

erally known and recognized for some time. To maintain, as Dr. Bretz does, that these shifts can be considered an evolution is in general terms probably a true enough statement, but in actual fact Baroja's novels display a bewildering mixture of progression and regression both in form and content. Any attempt to chart the details of this pattern will inevitably lead to some confusion. And Dr. Bretz comes close to admitting this when, on the defensive, she reminds the reader that Baroja's work "is not a homogeneous and uniform whole" (p. 292). Indeed the constant cross-references and ongoing summaries of her argument are also tantamount to such an admission.

Naturally, the task that Dr. Bretz set herself in the first place was a formidable one simply because Baroja was such a prolific writer, and because she herself has chosen to examine the question of evolution from all angles. A smaller canvas would have been preferable. The unfortunate consequence of Dr. Bretz's choice of topic is that many observations rarely go beyond a factual statement. Her discussion of the different narrative perspectives used in *César o nada* (pp. 362-63) is a good example: a vapid conclusion fails to highlight the considerable artistic effects that Baroja is able to achieve by the sophisticated manipulation of this device. Two other interesting ideas (the influence of Baroja's art-life dilemma on his landscape descriptions, pp. 141-43, and the nature of Baroja's dramatic scenes, p. 198) could have also been profitably expanded. Shortage of space is not really a valid excuse as a great amount of paper has been devoted to plot outlines and the labyrinthine presentation of divergences of opinion amongst the critics on almost every aspect of all the novels considered. Reliance on critical clichés, poorly defined concepts and terms are further weaknesses that detract from the book's claimed merit.

The book is pleasant and easy to read with very few typographical errors (pp. 195, 196, 230, 253, 275, 332, 359). Two important items of criticism have been omitted from the Bibliography: Donald Shaw's substantial introduction to his Pergamon edition of *El mundo es así*, and Carlos Longhurst's brilliant Critical Guide on the same novel.

In short, Dr. Bretz's bold initial claim is really not substantiated by the subsequent development of her argument.

Peter A. Bly

FRANK McCONNELL

The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells
Oxford: Oxford University Press,
1981. Pp. 235

In his foreword to this volume, the second in the Oxford Science-Fiction-Writers Series, general editor Robert Scholes outlines what students and teachers may expect from the project as a whole: ". . . a criticism serious in its standards and its concern for literary value but willing to take seriously a literature based on ideas, types, and events beyond ordinary experience" (p. vii; my emphasis). Professor McConnell's study earnestly realizes the second of these *desiderata* by focusing on Wells's ideas, particularly as they work in the "scientific romances." In the first chapter, "A Very Ordinary Brain," Professor McConnell proposes that Wells is an "heir not only to the Victorian apotheosis of Will, but its Darwinian negation" (p. 10). The publication of both Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* and Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in 1859 is offered as an eloquent temporal coincidence suggestive of the paradox Wells grappled with for more than a half century. The maker of *The Time Machine* (1895) and *Mind at the End of Its Tether* (1945) never deviated from his belief in "the immutability of history and the omnipotence of will" (p. 28). Professor McConnell consistently sets out the thesis of a continuous dialectic of opposition and reconciliation in Wells's thought, to refute the conventional dissociation of the early Wells (an imaginative skeptic) from the later (a sanguine rationalist) one.

As the above suggests, *The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells* makes a contribution to literary and intellectual history. The one-paragraph account of 1895, for instance, bringing together Louis and Auguste Lumière, Georges Sorel, Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Roentgen, and Oscar Wilde (p. 36), is as illuminating as it is succinct; and the background for Wells's rejection of "dead-end Romanticism" (p. 39) and aestheticism—these set spirit and art in irremediable opposition to science—is outlined clearly. Such background materially sustains Professor McConnell's argument for a union of wit and imagination in Wells. On occasion, *The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells* goes beyond the paraphrasing of history and concept, to genuine analysis, as here: "An ancient Greek philosopher wit-

tily observed that, if cattle could think, they would imagine their gods as super-cows. One implication of Darwinian science was to turn this witty criticism into bitter truth" (p. 59). And when the study considers the operation of a related Darwinian notion in a literary work, a witty compression sometimes results. In the "mock-gospel" of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, for example, the doctor is said to "have been transformed from a post-Darwinian Jehovah into a post-Darwinian Christ"—he is a "sham" in either incarnation (p. 97). This is the kind of insight Wells himself prized.

If there is a problem with Professor McConnell's work, it is that it aspires to be what it is not. "My concern is with the art of Wells's science fiction," he writes (p. 6). "Literary value," not ideas, will be emphasized, since Wells was "not an original thinker. His gift was for *imagining*" (p. 11; his italics). In fact, however, there are not many passages of literary analysis in the study. And what there is of aesthetic evaluation is not always as instructive as the thematic and historical analyses. These are a few of the literary facts or judgments proffered: T. H. Huxley's essays on evolution "are among the masterpieces of English prose" (p. 15); Henry James's novels "are among the greatest achievements of his age" (p. 21); Harold Bloom is "perhaps our most perceptive critic of Romantic and modern poetry" (p. 82); a passage from *The Jungle Book* is "one of Kipling's finest, and one of the century's most important" (p. 100); *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is "one of the most successful and most lasting nineteenth-century tales of horror" (p. 85); *Brave New World* is "one of the most celebrated twentieth-century visions of a nightmare future" (p. 158); Olaf Stapledon is "one of the unquestioned geniuses of science fiction" (p. 211); Swift is "one of Wells's earliest found and most treasured writers" (p. 159), while P. B. Shelley is "one of Wells's favorite and most frequently cited authors" (p. 11). Unfortunately, vagaries of this kind are duplicated in the assessment of Wells's work. For example, a paragraph from *The Time Machine*, "a masterpiece" (p. 75), "a major and brilliant work of literary art" (p. 82), is "one of the most powerfully imagined passages in modern English fiction" (p. 82), "one of the great chilling passages in the history of the English language" (p. 86). The shepherd in *When the Sleeper Wakes* is "one of Wells's most important characters" (p.

153), while *The First Men in the Moon* includes "one of Wells's finest scenes" (p. 156). A passage from *The Food of the Gods*, "a major fiction" (p. 171), paints "one of the book's most poignant scenes" (p. 165), and *The Shape of Things to Come* is "one of Wells's subtlest, most self-conscious performances" (p. 209). Finally, *Star Begotten* offers "one of the funniest passages in Wells" (p. 215), a virtue it shares with *The First Men in the Moon*, which contains "one of Wells's funniest scenes" (p. 156). The last of Wells's scientific romances, *Star Begotten* is "in its way one of his best" (p. 213). The judgments suffer from a want of discrimination. Perhaps Professor McConnell has set himself an unnecessary or impossible task. He remarks of the passage he so admires in *The Time Machine*: "There is little that need be said about a passage like this" (p. 86). Apparently, it defies analysis—or requires none.

The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells would have benefited from closer editing in other ways as well. Johnson's *Dictionary*, for example, is set "at the end of the eighteenth century" (p. 196), and the promise of a return to Teilhard de Chardin, on page 26, is not kept. Professor McConnell's talent for intellectual history suggests that the promise would have been worth keeping.

Camille La Bossière

JOSEPH J. WALDMEIR, ED.
Critical Essays on John Barth
 Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980. Pp. xi
 + 247

In his thoughtful and highly informative introduction to this collection of critical essays on John Barth, Charles B. Harris states that "book-length collections of previously published articles on recent American writers are common, but no such collection of the best of Barth criticism exists, a curious lacuna in Barth studies that one hopes some enterprising scholar will soon fill" (p. 5). And he even points out some of the critics that he thinks should appear in such a collection: Beverly Gray Bienstock, Cynthia Davis, Barbara C. Ewell, Robert F. Kiernan, Daniel Majdiak,