

The Drafts of THE TIME MACHINE, 1894

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Bernard Bergonzi in a useful article, "The Publication of *The Time Machine*, 1894-5," (1) has indicated the correct relationships between the printed texts of H. G. Wells' first scientific romance. Briefly, the history of the main *Time Machine* versions is as follows.

(1) Wells' first attempt at a time travel story was the unfinished *Chronic Argonauts*, 1888.

(2,3) He wrote two more drafts, now lost, 1889-92.

(4) Early in 1894 Wells, encouraged by W. E. Henley, produced the skeleton of the *Time Machine* story as we now have it, in the form of seven articles published March-June 1894 in Henley's *National Observer* (which version is henceforth symbolized as NO).

Very soon afterwards Henley lost the editorship of the *National Observer*, but continued to encourage Wells to transform his somewhat disconnected articles into a whole romance. *The Time Machine* then saw publication early in 1895, in three closely related versions:

(5) Serialized in Henley's new magazine, *New Review*, January-May (henceforth, NR).

(6) A book edition, published by Henry Holt, New York, early May (henceforth, NY).

(7) Another book edition, published by Heinemann, London, late May (henceforth, H).

Bergonzi has established by internal evidence that NY is the most primitive of the 1895 versions, and H the most revised; H indeed is directly ancestral to the present standard text, that of the Atlantic Edition of 1924, which differs from H only in a few verbal emendations plus a somewhat drastic rechaptering. However, if we count the Atlantic Edition text as another version, this means that there were no less than eight successive versions of the romance. As Bergonzi remarks, *The Time Machine* is remarkable not only for its literary merit but for its complex bibliographical history, which must be unparalleled among works of modern fiction" (p. 42).

As a matter of fact, though, Bergonzi has understated the complexity of *The Time Machine's* full history; for he has not taken into account the manuscript versions, all dating from 1894, now held in the library of the University of Illinois. It will be my purpose now to show how these drafts support most but not all of Bergonzi's conclusions, and modify Wells' own account of the writing of *The Time Machine*.

Wells more than once gave the impression that the final rewriting of *The Time Machine* was accomplished in a fortnight during the summer of 1894, (2) and in his *Experiment in Autobiography* he makes it clear that this was in August while he was staying at Sevenoaks, in Kent. (3) Bergonzi has already called this in question (ibid), by referring to Henley's letters to Wells, which show that Wells was still working on

the story as late as November. Thus on November 24th Henley writes, "I hope the *Time Traveller* is doing well," and on 26th, "I hope you put in some work on the MS." (4) The story drafts confirm the evidence of the letters. Wells did finish a major draft of *The Time Machine* in August, but even in October he knew that the book was not yet in a condition to send to a publisher. If it had been published in August-September it would have lacked its poetic climax, the end-of-the-world "Further Vision", and the *Time Machine* would have been disposed of in a comic accident; if it had been published in October, "The Further Vision" would have been followed by episodes of pure bathos, encounters with a Pliocene hippopotamus and some stage-Puritans of the year 1645 A. D. The excellence of the final version, then, is due to the author's patience and critical judgment, his pertinacity in vision and revision. This creative process can be followed in great detail in the *Time Machine* drafts.

The manuscripts of *The Time Machine* were acquired by the University of Illinois from the Wells estate in 1954, and in 1958 were sorted into groups, labelled A through E, by Mrs. Susan Shattuck. (5) Two groups need not concern us here. Group A comprises drafts of the preface to a 1931 edition (New York: Random House). Another group (unlettered) comprises the complete galleys for the Atlantic Edition of 1924. It is groups B through E which comprise the 1894 manuscripts. Bulkiest of all is B, the main draft of the summer of 1894; C, D, and E are all revisions of parts of the story. Of these groups, B and D can be dated very exactly, for the following reason. Almost invariably, Wells composed in pen on one side only of whatever sheets of paper he happened to have handy. When he was well supplied with paper, as in the late autumn of 1894, these were unlined quarto sheets, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ by 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches; but in July-August and again about early October he was clearly not well supplied, and he wrote on whatever came to hand — including the backs of letters received by him and abortive letters written by him, which luckily are dated.

Another, but rougher, means of dating is supplied by the character called Filby in the 1895 printed texts. In NO and in the main text of B he is "the red haired man"; at a later stage Wells altered his name to "Bayliss"; it is only in group E that he becomes "Filby". Hence Wells' drafts can be classified into "red haired man," "Bayliss", and "Filby" periods.

Many of the manuscript sheets bear instructions to, or endorsements by, the typist, which can also be useful for dating. Wells' typist in the 1890s was his cousin Bertha Williams, whom he addresses on one sheet of B: "Bertie / copy this". When Miss Williams finished typing a piece of work for Wells, she often typed on the verso of the last page Wells' name and address. In the spring and fall of 1894, Wells lived at 12 Mornington Road, London N. W., but in July-August at Tusculum Villa, Sevenoaks. Thus a "Mornington Road" endorsement proves a piece of writing to be either early or late.

Now let us consider group B, the main manuscript of *The Time Machine*. This is a bundle of 152 pages on nearly as many sheets, the first 36 pages being numbered by Wells in brown pencil, the sequence of the rest being certain up to p. 142. This is the point where the Time Traveller ends his narration, with the words (142 recto), "And, taking it as a story, what do you think of it?"

Thereafter the B bundle contains two separate and probably alternative endings, which I will label "B minus" and "B plus". B minus is most probably the earlier of the two; but both B minus and B plus (1), written in the "red haired man" period (2) were later revised, "the red haired man" being altered in pencil to "Bayliss". This is interesting, for it reveals Wells' characteristic way of working on a book: he would carefully preserve "earlier" versions, and make choice between several for his printed texts. (Thus the first chapter of the final Heinemann text of *The Time Machine* reverts substantially to the NO first chapter, rejecting NY and NR.)

Let us exclude for the moment the two endings, and consider the main B manuscript, pp 1-142. One has to recognize at once that it has been produced by a process akin to collage: it begins with paste-ups of NO articles, and proceeds through pen drafts to typed pages and back to pen; and it was certainly not produced all in one fortnight. It contains several layers of working, probably two main versions plus one or more later revisions. All these layers belong to the "red haired man" period (with "red haired man" often corrected afterwards to "Bayliss").

1. The earliest layer of work is represented perhaps by the NO paste-ups, pp 3-14, and certainly by the typewritten pages 68, 69, 80-82, 84, 85. These are not exactly datable, but p. 69 verso bears Miss Williams' typed endorsement "H. G. Wells/12 Mornington Road, N.W." These pages 68-69 must be earlier than July, for, though not identical with NO, they are very much in the style of the NO articles, with frequent interruptions of the Time Traveller's narrative by the auditors, including the "red haired man" — all such interruptions having been later cancelled in pen. Pp 80-82, 84, 85 are a typed-out text of most of the NO article of May 19, with pen cancellation of interruptions. (As we shall see below, the ending B minus probably belongs also with this layer.) The evidence especially of p. 69 makes it clear that Wells tinkered with the NO version before he left London for Sevenoaks: (6) perhaps about June, while the NO articles were still running, he wrote extensions to the NO version which he had typed; then he took these typed sheets with him to Sevenoaks, considerably revised them, and incorporated them in his main draft.

2. The main, hand-written draft is datable by the evidence of versos to Sevenoaks, late July to early August. The dates (which provide termini a quibus) range from July 1st (p. 28 verso: a letter from Henley including the remark "I shall be glad ... to see the book when it's done") to July 30. Since p. 26 verso is a letter dated July 25, and this is near the beginning of the story, Wells presumably began this main draft near the end of July at earliest.

3. There are also portions of later typing (probably later than

August). Thus pp 127-8 are typed *revisions* of the handwritten pp 129-32. Incidentally, p. 127 is type-paginated "110", which possibly suggests that they formed part of an extensive type-draft now lost.

4. There is yet a fourth layer of work in B, for revised-typed p. 127 is itself revised: its middle has been cut out and pasted upon a handwritten sheet; and part of the removed central typed portion has been re-pasted onto the foot of the page.

The content of B is highly interesting. Page 1 is a title page inscribed "The Time Traveller/An Invention". This page also bears instructions to the typist, including: "General note/Wherever red haired man occurs after the first page write *Bayliss*/He only comes in the Introduction & at the end." Since the Filby character does not figure at all in the final version of the end of *The Time Machine*, it seems that when Wells wrote these title page instructions he still proposed to end with B minus or B plus (or another version to be discussed below, which I have labelled "D minus"). The likeliest of these, I think, for this "Bayliss" period, would be B plus.

It follows from these instructions that there must have been a neat typed transcript of this "Bayliss" version, entitled "The Time Traveller". Very possibly B 127-8 are actually from this typescript. But whether typed or in manuscript, "The Time Traveller" is far from coinciding with any of the published versions of the story. It has (without counting B plus) one short episode which is not in the final version: near the beginning (pp 8-10) the auditors express strong incredulity, and the Time Traveller loses his temper and leaves the room; moreover, immediately on resuming his tale he reveals that he has tried time travelling before, but was then deterred by the unpleasantness of the sensations involved. But most striking of all, "The Further Vision" is totally lacking: when the Traveller escapes from the Morlocks, he comes directly home (p. 141).

Having pointed out these gross differences from the 1895 printed editions, I must now admit the similarities. B begins with a paste-up of the first three articles of NO (March 17, 24 and most of 31), with amendments and insertions in pen: this beginning was used by Wells for the final H version of 1895, but not for NY or NR. However, from p. 16 onwards there is a strong similarity between B and above all NY, the American edition of *The Time Machine*. Indeed, most of B 16-142r might be regarded as a late draft of NY. Every important peculiarity of NY that is noted by Bergonzi occurs also in this manuscript. For instance:-

(1) The fictional date. Bergonzi has noted (p. 46) the anomalous date in Chapter IV of NY: ".... the people of the year Thirty-two thousand odd", and speculated that Wells "had provisionally adopted another date before deciding on one sufficiently far in the future." This speculation is now proved correct, for the same phrase, "the people of the year thirty-two thousand odd" occurs on B 19; and B 30 contains the exact date "the year thirty-two thousand seven hundred and one A.D." — which is consistently the date of the Eloi world in this draft.

(2) In all the instances quoted by Bergonzi (pp 48-9) where NY differs from NR-H, the phrasing of the B manuscript is either exactly or very nearly that on NY, and in the minor instances where it differs from NY it does not resemble NR-H.

(3) Chaptering in B is very similar to that of NY, and paragraphing nearly always exactly the same, so that Bergonzi's speculation (p. 48) that paragraphing may have been altered by the American publisher or printer is shown to be unfounded. Wells was such an inveterate reviser that we should hesitate, I think, to ascribe any peculiarities in NY (except spelling) to the American publisher.

To summarize: B is often so close to the printed versions of *The Time Machine* that Wells may be forgiven for thinking, in later years, that he had "finished" the romance with that August draft. (Indeed, B is a valuable resource for critical study of the final text. At least one reading in H and the Atlantic edition can be shown by comparison with the manuscript to be almost certainly an error. (7)) And by the time he had reached the end of B 142 recto, Wells had accomplished a great deal: he had created the essential plot of the stealing of the Time machine, and all the business of Weena and her pathetic death. But he still did not know how to round off his story.

We must now consider the alternative endings, B minus and B plus. B minus comprises seven handwritten sheets, eight inches by six and three-quarters inches, bearing what is clearly neat copy for, or a neat transcript of, part of the last NO article (June 23, 1894), including the ending of the story in that early version. But the neat copy is heavily marked with alterations and cancellings (one of the latter on the first page makes B minus fit smoothly onto the end of "main B"). But Wells was not satisfied with the rather tame NO ending, which leaves the Time Traveller going upstairs to soothe his crying child: after the last line in the neat copy there are half a page of pen additions, representing further reactions of the auditors, including "the red haired man".

And perhaps when Wells left Sevenoaks towards the end of the summer, this is how the story was left. But certainly somewhere about this time he composed another ending, B plus, which he may have originally intended as an addition to B minus — but as the manuscript now stands, looks more like an alternative. This is represented by three typed sheets and pencilling on the whole verso of B 142, so that it seems to follow directly on from "main B". The second and third typed sheets are type-paginated "2" and "3", and the verso of 3 has the typed endorsement "H. G. Wells /12 Mornington Road, N. W." These typed pages are themselves heavily altered and added to; and the pencilling on the verso of B 142 is a neat write-out of the much-altered first part of typed page 1.

B plus is titled "The Last Voyage of the Time Machine". It begins with the words: "The Philosophical Inventor had seemed well on that Thursday morning when he had parted from us in the small hours." What follows is the Time Traveller's sudden death from brain damage

induced by unforeseen after-effects of time travelling out of his own natural lifetime. Soon after this the red-haired man jokingly climbs onto the Time machine, by accident presses a lever — whereupon he and the machine vanish, never to reappear.

The endorsement probably dates B plus to the early fall of 1894. Now Henley was again inquiring after the book; but still Wells was not satisfied with his ending. He was to use something like it years later in *The First Men in the Moon* — but there the comic accident to the Cavorite sphere would be appropriate to the general tone; here it was not. And so we come to the additional manuscripts, C through E.

Of these, C and E are certainly the latest; the next item we must examine is a pair of sheets at the end of bundle D, D27 and 28, which I shall call "D minus". This penned fragment, paginated "126" and "127", constitutes another ending of the B plus episode; but this time the main actor is called "Bayliss" in the draft itself, so that D minus must be later than the Sevenoaks period. In this D minus ending, "Bayliss" reappears from thin air after his escapade on the Time machine, and he and the narrator are left bewildered. And this is certainly meant to be the end of the story; but (as after B minus and B plus) the words "The End" do not appear. Wells was still floundering.

Now we come to D proper. This is in many ways the most interesting of all the *Time Machine* manuscripts, for it comprises two whole chapters, numbered and titled as follows:

XIII. The Further Vision (p D 1)

XIV. The Return of the Time Traveller (p D 12)

Bundle D is entirely written in pen, the first page being marked "NB — Page 117". There is no occurrence of the Bayliss-Filby character, but there is a clear indication of date on the versos of two Chapter XIV pages, D 14 and 15, which bear, each of them, the beginnings of a letter by Wells which gets no further than:

12 Mornington Rd. N. W.
4/10/94

Dear Sir,

I have written a story of about 40,000 words

The date means "4 October". The abortive letters were written before the text of the story, because they are not rough drafts: the two small sheets (8.8" by 7") had been folded, and the letter beginnings are written, according with Wells' usual habit, across the first 7" by 4.4" recto so formed. It looks as though Wells were trying to persuade himself, in early October, that his story was finished enough to send to a publisher; but then his artistic conscience stopped him, and he cancelled the letters, unfolded them, and used the clean sides for his new draft.

And when he had written this new draft, after October 4th, Wells was still not finished. The new Chapter XIII is very nearly "The Further Vision" as it appears in NY — yet there is one paragraph on D 3 which is missing from all later versions, and this gives the date of the giant crab episode as "more than eighteen million years from this human age of ours." (By D 8 we reach "more than thirty million years hence", as in the 1895 texts.) And the great difference comes at the end of the chapter, which concludes: "I do not remember what followed. I fainted upon the machine." (D 11)

What does follow is an awkward accident: the Traveller, in fainting, breaks the connection between the dials and the mysterious works of the machine, so that he does not know where he is in time. On D 15 he stops, to find himself in the prehistoric past: he has badly overshot, and has a brush with a Pliocene hippopotamus. His geology is vague, but he reconnects the dials and moves forward in time by two million years — and then (D 19) finds himself in the seventeenth century A.D. He is nearly shot as a warlock by a band of Puritans, but one of them tells him the exact date — New Year's Eve, 1645 — and at that he leaves them. In his excitement he overshoots his starting year by a decade (D 25), then swings round and comes home "more deliberately".

D 26 may or may not fit properly onto the end of this draft. It contains the first draft of the episode of Mrs. Watchett appearing to move in reverse. And then the Traveller is home — but the machine not yet well disposed of.

At last, possibly in November, Wells took the essential steps. He very properly suppressed his new Chapter XIV (the Pliocene and Puritan episodes), and wrote manuscripts E and C.

E belongs at last to the "Filby" period. It is a late draft of the beginning of the story, in the NR version, up to the point where the Traveller arrives in the Eloi world.

C, which may be a little earlier than E, is at last the ending of the story somewhat as the 1895 printed texts have it. The Filby character does not appear, but the text is verbally extremely close to the last chapter of NY. The narrator, in waiting for the Traveller, takes up "the *New Review*" — as in NY, not "a daily paper" as in NR and H. There is only one substantial difference from NY: after the Traveller disappears on his last voyage, the narrator stands talking to the manservant, and the ending is very abrupt:

At that I understood.

But up to the moment of publication the Time Traveller has not returned.

And then at last Wells wrote the words: *The End*. One can only be thankful that he waited so long.

NOTES

1. *Review of English Studies*, n. s. 11 (1960), 42-51.
2. In a newspaper interview, *New York Herald*, April 15, 1906; moreover, Geoffrey West (whose work was checked by Wells) says in his biography *H.G. Wells* (London: Gerald Howe, 1930), "A fortnight of hard work saw it written practically in its present form" (p. 102).
3. London: Gollancz, 1934, vol. II, pp. 518-19.
4. Henley-Wells correspondence, in the University of Illinois Library. I am indebted to the Library and to Professor G.P. Wells for permission to quote from unpublished Wells materials, including the *Time Machine* manuscripts.
5. I gratefully record my indebtedness to Mrs. Shattuck and the staff of the Rare Book Room, the University of Illinois Library, for help in examining these manuscripts, as well as the Wells letters. Mrs. Shattuck's typed list of the *Time Machine* MSS has in particular proved an invaluable guide.
6. It is clear that the handwritten p. 67 was written after the typewritten p. 68, since the handwriting on p. 67 ends in mid page and mid sentence — obviously to link up with the earlier typescript.
7. In Chapter 9 of the final (Atlantic Edition) text, as in NR, H, and nearly all modern paperbacks, we read that the Time Traveller in warding off the Morlocks lights a block of camphor, "and as it split and flared up ... I knelt down". But the B manuscript here (p. 120) reads "as it spit" — and "spit" is corrected in pen to "spat". "Split" indeed makes no sense; NY has "spit", which is an acceptable past tense at least in America. Wells clearly intended either "spit" or "spat", not "split" — even though this is the reading of NR and H, and the mistake passed from H unobserved through the proofs to the Atlantic Edition. There is need for a good critical edition of *The Time Machine*.