition became complete only with the new legislation of 1926; that is to say, two years of civil war (1921-2), and four years of despotic rule, were necessary before the last resistance was suppressed."[631]

As contemporary historiography has amply shown, the ascension to power was characterized under a climate of constant illegal use of force: threats, beatings of citizens and politicians, persecutions, murders, torture with castor oil and other un-creative means. Unrestrained use of violence, combined with the aggressive nationalist and anti-Marxist journal propaganda *Il Popolo d'Italia*, and with the general appeasement from the liberal Government, allowed the rise to power of Benito Mussolini. Fascism was perceived by many authoritative personalities, both in Italy and England, to represent a chokepoint to the rising upheavals inspired by the recent Russian Revolution.[632] As Renzo De Felice notes, the King Vittorio Emanuele himself was no Fascist, but he certainly feared for the revolutionary forces menacing the monarchic establishment. Tzarist autocracy, after all, had recently proved to be a castle of sand. From his standpoint the King was, in a sense, obliged to welcome Fascism in the rooms of Parliament; but whatever the political complexities, which go beyond the purposes of this study, what is of interest is the reception of Fascism in its contemporary scene. The programmatic plan of Mussolini undeniably aimed to supersede the democratic apparatus of the Liberal State by means of declared violence and coercive methods through extra-legal routes. The Fascist murder of Giacomo Matteotti in June 1924, whose

[629] Salvemini, *The Fascist Dictatorship*, 158.
[630] Ibid., 381.
[631] Ibid., 313.
[632] For the enthusiast British reception of the early rise of Fascism see the account in Lamb, *Mussolini and the British*, 17-27.

direct responsibility was continuously denied by Mussolini himself, was the culmination of the Fascist illegal system. In the Parliament speech of on January 3, 1925, Mussolini would only declare: "Before this Assembly, and before the people of Italy, I declare that I alone assume the moral, political, and historical responsibility for all that has occurred."[633] Resonantly specifying that:

> If Fascism has only been castor oil or a club, and not a proud passion of the best Italian youth, the blame is on me! If Fascism has been a criminal association, if all the violence has been the result of a determined historical, political, moral delinquency, the responsibility for this is on me, because I have created it with my propaganda from the time of our intervention in the War to this moment.[634]

Mussolini thus cleverly accepted the "historical," "political" and "moral" responsibilities. He did not accept, as many contemporaries noted, including Salvemini, the crucial responsibility for a head of the State: the legal responsibility.[635] The death of Matteotti, who in 1924 also visited England for a Labour Party meeting, provoked a scandal. The case was evocative indeed of the Dreyfus affair, which also reached the conservative British Isles; as Richard Lamb has noted, "The Matteotti crime shocked public opinion in Britain."[636] Filippo Turati, Italian leader of the Socialist party, could profess on 7th of October 1924: "la necessità di riassumere il *J'accuse* o meglio il *nous accusons* in base ai dati che ormai sono certi ed acquisiti" [the necessity to establish the *J'accuse* or better the *We accuse* on the ground of certain evidence]."[637] The history is acknowledged; no efficient opposition, not even the evident assassination of a Parliament member would manage to stop the relentless march of the Fascist totalitarian experiment. The inhumane experiment, despite its well-known illiberal means, was well-received in Great Britain as an epic, chivalrous adventure. Salvemini's *The Fascist Dictatorship* was precisely written with the intention to dismantle the flawed interpretation on the Fascist regime in the public of the British Empire and abroad.

Winston Churchill is an exemplary case of British reception of Fascist ideology. Churchill and Wells were two – significantly different – faces of the same coin of the British Empire.[638] Still,

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[633] Quoted and analysed by Salvemini in *The Fascist Dictotorship*, 378.
[634] Benito Mussolini, *My Autobiography* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1928), 231.
[635] Salvemini writes: "The only responsibility which he did not accept was the penal responsibility. Any murderer would really accept moral, political and historical responsibility for his act provided that he was exempt from penal responsibility (378).
[636] Lamb, *Mussolini and the British*, 66.
[637] Quoted in Alessandro Schiavi, *La vita e l'opera di Giacomo Matteotti* (Roma: Opere Nuove, 1957), 219.
[638] For their political friendship see especially the studies by Richard Toye, "H. G. Wells and Winston Churchill: A reassessment," in *H. G. Wells: Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Steven McLean (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 147-61. For a contextual discussion see also Toye, *Churchill's Empire. The World that Made Him and the World He Made*.

writing in the early 1920s Wells depicts Churchill "as an adventurer": "His imagination is obsessed by dreams of exploits and a career. It is an imagination closely akin to the D'Annunzio type," adding that "in England D'Annunzio would have been a Churchill; in Italy Churchill would have been a D'Annunzio. He is a great student and collector of the literature of Napoleon I, that master adventurer."[639] Both Wells and Churchill were leading journalists; they both adored Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and Winwood Reade's *The Martyrdom of Man,* and the two certainly cared about the importance of the English in the human destiny. Yet, their idea of Empire was often at opposite poles. In general, Churchill worshipped the Crown as absolute horizon whereas Wells, it is now clear, would abolish all forms of monarchies inhabiting Planet Earth. Richard Toye notes of the early Churchill, that "the notion that thinking imperially meant thinking always of 'something higher and more vast than one's own national interests' was one that at this stage remained alien to him."[640] While after the Great War the Wells advocated, as we have seen, a pooling of European Empires, Churchill was particularly interested in winning any form of Bolshevik threat. At the times, Mussolini was depicted in *The Times*, Daily *Mail, The Spectator* and other conservative channels as a great epic hero; Churchill largely contributed to shape this reception. As reported on *The Spectator* and major newspapers, on January the 15th 1927 the arch-imperialist Winston Churchill visited Mussolini in Rome, praising "the benefits of Fascism as an antidote against the Russian virus," holding that it "was absurd to say that the Italian Government was not resting on a popular basis or that it is not sustained by the active and practical assent of the great masses;" that Italy was a gagged country, Churchill did not make note.[641] The British statesman overlooked the Matteotti case and the recent assassination of the anti-fascist deputy Giovanni Amendola in 1926; equally ignoring the banishment of the opposition, including Don Luigi Sturzo, Filippo Turati, Gaetano Salvemini and Francesco Nitti, Churchill went as far as to confer his support to Mussolini from the beginning to the end of "his victorious struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism." As Richard Toye and Michael Foot amongst other scholars have remarked, of course, Churchill in the 1920s was in his most acute imperialist phase; and probably no one despised Russia more than he did.[642] Above all, in his evaluation of Fascist Italy, Winston Churchill was glad to remark that "the great mass of people love his country and is proud of its flags and its history." The Chancellor of the Exchequer confessed to Mussolini himself: "your movement has rendered service to the whole world."[643] Later in the

[639] Quoted in Virginia Cowles, *Winston Churchill. The Era and the Man* (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1953), 250.
[640] Toye, *Churchill's Empire,* 39
[641] See Arrigo Petacco, *Dear Benito, caro Winston. Verità e Mistero del carteggio Mussolini Churchill* (Torino: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1985), 12-17.
[642] See Toye, *Churchill's Empire. The World that Made Him and the World He Made*. For Toye the "Diehard" phase comprises the years 1922-1939. See 162-64. Certainly, Churchill changed his attitude towards Mussolini during the Second World War. See Foot, *The History of Mr Wells.*
[643] Quoted in Lamb, *Mussolini and the British*, 76.

1930s, the British politician would eulogise Mussolini as the "Roman Genius," and the "greatest lawgiver amongst living men" (Mussolini was not Roman; he was from the small town Predappio in Northern Italy).[644] Churchill evidently fell to the witchcraft of Mussolini's *romanità*.[645] By 1925, also Austen Chamberlain, Curzon's successor as Foreign Secretary, had entertained a "strong personal friendship with Mussolini."[646] The British people, as Salvemini noted throughout *The Fascist Dictatorship* (1928) had been supporting the most dangerous experiment in statecraft of the twentieth century.

H. G. Wells's anti-fascism emerges in this *laissez-faire* and accommodating context. He was anachronism and the leading political intellectual of the 1920s. He embodied, alone, the revolution the British Empire had at home but never was. Contrarily to the received opinion of the establishment, as early as February 1924 Wells commented, still perhaps underestimating the Italian threat against Liberalism, that "Fascism is a dramatic and empty, a puerile, vague, violent thing, a young ass to be ridden anywhere by a bold competent rider."[647] But he understood the type of "totalitarian Caesarism" characterizing Fascism. He insisted that "Lenin was never in reality a dictator as Mussolini is a dictator. . .Communism is definite, directive, compelling. . .A score of Lenins might die and Communism would go on as though nothing had changed. Without Mussolini the Fascist might do anything – fall into a torrent, get lost, destroy society, vanish."[648] Wells's anti-fascism is strictly related to the Matteotti case. In February of the same year, the Italian Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti had published his famous booklet in which he meticulously exposed, event by event in forms of a long list of abuses, all Fascist brutalities and compromising financial revelations. Matteotti's unique book, the first open indictment ever written on Fascism until 1924, was entitled *Un Anno di Dominazione Fascista* and the essay was soon translated in English, French and German. In England it appeared in September 1924 translated by E. W. Dickes for the Labour party under the title *The Fascisti Exposed: A Year of Fascist Domination*. *By the Late Giacomo Matteotti*.[649] On the

[644] Ibid., 77.
[645] For Churchill's early admiration of Mussolini, and subsequent political intercourses, see also Petacco, *Dear Benito, caro Winston*.
[646] Lamb, *Mussolini and the British*, 56. For other conservative praises see 59-77.
[647] Wells, "Lenin: Private Capitalism against Communism," [9 February 1924], in *A Year of Prophesying* (New York: the Macmillan Company, 1925), 143. *A Year of Prophesying* consisted of fifty-five articles on statecraft and world affairs. He briefly mentions Mussolini also in the articles: "Spain and Italy whisper together" (15 December 1923), "Latin America and the League" (22 December 1923) and "The Case of Unamuno: The Feeble Republic of Letters" (12 April 1924). The dedicated discussion on Italian Fascism, from this volume, appears as "The Spirit of Fascism: is there any good in it at all?" (12 July 1924). I will return to this piece from *A Year* in a second moment.
[648] Wells, "Lenin: Private Capitalism against Communism," 143.
[649] *The Fascisti Exposed: A Year of Fascist Domination*. *By the Late Giacomo Matteotti* (London: Independent Labour Party Publishing Department, 1924). The copy I consulted is held at the British Library in London (UK). It is accompanied by an introduction by Oskar Pollak who concludes: "And never has another word become more true than those prophetic words of the dying hero – they killed him but they were unable to kill the ideal for which he stood. They tried to stop a fighting force, and they have stirred a whole nation. They wanted to silence a single man, and they have raised a world-

Fascist action exposed, Matteotti comments: "The foregoing is only a list of some typical instances of the manifestations of Fascist lawlessness which were continuous in the first year a Fascist government. Lawlessness is now a permanent feature, especially in some parts of Italy, where the law and the constitution and the very organs of the law have been superseded, lawless government being imposed on the citizens by violence or, in the end, merely by threats of violence."[650] *The Fascisti Exposed* was not the only form of political activism by Matteotti; as early as 1920 the Socialist deputy had denounced the regime incessantly through open Parliament speeches and denouncing the reign of terror that was being established by the Fascists. On 10 June 1924 Matteotti was therefore kidnapped in Rome, near the Parliament, and assassinated for his troublesome statements. The result was as judicial farse in which the highest Fascist authorities were forced to hide their tracks; whether Mussolini was directly responsible or not, the reputation of Fascism was exposed, and in danger of existence. Many people before had been beaten and killed, certainly, but now it was a Parliamentary member. This is where Wells, Fordian "Arbiter of the World,"[651] enters the scene. Six days after the Italian politician's death, on 16 June 1924, the former Italian Prime Minister Francesco Nitti writes to the British intellectual:

> Caro Mr. Wells,
>
> Assai vivamente La ringrazio della Sua lettera cortese.
>
> Poi che Ella conosce l'italiano mi permetto iscriverle in italiano.
>
> I gravissimi fatti che accadono in Italia e la situazione che si va determinando in Europa richiedono i nostri colloqui non siano troppo differiti. Ma io L'attenderò quando Ella potrà venire.
>
> Io sono sotto l'impressione orribile della morte del povero Matteotti. Era un giovane onesto e virtuoso, un'anima di credente. Aveva dato tutto sé stesso alla causa del popolo. Era ricco e aveva sacrificato anche alcuni milioni della sua fortuna.
>
> Ciò ch'è più orribile è che le persone che hanno ucciso Matteotti sono membri del partito del Governo. Sono le stesse persone che hanno invaso e saccheggiato la mia casa, che hanno aggredito e ferito il deputato Misuri e il deputato Amendola. Molti degli aggressori sono stati eletti anche deputati!
>
> In Italia la vera opinione pubblica è tutta con me: gli intellettuali, gli operai, i lavoratori della terra.
>
> Quante verità Ella può far conoscere al mondo!

---

wide movement of horror and protests. They killed one, and there are hundreds eager to take his place in the ranks. They stabbed Matteotti to death, and he is still alive; they buried his body, and his spirit is amongst us, leading and fighting more than ever (xi).

[650] Matteotti, *The Fascisti Exposed*, 102.

[651] Ford, "H. G. Wells" 157, 162.

Con i più cordiali saluti mi creda,

Nitti

P.S. Le manderò presto un opuscolo di Matteotti: Un anno di governo fascista. E' una pubblicazione vietata in Italia, ma Le sarà utile conoscerla.[652]

[Dear Mr. Wells,

I thank you very warmly for Your kind letter.

Since You know Italian, I take the liberty of writing to you in Italian.

The very grave events that are happening in Italy and the situation that is being determined in Europe require our conversations not to be too delayed. But I will wait for You when You will be able to come.

I am under the horrible impression of the death of poor Matteotti. He was an honest and virtuous young man, the soul of a believer. He gave all of himself into the cause of the people. He was rich and had even sacrificed a few millions of his wealth.

What is more horrifying is that the people who killed Matteotti are members of the Government party. They are the same people who invaded and ransacked my home, who attacked and injured Deputy Misuri and Deputy Amendola. Many of the assaulters were also elected deputies!

In Italy the real public opinion is all with me: the intellectuals, the workers, the workers of the land.

How many truths You can make the world know!

With sincere regards, believe me,

Nitti

P.S. I will soon send you a pamphlet from Matteotti: A year of fascist government. It is a banned publication in Italy, but it will be useful for You to know it.]

Nitti, important to note, also informs Wells about Matteotti's Fascist critique, promising to send a copy. This piece, ignored as of today, reveals the magnitude of Wells in terms of intellectual position in the twentieth century. This is the nature of Wells in the role of "Arbiter of the World" Ford would refer to in *Mightier than the Sword* (1938). In the 1920s, as I have tried to show, Wells came to embody the reputation of a new Zola, but cosmopolitan and all British. Nitti's esteem for Wells's democratic views is evident throughout this letter. Six months before, as the letter also mentions, the Fascist *squadracce* had looted and burnt Nitti's house in Rome.[653] He was amongst the first relevant

[652] This correspondence, still unpublished and here reproduced, is from the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Other relevant letters from Wells to Nitti appear not to be in public domain. "Letter from Francesco Saverio Nitti to H. G. Wells." UIUC, RBML. 16 June 1924, H. G. Wells Correspondence, WELLS-1, Folder N-145. All the translations into English of the materials are mine.

[653] Matteotti's *The Fascisti Exposed* reported in the entry: *Rome* – A large band of Fascists set off from the centre of the city for the house of Signor Nitti, ex-Prime Minister, on the other side of the Tiber. A great number of revolver and rifle shots fired both inside and outside the house. The furniture destroyed, the members of the household threatened etc. The police arrive when it is all over" (102).

political individuals forced to go in exile. In 1927 Nitti would then write his own critique on Fascism in *Bolshevism, Fascism and Democracy* (London: George Allen); again, he would send a copy to Wells. Thanks to Nitti's information the world intellectual would embark, in detail, into his precise anti-fascist crusade.

The two figures had already been in contact before. Wells had previously contributed with an article, along with Italian ex-Prime Minister, in the 1924 socio-political book *These Eventful Years: The Twentieth Century in the Making as told by Many of its Makers*.[654] In Wells's piece, "Forecast of the World Affairs," Wells re-iterated the importance of a universal history devoid of *duces*; the main problem the thinker underscores, is that the twentieth-century still revamps the romantic nineteenth-century imperialist dream on national self-assertion. The "world civilisation" by contrast, is presented by Wells as a revolutionary "idea," through education, "overriding all our present clanships, partisanships, race prejudices and national passions." Interestingly, Wells still thinks through Darwinian framework: in the geopolitical scene, Italian Fascism is analysed by Wells as a cultural phenomenon pointing towards "retrogression" of the species, to a "conspicuous and extravagant degree."[655] Ku Klux Klanism and others extremist movement are equally condemned by the British intellectual; Fascism is only the last and highest stage of evolution of the corruption of patriotism. Nitti and Wells, two major representatives of liberalism, had exchanged letters even prior to Matteotti's murder. On 9 June 1924, a day prior to the assassination of Matteotti, it appears, Nitti wrote a letter to Wells, attaching a picture of the new Italian currency with the *fascio littorio* stamped on one side; the former Minister expressed to Wells his profound disappointment for Mussolini's personality and dangerous Roman imperial imagination:

> Vous trouverez ci-enclose la reproduction de la nouvelle monnaie italienne. Il y a toute la folie de Caligula.
>
> D'un côté la tête du roi (pauvre roi!) avec le casque de guerre.
>
> De l'autre côté la Victoire, une hache, une tête de lion et les mots suivants : Meglio vivere un giorno da leone che cento anni de pecora (C'est mieux vivre un an comme lion, que cent ans comme brebis). Guillaume II en comparaison était encore un sage.
>
> Mussolini ne pense qu'il soit possible vivre comme un homme civilisé, mais seulement comme un animal de proie ou comme une victime!

[654] *These Eventful Years* was published in two volumes by the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Nitti wrote an essay for the first volume entitled "Dynamic Italy," 634-56. Wells's article "A Forecast of the World's Affairs" was also separately reproduced as *A Forecast of the World's Affairs* (New York and London: The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1924).
[655] See Wells, *A Forecast,* 33. See, especially, 31-36.

C'est toute la psychologie.[656]

[You will find herewith the reproduction of the new Italian currency. There is all the madness of Caligula.

On one side the head of the king (poor king!) with the war helmet.

On the other side Victory, an axe, a lion's head and the following words: Meglio vivere un giorno da leone che cento anni de pecora (better to live one day as a lion than one hundred years as a sheep). William II in comparison was still a sage.

Mussolini does not think that it is possible to live like a civilized man, but only like an animal of prey or like a victim!

It's all psychology.]

From the correspondence, it appears that Nitti had read Wells's February article and, writing from Zurich, he wanted to inform the British writer "with greater precision of many elements of fact that even the most intelligent writers don't know precisely." It is in the context of these key political exchanges with Nitti in regards to the Matteotti murder that Wells writes, on 12 July 1924, his first anti-fascist article entitled "The Spirit of Fascism: is there any good in it at all?"[657] To Wells, the Fascist State operates as a form of Government based on *terror*; the Fascist experiment is marked by the intellectual as a threat to world's democracy.

In this piece, Wells reacts to the murder of Matteotti with a note of irony meant to indict the perpetrators, and equally attack the conservative British reception which still hailed Mussolini as a firm and honest statesman. On 31 October 1923 *The Times* could still write: "Italy has never been so united as she is today."[658] It is "an extraordinary fuss" Wells declares, "that has been made over the brutal murder of one of Signor Mussolini's most able and honourable opponents. . .Even the London *Times* has published leading articles that seem to hint at a faint reluctant perception that the Italian dictator is remotely connected with the bloody and filthy terrorism on which his power rests."[659] He turns serious and sharp:

It is, I say, an extraordinary fuss, a remarkable and almost unaccountable outbreak of the public conscience of Europe. Because it is surely a matter of common knowledge that hundreds of people have been beaten and tortured to death by the Fascist, that innumerable outrages of a peculiarly dirty kind have been committed, that arson, wreckage, and threats are the normal

[656] "Letter from Francesco Saverio Nitti to H. G. Wells." UIUC, RBML. 9 June 1924, Folder N-145.
[657] Wells, "The Spirit of Fascism: is there any good in it at all?" [12 July 1924] in *A Year of Prophesying*, 285-90.
[658] Quoted in Lamb, *Mussolini and the British*, 62.
[659] Wells, "The Spirit of Fascism," 285.

> expedients of Italian political life, and that the power of Mussolini has been built up upon the organisation of such violence.

Other acts of brutality, Wells continues, have also affected the person of Signor Nitti, but "no one has protested, except perhaps Nitti. No apology has been made by Mussolini." Adam Roberts selectively quotes Wells's article in his study and misinterprets the author's anti-fascism; he briefly writes that in this piece Wells "reports recent outrage at fascist violence in Italy and decides, alas overoptimistically, this marks 'the beginning of the end of Fascism'."[660] The comment is not accurate and also minimizes the Italian complexities in relation to the British Empire; the British intellectual refuses, precisely, to advance a prophecy. Let us see the full excerpt from Wells's article. The author does "not propose to speculate here whether the storm will blow itself out and leave Signor Mussolini still on his blood-stained pedestal doing his solemn gestures of good government before the world, or whether we are in sight of the beginning of the end of Fascism;"[661] what he remarks, is that this type of political extremism is a global issue unbound from a single national context. Wells seeks to understand, while indicting, "the complex of motives that drives behind Fascism, Ku Klux Klanism, the British Crusaders, and all these romantic attempts to organise ultra-legal tyrannies."[662] The underlying motif, Wells again notices, is the animalistic nature of man interpreted through Huxley's lenses: "the craving to exercise power." What the world intellectual traces as a pattern, is the "failure of the normal processes of law and police" in modern polities.[663] As early as 1924 Wells understands the Fascist violent uniqueness. It is undeniable, he says, that "there have been Communist murders and Communist outrages in Italy, though nothing to parallel the extensive systematic terrorism of the Fascista régime."[664] Wells declares that no State can progress through such ruthless methods; just forms of government can only be achieved with "plain speech and free publication, refusing concealment, refusing to conspire and compel, respecting himself completely in his infinite respect for his fellow-men."[665] On the 1st November 1926 Nitti then writes again to Wells:

> Cher Maître,
>
> J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer mon nouveau livre Bolchevisme, fascisme et démocratie. Je désire que vous le lisiez. J'espère qu'une traduction anglaise puisse paraître prochainement.

[660] Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 320.
[661] Wells, "The Spirit of Fascism," 287.
[662] Ibid.
[663] Ibid., 288.
[664] Ibid., 289.
[665] Ibid., 290.

Le Fascisme et le Bolchevisme sont deux phénomènes de la même nature et sont les deux menaces de la civilisation européenne, le Fascisme bien plus que le Bolchevisme.

Le Fascisme est l'expédient provisoire de la réaction.

Comme artiste et comme historien vous vous rendrez compte que chaque dictature dans les pays modernes prépare la révolution ou la guerre ou toutes les deux choses ensemble. Le Fascisme après avoir ensanglantée l'Italie finira prochainement dans la révolution ou dans la guerre. Mais dans quel état il laissera sa victime !

J'espère que vous aurez occasion d'écrire du Fascisme et de la menace qu'il représente pour la civilisation moderne. Votre voix aura une grand echo.

Croyez à mes meilleurs sentiments[666]

Nitti

[Dear Sir,

I have the honour to send you my new book Bolshevism, Fascism and Democracy. I would love you to read it. I hope an English translation can be published soon.

Fascism and Bolshevism are two phenomena of the same nature and are the two threats of European civilization, Fascism much more than Bolshevism.

Fascism is the temporary expedient of reaction.

As an artist and as an historian you will realize that every dictatorship in modern countries is preparing for revolution or war or both together. Fascism after having stained Italy with blood will soon end in revolution or in war. But in what condition it will leave its victim!

I hope you will have a chance to write about Fascism and the threat it poses to modern civilization. Your voice will have a great echo.

Yours sincerely.

Nitti]

Nitti sends his book on Fascism and Bolshevism in French, which, however, will be translated in English in 1927.[667] In the letter, is worth highlighting, Nitti invokes Wells's quality as "artist" and "historian," inviting the author to write another critique of Fascism: "Your voice will have a great echo." Wells would soon accommodate the request and expands his view on the Fascist universe and

[666] "Letter from Francesco Saverio Nitti to H. G. Wells." UIUC, RBML. 1 November 1926, Folder N-145.
[667] Francesco Saverio Nitti. *Bolshevism, Fascism and Democracy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927). It was translated by Margaret M. Green.

its position in world politics. A few months later, on 9 February 1927 he thus writes an article entitled "What is Fascism? Whither is it Taking Italy?"[668]

In this second anti-fascist article Wells inquires whether Fascism is "the invention and weapon" of Mussolini, or if "Mussolini is," rather, "the creature of Fascism." Firstly, he correctly retraces the genealogy of Fascism. He declares, correctly, that the "spiritual father" of the movement was in fact D'Annunzio's war heroism, the "magnificent Saviour and re-Maker of a Hairy Heroic Italy;"[669] and that the aggressive literary rhetoric of Futurism in 1912 and 1913, also, paved the way to Mussolini's "fantastic position of Italian tyrant." The violent passions of youth were a fertile ground to Fascism, so eventually "it put the rampant Italian Futurists into a uniform and taught them a Roman salute" – the process was simple. From 1919 onwards, Mussolini's imagination moves increasingly towards "patriotism, nationalism, religious orthodoxy, and conservatism." What terrifies Mussolini, Wells claims, is not "the assassin who lurks in the shadows, but afraid, in deadly fear of that truth which walks by day. The murders and outrages against opponents and critics that lie like a trail of blood upon his record are the natural concomitants of leadership by a man too afraid of self-realisation to endure the face of an antagonist." The solution of Mussolini then, is exposed publicly by Wells with a list of victims of the regime: "Away with them! Nitti, Amendola, Forni, Misuri, Matteotti, Salvemini, Sturzo, Turati! Away with all these men who watch and criticise and wait!"[670]

Mussolini is not, for Wells, an original fact: "What is now drilled and disciplined as Fascism existed before him and will go on after him. Retracing the question advanced in his 1924 article "The Spirit of Fascism," Wells aims to undercover the "complex of forces" that sustain the movement; Wells perfectly sees the nature of the totalitarian experiment, namely, that Fascism is "only apparently a one-man tyranny." It is a wider system of connections and hierarchies towards an ideal. It is a "quasi-religion" movement in the open arena with definite aims; but Fascism, despite its reactionary ambitions, is inherently conservative in Wells's view, and a result of an egomaniac nationalism whose "mentality could not be possible without a wide ignorance of general history and world geography, without the want" of scientific training and critical openness. And he acknowledges a sentiment we could define as political envy:

> For the most tragic thing of all, to my mind, in this Italian situation is the good there is in these Fascists. There is something brave and well-meaning about them. They love something, even

[668] Wells, "What is Fascism? Whither is it Taking Italy?" [9 February 1927], in *The Way the World is Going* (1928), 24-34.
[669] Ibid., 26.
[670] Ibid., 27-28.

> if it is a phantom Italy, that never was and never can be; they can follow a leader with the devotion even if he is a self-deceitful charlatan. They will work. Even their outrages have the excuse of a certain indignation, albeit stupid sometimes to the pitch of extreme cruelty. Mixed up with this goodness there is no doubt much sheer evil, a puerile malignity and the blood-lust of excited beasts, as when so hideously they beat to death and out of recognition the poor child who may or may not have fired an ineffective pistol at their dictator. But the goodness is there. Yet I do not see that the alloy of generosity and courage in Fascism is likely to save Italy from some very evil consequences of its rule. The deadliest thing about Fascism is its systematic and ingenious and complete destruction of all criticism and critical opposition.[671]

This passage is very far from being an appreciation of the Fascist leadership structure and methods. Wells here merely points out, and grudgingly, the *devotion* of its members which Wells would love to see redirected, instead, to his own "Open Conspiracy" of watchful, collective criticism. Certainly, the *spirit* of Fascism and Communism offered Wells new templates to reform the imperial assets of the world; but according to the British intellectual, Italian Fascism represented the plague of the world, no more no less than a downfall into political and moral retrogression. As he comments, Fascism is destroying the country and making its recovery more difficult as years pass. The truth is that "Fascism is holding up the whole apparatus of education in Italy, killing or driving out of the country every capable thinker, clearing out the last nests of independent expression in the universities." [672] Italian imperialism becomes rampant as "its militant gestures alarm and estrange every foreign Power with which it is in contact." His premonition of the future development of the totalitarian experiment is therefore apparently pessimistic. At the current state of affairs, no "forces in Italy" are capable of "arresting the drive to degradation and catastrophe that the Fascist movement, for all its swagger, has set going."[673] In Wells's horoscope Italy now represents "the Sick Land of Europe. . .She declines. She has fallen out of the general circle of European development; she is no longer a factor in progress of civilisation. . .She has murdered or exiled all her Europeans. . .In that way Italy becomes a danger to all humanity."[674] Yet, despite the grim scenario imposed by the unceasing *fascistizzazione* of the State, Wells concludes his piece on totalitarianism with one final call to intellectual action:

> But Italy is something more than a huge river valley and a mountainous peninsula under a Fascist tyrant. Italian intelligence and energy are now scattered throughout the earth. Who can measure the science and stimulation we in the rest of the world may not owe presently to the fine minds, the liberal spirits, who have been driven out of Italy by the Fascists' loaded cane?

[671] Ibid., 31.
[672] Ibid., 32.
[673] Ibid., 33.
[674] Ibid., 33-34.

> How many men must there be to-day, once pious sons of Italy, who are now learning to be servants of mankind![675]

Francesco Nitti read Wells's second article and wrote back to him on 23 February 1927, in visible enthusiasm.[676] The piece was received as one of the major anti-fascist indictments from a leading foreign intellectual of world-fame:

> Cher M. Wells,
>
> Votre article sur le Fascisme italien est vraiement ce qu'on a écrit de mieux sur cette honte de notre civilisation. Il est un synthèse superbe et clairvoyante. Je l'ai fait traduire en italien et malgré la censure fasciste je le ferai envoyer partout en Italie. Il sera lu avec émotion par tous les esprits libres.
>
> Ne croyez pas aux apparences! Le Fascisme va vers sa fin sanglante. Il s'écroulera quand on ne pense pas.
>
> Votre article m'a fait autant plus de plaisir après l'interview vulgaire et banale de Mr. Winston Churchill.
>
> N'avez-vous occasion de venir à Paris ? Si vous venez veuillez bien m'avertir.
>
> Il y a ici un grand nombre d'Italiens expatriés, députés, écrivains, journalistes de grande instruction. Votre article a été lu avec la plus grande admiration.
>
> La maison Allen & Unwin va publier prochainement en anglais mon livre Bolchevisme, fascisme et démocratie.
>
> Croyez à mes meilleurs sentiments.
>
> Nitti
>
> [Dear Mr. Wells,
>
> Your article on Italian Fascism is truly the best that has been written on this shame of our civilization. It is a superb and far-sighted synthesis. I had it translated into Italian and despite the fascist censorship I will have it sent everywhere in Italy. It will be read with emotion by all free spirits.
>
> Don't be fooled by appearances! Fascism is approaching its bloody end. It will collapse when you don't expect it.
>
> Your article made me even more happy after the vulgar and banal interview with Mr. Winston Churchill.
>
> Don't you have the opportunity to come to Paris? If you come, please let me know.
>
> There are a large number of Italian expatriates, deputies, writers, highly educated journalists here. Your article was read with the greatest admiration.

[675] Ibid., 34.
[676] "Letter from Francesco Saverio Nitti to H. G. Wells." UIUC, RBML. 23 February 1927, Folder N-145.

The firm Allen & Unwin will soon publish my book Bolshevism, Fascism and Democracy in English.

Yours sincerely.

Nitti]

Nitti's reference to Winston Churchill points to the aforementioned praise of Mussolini's regime, based, as the British statesman publicly asserted and contrarily to Wells, on open consent and authentic love for the flag. Wells's article, as this letter and others by Nitti reveal, had a significant impact abroad.[677] Their exchanges would continue over the next years to discuss, as Nitti put it, "des formes politiques de la nouvelle démocracie."[678]

Having sufficiently expanded the obscured narrative of Wells's intellectual position in the history of Fascism, it is time to shift our attention to his fictional output. In 1926, as we have seen in Chapter 2, Wells published *Clissold* as his major work against the self-sufficient imperialist idea; but two other works were meant to undermine national individualism: *Meanwhile: The Picture of a Lady* (1927), and *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham* (1930). In the 1930s Wells will also publish *The Holy Terror* (1939) to delve into the illiberal realities of totalitarianism. Gaetano Salvemini, writing to Wells in June 16 1927, would thank Wells for mentioning his name in "What is Fascism;" the historian also wrote that "Signor Nitti told me that you are preparing a novel on Fascism."[679] The novel Salvemini is referring to in the letter is *The Autocracy of Mr Parham* (1930), and to aid Wells's research in writing this work of fiction, Salvemini informs Wells of the soon to be published *The Fascist Dictatorship* (1928). Placed in the outer periphery of the Wellsian canon, *Meanwhile* and *Parham* are two overtly anti-fascist books; their critical disregard is a logical consequence of the general ignorance in terms of Wells's political activism.[680] Italian *Fascisti* appear in the narrative and Mussolini himself is either directly quoted and condemned, or, in the case of *Parham*, he figures as character. I shall focus exclusively on *Meanwhile*, being the first anti-fascist novel in English literature, written as critical comment of the General Strike of 1926 in London, but also as direct result of Giacomo Matteotti's Fascist murder.[681] Its structure, wit, political engagement and symbolism are much more complex than critics have so far reckoned. Rarely read today, in its days

[677] In another letter, dated 3 March 1927, Nitti informs Wells that "des députés italiens réfugiés à Paris, des écrivains et des journalists persécutés par le Fascisme désirent vous remercier pour votre article. J'espère que nous pourrons établir une heure pour les recevoir" (N-145). Again, on 15 March 1927 Nitti writes: "Une délégation italienne des émigrés désire vous remercier de votre article et de votre noble manifestation. Pouvez-vous la recevoir jeudi à 4 heures?" (N-145).

[678] Letter dated 18 October 1930. Nitti thanks Wells for sending his *Democracy Under Revision* (1927).

[679] "Letter from Gaetano Salvemini to H. G. Wells." UIUC, RBML. H. G. Wells Correspondence, WELLS-1, Folder S-24.

[680] The critic David Smith has always been particularly supportive for *Meanwhile*, calling it "perhaps the most unjustly neglected novel" (*The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 3, 268).

[681] Wells started to work on the book somewhere in 1926.

it was also a successful publication, although conservative press deemed the book straightforwardly as anti-British propaganda. *The Daily Mail* commented also in relation to Wells's anti-fascism: "Mr Wells cares not one jot for freedom of speech and of the Press in his own country. But when in Italy the Fascists stop grave abuses of that freedom by Communists, he has nothing but sneers for the Italian nation."[682] In Richard Jennings characteristically hostile evaluation, *Meanwhile* was "a Pamphlet Novel."[683] Obviously, like the *Outline of History*, the book was also banned by the Italian Fascist Government. Judged *persona non grata* in Italy Mr Wells was denied the usage of Italian trains through Italian territories (!).[684] Let us see on what grounds *Meanwhile* was a mutinous novel both in Great Britain and Italy. There is wit, sharp and good Wellsian wit.

The scene of *Meanwhile* mainly takes place in the Italian Riviera, in a wealthy Palazzo situated in Ventimiglia's countryside and inhabited by the Rylands family. Mrs Rylands is expecting a baby in the tranquil villa. Although overlooked by critics, the villa goes by the name "Casa Terragena," through which Wells playfully experiments with languages: in Italian "Terra" means "Earth," so Home *Terragena* stands metaphorically for a microcosm of the world affairs. The garden of Casa Terragena, although artificially realized in the sunny Riviera, is also an allegory of the extension of the British Empire: "there's that big lovely purple spike thing you say came from Australia" (212). Purple, symbolism has it as the colour of Roman emperors, and Wells, we know, is a novelist attentive to details. There is also a "waterless part of the gardens at Terragena that was called the Caatinga. Nobody knew why it had that name; there was no such word in Italian. . .possibly it was Spanish-American or a fragment from some Red Indian tongue" (63); it was, the extra-heterodiegetic narrator explores, a region "of cactuses and echnocactus, thick jungles of spiky and leathery exotics" that "gave a strongly African quality to its shelves and plateau and ridges and theatre-like bays" (63). The morphological scene of the European thus villa dissolves into exotic colonial imagery – the background of *Britannia*. This colourful and flowery villa is owned by Philip Rylands and his wife

[682] "General Strike Novel," *Daily Mail*, Thursday July 28, 1927.

[683] Jennings writes: "But, since Mr. Wells prefers, in these days, to be journalist and pamphleteer, we must submit. We bow our heads, It is his freedom of choice. I had hopes for this new book [*Meanwhile: The Picture of a Lady*] when I read the sub-title, adapted from an early novel by that same Henry James. *The Picture of a Lady!*" (quoted in Scheick, *The Critical Reception of H. G. Wells*, 143). Wells's novel clearly alludes to James's masterpiece *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881).

[684] Probably the funniest (although grim) episode of his life. He wrote a complaint to The British Foreign Office: "This is very humiliating for a British subject to learn that his government cannot protect him from annoyance in an international train passing through Italy. Is it too much to ask the Foreign Office to demand a guarantee of immunity from the present Italian government not only in respect to myself but to other British subjects who may have written criticisms of the present regime during such passages as they may make through Italy. This unpleasant country not only blocks the most convenient route for me from Germany to Cannes but it also impedes the free movement of intelligent and outspoken British subjects to the east. Civis Britanicus sum. Why should I be subjected to this vexation? I shall be in Berlin on the 15th of April and travelling from Berlin to Cannes between the 18th and 21st. As one who contributes heavily to the cost of the Army, Navy, Flying Forces and Foreign Office of the British Empire, I feel I have some claim to your service in the matter" (*The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, vol. 3, 297-98).

Cynthia, who are two rich English representatives and mine owners. In this foreign setting, with an evident expatriate Jamesian flavour, as the subtitle *The Picture of a Lady* (Cynthia) also directly suggests, the Rylands host a variegated group of English-speaking individuals. The group debates a range of topics revolving around the current state of the British Empire, home policy, and, to a lesser degree, foreign affairs addressing the on-going Fascist dictatorship. The narrator recurrently points out the narrow-minded vision inhabiting Casa Terragena: "Mrs Rylands found Miss Fenimore all alone in the hall reading Saturday's English newspapers. 'Nothing seems settled about the miners', said Miss Fenimore, handing over *The Times*, and neither lady glanced at the French and Italian papers at all. Mrs Rylands found the name of an old school friend among the marriages" (140). As Janet Gabler-Hover has remarked, it is clear that "Wells argues that an aesthetic vision of life must be replaced by a social one."[685] The old debate on the function of art between Wells and James returns in 1926. *Meanwhile* is a melancholic tribute to the Master as well as a strong assertion of the Wellsian novel.

Amongst the guests, the most prominent figures in the first half of the book are the American Plantagenet-Buchan (an allusion to James's mannerism), the proud Colonel and Mrs Bullace, the British Lady Catherine and, finally, the Wellsian "conspirator-character" Mr Sempack. Sempack also entertains a flirt with Lady Catherine which is poorly explored by Wells; the love plot is not an authorial interest. Conservative views of Empire in this Italian villa are, on the contrary, dialectically opposed by the iconoclastic topics presented by Sempack; this Wellsian figure is a sceptic of self-sufficient polities of the nineteenth-century type, and mirrors, similarly to William Clissold, Wells's reformist and utopian thought. He speaks of the "Great Age" to come, of an "open conspiracy" and such-like co-operative horizons. The first Chapter of *Meanwhile* presents this visionary figure as the "Utopographer in the Garden" – which is a great coinage from Wells. Interestingly, the plot in his realist form is not a utopian novel *per se*, in the sense there is neither a sudden shift of environment nor the autoctone "informant" figure of utopian narratives. Yet, the novel has a strong utopian charge inasmuch as the utopographer (informant himself, one may say) offers incessantly alternative frameworks of life to the visitors enjoying their Italian stay. Sempack "could allude to the whole span of the human history" (28) but does not offer, as a matter of fact, a structured, coherent vision. The utopian mind simply puts on the map sketches of Utopia from the current world situation which is in a phase of "Meanwhile" – a transition towards higher and collective ends. Throughout, Sempack traces, subtly, the continuity between imperialism and European Fascism; like Wells, the Utopographer in the Garden is one who seems to "belong to the Nineteenth Century. . .'by his

[685] Janet Gabler-Hover, "H. G. Wells's and Henry James's Two Ladies," in *The Critical Response to H. G. Wells*, ed. William J. Scheick, 156.

reckoning that means 1815-1915'." But behind the discussions held in the pleasant setting of Casa Terragena, there is a major event evolving abroad: the setting is the United Kingdom General Strike of 1926.[686]

At the time, the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin appointed Winston Churchill in control of the propaganda newspaper *The British Gazette* in order to control and put an end to the miners' strike. It was a moment of threat for the establishment, suddenly gripped by Socialist forces. The political discourse implemented an ingroups-outgroups rhetoric around the civilized idea of a "Community" set against the barbaric and subversive "forces of anarchy." An auxiliary force too, bureaucratically named the "Organisation for Maintenance of Supplies" (OMS) was also formed by the Government under the banner of "association of loyal citizens." Its formation inevitably provoked discontent in the British left, and it was particularly suspicious in the light of the violent Italian scenario. Nigel Copsey and David Renton have explored the political context in their study, observing that it is also a well-known fact that "a significant number of members of the British Fascists" joined the organization and that the Government knew very well, and actually exploited, their repressive activity.[687] As Wells's *Meanwhile* will further confirm, it was also a known fact back in the 1920s. The home secretary Sir William Joynson Hicks sent a letter on 1 September 1925 to the Prime Minister Baldwin claiming that amongst available forces to suppress the revolutionary tensions:

> There exist the Fascists, the Crusaders, and the Organisation for the Supply of Material Services. One need say nothing about the first two – they are well known, and, I think to be depended upon. I have seen their leaders several times.[688]

[686] The strike was regarded, as Ferrall and Mcneill notes, as "the most important event between the end of the First World War and the Great Depression." It lasted nine days beginning from 3 May 1926. For a dedicated and contextual analysis of the novel in relation to the event see also Charles Ferrall, Douglas McNeill, *Writing the 1926 General Strike. Literature, Culture, Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). See in particular the chapter "The Aesthetic Fix: Wells, Chesterton, Bennett," 43-60.

[687] Copsey and Renton, *British Fascism*, 7-8. The critics observe: "What this examination appears to reveal is that ministers and many civil servants understood that the fascist movement attracted thugs and was inherently violent, but viewed this as an acceptable 'downside' to a group that was, by no means, outside the cultural mainstream. It will be suggested that the reason for this acceptability lay not in any widespread anti-Semitism, but in an understanding that the fascists shared other values with ministers, many civil servants and a substantial portion of British citizens" (9).

[688] Quoted in *British Fascism*, 8.

The British Fascisti were formed as early as May 1923, after the Italian model of the Fascist March on Rome on October 1922.[689] When they appeared in the British context, the Italian liberal state was, as we have seen, in the process of its progressive *fascistizzazione*.

In *Meanwhile* the public sphere, and the Strike, assaults Casa Terragena, in a recurrent Wellsian *motif*, principally through major newspapers: *The Times, The Nation, The Spectator, The Daily Mail*; the coercive post-Matteotti Fascist regime still glooms in the distant background. The fear of Bolshevism, on the other hand, establishes itself as the only relevant menace to the allegorical imperial order of Casa Terragena. It is within this context that Wells stages a lively satire on the character of Colonel Bullace ("bully" is, indeed, an easy association). Bullace is described by Mrs Rylands as a "great admirer of Joynson-Hicks" and one, therefore, "who wants to organize British Fascists." Bullace is also a convinced supporter of the fictional British Fascist Sir Fearon Owen and above all, the proud Colonel Bullace "adores Mussolini" (15). He believes that behind the utopian big talk of Mr Sempack, the Utopographer is some Moscow plotter. Essentially, Wells depicts Bullace as the Chamberlain type of imperialist worshipping nineteenth-century prestige, the flag and the Destiny rhetoric of the Imperial mission. Colonel Bullace belongs to the heroic military class which Wells openly criticized in *The Outline of History*; Bullace's fascination goes to the imperial mythology of Sir Walter Raleigh, Nelson and the red flag all over the globe. Bullace is "that variety of Englishman which believes as an article of faith that the Union Jack has 'braved as thousand years the battle and the breeze' since 1800" (29). In short he embodies, quite evidently too, the major element of resistance to Wells's Cosmopolis. Similarly, Mr Sempack entertains a flirt in the gardens with the beautiful Lady Catherine. When the General Strikes breaks out, an outburst of atavistic patriotism takes over some of the guests at Casa Terragena. Bullace and Catherine extends their support to the Government and the British Fascists guided by Captain Fearon Owen. Apparently, Sempack loses the love competition; Catherine falls in love with the Fascist Captain and the aggressive British climate leads her gentle nature to homicide for the sake of the Union Jack. Mr. Rylands informs her wife of the incident:

> I did not even know she was in England. I thought she was still with you. . .You know she is mixed up with the comic-opera fellow Fearon-Owen who stars it in the British Fascisti world. . .You know how she drives. Foot down and damn the man round the corner. Giving her a car to drive is almost as criminal as shooting blind down a crowded street. She got her man near Rugby. Two young fellows she got, but the other was only slightly injured. This one was killed

[689] See also Robert Benewick, *A Study of British Fascism: Political Violence and Public Order* (Baltimore: Allen Lane, 1969). Stocker, "Importing fascism: reappraising the British Fascisti, 1923-1926," *Contemporary British History* 30 (2016): 326-48.

> dead. Tramping for a job, poor devil. *And she drove on!* She drove on, because she was a patriotic heroine battling against Bolshevism and all that, for God and King and Fearon-Owen and the *British Gazette*, particularly Fearon-Owen and the *British Gazette*. War is war. Nothing will be done to her. That's all. Philip. (228)

Philip, now in England and writing letters home, sceptically terms the Strike as the "Silliest Thing in the History of England" (176). Imperial dreams haunt the rooms of Casa Terragena. Wells satirizes the effect of patriotism in the novel to the extent that, as I have indicated, the book was judged as a revolutionary comment by one of the most famous and controversial personalities of the British Empire.

Winston Churchill (Chancellor of the Exchequer) also figures in his original Government role, in charge of the *British Gazette*. This was the propaganda newspaper established by Baldwin to save the Empire, as he often put it, from the "unpatriotic" workers. At this point, conservative newspapers like *The Morning Post* and *The Times* are reported by Philip to be all "*pro bono Winstono*" (179).[690] Mr Rylands, now mouthpiece to Wells, describes the "Winston-Bullace state of mind" as a class too "ill-educated and self-centred": "*Their* Empire threatened! *Their* swagger and privileges going! Their air of patronage to all the rest of the world undermined! They refuse the fact" (192). The awakened consciousness of Rylands filters them, echoing Wells, as figures belonging to the past of the military tradition indicted in *The Outline of History*. It was not the first time that Wells transposed his arch-imperialist friend in his novels. In *Men Like Gods* (1923) Churchill appears as "Rupert Catskill" in the role of a wannabe be D'Annunzio who aims, essentially, to besiege and conquer Utopia; in a way it is a re-enactment of *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) imperialist satire. In *The Autocracy of Mr Parham* (1930), again, the statesman appears either through his own name or the fictionalized character of "Brimstone Burchell." In 1923 Churchill opposed Wells's advocacy for a world federal government: "We can almost hear him smacking his lips at every symptom or upheaval in India or in Africa. . .In this sublime conception the British inheritance accumulated by the thrift and effort of so many centuries would be liquidated and generously shared with all nations."[691] Wells called Churchill a child; Churchill usually replied with the quip, so to say, "leave State affairs to statemen and go back

[690] The book's wit is also sustained by Wells's burlesque pen sketches which are true delight. These were termed "picshuas" by the author. He would put picshuas extensively in his private letters, drafts of novels but also in published books. See, for instance, *Boon* (1915). For a detailed introduction to a major satiric side of Wells's production see Gene K. Rinkel and Margaret E. Rinkel, *The Picshuas of H. G. Wells. A Burlesque Diary* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

[691] Quoted in Toye, *Churchill's Empire*, 162.

to your novels." It was an amiable and respectful skirmish, and in the 1920s Churchill became a major target of Wells's satire.[692]

In *Meanwhile*, however, although Wells launches his critique to a self-closed idea of British Empire characteristically embodied by Winston Churchill, the real threat to any world reconstruction comes from Rome: the Fascist tyranny and its imperial aspiration. *Meanwhile* successfully parallels British imperial intolerance with the Italian totalitarian experiment. Fascism in Italy, after all, as Wells admirably understood, was infatuating aggressive imaginations in other countries, posing itself as the most urgent European issue. Italian Fascists do not appear in the narrative until Book II in the chapter "Fascisti in the Garden." But there is a crucial feature specified as early as in first sections of *Meanwhile*: the garden hosting the English-speaking group is built on the ruins of an ancient Roman Villa, in proximity with an imperialized "Via Aurelia" (from Emperor "Aurelius"). The setting is surrounded by "polished marble and busts and broken provincial statuary had recalled its Roman predecessors. . . but at the touch of Sempack these marble gods and emperors became no more than the litter of the last tenant, his torn photographs and out-of-date receipts" (27). The narrator fully describes the scene:

> The Via Aurelia ran deeply through the grounds between high walls, and some one had set up, at a bridge where the gardens crossed this historical gully, a lettered-stone to recall that om this documented date or that, this emperor and that pope, Nicolo Machiavelli and Napoleon the First, had ridden past. These ghosts seemed scarcely remote than the records of recent passages in the big leather-bound Visitors' Book in the Hall, Mr. Gladstone and King Edward the Seventh, the Austrian Empress and Mr. Keir Hardie.

Through the allegorical setting, reminiscent of *The Time Machine* (1895), Wells the historian highlights the dangers; historical continuity is reinforced, and the echoes of fallen empires gloom insistently over the narrative as omen of warning. It is the same good old early Wells of perceptive and ironic symbolism.

Towards the later sections of the novel, Italian *Fascisti* thus enters Utopia, without paying the ticket and armed to the teeth. Throughout *Meanwhile* the occasional use of untranslated Italian sentences, misspelled too, gives the novel an ironic added flavour. Chapter §17 "Fascisti in the Garden" represents one of the best moments of the novel. In this episode, Fascists are hunting a certain Vinciguerra, an Italian politician alluding to Matteotti and the banished Italian opposition. The

[692] *Star Begotten* (1937) is also dedicated "to my friend Winston Spencer Churchill."

politician will eventually hide and find shelter in Casa Terragena. The curtain of world's affairs rises: "The serenity of the night was broken. Distant shouts ugly with anger the crack of a pistol. She [Mrs Rylands] stopped still and *returned to the world of fact*" (239) [italics mine]. The world of facts enters the Villa. "Black Shirts" are hunting Signor Vinciguerra: "the tradittore! ("the traitor") (261). Mrs Rylands passes "near the old Roman road" (239) and finds Vinciguerra in a state of panic:

> Her appearance, blocking his path, seemed the culmination of dismay for him. 'Santo Dio!' [My God!] he choked with a gesture of despair. 'Coming!' came the voice of Mrs McManus out of the air. 'What is it?' asked Mrs Rylands, though already she knew she was in the presence of the Terror.

Mrs Rylands sees the effect of Fascism in the eyes of Vinciguerra. "I Fascisti m'inseguono! Non ne posso più…Mi vogliono ammazzare? [Fascists are chasing me! I can't anymore…They want to kill me?"]. Mrs Rylands resolutely decides she must protect the fugitive: "She knew Fascismo. No man was to be chased and manhandled in the garden of Terragena" (240). Differently put: no man can die like a dog under the protection of a Liberal Empire: "We'll have to hide him and get him out of this country somehow or Murder it will be" (252). These horrors can happen abroad, but not in England /Casa Terragena (!). With the help of her "wonderful nurse from Ulster," Mrs McManus, Wells's Lady saves the deputy from the totalitarian Terror. Thanks to Nitti's information, H. G. Wells's knowledge of Fascism in 1926-7, in an age where the terror aspect of the regime was downplayed or even glorified, is impressive. But who is this Vinciguerra? He "used to be a minister" (244) and, as he explains to Mrs Rylands, the regime hunts opposition "like a beast! And for why? The simplest criticisms. Italy has embarked upon a course that have only one end, National tragedy. Twice I have been beaten. Once in Rome in full daylight in the Piazza della Colonna. Once in the little town where formerly I was mayor" (256). Mussolini is described by Signor Vinciguerra as a "charlatan" managing "this whole country" as "one great prison. A prison with punishment and tortures" (256). Vinciguerra praises the British liberal tradition and intellectuals:

> You have your great public men, respected, influential, no matter the government. Your Shaw, your Gilbert Murray, your Sempack; Americans like Nicholas Murray Butler, Upton Sinclair, Arthur Brisbane. Free to speak plainly. Bold as lions, Free – above the State. But in Italy – that actor, that destroyer, that cannibal silences us all! Performs his follies. Puts us all to indignities and vile submissions. I can't tell you the half of things submitted. The shame of it! For Italy! The shame for every soul in Italy! (257).

This is, in a nutshell, the reason why Wells became *persona non grata*. Vinciguerra tells Lady Rylands that Italy lacked unity, "there was no liberal will in Italy but only scattered self-seeking men. Politicians were divided. Intellectual men, not very cordial, not balanced together, not ready to die for freedom, one for all and all for one" – and Fascism established, in the "*meanwhile*," its Rule of Terror (257). The Italian ex-deputy launches his warning against the well-known English Liberal quip that "Fascism cannot happen in England;" he admonishes: "Nothing is safe in life. Now I know. What has happened in Italy may happen all over the world" (258). Like the majority of the Italian opposition, Mrs Rylands will eventually manage to support Vinciguerra's escape in the North: France.

Now, through his correspondences with Nitti and having read Matteotti's *The Fascisti Exposed* somewhere between 1924 and 1925, not only Wells was presumably the most informed Englishman on the Fascist terror policy, but *Meanwhile* also shows a knowledge of minor details of the Italian literary and political scene. On a thematic level, of course, Signor "Vinciguerra" translates literally in Italian as "Mr Win War;"[693] it also logically follows that Signor "Vinciguerra" *must* win the war against the Fascist experiment. There are, however, good reasons to believe that Wells was inspired precisely by the Italian journalist Mario Vinciguerra (1887-1972) who was also literary critic and, later in his career, historian.[694] He was assistant editor of the anti-fascist newspapers *Il Resto del Carlino* and *Il Mondo*; the latter newspaper, suppressed by the regime in 1926, was considered the major anti-fascist voice of Italy by both Nitti and Amendola. *Il Mondo* also published in 1924 materials which exposed, through Fascist witnesses, Mussolini's direct involvement in the Matteotti's murder.[695] Fascism, openly and increasingly totalitarian after 1925, divided the Italian intellectuals.[696] Mario Vinciguerra belonged to the anti-fascist side; as early as 1923 he also published an early analysis of Fascism not devoid of observant criticism in *Il Fascismo visto da un solitario: Batti ma*

[693] "Vinci" is a second person declination of the verb "vincere" (to win). "Guerra" is transparently the term "war."

[694] Throughout his life Mario Vinciguerra increasingly opposed the Fascist regime and was persecuted for subversive action. For more details see Franco Rizzo, *La solitudine della ragione: il caso Vinciguerra* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2001); Mario Vinciguerra, *I Girondini del '900 e altri scritti politici*, edited by Antonio Carioti (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2005); Antonio Carannante, "Un intellettuale 'scomodo': Mario Vinciguerra (1887-1972)," *Campi Immaginabili* 32-3 (2005): 254-88.

[695] On 27 December 1924 *Il Mondo* made public Cesare Rossi's memorial in which Mussolini figures as the major responsible of Matteotti's death. Judged to be involved in the Matteotti case, Cesare Rossi was the former chief press officer, member of the Grand Council of Fascism and one of Mussolini's closest collaborators. He was set free in 1925 and escaped in France to avoid Fascist retortions.

[696] *Il Mondo* published, on the first of May 1925 "La protesta contro il 'Manifesto degli intellettuali fascisti'" ['The protest against the 'Manifesto of the Fascist Intellectuals"] by Benedetto Croce. It was a response to the apologetic Fascist intellectual manifesto of April 1925 written by Giovanni Gentile: "Manifesto degli intellettuali fascisti." See Gabriele Turi, *Il Fascismo e il consenso degli intellettuali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1980); Emiliana P. Noether, "Italian Intellectuals under Fascism," *The Journal of Modern History* 43 (1971): 630-48. See also for a contextual discussion Paul Hollander, "Mussolini, Fascism, and Intellectuals," in *From Benito Mussolini to Hugo Chavez: Intellectuals and a Century of Political Hero Worship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 47-82.

ascolta (1923).[697] Wells, perhaps, could have heard of him as early as 1920 in Joseph Collins's study *Idling Italy. Studies of Literature and of Life* (1920).[698] The Italian writer, who was also reviewed occasionally by the British press, was interested in Anglo-Saxon literature and both Wells and Vinciguerra figures in Collins's chapter "Improvisional Italian Literature of To-day and Yesterday."[699] Vinciguerra also mentions Wells in one of his studies on Anglo-American literature.[700] The specific allusion to Mario Vinciguerra rests, however, on a mere general level: the real model for "Signor Vinciguerra," Wells's allegorical character, is of course the Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti and, more broadly, the Italian intellectual opposition.

Finally, as token of Wells's supreme wit, there is also another character which Wells extracts from the Italian political context. Casa Terragena, in effect, has one "perfect major-domo" by the name Bombaccio. "Bombaccio" in Italian evokes, again, a warfare lexical approximation of "bomb" – more precisely "bad" bomb, being -accio a pejorative affix.[701] However, the reference seems to point more straightforwardly at Nicola Bombacci (1879-1945). Bombacci was in the early 1920s a well-known international figure of Communism in the British press. The political life of Bombacci is, as a matter of fact, a bizarre adventure of political shifts; he begins his activity amongst the founders of the Italian Communist Party and will find his death next to Mussolini in Piazza Loreto as one of his most loyal collaborators.[702] Still, in the years when he leaned more coherently towards Communism, he was a favourite target of Fascist's hooliganism. Wells could do his accurate research

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[697] This was a collection of a series of articles written from 1921. It was published by the anti-fascist journalist Piero Gobetti, another victim of Fascist beatings. The provocative title can be translated as "Fascism as seen from a solitary man: Beat but listen." For major details, see Alessandro Barbero's afterword in *Il Fascismo visto da un solitario: Batti ma ascolta* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2014). In 1923, as many Italian liberals after the March on Rome, Vinciguerra initially hoped in the "normalization" of Fascism. The situation, as we know, would degenerate even more towards despotism and homicidal banishment of the opposition.

[698] Collins writes: "I never fully appreciated how hazardous it is to speak of the literature of a foreign country until I read an article in the *Tribuna* of Rome, signed Mario Vinciguerra, on Michaud's 'Mystiques et Realistes Anglo-Saxons,' which seeks to disparage the originality of some of our Transcendentalists, particularly Emerson, and to trace tendencies in our literature. I hope that I may be more successful in reviewing some of Italy's recent literature and in making an estimate of the merit of those who are responsible for it than Signor Vinciguerra, who says the two most potent romancers of living American writers are Jack London and Upton Sinclair." (*Idling in Italy*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 121.

[699] This is the passage on the next page, right after the mention of Mario Vinciguerra: "Previous to the war there was no such pouring out of literature in Italy as there was in England, and there were few writers of fiction whose outpout or content could be compared with that of Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. Arnold Bennett, Mr. Hugh Walpole, Mr. Gilbert Cannan, Mr. Compton Mackenzie, Mr. D. H. Lawrence, and others" (*Idling in Italy*, 122).

[700] "Jack London e Upton Sinclair, i due romanzieri più forti tra gli scrittori americani viventi. . .hanno quasi proiettato su di uno schermo cinematografico gli elementi principali e più appariscenti tratti da Nietzche, da Kipling, da Wells. . . .Poco prima che scoppiasse la guerra, i libri che avevano fatto più rumore negli Stati Uniti erano stati appunto romanzi come *A captain of industry, The Jungle, The Metropolis,* di Upton Sinclair, critiche dalle forti tinte della società industriale americana; e soprattutto *Il tallone di ferro*, di Jack London, visione alla Wells degli immani conflitti sociali che insaguineranno il nuovo mondo." From Vinciguerra, "America letteraria," in *Romantici e decadenti inglesi* (Foligno: Campitelli, 1926), 120.

[701] In Italian, "bomb" means "bomba," while "-accio" is a pejorative suffix. For the sake of syntactic preciseness, "Bomba" is of feminine grammatical gender in Italian, so a "bad bomb" should be "bombacci-a" and not "bombacci-o."

[702] For major details on the development of Nicola Bombacci's political career see Guglielmo Salotti, *Nicola Bombacci: un comunista a Salò* (Milano: Mursia Editore, 2008).

through the press and especially the apologetic work by Luigi Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*: *The Fascista Regeneration* (1924). Salvemini's *The Fascist Dictatorship* (1928), while unmasking the hypocrisy of British conservative Press, was also meant to represent a direct counter-text to Villari's glorification of Fascist Italy.[703] In this 1924 book Villari attacks strenuously "the example of Russia" which "exerted immense influence, and was the most of; the extreme Socialist leaders, Serrati, Bombacci, Lazzari, etc. were in close touch with Moscow, and by depicting the conditions of Russia as those of an earthly paradise. . .," and so on with Fascist rhetoric.[704] It is with a note of sarcasm, therefore, that the Italian servant of the British rich of Casa Terragena, is the "perfect" major-domo "Bombaccio." Wells has a funny portrait of this character, "Bombaccio with the Caruso profile" (11) is "wisest and most wonderful of servants;" but Mrs Rylands "had no knowledge of Bombaccio's political views and still less of his susceptibility and susceptibility of his minions to the Terror." Bombaccio is also involved in a key episode. When Signor Vinciguerra is found in Casa Terragena, the Italian servant finds something:

> "What is that you've got in your hand there? a pair of shoes?" "They were found in the garden," said Bombaccio. "They were found in a trampled place under a rock beneath the tennis court. And these – *affari*. Ecco!" Bombaccio held them out; the decorative socks of a man of the world but with a huge hole in one heel. "What can they be? And where are the feet they should have? Surely this is of the traddittore! Il Vinciguerra." (261)

It is a odd scene, at first sight. But there is again attentive symbolism inserted by the author. Firstly, Wells puts, of all the Italian words Bombaccio utters, "affair" in italics. Secondly, Bombaccio presents the riddle: "What can they be?." Thirdly, the description is also too elaborate to be a passing triviality. The *fact* is that the "decorative socks of a man of the world but with a huge hole in one heel" does reconnect this ordinary image to the Fascist tragedy of Matteotti's Murder– which is to say, the Italian *Affaire*, the new Italian Dreyfus of "judicial" murder.

To conclude, with Meanwhile, by setting his *dramatis personae* in the ever-growing tension of totalitarian Italy, cradle of civilization and the former Roman Empire, Wells magnifies the flaws beneath all forms of imperial revival of the age. The isolated character of the Palazzo, "Casa Terragena," which at first is apparently untouched by the Fascist threat and tangible working-class upheavals, also suggests a well-defined utopian, almost pastoral spatiality. Furthermore, as Maxim

[703] Luigi Villari (1876-1959), ardent Fascist supporter, was an active figure in the Italian Foreign Office. He contributed, as Salvemini's genealogical study of Fascism reveals, to the mythology of the *Duce* abroad. The arch-imperialist *Daily Mail* in particular made Mussolini a heroic figure.
[704] Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*, 50-1.

Shadurski recently commented on Wells's utopian imagination, in extension usually "Wells connects alterity to utopia's planetary's dimensions," thus escaping enclosure.[705] *Meanwhile* is a trajectory of social struggle, through discourse, to enlarge its utopian scope. And indeed, there is always a correspondence between spatial dimension and Wells's collectivism. This long-neglected novel occupies a peculiar position in Wells's canon, by defying utopian-dystopian categorizing. It is not a utopian novel in the sense of *A Modern Utopia* (1905) or *Men Like Gods* (1923), of course. "Casa Terragena" is however, a "cathedral of ideas" in the *meanwhile* of Utopia; in which "everything said had a sort of freedom and yet everything belonged" (19). Its liminal space lies, as all utopias, in the boundary ground between empirical and imagined world. The novel's realism tends towards the Utopian end of a Federation of Mankind, which, the author implies, cannot be achieved in the static "drawing-room of Casa Terragena" (279). As revelation of a metaphorical rebirth of Liberalism, destroyed by Fascist Italy and limited by the British Empire, the child of the Rylands finally arrives. The Rylands conclude that "if we are going to realise the teachings of the prophet Sempack, there must be an end to Casa Terragena;" which translates as an end to the self-sufficient idea of the British Empire. The family will join instead the world in a more *active* and less individualistic attitude. The characters finally realize that the "beauties and prettiness" of the Italian "enchanted Garden" (279), has proven to be a paper-made utopian setting. *Meanwhile* is a full-fledged novel self-reflecting on the fundamental inefficiency of utopian discourse. It magnifies the force of language to provoke change while also pointing to its insufficiency; as all Wells's novels, it thus promotes action. As Wells describes in the preface, the novel is "a fantasias of ideas, this picture of a mind and of a world in phase of expectation" (6). The expectation of action. Action means democratic Education. *Meanwhile* dismantles the British imperial architecture; and it is, defiantly, the story on how "Casa Terragena was caught out at so directly an anti-Fascist exploit" (246). Transnationally, the novel becomes an engaged revolutionary act which testifies the political force of Art.

* * *

In the light of the author's anti-fascist activity in the 1920s, it is now possible to reassess H. G. Wells's ideological position. In 1932 Wells coined the oxymoric phrase "Liberal Fascism" in a talk to a Liberal summer school at Oxford.[706] In Adam Roberts's literary biography this phrase is included

[705] Shadurski, *The Nationality of Utopia*, 180.

[706] "Liberalism and the Revolutionary Spirit," reprinted in *After Democracy* (London: Watts & Co, 1932), 1-28. This talk, opening the book, was an address delivered at the Liberal Summer School of Oxford in July 1932. *After Democracy* includes articles which continue Wells's anti-fascist engagement. John S. Partington in particular has contributed immensely to shedding light on Wells's democratic position, but Wells's works from 1930 onwards certainly requires major attention from future scholarship.

under "what might be called pseudo-fascist ideas."[707] We may hear Mr. Wells turning in his grave. The critic does mention the talk and decides not to explore its content. The fact, however, is that the "Liberal Fascism" address in Oxford is better understood when framed as outspoken anti-fascist activism.[708] The talk ended quite prophetically with the question: "Do you think there is a possibility of Western Liberalism producing anything to compare with the creative courage and energy of Russian Communism? Or are the Sturdy Dwarfs to be left in possession of our Western world?. . .The dance of the Dwarfs will proceed" (*After Democracy* 28). A more accurate and concise evaluation on Wells's ideological position, on the other hand, has already been presented by Michael Sherborne. The biographer writes:

> In the new decade of confrontation, cynicism and glib ideology-mongering, Wells looked like an anachronism. True, he would call his 1932 collection of articles and speeches *After Democracy* and include a talk to a Liberal summer school calling for "Liberal Fascisti…enlightened Nazis," but the emphasis clearly falls on the adjectives rather than the nouns. Wells does not want Liberals to emulate their enemies' vile policies, only to be equally purposeful and united. His aim is to get beyond the limits of party politics, unequal opportunities and press barons who control the news agenda in order to achieve a more effectively open society, not to replace it with what, with reference to Russia, he scathingly sumps up as an "ego-centred autocrat, with a political party disciplined to death, a Press bureau, and a secret police."[709]

If one reads through Wells's 1932 address, it is possible to see that Wells exhorts his listeners to "create a power of belief and devotion for Socialism in the community;" in other terms, the British intellectual wants to establish what he terms a *competent receiver*, namely "an organization, a responsible organization, able to guide and rule the new scale of human community that is struggling to exist to-day among the entanglements of the old" (*AD* 10). It is a variety of the Open Conspiracy idea, the one Wells presented throughout his textual world. He acknowledges that both Fascism and Communism have successfully managed to develop systems of organizations revolving, energetically, around a political imagination; as he remarks, he had been preaching this political union and devotion to an ideal since the days of *Anticipations* (1901) and *A Modern Utopia* (1905). Ideally, he incites Liberals to find an equally powerful faith to reform the system. Liberalism is the keyword of this Oxford address.

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[707] Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 326.
[708] Philip Coupland also has explored the controversy behind the phrase "Liberal Fascism" in "H. G. Wells's 'Liberal Fascism'," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35 (2000): 541-58. The novel *Meanwhile* is absent from the discussion.
[709] *Another Kind of Life*, 289-90.

Wells insists on the creation of a global force to override jealousy, competitiveness and to "release from the tradition of national sovereignty" (*AD* 12). Again, he attacks Kipling's self-centred and hustle-to-the-top imperialism (13). The world reconstruction Wells presents is no less than a "*urgent necessity for mankind*" (17); the alternative is the fall into Fascism and its "world for the gangster type – and not for you" (17). If Fascism was the death of Liberalism, as Mussolini claimed as early as the 1920s, Wells promotes a phoenix rebirth of liberal thought in times of crisis. Wells clarifies the semantic boundaries of the term: *I think it is possible to maintain that Liberalism is this: it is the implicit recognition of the possibility of one prosperous and progressive world community of just, kindly, free-spirited, freely-thinking, and freely-speaking human beings, and it is a struggle to release humanity from all that impedes our present realization of that possibility* (18). He shifts his discourse from Socialism to Liberalism but, as Richard Toye has commented, in fact, Wells "frequently identified himself as a Liberal, and viewed socialism as an integral part of liberalism, not as antagonistic to it."[710] So, what is Wells's idiosyncratic notion of Liberal thought? Essentially, "Liberalism is the belief in and attempt to evoke the one human commonweal, one common citizenship, upon this earth. . .Liberalism, then, *means* the progressive world state" (20). He makes a distinction between Liberalism and *Conservatism*: Liberalism is a dynamic process of progressive reconstruction, still, the ideology struggles, he perceives, amongst the "multitude of extremely fierce and vigorous dwarfs." "Dwarf" throughout his writings was Wells's most favourite term to refer to Mussolini and Hitler – old sarcastic Wells. While Conservatism is "national, local, various, entrenched in a multitude of different forms and frontiers," Liberalism is "the mental quality of all intelligent men throughout the world." Or to put differently: *Liberalism* is the World State, *Conservatism* is, as also Salvemini intended it, the nationalist spirit of Fascism and the current position of British Empire. It is no Anglophile babble, no self-sufficient British imperial imagination. The rebirth of Liberalism, as *Meanwhile* suggests in 1927, must begin from a very reform of the imperial fabrics of thought.

Liberalism has the greatest of weakness in Wells's diagnosis: it lacks a "backbone," it has no education system able to supersede the forces of conservative nationalism. It is strangled by imperial and Fascist conservatism: "It is continually being kicked hard by gangsters, lawbreakers, Mussolini, Stalin, Japan, the Catholic Church, Kipling, Shaw, and so forth and so on. Need I remind a Liberal Summer School of that peculiar *kicking* feeling?" (22). And Shaw himself was one those socialist writers who did not condemn Italian totalitarian means in the 1920s. He certainly did not praise Mussolini as elegantly as Churchill, but in his view Mussolini gained power legitimately; and murder,

[710] Toye, "H. G. Wells and Winston Churchill: A Reassessment," 154.

Shaw sceptically insisted, unlike Wells, had always been an inevitable component of history's course.[711] In Italy, Wells notes, "what is left of Liberalism languishes in the Islands. . .And so throughout the world the Sturdy Dwarfs have it" (22). Education is the Wellsian answer. The author of *The Outline of History* has no repressive means in his propaganda, nor he seeks to deny the franchise to this or that nation or race:

> When I speak of Liberalism developing a backbone, I mean hard conviction and hard effort; I mean nothing less than the deliberate organization of an education, a definite Liberal education, and a discipline, a definite Liberal discipline, and a programme, a definite guiding programme, for human liberation and the attainment of the world state. . .I am asking for a Liberal Fascisti, for enlightened Nazis; I am proposing that you consider the formation of a greater Communist Party, a Western response to Russia (24)

Let us try to disentangle the lexical oddities. Reframed in different terms, therefore, Wells sees the political struggle as one between, we may rephrase, "*Liberal* Fascistis" set against "*Conservative* Fascistis." In his view, Liberalism is *Progressive* and Fascism remains *Conservative*. Italian Fascism is reactionary, of course, but still falls in Wells's mind into the category he presents as *Conservatism*. Wells insists that "the world is sick of parliamentary politics. Each aspired to become a *competent receiver* within the limits of its range. The Fascist Party, to the best of its ability, *is* Italy now. The Communist Party, to the best of its ability, *is* Russia. Obviously the Fascists of Liberalism must carry out a parallel ambition on a still a vaster scale" (25) These politically-devoted movements managed to create a *competent receiver* (let's call it *a political faith*) – this is, to Wells, the real triumph of such emerging organizations. But Italian Fascism, and the emerging Third Reich, remain a primary *conservative* force in the development of civilisation. Wells the prophet-intellectual then concludes: "If Liberalism cannot produce an adequate effort, let us at least face realities. Let us eat, drink, and see Oxford; for to-morrow, politically speaking, we die" (28). We know how the world power politics developed from 1932. What we can acknowledge is that at least H. G. Wells tried his best, as artist,

[711] Leon Surette writes: "Wells certainly never endorsed fascism – as Lewis did – and it is hard to believe that Shaw had much good to say about Mussolini," *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia: Literary Modernism and Politics* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 96. While Surette is correct on Wells, in the 1920s Shaw tended towards a different strand. In 1927 Gaetano Salvemini himself quarrelled violently with Shaw in the British press. See Gaetano Salvemini, *Bernard Shaw and Fascism* (Kensington: The Favil Press, 1928). See also from Gaetano Salvemini, George Bernard Shaw, *Polemica sul Fascismo*, edited by Gaetano Quagliarello (Roma: Ideazione Editrice, 1997); on Salvemini's anti-Fascism compare Alice Gussoni, *Gaetano Salvemini a Londra. Un antifascista in esilio (1925-1934)* (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2020). For a general discussion of Bernard Shaw's controversies and totalitarianism, see the study by Matthew Yde, *Bernard Shaw and Totalitarianism. Longing for Utopia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

to arrest the rise of totalitarianism. The often debated "Liberal Fascisti" address (1932), moreover, cannot be understood without taking into account the anti-fascist novel *Meanwhile* (1927).

Critics of Wells have missed the origin of the controversial phrase and, as consequence, what the anti-fascist notion "Liberal Fascism" signifies in its historical context. "Liberal Fascism," no small wonder, stems precisely from Wells's artistic engagement in *Meanwhile*. Champion of democratic Italy, there is no significant shift of political opinion in Wells from 1924 to 1932 in what regards his view of Italian totalitarianism: the "Terror." Mr. Rylands is in England during the General Strike and through letters sends his reflections on the British Empire to Cynthia, who remains in the calm world of Casa Terragena: "Last night my mind was so puzzled and troubled I could not sleep. . .A country that has been very proud and great and rather stupidly and easily great, learning its place in a new world. A fine world perhaps later – but bleak and harsh at present" (*Meanwhile* 200-201). Philip's thoughts lead him to questions of faith:

> Is religion over for ever and the soul of man gone dead? And if it isn't, why is there none of it here? Why are these people all jammed against each other like lumpish things against the grating of a drain? Why is there no league for clear-headedness? Why are there no Fascisti of the Light to balance the black Fascists? Why are none of us banded together to say "Stop!" all these politicians' tricks, these shams, to scrap all the old prejudices and timidities, to take thought – and face the puzzle of the British position and the real future of England and the world, face it generously, mightily – like men? (202)

Here is the liberal, almost theological dichotomy: *Fascisti* of the Light set against Black *Fascisti*. Cynthia receives his papers, abruptly signed "Philip." Along with these materials, there is also "a loose sheet on which he had been thinking and which had evidently got itself among the *fasciculi* by mistake (203; emphasis added). Wells, one may note, plays with *fasciculi*. On the back of a Debit and Credit account Mrs Ryland reads her husband's notes: "A man who doesn't think conserves energy. Parties of reaction like the Fascists, parties of dogma like the Communists, are full of energy. They get something done. They get the wrong thing done but it is done. Independent thought, critical thought, has no chance against them." She flips the card and sees the final notes of confusion nervously written by Philip:

> "In the long run intelligence wins," and then: "does it?" and mere scribbling. Across the lower half of the sheet ran one word very slowly written in a large fair hand, "Organisation." Much smaller: "Intelligence plus energy." Then beginning very large and ending very small, a row of interrogation marks.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? (203)

Later on, Cynthia will reply to Philip, underscoring the correctness in aspiring to an "organisation," a "sane organisation" (206). She confesses: "I find my mind almost too excited to write. It is work in that way that has to be done now. Manifestly. 'Fascists of the Light' is a great phrase. Who would have thought of you," writes Mrs Rylands, "my dear dear Man as a maker of phrases?" It is a curious passage which reveals H. G. Wells's political dissatisfaction taking form. In his *Experiment* (1934) he will return to the topic: "People with a real quantitative excess of energy and enthusiasm becomes Mussolinis, Hitlers, Stalins, Gladstones, Beaverbrooks, Northcliffes, Napoleons. It takes generations to clean up after them (*EA* 1: 37)." With hindsight, we may notice, George Orwell was right in "Wells, Hitler and the World State" (1941) to declare that "Wells is too sane to understand the modern world;" and by "sane" Orwell intended a lack of aggressive patriotism in Wells.[712] This Orwellian essay will be our last stop for our time travel into twentieth-century Wells. Literary critics generally refer to this essay in relation to "Science" and overlook Orwell's fundamental charge of "anti-patriotism" launched at Wells.[713] The following Wells-Orwell discussion will finally connect us to the "early" Wells of *pure* (?) literary imagination.

The short piece of journalism has been often criticized by experts of Wells, in defence of the author.[714] George Orwell fundamentally downplayed Wells's World State vision as a *naïf*-utopian approach to politics, so that "the usual rigmarole about a World State, plus the Sankey Declaration, which is an attempted definition of fundamental human rights, of anti-totalitarian tendency," barely provoke change in Orwell's view, and little contribute to stop the nationalist march of totalitarian movements.[715] Orwell asks: "What has kept England on its feet during the past year? In part, no doubt, some vague idea about a better future, but chiefly the atavistic emotion of patriotism, the ingrained feeling of the English-speaking peoples that they are superior to foreigners." On the opposite pole, Wells's liberal worldview, to Orwell, was liberal babble: "For the last twenty years the main object of English left-wing intellectuals has been to break this feeling down, and if they had succeeded, we might be watching the S.S. men patrolling the London streets at this moment." This is as provocative as much as it is debatable. To Orwell, Wells's engaged art, too, has proved fundamentally inefficient,

[712] Orwell, "Wells, Hitler and the World State", in *Critical Essays* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1946), 88. The article originally appeared in *Horizon* (August 1941).
[713] For a general and insightful overview see Larry W. Caldwell, "Temporal Compression, Fractious History: H. G. Wells, George Orwell, and the Mutiny of 'Historical Narrative'," in *Worlds Enough and Time: Explorations of Time in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, edited by Gary Westfahl, George Slusser, and David Leiby (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 130-37.
[714] A good comment, which also attempts a resolution on their similarities, is in Foot *The History of H. G. Wells*, 290-92.
[715] Orwell, "Wells, Hitler and the World State", 84.

and since 1920 the author has "squandered his talents in slaying paper dragons" (apparently Wells's early anti-fascism was equally trivial).[716] Not only that, but:

> Much of what Wells has imagined and worked for is physically there in Nazi Germany. The order, the planning, the State encouragement of science, the steel, the concrete, the aeroplanes, are all there, but all in the service of ideas appropriate to the Stone Age. Science is fighting on the side of superstition. But obviously it is impossible for Wells to accept this. It would contradict the world-view on which his own works are based.[717]

It is a polemic note in Orwellian style indeed which influenced immensely the literary and political reception of Wells after 1950 through a series of farcical re-uses and distortions. In John S. Partington's words, although Orwell acknowledged Wells's magnitude in the influence of twentieth-century, the radical socialist also designed Wells, exaggerating the issue "to the height of ridiculousness," as some kind of "unconscious sire of totalitarian regimes and one oblivious to the driving motives behind the average person."[718] Orwell's attack on Wells has contributed to perpetrate amongst critics, certainly, a plethora of misconceptions on Wells's works, based, *by paradox*, on the exact opposite points of Orwell's article: namely that he was a terrible eugenicist of the fabrics of Doctor Moreau, some elitist "advocate" of scientific totalitarianism, or other unfounded facts along these lines; also that he was a British imperial supremacist advocating extermination, if not a true-born or proto/pseudo-*Fascista*. These trends have not inhabited literary criticism only; websites and forums at times offer such views and will, presumably, continue to spread. That is fine. But these are, of course, misreading of Orwell's original comment on an immensely influential British intellectual who, as a matter of fact, wanted as much as Orwell to put an end to capitalist political systems based on tyranny.[719] Another trend of criticism has, on the other hand and no less blindly, adhered to Orwell's prejudiced view on Wells's World State. Orwell's fragile judgement lies, I would argue, exactly in the belittlement of Wells's view that anti-nationalism *was* antidote to totalitarianism (and,

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[716] Ibid., 88.
[717] Ibid., 86.
[718] Partington, *Building Cosmopolis*, 15, 14.
[719] On Orwell and imperialism see for example his essay "How a Nation is Exploited – The British Empire in Burma," *Le Progrès Civique*, 4 May 1929. Orwell very clearly understood the power politics based on a Master-Slave relationship. For a broader discussion on Wells and Orwell's types of Socialism see Partington's discussion in "The Pen as Sword: George Orwell, H. G. Wells and Journalistic Parricide," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39 (2004): 45-56. As Partington remarks, "Orwell's and Wells's socialisms, whilst being founded upon an opposition to capitalism, were in fact poles apart. Wells's socialism was cosmopolitan, middle-class orientated and anti-parliamentary, based upon like-minded individuals organizing into functional lobbies to create a functional world state incrementally. Orwell's socialism was patriotic, working class-centred and parliamentary, based upon the mass mobilization of patriots through traditional socialist vehicles such as the Labour Party and the trade union movement to establish socialism through sheer pressure of support at the ballot box and a resolute war effort" (55).

prior to 1922, imperialism). For the rest, Orwell's portrait is in fact more truthful than critics usually present it.

According to Orwell, "if one looks through nearly any book that he has written in the last forty years one finds the same idea constantly recurring: the supposed antithesis between the man of science who is working towards a planned World State and the reactionary who is trying to restore a disorderly past;" that "History as he sees it is a series of victories won by the scientific man over the romantic man."[720] Now, Orwell is generalizing Wells's immense corpus, but is not completely wrong. Most critics would also reply that the failure of the scientific man in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *When the Sleeper Awakes* (1899), *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) are counterpoints to this thesis; Orwell, however, is momentarily addressing "the last forty years," and his point must not be discarded so easily. Orwell is not addressing Wells's early scientific romances. What is also true of Orwell's thesis is that Wells's textual world symbolically envisions a twentieth century without "flag-wavers like Churchill." The Socialist then looks backwards and makes the following remark:

> But because he belonged to the nineteenth century and to a non-military nation and class, he could not grasp the tremendous strength of the old world which was symbolised in his mind by fox-hunting Tories. He was, and still is, quite incapable of understanding that nationalism, religious bigotry and feudal loyalty are far more powerful forces than what he himself would describe as sanity. . . The people who have shown the best understanding of Fascism are either those who have suffered under it or those who have a Fascist streak in themselves. . . If one had to choose among Wells's own contemporaries a writer who could stand towards him as a corrective, one might choose Kipling, who was not deaf to the evil voices of power and military "glory." Kipling would have understood the appeal of Hitler, or for that matter of Stalin, whatever his attitude towards them might be. Wells is too sane to understand the modern world.[721]

It is worth elaborating its validity in historical context. Here Orwell gets one point correct and one wrong. Criticism typically overlooks this reference to Kipling, who died in 1936 before WWII shook Europe. This is, following the established tradition of previous commentators, a correct study in contrast; but for the rest Orwell stubbornly refuses to admit that Wells *knew* and understood, more than Orwell insinuates, the forces of militant nationalism – and presumably came to increasingly grasp the threat of nationalism more than any of his contemporaries. Wells's anti-nationalism, moreover, came precisely from the "non-military nation" of the late nineteenth century alluded to in

[720] Orwell, "Wells, Hitler and the World State," 85-86.
[721] Ibid., 88.

the article. Orwell is minimizing the cultural background of the past century. Indeed, one should pay attention to the fact that Orwell was born in 1903. Queen Victoria died in 1901, and two world wars, quite understandably, made Orwell consider the nineteenth-century Empire as a power system significantly less militant than his twentieth-century vision would allow. Nor Wells did see, at the time, "fox-hunting" Tories running around his imagination; he saw a world in a capitalist system of increasing exploitation.

In the next chapter, therefore, it is worth re-discovering, through accurate historicization, how efficiently Wells could dismantle patriotism and self-sufficient aggressive imperialism under Queen Victoria's Reign. It was the origin of its intellectual politics; but it was not a *less* ideological phase as seen in Chapter 2. The difference is merely a cultural one: the "early" Wells (1890-1899) was, simply put, not as famous as the "late" Wells. It is a matter of cultural visibility, not of different ideological standing in relation to art and the world. Contrarily to Orwell's view that Wells maintained an endurable faith in "Science," the Victorian author already foresaw the "Dark Age" of political irresponsibility in the European political scene. In 1942 Wells would express, in an angry note, a recommendation to Orwell: "Read my early works, you shit!" We may follow the suggestion and leave aside the offence (!).[722]

[722] For a chronological account of their quarrel in the 1940s see Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *The Time Traveller*, 430-31. The biographers write on the episode: "What led later to the breach was a talk that Orwell gave in March 1942 on the Indian service of the BBC that was afterwards reprinted in the *Listener*. When H. G. saw that Orwell was repeating the claim that Wells believed that 'science can solve all the ills that man is heir to.' he wrote to Orwell an angry note insisting that 'I don't say that at all. Read my early works, you shit.' In an ensuing correspondence in *The Listener*, he objected to Orwell's argument that he 'belonged to a despicable generation of parochially-minded writers who believed that the world could be saved from the gathering distresses by science,' and claimed that from his earlies works he had been trying to say the exact contrary." The biographers comment that "Orwell had undoubtedly misrepresented him at a time when he was unwell, and more than usually sensitive to suggestions that his ideas were out-moded, wrong-headed and inconsistent."

5. Re-thinking the Canon of Colonial Fiction

"Mr. Wells struck the Empire with all the impact of Mr. Kipling."

Ford Madox Ford, "H. G. Wells." *Mightier than the Sword* (1938)

Throughout this study I never addressed a prophecy by Wells. An important premonition, back from the 1890s is nonetheless worth highlighting. The prophecy has a name: totalitarianism. In 1899, in an interview to the "early" H. G. Wells, George Lynch writes:

> While the world has done justice to the literary genius of Mr. H. G. Wells, and elected him to a position in the front rank of story-writers, it has scarcely realised that below the surface of the novelist is the thinker and teacher. He is regarded variously as a cynic, a pessimist, or a dreamer of terrible dreams. But he is more than this. And now that he has "arrived," and for good or evil his influence in the future is inevitable, it seemed worth while trying to ascertain the direction that influence was likely to take. . .Mr. Wells, I should add, disclaims any idea of posing as a tutor to his generation, but he realises that fiction has to-day powerful influence in the formation of the reader's views of life, and that, though he may not use the novel as a pulpit, it is impossible for the novelist to evade responsibility for the ideas he inculcates or the tendencies he may encourage.[723]

This piece, from the outset, already anticipates the notion of authorial responsibility exposed twelve years later in "The Contemporary Novel" (1911). The interviewer leaves the floor to the author: "'Yes, I know,' said Mr. Wells, 'that I am not credited with any very lofty purpose in my books. I quite understand, for instance, that 'The Time Machine' was regarded simply as a picture of despair – what avails? – however we strive, we shall come to this! But I never meant it in that way.'" Wells specifies his ambitious authorial plan: "The great thing I had in my mind, as the book developed, was this – the responsibility of men to mankind. Unless humanity hangs together, unless all strive for the species as a whole, we shall end in disaster." The discourse on the social dynamics characterising the coming World State is clear and concise. What Wells's vision tends to, in fact, is to lessen the gap

[723] H. G. Wells, "What I believe. A Chat with Mr. H. G. Wells, by George Lynch" (*The Puritan. An Illustrated Magazine for Free Churchmen Volumes I & II, February-December* 1899, London: James Bowden, 218). According to Smith the actual interviewer was J. B. Pinker, "and Wells had a chance to read and work on it before it appeared" (*The Journalism of H. G. Wells*, 328). Other than Smith's entry, this April 1899 interview is, to my knowledge, only rapidly quoted by Bernard Bergonzi in *The Early H. G. Wells* and W. Warren Wagar's *Traversing Time*. It was reproduced as appendix in Leon Stover's critical edition of *When the Sleeper Wakes.* Unfortunately, it has never been taken into full critical consideration; not even by Stover. Bergonzi in particular, as we have noted in Chapter 1, had remarkable little interest for Wells's activity from 1901 onwards. His criticism attempted to crystallize the early Wells as pure art uncontaminated by socialism (and imperialism).

between oppressor and oppressed, by avoiding the establishment, in other words, of a despotic elite: "If the conceit of distinction or the aristocratic instinct induces any superior section of humanity to withdraw from intercourse and sympathy with the remaining portion of humanity, as a necessary consequence of this selfishness man *must* in the remote future differentiate into two distinct species."[724] As early as 1899 Wells's socialist outlook understood lucidly the danger deriving from a concentration of power. Contrarily to the general perception of a pessimist stance in his romances, the author defines himself "an extremely optimistic person" who thinks "there is a possible future of enormous happiness and honour for humanity. But one has to admit the dangers; and it is exactly the dangers upon which one has to lay stress, if one is anxious for their avoidance."[725] In the present interview Wells offers the image of a map, of an open sea where the novelist has to "mark", he argues, "the rocks," which is to say the obstacle in the route towards happiness; yet, the author declares that because "one lays stress on evil tendencies, one must not be branded as a pessimist."

The interviewer then asks Wells what seems to him, most likely, the greatest threat lurking in the obscure future developments of civilisation. The author replies, as it might be expected from Wells's Socialist and Huxleyan framework: "Well – the thing that I am not satisfied about is the possibility of the intelligence, more particularly the moral intelligence, of human beings overcoming the egoism, especially the acquisitive egoism, of the individual;" what matters in the shape of things to come is "the desire to make life pleasant for other people." The literary author expands his political commitment:

> The great probability, I think, in the near future is *the growth of political indifference*. Life is becoming extremely complex; it is brain-wearying to understand; and each man lives his own little life deliberately trying not to think how it affects the general welfare. . .But it seems to me it is simply the work of the worst devil of all – moral apathy. And unless this is overcome – and pleasant little optimistic stories will not do that – we may, under the influence of commercial methods, insure the most intolerable lot for our descendants. . .To say that the age of democracy has now dawned seems to me absurd. The age of democracy is over. The collapse of the Liberal party is one of many signs of that fact. *I take it Liberalism is in for a reconstruction, I hope a rejuvenescence*. The Liberalism that aimed chiefly at a broadened franchise, trusting votes, local control, and Home Rule to cure every dislocation, is over. [italics mine][726]

In the ever-increasing technological and social changes, what Wells believes "inevitable in the future is rule by an aristocracy of organisers, men who manage railroads and similar vast enterprises." At

[724] Ibid., 219.
[725] Ibid.
[726] Ibid., 219-20.

the present state of affairs, he acknowledges that politics are governed by "big property owners" whose powers are constantly increasing; and here lies the real danger, that "the men themselves who are exercising this power do not seem to be aware of it – they do not know what they are doing."[727] In this social context, H. G. Wells, the emerging world intellectual, prophetically anticipates the danger of the twentieth century:

> The people are blinded by democratic forms of government; and there lies before the world in the future *the dangers of domination by a sort of irresponsible aristocracy – and nothing could be worse than that*. For the last hundred years the progress of the world has been a sort of muddle-headed advance; but in the next hundred years it may be simply sleep-walking. Dreaming that it is a democratic world, *in reality the world will be a world ruled by an aristocracy of bosses and exploiters.* [italics mine]

There is one last query Wells needs to solve: "Where are we to seek the moral control that shall overcome these vicious tendencies?" Above all, Wells does not abandon his faith in "the possible righteousness of most men. I do not think, for instance, that dying for one's country is really an exceptional performance," and especially if the governing class is composed by "some gang of jobbers." The problem, he concludes, is in part more intellectual than moral, and that, refraining the Wellsian credo, the "earthly salvation at any rate of humanity lies in Thought. By inducing people to think about their lives, to see their lives relatively to life in general. . .to solve the social problem" from a less egoistic standpoint and by adopting a world-conscious intellectual standing. The solution is one: "education, that is to say, the inculcation of habits of constant thought – thought at home, thought at school, spacious thought about everything with which a human being is concerned." This is where the "early" Wells and the "late" Wells coincide: H. G. Wells the political artist.

To exemplify the premonition of a world governed by an irresponsible elite, the author quotes his recent scientific romance *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) as a symbolic attempt, from the author, to express through the Sleeper figure, that "well-meaning humanitarian element that there is in every man, and which seems to be going to sleep in the world at present." *When The Sleeper Wakes*, tellingly a project started as early as August 1896 after the publication of *Moreau*, was Wells's most evident lunge in fiction to dramatize the World State idea in a futurist environment; it is in fact, I contend, a dystopian vision of Wells's own political system.[728] The book is a direct response to the previous late

[727] Ibid. 220.
[728] On the opposite spectrum of my thesis, Leon Stover in particular is convinced that *The Sleeper* represented Wells's utopia; that Wells, essentially, beneath the big talk of humanitarianism had always been a totalitarian advocate since the

nineteenth-century utopias by Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890) and Bellamy's *Looking Backward (2000-1887)* (1888); throughout the twentieth century, Wells's imagined society in *The Sleeper* has been often commented as an early depiction of the corporate State anticipating all the anti-utopian tradition of the disillusioned twentieth century;[729] certainly, as Mark Hillegas has amply shown, it represents an important archetype for the subsequent political imaginations we find in Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *1984* (1949). Adam Roberts sees it as an "attempt to a more serious critique of encroaching fascism" through a rather simple adventure plot.[730] Bergonzi in his seminal *The Early Wells* saw this scientific romance as a failure on the basis of its sociological and "intellectual" contents; it marked the end of Wells's idealized "pureness": Socialism overwrote the artist. Although largely unexplored, in its original historical context this early romance represents the fictional portrayal, and far from being a discussion on abstract power, of the hierarchization system of nineteenth-century imperialism.[731] It is an imperial allegory, and satire, of class and race divisions stretched to the extremes. John Huntington, I argue, completely misses the point in seeing that "as in other racist literature, the racial issue is used as a way of avoiding real

1890s. It is my belief that Stover's career seriously distorted Wells's authorial intentions. As shown throughout, Wells's authoritarianism is a constant feature in Wells's World State, and his fiction dialectically explores his political thought; but Stover exaggerates its scopes with the association and endorsement of totalitarian thinking. On the fallacy of "Stoverism" see Wagar, "H. G. Wells: *The Island of Doctor Moreau, a Critical Text of the 1896 London First Edition, with an Introduction and Appendices*," *Utopian Studies* 8 (1997): 238-40. See also Stover's own account of "Stoverism" in Leon Stover's critical edition of *When the Sleeper Awakes* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2000): "In a review (Sherborne 1996) of the first two volumes in the present series, I myself have been called 'Wells's most perceptive detractor since Chesterton,' given to finding in Wellsism a 'sinister propaganda' to refute with my own doctrinal 'Stoverism.' But detractor I am not and Stoverism, if it must have a name, rather celebrates Wells for the great errorist he is. It judges not him but the critics and their facile humanistic interpretation. I cannot believe he wasted his genius merely to fulfill the extremely boring precepts of today's political correctness" (44). Stover, by education an anthropologist, used to draw his conclusions by associating Wells's early works with evidence from the late Wells; he favoured the habit of selective quotations to incriminate the author. Yet, Stover never studied Wells's actual involvement with totalitarianism. This fact alone is what renders all his works on early Wells a sequence of polemical and misconceived observations largely discredited by modern criticism. To Stover, Wells *was* Moreau and Ostrog; and also the Martians' homicidal fury were metaphorical tentacles of Wells's authoritarian design. Despite Stover's evident critical bias, his studies are still worth reading on the basis of their controversial, and therefore intellectually stimulating character. I will put in the bibliography his critical edition of *Wheen the Sleeper Wakes* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* as examples of Stoverism; his other works are all published by McFarland. The controversial notes apparatus Stover produced remains a valuable resource for any study of Wells the artist and intellectual. They also help us frame the ambivalences of Wells's imperial vision.

[729] In 1910 Wells will revise the novel, also publishing it with a new title: *The Sleeper Awakes*. George Orwell in 1940 interpreted it as premonition of Fascism, see Orwell "Prophecies of Fascism," *Tribune*, 12 July 1940. The article briefly reviewed *The Iron Heel* by Jack London; *The Sleeper Awakes* [Wells's updated title for *When The Sleeper Wakes*] by H. G. Wells, Huxley's *Brave New World* and *The Secret of the League* by Ernest Bramah. Before Orwell, see also Yevgeny Zamyatin's illuminating essay of 1922 on Wells's sociological interest, "H. G. Wells," in *A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin*, edited and translated by Mirra Ginsburg (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 259-90. See the works by Williamson, *H. G. Wells: Critic of Progress* (1973) and Hillegas, *The Future as Nightmare* (1974) for a contextual discussion; for a dedicated study on Wells's novel see Nicoletta Vallorani, *Utopia di Mezzo. Strategie compositive in "When the Sleeper Wakes" di H. G. Wells* (Torino: Editrice Tirrenia Stampatori, 1996); see by Carlo Pagetti, the chapter "'Areoplanes at Arawan': viaggio nella Londra del futuro," in *I marziani alla corte della regina Vittoria* (Pescara: Tracce, 1986), 45-66; see also his introduction to the new Italian translation of Wells's futuristic story, *Londra 2100. Il risveglio del dormiente* (Milano: Mondadori, 2021).

[730] Roberts, *H. G. Wells*, 81-82.

[731] For further discussion on *The Sleeper* as imperial critique see also Gareth Davies-Morris, "Afterword," *The Sleeper Awakes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 289-302.

political analysis."[732] I shall focus on the articulate race discourse in *When the Sleeper Wakes* and Wells's ironical device.

The Sleeper is Graham, "an individual man, and the same time a typical individual"[733] of 1897 interested in politics who falls into a coma and wakes up in a world in the distant year 2100. In the meantime, the world had witnessed a "War" and a Martian invasion (*Sleeper* 16), thus creating a thematic continuity with Wells's imperial fiction *The War of the Worlds* (1898). What Graham finds at his awakening is a London of "Titanic buildings, curving spaciously in either direction" (35) and ruled by a symbolically Europeanized "White Council" which appears to have invested the wealth of the Englishman in the construction of their new order. After moments of confusion in this new world, "The Sleeper" finds out with shocking surprise, but also pleasure, that he is hailed as "Master of the Earth" and "owner of half the world" (70). At this point, the revolution begins: Graham is told that the Council is plotting a conspiracy against him. The protagonist manages to escape with the aid of two dissenters; here, the Sleeper will meet Ostrog, their "Boss," who has gathered revolutionary forces for an attack on the dictatorship of the Council. But the affair is revealed to be more complex than this smooth resolution suggests. In the end, Ostrog will turn out to be no less than another tyrant, with individualistic visions embedded in social-Darwinist thinking. Helen Wotton, Ostrog's niece in the role of the autochthonous *informant* of this utopian-dystopian narrative, will demystify Ostrog's tyrannical intentions to the Sleeper. A civil war for imperial and despotic supremacy begins its course. *When the Sleeper Wakes* reveals that power changes its agents but cannot reform its system of capitalist oppression. The plot proposes no concrete resolution: it rather exposes the flaws in human relations.

Graham himself, however, a point often missed by critics, is no self-righteous character; he is ironically affected by "an archaic prejudice" (168) of race which makes him pathetically hostile to the "Black Police" employed by Ostrog. The Sleeper too is not immune to the tempting call of power of becoming "Master" – which is what Wells the author, as we have long seen, abhors the most in the construction of an ideal society. Critics, in a superficial – and ideological – obsession to find one-to-one correspondences between author and fictional character, have long debated whether Wells identifies as Graham *or* Ostrog. In truth, Wells is neither one nor the other; as in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* the author annihilates both Prendick and Moreau's egotisms. As usual, there are elements of Wells's vision in both figures, but in no definite overlapping process. As Wells observes in "What I believe," the Sleeper wakes up and "finds the world as I hope it never will be, but as I think it might

[732] Huntington, *The Logic of Fantasy*, 146.
[733] Wells, "What I Believe," 220.

conceivably become, if that humanitarian instinct, that broad-minded tendency, is really going to slumber for those two centuries;" this is plainly the grim result of world affairs "if each man, without any reference to the welfare of his fellows, is going to make his sole object in life the securing of a pleasant, comfortable existence for himself."[734]

The colonial scene is transposed meticulously, through ironical commitment, in the fictional world: in chapter 6, "The Hall of Atlas," Graham meets "white men in red and other negroes in black and yellow"; in the scene, "the black in the wasp uniform stood aside like a well-trained servant" opening diligently doors (42). This symbolic strategy, critics will notice, would also characterise Conrad's art. To intensify the Master-Servant symbolism, Wells places on "a pedestal at the remoter end, and more brilliantly lit than any other object," a "gigantic white figure of Atlas, strong and strenuous, the globe upon his bowed shoulders. . .so vast, so patiently and painfully real, so white and simple" (42). European imperialism figures through the stately Atlas of the White Council. The flag of the Council, the Victorian reader is informed later in the narrative, is precisely white: "the flag of the Rule of the World. It will fall" (104). In another room of his apartments, Graham then crucially discovers a series of "peculiar double cylinders inscribed with green lettering on white;" these seem to be the new material form for paper books in the year 2100:

> The lettering on the cylinders puzzled him. At first sight it seemed like Russian. Then he noticed a suggestion of mutilated English about certain of the words.
>
> "*oi* Man huwdbi Kin,"
>
> forced itself on him as "The Man who would be King." "Phonetic spelling," he said. He remembered reading a story with that title, then he recalled the story vividly, one of the best stories in the world. But this thing before him was not a book as he understood it. He puzzled out the titles of two adjacent cylinders "The Heart of Darkness," he had never heard of before nor "The Madonna of the Future" – no doubt if they were indeed stories, they were by post Victorian authors. He puzzled over this peculiar cylinder for some time and replaced it.[735] (49)

The text in "Russian" alphabet subtly alludes, in the specific, to *Heart of Darkness* and Marlow's finding in Africa of a symbolic book stitched "with white cotton thread. . .Its title was, 'An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship,' by a man Tower, Towson – some such a name – Master in his Majesty's Navy;"[736] Marlowe famously mistakes for ciphers some notes which are in fact written in

[734] Ibid.
[735] On this reference to Conrad see Linda Dryden, "A note on *When the Sleeper Wakes* and *Heart of Darkness*," *Notes & Queries* 51 (2004): 171-74; "H. G. Wells and Joseph Conrad: A Literary Friendship," *The Wellsian* 28 (2005): 2-13. See also Laurence Davies, "The Lesson of the Cylinders: Wells, Conrad, James, and Kipling," in *One of Us. Studi inglesi e conradiani offerti a Mario Curreli*, ed. by Fausto Ciompi (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2009), 129-38.
[736] Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," 112.

Russian. In *Heart of Darkness* the author cleverly, through a representative symbolist device, points to the fraud of the European presence in the Dark Continent: "Not a very enthralling book; but at the first glance you could see there a singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way going to work, which made these humble pages, thought out so many years ago, luminous with another than a professional light."[737] There is bitter irony.

Now, the references in *When The Sleeper Wakes* to Kipling and Conrad in particular invite major reflections for our thesis.[738] Conrad, we know, in *Heart of Darkness* would equally pay homage to Wells in his novella with a reference to Wells's imperial plot in *The War of the Worlds* (1898): "I knew once a Scotch sailmaker who was certain, dead sure, there were people in Mars. If you asked him for some idea how they looked and behaved, he would get shy and mutter something about 'walking on all-fours'."[739] The final reference is also a direct allusion to *The Island of Doctor Moreau* published in 1896. Also the African setting in search of the "Quap" in *Tono-Bungay* (1909) is particularly evocative of *Heart of Darkness*. Of course, however, the "Arbiter of the World," who also had a brother in South Africa, did not need to wait for Conrad's sailor yarns to figure out how Empires functioned. As we have seen in 1899 he could choose G. W. Steevens's *In India* and *The Tragedy of Dreyfus* as favourite readings; but certainly Conrad offered Wells first-hand accounts of his experiences which enriched his imaginative visions.[740] Despite differences in political engagement beyond their artistic activity, both Wells and Conrad were, in truth, two of the most attentive artists in English literature with a keen interest in imperial affairs. No small wonder that *The*

[737] Ibid.

[738] James's "Madonna of the Future" was published in 1879. The reference to Conrad, in *The Sleeper,* figured in the book form, but not in the serial. On the chronology of these works see Laurence Davies's "The lesson of the Cylinders" and Dryden's observations in "A Note on *When the Sleeper Wakes* and *Heart of Darkness*." Wells started working on *The Sleeper* presumably in August 1896, after publishing *Moreau*. He finished it on 6 March 1898 and the story was serialised in *The Graphic* from 7 January 1899; Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness" appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* from February to April of the same year. *The Sleeper* was published as a book in May 1899. The polish author began to work his novella in December 1898 and by February 1899 he had finished a draft. Following Dryden's suggestion, Wells and Conrad must have discussed their respective works at some stage of their literary and political debates. The two authors wrote to each others since 1895, after Wells reviewed enthusiastically Conrad's colonial plot in *Almayer's Folly*. In 1898 they became neighbours. Their friendship is accurately recounted in Dryden, *Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells*. Not related to imperialism, but on major thematic affinities on Conrad and Wells see also the insightful analysis by P. A. McCarthy, "*Heart of Darkness* and the Early Novels of H. G. Wells: Evolution, Anarchy, Entropy," *Journal of Modern Literature* 13 (1986): 37–60.

[739] Marlow reflects on his mission to find the mysterious entity of Kurtz: "What were we who had strayed in here? Could we handle that dumb thing, or would it handle us? I felt how big, how confoundedly big, was that thing that couldn't talk, and perhaps was deaf as well. What was in there? I could see a little ivory coming out from there, and I had heard Mr. Kurtz was in there. I had hard enough about it, too – God knows! Yet somehow it didn't bring any image with it – no more than if I had been told an angel or a fiend was in there. I believed it in the same way one of you might believe there are inhabitants in the planet Mars" (92-93).

[740] Wells recollects jocularly in *EA2* his early discussions with Conrad: "He talked to me mostly of adventure and dangers, Hueffer talked criticism and style and words. . .I think he [Conrad] found me Philistine, stupid and intensely English; he was incredulous that I could take social and political issues seriously; he was always trying to penetrate below my foundations, discover my imaginative obsessions and see what I was really up to" (619).

Time Machine and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* seem Conradian colonial plots soaked in science fictional filter – and the methods of cognitive estrangement are the same.[741] These "adventure" and exotic romances were written before Conrad's appearance in Wells's life. In light of their shared social interests, the cross-references between texts are not mere homages or jocular tributes amongst literary friends – it is a reading guide, through intertextual technique. The colonial texture of Wells's story counterposes Kipling's imperial vision, along with the imperial bard's cautionary message, to Conrad's most acute scepticism for the *efficiency* of the European mission in the African Continent. The Sleeper, who slept since 1897 and "never heard of before" of Conrad's subversive novella of the imperial mythology, thus knows only Kipling's imperial narrative of patriotic faith, law and order. Laurence Davies has observed that unlike *Heart of Darkness* and "The Man who would be King," *The Sleeper*'s "setting is not primarily colonial, but we do learn that the supreme Council of twelve men has 'bought and organised China, drilled Asia, crippled Old world empires' (14:173-4). This oligarchy has also taken charge of Africa."[742] Exactly so, and there is more.

The most pivotal colonial element in the narrative is the presence of the "Black Police" governed by "Boss Ostrog." A propaganda speaker, from a "General Intelligence Machine" (anticipating Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) reports, through Kiplingesque language, the recent upheavals which have taken place in Europe. Wells's grim ironical commitment reaches his reader:

> Paris is now pacified. All resistance is over. Galloop! The black police hold every position of importance in the city. They fought with great bravery, signing songs written in praise of their ancestors by the poet Kipling. Once or twice they got out of hand, and tortured and mutilated wounded and captured insurgents, men and women. Moral – don't go rebelling. Haha! Galloop, Galloop! They are lively fellows. Lively brave fellows. Let this be a lesson to the disorderly banderlog of the city. Yah! Banderlog! Filth of the earth! Galloop, Galloop!" The voice ceased. There was a confused murmur of disapproval among the crowd. "Damned niggers." A man began to harangue near them. "Is this the Master's doing, brothers? Is this the Master's doing?" (176)

Wells carefully builds – as he already did in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) – the colonial dialogue with Kipling's didactic rhetoric of power hierarchies from *The Jungle Books* (1894-5). Another news machine activates its report:

[741] On this topic one of the most interesting essays written on *Heart of Darkness* is Isiah Lavender III, "Reframing *Heart of Darkness* as Science Fiction," *Extrapolation* 56 (2015): 15-39.
[742] Davies, "The lesson of the Cylinders," 132-33.

> "Yahaha, Yahah, Yap! Hear a live paper yelp! Live paper. Yaha! Shocking outrage in Paris. Yahahah! The Parisians exasperated by the black police to the pitch of assassination. Dreadful reprisals. Savage times come again. Blood! Blood! Yaha!" The nearer Babble Machine hooted stupendously, "Galloop, Galloop," drowned the end of the sentence, and proceeded in a rather flatter note than before with novel comments on the horrors of disorder. "Law and order must be maintained," said the nearer Babble Machine. (176-77)

Graham, the new "Owner and Master" (85), and "Master of the World" (104) is equally shocked by non-white police forces coming to Europe: "'Black police!' said Graham. 'What is that? You don't mean –'" (176). Throughout the narrative his ethno-centric reluctance for "Negroes" is recurrent; Ostrog, however, justifies it in Kurtz's fashion: "They are useful' said Ostrog. 'They are fine loyal brutes, with no wash of ideas in their heads – such as our rabble has" (164). The Sleeper, in a reflexive moment, observes too: "Of course I see the perfect reasonableness of this. . .But man has conquered nature now for all practical purposes – his political affairs are managed by Bosses with a black police – and life is joyous'" (183). As Robert M. Burroughs enlighteningly reveals, Wells's speculative fiction could probably also allude through "The Black Police" to the "Force Publique" employed by King Leopold in the Congo Free State (1885-1908).[743] In general, however, *The Sleeper* is a picture of rampant European colonialism based on the Master-Slave relationship. Through an imaginative distortion of "this great world state" (167), the authorial voice unmasks the immoral racial gap.

The race discourse is particularly ambiguous in the novel; but again, it is wrong to see Graham, as I said, as Wells's positive and one-sided "clean" figure – he is a sample of a Victorian individual who can fluctuate between humanitarianism and the danger of the "rocks" (Wells, "What I believe") of egoistic conceits, of Kingship and other glorious ambitions of statecraft. The narrator observes: "He was very anxious to take up his empire forthwith" (163); the imagination recurs throughout his futurist sojourn: "For one last moment there gleamed in Graham his dream of empire, of kingship, with Helen by his side. It gleamed and passed" (216). A new Helen. Graham is another Victorian *irresponsible* adventurer with imperial imaginations: "'He who takes the greatest danger, he who bears the heaviest burthen, that man is King,' so the Master was reported to have spoken" (220). And Wells poses the Sleeper to open criticism: "I am the Master. I do not want any negroes brought to London. *It is an archaic prejudice perhaps*, but I have peculiar feelings about Europeans and the subject races. Even about Paris" (168) [italics mine]. The stubborn self-assertion of power puts the Victorian time traveller under critical scrutiny from the reader. Speaking with Ostrog he despotically insists: "'These negroes must not come to London,'" said Graham. 'I am Master and they shall not

[743] Robert M. Burroughs, "'Savage times come again': Morel, Wells, and the African Soldier, c.1885-1920," *English Studies in Africa* 59 (2016): 40-51.

come. . .White men must be mastered by white men. . .I am the Master. *I mean to be the Master*. And I tell you these negroes shall not come" (197) [italics mine]. In the end of the novel, however, Graham also acknowledges in a conversation with Helen:

> These blacks are savages, ruled by force, used as force. And they have been under the rule of the whites two hundred years. Is it not a race quarrel? The race sinned – the race pays.' 'But these labourers, these poor people of London – !' 'Vicarious atonement. To stand wrong is to share the guilt.' (214)

In this conscious moment of imperial guilt we trace the author's acute intrusion and external judgement, through the contradictory figure of Graham, of the paradoxical hierarchization system beneath the new imperial cosmos of the year 2100.

Also Gareth Davies-Morris has commented that *The Sleeper* proves to be an "indictment of imperialism similar to, if much less sophisticated than, his attack on colonialism that made *The War of the Worlds* so disturbing."[744] According to the critic, however, "incorporating this backward jab at colonial exploitation leads to scenes that could appear racist, a problem that Wells left uncorrected when shaping *The Sleeper Awakes*."[745] In Morris's view, the language of fiction risks to "be misread as racism" on the part of the author and incurs misinterpretation of authorial intention; this is not, I believe, a "problem."[746] All reading activity must be conscious of the object under examination; otherwise one encounters the risk of falling into the same interpretative blind-alley that famously led Chinua Achebe in calling "bloody racist" another renowned sceptic of the methods of European rule like Joseph Conrad.[747] This is why *H.G. Wells and the Empire* has always insisted on the necessity of the Author figure. The moment we fail to understand the author, we fail also to understand the

[744] Gareth Davies-Morris, "Afterword," 295.
[745] Morris notes that in the revised 1910 version, *The Sleeper Awakes*, Wells will also remove the above quoted passage. The critic comments: "Wells did himself a disservice by removing this scene, which carries its own racial baggage but is at least a clear instance of the rough justice that the Black Police embody: it is a fitting irony, he was arguing, that the oppressed are now the oppressors (if in reality the Black Police still serve a greater oppressor, the State itself). Wells was no deliberate racist, as shown by his admiration for Zulu culture, for example, and by his early opposition to restrictive race policies in South Africa. Nonetheless, by missing the opportunity to explain or at least tone down a cynical use of racial polarization, he devalues the very democratic ideals that his story purports to defend" ("Afterword," 296). Morris's short afterword to the book does not explore the Black Police in relation with all the pervading ironical symbolism contouring the narrative.
[746] Ibid., 295.
[747]The debate is notorious. Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa," *Massachusetts Review* 18 (1977): 788. A mitigated version appeared with "thoroughgoing racist" in Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," in *Hopes and Impediments* (New York: Doubleday, 1988) 11. For critical treatment see Cedric Watts, *Conrad's Heart of Darkness. A Critical and Contextual Discussion* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012). The debate on Conrad is vast. To consider the absence of "racism" in the Polish author, see the 1895 introduction of *Almayer's Folly*; alone it suffices to critically understand Conrad's worldview. See also Conrad's letter reprinted in E. D. Morel activist book, *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1904), 351.

strategic complexities through which language functions in the fictional text. *The Sleeper*, through its carefully constructed irony, still manages to bitterly expose, in fact, the prejudiced rhetoric and practice of late-Victorian imperialism through a clever intertextuality with Conrad and Kipling. It is a grim irony, typical of the early Wells, which is perhaps not as effective as *The War of the Worlds* or *The Island of Doctor Moreau*; still, as literary scholars, we must recognize it in the text as an intriguing technique with authorial responsibility. It is advisable that a seminal text of the anti-utopian tradition such as *The Sleeper* may exit from its peripheric position and also enter the canon of nineteenth-century fiction on empire. *The Island of Doctor Moreau* in particular, extensively discussed in the final section, will reveal Wells's mastery in creating intertextual worlds oriented towards an exposure of racial issues.

Critics of Wells, as we have seen throughout the previous chapters, have generally overlooked Wells's knowledge of Empire and foreign affairs at the *fin-de-siècle*. Politics, of course, has always been Wells's passion. In his autobiography Wells recounts that in his student days (1884-1887) he formed a Debating Society with an active group including his close friends A. T. Simmons, Elizabeth Healey and A. M. Davies. He comments on the meetings: "we were supposed to avoid religion and politics; the rest of the universe was at our mercy. I objected to this taboo of religion and politics. I maintained that these were primary matters, best beaten out in the primary stage of life" (*EA* 1: 235). In terms of war knowledge, Wells's "untravelled political mind was confined," prior to the Boer War, "within the limits of the Empire," with "no idea that the guns went off – except when pointing right away from civilization, in Afghanistan or Zululand or against remote inadequate batteries at Alexandria;" all the conflicts "had an air of being in the order of things. . .They made a background" (*EA* 1: 186). But Wells read, a lot. A brief lively sketch of his imperial formation can help ascertain his social vision.

As he entertainingly recounts in his autobiography, his early ideas as a boy around the year 1874 "of political and international relations were moulded very greatly by the big figures of John Bull and Uncle Sam, the French, the Austrian, and the German and Russian emperors, the Russian bear, the British Lion and the Bengal Tiger" (*EA* 1: 78). Empires and Colonies colour his boyhood memories. Also, Wells's first erotic encounter with a woman came to him in his imperial fantasies: "across the political scene also marched tall and lovely feminine figures, Britannia, Erin, Columbia, La France, bare armed, bare necked, showing beautiful bare bosoms, revealing shining thighs, wearing garments that were a revelation in an age of flounces and crinolines;" his first desire for womenkind was Britannia herself (!) and "these heroic divinities" (*EA* 78-9). Then, in the years 1878-1879, after reading travel writings of Stanley and Livingston, and adventure fiction of all sorts:

> It was made a matter of general congratulation about me that I was English. The flavour of J. R. Green's recently published (1874) History of the English People had drifted to me either directly or at second-hand, and my mind had leapt all too readily to the idea that I was a blond and blue-eyed Nordic, quite the best make of human being known. England was consciously Teutonic in those days, the monarchy and Thomas Carlyle were strong influences in that direction; we talked of our 'Keltic fringe' and ignored our Keltic infiltration. . .We English, by sheer native superiority, practically without trying, had possessed ourselves of an Empire on which the sun never set, and through the error and infirmities of other races were being forced slowly but steadily – and quite modestly – towards world dominion. (*EA* 1: 99)

One should note that this passage, wittily written, is nothing but a re-iteration of the imperial education we find in Wells's fictional characters, as in *Kipps* (1905), *The History of Mr Polly* (1910) and *The New Machiavelli* (1911). John Richard Green's historiographic work in particular is a text Wells already ridiculed as early as in *A Modern Utopia* (1905) and *The New Machiavelli* (1911), and again in *Boon* (1915).[748] Wells then continues the depiction of his early imperial imaginations, noting that "in those days I had ideas about Aryans extraordinarily like Mr. Hitler's. The more I hear of him the more I am convinced that his mind is almost the twin of my thirteen year old mind in 1879; but heard through a megaphone and – implemented" (*EA* 1: 100). His child activity was made of games and improvisations in role of conqueror very much like Remington's boyhood (*EA* 1: 100-101) (see Chapter 3.2.2.). In this funny recollection, Wells finally calls again Hitler into his portrait: "In fact Adolf Hitler is nothing more than one of my thirteen year old reveries come real. A whole generation of Germans has failed to grow up" (*EA* 1: 102). As Wells puts it, his "mind was full of international conflicts, alliances, battleships and guns" (102), although ignorant of the financial aspect of the whole imperial machine.[749] And so on. Despite the jocular exposition, what matters is that this phase ended, it seems, somewhere before the 1880s: "So much for the Hitlerite stage of my development, when I was a sentimentalist, a moralist, a patriot, a racist, a great general in dreamland. . .this pasty-faced little English Nazi escaped his manifest destiny of mean and hopeless employment, and got to that broader view of life and those opportunities that have at last made this autobiography possible" (*EA* 1: 107). This is Wells's account from the future, year 1934.

[748] For additional discussion on this history text see Bryan Ward-Perkins "Why Did the Anglo-Saxons Not Become More British?" *The English Historical Review* 115 (2000): 513-33. Wells's ethnological judgement was fairly accurate. A contemporary reviewer praised the history: "Its learning, its style, its imagination, and above all, its sound common-sense, are most remarkable. Readers of this Review will readily acquit its criticism of any tendency towards indiscriminate laudation, and may therefore be less disposed to scepticism if the critic for once frankly begins by asserting that Mr. Green cannot be ranked among contemporary English historians second to anyone but Macaulay himself." (*The North American Review* 121 (1875): 216.)

[749] Wells also created a popular game: *Little Wars* (1913). It was a floor game for "boys and girls." He suggested: more toy warfare, less bloodshed.

It is no coincidence that in the heyday of competitive imperialisms of the 1890s, the age of Cecil Rhodes's Anglo-Saxonism, Henry Morton Stanley's exploits, and the first deployment of Maxim guns in South Africa of 1893, Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898) portrays Martians bringing havoc to London in the form of a return of the repressed. As critics have often noted, the book appeared in the context of popular invasion fiction, in a general climate of imperial anxieties and fears, as Stephen Arata puts it, of "reverse colonization."[750] All Empires come to an end, and the close of the century intensified feeling of decadence along with a renewed frenzy for imperial rule. The nature of Victorian travel writings are crucial to understand Wells's early production. These best-selling travelogues tended increasingly towards depictions of violence on the colonial subject; as the beautiful study by Laura E. Franey has reconstructed, moreover, "discourse of bodily mutilation and pulverization . . .began to be fully realized in the early 1890s."[751] Not only in published travel writings, but the British Press of the last decade of the century would expose episodes of colonial violence in Africa; David Nicoll, for example, published his pamphlet against the methods of the Victorian explorer Stanley under the evocative and iconic title *Stanley's Exploits, or Civilising Africa* (1890). Well before *Heart of Darkness* (1899) the public discourse of the day either presented British exploration in African continent either as a triumph of civilization or as a capitalistic sham.

More generally overlooked by criticism in the context of Wells's early fiction, the 1890s were also *the* decade of the "mutiny novel" evoking the 1857 Indian Rebellion.[752] In general, fantasias of imperial rule to suppress the fear of another colonial Great Mutiny haunted the literary world of late Victorian England.[753] As Gautam Chakravarty has noted, in the 1890s "the rebellion now turns into a site of heroic imperial adventure, and an occasion for conspicuous demonstrations of racial superiority," in which the "native" Indian is dehumanized and degraded to beastly imageries.[754] Therefore, the "early critique of colonialism in *The War of the Worlds*," as Sherryl Vint perceptively comments, "involved a reversal not only in the sense that England was the invaded instead of colonising nation, but further in suggesting that the Martians did not recognise the native British as

[750] See especially the pioneering work by Stephen Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," *Victorian Studies* 33 (1990): 621-45; and *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Identity and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Following Arata, *The War of the Worlds* is more of a reverse colonization narrative than an invasion scare novel (*Fictions of Loss*, 110-11).
[751] Laura E. Franey, *Victorian Travel Writing and Imperial Violence: British Writing on Africa, 1855-1902* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 46.
[752] John Peck, *War and Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 87. Peck specifies: "the 1890s were the decade of the Indian Mutiny novel, the topic reflecting the period's new enthusiasm for militarism and tales of colonial adventures," 87.
[753] See Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness* and especially Gautam Chakravarty (2005).
[754] Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination*, 6. See also Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness* and the figure of the Indian prince Nana Sahib, famously demonised and labelled by the British as "The Tiger of Cawnpore."

human/sentient subjects."[755] A vehement disdain for self-sufficient polities and romantic patriotism is a constant of the Wellsian thought. *The War of the Worlds* exposes indeed, as Suvin observed, the anxiety of being "on the receiving end", but the story is also meant to purge British imperial ego and invite humanitarian sympathy. All Well[756]s's scientific romances elaborate a fundamental scepticism on self-centred Anglo-Saxonism. To Wells, as the author expressed his views in "What I believe" (1899), moral control could stop the process of egotism, the "vicious tendencies" controlling mankind's progress. The author's responsibility, as usual in Wells's career, always emerges within the narrative frame.

The War of the Worlds famously evokes the extermination of Tasmanians caused by Europeans:

> And before we judge of them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its own inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit? (*WOW* 9)

Tasmania was a recurrent topic of the age and after the extinction of "The Last of the Tasmanians" around 1869, it soon became the symbol of race extermination.[757] Wells in the 1890s vigorously reacted to Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* (1894). Kidd, whom Wells read and criticised in "Human Evolution, An Artificial Process," observed in his study that "the slow extinction of the inferior" that is "taking place to-day beneath our eyes in different parts of the world" is part of the inevitable process of a higher, uncheckable law of social evolution.[758] Kidd concluded in acknowledging the "powerlessness of man to escape from one of the fundamental conditions under which his evolution in society is proceeding."[759] Extermination was Law beyond the intellectual and moral powers of the British, no matter the "humanitarian" effort;[760] in his discussion, Kidd mentions various maps of the racial conflict under British rule, including the Australian aboriginals, the Maoris in New Zealand, the people of South Africa, the Pacific Scene, and Tasmania. Critics have largely

[755] Sherryl Vint, *Animal Alterity. Science Fiction and the Question of the Animal* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 114.
[756] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 216.
[757] On the extermination discourse in Victorian culture see especially Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings.* I have treated the Tasmanian question in Chapter 4.
[758] Benjamin Kidd, *Social Evolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1894), 52; Wells, "Human Evolution, An Artificial Process," in *Early Writings,* 211-19.
[759] Kidd, *Social Evolution*, 48.
[760] Ibid., 46.

overlooked Kidd's social-Darwinist work, but Kidd himself, in *Social Evolution* (1894), immensely contributed to Wells's idea of reverse colonization in the *The War of the Worlds*. Intriguingly, Benjam Kidd anticipated in effect the very idea of Wells's romance: "If we could conceive a visitor from another planet coming amongst us, and being set down in the midst of our Western civilisation at the present day. . ."[761]

In his 1898 imperial romance, then, Wells settles the dispute. The narrator mirrors Wells's (intellectual) extra-literary activity as journalist for *The Fortnightly Review*.[762] The Wells-like narrator of *The War of the Worlds* informs the reader that before the invasion of England: "For my own part, I was much occupied in learning to ride the bicycle, and busy upon a series of papers discussing the probable developments of moral ideas as civilization progressed" (*WOW* 12); he is referring to "Morals and Civilisation" (see Chapter 2.1). And Wells the author, thinking imperially, ironically remarks: "At most, terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise" (*WOW* 7). The narrator comments upon the fact that "with infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same." H. G. Wells, disciple of Huxley's science, in all his engaged personality puts the map of the Empire under scientific observation.[763] Imperial images emerge constantly in Wells's early texts. Even Griffin in the *Invisible Man*, after all, is a study into the anatomy of imperial power. The "Invisible Man" purports to establish, almost like Conrad's Kurtz, a Reign of Terror in England: "There is nothing for it, but to start the Terror. This announces the first day of Terror. Port Burdock is no longer under the Queen, tell your Colonel of Police, and the rest of

[761] Ibid., 82.

[762] Wells's evolutionary thinking in the 1890s is a well-known field. Critics have, however, generally downplayed Wells's interest in purely racial issues. On Wells's prolific activity as journalist reflecting on evolution see Philmus and Hughes, *Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction* and McLean, *The Early H. G. Wells*. The following section will reveal Wells's prolific dialogue between fiction and journalism, in particular in relation to "Human Evolution. An Artificial Process."

[763] Tasmania, in fact, is also explicitly evoked in the prolegomena to Huxley's lecture *Evolution and Ethics* (1894). Wells knew this text presumably by heart. A garden metaphor is efficiently used by Huxley to explain the balance between the forces of retrogression and the artificial condition which is civilization: "The process of colonization presents analogies to the formation of a garden which are highly instructive. Suppose a shipload of English colonists sent to form a settlement, in such a country as Tasmania was in the middle of the last century" (Huxley, "Prolegomena [1894]" 16). A prototype for Moreau, new Law-giver and "gardener" of the colony, is then outlined: "Let us now imagine that *some administrative authority, as far superior in power and intelligence to men, as men are to their cattle, is set over the colony,* charged to deal with its human elements in such a manner as to assure the victory of the settlement over the antagonistic influences of the state of nature in which it is set down. . .Laws, sanctioned by the combined force of the colony, would restrain the self-assertion of each man within the limits required for the maintenance of peace (17-18; emphasis added). Apparently, in this "true garden of Eden (19)," we already have the main themes of Wells's major scientific romances, albeit undeveloped. This passage is, arguably, by far the most relevant scientific influence on the making of *Moreau*; the Tasmanian colony and the superior entities "to men, as men are to their cattle," echo as well the idea for the development of *The War of the Worlds*. At the same time, it is the pivotal contact point between the scientific and colonial discourses informing the plot of Moreau's jungle/garden. The island is not much a metaphorical Tasmania *per se* – it is a picture of the world itself in times of aggressive imperialism.

them; it is under me – the Terror!" (*Invisible Man* 134).[764] We will have to wait for *Meanwhile* (1927) to find a well-developed totalitarian Terror in Europe. Griffin envisions no less than an imperial rule on monarchic grounds: "The Epoch of the Invisible Man;" his political delirium already possesses him as "Invisible Man the First." There is a discernible pattern in these early romances: the moment Wells's individuals access supreme and unfair power, and precisely of an imperial type, the fall usually begins its course through means of political, authorial irony.

To conclude our exploration on H. G. Wells, in the following final section, focusing on *Moreau* as case study, I therefore intend to bring concrete historical evidence to my thesis which aims to bridge the gap between an "early" (supposedly less ideological) and "late" (supposedly more ideological) Wells. John Batchelor implied, with many other scholars before and after him, and passing through Ford Madox Ford, that "the early works, to which *he devoted the whole of his talent without chaining to a particular cause,* yield the highest kind of literary and imaginative pleasure" [italics mine].[765] Scholarship on Wells may desirably discard the notion that Wells's early fiction is not chained to a particular cause.[766] The political cause is there since his major works of Wells's "pure literary imagination": it is a critical focus on the controversial power politics of the imperial system. *Moreau*, it will hopefully be evident, is another intellectual elaboration on such European *irresponsible aristocracy* ("What I believe" 1899, 220). To understand the intellectual breadth of this text, as engaged art, the following discussion then explores the fundamental connection between R. L. Stevenson and H. G. Wells, with a particular focus on their shared interest in the ethical implications of expansionism at the close of the nineteenth century. Behind the origins of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), Wells surprisingly appears to have extensively borrowed from and reworked Stevenson's Pacific tale *The Ebb-Tide* (1893-94). On these grounds, it is possible to trace an implied conversation between Wells and Stevenson, which takes its cue from Robert M. Philmus's pioneering works on the "Strange Case of Moreau." Moreau, as Philmus among other critics have noted over the past decades, is in fact rich with intertextual connections, which complicate its meaning and make it highly ambivalent. However, *The Ebb-Tide*, a major and leading source text seemingly as relevant as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, has been largely and strangely neglected by contemporary criticism. Thus bringing more evidence to the case, I also connect Wells's and Stevenson's

[764] See also Linda Dryden, *Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells* for a discussion on other similarities between these two works; see also the beautiful and concise study on Wells by Carlo Pagetti, *I marziani alla corte della regina Vittoria*: *The Invisible Man, War of the Worlds, When the Sleeper Wakes di H. G. Wells* (Pescara: Tracce, 1986).
[765] Batchelor, *H. G. Wells*, 31.
[766] Wells in *The Common Sense of War and Peace* (1940), chapter I "Grown Men do not need Leaders," stated that "for the greater part of my life I have given most of my working time to the problem of the human future, studying the possibility of a world-wide reorganisation of human society that might avert the menace of defeat and extinction that hangs over our species;" the chronology of this "leading preoccupation," the author claims, goes back to the days "since I published The Time Machine" (1).

ideological awareness, while shedding more light on the socio-political horizons of Wells's early science fiction.

5.1. The Strange Making of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*[767]

It is a curious fact that two prominent *fin-de-siècle* figures like R. L. Stevenson and H. G. Wells have been often compared in relation to their shared preoccupations within evolutionary thinking – especially regarding the connections between *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) and the *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) – but are seldom discussed on the grounds of the analogies between Wells's 1896 *Moreau* and Stevenson's South Sea tale *The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and Quartette* (1893-94).[768] Most immediately, the two books show divergencies especially at the level of literary form. The 1890s novella *The Ebb-Tide*, altogether witnessing Stevenson's final move to realism, is a Pacific tale focusing on the miserable activities of three English-speaking beachcombers; the "Trio" then meets Attwater, a controversial religious Englishman establishing – illegally and through slave labour – a colony of South Sea islanders in the midst of nowhere in order to run his private fortune in the pearl trade. On the other hand, Wells's scientific romance is most obviously a post-Darwinian re-working the *Frankenstein* myth, now presenting the European scientist egoistically committed in the attempt of carving human life out of animals on a Pacific isle – thus creating his own colony.[769] It is the narrator Edward Prendick, a shipwrecked Englishman, who informs the reader about the presence of the "Beast People" and the grim mysteries of Moreau's utopian Empire. Nicoletta Vallorani has crucially identified the Beast Folk as Foucaultian docile bodies;[770] and *Moreau* is in truth a narrative which would suggest a post-colonial discourse *ante litteram*, already presenting in-groups and out-

[767] A slightly different version of this section has first appeared in *Science Fiction Studies* as Tiziano De Marino, "The Ethics of Empire: H.G. Wells Re-Writing R.L. Stevenson," 48.2 (July 2021): 243-62.

[768] On Stevenson's influence on Wells, and the background of *Moreau*, Robert M. Philmus's variorum edition remains the reference text, *The Island of Doctor Moreau: A Variorum Text*, ed. Philmus (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1993). Further references from Philmus's edition are abbreviated in the text as *Variorum*. For a comprehensive and contextual analysis of *Moreau* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, see Linda Dryden, *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). See Stephen Derry for a concise summary of certain major echoes between *Moreau* and *The Ebb-Tide* in "*The Island of Doctor Moreau* and Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide*," *Notes and Queries* 43 (1996): 437. For a study on Wells's previous drafts, see also Bernard Loing, *H. G. Wells à L'Œuvre: les débuts d'un écrivain (1894-1900)* (Paris: Didier Edition, 1984), 141-258.

[769] On Frankenstein and Moreau see, for example, Steven Lehman's analysis in "The Motherless Child in Science Fiction: *Frankenstein* and *Moreau*," *Science Fiction Studies* 19 (1992): 49-58. A dated yet necessary study on *Moreau* is certainly Roger Bowen, and his focus on the text's mythopoeic quality in "Science, Myth, and Fiction in H. G. Wells's *Island of Dr. Moreau*." *Studies in the Novel* 8 (1976): 318-35. Particularly relevant on the intertextual nature of Wells's romance is also Roger Bozzetto who, including Stevenson, identifies references to More, Shakespeare, Swift, Defoe, Kipling and several others (Bozzetto, "Moreau's Tragi-Farcical Island," *Science Fiction Studies* 20 (1993): 34-44).

[770] Vallorani "Creature. Faust e la scienza da Moreau a von Sasser," *Formula e Metafora: Figure di scienziati nelle letterature e culture contemporanee*, ed. by Marco Castellari (Milano: Ledizioni, 2014), 57-69.

groups categorizations between European characters and non-white Beast People. In fact, Wells's science fiction offers the guest-reader a scene of European "first contact" with an Other, "alien" category – which is undoubtedly "the genre's primal scene."[771] Following John Rieder's study of the ideological and historical development of sf outlined in *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008), I here stress the potential of Wells's early "scientific romance" in subverting imperial policy and discourse – albeit from a white dominant background. If, according to Rieder and other scholars, colonialism is "a significant historical context for early science fiction," historicizing the genre in its cultural and intertextual milieu becomes a highly required praxis.[772] Most urgently however, as he also implies, "it is not a matter of asking whether but of determining precisely how and to what extent the stories engage colonialism," with a critical priority to "decipher the fiction's often distorted and topsy-turvy references to colonialism" and its spatial-temporal coordinates.[773] While Rieder mainly focuses on the scientific, racial discourse and ideology which informs *Moreau*, I shed light on the specific textual (pre/recent-) history behind the writing of Wells's romance, and the fruitful dialogue between literary realism and speculative fiction.

Specifically, *Moreau* is intentionally indebted to Stevenson's grim depiction of the Pacific scene and alludes extensively to characters, events and locations from *The Ebb-Tide*. But in the intertextual act of re-writing the novella across genres, Wells also aims to correct one specific moral flaw in it – *The Ebb-Tide* indeed explores the delusions of human egotism and colonial power, yet the major villain Attwater survives unabashed in his European, almost divine authority. Accordingly, presumably unsatisfied with the lack of a convincing authorial sanction, through the characterization and *failure* of Doctor Moreau we may trace a satirical desire – in an eighteenth-century vein dear to Wells – to revise this precedent narrative and borrow its otherwise subversive potential; for the plot of *The Ebb-Tide*, in truth, skilfully diverges from the reassuring features of exotic adventure fiction that Wells despised. In the 1890s Wells was a staunch critic of the patriotic "replicas of the romance" in which "the Englishman never gets hurt, never gets humiliated."[774] Discounting the "triumph" of Attwater, he certainly acknowledged, on the contrary, the governing sceptical note in Stevenson's late Samoan fiction and decided to sharpen the moral question further under his science-fictional framework. It is the dense intertextual dialogue with the colonial dynamics in *The Ebb-Tide* that primarily allows Wells to introduce and sustain an efficient satire of colonialism as subplot within

[771] Thomas M. Disch., *The Dreams Our Stuff is Made Of: How Science Fiction Conquered the World* (New York: The Free Press, 1998). 185.
[772] Rieder, *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*, 2.
[773] Ibid., 3.
[774] Wells, "More Haggard," [1896] in *H. G. Wells's Literary Criticism*, ed. Patrick Parrinder and Robert Philmus (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980), 98.

the evolutionary fable *Moreau*. By completely dismantling the heroic features of the imperial romance genre, and rather than merely mirroring imperial ideology, *Moreau*'s semantic ambiguity puts into question the nineteenth-century black/white binarism in a discourse which intersects with science, theology and empire.

There are indeed well-defined power relations on Wells's island, but insofar as the recipients of Moreau's violence are animals, critics have often overlooked, if not straightforwardly discarded, extended allusions to specific colonial practices. Tim Youngs, for example, argues that "as the story progresses" Wells shifts his interest "to the state of humanity as a whole, losing sight of the possibilities for a subversive reading of colonialism."[775] On a thematic level, as Wells scholars have generally pointed out, *Moreau* would tend more towards a general pessimistic commentary on the triumphs of civilization and human's place in nature, following the grim atmospheres already characterizing *The Time Machine* (1895). Contrarily, *The Ebb-Tide* has been rightly deemed a realist – and piercing – comment on the shams of imperial greed. In its concise form yet of unsettling explicitness, *The Ebb-Tide* proved to be Stevenson's final word in the Pacific, and about the Pacific; of course, it was neither "*the* big book" (*The Letters* 6: 401) he originally wanted to craft out of his experience, nor the work of fiction people at home expected.[776] Henry James, Edmund Gosse, his close friend Sidney Colvin, and not least Stevenson's wife, all manifested various degrees of skepticism in regard to Stevenson's latest work and political activism in the Samoa Islands against the geopolitical machinations of the three Powers of Germany, Great Britain and the United States. Even outside his personal circle, as Roslyn Jolly has meticulously documented in *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific* (2009), reception in Europe did not receive Stevenson's new exotic settings well. As the saying goes, far from the eyes, far from the heart: the public simply did not want to lose their beloved novelist. Oscar Wilde's words are representative: "I see that romantic surroundings are the worst surroundings possible for a romantic writer. In Gower Street Stevenson could have written a new *Trois Mousquetaires*. In Samoa he wrote letters to *The Times* about Germans."[777] Yet, the result of his efforts was some great, but rather underrated book of realist fiction which would become the Urtext of British colonial narratives at the turn of the century.[778]

[775] Tim Youngs, *Beastly Journeys: Travel and Transformation at the Fin de Siècle* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2013), 122.
[776] All references as *Letters* are from R. L. Stevenson, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*. 8 vols, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
[777] Oscar Wilde, *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Hart-Davis, 1962), 520.
[778] For the imperial genealogy of *The Ebb-Tide* cfr. Richard Ambrosini, *R. L. Stevenson: la poetica del romanzo* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2001), 331-408; and Roslyn Jolly, "*The Ebb-Tid*e and *The Coral Island*," *Scottish Studies Review* 7 (2006): 79-91.

Patrick Brantlinger in *Rule of Darkness* (1988) was, for example, among the first to compare Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide* with Conrad's achievements. However, no particular mention was made of the blood kinship *Moreau* shares with Stevenson and Conrad's colonial fictions. Strange indeed, since Wells was indisputably the most active and boisterous commentator of Empires of the past century; he met with world figures like the two Roosevelts, Stalin, Lenin, and he was a close acquaintance of Sir Winston Churchill, not to mention that in the late nineteenth century he was among Conrad's dearest friends.[779] But this general blindness towards Wells's concerns about Empire in his fiction, although unfair, should not be surprising. Wells's renown as the father of science fiction has, albeit paradoxically, by and large overshadowed the ethical preoccupations and activism of his works. In particular, his early scientific romances, with the safe exclusion of *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), are rarely deemed as dedicated and consistent critiques of European imperialism. In Gareth Davies-Morris's fitting words, these two books were "intended to jangle the nerves of his contemporaries," while dismantling the received tenets of imperialism.[780] Tellingly, Paul A. Cantor and Peter Hufnagel have recently read in detail *The Time Machine* as "a parable of the doom of empire" – a recurrent Wellsian topic Patrick Parrinder also explored in *Shadows of the Future* (see especially the chapter "The Fall of Empires," 65-79).[781] Yet, the line of thought which tends to prioritize the established reading of *The War of the Worlds* as imperial allegory over *Moreau* has monopolized criticism for decades; the same hermeneutic scheme also applies for Patricia Kerslake's study *Science Fiction and Empire* (2007). As I will argue, however, *Moreau* proves to be so strictly – and perhaps surprisingly – related to *The Ebb-Tide*'s realism and imperial themes. Wells's scientific romance does certainly display, as Chris Danta observes, "the sense of fear the human experiences on discovering its biological proximity to the ape," but there is more to this, especially when the connections with Stevenson's Samoan fiction are fully unearthed.[782] Only recently Genie Babb and Linda Dryden have dedicated some larger discussion on the analogies between *Moreau* and *The Ebb-Tide.* Dryden, for example, acutely identifies the fact that in terms of "*Moreau*'s location and focus on tyranny and corruption, it is *The Ebb-Tide* that provides Wells with his inspiration."[783] Certainly true – especially when Stevenson's influence is put into close relation

[779] On the Wells-Conrad friendship see Dryden, *Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells*; insightful is also her treatment of Wells's reception and criticism of Stevenson (39-68).
[780] Davies-Morris, "The Alien Eye: Imperialism and Otherness in H. G. Wells's *The First Men in the Moon*," in *Science Fiction and the Two Cultures: Essays on Bridging the Gap Between the Sciences and the Humanities*, ed. Gary Westfahl and George Slusser (Jefferson: McFarland, 2009), 174.
[781] Cantor and Hufnagel, "The Empire of the Future: Imperialism and Modernism in H. G. Wells," *Studies in the Novel* 38 (2006): 43.
[782] Chris Danta, *Animal Fables after Darwin: Literature, Speciesism, and Metaphor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 113.
[783] Dryden, "Monomaniacs, Evolutionary Science and the Influence of Stevenson in Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau*," in *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Great Affair: Movement, Memory and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Hill (New York: Routledge, 2017), 168; Genie Babb, "Isolation and Variation on Doctor Moreau's Oceanic Island," in *Oceania and*

with Thomas H. Huxley's ethical teachings. Without this dialogue, the colonial subtext in *Moreau* inevitably becomes opaque. Before committing to a close reading of the two texts, a contextual analysis of Stevenson's latest activities and Wells's moral ideas are thus the object of enquiry in the next sections. Their shared scepticism for unrestrained imperial action beyond the British Isles, combined with their insistence on the need for moral rules, reveal a striking affinity in the scope of their fiction and, more generally, of their role as writers.[784]

In the last two decades critics have devoted increasing attention to Stevenson's role in the Pacific and its critical stance towards what proved to be *de facto*, in Roslyn Jolly's phrasing, a "shadow empire created by traders and missionaries operating outside imperial boundaries."[785] Corruption, imperial arrogance and subterfuge are the three main ingredients of Stevenson's Pacific fiction at the close of the century. Most remarkably, it is now well acknowledged that "The Beach of Falesá" (1892) and the later novella *The Ebb-Tide*, first serialized between 1893 and 1894, marked Stevenson's versatility in reworking the experience of imperialism through works of fiction. *The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and Quartette* is an unconventional sea romance. The plot follows, through an alert and often ironic third-person narrator, the miserable life of a group of three English-speaking people in Papeete, Tahiti; these characters are unemployed "beachcombers" living from day to day. The young Robert Herrick, an admirer of Virgil, is more of the romantic type; born into a well-off family, he ends up his days far from the embrace of success or the joys of an exotic life. The disgraced mariner John Davis, with (he says) a family in England, is a drunkard, a racist and with dubious moral standards; while Huish, a cockney clerk, figures as the most Hyde-like figure of the party. One day, tired of their monotonous and harsh existence, they accept to deliver to Sydney a cargo of champagne aboard the ship *Farallone*. Although they acknowledge that the previous owners have died of smallpox, the bizarre adventurers accept the job and hire a crew of Kanakas, whom the Captain badly mistreats. But Davis has a different plan in mind, proposing instead to steal the ship and whole cargo for better incomes. They depart, and Davis and Huish, after irresponsibly drinking the cargo itself, realize that the rest of the bottles are in fact filled with water. Fraud detected, and in despair, they finally land on a mysterious island. It is at this turning point that the narrative introduces the fourth figure of Attwater. A well-mannered and masculine British gentleman in all appearance, Attwater is in truth a tyrant who, seemingly undisturbed by national authorities, has forged his own private empire

the Victorian Imagination: Where All Things Are Possible, ed. Richard D. Fulton and Peter H. Hoffenberg (London: Routledge, 2016), 121-34.

[784] Citations from *Moreau* and *The Ebb-Tide* are, respectively, from *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (London: Penguin, 2005) and *The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and Quartette*, in *South Sea Tales* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008, 123-252). Cited hereafter in the text as *IM* and *ET*.

[785] Jolly, "Piracy, Slavery, and the Imagination of Empire in Stevenson's Pacific Fiction," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 35 (2007): 157.

of pearls. Supported by a certain Dr Symonds, absent from the scene, his regime is despotic and bloody; the exploitation of South Seas workers is methodically employed to sustain his mission on the "invisible" island. After a series of tensions and considerations by the "Trio" whether to escape or steal and usurp Attwater's treasures, the story ends without a definite conclusion or clear-cut moral; Huish is brutally killed in the attempt of murdering Attwater, Davis ends by worshipping the tyrant's rule, and the faith of Herrick remains uncertain. Will he leave or join Attwater's Empire and new Religion? Pivotally, in this strange scenario a Union Jack governs the landscape and grimly floats on a staff, close to a symbolically white sculpture of a woman reigning over the invisible island. It is a short narrative indeed, but extremely powerful and with many implications and meanings to uncover. *The Ebb-Tide* is Stevenson's late experiment in duality, which also re-enacts, to a certain extent, the mystery-solving approach characteristic of his famous Case.

In other Pacific short stories included in Stevenson's collection *Island Nights' Entertainments* (1893), like "The Bottle Imp" and "The Isle of Voices," the affairs of white characters are critically depicted. All these texts together, along with his non-fictional writings of the early 1890s – in particular his work on the Samoan political agitations in *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa* (1892) – constitute Stevenson's corpus over issues regarding Empire, international politics and social questions. Lloyd Osbourne, his stepson and co-author in the first part of *The Ebb-Tide*, would later recall how Stevenson "had been touched by that most consuming of all ambitions – statecraft."[786] Although dwelling in Vailima esteemed by Samoans in a "life of feudal splendor," with servants and European commodities of a white subject abroad, Stevenson vehemently voiced his humanitarian concerns for what appeared to be a violent, and rapacious usurpation of foreign lands. Osbourne stresses the fact that Stevenson's criticism of colonial injustices was so acute that "in vain" government officials "attempted to deport him from the island, to close his mouth by regulation, to post spies about his house and involve him in the illicit importation of arms and fixed ammunition."[787] Writing to Colvin, Stevenson could state straightforwardly: "It means as you will see that I have at one blow quarrelled with *all* the officials of Samoa, the Foreign Office, and I suppose her Majesty the Golden with milk and honey blest" (*The Letters* 8: 279). In the late nineteenth century, Stevenson "the novelist" was about to turn into what Wells would become in the opening century: a socio-political voice. In a simultaneous effort through his works of fiction and non-fiction, Stevenson was thus offering to "the average man at home," whom he looked upon as still "sunk over the ears in

[786] Lloyd Osbourne, *An Intimate Portrait of R.L.S: By his Stepson* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), 129.
[787] Osbourne, "Mr. Stevenson's Home Life at Vailima", in *Memories of Vailima*. Ed Lloyd Osbourne and Isobel Strong (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 155.

Roman civilisation" (*The Letters* 7: 187), not a taste of exoticism, but rather a truth about the exotic world. And through the act of writing the Scottish author attempted to elicit change.

After all, William R. Nicoll correctly remembered Stevenson in 1902 as a genuine teacher of conduct, whose "ruling interest was in ethical problems."[788] If the ethical dualism of *Jekyll and Hyde* is Stevenson's most direct treatment of moral concerns, the *Ebb-Tide* – although less renown – certainly represents the harshest observation on the subject. Roland Alexander suggestively remarks that through Attwater "Stevenson is able to explore the complexities of a shameful imperialism, complexities that reflect his own ambivalence and that of his readers."[789] Hidden behind the veil of fiction, Stevenson still exposes the atavistic and primordially egotist nature inhabiting imperial interests. In 1893, in an interview published on the *Edinburgh Evening News* he confesses: "there is every sort of crime in it, only it is a moral story, because everything which the villains attempt fails."[790] But the major villain, in fact, is not even explicitly condemned by the author; the ambiguous Attwater, deified Lord on *his* Pacific island, is at times admired and at times despised in the narrative, seemingly emerging as the undefeated figure within this strange "moral story." Chesterton memorably pointed out Stevenson's ambivalent representation of his tyrant as a major flaw: "I do not object to the author creating such a loathsome person as Mr Attwater; but I do rather object to his creating him and not loathing him."[791] Nor, however, does *The Ebb-Tide*'s plot aim to reveal Attwater's quasi-imperial activities under an uncritical light; from the outset, the parasitic imagery of the first lines of the novella unmistakably invite a fundamental scepticism from the reader: "Throughout the island world of the Pacific, scattered men of many European races and from almost every grade of society carry activity *and disseminate disease*. Some prosper, some vegetate. Some have mounted the steps of thrones and owned islands and navies" (*ET* 123; emphasis added). In the *The Ebb-Tide*'s ending, then, which is more of a stalemate, Stevenson leaves the reader quite abruptly, repeating as in a musical *leitmotif* the very sense of inconclusiveness by which the Pacific tale begins. The entire English-speaking "Quartette," no member excluded, manifest a flaw in their own conceptions of morality. Stevenson's concerto works on a constant grim note.

At the turn of the century, albeit from his lower middle-class position, and apparently departing from different narrative techniques, H. G. Wells was about to commit himself to

[788] William Robertson Nicoll, "The Personality and Style of Robert Louis Stevenson," in *Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Gilber K. Chesterton and William R. Nicoll (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1902), 1.
[789] Roland Alexander, "'On the Rack': Shame and Imperialism in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide*," in *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Great Affair: Movement, Memory and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Hill (New York: Routledge, 2017), 131.
[790] "Interview with Mr R. L. Stevenson," *Edinburgh Evening News* (April 01, 1893), 3.
[791] Chesterton, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927), 133.

undermining the general complacency of his readers. More precisely, as critics have often commented upon, Swift's touch in his early fiction is ever strong: "My early, profound and lifelong admiration for Swift, appears again and again in this collection, and it is particularly evident in a predisposition to make the stories reflect upon contemporary political and social discussions."[792] Ethics was paramount in Wells's conception of the role of the artist, and more broadly of the writer in its variety of connotations. In "The Contemporary Novel," Wells's most extensive 1911 discussion with regards to the functions of the novel, he insists that "it is to be the social mediator, the vehicle of understanding, the instrument of self-examination, the parade of morals and the exchange of manners, the factory of customs, the criticism of laws and institutions and of social dogmas and ideas" ("The Contemporary Novel" 167-168). The novelist, he continues, should not be looked upon as though he were a prescriptive orator from a pulpit, "but the novelist is going to be the most potent of artists, because he is going to present conduct, devise beautiful conduct, discuss conduct, analyse conduct, suggest conduct, illuminate it through and through (168). In Wells's view, artists ought to write "about the whole of human life. We are going to deal with political questions and religious questions and social questions" (168). The act of writing was, for Wells, a space for action. This was in fact the ambitious scope of the novel as he envisaged it. However, the Wellsian conception of an engaged writing in fiction – which refuted altogether the modernist, elitist aestheticism of Virginia Woolf – was the rationale behind his whole career as prose writer. As a matter of fact, as early as 1896 in the scientific essay "Human Evolution, an Artificial Process" in *The Fortnightly Review* – which should be regarded most justly as Wells's early manifesto of his priorities as an artist – he conceives of morality as a subject of teaching conveyed by "*suggestion*, and particularly the suggestion of example" to the artificial factor in man; which, he explains, "may evidently be deliberately affected by a sufficiently intelligent exterior agent in a number of ways: by example deliberately set; by the fictitious example of the stage and novel; by sound or unsound presentations of facts, or sound or fallacious arguments derived from facts, even, it may be, by emotionally propounded precepts" (Wells, "Human Evolution" 217-218). In other terms, all artists and thinkers are benefactors and possible sharers of moral principles: "The artificial factor of mankind – and that is the one reality of civilisation – grows, therefore, through the agency of eccentric and innovating people, playwrights, novelists, preachers, poets, journalists, and political reasoners and speakers" (218). Surprisingly, this passage has not been sufficiently compared to Wells's 1911 ideas of morality and the role of the engaged writer, but continuities in the Wellsian thought are evidently striking.

[792] Wells, "Preface," in *Seven Famous Novels* (New York: Knopf, 1934), viii.

In the same "Human Evolution," published after *Moreau* and before Wells's reverse colonization scenario in *The War of the Worlds* (first serialized in 1897), the author claims that "what we call Morality becomes the padding of suggested emotional habits necessary to keep the round Palæolithic savage in the square hole of the civilised state. And Sin is the conflict of the two factors – as I have tried to convey in my *Island of Dr. Moreau*" ("Human Evolution" 217). As Roger Luckhurst notes, Wells's scientific romances emerged out of "hybrid and 'impure' spaces."[793] The continual dialogue between fiction and journalism is at the core of his career, with important consequences for the fictional elaboration. Most imminently influenced by Thomas H. Huxley's teachings in *Evolution and Ethics* (1893-4), and largely resonant of the post-Darwinian treatment of morality depicted by Stevenson through the *Jekyll and Hyde* complex, Wells methodically addresses ethical concerns in his early fiction – the suffering of other living beings are among these preoccupations. In the 1890s, although not a first-hand witness of colonial affairs himself, Wells too, like Stevenson, was aware of the ethical issues both implied and raised by imperial expansionism. The reference to Tasmania in the opening section of *The War of the Worlds*, in Robert Hughes's words "the only true genocide in English colonial history,"[794] leaves no ambiguity: "The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit?" (*WOW* 9). Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr's suggestive claim that "sf is a genre of empire" is certainly valid if we base our critical eye on Wells's fin-de-siècle fiction; and is also true that this does not necessarily imply that "sf artists seek to serve the empire" in blind devotion to its hegemonic, cannibalistic drive.[795]

In his scientific writings Wells writes: "The attainment of an unstable and transitory perfection only through innumerable generations of suffering and 'elimination' is not necessarily the destiny of humanity" ("Human Evolution" 218-219). To a conception of harsh and unstoppable means shared by contemporary thinkers like Benjamin Kidd, he rather counterposed in a typically twentieth-century Wells rhetoric, an escape route from Nature's claws: "in Education lies the possible salvation of mankind from misery and sin. We may hope to come out of the valley of Death, become emancipated from the Calanistic deity of Natural Selection, before the end of the pilgrimage," advocating that "we need not clamour for the Systematic Massacre of the Unfit" (219). Although Wells was not referring explicitly to the practice of conquest and colonization, the reference to mankind is here as much inclusive as possible. Even in 1940 he will adapt similar terms in relation to man's inner animality.

[793] Roget Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 31.
[794] Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore. The Epic of Australia's Founding* (London: Vintage, 1986), 120.
[795] Istvan Csicsery Ronay Jr, "Science Fiction and Empire," *Science Fiction Studies* 30 (2003): 241.

Addressing the problem of xenophobia he recognizes that "mingling with this factor of suspicion become frantic, there is also another unpleasant trait in our sinful make-up, and that is the craving to exercise power" (*The Rights of Man* 47). Huxley himself saw man as a creature divided between the savage cravings inherited from his animal origins, and the "state of Art" derived from culture – the triumphs of ethical principles. Self-restraint, rather than self-assertion was needed, so as that "the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive" (Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics" 82). Huxley's thoughts on civilization provided Wells with specific ethical frameworks, along with suggestive ideas for his imaginative writing. In *Moreau*, revising and expanding Huxley's repudiation, or rather circumvention of the "gladiatorial theory of existence" ("Evolution and Ethics" 82), animality is synonymous with the lust for power. In Wells's view, a state of artifice based on the outlining of moral standards would be the only mean to restrain the Hyde within. However, in regard to Wells's early science fiction and its allegorical implications, there is still an evident need for wider contextualization. In the light of the established Wells's concerns about morality, a close reading of *Moreau* will help in identifying such interest and legacy to Stevenson's preoccupations with race and imperial expansionism.

Moreau appears in the form of a fictional diary written by the shipwrecked narrator Edward Prendick; on a phonetic level his name would from the start loosely resemble Stevenson's Robert Herrick. To this first-person narrative, there is attached a fictional introduction written by his nephew, Charles Edward Prendick, who informs us about the exact dates and coordinates concerning his uncle's misfortunes. Wells adds an array of factual details and specific geographic directories so as to foster the verisimilitude of his fantastic story. As John Glendening nicely puts it, *Moreau* is "somewhere between realism and satirical fantasy."[796] Analogies are striking from the outset. The nephew tells the public that the island in which Mr Prendick landed, has been visited in 1891 by the Royal Navy ship H.M.S. *Scorpion*. Interestingly, in *The Ebb-Tide* a certain "Commander Matthews H.M.S. *Scorpion*, states that an island exists in lat. 12°0′ S. long. 133°16′ W" (*ET* 185). Critics have strangely underestimated this initial reference to a warship, altogether missing Wells's first tribute to Stevenson. Robert Philmus among others, for example, comment that the ship's name is a probable homage to either Darwin's *Beagle* or Huxley's journey aboard the H.M.S. *Rattlesnake* (*Variorum* 89n5). Rather, it would be more correct to see it as the first aggressive symbol of Empire Wells puts into his plot. He would seem to follow Stevenson's portrayal of menacing men-of-war in Samoa, which, as in his *Footnote*, are repeatedly presented in the background as though they were intruder

[796] John Glendening, *The Evolutionary Imagination in Late-Victorian Novels: An Entangled Bank* (London: Ashgate, 2007), 51.

titans from outer regions. Next to military vessels, the author tends to depict trading ships parasitically cruising the sea; this passage from *The Ebb-Tide* well exemplifies such a miasmic scenario: "A French man-of-war was going out, homeward bound; she lay in the middle distance of the port, an ant-heap for activity. In the night a schooner had come in, and now lay far out, hard by the passage; and the yellow flag, the emblem of pestilence, flew on her" (*ET* 134). On the evident model of the *Farallone*, the smallpox infected schooner on which Stevenson's three scoundrels sail, *Moreau*'s introduction reports the missing ship which first rescued Mr. Prendick, here named *Ipecacuanha*: "And it seems that a schooner called the *Ipecacuanha*, with a drunken captain, John Davis, did start from Arica with a puma and certain other animals aboard in January 1887, that the vessel was well-known at several ports in the South Pacific, and that it finally disappeared from those seas (with a considerable amount of copra aboard)" (*IM* 6). As Dryden notes, 1887 would also tally with *Jekyll and Hyde*, "being exactly one year" after its publication in January 1886.[797]

The Pacific locations and the copra trading, the drunken captain by the very same name of *The Ebb-Tide*'s John Davis, are all hints that bring us even closer to Stevenson's Samoan universe. In particular, Wells's John Davis, other than being a drunkard like the original one, employs the same coarse language while mistreating a certain M'ling – in truth a Beast Man, but in all appearance a "black-faced man" with African resonances to Prendick and the Captain.[798] Like Stevenson's Davis, Wells's "red-haired" mariner gratuitously opts for the terms "devil" and "brute" as he exclaims: "Law be damned! I'm king here!" (*IM* 23). On a closer reading Wells is not only borrowing a character's name, he is creating a conscious parallel reading of these two violent white men. Stevenson's mariner, increasingly drunken and irritated with his crew of "niggers," pronounces the same authority: "I'm captain here" (*ET* 153-54). Both Prendick and Herrick are annoyed by the captain's incivility and quarrel in likewise speeches – class division between these university students and the dissolute captain is attentively highlighted. What is more, is that the *Ipecacuanha* will reappear towards the end of Prendick's narrative, yet stranding on the island with its crew found dead on a secondary boat and in a state of decomposition: "One had a shock of red hair like the captain of the *Ipecacuanha*, and a dirty white cap lay in the bottom of the boat" (*IM* 128). In elegant symbolism, a "great white bird flew up out of the boat" (*IM* 127), recalling the "tropic bird, white as a snowflake" (*ET* 184) circling around the *Farallone* in Stevenson's grim yarn. This vessel, belonging to the *Ipecacuanha*, is "a small open boat, of which the name was illegible" (*IM* 5); specularly, the *Farallone*'s tag is "part

[797] Dryden, "Monomanics," 171.
[798] To a Victorian, the exotic name "M'ling" would also evoke African imagery. A prominent model could be the colonial figure of King M'Siri (1830-91), brutally murdered by Europeans during the "Scramble for Africa;" see Pierre Petit, "M'siri: Yeke Kingdom," in *Encyclopedia of African History*, vol. 2. ed. by Kevin Shillington (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2005), 1047-48.

obliterated" (*ET* 165) and hardly readable. The corrupted imagery shared with the *Ebb-Tide*, and more specifically the allusion to the *Farallone* is reinforced by the fact that "Ipecacuanha" is actually the name of a herb used to induce vomiting. In these narratives, the violence on the ships, which evokes broader racial conflicts, anticipates the brutalities perpetrated by Moreau and Attwater on "this beastly island" (*IM* 106; *ET* 197). In truth, no one is innocent in the two late nineteenth century tales; it is rather a game of mirrors, in a Sartrian fashion, in which everyone accuses the other: *l'enfer, c'est les autres*. Critics have especially focused on the power figures of Moreau and Attwater portrayed in the narratives, but the connections with *The Ebb-Tide* are apparent throughout. In re-writing *The Ebb-Tide* Wells seeks to amplify the grim display of racial violence and scepticism for aggressive supremacy already shrewdly characterizing Stevenson's novella.[799] Wells is evidently playing in-between fictional worlds; this is an aspect which further emerges once the early manuscripts are taken into consideration.

The first draft of *Moreau* reveals the authorial design. Irony and implied readings in connection with *The Ebb-Tide* are Wells's major strategy. When Stevenson's Davis tries to convince Herrick to join his criminal adventure, for instance, he comments: "You don't fancy I'm going to skip and leave you rotting on the beach perhaps?" (*ET* 147). While in Stevenson's story John Davis is afraid of being "abandoned" in the task, in *Moreau* it is the captain who maroons Prendick in the middle of nowhere. The re-writings of *The Ebb-Tide* are many, from more trivial details to key correspondences: when both ships land on the islands, for example, in *The Ebb-Tide* they are helped by "brown oarsmen" (*ET* 191) whereas in Moreau, these "brown" helpers are more Gothically depicted as "evil-looking boatmen" in the chapter title (*IM* 26). Most remarkably, however, the islet of *The Ebb-Tide* is described as a "pearling island the government don't know about" (*ET* 185), presenting nonetheless "a flagstaff at the pierhead" where "the red ensign of England was displayed" (*ET* 190). At the closing of the narrative, the image returns as a musical prelude: "and the Union Jack floated once more on its staff" (*ET* 250). Could it then be a mere coincidence that the H.M.S. *Scorpion* visits these "imperial" islands, although in parallel fictional universes? In the 1896 edition Wells's island does not expose any flag. But somehow revealingly, the first draft of *Moreau* reports "a house with a thatched roof & a flagstaff standing on a promon[tory][.] A broad *white ensign* was ascending

[799] Even though they do not acknowledge the influence of *The Ebb-Tide*, for specific studies on *Moreau*, race and empire, see Cantor and Hufnagel's brief analysis in "The Empire of the Future." See also Timothy Christensen "The Bestial Mark of Race in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*," *Criticism* 46 (2004): 575-95; and Payal Taneja, "The Tropical Empire: Exotic Animals and Beastly Men in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*," *English Studies in Canada* 39 (2013): 139-59. For more recent psychoanalytic treatments of *Moreau*'s colonial subtext, cfr. for example Gustavo Generani, "*The Island of Doctor Moreau* by H. G. Wells: a Pre-Freudian Reply to Darwinian Imperialism," *English: Journal of the English Association* 67 (2018): 235-61.; and also Rebecca Weaver-Hightower and Rachel Piwarski's article, "The Gothic Uncanny as Colonial Allegory in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*," *Gothic Studies* 20 (2018): 358-72.

this in a series of spasmodic jerks" (*Variorum* 109; emphasis added). Later in the chapter, "the shadow of the flag fluttered on the wall" (*Variorum* 112). Several times the narrator's attention focuses on "the house with the flagstaff" (*Variorum* 117); moving on the isle he can always detect "far off along a pathway the flagstaff & the white banner" (*Variorum* 122). At one point he curiously remarks: "There were some other almost commonplace civilities, civilities which seemed to me to be oddly discordant with the strange world into which I had fallen, under this fluttering unknown flag on an island so unaccountably strange." Significantly, a corrected version of the draft reports "this strange white" instead of the adjective "unknown" (*Variorum* 113).

In the first draft, furthermore, Prendick is rescued by Moreau himself aboard of a schooner "painted white with a lot of gilt ornament as if she was a pleasure yacht" (*Variorum* 102; the first chapter is entitled "The White Yacht"). Robert Philmus's otherwise flawless variorum edition of *Moreau*, not considering Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide,* does not attribute particular importance to the white symbol, in fact seemingly implying both White Man rule and the image of an invisible and unfair Empire. In turns, the whiteness of the ensign would also echo the "leprous whiteness" (*ET* 190) of the sculpture appearing in *The Ebb-Tide*'s island. This key symbol of decadence first appears as "a woman of exorbitant stature and as white as snow," the "*ensign* and presiding genius of that empty town" (*ET* 190; emphasis added). Philmus concurs that certain features of *Moreau'*s first draft – such as the insistent racial characterization of the islanders, the presence of a Village and a hierarchized society as such – are quite strikingly suggestive of a satire of colonialism, making the "interpretation wholly defensible, if not absolutely incontestable" (Philmus, *Variorum* xxiii). Missing the parallel reading with *The Ebb-Tide*, however, he unsatisfactorily concludes that "we would have trouble making a case for that reading merely on the basis of the fiction's resemblances to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and the fact that Wells already had *The War of the Worlds* in mind when he was working on *Moreau*" (xxiii). In truth, given Attwater's island, we need not necessarily look at early drafts nor time travel to the Renaissance to find in Wells a critical stance towards imperial ideology. Thus, to borrow an expression from Philmus, the "strange case of *Moreau* gets stranger," and stranger.[800]

Moreau is an experiment in colonial geography. In the published edition of *Moreau,* the specific series of events occurring on Wells's island are recounted by the main narrator, "a private

[800] Basing his analysis on authorial revisions, Philmus's pioneering studies were among the first to identify a crucial connection between Wells and Stevenson, along with the well-established Swiftian influence (see works cited on *Moreau,* and especially "The Satiric Ambivalence of *The Island of Dr Moreau*"). The first draft of Moreau, he notes, "owes much to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The resemblances, of course, reside in method and meaning, not in incidental detail. Wells follows Stevenson in concentrating attention primarily on the solving of a mystery" (*Variorum* xx-xxi). My personal archival research at the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (USA), where the manuscript is held, thus corroborates, revises and expands many of Philmus's observations, by integrating *The Ebb-Tide's* major role in this intertextual puzzle.

gentleman" (*IM* 5) and science student. Like his fictional brother Robert Herrick, a university man of "kindly nature" (*ET* 175) and polite in language, Prendick is essentially a "mild-tempered man" (*IM* 17) who repudiates violence. After the shipwreck of a vessel by the symbolic name *Lady Vain*, reported to have "collided with a derelict when ten days out from Callao" (*IM* 7), Prendick, following a series of tribulations, is eventually rescued by the *Ipecacuanha*. Crucially, Callao in Peru, Prendick's point of departure, is also the specific seaport mentioned in *The Ebb-Tide* and which particularly attracts Robert Herrick himself: "oh, let's get on to Peru!" (*ET* 180-181). Wells does insist subtly on the overlapping reading. Prendick is then escorted to a volcanic islet by the confessedly ironic name "Noble's Isle" – namely the island of Dr Moreau, already resembling *The Ebb-Tide*'s "New Island" (*ET* 185). The doctor, apparently an educated Victorian gentleman banished from London because of unorthodox experiments is, like Attwater, an exile from civilization. Supported by his ungainly human assistant Montgomery, his main purpose is to create his own colony of human-like creatures through dreadful and unsympathetic processes of vivisection; these "islanders" are obviously called Beast People or Beast Folk on the recent colonial model of Kipling's Jungle People/Men Folk. Irony is that throughout the narrative these creatures, ontologically ambivalent, are continuously racialized as brown and black skinned creatures. Their characterization is as consistent to the extent that *Moreau* could be read by a Victorian reader as any other Henry M. Stanley's narrative, in which physical punishment and ethnocentrism were commonplace.[801] Compare for example these two passages:

> I saw before me over a hundred beings of the most degraded, unpresentable type *it is possible to conceive* (72-73) . . . The replies were followed by long-drawn ejaculations of "Wa-a-a-antu!" ("Men!") "Eha-a, and these are men!." *Now imagine this!* While we whites are loftily disputing among ourselves as to whether the beings before us are human, here were these creatures actually expressing strong doubts as to whether we whites are men! (*Through the Dark Continent* 2: 75; emphasis added)
>
> "Not to chase other Men; *that* is the Law. Are we not Men?" . . . What were they all? *Imagine yourself* surrounded by the most horrible cripples and maniacs *it is possible to conceive*, and you may understand a little of my feelings with these grotesque caricatures of humanity about me. (*IM* 59-60; second and third emphasis added)

It is no obvious task to distinguish the respective voices - the first prose extract is Stanley speaking, Prendick's is the following excerpt. This also testifies the scope to which, quoting Isiah Lavender III,

[801] See Laura Franey, *Victorian Travel Writing and Imperial Violence* for an in-depth study of despotism, and the recurrent representation of whips, torture and bodily punishment in popular travel narratives.

"race, more particularly 'blackness,' is always in the background of this historically 'white' genre": science fiction.[802] In this episode Stanley is describing a village in the district of Uhombo, and his encounter with their chief. Echoing Prendick's repulsion for the Beast People, the British explorer appears continuously disgusted by the "ugliness" of the natives. The analogies between this African episode and *Moreau*'s chapter XII "The Sayers of the Law," are stressed by Stanley's patronizing rhetoric magnifying the distance between white men and the natives.

Did Wells read Stanley to write in such a form? Probably, given the explorer's popularity and Wells's early geographical education. In his 1934 autobiography he recalls, for instance, the imperial focus on "the North West Frontier with an appeal to a decaying yellow map of Asia that hung on the wall, or we would follow the search for Livingstone by Stanley in Darkest Africa" (*EA* 1: 91). Exotic imagery, physical deviations and animal gazes, hostile ferns and cries of pain coming from the scientist's laboratory, all contribute in characterizing the island with a haunting Gothic atmosphere - which is in essence an additional allegorical veil to envelope his colonial subtext. In *Moreau* the island is inhabited by human-like creatures carved out of animal bodies – yet they cook, socialize, have off-springs and marry even. They seemingly respect inhumation practices as well. Ingeniously, Wells's romance deceives his reader through an ethnocentric narrator. As Kelly Hurley remarks, "the text first invites us to characterize Prendick's disgust as the natural response of a white man to odd 'natives,' who are not quite right to begin with; thus one can account for their *unheimlich* quality, the familiarity that is yet a strangeness."[803] In the cruder realism of *The Ebb-Tide*, on the other hand, victims are South Sea islanders stripped from their home and forced to illegal labour as it was usual custom in the Pacific of the 1890s. Attwater's rapidly mentioned assistant Dr Symonds, a source for Montgomery's role in *Moreau*, represents his most loyal accomplice in this shameful practice – a practice Attwater seems nevertheless to be proud of: "One does one's best" (*ET* 216).

Yet, Moreau's cruelty towards other living beings is quite unmatched in late Victorian fiction. Moreau's ruthless rational Empire alludes more directly to the European-like, "civilized" regime of *Houyhnhnms* over the barbarous *Yahoos* in the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*. Equally, Moreau struggles to purge the Beast Folk from their animal heritage; still, his subjects remain relentlessly caged within their atavistic instincts. The Swiftian tones reinforce the colonial satire insofar as civilization is ultimately demystified as a process inherently controversial and perhaps unattainable. Blood, combined with an unrestrained use of whips and guns characterize this microcosmic empire governed by the Law. As critics have pointed out, Moreau's legislation on his "native" population

[802] Isiah Lavender III, *Race in American Science Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 19.
[803] Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 105.

echoes simultaneously a profane adaptation of the Ten Commandments and Kipling's Law of the *Jungle Books* (1894-95). Theological and imperial spheres are thus encapsulated in this outlandish regime which is, in Frank McConnell words, "perhaps the first really totalitarian regime imagined by Western man."[804] It is this very combination, following the tradition of Swift's satire of Western empires, which allows us to understand *Moreau* in its ambiguities of meaning – namely the association and interplay between divine and imperial power out of which Wells creates his white tyrant. The "islanders" deem Moreau immortal from his lofty throne. Attwater too appears throughout the story as a supreme and untouchable being in his "white clothes shining" (*ET* 196); as Herrick acknowledges, Attwater "knows all, he sees through all . . . he looks at us and laughs like God!" (*ET* 222). But of course, he is also depicted as a rule enforcer, a white man in the Pacific; a muscular armed foreigner. "Dressed in white drill" and Winchester in hand, beneath Attwater's now sunburnt complexion, "only his manners and movements, and the living force that dwelt in him, like fire in flint, betrayed the European" (*ET* 192). In a similar fashion, Moreau's European whiteness and divine features are insistently highlighted. He is a "white-haired man" with an "awful white face," and whose "lank white hand" functions as a sceptre of life and death (*IM* 26, 62, 90). His power is enclosed in his bodily extension and above all the Beast People fear it: "*His* is the Hand that wounds, *His* is the Hand that heals" (*IM* 89). Such a theological imagery would invite the association of Moreau with a tyrannical, monstrous God; and obviously, *Moreau* openly questions the Judeo-Christian creationist scenario under new Darwinian lenses. Yet, in the 1890s, supernatural imageries were also exploited by European explorers in Africa and across the borders of Empire in order to legitimize colonial domination. Henry Drummond's *Tropical Africa* (1888) is particularly indicative: "To the African the white man is a supreme being. His commonest acts are miracles; his clothes, his guns, his cooking utensils are supernatural. Everywhere his word is law."[805] Of this and like travelogues Moreau is a response to. To rule the Beast People Prendick points upward and tries to instil in them the idea they simply "cannot see him [Moreau]. But he can see you. Fear the Law" (*IM* 103). Symbolically, therefore, it is the "Leopard Man" the Beast Man who first starts the rebellion which will overthrow Moreau's white tyranny; one should not overlook the fact that in nineteenth-century explorers' narratives, leopard skins were typically recurrent symbols of power among African tribes.[806] Wells's choice for his native "rebel" might be not casual. Eventually killed by his subjects, "Moreau's mangled body" will lie "face downward in a trampled space in a cane-brake," with his sovereign

[804] McConnell, *The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells*, 92.
[805] Henry Drummond, *Tropical Africa* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1888), 105.
[806] See, for instance, the multiple references to leopards, and leopard skins as symbol of rank among Africans in Victorian travel writings. Specifically, see again Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, vol. 2 (106, 134, 136, 273, 282). Or the immensely popular *In Darkest Africa* (1890), vol. 2 (396).

white hand "almost severed at the wrist, and his silvery hair" now "dabbled in blood" (*IM* 105). The author reminds the reader, through the humiliating death of the Master, that *Moreau* is a grim story of thrones and dethronements.

Mor-*Eau* alludes to the Ebbs of Empires. What's in a Name? Recently, critics have tended to focus on the analogies between the two main antagonists. Although uninterested in the colonial implication of Wells's story, Genie Babb rightly claims that both Moreau and Attwater "mix a savage conception of Nature with a religion that justifies their cruelty."[807] They substitute Nature, bypass ethical concerns and theological principles of charity. Stevenson's influence on Moreau's rationale is most evident. Attwater defines himself "an experimentalist" (*ET* 211), anticipating Moreau's horrors of 1896. He landed on the island driven by the enthusiasm of "youth, curiosity, romance, the love of the sea, and (it will surprise you to hear) an interest in missions" (*ET* 203); and like any Empire ruler he passed through a mutiny as well: "one of my incidents of my missionary life" (*ET* 211). Both characters found and appropriated the island in akin fashion, also through the violent exploitation of Kanakas. Like Moreau's fascination for "man-making" (*IM* 73), Attwater begins his machination in "making a new people here." Far from the borders of imperial law, the religious fanatic establishes his own "business, and a colony, and a mission of my own" (*ET* 204). He exerts confessedly an "iron cruelty, an iron insensibility to the suffering of others, the uncompromising pursuit of his own interests, cold culture, manners without humanity" (*ET* 203). It is worthwhile to remark that in Wells's story the term "colony" never appears, but the colonial subtext in Wells is demonstrated by the bond between Doctor Moreau and the despotic figure of Attwater, especially considering the presence of the white flag in the draft of *Moreau*. Both Stevenson and Wells depict their European rulers as usurpers of imperial and divine powers. In other terms, they are transgressors of good ethics; for them, morality is a hindrance rather than a guiding outliner of action. They are Gods and conquerors acting, like Conrad's Kurtz, almost invisibly; but Moreau further complicates the mystery dynamics by inviting the reader to decipher the meanings beneath his name.

The origins behind the name "Moreau" itself is a stranger case that has puzzled critics for decades. Adam Roberts convincingly interprets it as "an extended, or crumbling-at-the-edges, version of the name More;" thus pointing out that "More's utopia as *no*-place leads to Wells' *no*-bles, a place distinctly unblessed, twisting More's happy utopian paradigm into monstrous, dystopian shapes."[808] John Hammond, on the contrary, has claimed that "'Moreau' is clearly derived from 'morrow': the disintegration of society depicted in the novel is a foreshadowing of a wider dissolution implicit in

[807] Babb, "Isolation and Variation on Doctor Moreau's Oceanic Island," 128.
[808] Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction*, 204.

man's animal nature;" and that, "more immediately the end of white dominion, Wells suggests, is already on the horizon."[809] Hammond does mention Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Treasure Island*, but fails to see the key connections with *The Ebb-Tide*. Ian F. Roberts, for example, identifies as precursor the scientist-philosopher Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis; [810] Philmus's variorum edition also proposes as real-life model the theologian Jean Ignace Moreau (1807-81), and the psychiatrist Jacques-Joseph Moreau of Tours (1804-84). Other candidates, including the symbolist painter Gustave Moreau, are mentioned (*Variorum* xviii-xix, xli-xliiin36). Philmus, however, more rightly deems Moreau as a possible French compound of "death" and "water" (*morte*=death, *eau*=water) (xviii). But critics do not explore further. As a matter of fact, the source name of "Attwater", I propose, should be deconstructed into "at water" and compared with the French roots in "Mor-Eau" – echoing "death water" or "dead water." Dr Moreau embodies exactly death from water – he is an outlaw, a bringer of pain coming from the sea as if mocking the imperial and just image of "*Rule Britannia! Rule the Wave*s*!*." In the intertextual translation from "Att-water" into "Mor-eau," Wells thus wittingly exposes the moral fallacies of Stevenson's villain; and stages, as if reversing, the fall of Moreau's private empire as a degraded Prospero.

The narrative arch in Wells's story resembles a heroic fall without the actual hero status: power is longed for and power is consequently lost by Victorian gentlemen unfit for fantasies of empire-building. In fact, in *The Ebb-Tide*, Stevenson guides the reading from the outset through Shakespeare's liquid, imperial echoes. Brutus's claim that "*there is a tide in the affairs of men*" (*ET* 123) becomes Stevenson's epigraph and prelude to his yarn.

> There is a tide in the affairs of men
> Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
> On such a full sea are we now afloat,
> And we must take the current when it serves,
> Or lose our ventures.
>
> (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*. Act IV, scene iii, lines 216-222)

Brutus reminds Cassius that power is a fluctuating quality. Stevenson's white characters thus swarm in search of imperial-like power across the Pacific; they are essentially adventurers coming from the

[809] "*The Island of Doctor Moreau*: A Swiftian Parable," *The Wellsian* 16 (1993): 37.
[810] Ian F. Roberts, "Maupertuis: Doppelgänger of Doctor Moreau," *Science Fiction Studies* 28 (2001): 261-74.

sea, conquering, tricking, killing at sea, but also starving at sea for what concerns the three beachcombers of Herrick, Davis and Huish. As the ship's name *Farallone* seems to ironically imply, they find themselves "far alone" in exotic and uncharted seas losing their own identity. Theirs is a life "gone to water." In *Moreau* and *The Ebb-Tide*, waves, ebbs and flows are central and recurrent not only as a background setting, but as a motor of action and allegorical elaboration. Sea images are methodically sustained. Attwater remarks to Herrick: "you're new from the sea" (*ET* 202). Leaving no ambiguities, Wells's Satyr Man addresses Prendick, the "Other who walked in the Sea" (*IM* 119), as such: "the Third with the whip, he that walks weeping into the sea, has a thin white face" (*IM* 86). Wells's satirical island displays a well-defined ideological structure in in-groups and out-groups which intensifies the divide between the European characters, arrived from the sea, and the humanoid creatures on the land. The "Other" category is instantiated in the narrative in its ambiguities of meaning and deictic possibilities. It is Stevenson's grim characterization of overseas adventurism that Wells would seem to appreciate the most; the reader is continuously invited to decipher the textual riddle.

Remarkably, Stevenson is also mentioned in *Moreau*'s draft, in which a Mrs. Moreau and her son appear. In a discussion between the narrator and the woman, seemingly, like Prendick, a symbol of British domesticity opposed to the outer affairs of Empire, *Jekyll and Hyde* is quoted among the narrator's favorite readings. Although removed by Wells in the published version, the reference is nevertheless largely maintained. The action evolves in authentic Gothic dynamics, and Moreau explicitly remarks this secrecy to his guest: "I'm sorry to make a mystery, Mr. Prendick – but you'll remember you're uninvited. Our little establishment here contains a secret or so, is a kind of Bluebeard's Chamber, in fact. Nothing very dreadful really – to a sane man. But just now – as we don't know you –" (*IM* 31-32). In both stories the Victorian readers – as much as Prendick, the removed Mrs Moreau, and Herrick – are thus the "uninvited guests" to witness this stage of violence fostered by white representatives. As Roland Alexander aptly observes, in *The Ebb-Tide* "Attwater's rule offers Stevenson a powerful symbol of shameful imperialism," and the whole "plot becomes a mechanism by which Stevenson instils in his Western readership a sense of collective shame."[811] Wells's romance adopts that same strategy of shaming to provoke a self-reflection in the reader. Prendick's narrative constitutes an array of unrequested horrors to the accepted standards of civilization at home; his diary shows a man undecided about his effective allegiance to Moreau – like Herrick with Attwater he is at times complicit, at times a victim of the Gothic villain. Similarly to

[811] Alexander, "'On the Rack': Shame and Imperialism in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide*," 128, 125.

Herrick, Prendick is attracted because of class and education affinities, yet also repelled by Moreau's cruelty.

Herrick establishes the model for Wells's narrator; numerous overlooked parallels clearly support this view. In moments of European nostalgia, for example, their mind goes to London and to a shared culture; they dream of shops and the comforts of civilization. Quite deliberately, on the model of *The Ebb-Tide*'s chapter X entitled "The Open Door," Wells names section VII "The Locked Door." In Stevenson, the open door refers to the possibility of suicide which Herrick considers more than once in order to avoid his responsibility. This desire of death is a feeling shared by Prendick as well – there is too much to bear on these islands, and death would prove to be a viable escape from barbarism. The two gentlemen are no Robinson, nor Livingstone. If Wells overtly alludes to Herrick it is because he appreciates how Stevenson's gentleman marks the impossibility of romance and imperial agency; in other terms, the anti-hero does not convey those "silly ideas about the invulnerability and other privileges of the Englishman abroad" of a Haggard romance which Wells, as literary critic for the *Saturday Review*, judged insincere and morally harmful.[812] Herrick struggles to behave as a Western hero, diving into "his reminiscences of sea romance for some appropriate words" (*ET* 155); Prendick, in "the hardihood of" his "expedition among these unknown people" (*IM* 41), embodies rather unwillingly the explorer role. Yet both are unable to conquer and control. In "The Open Door" chapter, Robert Herrick confesses in a moment of despair:

> Here I am. I am *broken crockery*; I am a burst drum; the whole of my life has *gone to water*; I have nothing left that I believe in, except my living horror of myself. Why do I come to you? I don't know; you are cold, cruel, hateful; and I hate you, or I think I hate you. But you are an honest man, an honest gentleman. *I put myself, helpless, in your hands*. (*ET* 230; emphasis added)

"Gone to water." Analogously, in *Moreau*'s Bluebeard metaphor chapter "The Locked Door," the uninvited guest Prendick who had previously defined himself "merely a bit of human flotsam" (*IM* 17), offers himself to his Master: "I'm in your hands" (*IM* 31). The narrator is then brought to a small apartment with "an array of old books," mostly "surgical works and editions of the Latin and Greek classics – languages I cannot read with any comfort" (*IM* 32). Here, Wells is re-working Herrick's obsession for Virgil and the classical languages in order to strengthen a common ground of imperial, Western heritage with the reader.

[812] Wells, "More Haggard," 98.

It is crucial to go behind the scenes of *Moreau.* Formal and thematic convergences are indisputably insightful, but what specific knowledge of Stevenson's work could Wells have had around 1896? *Moreau* was first published in London by Heinemann in April 1896, and Wells presumably worked on a first draft around the end of 1894, early January 1895 (cfr. Philmus, *Variorum* xviii); Stevenson passed away in December 1894. *The Ebb-Tide,* which appeared in book form through Heinemann in September 1894, had in fact already been serialized in *To-day* (November, 1893 - February, 1894) and by *McClure's Magazine* (February - July, 1894). In fact, Wells did not always highly esteem the Scottish writer. In his June 1896 essay "The Lost Stevenson," Wells expresses his strong dislike for the author's commitment in the peculiar "Scott line of business" of historical romances.[813] Such is the hostility that he defines this type of "reminiscent fiction" on Scottish history and character as "the tragedy" of "Stevensons's career;"[814] but he instead approves, for instance, "such a fantasia" as the Pacific tale "The Isle of Voices" (1893) and, as *Moreau* itself testifies, "such a masterpiece of the trickery of effect as the *Strange Case*."[815] The review does not mention *The Ebb-Tide* although the novella clearly presents features Wells was looking after in his fantastic romance formula; and this because Stevenson's work is a grim narrative devoid of romantic vein.

By 1894, Wells must have had well in mind Stevenson's book, and especially his political activism in the Pacific over the past recent years; the major newspapers also read by Wells – including *The Times, The National Observer, The Pall Mall Gazette, The Fortnightly Review* – discussed either in positive or skeptical light the "Vailima" Stevenson. In a pointedly ironic article of June 1894 in *The Pall Mall Gazette* commenting on recommended regimens to achieve literary success, for instance, Wells does briefly mention him: "Stevenson fled to Samoa to hide his extremely elaborate methods, and to keep his kitchen servants out of the reach of bribery."[816] Although Wells was not the Giant of the twentieth century yet, he already had a keen eye on foreign social and political questions. A most direct evidence of Wells's reading of Stevenson's Pacific fiction can be traced also in a short story, originally published in *The Pall Mall Gazette* on 28 March 1895 under the title "A Moth – Genus Novo." This piece of fiction traces the intellectual quarrel between Hapley, an entomologist, and his late rival Professor Pawkins. Hapley becomes so obsessed by the death of his academic nemesis that at one point he attempts to seek some relief in reading contemporary fiction:

[813] Wells, "The Lost Stevenson," [1896] in *H. G. Wells's Literary Criticism*, 99.
[814] Ibid., 102, 101.
[815] Ibid., 99.
[816] The Literary Regimen," [1894] *Certain Personal Matters*, 74.

> He turned to fiction – and found it had no grip on him. He read the "Island Nights' Entertainments" until his "sense of causation" was shocked beyond endurance by the Bottle Imp. Then he went to Kipling, and found he "proved nothing," besides being irreverent and vulgar.[817]

The combined reference to these two literary masters further encourages a subversive colonial reading of *Moreau*. As Nandita Batra has observed, the many allusions to *The Jungle Books* in the novel are meant to undermine the imperial order suggested by Kipling's hierarchization.[818] Within the novel's intertextual richness, Roger Bozzetto too has observed that Prendick can be read as "Wells's ironic revision of the man-cub Mowgli learning the Law," and the story would suggest a "farcical parody of the ambitions of 'civilization'."[819] *Moreau* is, simply put, Wells's anti-Jungle Book. However, what critics have missed is that to Kipling's devotion to an imperial law, Wells subtly aims to counterpose Stevenson's grim and disordered Pacific – in these hellish islands, idiosyncratic conceptions of legal and ethical aspects of the Law are set into motion.

The case of *Moreau* is thus reopened. The truth, and Wells's colonial satire in *Moreau*, is that Noble's Isle is not a space for noble deeds; through the demise of the ambiguous, godlike figure of "Mor-eau" (adapted from "Att-water"), Wells magnifies under his fictional microscope the monstrosity of human nature; while adding, with the complete humiliation of the European *dramatis personae*, an explicit moral resolution which Stevenson's realistic sea novella seemingly lacked. It is therefore quite the paradox, and a stranger case, that even most recent reissues of *Moreau* do not mention *The Ebb-Tide* either as minor or major influence on Wells.[820] Wells's scientific outlook immensely borrowed from Stevenson's novella by acutely reshaping its colonial location, characters, symbols, and embarked on a new literary experiment. Wells's *Moreau* is essentially the science-fictional translation of *The Ebb-Tide*, with plot corrections and a noticeable influence from nineteenth century Gothic prose. Stevenson's move to realism did not certainly entail dismissing the inner monstrosity and gothic patterns he explored in his renowned strange case; rather, he exported and expanded the Jekyll and Hyde dilemma through the figure of Attwater, the embodiment of a Janus-faced, God-like imperialism. Julia Reid perfectly recapitulates the complex figure of the Cambridge gentleman – in her words, Stevenson's villain is virtually an exiled in a tropical island standing for

[817] "The Moth," [1895] in *The Complete Short Stories of H. G. Wells*, ed. John Hammond (London: J. M. Dent, 1998), 86.
[818] Nandita Batra, "Jungle People and Beast Folk: Darwinian and Imperial Discourse in Two Fables of the Fin-De-Siècle,' *Bestia* 8 (2001/2002): 165-73.
[819] Bozzetto, "Moreau's Tragi-Farcical Island," 40-41.
[820] In the Oxford reissue, Darryl Jones claims that within the literary subgenre of the island novel, *Treasure Island* is "the example chronologically nearest to Moreau" (xiii); this point in particular needs urgent revision.

"the sinister and intertwined forces of Empire, the Church, Commerce, and the Law."[821] Moreover, moving beyond genre boundaries, and following Judith Halberstam's claim, it is perhaps advisable to note the extent to which the whole "nineteenth century literary tradition *is*," after all, "a Gothic tradition."[822] The key Gothic trope of duality resonates constantly in Stevenson's works – this is valid from the London metropolitan world to the exotic South Seas. Although Wells was not enthusiastic himself of Stevenson's historical romances, the grim realism and the moral concerns of the South Sea works had certainly suggested Wells points to reflect about the experience of empire. Following *The Time Machine*, Wells's *Moreau* is certainly another grim post-Darwinian meditation on man's supremacy in the world, but is also more subtly an extended commentary in Aesopic language on the ruthless struggle of power and violence beneath contemporary imperial policy. Still, allegory functions as a double-edged blade. As a mechanism to attenuate and to circumvent resistance, the allegorical scheme also undergoes the risk to pass largely undetected – most recent criticism plausibly suffers from temporal estrangement too, for allegory is a strongly historical mode. Thanks to Stevenson's work – and far more than H. G. Wells would acknowledge – he saw in the late nineteenth century romance a fertile space to undermine what proved to be Wells's archenemy across his life: the obtrusive imperial egotism of Western civilization. Isiah Lavender III states about the progressive force of sf: "Invoking race and racism in an outwardly white genre is necessary. Coloring science fiction *is* an absolute and radical commitment."[823] Wells's *coloratura*, once more, does not alter his position among the Fathers of science fiction; it rather fortifies and validates the socio-political horizons of the genre.

[821] Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 49.
[822] Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 2.
[823] Isiah Lavender III, "Introduction: Coloring Science Fiction," *Black and Brown Planets. The Politics of Race in Science Fiction* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 10.

Conclusion: *Of Art, of Politics, of Mr. H. G. Wells*

"Then there is the voice which asks for help: Come down from your ivory tower, leave your studio, it cries, and use your gifts as doctor, as teacher, not as artist."

Virginia Woolf, "Why Art Today Follows Politics" (1936)

In 1945 Wells alluded to the next study on his "fundamental theme": *Decline and Fall of Monarchy of Competitive Imperialisms*.[824] He would not manage to write it; instead, he left world readers with the majestic *The Outline of History* (1919) and an immensely prolific fictional and non-fictional output centred on the question of imperialism. From the 1890s to 1946 H. G. Wells addressed the British Empire and world politics with an artistic consistency and ironic commitment in his works that no other writer could remotely equal. The scientific romances, once accurately historicized, are imperial romances; no more, no less, to minor and major degree. They are *riddles* on the imperial scene – in his early fiction, mostly through symbolism and allegorical means, the author exposes methodically the inequality of power relationships. The author's judgement lies perceivably within the fictional frame. Irony is Wells's chosen rhetorical device to criticize systems of power; this is a constant from works such as *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The New Machiavelli* (1911), *The World of William Clissold* (1926) and *Meanwhile* (1927). It is important to stress the continuity in method and political thought; although Wells achieved major public fame from 1901 onwards, this does not diminish his iconoclastic intention and practice to reform the British Empire since the last decade of Queen Victoria's reign. Throughout the long twentieth century, as expected, the contrast figure thus became embodied by Rudyard Kipling – Wells would insistently put the other major imperial writer under scrutiny already in his Victorian fiction and journalism: "It is not known what Mr. Kipling takes to make him so peculiar. Many of us would like to know. Possibly it is something he picked up in the jungle—berries or something."[825] Few literary figures have been so alike and equally so conspicuously divergent in their careers. In Ford Madox Ford's idealized conception of the Conscious Artist, as we have seen, both Wells and Kipling abandoned or "deserted" artistic priorities to become involved in "Public Affairs;" that is, imperial questions.[826] Throughout this study I stressed the fundamental importance to readdress the focus on this unique literary pair; Wells and Kipling are essential for an accurate and truthful understanding of British imperial culture from the

[824] Wells, *Mind at the End of its Tether*, v-vi. Compare Chapter 2.1.1. "Wells's Great Book: *Decline and Fall of Monarchy and Competitive Imperialisms*."
[825] Wells, "The Literary Regimen," *Certain Personal Matters*, 52.
[826] Ford, *The Critical Attitude* and *Mightier than the Sword*.

New Imperialism to the rise of the first totalitarian movement in Europe in the 1920s. Many critics in the first half of the century would often situate the two imperial voices on the same plan, while underscoring their striking political differences. Their political views, as Thurston Hopkins's words recapped in 1922, were "as wide as the world, and there is no need to comment on it."[827] Wells chastised Kipling throughout his career for being the symbol of, as he saw it, aggressive and despotic imperialism; the *Outline of History* exposed precisely the "*tacit conspiracy between law and illegal violence*" underlying British imperialism. But in 2021 the political thought of Wells and Kipling, the two imperial authors, are worth commenting for the literary critic. These artists must be explored under the same critical lenses; it is true that Kipling was no public (Left-wing) "Intellectual" in the sense Wells was, but their political thought is indissolubly tied to their art.

They both set the future of the Empire as their overarching mission but differed dramatically in one major regard: Kipling never purported to promote world revolution. He identified with the establishment and all his career was devoted to the Empire, right or wrong. He could invoke violent imperial subjugation in *Stalky & Co.* (1899) or *The Jungle Books* (1894-95), as much as admonish administrative arrogance as in the "Recessional" (1897), "The Man who would be King" (1888), "The Mark of the Beast" (1890) and other imperial stories functioning as cautionary tales; he could equally inspire a cosmopolitan and hybridized vision of the British Empire through the romance of *Kim* (1901). The imperial Poet, however, never aimed through his art to demolish the imperial system, and the Crown. Contemporaries recurrently highlighted the extent to which Wells's pen, instead, consistently belittled the British Empire.[828] Wells's career remains nevertheless ambivalent towards the imperial question; the faith in new political directions for European imperialism never abandoned his thought. The World State – sometimes torn between authoritarian control and inclusive Socialist cosmopolitanism – was Wells's imperial vision, although he vehemently came to insist in a reconstruction "for Cosmopolis that is and not for Empire."[829] As John S. Partington's study has meticulously retraced, Wells's political proposals sketched an internationalist position and designed increasingly, after the Great War, effective models of cosmopolitan government administration; still, the World State ideal, as an intellectual rebirth to go beyond power structures of oppression, self-sufficiency and national competition, has always been part of Wells's worldview.[830] Wells's ambitious literary ideal of engaged art makes him stand as a unique, gigantic phenomenon in British culture; his fiction output is, I contend, *revolutionary* – almost mutinous although constructive in

[827] Thurston Hopkins, *H. G. Wells: Personality, Character, Topography* (New York: Dutton, 1922), 156.
[828] See, for instance, Salmon, "The Literature of the Empire," 152-54; Jones, *My Dear Wells. A Manual for the Haters of England.*
[829] Wells, *Imperialism and the Open Conspiracy*, 6.
[830] Partington, *Building Cosmopolis.*

intention. Altogether with his journalistic and essayistic activity, Wells aimed to reform ambitiously the architecture of the British Empire through literary worlds. The realm of fiction remained his preferred medium throughout; unlike journalism, the illusion of art could persuade in more elaborate fashion. In the light of Wells's artistic activity presented in this study, from the 1890s to the 1930s and beyond, Edward's Said's famous conclusion that "only Conrad, another master stylist, can be considered along with Kipling, his slightly younger peer, to have rendered the experience of empire as the main subject of his work with such force,"[831] requires major revisionism from the academia. It is one of those authoritative statements accepted at face-value that tend to crystallise critical reception; and all other artists remain in the periphery of the canon. How post-colonial studies came to understand Kipling without Wells, with hindsight, is hard to understand; there is much at stake, and much to lose. We may go beyond the equally crystallized and textually centred critical attitude that Wells exposed Empire in *The War of the Worlds* (1898), without considering the whole Wellsian canon in its genre variety.

The point is that Wells is part of a major narrative in the canon of English literature. In 1915 Wells expresses through the character Boon, in the homonymous novel, an inescapable truth for all literary criticism: '"You see," Boon said, "you can't now talk of literature without going through James. James is unavoidable. James is to criticism what Immanuel Kant is to philosophy— a partially comprehensible essential, an inevitable introduction" (*Boon* 98). We know the quarrel: James envisioned the novel as the supreme aesthetic object whereas Wells intended it primarily as a vehicle of ideas, and instrument of change. The bizarre figure of Boon argues, in short, that if you know James, "you are in the middle of the critical arena." In 1915, before the academic establishment of English studies, Wells perfectly got a point. No literary critic would now successfully explore, for instance, the development of the Modernist canon without addressing James's theory of art. Still, Modernism has been largely being studied without considering, directly, Wells's engaged ideal of art so openly explained in "The Contemporary Novel" (1914); the author also presented the political notion of education and authorial responsibility in the 1890s, as in "Human Evolution, an Artificial Process" (1896) or "What I Believe" (1899). Criticism on Wells has long neglected this continuity of thought, tending to create, instead, an artificial critical generic distinction between scientific romance and novel. As stated throughout this study, what we need, free of dogmatic constraints, is *authorial intention*. Apart from the specific critical discussion on imperialism, *H.G. Wells and the Empire* has been written with the hope to reveal the immense extent to which "you can't now talk of literature without going through," also, the art of H. G. Wells. It is equally unavoidable. Not that H. G. Wells

[831] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 132.

has been absent in contemporary literary criticism: he has been, for the most part, an Invisible Man – Wells has always been peeping into the critical arena, plotting, unseen, rarely quoted in indexes. but his influence was the pillar against which criticism constructed its academic space.

At the core of the present study there has been a well-debated figure in literary theory: the Author. After having expanded on Wells's liberal imperialism and the technique of self-revelation as case study in *The World of William Clissold*, throughout Chapter 3 "Death of the Author, Death of the Intellectual" I also attempted to show how Wells's presence, or vanishment, informs all literary theory in regards to the post-structuralist "Death of the Author" notion. The reader, in Barthes's view, can dispense of authorial ideology and accepts the literary object alone; no history of ideas or human agents are needed in the abstraction of such critical view. After all, without acknowledgment, Roland Barthes promoted an alluring – yet troublesome – formalist concept which is fundamentally built on the effacement of Wells's prominent theory of art. Wells's fictions is based, contrarily to Barthes's framework, on authorial presence *within* and *beyond* the literary artifact. I have therefore traced the genealogy which has witnessed the establishment of a literary canon focused on the removal of the author figure; through Theory we lost Wells the author, the artist, Wells the intellectual and above all the *human agent*, in Paul Ricœur's terminology, with responsibility in history. And Wells was alive during this progressive effacement of the Author. In the Anglo-Saxon culture, before Barthes, American New Criticism and Leavis's school had to remove H. G. Wells from the critical telescope – the world fame author was a titan. Before Theory shaped our limited understanding of literature founded on the stigma of authorial intention and the banishment of the author figure, however, in the British context varieties of anti-authorialism originated precisely as attacks on Wells's *unavoidable* theory of art. Wells was unavoidable for any discussion of art in the 1910s, and, although largely unacknowledged in the academia, it remains unavoidable today. On the traces of James's advocacy for authorial detachment in fiction, Virginia Woolf and Ford Madox Ford in particular managed to elect the literary text as an aesthetically *finite* object; authorial didacticism and ideology in fiction became the cruellest tyranny. The truth, however, is that Wellsian art is no monologic or didactic imposition; on the contrary, it purports to represent a dialogical moment which intends the literary space as communicative forum to foster a sense of global, transnational public sphere. The literary object is *intended* to incite political commitment to reform the State, the inequalities of the imperial system; since the 1890s, Wells's fiction belongs to the public as an open structure. The literary text is situated in a strong intertextual space communicating with the author's journalistic activity. Fiction, in Wells's view, could not be *used* by readers as self-enclosed object of autonomous language.

Apparently, therefore, Wells's disappearance for so long a period from the critical spectrum could thus be explained by the "Original Murder" committed by Modernism. It would also seem, at first sight and as it is always acknowledged, that Modernist theory succeeded, and Wells failed. I argue the opposite: Modernism's murder of Wells is, to a closer examination, an attempt which failed in the long run. Not only artists themselves, both in the novel and poetry, became increasingly sensitive and political in respect to militant imperialism and totalitarianism during the 1930s and 1940s; but also literary criticism changed its critical attitude. After the emergence of postcolonial studies in the late 1970s, critics have re-directed their gaze on the political texture of fiction; to many influential academics, and contrarily to Woolf's Modernist original credo, it is an admirable feature if the artist deals overtly with the politics of Empire in the literary text. This is a curious phenomenon in cultural studies which has naturally followed and adapted itself to the ever-changing social dynamics and crisis phases characterizing the past century. Criticism has thus tended to valiantly *defend*, through strong and I would say valid arguments, the subversion of the imperialist discourse in Modernist fiction. A series of insightful books and articles have been published to show how modernist texts were not, so to say: "apolitical."[832] Of course, as argued throughout this study, the politics of Empire cannot be separated from art and Wells testifies this natural merger.[833] Still, as seen throughout *H.G. Wells and the Empire*, the pillar of Modernism, Virginia Woolf herself, and Wells's friend Ford Madox Ford in particular, expressly opposed to address authorial views on imperialism and world government in fiction; they promoted, like Eliot with poetry, an idealized Death of the Author in the interest of the Reader. The aspiration was a suppression of the artist's personality in the literary text; they opposed, precisely, the self-revelatory technique of Wells's influential imperial novels. As I have tried to show in Chapter 3, Woolf was particularly interested in Empire: her insistent and antagonistic criticism on Wells's methods testifies exactly her political concerns. Later in 1930, Woolf's public role through the Hogarth Press also happened to provide publication to Wells's major imperialist reform: "The Open Conspiracy."[834] Her space of art, certainly, often ingeniously exposed the arrogance and oppression of the British system; still, in the 1920s Woolf made a well-defined opposition to Wells's ideal of militant art and technique: either you are an artist *or* a teacher. In the case of Wells, "Teacher" would become, essentially, synonym for the "Intellectual" focused on imperialism. Between the late 1890s and the 1910s, Ford Madox Ford, and to a minor degree Henry

[832] We may report again some major titles including Kathy J. Phillips, *Virginia Woolf Against Empire* (1994); Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (1995); Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (2002). In Phillip's study, H. G. Wells does not figure. The other works only rapidly quote the author.

[833] Politics is also the vaguest of terms, so I have often preferred, within the context of the present work, to employ the phrase "politics of Empire."

[834] The Hogarth Press published the revised second edition, *The Open Conspiracy: A Second Version of This Faith of a Modern Man Made More Explicit and Plain* (1930). The first British edition appeared in 1928 by Gollancz.

James, would already present both in private and publicly, all Woolf's criticism on Wells from 1918. Ford Madox Ford, whom I employed as preferred foil throughout this study to understand the literary and intellectual character of Wells, would thus strikingly anticipate the Death of the Author concept as well as the Two Culture question.

The problem, therefore, is also an intellectual one. As seen throughout this study, Wells in relation to the "intellectual" category is for the most part, again, an Invisible Man. Originally, Raymond William's *Culture and Society* (1951) only rapidly mentioned his name and criticism has tended to avoid discussions on Wells in terms of intellectual history. This is a cultural loss. The fact, evident from *H.G. Wells and the Empire* is that the "British intellectual" was born in the literary conflict between Wells and Modernism. Modernism is no independent fact. It was an ideological conflict: Modernism, *to be*, at least in theory must be un-Wellsian. It must reject Wellsian political intellectualism. *Carthago delenda est*. Throughout the years, criticism has typically stopped and accepted at face-value Woolf's terminology employed to dethrone Wells's artistic position: Wells "the Edwardian," Wells the "materialist," ultimately Wells "writing of unimportant things." Critics have briefly commented, and never structurally investigated the real contents of the quarrel and its intellectual resonance. Only superficially studied in relation to Wells, Woolf's ideological discourse, so crucial in the development of the English novel, revolved precisely on the position of art in relation to the Empire (the State). After the 1950s, however, Bernard Bergonzi focused the critical lenses so exclusively on Science that imperialism disappeared from the horizon.[835] Initially, Modernism's belittlement of politics succeeded in erasing Wells. Then, science fiction criticism re-discovered the author.[836] But science fiction criticism was exactly that: criticism on science fiction founded on the necessity to define, and defend, an all-round respectable genre. The Father of the twentieth century became the Father of a literary genre, restricted to a period in which Wells was active in journalism but, alas, was not yet a public authority. In the process, we came to overlook the fact that always throughout his career Wells represented the most revolutionary intellectual figure of world-fame discussing European imperialism under the British Empire. And as we have seen in the 1920s, he presumably was the most influential "world intellectual" of the past century.

When Virginia Woolf was proposed to become the President of P. E. N (Poets, Essayists, Novelists) in 1935, succeeding Wells's presidency, she wrote to her sister Vanessa Bell: "I have been asked to be President of the P. E. N. Club in succession to Wells: this is about the greatest insult that could be offered a writer, or a human being."[837] No need to be self-righteous here; it is frankly the

[835] Bergonzi, *The Early H. G. Wells* (1961).
[836] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979).
[837] Quoted from Ali Smith, "Introduction" to H. G. Wells, *The Rights of Man* (Penguin: Penguin Special, xxii).

standard to be vitriolic in private correspondences. At any rate, this statement perfectly matches Woolf's ideological position already stated in her major public indictments of H. G. Wells between 1918 and 1924, when Wells was the imperial giant of *The Outline of History*. The fracture between Wells and Modernism can be sutured. The point is the following: the more we *uncover* the political intentions of Modernist's texts, the more we have to acknowledge, also, that Modernism was predicated on the theoretical separation between art and political engagement; and by political engagement, in this context, I intend the possibility of fiction to cause change in imperial power structures. Or Wells's contribution in literary and intellectual culture means nothing. Ford Madox Ford, also, insisted throughout his career to theorize an idealized distinction between "Artistic" and "Intellectual" activity. The intellectual activity was, to Ford, Wells's overarching interest in imperialism, and education; all things connected to the author's extra-literary ambition, uniquely Wellsian, to reform the State. Not only intellectual activity in imperial matters was suspicious when discussed through the literary object itself, but all political and eclectic extra-literary work aroused suspicion. To Ford such action beyond the artist's "role" *betrayed* the artist's vocation.

In other terms, in the light of this study, it is therefore possible to claim that literary Modernism, through the theory of impersonality in fiction and antagonistic public statements in relation to Wells's critique of imperialism, expressed a variety of anti-intellectualism that allows to reframe our understanding of the development of the British intellectual, intended here, of course, in its political expression. Modernism rejected the political "intellectual" in a specific Wellsian sense, as it developed in England after the Dreyfus Affaire's political scandal. *Wellsian intellectualism* had its specificity: unlike Zola's famous one-time intervention in politics, Wells's public role involved a consistent dialogue with the imperial world and its representatives. Evidence shows that Wells immensely contributed to *define* the semantics of the emerging term "intellectual" in Great Britain; he was, it must be clear, a public "intellectual" in a different sense than Virginia Woolf. Wells did set a standard for public involvement that successive thinkers either accepted or rejected, thus finding their peculiar intellectual space. Still, as I argued in Chapter 4 "The Call of History: The World Intellectual," Wells occupies, as much as Zola, a crucial prototypical position in intellectual and literary history. Wells was *the* British political intellectual, and his art was all-round intellectual activity. All British political activism of the later third and fourth decade of twentieth century, as a matter of fact, is closely indebted to the figure of H. G. Wells. One fact is crucial. Wells and Zola, two major intellectual figures of the European scene, belong to different temporal and political backgrounds; yet, significantly, they both emerged in the context of militant and competitive imperialism. The category of the intellectual cannot be fully understood beyond the geopolitics of New Imperialism. Without Empire, therefore, we cannot understand Wells.

Throughout *H.G. Wells and the Empire* it proved impossible to separate the artist from the intellectual whose activity was channelled on imperial reform. After *The Outline of History* in 1919-1920 he came to represent a world authority, and the foreign champion against Italian Fascism. As if imagined from an unwritten Dickensian novel, cockney Wells escapes the faith of the shop-clerk to become the most important commentator and journalist of imperial policy. As seen in Chapter 4, the other major journalist was Winston Churchill, who came to share from the 1920s self-sufficient ideas of Empire on the opposite pole of Wells's cosmopolitanism. It is evident that Wells helps us reframe our understanding of literary engagement, of politics, of authorial responsibility and the scopes of all artistic productions. Art may does make nothing happen, as the famous question goes, but Wells suggests it is worth trying. In the 1930s W. H. Auden was not claiming any original view; the poet was simply returning to the old question of art and the role of the artist in society so vehemently raised by Wells in the Edwardian era. We should not understand, however, Modernism and Wells as incompatible artistic forces. Modernism did seek for an abstraction which, evidently, could not be put into practice; the suppression of authorial ideology in fiction is, as much as Barthes's "Death of the Author" concept, an intellectual blind alley. Virginia Woolf, in order to establish her literary standing, attempted to bury Wells by consciously misinterpreting his art as monologic didacticism; whereas in fact, Wells's art explicitly envisioned the Author figure at the *service* of the Reader. Like Ford and Woolf, Wells desperately desired the Reader figure. Unlike these two literary figures, however, Wells employed techniques of self-revelation in fiction and acted eclectically as "Arbiter of the World," in Ford's suggesting image, in the age of rampant imperialism. H. G. Wells has, I argue, the following major merit: he was the first author in the English language who managed to bridge the gap between the non-communicative field of Art and Politics. This study has aimed to grasp the logical fallacies, and legacy, beneath this artistic and intellectual quarrel which would shape the canon of English literature and has too often focused on the Wells-James debate alone.

Therefore, I say again, Wells's theory of the novel, in the end, did *not* fail; it proved correct. Who can realistically remain, as Ford Madox Ford aspired to, beyond the world of "Public Affairs?" Any novelistic production is, by definition, a public act of human responsibility; and any attempt to divide art from politics is destined to struggle within its own entanglements of incoherency. Enlighteningly, furthermore, if one looks through the trajectory of Modernist writers from the 1930s onwards, and Virginia Woolf in particular, will detect an increasing attention to overt political examination in their literary works. Take, for instance, the structure of *The Years* (1937) and *Between the Acts* (1941); not to mention, beyond the literary production, Woolf's political activism and the anti-fascism advanced in *Three Guineas* (1938). Tellingly, Woolf's heroine, Lucy, at the end of *Between the Acts* is thus found scrolling the pages of Wells's *Outline of History* (1919). As History

calls, the canon of Modernism and all artistic productions becomes progressively "Wellsianised." Wells's influence after all, could not be suppressed by a series of sceptical statements alone; nor a stubborn critical silence on Wells can downplay the importance of the politics of art in relation to the world.

Politics and art have often struggled to find harmony. In the light of the analysis of *Moreau* and *The Ebb-Tide* in Chapter 5 "Re-thinking the Canon of Colonial Fiction," for instance, I am also convinced that Robert Louis Stevenson, had he lived beyond 1894, would have become the first "political intellectual" in the English language, hypothetically overlapping with Zola in France. After all, he was following the perilous path of Public Affairs. Of course, it is largely uchronian thought to imagine the development of the term "Intellectual" before the Dreyfus *affaire*; but again, the context was competitive imperialism. Stevenson's career, as we noted, insightfully anticipates the history of Mr Wells: as soon as the literary author of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* intervenes with responsibility in politics, the critical oblivion begins. Stevenson's lunge into Public Affairs in the Samoan scene originally caused laments from "Home;" friends and artists accused him for having abandoned *pure* literary imagination for the dangerous and un-artistic business of Statecraft. Stevenson's political activity, as suggested, had shown Wells, since the early 1890s, and before Zola, the possibility for the literary author to be eclectic, politically engaged, and responsible for his denouncing art. From this point, new critical horizons therefore open before the critic.

This is precisely where I believe future scholarship could redirect its attention: in the understanding of H. G. Wells's uniqueness in literature and intellectual history. The early Wells, the colonial settings of his short stories and novels, also, deserve to be rediscovered in terms of Empire. My contextual analysis of *Moreau* has attempted to prove how much an interest in "Science" alone can be limiting when studying an author as political as Wells. And it is high time to re-discover Wells in the twentieth century, in my view; chronologically, my research, although aiming to a fuller picture of the author in order to escape the "early"/ "late" categoric distortion, interrupts averagely around the 1920s, when the power structure of imperialism is confronted with the emerging totalitarian experiment in Italy. I restate the importance to which any serious discussion should now discard Arendt's fragile – but still influential – conception that Italian Fascism was *not* totalitarianism.[838] This view perpetrates the falsified image that Nazi Germany was the true or *actual* totalitarianism. Having clarified this fallacy, studies in Wells the "Artist-Intellectual" in relation to totalitarianism may be a challenging path to explore. H. G. Wells, as we have seen in Chapter 4 "The Call of History: The World Intellectual", came to be considered in the 1920s as a most potent "Voice" of democracy from

[838] See Gentile, "The Silence of Hannah Arendt."

the leading Italian anti-fascists. The Italian Ex-Prime Minister Nitti asked for the author's influential support: "How many truths You can let the world know!" Despite his own political limitations, Wells was the first influential Englishman to take a stand against the Italian totalitarian policy of terror, when many would either stand indifferent or hail the Fascist experiment. It is alarming that the prejudice on Wells's career after 1901 has allowed for decades to obscure relevant pages of history. In the lack of a serious understanding of Wells, the critical genealogy of the British intellectual in its political connotation, also, remains flawed and falsified. Equally, the position of Art in relation to politics presents critical gaps. In the trajectory we have lost both the artist and the intellectual.

There is also another field of investigation connected to *H.G. Wells and the Empire*, which is more specific: war. I have attempted to offer a general view of Wells's continuity of thought in terms of imperialism; but technological inventions and prophecies, for example, have not been under my critical consideration. We know the anecdotical narrative: Wells foresaw the tank, the airplanes, the atomic bomb etc. etc. It is possible for specialists, however, to add a fuller contextual picture of the Wellsian novel between 1913 and 1918. Wells's engagement during the war period is a field worth exploring. It may sound as paradox, but criticism has no trenches in there yet. We saw how Wells was a major voice of WWI; *Mr Britling* was an international success and the thundering, global critique of European imperialism in *The Outline of History* became the intellectual symbol of the "Wellsian Era." Along with the Great War, and by large less at the centre of critical attention, is also the author's position and fictional output produced during the Second World War. Wells's relationship with Winston Churchill is particularly insightful and, probably, further studies would require a major collaboration between literary scholars and experts of political thought. It is evident that the 1920s, the 1930s and 1940s are virtually unchartered territories which have suffered under the prejudice of the label of Wells's "later fiction" and the three crosses of Virginia Woolf: "Edwardian," "Materialist," and ultimately Wells "writing of unimportant things" (!).

To conclude, although it may appear critical imperialism in itself, it is nevertheless advisable to label most of Wells's works, similarly to Kipling's output, as "imperial fiction;" or "engaged fiction" in which, let us be clear, *engaged* has little to do, anachronistically, with the French term *engagé*; it is a concept purely British and Wellsian. Both phrases seem to me, despite their limitations, more transparent and accurate than the vaguest and now quasi-derogatory label "later fiction of H. G. Wells." There is a critical urgency to resituate the author in the original context through faithful historicization. As I have tried to show, the allegorical design in *Meanwhile* (1927) and the self-revelatory technique of *The World of William Clissold* (1926), for example, are much more interesting literary experiments and "imperial novels" than one would normally believe. Wells's self-revelatory

technique and its political ironic edge never abandoned the sparkle of his artistic power. John Huntington insisted, as early as 1986, that "in order to influence the understanding and evaluation of Wells in any significant way, we are going to have to take on the detailed ideas and the explicit political stances to which Wells committed himself."[839] This remains the most valuable recommendation to any scholar of Wells. We need the Author back and his political intentions; through historical awareness it is necessary to frame Wells as the full-fledged leading political intellectual of British culture in the context of imperialism. This critical attitude will hopefully allow future criticism, finally, to rediscover the artistic force of H. G. Wells's textual universe. It is a sidereal literary space, vast, and important.

[839] Huntington, "Rethinking Wells," 206.

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