

## Zamyatin's Reception of Wells's Fiction

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**Natalia Aksenova and Marina Albertovna Khatyamova,**  
**"Zamyatin's Reception of Wells's Fiction"**

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**Abstract:** In their article "Zamyatin's Reception of Wells's Fiction," Natalia Aksenova and Marina Albertovna Khatyamova examine several essays written by Yevgeny Zamyatin on Herbert Wells's texts and analyse Zamyatin's reception of Wells's work. Wells's ironic mindset, plot-driven writings, and attraction to parody drew Zamyatin's attention. Zamyatin felt a rapport with the central role of plot dynamics, unorthodox socialist politics, and dystopian tendencies in Wells's fiction. Discussions of the artistic qualities of Wells's writings allow Zamyatin to expound upon his own aesthetic program, known as "synthetism." In these discussions Zamyatin interprets Wells's work as a complex interpretation of technological modernity where the line between humans and gods is actively blurred, and traces the origins of Wellsian fiction to his predecessors, mostly English-language adventure writers. In doing so, Zamyatin gives Wells credit for extending the typical adventure novel into a philosophical realm while keeping it entertaining and captivating. Furthermore, in terms of the reimagining of the Apollonian and Dionysian opposition as an opposition between English and Irish in Zamyatin's "English stories" of the same period, Wells is read as a typical Englishman: an unorthodox heretic. Ultimately, it becomes clear that these are the qualities that Zamyatin values most in Wells.

## Natalia AKSENOVA and Marina Albertovna KHATYAMOVA

### Zamyatin's Reception of Herbert Wells's Fiction

Yevgenii Zamyatin's art attracts critical attention from foreign scholars as well as Russians. Among them we can distinguish Alan Myers, Alex Shane, Leonora Scheffler, Christopher Collins. Each of these representatives has made his or her contribution to the study of Zamyatin as a writer. However, too little research has been performed on the relation between Wells and Zamyatin. Wells' importance as a writer for Zamyatin and his reception of English culture, in particular Wells' influence on Zamyatin's worldbuilding, has been greatly underappreciated. Myers, in his article "Zamyatin in Newcastle," reveals interesting information on the influence of British realia and people on the characters of *The Islanders*. Myers notes that, despite lack of records on Zamyatin's stay in Newcastle, there is, however, some evidence of this influence, such as street names, descriptions of buildings, and peculiar people who could serve as prototypes for the characters. Alex Shane has developed a periodic classification of Zamyatin's works, which places the English-themed works in the second period. He notes that the author's increasing interest in making the narration more dramatic. He specifically shows how Zamyatin's irony serves to depict absurdity of the tragedy of life. According to Shane, the central concern of the English works is exposure of a philistinism, which denies human personality and its free development. Shane notes Zamyatin's tragic sensibility, but argues it is supplemented by faith in irony as is the best remedy to overcome tragedy. In her book on Zamyatin's life and work, Leonora Scheffler says that Zamyatin was surprised by "monotonous architecture and mechanical character of English life, thus he connected in his representation the exterior uniformity with the cultural tradition of puritanical moralism, where there is a simple human behind the non-descript façade" (*Evgenij Zamjatin* 143). Finally, Christopher Collins compares both writers, but without paying attention to Well's influence on Zamyatin's work.

Zamyatin, "one of the writers most kindred to the Russian soul," writes O. Kaznina, "was at the same time an ardent admirer of Wells works, his best translator in Russia, biographer and annotator" (Kaznina 5). Nowadays we know of three articles penned by Zamyatin on the subject of the British writer: "Wells" (1920), "Wells' Genealogy" (1921-22), and "Herbert Wells" (1921-22), as well as several prefaces to Russian translations of Wells's novels. These essays were all parts of the World Literature Publishing's plans to print the books "from all times and nations," in Zamyatin's words, and were conceived as merely prefaces to works of the science fiction and dystopian fiction writer, which were undoubtedly interesting for the author of *We* (Kaznina 5).

"Despite this fact, that all of them were a part of a program done by order of the World Literature Publishing House as prefaces to Well's publications (Zamyatin 321) he uses these short texts to solve a separate problem of ultimate priority. 'Herbert Wells' essay first appears as a separate work, and was later published in an edited form as a preface to the first volume of Wells's collected works" (Khatyamova 450) ("Несмотря на то, что все они были частью программы по изданию 'Всемирной литературой' книг 'всех времен и народов' (Е. Замятин) и задумывались как предисловия к изданиям произведений фантаста и антиутописта Уэллса, который, несомненно, интересовал создателя романа 'Мы', автор решает здесь и свою сверхзадачу. Очерк 'Герберт Уэллс', впервые вышедший отдельным изданием, в переработанном виде был опубликован в качестве предисловия к 1 тому Собрания сочинений Г. Уэллса" [Хатямова [450]]).

"Wells"—in "Vestnik Literaturny" (Zamyatin 494), and "Wells's Genealogy" seem to be never published during Zamyatin's lifetime (Zamyatin 322-28). ("Уэллс" — в "Вестнике литературы" [Замятин] «Генеалогическое дерево Уэллса, по всей видимости, не было опубликовано при жизни Замятина» [Замятин [322-28]]. In these articles, just as in other articles and lectures of this period, Zamyatin uses the English novelist's prose as source material for elaborating his own aesthetic program. For this reason, each of these articles represents a new statement on creativity, and taken together they form a certain self-descriptive whole.

The "Wells" article seems to be written as a comment on current events following the English writer's meeting with writers and journalists of Saint Petersburg in the House of Arts on September 20, 1920. However, the factual parts characteristic of such publications are inserted into the aesthetic frame of an "admirer of fantastic journeys" looking at Russia with his writer's eyes: "His only official title was the most honorable and international of them all: that of a writer. As a writer he came to visit a writer" (Zamyatin, *Heretic's Discussions* 377). Zamyatin looks at Wells as in a mirror, refreshing the problems of identity and creativity that excite Zamyatin's own imagination as a writer. He begins by noting Well's effort to comprehend the essence of Russian life existence by studying everyday life: Wells "walked around without any official guides and saw everything that can be seen without an official guide... He visited a Soviet canteen, a prison, Petrocommune, a school, the Academy of Science, the House of Scientists, the House of Arts, Vsemirnaya Literatura Publishing house, Hermitage Museum, Institute of Experimental Medicine, he attended a meeting of Petersburg's Soviet" (Zamyatin, *Heretic's Discussions* 378) ("без официальных гидов ходил и смотрел все то, что можно увидеть без официального гида... Был он в советской столовой; был в одной из тюрем; был в Петрокоммуне; был в школе; был в академии наук, в Доме ученых, в Доме искусств, в издательстве 'Всемирная литература', в Эрмитаже, в институте экспериментальной медицины, на заседании Петербургского Совета" [Замятин [378]]).

Then, he observes Wells's dispassionate attitude towards what he sees: "of course, many things gave heavy impressions", but "many things he found interesting" (Zamyatin, *Heretic's Discussions* 378). While talking about the meeting at the House of Arts, Zamyatin quotes Wells to illustrate the moments of principal importance to him. He notes that the artist is free from responsibility for his government: "The first thing I would like to say," said Wells, "is that we cannot be blamed for actions

of our rulers, we are not responsible for them. The second: I don't want to waive the British Government: their politics has no justifications for me" (Zamyatin, *Heretic's Discussions* 378) ("Первое, что мне хотело бы сказать, – говорил Уэллс, – это – что нас нельзя винить за действия наших правителей; мы за них не ответственны. Второе: я не хочу снимать ответственность с правительства Англии: для ее политики – у меня нет оправданий" [Замятин [378]]).

Being a master of irony, Zamyatin cannot miss the off-beat and ironic mindset of Wells: "I remember, that once Wells overheard a question: Shall socialism totally destroy private property or just limit it? Wells's reaction: Are you going to have common toothbrushes? Count me out" (Zamyatin 378) ("Вспоминается, однажды в присутствии Уэллса спросили: должен ли социализм совершенно упразднить частную собственность – или только ограничить ее. Реплика Уэллса: 'А зубные щетки у вас тоже будут общие? Нет, я не согласен....'" [Замятин [378]]). Zamyatin held that Wells's artistic originality was largely defined by the traditional character of English culture that finds its implementation in a certain stance on social problems and on learning from the mistakes of others: "Rich, full-color intelligence as that of Wells cannot be classified into cabinets and paragraphs. Wells's socialism is constructed according to his own drawings. Wells is faithful to what he said several years ago in his autobiography: 'I was always a Socialist, but never a Marxist'. And, as we may see, his prognosis of social movement in England is still the same. 'We are never going to overthrow, overturn, destroy, begin over—never! However, we are more and more soaked with socialism. Our individualism gives place to ideas of social entity'" (Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*) (Zamyatin, *Heretic's Discussions* 378–79) ("Такой богатый, многокрасочный интеллект, как у Уэллса, – не уложить в ящички и параграфы. Уэллсовский социализм построен по его собственным чертежам. Уэллс остается верен тому, что несколько лет назад он говорил в своей автобиографии: 'Я всегда был социалистом, но социалистом не по Марксу.' И, сколько можно судить, прежним остается его прогноз относительно социального движения в Англии. 'Чтобы мы что-нибудь 'свергли,' 'опрокинули,' 'уничтожили,' чтобы мы 'начали все сызнова' – никогда! Тем не менее мы все гуще и плотнее насыщаемся социализмом. Наш индивидуализм уступает место идеям общественной организации" [Замятин [378–79]]).

While giving an overview of Wells's works in one short article, Zamyatin lingers unexpectedly not on Wells' innovative storylines but rather on his religious quests. *The Undying Fire*, a novel that later will be published in Russia in a translation edited by Zamyatin, will be taken as evidence of a parallelism between his studies and those of the English writer upon Hereticism as a specific religion: "In *The Undying Fire* Wells is even more outspoken about the question of God: three quarters of the novel... is a four-hour discussion between the four gentlemen on the subject of God. One of the four is a layman with layman's God, the second one is admirer of spiritualism studies as performed by Oliver Lodge, famous physicist; the third person is a doctor, atheist and agnostic, and the fourth one who is an obvious image of the author and who sees inside the man an undying fire from a certain God a fire calling for eternal rebellion, eternal fight for intelligent organization of humankind that will end all wars, cure all social evils and illnesses and thus create a life that the man is worthy of" (Zamyatin, *Heretic's Discussions* 379) ("В 'The Undying Fire' Уэллс еще определенной подходит к вопросу о Боге: три четверти романа... – четырехчасовой спор четырех джентльменов о Боге. Один из четырех – просто обыватель, с карманным, обывательским Богом; другой – поклонник спиритизма истинных изысканий известного физика Оливера Лоджа; третий – врач, атеист и агностик; и четвертый, с которым явно отождествляет себя автор, видит в человеке неугасимый огонь некоего Бога, зовущего к вечному бунту, к вечной борьбе за разумную организацию человечества, которая прекратила бы войны, излечила бы социальное зло, болезни, создала бы человеку жизнь, достойную человека" [Замятин [379]]).

However, when Wells the heretic starts outlining a special way for painless reformation of mankind with history and schooling, Zamyatin the Essayist becomes his critic. Of the novel *Joan And Peter*, where Wells presented "impressions of the world war", Zamyatin says: "This novel could be the best of realistic works of Wells, if not for a number of chapters devoted to dry journalistic criticism of English schooling. Every page shows a big artist who is not stopped by his previous achievements, a significant sophistication of techniques, use of bolder impressionist images. Joan And Peter make it safe to say that Wells has left artist's tools for preacher's pulpit only temporarily: there is too much alive and creative spirit in the author, despite his age of 55" (Zamyatin 380–81) ("Роман этот был бы лучшим из реалистических вещей Уэллса, если бы не целый ряд глав, отведенных суховатой публицистической критике школьного дела в Англии. За вычетом этих глав на каждой странице чувствуется большой и не остановившийся на прежних достижениях художник, заметно изощрение изобразительных приемов, пользование более смелыми импрессионистскими образам 'Joan and Peter' – позволяет с уверенностью сказать, что только на время Уэллс оставили палитру художника и взошел на кафедру проповедника: слишком много живого, творческого духа чувствуется в авторе, несмотря на его 55 лет" [Замятин [380–81]]).

Wells's personality and literary credo are undoubtedly fit for Zamyatin's creative tasks. Slice-of-life approach and freedom of creation, originality and irony, dystopia, and heresy—aren't they the aesthetic principles of Zamyatin himself from the period when he created *We*? After outlining these basic lines of a creative portrait of the English writer, "Genealogy of Wells", Zamyatin's next article, imitates a study of historical poetics as a means of looking for the genesis of Wells' fantasy. Likening different kinds of literary work to make discoveries in geography and new inventions in science, he associates literary geniuses with pioneers, and those who simply embellish existing discoveries with scientific talents: "History knows not so many geniuses who discover unknown or long-forgotten countries... it knows a lot more talents who improve or introduce significant changes into known forms." Wells the Genius is a "time traveler, the author of science fiction and social fantasy tales,"



while Wells the Talent is "dweller of our three-dimensional world, an author of slice-of-life novels" (Zamyatin 322) ("Гениев, открывающих неведомые дотолы или забытые страны... – история знает немного; талантов, совершенствующих или значительно видоизменяющих формы, – больше». Уэллс – гений – путешественников времени, автор научно-фантастических и социально-фантастических сказок, Уэллс – талант – «обитатель нашего трехмерного мира, автор бытовых романов" [Замятин [322]].

This analysis of Wells's science fiction novels leads Zamyatin to conclude that Wells "created an original species of literary form" (Zamyatin 324) ("создал новую оригинальную разновидность литературной формы" [Замятин [324]]. Although not employing the term, he characterizes Wells's science fiction novels as dystopian: "There are two inevitable generic indicators of utopia. One lies in content: the authors of utopias present us with the structure of society that they think is ideal, or, mathematically speaking, utopia always has a "+" sign. Another indicator, following from the content-form of utopia is always static, it is always a description that has no or little dynamic storytelling. We can rarely see those indicators in Wells's social fantasy novels. Mostly his social fantasy has a "-" sign and not a "+". He uses his social fantasy novels almost exclusively to show the deficiencies of the existing world order, and not to show us a picture of some future heaven" (Zamyatin 324) ("Есть два родовых и неизменных признака утопии. Один – в содержании: авторы утопий дают в них кажущееся им идеальным строение общества или если это перевести на язык математический, утопия имеет знак '+'. Другой признак, органически вытекающий из содержания, – в форме утопия всегда статична, утопия – всегда описание, и она не содержит или почти не содержит в себе – сюжетной динамики. В социально-фантастических романах Уэллса этих признаков мы почти нигде не найдем. Прежде всего, в огромном большинстве случаев его социальная фантастика со знаком '-', а не '+'. Своими социально-фантастическими романами он пользуется почти исключительно для того, чтобы вскрыть дефекты существующего социального строя, а не затем, чтобы создать картину некоего грядущего рая" [Замятин [324]].

One feature of this new genre form that Zamyatin calls "a social pamphlet in a literary form of a fantasy novel" is that it serves as a conjunction, alloying of two elements in Wells' novels: "element of social satire" and "element of science fiction" (324).

And that is why, he argues, the roots of Wells' genealogical tree may be found only in such literary works like *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, *Niels Klim's Underground Travels* by Ludvig Holberg, *The Coming Race* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Constructing a long and diverse genetic list of fantasy literature (from Bacon to Flammarion and Verne) that Wells used to adopt "many details of fantastic future", Zamyatin sees attractiveness of Wells' novels to readers in their strict logic "with hot spice of irony and social satire" (Zamyatin 324) ("И поэтому, – рассуждает писатель, – корни генеалогического дерева Уэллса можно искать только в таких литературных памятниках как свифтовское 'Путешествие Лемюэля Гулливера,' 'Путешествие Нильса Клим к центру земли' Людвиг Гольберга, 'Грядущая раса' Эдварда Болвера-Литтона». Выстраивая длинный и многообразный генетический ряд фантастической литературы (от Ф. Бэкона – до Фламариона и Ж.Верна), из которой Уэллс черпает 'много деталей фантастического будущего,' Замятин видит привлекательность романов Уэллса для читателя в строгой логике, 'снабженной острой приправой иронии и социальной сатиры'" [Замятин [324]].

Zamyatin sees other important features in the English writer's art of storytelling: "The storyline of the social fantasy novels of Wells is always dynamic, built upon collisions, upon struggle; the plot is always complex and engaging. Wells inevitably dresses his social and science fiction into the Robinsonade, a typical adventure novel, a form beloved in Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. In this area Wells is a successor of the tradition created by Daniel Defoe and leading through Fenimore Cooper, Thomas Meyne Reid, Robert Stephenson, Edgar Poe—to contemporary Haggard, Conan Doyle, Jack London. However, Wells took the form of adventure novel and significantly deepened it and raised its intellectual value by bringing in social and philosophical elements, as well as scientific ones" (Zamyatin, Works in two volumes 326) ("В социально-фантастических романах Уэллса сюжет всегда динамичен, построен на коллизиях, на борьбе; фабула – сложна и занимательна. Свою социальную и научную фантастику Уэллс неизменно облакает в форму робинзонады, типического авантюрного романа, столь излюбленного в англо-саксонской литературе. В этой области Уэллс является продолжателем традиций, созданных Даниелем Дефо и идущих через Фенимора Купера, Майн Рида, Стивенсона, Эдгара По – к современным Хаггарду, Конан Дойлю, Джеку Лондону. Но, взяв форму авантюрного романа, Уэллс значительно углубил его и повысил его интеллектуальную ценность, внес в него элемент социально-философский и научный" [Замятин [326]].

Zamyatin cites Wells' thrilling novels on the one hand to support his arguments in a discussion about storytelling that was started by the Formalists around that time, and on the other hand to support aesthetic choices made in the creation of *We*. According to Zamyatin, the laws governing the rise of the fantasy novel as a new genre form are evident in the great number of Wells' followers in the European literature (Conan Doyle, Bernard Shaw, Sinclair, France, Capek, and others are listed). Zamyatin hopes that the time for such thrilling literature has come for new Russia as well, "the most fantastic of all the countries of modern Europe": "and the foundation is already laid off: Alexey Tolstoy's *Aelita* and *Hyperboloid*, the author's novel *We*, Ilya Erenburg's *Julio Jurenito* and *Trust*" (328) ("фантастичнейшей из стран современной Европы": "и начало этому уже положено: романы А.Н. Толстого «Аэлита» и «Гиперболоид», роман автора настоящей статьи «Мы», романы И. Эренбурга «Хулио Хуренито» и «Трест Д.Е.»" [Замятин [328]].

It would be no exaggeration to say that Zamyatin's concept of synthetism in art takes his understanding of Wells' artistic endeavors as one of its sources. Zamyatin saw Wells as an embodiment of one of two traits that he would like to breed together, namely, gripping storytelling that turns Wells's novels into page-turners: "What Wells had that was his own, original and exclusive

was in plots of his fantastic novels" (326) ("Свое, оригинальное, исключительное у Уэллса было в фабуле его фантастических романов" [Замятин [326]). Zamyatin would like to extend it with expert wordsmithing of elitist modernist writing while abstaining from its extremes, which he clearly did not find that much interesting: "Analytic search for word comes to its end, and argonauts who left home for the Golden Fleece are arriving to argot, to langue verte" (366) ("Аналитическая работа словоискательства подходит к завершению, отправившиеся за золотым руном слова-аргонавты – подплывают уже к арго, к langue verte" [Замятин [365]). In 1923, in "New Russian Prose," an article devoted to an analysis of contemporary Russian literature expressing his own aesthetic views Zamyatin writes: "To reflect the whole range [of modernity—Natalia Aksenova, Marina Khatyamova]—it is necessary to introduce some kind of philosophical synthesis into the dynamics of adventure novel... If I had to find a word to define the point where the current literature is aiming to—I would chose the word synthetism" (366) ("Чтобы отразить весь спектр [современности – Н.А.] – нужно в динамику авантюрного романа вложить тот или иной философский синтез... Если искать какого-нибудь слова для определения той точки, к которой движется сейчас литература – я выбрал бы себе слово синтетизм" [Замятин [366]).

Herbert Wells became an integrating work in Zamyatin's "Wellsian series" of articles. Just as in his previous articles, Zamyatin declares Wells to be the most modern Western writer as well as his own predecessor, and characterizes Wells's work in terms of a dominant "fantastic line." However, in this work Zamyatin as an art theorist and philosopher of art shows his solidarity with popular western mythocritical concepts: Wells's works are projected onto the text and structure of myth. Wells's novels are myths of a modern city: "A city, modern, vast, frantically running, full of roars, humming, buzz from propellers, wires, wheels, adverts—this city is everywhere in Wells's works" (297) ("Город, нынешний огромный, лихорадочно бегущий, полный рева, гула, жужжания пропеллеров, проводов, колес, реклам – этот город у Уэллса всюду" [Замятин [297]).

As in any other myth, Wells's myth of the modern world reproduces a syncretic form. At the same time, it is a technical, scientific, religious and social myth: "Here is what is revealed to us when we come under the roofs of these fantastic buildings—he Wells's tales. There are in the same row: mathematics and myth, physics and fantasy, parody and prophesy, fairytale and socialism" (Kaznina 414) ("Вот что открывается нам, когда мы войдем внутрь этих причудливых зданий – сказок Уэллса. Там рядом: математика и миф, физика и фантастика, чертеж и чудо, пародия и пророчество, сказка и социализм" [Казнина, Николюкин [414]). The first level of Wells's world view is scientific and technical: "Modern city with its uncrowned ruler—Mechanism, whether as an explicit or implicit function—is an inevitable part of every Wells's fantastic novels, of these Wellsian myth-creating equations, and the myths, as we will see below, are exactly logical equations" (Kaznina 406) ("Сегодняшний город с некоронованным его владыкой – Механизмом, в виде явной или неявной функции – непременно входит в каждый из фантастических романов Уэллса, в уравнение любого из уэллсовских мифов, а эти мифы, как мы дальше увидим, именно логические уравнения" [Казнина, Николюкин [406]). "...For his tales, Wells chooses a safe route: a route paved with astronomical, physical, and chemical formulas, a route rammed with iron laws of exact sciences. In the beginning it sounds like a paradox: exact science and fairytale, exactness and fantasy. But it is so—and so it should be. Because the myth is always, explicitly or implicitly, connected to religion, while religion of modern city is exact science, thus—here is a natural link between an urban myth, urban fairytale and science. I do not know, is there a significant area of exact sciences that found no reflexion in Wells's novels" (Kaznina 407) ("...Для своих сказок он [Уэллс, с точки зрения Аксёновой] выбирает надежный путь: путь, вымощенный астрономическими, физическими, химическими формулами, путь, утрамбованный чугунами законами точных наук. Это звучит сперва очень парадоксально: точная наука и сказка, точность и фантастика. Но это так – и должно быть так. Ведь миф всегда, явно или неявно, связан с религией, а религия сегодняшнего города – это точная наука, и вот – естественная связь новейшего городского мифа, городской сказки с наукой. И я не знаю, есть ли такая крупная отрасль точных наук, которая не отразилась бы в фантастических романах Уэллса" [Казнина, Николюкин [407]).

Furthermore, the most integral part of Well's myth is its social component, for he creates "a parody of modern civilization": "The reader have most probably already found another one feature of Wells' fantasy in his prophecies—a feature inextricably connected with the city, with that soil of brick and mortar where the Wells's roots lie. For the modern city dweller is inevitably zoon politicon—social animal; hence—with little exception—a social element, being intertwined into every fantasy of Wells. Whatever is the tale he is telling us, however far it seems from social issues in the beginning, the reader will be led to those issues in the end" (Kaznina 412) ("Во всех пророчествах Уэллса читатель, вероятно, уже успел нащупать еще одну черту уэллсовской фантастики – черту, неразрывно связанную с городом, этой каменной почвой, в которой все корни Уэллса. Ведь сегодняшний городской человек непременно zoon politicon—животное социальное; и отсюда—почти без исключений—социальный элемент, вплетающийся во всякую из фантазий Уэллса. Какую бы сказку он не рассказывал, как бы она на первый взгляд, не казалась далека от социальных вопросов, – к этим вопросам читатель будет неминуемо приведен" [Казнина, Николюкин [412]).

According to Zamyatin, Wells responds to modernity—"the time of the most impossible, the most unbelievable scientific wonders", and thus he is an extraordinary writer, for his individual myth of the world is not devoid of wonder, but an insight into the future: "Airplane—this word is for me the focus of modernity, and in the same word—there is the whole of Wells, the most modern of all modern writers... This new perspective, those new eyes of an aviator, they are a feature of many of us, who lived through the recent years. Wells has those eyes for quite some time. They give him the insights into the future, the vast horizons of space and time" (Kaznina 426) ("времени самых невероятных, самых неправдоподобных научных чудес», и потому он выдающийся писатель, ибо его

индивидуальный миф о мире не лишен чудесного, это прозрение будущего: «Аэроплан – в этом слове, как в фокусе, для меня вся наша современность, и в этом же слове – весь Уэллс, современнейший из современных писателей... Этот новый кругозор, эти новые глаза авиатора – у многих из нас, кто пережил последние годы. И эти глаза уже давно у Уэллса. Отсюда у него эти прозрения будущего, эти огромные горизонты пространства и времени.» [Казнина, Николоюкин [426]]; "...many of Wells's fantasies have already come to life, he has a strange gift to see through the nontransparent veil of today" (Kaznina 409) ("...многие из фантазий Уэллса – уже воплотились, потому что у Уэллса есть странный дар прозорливости, странный дар видеть будущее сквозь непрозрачную завесу нынешнего дня" [Казнина, Николоюкин [409]]).

The symbolic polysemy of Wellsian myth, as constructed by Zamyatin, may be complemented with national semantics: the Russian writer constantly emphasizes that Wells creates an *English* national myth. The article consistently creates the image of a British artist whose character is defined by national mentality and traditions. Zamyatin respects Wells's pragmatism, and uses fairytale images reflected through Saltykov-Schedin's work to contrast the Russian and English mentalities: "Motives of Wells's urban tales are, in principle, the same as in any other tales: here you find the Fortunatus's cap, Flying Carpet, Break-All Grass, Magic Table-cloth, as well as dragons and giants, dwarfs, mermaids and ogres. However, there is a difference between these tales and, for example, Russian ones, the same as the difference between the mentality of a Russian from a small town of Poshekhonie and that of a Londoner: Poshekhonian sits himself by the window and awaits for the cap and the carpet to appear in front of him by the will of the Great Pike; Londoner has no trust into the Great Pike, but rather trusts himself—so he sits in front of a drafting board, takes a slide-rule and calculates the Flying Carpet, the Londoner goes to a lab, fires an electric oven and invents Break-All Grass, the Poshekhonian reconciles himself with the idea that his miracles are in a land far far away, while the Londoner wishes his miracles to arrive here and now" (298) ("Мотивы городских уэлловских сказок – в сущности те же, что всех других сказок: вы встретите у него и шапку-невидимку, и ковер-самолет, и разрыв-траву, и скатерть-самобранку, и драконов, и великанов, и гномов, и русалок, и людоедов. Но разница между его сказками и, скажем, нашими русскими – такая же, как между психологией пошехонца и лондонца: пошехонец садится под окошко и ждет, пока шапка-невидимка и ковер-самолет явятся к нему «по щучьему велению»; лондонец на «щучье веленье» не надеется, а надеется на себя – лондонец садится за чертежную доску, берет логарифмическую линейку и вычисляет ковер-самолет, лондонец идет в лабораторию, зажигает электрическую печь и изобретает разрыв-траву, пошехонец примиряется с тем, что его чудеса – за тридевять земель и в тридесятом царстве; лондонец хочет, чтобы чудеса были сегодня, сейчас же, здесь же" [Замятин [298]]).

English practicality and activity aims at modern scientific knowledge, thus Wells uses knowledge from exact and natural sciences in his works: "Mathematics, astronomy, astrophysics, physics, chemistry, medicine, physiology, bacteriology, mechanics, electrical engineering, and aviation. Almost all Wells's tales are based upon brilliant, unpredictable scientific paradoxes, all the Wellsian myths are logical as if they were mathematical equations" (Zamyatin 407) ("Математика, астрономия, астрофизика, физика, химия, медицина, физиология, бактериология, механика, электротехника, авиация. Почти все сказки Уэллса построены на блестящих, неожиданнейших научных парадоксах; все мифы Уэллса – логичны, как математические уравнения" [Замятин [407]]).

Wells' Public position as a socialist, Zamyatin argues, is grounded in a love of liberty that is not only characteristic of his identity as a true artist, but also his British identity: "...Wells is, obviously, a socialist... But if any party tried to append Wells to its program as a wax seal, it would be the same as use Leo Tolstoy or Rozanov to support Orthodox Christianity...Wells is first of all an artist. And as an artist... he creates his own specific world with specific laws—creates them into his own likeness and not into likeness of others. That is why it is hard to pack the artist into already created, seventh day, solidified world: he will jump out of the paragraphs and become a heretic" (413) ("Уэллс, конечно, социалист... Но если какая-нибудь партия вздумала приложить Уэллса, как печать к своей программе, – это было бы то же самое, что Толстым или Розановым утверждать православие... Уэллс прежде всего – художник. А художник... творит для себя свой особенный мир, со своими особенными законами – творит по своему образу и подобию, а не по чужому. И оттого художника трудно уложить в уже созданный, семидневный, отвердевший мир: он выскочит из параграфов, он будет еретиком" [Замятин [413]]).

The epithet "heretic" is Zamyatin's highest praise to any artist. Later in his article "On literature, revolution, entropy and other things" (1924) he writes: "...Somebody have to ... tell about the future as today's heretic. Heretics are the only (bitter) medicine against entropy of human thought" (Zamyatin, "I am afraid" 96) ("Кто-то же должен ... уже сегодня еретически говорить о завтра. Еретики – единственное (горькое) лекарство от энтропии человеческой мысли" [Замятин, Я боюсь [96]]).

However, Wells's hereticism was formed within the English tradition: "There is another feature of Wellsian socialism, which is probably more of a national nature, than of personal. Socialism for Wells is undoubtedly a way to cure the cancer that eats the body of the Old World. However, medicine has two methods to fight this disease: one of them is scalpel, surgery, another is the slower way of therapy. Wells prefer the latter. Here... are several words from his autobiography: "We, Englishmen are a paradoxical nation—progressive and terribly conservative at the same time, we always change but never dramatically, we never saw sudden revolutions..." (306) ("Есть еще одна особенность в уэлловском социализме – особенность, может быть, скорее национальная, чем личная. Социализм для Уэллса, несомненно, путь к излечению рака, въевшегося в организм старого мира. Но медицина знает два пути для борьбы с этой болезнью: один путь – это нож, хирургия, другой путь – более медленный – терапия. Уэллс предпочитает этот последний путь. Вот... несколько



слов из его автобиографии: «Мы, англичане, парадоксальный народ, – одновременно и прогрессивный, и страшно консервативный; мы вечно изменяемся, но без всякого драматизма; никогда мы не знали внезапных переворотов...» [Замятин [306]].

According to Zamyatin, "Wellsian socialism is humanistic. That is why he knows how to find convincing, sharp words when he speaks about classes thrown into desperate work and penury, when a man speaks about hatred towards a fellow man, about murder, war and capital punishment. According to Wells, no one is guilty, there is no evil will, only evil life. It is possible to pity humans, to scorn them or love them, but not to hate" (Kaznina 414) ("социализм Уэллса гуманистический. Именно поэтому умеет он находить такие убеждающие, острые слова, когда говорит о классах, брошенных в безысходный труд и нужду, когда говорит о ненависти человека к человеку, об убийстве человека человеком, когда говорит о войне и смертной казни. По Уэллсу, виноватых – нет, злой воли – нет: есть злая жизнь. Можно жалеть людей, можно презирать их, можно любить их – но ненавидеть нельзя" (Казнина, Николюкин [414])).

In the second part of his essay, Zamyatin continues examining the poetics of Wells's fantasy and slice-of-life novels. He exchanges the term *storyline*, used in previous articles, for the term *plot*, meaning order of event presentation. Narrativity is yet another "English feature" of Wells's works: "...Wells, just like most of his fellow English writers pays much more attention to the plot, rather than language, style, word—all those things that we became used to praise in recent Russian writers... What Wells had as his own, original and exclusive were in plot lines of his fantasy novels, and as soon as he debarked the airplane and took more usual themes he lost a part of his originality" (Kaznina 415) ("...Уэллс, как и большинство его английских товарищей по перу, значительно большее внимание обращает на фабулу, чем на язык, стиль, слово, – на все то, что мы привыкли ценить в новейших русских писателях...Свое, оригинальное, исключительное у Уэллса было в фабуле его фантастических романов; и как только он слез с аэроплана, как только он взялся за более обычные фабулы, – часть оригинальности он утерял" [Казнина, Николюкин [415]]).

According to Zamyatin, the derivative nature of Wells's realist novels is caused by the slow-paced movement of Dickens's novel, which Wells took as his models. "Another important English feature of Wells's prose is its ironic smile, which Zamyatin notes, observing that he loves with acute, hating love... and that is why his pen often turns into a scourge and scars from that scourge are long-lasting. Giving multiple examples of irony in fantasy works of Wells, Zamyatin also notes that "this ironic base is even more evident in Wells's realistic novels" (Kaznina 416) ("Другой важной английской особенностью прозы Г. Уэллса является 'улыбка иронии,' ибо он 'любит острой, ненавидящей любовью... и потому его перо часто обращается в кнут, и рубцы от этого кнута остаются надолго.' Приводя многочисленные примеры иронических пассажей Уэллса-фантаста, Замятин отмечает, что еще яснее эта ироническая основа в ткани каждого из реалистических романов Уэллса" [Казнина, Николюкин [416]]).

Ultimately, Zamyatin's assessment of Wells's realistic novels is paradoxical. While acknowledging their strong dependence on British literary tradition he nevertheless notes, that "the architect who built cloud castles of scientific tales and the architect who constructed vast six-storey brick and mortar buildings of the realistic novels are the same person" (306) ("архитектор, построивший воздушные замки научных сказок, и архитектор, построивший шестизэтажные каменные громады бытовых романов, – один и тот же Уэллс" [Замятин [306]]). Zamyatin continues: "Wells's realistic novels become sociological observations, and his pen just like the pen of a seismograph fixes systematically all the movements happening in the social ground of England in the beginning of the twentieth century... So, gradually, Wells's realistic works undergo transformation from autobiographic writings to chronicle of modern England" (306) ("архитектор, построивший воздушные замки научных сказок, и архитектор, построивший шестизэтажные каменные громады бытовых романов, – один и тот же Уэллс"... "Бытовые романы Уэллса, – пишет Замятин, – становятся социологической обсерваторией, и его перо, как перо сейсмографа, систематически записывает все движения социальной почвы в Англии начала XX века ... Так, постепенно, из автобиографических – бытовые романы Уэллса становятся летописью жизни современной нам Англии" [Замятин [306]]).

However, Wells's realistic novels also strike an unexpected choice and demonstrate a deep understanding of problems, including the Problem of God. Wells' religious myth is the modern humanism, Zamyatin holds: "...and in his religious schemes Wells is still Wells...Of course, his God is the God of London and, of course, the best incense for his God is the smell of chemical reactions and aircraft engine's gasoline. That is why the omnipotence of this God is in the omnipotence of the Man, human mind, human science. Because it is not an eastern God to whom a man is just an obedient tool: it is the western God, requiring activity and work from the Man first of all" (Kaznina 423) ("И в своих религиозных построениях Уэллс остается все тем же Уэллсом. ...Конечно же, его бог – это лондонский Бог, и, конечно, лучшие фимиамы для его Бога – это запах химических реакций бензина из аэропланного мотора. Поэтому всемогущество этого Бога – во всемогуществе человека, человеческого разума, человеческой науки. Потому что это не восточный Бог, в руках которого человек – только послушное орудие: это Бог западный, требующий от человека, прежде всего, активности, работы" [Казнина, Николюкин [423]]).

It is clear that Zamyatin's articles dedicated to Herbert Wells fulfill a two-fold task. First, Zamyatin creates his own myth of Wells as an embodiment of an ideal Englishman, a speaker for free European worldview whose sensible, scientific, and at the same time moral and humanistic, existence was realized through his books. Second, they construct an aesthetic myth out of ideas and categories that were important for Zamyatin throughout the 1920s. That is literature is a myth of the world, that the scientific version of the myth is current, that irony and knowledge of everyday life are necessary components of this myth, that an approach synthesizing fantasy and slice-of-life with plot-related characteristics represents the future of literature under the demands of a fantastic time. As a result,



Well's works become not just an object of reception, but material for the Zamyatin's own aesthetic reflections.

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