

tion for Kitty, the fair-haired, blue-eyed daughter of her sister. Before Kitty was born, Aunt Sophie worried a great deal about the skin color of the expected baby. "The image of her [Aunt Sophie's] grandmother emerged from the distant past, a dark woman she had seen several times in the outbuildings when she was a girl of six or seven." When Kitty "proved to be a sweet *white* and *blond* baby," Aunt Sophie is overjoyed. "This time her grandfather's European blood had not been denied, thank God, because it really seemed as if a dark complexion and dark hair had established itself forever in the family" (p. 87).

Faded Portraits shows that these "mixed" families were cut off from any significant contact with the people they ruled so tyrannically. Only those who belonged to the family counted; conversations dwelled on little else but family gossip; and because one had no meaningful contact outside the family, marriages within the family were not uncommon. Only as a university student is the narrator confronted with a different perspective. Studying in Leiden, he meets another "loner," a Javanese student. "What he said shocked me. I had lived so long in the protective society of Europeans, where I had been brought up with the idea of the obvious justice of Dutch rule, that it was completely new to me to hear this same rule quite as obviously called unjust" (p. 112).

Behind the narrator's sober tone with which he describes his aunt (and his implied relationship to her) is the attempt to create a continuity between his own past, his youth, his colonial background, and his present situation that is based on a total rejection of that past and of his family. He calls himself "an outsider beyond recall." The novel is written with a great deal of generosity to his family and to the colonialist pattern of expectations and relationships, for the narrator understands that if it had not been for accident and history he would, most likely, have accommodated himself to that pattern as everyone of his parents' generation had done.

Nieuwenhuys began his novel on scraps of toiletpaper in the Japanese concentration camp in which he was interned from 1943 to 1945 and finished it in the Netherlands ten years later. A first-person narrator and a pseudonym have enabled him to use highly personal experiences creatively, for much of the material used in the novel parallels events and people in his own life. Since Nieuwenhuys has stated that *Faded Portraits* could be read as his autobiography, we may

assume that what the narrator says about himself to be true for Nieuwenhuys: "A memorialist . . . is what I am instead of a writer of fiction" (p. 60). Nieuwenhuys's intent, however, is not to create an autobiography of a member of the literati. "I have removed all literary aspects from my language and have tried to imitate the spoken style . . . in order to be in tune with myself," he writes later in *Oost-Indische Spiegel* (Amsterdam: Em. Querido, 1978; p. 571). This direct and objective tone is beautifully preserved in the English translation by Donald and Elsje Sturtevant. E. M. Beekman has enriched *Faded Portraits* with a highly informative introduction, has provided copious notes that refer to the history and the culture, and has translated numerous Malay words that are used by the author and preserved in the English translation. As the third volume in a planned twelve-volume Library of the Indies, *Faded Portraits* enables a much wider public to become acquainted with this superbly expressed encounter with colonialism.

Hilda van Neck-Yoder

JOHN R. REED
The Natural History of H. G. Wells
Athens, Ohio: Ohio University
Press, 1982. Pp. 294.

This "natural history" proposes that H. G. Wells had a coherent "world view" and that his view was "rooted" in "private fears and desires." By a nicely enclosed circularity, it is argued in turn that these inner forces "found expression in powerful sets of images" which reinforced Wells's "intellectual constructions" (p.ix). The syntax of John Reed's erudite study well accommodates the vision of a wholly integrated Wells he argues for. An no other historian of the Wells *fact* has shown a more intimate familiarity with the entire *oeuvre* of this author who, for more than a half-century, wrote an average of three books per year. Professor Reed addresses no fewer than 158 of Wells's creations.

What is the governing idea of the Wellsian structure? It is change. "All human conceptions are *provisional*," Professor Reed summarizes, for man is "an amalgam constantly in a state of mutation" (pp. 100, 8; his emphasis). Wells was not simply a sanguine Victorian; he believed "that *change* was inevitable, not *progress*" (p. 106; his emphasis). Humanity, like the universe as interpreted by that species (not necessarily Nature as it is in itself, of course), he saw as a boundless field of conflicting forces. And what were the subliminal agencies that Wells brought to the light of day so as to understand and harness them and thereby serve himself and others? They were a fear of chaos, of unbridled (sexual) passion, and the desire for a harmonious ordering of private wants and public needs. The "history of the race" (p. 233, e.g.) which the Wells *oeuvre* writes is said to have written, duplicated, by analogy the history of its author, a being of contradictions. Professor Reed eloquently suggests that the expressions of the Wellsian visionary imagination are most appropriately read as *experimental acts* of reconciliation, dramatic enactments of the individual and collective *psychomachia*; and these for the education of their author as well as his public. According to Professor Reed, the very writing of Wells's universal and private history was an effort to envision for humanity a time, place, and state favorable to change, but for the better: the dream was of an ever-renewing order. "Vision precedes act as plan should deed," he concludes from Wells (p. 109).

There is, however, a *décalage* which *The Natural History of H.G. Wells* seems not quite so successfully to bridge. Professor Reed observes in his Preface: "Often Wells's clearest expressions of his opinions and his intentions do not appear in his best novels" (p. x). This Professor Reed sets out plainly to account for the relatively little space he will be giving to *Kipps*, *Tono-Bungay*, and *The History of Mr. Polly*, for example. Ideas will be the thing. And fittingly so, for, as Professor Reed acknowledges at the beginning of his Introduction, "ideas came first" with Wells. But it is also true, he goes on to add, that "Wells discovered very little that was new." Our continued interest in Wells, then, has a cause other than "intellectual": he was "a master of language" (p. 1). So much was he a master, it is subsequently argued, that the repellent attraction of Beauty may be seen as yet another manifestation of contradiction in Wells: he "was severe on aestheticism because he was not immune to its attraction" (p. 193). The Wellsian history is

worth the recollecting and the telling because he was a craftsman of the literary imagination. Professor Reed attempts to reconcile Wells the thinker with Wells the artist by arguing, in the end, that the author of *A Modern Utopia* "had never believed that fiction *should* be separated from its context and shorn of practical purpose" (p. 233; my emphases). Propaganda is not incompatible with art, perhaps, but belief and practice are not the same thing. The idea of a deed is not the deed. Also, history shows that some art with little propaganda value also has little value as art, so that neither the presence nor the absence of propaganda can be said to guarantee literary merit. The question remains: what aesthetic value do the Wellsian fictions have? Even Professor Reed's fine work leaves that question largely unanswered. A persuasive case for Wells as a master of language has yet to be made.

Camille R. La Bossière

SIEGFRIED LENZ

Der Verlust

Hamburg, Hoffman und Campe, 1981. Pp. 223.

This novel offers the reader a tautly-controlled insight into a neurotic male in mid-life crisis. Ulrich Martens suffers a cerebral stroke, partial paralysis of the nerves, and a breakdown of his internal communications centre (if old-fashioned, read: soul). His total loss of speech is reminiscent in its philosophical dimensions of the "Sprachkrise" that was made famous by Hugo von Hofmannsthal in his "Lord Chandos Brief" at the turn of this century. One wonders whether Ulrich, the brilliantly unorthodox tourist guide, a veritable artist of the spoken word, is a mirror for Lenz himself as the artist of the written word. Ulrich shows the less salubrious sides of his home city, Hamburg, and yet ironically brings his tourist audiences to love this city. Lenz delves into the darker aspects of the irrational human soul and yet brings us in the end to respect and love his characters. Ulrich's catastrophe, and perhaps Lenz's nightmare, is to lose not only his medium of communication with others but also "die innere Sprache zur Verständigung mit sich selbst" (p. 90).