



THE REFLECTION OF THE WAR OF THE WORLDS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The science fiction historian John Clute describes Wells as "the most important writer the genre has yet seen", and notes his work has been central to both British and American science fiction. Science fiction author and critic Algis Budrys said Wells "remains the outstanding expositor of both the hope, and the despair, which are embodied in the technology and which are the major facts of life in our world". He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1921, 1932, 1935, and 1946.^[10] Wells so influenced real exploration of Mars that an impact crater on the planet was named after him.

Introduction

Wells's genius was his ability to create a stream of brand new, wholly original stories out of thin air. Originality was Wells's calling card. In a six-year stretch from 1895 to 1901, he produced a stream of what he called "scientific romance" novels, which included *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds* and *The First Men in the Moon*. This was a dazzling display of new thought, endlessly copied since. A book like *The War of the Worlds* inspired every one of the thousands of alien invasion stories that followed. It burned its way into the psyche of mankind and changed us all forever.

In the United Kingdom, Wells's work was a key model for the British "scientific romance", and other writers in that mode,

such as Olaf Stapledon, J. D. Beresford, S. Fowler Wright, and Naomi Mitchison, all drew on Wells's example. Wells was also an important influence on British science fiction of the period after the Second World War, with Arthur C. Clarke and Brian Aldiss expressing strong admiration for Wells's work. Among contemporary British science fiction writers, Stephen Baxter, Christopher Priest and Adam Roberts have all acknowledged Wells's influence on their writing; all three are Vice-Presidents of the H. G. Wells Society. He also had a strong influence on British scientist J. B. S. Haldane, who wrote *Daedalus; or, Science and the Future* (1924), "The Last Judgement" and "On Being the Right Size" from the essay collection *Possible Worlds* (1927), and *Biological Possibilities for the Human Species in the Next Ten Thousand Years* (1963), which are



speculations about the future of human evolution and life on other planets. Haldane gave several lectures about these topics which in turn influenced other science fiction writers.

Methods

In the United States, Hugo Gernsback reprinted most of Wells's work in the pulp magazine *Amazing Stories*, regarding Wells's work as "texts of central importance to the self-conscious new genre". Later American writers such as Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Frank Herbert and Ursula K. Le Guin all recalled being influenced by Wells's work.

Sinclair Lewis's early novels were strongly influenced by Wells's realistic social novels, such as *The History of Mr Polly*; Lewis also named his first son Wells after the author.

In an interview with *The Paris Review*, Vladimir Nabokov described Wells as his favourite writer when he was a boy and "a great artist." He went on to cite *The Passionate Friends*, *Ann Veronica*, *The Time Machine*, and *The Country of the Blind* as superior to anything else written by Wells's British contemporaries. In an apparent allusion to Wells's socialism and political themes, Nabokov said: "His sociological cogitations can be safely ignored, of course, but his romances and fantasies are superb

Results and Discussion

Jorge Luis Borges wrote many short pieces on Wells in which he demonstrates a deep familiarity with much of Wells's work. While Borges wrote several critical reviews, including a mostly negative review of Wells's film *Things to Come*, he regularly treated Wells as a canonical figure of fantastic literature. Late in his life, Borges included *The Invisible Man* and *The Time*

Machine in his Prologue to a *Personal Library*, a curated list of 100 great works of literature that he undertook at the behest of the Argentine publishing house Emecé. Canadian author Margaret Atwood read Wells' books, and he also inspired writers of European speculative fiction such as Karel Čapek and Yevgeny Zamyatin.

The War of the Worlds chronicles the events of a Martian invasion as experienced by an unidentified male narrator and his brother. The story begins a few years before the invasion. During the astronomical opposition of 1894, when Mars is closer to Earth than usual, several observatories spot flashes of light on the surface of Mars. The narrator witnesses one of these flashes through a telescope at an observatory in Ottershaw, Surrey, England. He immediately alerts his companion, Ogilvy, "the well-known astronomer." Ogilvy quickly dismisses the idea that the flashes are an indication of life on Mars. He assures the narrator that "[t]he chances against anything manlike on Mars are a million to one." The flashes continue unexplained for several nights.

Early one morning, a "falling star" appears over England. It crashes on Horsell Common, a large expanse of public land near the narrator's home in Maybury. When the narrator visits the crash site, he finds a crowd of about 20 people gathered around a large cylindrical object embedded in a sand pit. The object is made of metal, and it appears to be hollow. The narrator immediately suspects that the object came from Mars. After observing it for some time, the narrator returns to his home in Maybury. By the time he next visits the



crash site, news of the landing has spread, and the number of spectators has increased significantly. The narrator's second visit is far more eventful than his first: the cylinder opens, and he gets his first glimpse of the Martians:

A big grayish, rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear, was rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder. As it bulged up and caught the light it glistened like wet leather.... The whole creature heaved and pulsed convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder; another swayed in the air.

After a second Martian makes its way out of the cylinder, the narrator runs away in terror. While he hides in the woods, a small group of men (including Ogilvy) approach the cylinder with a white flag. As they near the Martians, there is a great flash of light, and the men carrying the flag are instantly incinerated. Several more flashes follow, causing the spectators to scatter. The narrator escapes back to his house, where he tells his wife what he has seen.

Shortly thereafter, military forces arrive on Horsell Common, and a second cylinder lands near the first. Fighting soon breaks out between the soldiers and the Martians. The following evening, after it becomes apparent that the soldiers are no match for the Martians and their "Heat Rays," the narrator resolves to take his wife east to Leatherhead, where he believes they will be safe. Using a horse-drawn cart rented from an oblivious innkeeper, the narrator successfully transports his wife (and a few of his belongings) to Leatherhead. Late that night, he leaves to return the cart. As he approaches Maybury, he encounters a

terrifying sight—a "monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pine-trees, and smashing them aside in its career." Stupefied by the sight of the Martian "fighting-machine," the narrator crashes the cart, thereby breaking the horse's neck. The narrator just barely escapes detection by the Martians. Against all odds, he manages to make it back to his house. While sheltering there, he encounters a fleeing artilleryman. Cut off from his wife by a cylinder between Maybury and Leatherhead, the narrator decides to travel with the artilleryman. However, they are quickly separated. After a terrifying encounter with the Martians on the River Thames, the narrator finds an abandoned boat, which he uses to paddle toward London. Overcome by "fever and faintness," he stops at Walton, where he meets the curate who will become his companion for the next few weeks.

Conclusion

At this point, the narrative changes focus, and the narrator begins to tell the story of the invasion as it was experienced by his younger brother, a medical student (also unnamed) in London. According to the narrator, news of the Martian invasion was slow to spread in London. Two days after the initial attack, most Londoners were either unaware of or unconcerned about the danger presented by the Martians. Only after the Martians march upon London do the inhabitants begin to panic. The Martians release a poisonous "Black Smoke" over the city, forcing civilians to evacuate en masse. While attempting to flee to Essex, the narrator's brother catches a group of men in the act of robbing two women. The brother bravely intervenes and saves the women.



They allow him to join them in their carriage, and the three of them set out for the southeastern coast of England. After a series of unfortunate events (their pony is taken away as food by the Committee of Public Supply), the party reaches the coast, where they combine their money and buy passage to Ostend, Belgium, on a steamer.

As the steamer pulls away from the shore, the brother watches a spectacular fight between a worship—the torpedo ram HMS Thunder Child—and three Martian fighting-machines.

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