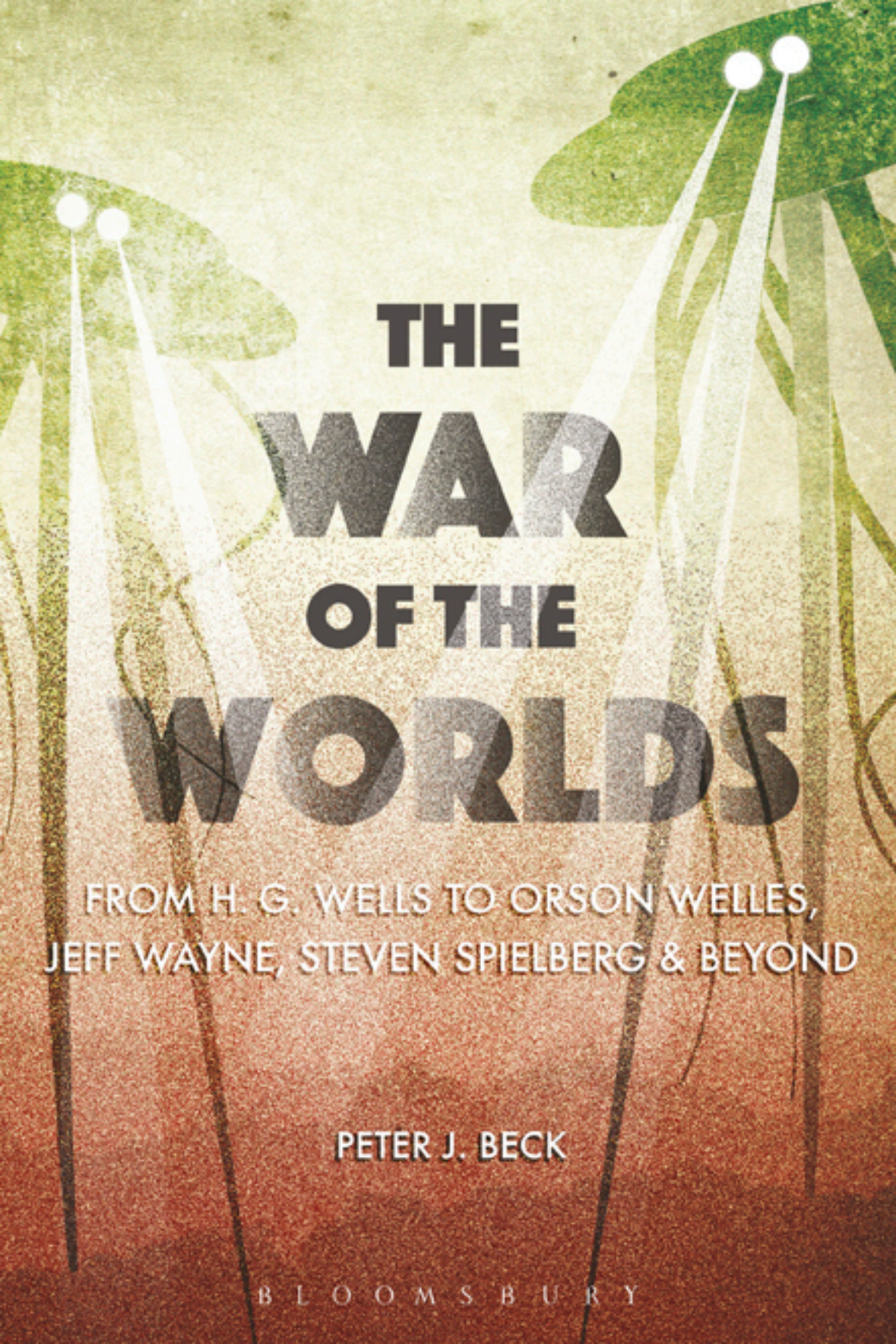
THE
WAR
OF THE
WORLDS
FROM H. G. WELLS TO ORSON WELLES,
JEFF WAYNE, STEVEN SPIELBERG & BEYOND
PETER J. BECK
BLOOMSBURY

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

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THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

From H. G. Wells to Orson Welles, Jeff Wayne, Steven Spielberg and Beyond

Peter J. Beck

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For Ethan

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PREFACE

Originating during the late 1980s as a small scale local history project focused upon Wells and his brief residence in Woking (1895–6), this study, drawing increasingly upon archival research conducted in both Britain and the USA, expanded gradually into a biography of *The War of the Worlds* as a book. Even so, for an author living a mile or so from both the place where Wells's Martians landed and the site of the first interplanetary battlefield, the local history dimension has always been there, albeit evolving increasingly into a focus upon the Wellsian literary heritage dimension. Indeed, my involvement as the H. G. Wells Society's representative on a Woking Task Group organizing events in 2016 to mark the 150th anniversary of Wells's birth and the 70th anniversary of his death has merely reinforced this aspect.

Jonathan, Catharine, Richard and Ethan have provided an encouraging family environment for undertaking this project. Sadly, my wife, Barbara, passed away midway through the project and hence this book is dedicated also to her memory. This book has benefited from the constructive editorial roles performed for Bloomsbury Academic by David Avital and Mark Richardson, the referees advising on the draft proposal, and to those, especially Keith Williams, reading sections of the manuscript in progress, plus the invaluable role played by Kim Storry and her team at Fakenham Prepress Solutions. I should like to thank also the personal contributions made by Paul Malcolm Allen, chair of the H. G. Wells Society; Pam Arbeeny of the John F. Reed Library, Colorado; Matthew J. Boylan of The New York Public Library; Rosemary and Richard Christophers; John M. Clarke; Damian Collier; Peter Darley; Mark Doyle; Edward J. Epstein; John Hammond; Ann Harington; Andrew Heggie; Simon James; Tony Kremer; Larry McAllister of Paramount Pictures; Louise North; Amber Paranick of the Library of Congress; Diane Parks of Boston Public Library; Patrick Parrinder; Lauren Plosker; Lynn Porteous; Paul Rimmer; Gene Rinkel; David Rymill; Henry F. Scannell of Boston Public Library; Dennis Sears; Michael Sherborne; Linda Shaughnessy; Riette Thomas; Travis Westly of the Library of Congress; Nathan Wilkes; and Keith Williams.

Present-day values of incomes and prices have been calculated using the online Bank of England inflation calculator: http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/resources/inflationtools/calculator/flash/default.aspx. To help readers follow up specific textual references to *The War of the Worlds*, the bracket following each quote from the book records the relevant section, chapter and page numbers in the original 1898 book and the 2005 Penguin edition in the following format: book section: 1898 book page/2005 book page (i.e. II.2: 204/124). Any changes of text from the 1898 book are recorded in square brackets.

Peter J. Beck
Kingston University

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CGI	Computer generated imagery
EST	Eastern Standard Time
H.C.P.S.	Horsell Common Preservation Society
MP	Member of Parliament
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
OS	Ordnance Survey Maps
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service (USA)

Herbert George Wells: Chronology

1866 21 September Born in Bromley, Kent, third son of Joseph and Sarah Wells

1874–80 School at Morley's Academy, Bromley

1880–3 Apprenticed to drapers in Windsor and Southsea and a pharmacist in Midhurst

1883–4 Pupil teacher at Midhurst Grammar School – won scholarship to Normal School of Science, London

1884–7 Attended Normal School of Science – studied under T. H. Huxley; met Isabel Wells; failed to graduate

1886 December Founded and initially edited *The Science Schools Journal;* published 'The Chronic Argonauts' (an early version of *The Time Machine*) in *The Science Schools Journal*

1887–8 Taught at Holt Academy, North Wales; seriously ill after footballing injury; convalesced in the Potteries and then at Uppark

1889–93 Taught at Henley House School, Kilburn and tutored for the University Correspondence College

1890–1 Gained London University B. Sc. Hons in Zoology & Geology plus teacher's diploma

1891 Married Isabel Wells, his cousin

1891 First article 'The Rediscovery of the Unique' published in a major periodical, *The Fortnightly Review*

1893 Gave up teaching because of illness – became a journalist

1893 Published *Textbook of Biology* and co-authored (with Richard Gregory) *Honours Physiography*

1893–4 Left Isabel to live with Amy Catherine Robbins (Jane)

1895 Divorced Isabel (she died in 1931); **May** Moved from London to Woking, Surrey; married Jane (October 1895)

1895 Published *The Time Machine*; *The Wonderful Visit*; *Select Conversations with an Uncle*; *The Stolen Bacillus*

1896 August–October Moved to Worcester Park, Surrey

1896 Published *The Island of Dr Moreau*; *The Wheels of Chance*

1897 Published *The Plattner Story and Others*; *The Invisible Man*; *Certain Personal Matters*; *Thirty Strange Stories*; serialization of *The War of the Worlds*

1898 Serious illness led to move to Sandgate on the Kent coast

1898 Published *The War of the Worlds*

1899 Published *When the Sleeper Wakes*; *Tales of Space and Time*

1900 Moved into Spade House, a new house built at Sandgate

1900 Published *Love and Mr Lewisham*

1901 Published *First Men in the Moon*; *Anticipations*

1927 Death of Jane, his second wife

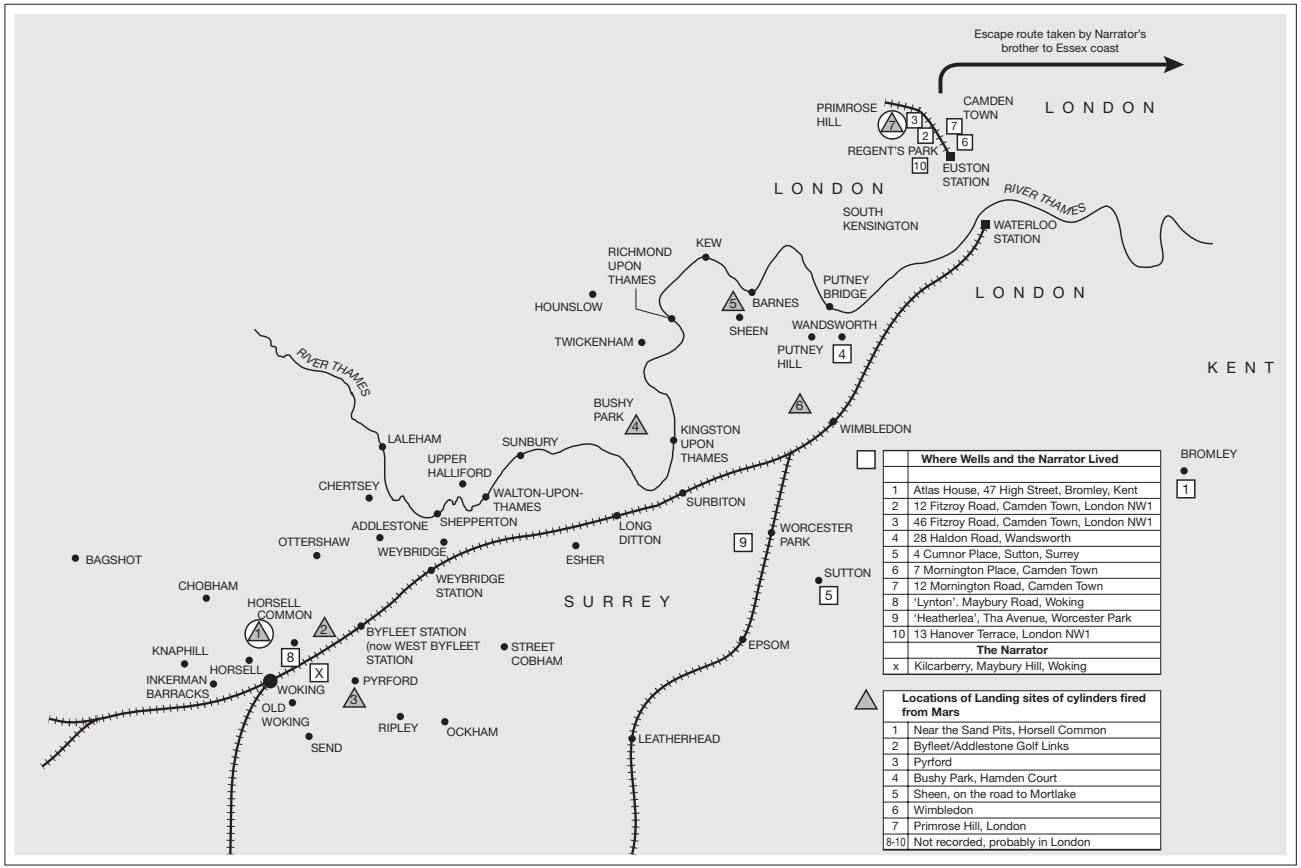
1943 Awarded DSc by University of London

1946 13 August Died in London

H. G. WELLS: BOOKS PUBLISHED, 1895–1900

Title	Serialized	Published as a book	Price
The Time Machine: An invention	*The National Observer*, March–June 1894 [partial serialization] *The New Review*, January–May 1895	William Heinemann, London: May 1895 Holt, New York: May 1895	UK: 2s 6d [£0.125] 1s 6d pb [£0.075] USA: $0.75
Select Conversations with an Uncle (now extinct) and two other reminiscences	12 conversations plus two short stories printed in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1893–4	John Lane, London: May 1895 Merriam, New York: May 1895	UK: 3s 6d [£0.175] USA: $1.25
The Wonderful Visit		J. M. Dent, London: September 1895 Macmillan, New York: September 1895	UK: 5s [£0.25] USA: $1.25
The Stolen Bacillus and Other Incidents	15 short stories published previously in journals, including *Pall Mall Budget, Pall Mall Gazette* and *St. James's Gazette*, 1893–5	Methuen, London: November 1895	UK: 6s [£0.30]
The Island of Dr Moreau	Excerpt based on Chap. XIV in *Saturday Review of Literature*, 19 January 1895 entitled, 'The Limits of Individual plasticity'.	William Heinemann, London: March 1896 Stone & Kimball, New York: August 1896	UK: 6s [£0.30] USA: $1.25
The Wheels of Chance: a holiday adventure [in USA sub-titled *a bicycling idyll*]	*To-Day* May–September 1896	J. M. Dent, London: October 1896 Macmillan, New York: October 1896	UK: 5s [£0.25] USA: $1.50
The Plattner Story and Others	17 short stories published previously in such journals as *The Idler*, *The New Review* and *Pall Mall Budget*, 1894–6	Methuen, London: May 1897	UK: 6s [£0.30]
The Invisible Man	*Pearson's Weekly*, June–July 1897	C. Arthur Pearson, London: September 1897 Edward Arnold, New York: November 1897	UK: 3s 6d [£0.175] USA: $1.25

Title	Serialized	Published as a book	Price
Thirty Strange Stories	30 short stories including all stories from *The Plattner Story*, ten stories from *The Stolen Bacillus*, plus three new stories	Edward Arnold, New York: January 1897	USA: $1.50
Certain Personal Matters	39 essays published principally in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, but also in the *New Budget* and *Black and White*, 1893–5	Lawrence & Bullen, London: October 1897	UK: 3s 6d [£0.175]
The War of the Worlds	*Pearson's Magazine*, April–December 1897 *Cosmopolitan* April–December 1897	William Heinemann, London: January 1898 Harper, New York: March 1898	UK: 6/- [£0.30] USA: $1.50
When the Sleeper Wakes (retitled *The Sleeper Awakes*: 1910)	*The Graphic*, January–May 1899 *Harper's Weekly*, January–May 1899	Harper, London & New York: May 1899	UK: 5s [£0.25] USA: $1.50
Love and Mr Lewisham	*The Times Weekly Edition*, November 1899–February 1900	Harper, London and New York: June 1900	UK: 6s [£0.30] USA: $1.50



The War of the Worlds: Where Wells lived, the Martian cylinders landed and events happened.

Part I

Introduction

Chapter 1

H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*: An Enduring Present-Day Story

In August 2012 the USA's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) successfully landed a robot rover on Mars. For NASA, like most people, the defining question is 'Life on Mars?' Was there once a time when life proved possible there? Unsurprisingly, all stages of the 'Mars Curiosity Project' have attracted extensive worldwide media coverage, particularly given the manner in which myriad works of science fiction have both encouraged and reflected our fascination with the Red Planet, Martians and all that. However, as the *New Scientist* asserted in 2015, the jury is still out on such questions.[1]

The War of the Worlds (1898), H. G. Wells's ground-breaking work of science fiction about a Martian invasion of earth, occupies a prominent place in our thinking about Mars. As a result, Wells is viewed still as a central player in Mars's storyline, as evidenced by his significant role in NASA's online 'Mars chronology'.[2] Moreover, the Press Kit prepared by NASA for the launch of the Mars rover included a section about fiction and reality focused upon the closing decades of the nineteenth century when the discoveries of astronomers like Giovanni Schiaparelli and Percival Lowell combined with the writings of Wells about Mars and Martians to fuel speculation about life on the red planet.[3] Indeed, as NASA's Press Kit recorded, Wells went even further by imagining future scenarios regarding Earth's relationship with Mars: 'On the dark side, H. G. Wells's 1898 novel "The War of the Worlds" portrayed an invasion of Earth by technologically superior Martians desperate for water'.

Today, 'the ghost of H. G. Wells' looms large still over contemporary media debates about the Red Planet.[4] In part, this reflects the enduring fame of *The*

1. Jacob Aron, 'What's flying over Mars … Could it be auroras? Volcanoes? Even aliens?' *New Scientist*, 21 February 2015, p. 10; Stuart Clark, 'Across the Universe: Curiosity rover: why NASA isn't looking for life on Mars', *The Guardian Science Blog*, 5 August 2012, http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/across-the-universe [accessed 5 August 2012].

2. Paul Karol and David Catling, *NASA: Mars Chronology: Renaissance to the Space Age*, 29 October 2003, http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/9-12/features/F_Mars_Chronology.html [accessed 16 October 2014].

3. NASA, *Mars Science Laboratory Launch: Press Kit*, November 2011, p. 56.

4. Robert Markley, *Dying Planet: Mars in Science and the Imagination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 386; Kenneth Chang, 'On Mars Rover, tools to plumb a methane mystery', *New York Times*, 22 November 2011.

War of the Worlds as a book, but it results also from the way in which Wells's pioneering story has been taken, and continues to be taken, to new audiences across the world – most notably on film by George Pal and Steven Spielberg, on radio by Orson Welles and through music by Jeff Wayne.[5] Moreover, Wells's book, like Orson Welles's broadcast, has even been targeted at a Martian audience, since both featured in 'Visions of Mars', a multimedia collection of literature and art about the Red Planet included in a DVD attached to the deck of NASA's Phoenix lander which arrived on Mars in May 2008.[6] Represented by the Planetary Society as 'the first library on Mars', the silica-glass DVD was designed to withstand the Martian environment for hundreds of years.[7]

Commenting upon the 'Mars Curiosity Project' for *USA Today*, Britt Kennerly reflected on Mars's role in popular culture:

> Mars is cool. No, not that kind of cool, though it gets nippy on a planet with temperatures that can dip to 200 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. Rather, it's an indefinable but unifying sort of cool that for centuries has inspired literature and legend. Sparked music and movies. Blended fact and fantasy in a way that's earned Mars a kind of "Pop Culture King of Planets" crown. Let's get down to Earth: You don't see Neptune or Uranus getting this kind of play.[8]

For Kennerly, Wells played a lead role in stimulating and moulding popular interest in and thinking about the Red Planet: 'Pop culture experts say widespread public interest in the planet really took off after H. G. Wells's "The War of the Worlds" was published in 1898, making plausible – or at least not out-of-this-world – the idea of Martian invaders'. Throughout its lifetime, *The War of the Worlds* has been acknowledged as – to quote Robert Crossley – 'a central text in the cultural history of Mars'.[9] Although it was not the first fictional work written about Mars, the book has proved instrumental in giving the planet global visibility and a central place in popular culture, most notably in serving as a reference point for the media. Significantly during 2013, Indian press coverage of the country's

5. Throughout this book, Orson Welles's name is written in full in order to avoid confusion with the use of 'Wells' for H. G. Wells.

6. The Planetary Society, 'Visions of Mars', 2007, http://www.planetary.org/explore/projects/vom/ [accessed 16 October 2014].

7. The Planetary Society, 'Press Release: Phoenix Takes Image of First Library on Mars', 27 May 2008, http://www.planetary.org/press-room/releases/2008/0527_Phoenix_Takes_Image_of_First_Library_on.html [accessed 16 October 2014].

8. Britt Kennerly, 'Mystery of Mars still attracts space lovers', *Florida Today*, 1 August 2012, http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/space/story/2012-08-01/mars-mystery-attracts/56650542/1 [accessed 5 August 2012]; Charles E. Gannon, '"One swift, conclusive smashing and an end": Wells, war and the collapse of civilisation', *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 28 (77) (1999): 44.

9. Robert Crossley, *Imagining Mars: A Literary History* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), p. 115.

'Mars Orbiter Mission', yet another project investigating past Martian habitats for indicators of life, echoed that in the USA. Thus, the *Times of India* foregrounded *The War of the Worlds* as a 'science fiction masterpiece', even quoting from the actual text by way of contextualizing India's interplanetary mission.[10] For the *Hindustan Times*, like *The Indian Express*, popular interest in Mars 'started with a book. In 1898, HG Wells brought Mars into popular culture with his book "The War of the Worlds"'.[11]

These examples, drawn from media coverage of recent space exploration, viewed alongside ongoing audio-visual adaptations of *The War of the Worlds*, reaffirm Wells's prominent place in contemporary popular culture. Indeed, ever since *The War of the Worlds* was published during the late 1890s, he has proved an influential popular cultural figure, as highlighted by his inclusion as one of the sixty or so people selected to feature on the cover of The Beatles' iconic 'Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' music album. Released in 1967, the Grammy Award-winning album, whose cover was designed by Peter Blake and Jann Haworth from an initial sketch by Paul McCartney, has sold over thirty million copies.

The War of the Worlds' *past and present*

The War of the Worlds, together with his other scientific romances, proved instrumental in forging Wells's reputation as a successful British writer reaching large audiences across Britain and the world. Moreover, these books have led Wells to be represented as a key figure, if not *the key figure*, responsible for originating what came to be described subsequently as science fiction.

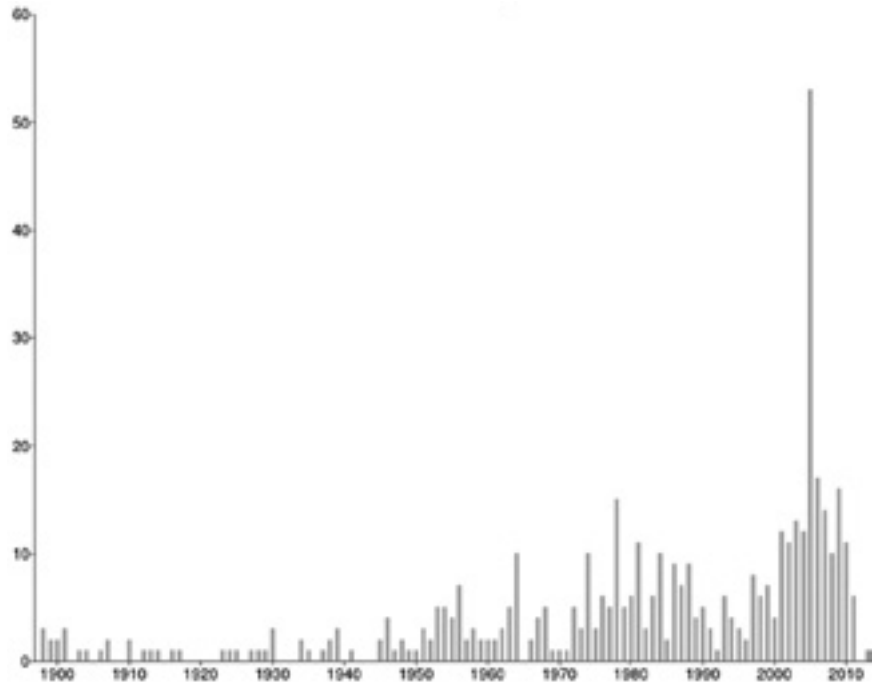
Written in the late nineteenth century and set during the early twentieth century, *The War of the Worlds* continues to attract audiences during the twenty first century. Serialized in 1897 and published as a book in 1898, this seminal work of science fiction has never been out of print. Over time, it has appeared in an ever increasing number of new print editions (Table 1.1), such as the 2005 Penguin Classic version referenced in this publication alongside the original book. Moreover, the book has been translated into numerous languages, is widely available for downloading on the internet and has been adapted for an ever wider range of media formats to reach new audiences.

Widely praised for its literary qualities, *The War of the Worlds* proved a crucial publication enabling Wells to make his mark in the challenging literary

10. 'Mars in Popular Culture', *Times of India*, 6 November 2013, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-11-06/india/43730963_1_mars-attacks-from-venus-from-mars [accessed 10 November 2013].

11. 'Mars, the muse: how Red Planet has inspired Earth', *Hindustan Times* 6 November 2013 http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/1147655.aspx [accessed 10 November 2013]; 'Mars of the mind', *The Indian Express*, 5 November 2013, http://www.indianexpress.com/news/mars-of-the-mind/1190930/ [accessed 10 November 2013].

Table 1.1 Editions of *The War of the Worlds* published per year



Source: http://drzeus.best.vwh.net/wotw/chron.html [accessed 30 July 2013].

world, particularly by highlighting his skill in making fantasy scenarios appear both engaging and real to readers within Britain and the wider world. For most readers, the story about a Martian invasion launched against Britain was just an excellent read, an exciting page-turner offering a very different type of story from the norm as well as raising such fantasy counterfactuals as 'What if the Martians invaded earth?'. For many its enduring appeal derives from its timeless focus upon the impact of a foreign invasion and war upon present-day society, through a storyline touching upon such perennial themes as complacency about national security; the need to take account of the unexpected; the ferocity of aggressive imperialism; the devastation and mass panic prompted by a sudden invasion; and the impact of science and technology upon warfare. Notwithstanding an understandable amount of scientific and technological anachronism due to subsequent advances in communications, weaponry and knowledge about Mars, *The War of the Worlds* has continually showed its ability to appeal to new and diverse audiences.

For Jeff Wayne, whose musical stage adaptation helps to explain *The War of the Worlds*' continuing visibility and popularity, Wells's storyline still talks to today's

world: 'It resonates today … it's all about conquering or being conquered'.[12] For Robert Silverberg, what keeps *The War of the Worlds* and the other scientific romances in print are Wells's literary skills, soaring imagination and vision of the time to come: 'it is that vision that gives his work continuing life'.[13] Likewise, Jorge Luis Borges, describing Wells as 'an admirable storyteller' writing scientific romances 'for all ages', praised the literary 'excellence' of these 'fantastic exercises': 'Not only do they tell an ingenious story; but they tell a story symbolic of processes that are somehow inherent in all human destinies. … I think they will be incorporated … into the general memory of the species and even transcend the fame of their creator or the extinction of the language in which they were written.'[14]

As a child, Wells used books to transport himself away from 'Atlas House', his birthplace in Bromley. Reading about diverse imaginary worlds took the young Wells away from the dark subterranean kitchen, the bug-infested bedrooms and the dingy parlour and carried him to faraway places and time periods. In turn, Wells, the writer of scientific romances, did the same for his many readers, offering them the opportunity to escape for a while from everyday realities to alternative worlds. Wells's scientific romances, most notably *The War of the Worlds*, have always appealed strongly to the young, a point made in 2005 by several respondents for a Mass Observation study about popular attitudes towards science fiction. Typically, one seventy-four-year-old recorded that as a boy he could 'still remember the pleasure of discovering' *The War of the Worlds*, which not only proved a good read, but opened his mind to other worlds beyond earth.[15]

One young reader enthused by the originality and sheer literary brilliance of Wells's early work was George Orwell (1903–50), whose dystopian novel *1984* (1949) was to prove as ground-breaking a text as *The War of the Worlds*.[16] For Orwell the schoolboy, 'There was the joy of waking early on summer mornings and getting in an hour's undisturbed reading (Ian Hay, Thackeray, Kipling and H. G. Wells were the favourite authors of my boyhood) in the sunlit, sleeping dormitory'.[17] As Bernard Crick recorded, Wells's writings, or rather those of the

12. Quoted, Stewart Lee, 'A new theatre of operations', *Sunday Times*, 19 March 2006, p. 27.

13. Robert Silverberg, 'Introduction', in Robert Silverberg (ed.), *The Mirror of Infinity: A Critics' Anthology of Science Fiction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. viii.

14. Jorge Luis Borges, *Other Inquisitions, 1937–1952* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1964), pp. 86–8.

15. The Mass Observation Project, Summer 2005 Directive: Part 1: the Universe and Outer Space (MO), SxMOA2/1/75/1, B1654, n.d. (2005), pp. 1–2, Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex Special Collections, The Keep, Falmer, Brighton (Sussex). See also responses B1509, B2240, F3112, H1745, H2410, P2915, R1418.

16. George Orwell, 'The true pattern of H. G. Wells', *Manchester Evening News*, 14 August 1946.

17. George Orwell, 'Such, Such were the Joys', c. 1946–7 [first published 1952], in Peter Davison (ed.), *Orwell's England* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 379.

early Wells, stayed with Orwell throughout his life both for what he wrote and for whom he wrote, that is the people, not intellectuals or fellow literary men.[18]

Despite acknowledging the difficulty of assessing any writer's impact, Orwell opined that during the late Victorian and Edwardian years no English writer 'so deeply influenced his contemporaries as Wells'.[19] Indeed, for Orwell, 'Mr Wells has certainly been the most influential novelist of our time, at any rate in the English-speaking world'.[20] What impressed Orwell, was the way in which Wells, 'a true prophet', confronted conventional modes of thought: 'there was need of someone who could state the opposite point of view'.[21] Expressing his 'great admiration' for Wells, Orwell admitted that he proved 'a very early influence on me: "The minds of all of us, and therefore the physical world, would be perceptibly different if Wells had never existed"'.[22]

> Back in the nineteen-hundreds, it was a wonderful experience for a boy to discover H. G. Wells. There you were in a world of pedants, clergymen and golfers, with your future employers exhorting you to "get on or get out", your parents systematically warping your sex life, and your dull-witted schoolmasters sniggering over their Latin tags; and here was this wonderful man who could tell you about the inhabitants of the planets and the bottom of the sea, and who *knew* that the future was not going to be what respectable people imagined.[23]

In this manner, Orwell's commentaries highlight not only Wells's role as a leading figure in popular culture, but also his ability to attract and engage the young often for life. Like Orwell, many other enthusiasts of *The War of the Worlds* – including Brian Aldiss, Timothy Hines, Steve Jones, Dominic Sandbrook, Will Self, Steven Spielberg and Fay Weldon – to quote Brian Aldiss – 'first came upon this novel at a youthful age'.[24]

18. Bernard Crick, *George Orwell: A Life* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1980), p. 68.

19. Orwell, 'The true pattern of H. G. Wells'.

20. George Orwell, 'The Male Byronic', *Tribune*, 21 June 1940, p. 21.

21. Orwell to Symons, 10 May 1948, in Peter Davison (ed.), *George Orwell: A life in letters* (London: Harvill Secker, 2010), p. 406; George Orwell, 'Wells, Hitler and the World State', *Horizon*, (August 1941), in Peter Davison (ed.), *The Complete Works of George Orwell, vol. XII: A Patriot after all, 1940–1941* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1998), p. 540.

22. Orwell to Symons, 10 May 1948, in Davison, *George Orwell: A life in letters*, p. 406; Orwell, 'Wells, Hitler and the World State', pp. 539–40; Patrick Parrinder, *Science Fiction: Its History and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 36. On Wells's irritation with Orwell's *Horizon* article, see Michael Sherborne, *H. G. Wells: Another Kind of Life* (London: Peter Owen, 2010), pp. 332–4. See also John S. Partington, 'The Pen as Sword: George Orwell, H. G. Wells and Journalistic Parricide', *Journal of Contemporary History* 39 (1) (2004): 45–56.

23. Orwell, 'Wells, Hitler and the World State', p. 540.

24. Brian Aldiss, 'Introduction', in H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. xv; John C. Snider, 'Interview: Timothy Hines, Pendragon Pictures', *Sci-fi Dimensions*, November 2004, http://www.scifidimensions.com/Nov04/timothyhines.htm

Accessing Wells at second hand

Notwithstanding its strong sense of time and place centred upon late Victorian London and Surrey, themes studied in the next two chapters, *The War of the Worlds* has proved – to quote Patrick Parrinder – 'highly adaptable'.[25] Thus, as detailed in Part III, the story has been reimagined and retold frequently through alternative audio-visual and literary formats normally set in different locations and time periods appropriate to the prevailing moods of the day. The storyline's 'unusual plasticity' means that its alien invasion template, though applied by Wells to late Victorian London and Surrey, could be set anywhere – for example, Boston, Braga, Buffalo, Lisbon, Los Angeles, New York, Providence, Quito, Rio de Janeiro and Santiago have suffered the same fate as London – and in any time period.[26]

In turn, each new adaptation marks recognition of the literary quality and originality of Wells's genre-defining storyline. In particular, they show that Wells's strong sense of time and place was both a strength, such as in terms of enhancing the story's realism and a weakness in enabling Wells's text to be rewritten for alternative locations and periods, just by switching the landing point, the Martians' target and the date of the invasion. In certain cases, like the 2005 Spielberg film, even the Martians were written out of the storyline to be replaced by anonymous alien invaders. Adaptations reflect also the timeless character of a storyline reconfigured repeatedly in different media to reflect contemporary scenarios, such as the threat of world war during the late 1930s in the case of Orson Welles's radio drama, Cold War paranoia during the early 1950s for Pal's film and post-9/11 trauma for Spielberg's film.

In fact, as detailed in Chapter 11, soon after *The War of the Worlds* was serialized, but before its publication as a book, the story was reworked and re-located for publication by two American newspapers, an episode establishing that this process of retelling Wells's original story geographically and/or chronologically possesses a long history across the world. Numerous reworkings, transplantings and updatings of the basic storyline in a wide range of media

[accessed 20 February 2014]; Steve Jones, 'View from the Lab: A century's worth of wisdom since the Martians first landed', *Daily Telegraph,* 18 February 1998; Dominic Sandbrook, 'Classic sci-fi', *The Times*, 15 November 2014; Dominic Sandbrook, 'Tomorrow's Worlds: the unearthly history of science fiction', BBC2, 22 November 2014; Will Self, 'Death on three legs', *The Times*, 23 January 2010; Devin Faraci, 'Interview: Tom Cruise and Steven Spielberg (War of the Worlds)', 29 June 2005, http://www.chud.com/3533/interview-tom-cruise-and-steven-spielberg-war-of-the-worlds/ [accessed 20 February 2014]; Fay Weldon, 'Great Lives: H. G. Wells', *BBC Radio Four*, 8 May 2014.

25. Patrick Parrinder, *Shadows of the Future: H. G. Wells, Science Fiction, and Prophecy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), p. 87; Thomas C. Renzi, *H. G. Wells: Six Scientific Romances Adapted for Film* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992), pp. 5–9.

26. John Gosling, *Waging the War of the Worlds: A History of the 1938 Broadcast and Resulting Panic* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), p. 2.

formats have kept both Wells and *The War of the Worlds* in front of audiences comprising not only readers of books and magazine serials but also cinema-goers, computer games players, music and radio listeners, readers of comic books and graphic novels and television viewers. Other spin-offs include parodies, prequels and sequels. In addition, the repeated referencing of both Wells's original storyline and adaptations based thereupon by a wide range of media results from a process of intertextuality reflecting and reaffirming *The War of the Worlds*' enduring impact upon popular culture.

In the present-day multimedia world, Wells's science fiction classic continues to attract adaptations. Indeed, today *The War of the Worlds* is probably best known through its many and varied contemporary retellings in a growing range of multimedia formats rather than the ground-breaking original written text. Thus, *The War of the Worlds* is accessed increasingly by audiences second-hand through the audio-visual media, especially film, music or television, rather than the written word. For most people, mention of *The War of the Worlds* is most likely to conjure up images of Tom Cruise taking on aliens in Spielberg's Hollywood blockbuster, the fighting machine descending on stage during Jeff Wayne's musical extravaganza, or the infamous panic reportedly occasioned by Orson Welles's 1938 radio broadcast. For them, Orson Welles, Spielberg and Jeff Wayne represent their entry points for *The War of the Worlds*.

Familiarity with such alternative spin-offs led Will Self, whose mother told him about listening to the 1938 Orson Welles radio adaptation when growing up in New York, to depict *The War of the Worlds* as 'one of those books that I felt I'd read long before I actually did so'.[27] There is, of course, no reason why those for whom a film, music show or radio broadcast might be the initial point of contact with *The War of the World*s should not go on to read the book and then move onto Wells's other writings. Indeed, Table 1.1 suggests that adaptations, such as Orson Welles's radio drama and Spielberg's 2005 film, have played a role in prompting the publication of new editions of the original book. In some cases, they might, like Simon James, the editor of *The Wellsian* (2009–16) and author of a major study of Wells's writing, be encouraged to focus their research on Wells: 'Like many born in the 1970s, my earliest exposure to Wells's words was through Jeff Wayne's musical adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*'.[28] On the other hand, this trend has led to an occasional tendency to gloss over Wells's role as the original author of the story and to treat him as little more than a literary footnote, almost an invisible man. More seriously, the similarity of their surnames has prompted some people to believe that Orson Welles, not H. G. Wells, wrote the original story.

27. Self, 'Death on three legs'.

28. Simon J. James, *Maps of Utopia: H. G. Wells, Modernity and the End of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. xiv.

Wells and science fiction

Born on 21 September 1866, Wells died in London on 13 August 1946, aged seventy-nine. As *The Times*' editorial recorded, Wells, a prolific publisher of books, articles, short stories and book reviews, a writer of both fiction and non-fiction, proved one of the most famous and widely read Englishmen of his time.[29] When writing his autobiography, published in 1934, Wells proclaimed confidently that several million copies of his books were scattered around the world.[30]

But who reads Wells today? Apart from falling out of favour with present-day readers, he does not appear to be a literary figure much studied in history or literature courses in schools and universities, where he has been shunted increasingly towards the margins of literature teaching, except for science fiction studies.[31] This is not to say that his books, or at least his scientific romances, are not still read and studied today, but much of Wells's writing, particularly that published after 1900, has been out of fashion for many years. Claiming that Wells became passé around the time of the First World War, David Lodge pointed to the irony that the Armageddon foreshadowed in such fantasies as *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and *The War in the Air* (1908) prompted a shift in the literary and intellectual world to which Wells failed to attune himself.[32] Also, as James observed, many of the books of the later Wells 'are not, simply, very good', as originality gave way to repetition and art was compromised increasingly by politics.[33]

Within this context, Wells's present-day literary reputation proves somewhat mixed, especially as – to quote Bernard Bergonzi – 'the difficulty of defining what kind of writer he was still remains'.[34] Generally speaking, his scientific romances remain highly regarded, the central element in positive assessments of Wells as a writer and particularly his image as one of the founders of science fiction. As Patrick Parrinder recorded, Wells was and still is 'celebrated as the inventor of the "scientific romance", a combination of adventure novel and philosophical tale in which the hero becomes involved in a life-and-death struggle resulting from some scientific development'.[35] Published predominantly between 1895 and 1901, his scientific romances sold well, attracted critical praise and public visibility, enabling Wells, a new young writer, to establish a fast-growing reputation on both

29. 'Editorial: H. G. Wells', *The Times*, 14 August 1946, p. 5; Patrick Parrinder, 'Biographical Note', in H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. xii.

30. H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (since 1866)*, II (London: Victor Gollancz and Cresset Press, 1934), p. 729.

31. In 2015 *The War of the Worlds* was introduced as a set book for Pearson Edexcel's GCE A level English Literature.

32. David Lodge, *The Novelist at the Crossroads and Other Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Ark, 1986), p. 205.

33. James, *Maps of Utopia*, p. x.

34. Bernard Bergonzi, 'A global thinker', *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 3 October 1986.

35. Parrinder, 'Biographical Note', p. ix.

sides of the Channel and the Atlantic. Foregrounding his scientific awareness and knowledge, they showcased Wells's storytelling skills and extraordinary imaginative power by juxtaposing fantastic scenarios with everyday realities.

Indeed, for many commentators, the scientific romances have led Wells to be regarded as 'the Shakespeare of science fiction', the author largely responsible for inspiring and popularizing science fiction, most notably the sub-genres concerning alien invasion and time travel.[36] As A. A. Gill opined when looking back to the origins of the BBC television series about the time travelling 'Doctor Who', 'the idea was a straight steal from H. G. Wells'.[37] Likewise, Wells is viewed as a prime source of inspiration for Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek* films and television series. For James Broderick, 'If Gene Roddenberry is the father of *Star Trek*, then H. G. Wells should be thought of as the mildly eccentric uncle in the *Trek* family tree.'[38]

Wells was instrumental in taking science to the literary world. Despite proving essentially fantastic products of a highly creative imagination, the scientific romances drew heavily upon his scientific education, informed awareness of contemporary advances in science, strong desire to give practical application to recent scientific research, and ambition to take science to the man in the street. Thus, just as *The War of the Worlds* linked up with recent scientific reports and media speculation about Mars, as detailed in chapter three, so the x-rays, featuring as 'Röntgen vibrations' in *The Invisible Man* (1897), drew inspiration from reports about the experiments of Wilhelm Röntgen, a German physicist, published in *Nature* in January 1896.[39]

Wellsian fantasies as reference points for the real world

Introducing a collected edition of his writings, Wells reminded readers that fundamentally the scientific romances were fantasies, literary products created by his imagination.[40] They were not intended, he stressed, to predict serious possibilities. Perhaps the scientific romances were, and still are, admired mostly for their engaging, fast-moving, innovative and entertaining storylines, but books like *The War of the Worlds*, it is argued, offered far more. As Wells himself admitted, '*The War of the Worlds* like *The Time Machine* was another assault on human

36. Brian Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 132.

37. A. A. Gill, 'I don't think we can save this one, Doctor', *The Sunday Times*, 24 August 2014.

38. James F. Broderick, *The Literary Galaxy of Star Trek: An Analysis of References and Themes in the Television Series and Films* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), pp. 49–51; Brian J. Robb, *A Brief Guide to Star Trek* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2012), p. 1.

39. H. G. Wells, *The Invisible Man* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 95.

40. H. G. Wells, *Seven Famous Novels* (New York: Knopf, 1934), p. vii.

self-satisfaction'.[41] For Bernard Bergonzi, among others, *The War of the Worlds* captured the *fin de siècle* angst of late Victorian Britain as Wells – to quote Bryan Appleyard – 'saw through the seductive veneer of modernity to the horrors that might lie beneath'.[42] For I. F. Clarke, *The War of the Worlds*, articulating contemporary forebodings about an uncertain future, 'is still the most remarkable fantasy of imaginative warfare that has so far appeared in the history of the genre. The theme was scientific warfare taken to the limit'.[43]

In this vein over time *The War of the Worlds* has often been represented as possessing a present-day relevance in terms of offering an invaluable reference point, one way of making sense of the contemporary world, as happened in 2011 when Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian*'s art critic, used *The War of the Worlds* to frame his thoughts about London in the wake of serious urban riots. For Jones, the abandoned metropolis seemed an eerie wasteland: 'There was something a bit Wellsian about photographs of riots and looting across London … It all seems uncanny and reminiscent of late Victorian science fiction.'[44]

Seeking to explain the continuing appeal and perceived relevance of a book written and published at the end of the nineteenth century, Stephen Baxter, the best-selling award-winning science fiction author and president of the British Science Fiction Association, represented *The War of the Worlds* as 'a controlling metaphor for the twentieth century'.[45] When researching the history of the Second World War as background for *Time's Tapestry 4: Weaver* (2008), Baxter discovered that 'many eyewitnesses referred to Wells's books as a basis for their experiences: "It's like something out of H. G. Wells"'.[46] For Baxter, *The War of the Worlds* foresaw many aspects of people's experience of war in the twentieth century: 'It is Wells's extraordinary achievement that in the pages of TWOTW [*The War of the Worlds*] he brought together themes that would define the coming century: homeland invasion, defying the tyrant, the convulsive shock of world wars, the loss of innocence, and the possibilities of life in the universe.' The various re-stagings, re-imaginings and fresh explorations of Wells's novel, as detailed in Part 3, highlight this point, as evidenced by the way in which, say, the audio-visual adaptations of Orson Welles, Pal and Spielberg were set in the then present and

41. Ibid., p. ix.

42. Bernard Bergonzi, *The Early H. G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), pp. 3–4, 12; Bryan Appleyard, 'The plot to hide H. G. Wells's genius', *The Sunday Times*, 26 June 2005.

43. I. F. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars 1763–1984* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 99.

44. Jonathan Jones, 'London burning: history just went sci-fi', 8 August 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2011/aug/08/london-riots-sci-fi-dystopian [accessed 5 September 2011].

45. Stephen Baxter, 'H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* as a controlling metaphor for the twentieth century', *The Wellsian* 32 (2009): 3.

46. Ibid., p. 15.

hence captured the angst and paranoia of the period. As Baxter observed, they prove 'mirrors that expose the themes of the work itself'.[47]

In this vein, Lonna Malmsheimer described Wells's *The War of the Worlds* as 'science fiction with a social history'.[48] Perceived as representing 'the panic model of disaster fiction', the storyline offered a highly visible and accessible reference point for people seeking to articulate their response to serious crises.[49] For Malmsheimer, the focus was the Three Mile Island Incident of March 1979, when the nuclear reactor of the power station at Three Mile Island, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, went out of control resulting in the mass evacuation of some 144,000 people. Drawing upon extensive oral testimony gained immediately following the emergency, she concluded that when people were projecting responses to an unprecedented disaster their thinking was informed by not only knowledge of past events – unsurprisingly Hiroshima 1945 was often cited – but also familiar fictional narratives.

Two fictional storylines, largely based on the aural and visual media rather than the written word, were cited more often than others: *The China Syndrome* (1979), a film which had just opened in Harrisburg, and 'The War of the Worlds', most notably the 1938 radio and 1953 film versions. According to Malmsheimer, these fictions, though based upon fantasy, possessed metaphoric elements adjudged relevant to a scenario where 'the population is suddenly assaulted with a deadly, little-understood technology by a coldly calculating, but in *War of the Worlds,* alien force':

> Social systems disintegrate under threat; science and government, including the military, fail to understand or deal with the threat. The narrator of the story (a scientist and sometime journalist) survives to report each stage of the annihilation. Only nature can stop this force; in the end the aliens succumb to the earth's bacteria. Both *War of the Worlds* and *The China Syndrome* also dramatize a fearful public powerlessness analogous to that of the Three Mile Island situation.[50]

Malmsheimer foregrounded the testimony of one twenty-year-old, who drew heavily upon his cultural inventory of books and films – reportedly Pal's 1953 film proved a staple feature of American Sunday afternoon television schedules – to make sense of the crisis:

> I could imagine all kinds of fantastic things like … nuclear type holocausts &, that type of thing, being the last few people, just left in an area during evacuation … imagining what an evacuation would be like … I have never been in

47. Ibid., p. 3.

48. Lonna M. Malmsheimer, 'Three Mile Island: Fact, Frame, and Fiction', *American Quarterly* 38 (1) (1986): 47.

49. Ibid., p. 44.

50. Ibid., p. 47.

> one and I have never seen one except we could joke around, some of us, about seeing *War of the Worlds* where people were all fleeing the invading Martians or whatever. They are all fighting each other for cars and all this … Basically that's all people talked about, a week or so.[51]

Wells's science fiction as 'historical fact'

Wells's *The War of the Worlds* proved a major source of inspiration also for Niall Ferguson, when planning his television history 'The War of the World', shown in both Britain and the USA in 2006 and subsequently writing the series' tie-in book. Ferguson, Laurence A. Tisch Professor of History at Harvard University, is one of *TIME Magazine*'s 'TIME 100', public intellectuals adjudged instrumental in shaping present-day thinking through journalism, public lectures and television.

Speaking in New York in September 2006 about the television series and his recently published tie-in book, Ferguson began by asking 'Why is it called "The War of the World"?':

> Did I go and see Tommy Cruise in a Steven Spielberg film? No. It was inspired by the original novel H. G. Wells wrote in 1898, *The War of the Worlds*, which, if you remember, describes the destruction of London, rather than New York, in an alien invasion.
>
> As I was reading Wells's extraordinary work of science fiction, it struck me how prophetic it was, because, time and again, the scenes that Wells describes – of a city thrown into turmoil by invaders using powerful technology to destroy buildings and people alike – that vision came true.[52]

A quote from *The War of the Worlds*, centred upon 'the roaring wave of fear' (I.16: 150/92) sweeping through London as the invaders reached the city, the resulting flight of the inhabitants and growing fears of extermination, provided the epigraph for Ferguson's book. In fact, Wells had figured prominently in his thinking already in July 2005, when writing for the *Daily Telegraph* about the 7/7 terrorist attacks launched in London by 'intra-terrestrial invaders'.[53] Quoting from the novel, Ferguson pointed to the way in which *The War of the Worlds* revealed Wells's foresight about future conflicts: 'Part of the reason Wells was so prescient was that he understood how easy it would be for a well-armed invader to plunge London, or any other urban centre, into chaos':

51. Ibid., p. 41.

52. Niall Ferguson, 'The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West', *Carnegie Council Public Affairs Program*, 26 September 2006, http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/studio/multimedia/20060926/index.html [accessed 22 February 2012].

53. Niall Ferguson, 'H. G. Wells warned us of how it would feel to fight a "War of the World"', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 July 2005.

> It is now more than a century since H. G. Wells published *The War of the Worlds* and once again London is under attack. Though it has titillated generations of cinema-goers – and, courtesy of Steven Spielberg, is doing so once again this summer – Wells's story is much more than just a seminal work of science fiction. It's also a work of astonishing prescience. For so much of what it describes was to happen time and again throughout the 20th century.

For Ferguson, therefore, *The War of the Worlds* is far more than a science fiction story or a Darwinian morality tale. Praising Wells for writing 'a work of singular prescience', Ferguson represented the key developments outlined therein as 'historical fact'.[54] Thus, as argued subsequently also by Baxter, the story offered a metaphor for the twentieth century and after when the nightmarish scenes of death and destruction Wells 'imagined while pedalling around peaceful Woking and Chertsey on his newly-acquired bicycle' became a reality in cities all over the world – not only in London, but also in – to list examples cited by Ferguson – Warsaw, Berlin, Hiroshima, Seoul and Phnom Penh. As Ferguson informed his audience only a few years after the destruction of New York's twin towers in 9/11, 'It suddenly struck me that this was the key *leitmotif* of twentieth-century conflict. And I hardly need to suggest to an audience in New York that that theme is by no means played out.'[55] In his book, Ferguson provided a vivid precis linking the images of Martian power created by Wells's imagination with twentieth-century military realities:

> Invaders approach the outskirts of a city. The inhabitants are slow to grasp their vulnerability. But the invaders possess lethal weapons: armoured vehicles, flame throwers, poison gas, aircraft. They use these indiscriminately and mercilessly against soldiers and civilians alike. The city's defences are overrun. As the invaders near the city, panic reigns. People flee their homes in confusion; swarms of refugees clog the roads and railways. The task of massacring them is made easy. People are slaughtered like beasts. Finally, all that remains are smouldering ruins and piles of desiccated corpses.[56]

Seeking to understand why the twentieth century, characterized by bloody conflicts and genocide, was 'so astonishingly violent', Ferguson employed a Wellsian analogy to help explain why people emulated the barbarous approach adopted towards humans by the Martians in *The War of the Worlds*: 'The irony is that it didn't need Martians to wreak havoc in so many cities in the world. There was no need for Wells' alien invaders … what's fascinating is how often it was done as if the victims were aliens.'[57] Pointing to Nazi Germany, Ferguson argued that

54. Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: Penguin, 2006), pp. xxxiii–iv, 646.

55. Ferguson, 'The War of the World' (Carnegie Council).

56. Ferguson, *War of the World*, pp. xxxiii–iv.

57. Ferguson, 'The War of the World' (Carnegie Council).

'No other regime has come so close to H. G. Wells's nightmare of a mechanized sucking out of human life by voracious aliens'.[58]

Wells's 'Alien Gaze'

Nor are Baxter, Ferguson and Malmsheimer alone in their thinking. Two examples follow, but there are many others. Firstly, Keith Williams repositions *The War of the Worlds* as 'one of the most influential manifestations of the emergence of a critical "postcolonial" vision in the science and culture of the late Victorian period'.[59] For Williams, Wells's book anticipates the total war of 1914–18 and its associated anxieties about imperial domination. This critical 'postcolonial' vision is established in the opening chapter, in which the Martians observe earth – what Williams represents as an 'alien gaze' – as they prepared their invasion plans. Making no secret of his anti-imperial stance, Wells used his Martians to inflict 'scientific terror on the complacent civilisation at the Empire's hub, inverting its relation to distant colonial subjects': '*TWOTW* [*The War of the Worlds*] elaborated the possibility of this emerging alien gaze to allow imperial Britain to look long and hard at itself and the ethics of its foreign policy from the vantage point of another species, a nightmare version of the colonial Other integral to its expansionist ideology.'[60] Wells achieved this effect, Williams argues, by using the anonymous first-person narrator to create 'a double perspective' offering readers the view of not only a victim of war but also an outsider articulating a more critical stance: 'At times I suffer from the strangest sense of detachment from myself and the world about me; I seem to watch it all from the outside' (I.7: 46/32).

Stressing the story's preoccupation with place and the parallels between the Martians and suburbanites, Todd Kuchta argues that *The War of the Worlds*' imperial narrative needs to be studied alongside the growth of suburbia in Britain: '*The War of the Worlds* would have been unthinkable to Wells … if not for the rise of suburbia.'[61] Kuchta overturns the dominant critical narrative concerning reverse colonization – here the Martian invasion is represented as intended to shock British complacency and to inspire an understanding about imperialism's negative impacts – when arguing that the novel 'is a reflection of what many Britons believed *was* happening to them: that suburbia was threatening to overtake the nation with a race that fused brutal colonizers and brutal savages'.

58. Ferguson, *War of the World*, p. 507.

59. Keith Williams, 'Alien Gaze: Postcolonial Vision in *The War of the Worlds*', in Steven McLean (ed.), *H. G. Wells: Interdisciplinary Essays* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), p. 49; Keith B. Williams, 'H. G. Wells: The War of the Worlds', *The Literary Encyclopedia*, 8 June 2009, http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=8092 [accessed 9 August 2013.

60. Williams, 'H. G. Wells: The War of the Worlds'.

61. Todd Kuchta, *Semi-Detached Empire: Suburbia and the Colonization of Britain, 1880 to the Present* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010), pp. 36–8, 55.

Biography of the book

'Every book', Leslie Howsam asserted, 'has a history of its own', especially once it meets and travels through the real world.[62] Rather like the characters they portray, books have their own lives, their own distinctive rhythms. Following their completion, they may thrive and achieve fame and fortune; fail and be quite forgotten; or be rediscovered and secure posthumous glory. Against this background, there has emerged growing interest in the biographies of books, as a way for understanding how books 'work', especially how they interact with people and societies. Moreover, as shown by Paul Eggert's *Biography of a Book: Henry Lawson's While the Billy Boils* (2013), such biographies offer also invaluable insights into the course of a country's cultural history.

In brief, these studies focus upon the production, the critical and commercial reception and the reading of books through ever-changing political, socio-economic and cultural contexts:

- the production stage concentrating upon the roles performed by both authors – for example, their sources of inspiration; contextual factors; research methods; and the writing, revising and proofing of the text – and publishers in commissioning, guiding, influencing, publishing and marketing books;
- the reception histories of books, most notably the responses of readers and reviewers when reading, receiving, mediating and interpreting the published tomes; and
- their literary and audio-visual afterlife.

Speaking about his role in editing Princeton University Press's series about 'The Lives of Great Religious Books', Fred Appel admitted that for some books the afterlife proves more prolonged, active and successful than for others. 'Not every book that is born lives a long life. Publishers know all too well that many of them just don't make it past infancy or early adolescence. For one reason or another, they're not taken up by the reading public, don't capture people's imagination, or aren't perceived as original or interesting enough – and they fade.'[63] But some books take on a life of their own and continue to live, particularly those viewed as possessing literary significance and merit, resonating strongly with audiences, or appealing to adapters.

The afterlife of books can take several forms. James Secord employed the concept of 'literary replication' to describe the varying ways in which texts

62. Leslie Howsam, *Old Books and New Histories: An Orientation to Studies in Book and Print Culture* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. viii.

63. Quoted, Ruth Braunstein, 'SSRC. The Immanent Frame: "I would love to read the biography of a book …"', 13 April 2011, http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2011/04/13/i-would-love-to-read-the-biography-of-a-book/ [accessed 22 September 2014].

replicate themselves.[64] Thus, books may be reprinted, repackaged and translated countless times, but appear with very different texts, which may or may not have been revised and/or approved by the author and original publisher. Inevitably the reading of books by successive generations of readers and reviewers will differ from that of those at the time of the initial publication. Frequently books, though continuing to have an afterlife through reprints and revised editions, may be adapted for presentation to audiences in alternative audio-visual formats in a manner showing contrasting degrees of accuracy to the original text.[65] Indeed, in today's multimedia world, stories published some time ago will often be accessed initially as well as primarily through non-printed formats, like film, radio and television.

Against this background, this study focuses upon the production and reception histories of Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, which is viewed by many commentators as – to quote I. F. Clarke – 'the best of all his scientific romances'.[66] Moreover, the book has experienced a long, extremely active and increasingly varied afterlife. *The War of the Worlds* has not only proved a best-seller and remained in print, but also appeared in an ever increasing number of new print editions (Table 1.1) and translations.[67] Indeed, the post-2000 period, characterized by a surge in 2005 when over fifty editions were published as spin-offs for Spielberg's film, has witnessed more new editions than ever.[68] Apart from proving a good read, throughout its lifetime the story, such as stressed by Baxter and Ferguson, among others, has been viewed as an invaluable reference point, that is – to quote Williams – 'a topically renewable template', 'a critical method for looking at ourselves', and a prompt to discuss such issues as imperialism, science's impact upon society and the growth of suburbia.[69]

As detailed in Part 3 of this book, *The War of the Worlds*' afterlife is distinguished by the way in which it has continued to flourish across the world during changing times to access and engage vast new audiences through the story's adaptation for a wide range of alternative formats. At times, it seems as if Wells's story is more famous for its numerous reworkings than for the original magazine serialization and book publication. Today, comics, computer games, films, graphic novels, mobile phone apps, music, radio and television take Wells's *The War of the Worlds* to audiences which might otherwise have neither the time, opportunity

64. James A Secord, *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of 'Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation'* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 126; Howsam, *Old Books*, pp. 41–5.

65. Sheryl A. Englund, 'Reading the Author in *Little Women*: a biography of a book', *ATQ* 12 (3) (1998): 199–220.

66. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War*, p. 94.

67. BBC Radio Four, 'Best Seller, 6: The War of the Worlds by H. G. Wells', 19 April 1978. This programme was written by Bernard Bergonzi.

68. '*The War of the Worlds*, years, chronological', *The War of the Worlds Book Cover Collection,* http://drzeus.best.vwh.net/wotw/ [accessed 5 May 2015].

69. Williams, 'Alien Gaze', p. 66; Williams, 'H. G. Wells: The War of the Worlds'.

nor inclination to read the original book. Despite their variable quality and fluctuating degrees of conformity to the original storyline, these adaptations highlight the timeless nature of Wells's creative imagination. Moreover, for those who may not have even encountered his writings before, adaptations provide a possible prompt to move on to sample an engaging piece of literature likely to encourage further explorations of Wells's publications and life story.

Conclusion

In 1901 the death of Queen Victoria brought the Victorian age to an end. The turn of the century proved also a major watershed in Wells's career, as 'the Early Wells', the writer responsible for both a series of scientific romances and an extensive range of journalism and short stories, gave way to the 'Later Wells'. The latter phase is frequently dated as commencing with *Love and Mr Lewisham* (1900), a novel described by Wells as 'a more serious undertaking than anything I have ever done before'.[70] Significantly, *Love and Mr. Lewisham* was represented by *The Bookman*'s reviewer as 'the work of a new Mr. Wells': 'There is the essential difference between this novel by the new Mr. Wells and all that has preceded it … From the realms of fantastic imaginings the author of "The War of the Worlds" has descended to a phase of existence of the earth earthy. "Love and Mr. Lewisham" is *lived*.'[71]

Despite still returning occasionally to write a scientific romance, such as *The War in the Air* (1908), Wells largely abandoned the literary genre responsible for making his name and fortune for what he represented as 'proper' novels, like *Love and Mr Lewisham*, *Kipps: the Story of a Simple Soul* (1905) and *The History of Mr Polly* (1910), and non-fiction studies, such as *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress Upon Human Life and Thought* (1901) and *The Outline of History* (1920), scientific ideological treatises and encyclopaedias. For Wells, the literary life was 'one of the modern forms of adventure', especially as fame brought him as a writer 'the utmost freedom of movement and intercourse'.[72] Basically, he wanted to be viewed as far more than a writer of what came to be called science fiction. In part, his novels reflected increasingly his emerging role and fame as a public intellectual using his writings, not excluding his fiction, and his voice to discuss contemporary political and social issues. As a public figure, Wells met world leaders, including American presidents (Theodore Roosevelt 1906; Franklin D. Roosevelt 1934) and Soviet leaders (Lenin 1920; Joseph Stalin 1934), while rubbing shoulders with Hollywood celebrities like Charlie Chaplin. Significantly, in September 1921 Chaplin, having just finished a film, decided to

70. Wells to Healey, 22 June 1900, David C. Smith (ed.), *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells, 1* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), p. 356.

71. J. E. H. W., 'The new Mr. Wells', *The Bookman* 18 (107) (August 1900).

72. H. G. Wells, 'My Lucky Moment, *View*, 29 April 1911, quoted Parrinder, *Shadows of the Future*, p. 89.