H. G. Wells Science and Philosophy
Friday 28 September
Imperial College, London
Saturday 29 September 2007
Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London

Programme

Friday 28 September 2007 – Room 116, Electrical Engineering Building, Imperial College, South Kensington, London

2.00-2.25 Arrivals

2.25-2.30 Welcome (Dr Steven McLean)

2.30-3.30 Papers:

Panel 1: - Science in the Early Wells

Chair: Dr Steven McLean (Nottingham Trent University)

Dr Dan Smith (University of London)

'Materiality and Utopia: The presence of scientific and philosophical themes in *The Time Machine*'

Matthew Taunton (London Consortium)
'Wells and the New Science of Town Planning'

3.30-4.00 Refreshments

4.00-5.00 Plenary: Stephen Baxter (Vice-President, H. G. Wells Society)

'The War of the Worlds: A Controlling Metaphor for the 20th Century'

Saturday 29 September 2007 - Library. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London

10.30-10.55 Arrivals

10.55-11.00 Welcome (Mark Egerton, Hon. General Secretary, H. G. Wells Society)

11.00-12.00 Papers:
Panel 2: - Education, Science and the Future
Chair: Professor Patrick Parrinder (University of Reading)

Professor John Huntington (University of Illinois, Chicago)
'Wells, Education, and the Idea of Literature'

Anurag Jain (Queen Mary, London)
'From Noble Lies to the War of Ideas: The Influence of Plato on Wells's Utopianism and Propaganda'

12.00-1.30 Lunch (Please note that, although coffee and biscuits are freely available, lunch is not included in this year's conference fee. However, there are a number of local eateries within the vicinity).

1.30- 2.30 Papers:
Panel 3: Wells, Modernism and Reality
Chair: Professor Bernard Loing (Chair, H. G. Wells Society)

Dr Sylvia Hardy (University of Northampton)
'H. G. Wells and William James'
Lee Garver (Butler University)
'Wells, Philosophical Nominalism, and Radical British Modernism

2.30-3.00 Coffee

3.00-4.00 Papers:

Panel 4: Wells, Science and the Mass Media

Chair: Mark Egerton (Secretary, H. G. Wells Society)

Dr Keith Williams (University of Dundee)

'Cinema and Optical Speculation in Early H.G. Wells'

Dr Todd Avery (**University of Massachusetts, Lowell)**

'A Natural Selection: H. G. Wells and a Huxleyan Ethics of Mass Communications'

4.30-4.45 Round table discussion chaired by Dr Bernard Loing

Directions to Imperial College

Room 611,
Electrical Engineering Building
South Kensington campus
Imperial College London
London SW7 2AZ
Tel +44 (0)20 7589 5111

From Heathrow airport
Take the Underground train (Piccadilly Line) to South Kensington station (50 minutes travelling time).
From Gatwick airport
Take a British Rail train to Victoria station (journey time 40 minutes) and then by Underground train (Circle or District Line; westbound) to South Kensington.
Both airports are some distance from central London and a taxi is not recommended for the whole journey. However, if you have to do so, establish the cost before you get in.
By sea
Take a British Rail train from the port of entry to London (Harwich to London journey time 1hr 30 mins; Dover to London journey time 2hrs) and then travel by Underground train to South Kensington station.
On foot
From South Kensington station, the campus is only five minutes' walk. Either follow the subway signposted to the museums or walk north up Exhibition Road. The College is next to the Science Museum.

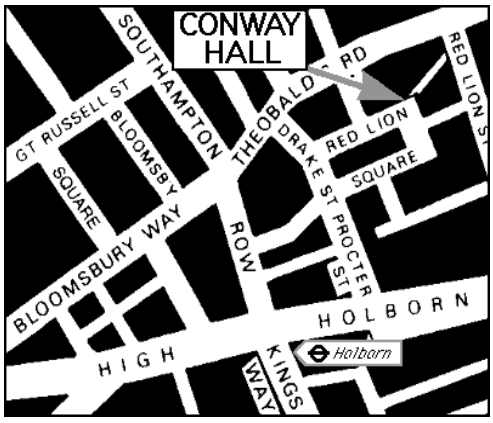
By bus

Route no.	To/From	Alight at
9	Aldwych - Hammersmith Broadway	Royal Albert Hall
10	Kings Cross Stn - Hammersmith Broadway	Royal Albert Hall
52	Victoria Bus Stn - Willesden Bus Garage	Royal Albert Hall

360	Elephant and Castle Stn - Prince Consort Rd	Prince Consort Rd
14	Tottenham Court Road - Putney Heath	South Kensington Stn
49	Battersea Rise - Shepherd's Bush Grn	South Kensington Stn
70	Acton - South Kensington Stn	South Kensington Stn
74	Baker Street Stn - Putney	South Kensington Stn
345	Peckham Bus Stn - South Kensington Stn	South Kensington Stn
414	Maida Vale - Putney Bridge	South Kensington Stn
C1	Victoria Stn - Phillimore Gardens (W8)	South Kensington Stn

By car
Car parking at the South Kensington campus is severely restricted and you are advised NOT to bring a car unless permission has been given. After 6pm, at weekends and during vacations the car park is open to the paying public. Parking in the streets surrounding the College is at pay and display or parking meters for limited periods only.

Directions to Conway Hall



Conway Hall
25 Red Lion Square
London WC1R 4RL
tel 020 7242 8032
www.conwayhall.org.uk

Underground
Nearest station is Holborn (Central and Piccadilly lines) approx 3 min walk. Also within reasonable walking distance are Chancery Lane and Russell Square. London Underground Infoline: 020 7222 1234.

Buses
The following buses pass through or near Holborn stopping just a few minutes walk to the Hall:

- ☐ from Oxford Street: 8, 25, 55; 98 (terminates in Red Lion Square)
- ☐ from Euston Station: 59, 68, 91, 188
- ☐ from Waterloo Station: 1, 59, 68, 188, 521, 243
- ☐ from Victoria: 38 (Theobalds Rd, rear side of Hall) London Buses Infoline: 020 7222

Abstracts of Papers

Dr Dan Smith, University of the Arts, London

Materiality and Utopia: The presence of scientific and philosophical themes in *The Time Machine*

This paper will identify an intersection of scientific and philosophical ideas within *The Time Machine*, which is read here as constitutive of a material world. This short novel can be thought of in terms of a scientific paradigm, not just as a source of evolutionary fantasy, but as an epistemological and methodological form of realism in the putting together of this material world. Despite his own contrasting assertion about the role of science as replacing the traditional use of magic in stories, the epistemological import of science on fiction is not alien to Wells's science fiction. The approach is arguably scientific, rather than based purely upon the use of science and technology as a source of fantasy. Science is also thematised through the account of time as a fourth dimension, and with the introduction of a technological means of traversing time. Scientific themes are also addressed through the embodied degeneration of humanity into the Eloi and Morlocks. Darwin, Huxley and evolutionary discourses are explicit but distorted beyond any kind of scientific accountability into a realm of speculation that can be identified as strictly philosophical in nature. The philosophical enquiry of *The Time Machine* can in part be associated with Wells's interest in Thomas Carlyle, and the influence of Max Nordau's *Degeneration*, but is also characterised by a sustained engagement with ideas first explored in Wells's student writing. His first article published in the student publication *Science Schools Journal*, titled 'Socrates', saw Wells posing as successor to Plato's narrating philosopher in *The Republic*. This piece is resonant in the light of Wells's speculative and utopian writing. It reads as a history, but prefigures his later works on futurity. More generally, philosophy can be detected in *The Time Machine* through a reading of the text as a utopian discourse, one that is marked by a sense of urgency of thought which engages with social reality. It is a speculative philosophical discourse, and marks a formative point in a subsequent tradition of critical engagements with utopia through fiction.

Biographical Note
I currently teach history and theory at Chelsea College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. I am a regular contributor to Art Monthly magazine, and have published writings on art, material culture and utopia. I have recently completed my PhD thesis on Wells, material culture and utopia at the Slade School of Art, University College London

Matthew Taunton, London Consortium

Wells and the New Science of Town Planning

This paper locates Wells within debates surrounding town planning around the turn of the century, and shows how his ideas on the subject shape and inform his fiction. Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* was a key text in the contemporary debate, and Wells was evidently excited by its desire to make a science of town planning. The influence of Howard's desire to 'restore the people to the land' can be felt, for instance, in *Anticipations*, where Wells argues for 'the probable diffusion of great cities'. This centrifugal redistribution of the population across the countryside has for him the advantage of reversing the trend for urban growth and rural depopulation that accompanied industrialisation. It is the nightmare that this centripetal trend might continue that animates *When the Sleeper Wakes*. But ultimately – as evinced by his short article on the Garden City – Wells could not stomach the close proximity of housing, industry and agriculture that was integral to Howard's plan. Against such mixed land use, Wells counterposed a vision in which housing could exist at great distances from places of work, connected by high-speed transport.
As an urbanist, Wells notable for his profoundly suburban outlook; indeed, as stated in *Anticipations*, 'the London citizen of the year 2000 A.D. may have a choice of nearly all England and Wales south of Nottingham and east of Exeter as his suburb'. This should prompt us to revaluate the notion that Wells's satirical novels of suburban life are opposed to the suburb *per se*. The paper closes by briefly

considering *Ann Veronica* in this light: as a novel which is directed towards the scientific perfection of the suburb rather than its abolition. For Wells, ultimately, it is the suburban home that offers the best chance of defending the family against the forces of industrial modernity.

Biographical Note

My background is in English Literature at UCL and I am currently a PhD student at the London Consortium. I also teach part time on the UCL English undergraduate degree. My thesis, entitled *Housing Problems in London and Paris: Literary and Filmic Perspectives*, examines the development of mass housing in the two cities through its representation in literature and film. This involves an examination of movements in urban planning and architecture as well as the social history of the two cities, and it therefore demands a multidisciplinary approach. The engagement with fictional narratives that are shaped by the development of mass housing can give fascinating insights into the social and political effects of such developments, and how they are felt. London and Paris responded in different ways to rapid population growth, and a comparative analysis of the forces at play in both cities is supported by the readings of film and literature in English and French. Through these readings, the thesis develops a critical perspective which aims to ask searching questions about the future of mass housing in our cities.

Professor John Huntington, University of Illinois at Chicago

Wells, Education, and the Idea of Literature

Wells's emphasis on science at the expense of the classical and humanist requirements of Oxford and Cambridge is central to his dream of education as the crucial instrument for the salvation of the civilized world. This is a well understood tenant of Wells's philosophy. Huxley's scientific style and thought spoke powerfully to Wells, and clearly his own training at the Normal School of Science remained a crucial model for him. Wells had the genius to put the radical and unsentimental implications of Darwinian evolution to work to escape the social handicap of his background and to achieve literary and social success.

As his career develops, Wells repeatedly attacks the traditional academic routine. The main fault he finds with classical education is its obsession with Latin and Greek, its philological interest in the history of Philosophy, and its essentially anecdotal sense of History as a nationalist celebration. These trivial, archaic studies, he argues, divert attention from present needs, obscure central issues, and use up time that would be better spent on science. Yet, behind these criticisms lies a deeper, more personal anger at the privileges of culture itself. Wells objects to "Culture" in the narrow sense, as the particular array of hard-to-attain skills, knowledges, and appreciations that Bourdieu argues reinforce the status quo. As Oswald discovers in Joan and Peter, this aspect of culture persists because it is the ticket to a university education and the badge that the university degree confers. There seems no way out.

Though in Wells's fiction the idea may first be voiced by people from the lower ends of the social scale, such as the Artillery man in The War of the Worlds, or the tramp in The Wonderful Visit, in later works, such as Joan and Peter or Star Begotten, the idea appears cleansed of class resentment. Many of his lower class heroes, such as Hoopdriver, Kipps, Bert Smallways, or Mr. Polly, seem oblivious (or resigned) to their cultural awkwardness. Others, such as George Ponderevo, are able, like Wells himself, to succeed despite those limits. But my point is not to categorize Wells' protagonists.

Through these permutations the same educational program continues to appear. The shifts in class perspective are not changes of idea but ways of moving around and viewing the main educational idea from different facets. The educational program is interesting in itself, but I want to push the issue a step further to how this educational idea with its underlying social implications touches the literary world at the time. The seeming contradiction that needs to be worked out is that Wells is himself deeply versed in the elements at the core of the humanist educational tradition that he attacks. He is not against traditional culture. He is not proposing a Maoist-style cultural revolution. From early in his career, he

shows himself extraordinarily well-versed, comfortable, even happy with the elements and styles that he would excise from education.

Education is always a site of a struggle over the essentials of social value. I plan to develop the implications of the apparent contradiction in Wells's own values and to show what a challenge his educational program was to British culture at the time by examining how Virginia Woolf's resistance to Wells's presence reveals a struggle that lies deeper than politics or art. On the surface, Woolf would seem to be in agreement with Wells about many issues. The Hogarth Press published three of Wells's works, and H.G. and Leonard had, most of the time, an amiable working relationship. Wells, as an eccentric socialist and feminist, might have been cultivated by Virginia. Her argument with Wells about the novel might be seen as just a further extension of the Wells-James debate.

Yet, Virginia Woolf's reactions to Wells are almost always hostile, and a study of her "readings" of him, in her essays, reviews, letters, and journals, suggests that he got under her skin in a way few other writers did. Woolf, of course, brings her own social anger to education. Three Guineas, which is in part motivated by some offensive lines in Experiment in Autobiography, is also a diatribe against the patriarchal establishment's denial of formal education to women.
Like Wells, Woolf has developed her cultural literacy outside the traditional academic institutions. Unlike Wells, however, she has gained her culture the old fashioned way, she inherited it. Put slightly differently, in her writing, both as novelist and as essayist, she shows herself to be a cultural authority who is the equal of any university-educated man; she finds Wells irritating because, as she sees him, he would devalue that accomplishment by striping it of its exclusive social significance. She defends her place by persistently questioning Wells's own cultural qualifications and denying that he has the sensibility that the traditional education instills.

Biographical Note

Professor Huntington's book was *The Logic of Fantasy: H. G. Wells and Science Fiction* (Columbia, 1982), and has recently edited Wells's late novel, *Star Begotten* (Wesleyan, 2006).

Anurag Jain, Queen Mary, University of London

From Noble Lies to the War of Ideas: The Influence of Plato on Wells's Utopianism and Propaganda

During the First World War, H.G. Wells wrote enthusiastically about propaganda as a means to fight ideas and bring about the war to end war. He believed propaganda was a crucial tool for defeating German Imperialism and establishing a lasting world peace. When he worked for the Ministry of Information in 1918 as director of enemy war propaganda, he complained that without clear war aims propaganda was not being marshalled towards establishing a peace that would establish a World State. Wells's conviction in the need for a world state started with *Anticipations* (1901), but the war afforded him an important opportunity to further his goals. Thus he championed propaganda as a means for hastening the possibility of establishing world governance. As has been well established, Wells's utopianism was greatly influenced by Plato, but what has hitherto been unexamined is how his ideas of propaganda are indebted to Plato's conception of the "Noble Lie" as a tool employed by the Guardians to help establish the rule of the philosopher kings. In this paper, I will be examining how Plato's discussion of the "Noble Lie" in the *Republic* and its relationship to the rule of the Guardians informs Wells's conception of propaganda and world governance. After the war, Wells would increasingly turn to education and history as new means of propagating his ideas, but he was enthusiastic over the experiments in Russia and Italy in moving beyond democracy as an ideal model of governance. Wells's changing understanding of propaganda can be brought into relief by examining post WWI American liberals such as Walter Lippman, Edward Bernays and Harold Lasswell. These thinkers would theorize propaganda as a tool for managing democracy in a way that helps illuminate Wells's own conception of propaganda. By looking at these post war theorizations I will explicate Plato's influence on Wells, particularly the way Wells's embrace of propaganda can be understood in relationship with his ambivalence to democracy.

Biographical Note

Anurag Jain is in the final year of his PhD Research project at Queen Mary, University of London. His project "How Art Put on Khaki and Went into Action" examines the relationship between authors and British Propaganda of the First World War.

Dr Sylvia Hardy, University of Northampton

H. G. Wells and William James

As a writer, H.G. Wells is renowned for the range and variety of his interests – writing extensively on science, politics, economics, history and sociology, as well as producing the novels and short-stories for which he is famous. He is, however, less well-known for his interest in philosophy, although this was an area which fascinated him throughout his life.

This paper will begin with a brief survey of Wells's philosophical interests and encounters, then will focus on his relationship with William James. When the two men met for the first and only time in 1909, James was one of the world's foremost philosophers, and Wells later declared that James had as great an influence on his thinking in his maturity as Huxley had on his youth. It is clear that as a scientist and a self-declared sceptical empiricist, Wells was attracted by James's Pragmatism, and he was fascinated, too, by James's psychological theories about the human psyche, particularly his arguments about reasoning and the consciousness of self. The paper will explore traces of these ideas in Wells's fiction and in his philosophical writing.

William James's influence on H.G. Wells was, I suggest, more extensive and important than has so far been acknowledged. James's analysis of different ways of thinking, it will be argued, not only affected Wells's approach to his writing in a number of ways, it also helped shape the way he saw himself.

Biographical Note

Sylvia Hardy is Research Associate at the University of Northampton, UK and a Vice-President of the H. G. Wells Society. Her research interests include Wells and film and Wells and language.

Dr. Lee A Garver, Butler University

Wells, Philosophical Nominalism, and Radical British Modernism

H.G. Wells's philosophical writings—especially his 1903 lecture to the Oxford Philosophical Society, "Scepticism of the Instrument"—are far more important to the development of British high modernism than critics tend to realize. Although Wells's stature among modernist scholars has risen considerably in recent years, it has often done so because critics have situated his work in opposition to that of more canonical modernists. By contrasting a backward-looking, authoritarian, and formally experimental high modernism with a more forward-looking, democratic, and aesthetically conventional "low" modernism, the latter closely identified with Wells, modernist scholars have encouraged contemporary readers to regard Wells as fundamentally opposed to the many of the most important aesthetic currents of his age. This, in my view, is unfortunate. While I do not wish to deny that there is some truth to this perspective or suggest that Wells does not richly merit separate scrutiny, I believe there is much to be gained by recovering philosophical links that unite him with later modernists, especially insofar as these links shed light on a shared commitment to aesthetic and political radicalism. The key philosophical link in this regard is philosophical nominalism. In his lecture, "Scepticism of the Instrument," later republished in revised form as an appendix to *A Modern Utopia* (1905), Wells expressed a deep skepticism about the capacity for language, as conventionally employed, to make sense of an evolving biological and social world. He argued that "classification" was "a departure from the objective truth of things, that [it was] very serviceable for the practical purposes of life, but a very doubtful preliminary to those fine penetrations the philosophical purpose, in its more arrogant moods,

demands." This, I will prove, is the same outlook held by such important early modernists as Ezra Pound, T.E. Hulme, and Katherine Mansfield, as well as the basis for a common interest in a strain of Edwardian radical political discourse that sought to base government on what Wells deems a "philosophy of fragmentation."

Biographical Note
Lee Garver is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in English at Butler University. He has published articles on Ezra Pound, Katherine Mansfield, and T.E. Hulme and written introductions to volumes eight and nineteen of The Modernist Journals Project online edition of *The New Age*. He is currently working on a book manuscript titled "Recovering Radical Modernism: *The New Age*, Edwardian Cultural Conflict, and Modernist British Aesthetics 1907-1914."

Dr Keith Williams, University of Dundee

Cinema and Optical Speculation in Early H.G. Wells

My paper examines synergies between Wells's writing and modern visual technologies. 'Realist of the Fantastic' (Conrad's accolade to Wells) could be equally applied to cinema as a medium rendering the actual and the impossible with virtually equivalent verisimilitude.

Wells's texts are often driven by 'optical speculations' producing radically defamiliarised forms of vision connected with the social and cultural impact of media technologies of various kinds, but also extending the ancient principle of ekphrasis into anticipations of new narrative forms which seem highly cinematic. My paper samples the sheer range of such 'optical speculations,' starting with the documented link between *The Time Machine* (1895) (published the same year as the Lumières' cinematograph) and British pioneer R.W. Paul's patent application for an exhibit simulating a journey into the future. Wells's early fiction is fascinated by 'paradoxes about space and time' ('The New Accelerator' (1901)) indicative of transformations in the 'chronotope' of Modernity in specifically cinematic terms. Among narrative strategies from the early stories are accelerated and slow-motion, 'frame freezing' and chronological 'reversing'. Similarly, numerous parallel universes speculate about new forms of technology allowing 'here and now' to overlap, dissolve into, and/or interpenetrate with 'elsewhere and -when'.

I also show how Wells explored modern subjectivity through other cinematic themes and tropes, such as wish-fulfilment amongst audiences made possible by technologised voyeurism (e.g. 'The Plattner Story' (1897)). Wells's early fiction is permeated by 'living pictures' and autokinesis (e.g. 'The Temptation of Harringay' (1895)). 'The Man Who Could Work Miracles' is a Mélièsque *tour de force* of 'stop-motion' illusionism and trickfilm effects. Given the Victorians's twin obsession with machinery and mediums, Wells frequently reworks occult narratives in (pseudo)scientific terms reflecting new media such as cinema as what Alison Chapman calls 'technologies of the uncanny'.

Biographical Note

Keith Williams teaches English at the University of Dundee. His forthcoming book on Wells, *Realist of the Fantastic*: *H. G. Wells, Modernity and the Movies*, will be published by Liverpool University Press in October 2007.

Dr Todd Avery, University of Massachusetts Lowell

A Natural Selection: H. G. Wells and a Huxleyan Ethics of Mass Communications

H. G. Wells was an infrequent radio broadcaster but, nevertheless, an important radio personality over the course of a broadcasting career that spanned nine talks and fourteen years from 1929 to 1943. Wells's contributions to the British Broadcasting Corporation during British radio's formative first two decades have received only sparse critical attention. (Of course, Wells's most famous---or notorious---contribution to radio was an indirect one: The War of the Worlds inspired Orson Welles's Halloween

1938 broadcast in the United States.) However, a closer look at Wells's BBC broadcasts offers an interesting perspective both on the BBC's efforts to elevate British culture and morality during the tenure (1922-1938) of Director-General John Reith, and on how Wells himself conceptualized early twentieth-century technoculture in the context of ethical beliefs which he had derived in part from his understanding of evolutionary theory in general and in part from Thomas Henry Huxley's work on evolution and ethics in the 1890s. This paper has two closely related purposes: to reassess the nature of Wells's participation in and attitude toward radio from an ethical perspective, and to offer a fresh reading of the nature of Wells's ethical beliefs in the context of the nascent world of electronic mass telecommunications in England in the 1930s. Joining strands of scientific (evolution), philosophical (ethics), and political (or, more precisely, cultural) discourse, this paper ultimately proposes to illuminate one of the activities---Wells's participation in radio broadcasting---that makes Wells, and Wellsian ethical thought, both deeply modern and firmly modernist in character.

Biographical Note

Professor Avery is an assistant professor of English at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, where he has taught for six years, since receiving my Ph.D. in English and Cultural Studies at Indiana University. Professor Avery has published several articles on British modernist writers, including Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, the Bloomsbury Group, and T. E. Hulme, and on such subjects as the ethical dimensions of the transition from Victorian into modernist literature and other aspects of early twentieth-century literary, ethical, and cultural thought. His recent book, RADIO MODERNISM: LITERATURE, ETHICS, AND THE BBC, 1922-1938, was published by Ashgate Press in 2006, and it includes a chapter on Wells of which this paper will be, to a great extent, an adbridgement. Professor Avery's current research involves examining iterary representations and ethical aspects of nanotechnology in the context of the so-called "two cultures" debate.