

is thought to have drawn the diagrams accompanying his lectures, which were given in the daytime because, Spurzheim thought, ‘Ladies and idle people’ preferred daytime lectures (p. 69). And Lightman records that in 1859 the entertaining natural historian Frank Buckland was lecturing to an audience of ‘working men, their wives and babies’ (p. 105). To follow up on one of Van Wyhe’s points: given the excellent work that has now been done on the audiences for science in nineteenth-century Britain, notably Anne Secord’s on the spread of scientific knowledge through working-class communities via local pubs, and also on families entering the marketplace, it would be useful for scholars to start thinking through the ways in which the companionate marriage – and new configurations of family life generally – may have increased the demand for scientific knowledge.

Science in the Marketplace offers an important overview of science and consumer culture in nineteenth-century Britain, with each author contributing something new to our understanding of the meaning and development of popular science. A history with a difference, it will be of wide appeal.

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STEVEN McCLEAN, *The Early Fiction of H. G. Wells: Fantasies of Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Pp. ix + 242. ISBN 978-0-230-53562-6. £50.00 (hardback). doi:10.1017/S0007087409990550

What is there to add to Wellsian scholarship? We all know now that his year of education under T. H. Huxley set him on course for life, and that his monsters were contemporary eugenic fears given hideous incarnation. We have all sat through conference papers about degeneration that use his novels as a touchstone. Steven McClean does not sound confident that he is carving out new territory: ‘What distinguishes [this book] from previous studies is that it investigates the full extent to which Wells’s romances are immersed in the discourses of science in the 1890s and 1900s’ (p. 8). The heart sinks a little at that ‘full’: so it’s more of the same except in more detail, then.

Actually the book turns out to be more interesting than its author implies. The first section, ‘Misadventures in a post-Darwinian universe’, covers the expected ground, but things start getting more original in Parts Two and Three. These deal respectively with the role of science and scientists in society, and with Wells’s sociological engagements. Overall, this is a very competent overview of Wells in relation to his contemporary science, broadly construed (its social role as well as its content). There are no major surprises, but the book provides a useful synthesis of recent scholarship, combined with insightful textual readings and some original intellectual history concerning scientific debates.

The book’s first two chapters are linked by Wells’s distrust of ‘Excelsior biology’ (p. 33), the notion that biological progress is an ever-upward phenomenon. Herbert Spencer is little discussed in this section, which is rather a pity (he makes his appearance later on), but Huxley, Lankester, Galton *et al.* all get a thorough treatment in relation to *The Time Machine* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. A little more cross-comparison between these texts would have been welcome, rather than the neatly bounded discussions we have here, but the textual readings are always insightful. At one point, McClean embarks upon an intriguing, historicized queer reading of Dr Moreau. Wells, we learn, acknowledged Wilde’s trials as a partial inspiration for the novel, and as McClean notes, Moreau’s expulsion from society echoes the consequences for the homosexual of transgressing social expectations. Alas, this thread is not pursued as fully as it might have been. This is perhaps indicative of a general tendency of McClean’s to delimit textual readings according to their relevance to predetermined scientific questions. His are well-behaved texts that do not overstep their illustrative value.

My favourite chapter came in the section on science and society, and focuses on *The Invisible Man*. McClean persuasively presents the novel as a study in the role of a scientific education and ways of knowing – a refreshing change from its protagonist’s usual pairing with that degenerationist bogeyman Mr Hyde. Instead attention is given to the villagers’ inability to comprehend the strange phenomena on their doorstep connected with the arrival of the bandaged Griffin. In McClean’s reading, their failure to practise basic observational skills is used by Wells to highlight the need for a scientific education such as had been presented in Huxley’s ‘Science and culture’ (1880) or in Karl Pearson’s *Grammar of Science* (1892). I could not help but wonder if the analysis might have been made more complex by a reading of the novel alongside Wells’s short story ‘The country of the blind’, in which observation turns out to be a distinctly un-useful skill. Contrary to the saying (‘in the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king’), even a two-eyed man turns out to be at the mercy of his sightless peers. Their world is entirely self-consistent and actually easier to navigate without sight: a question mark, perhaps, over the automatic ascendancy of scientifically enlightened cultures.

A chapter on *War of the Worlds* returns (frustratingly, without intertextual comparison) to the evolution-and-ethics debate of *The Time Machine*. McClean reads *War* as an intervention in the debate between Huxley and Spencer about whether individualism or cooperation was more necessary for (human) evolution. McClean’s conclusion, that Wells rejected Spencer’s individualism in favour of Huxley’s cooperation, is given an unnerving edge in many other of Wells’s stories, where cooperative biological groups (for example, the ants in ‘Empire of the ants’) exploit their superorganismic status to trounce humanity.

The division of scientific labour in society – a topic related to the scientific education of *The Invisible Man* – is revisited in McClean’s analysis of *First Men in the Moon*. The author astutely characterizes this novel as a ‘perverse articulation’ (p. 147) of Wells’s then-current thinking on the scientific ordering of society. This hints at one of the central problems of Wellsian scholarship, namely knowing whether or not to take him seriously. Near-identical social set-ups are apparently the objects of satire and then endorsement in *First Men* and *Anticipations* respectively.

In the book’s final chapter, McClean has to grapple with Wells’s infamous and incendiary eugenic statements. He does so calmly, treating them in the helpful contexts of contemporary debates on social well-being and Wells’s personal reading of J. S. Mill. In his coverage of this and other intellectual debates, McClean occasionally slips towards what Quentin Skinner has called the ‘mythology of coherence’, attempting to find a perspective from which Wells’s views may be demonstrated to have been consistent. Yet this perspective does not necessarily exist, and McClean’s own interpretative framework of ‘perverse articulation’ could have been followed through more fully to useful effect in exiting this trap. Despite his latter-day reputation for didacticism, the distinctive quality of Wells’s writing was that he was able to articulate a dynamic process of wrestling with the multiple implications of science, both the desirable and the rebarbative. Neither for his readers, nor even perhaps for himself, was there a clear and self-consistent set of answers. For this reason Wells remains a vital and engaging figure for historians of science, and one that can never be reduced to a literary articulation of scientific positions.

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DEBORAH COEN, *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty: Science, Liberalism, and Private Life*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007. Pp. xi + 380. ISBN 978-0-226-11172-8. \$45.00, £28.50 (hardback).

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Deborah Coen’s excellent *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty* invites us to view *fin de siècle* Vienna through the lens of the Exners, one of the city’s most illustrious families. From the early