

David Lake

The 1897 Editions of *The Invisible Man*

I owe readers of the *Wellsian* an apology, and this is it. If you refer to my article of Summer 1989, "The Current Texts of Well's Early SF novels . . . Part 2", you might blue-pencil one "fact" which is false, and put query marks against some of my opinions concerning *The Invisible Man*, which I have now reversed. My previous work on this novel was a little hasty, much of it based on notes I took in Illinois Library in 1978. This year (1994) I have made a much more careful study of the early *Invisible Man* texts, in preparation for an edition for Oxford University Press, World's Classics.

The false "fact" is stated in the *Wellsian*, 1989, p.23, third paragraph. Wells did not catch the erroneous date and emend it to "9th February" in the Tauchnitz edition of 1898. The Tauchnitz reads "29th February" just like every early edition of the novel except the Scientific Romances; Wells therefore caught the error only in 1933.

Unfortunately, my error was also transmitted to Chris E. Little, who published an article supplementing my work in the *Wellsian*, 1993. On page 43 of that issue he writes: "There are some minor differences between the T and P2 editions" – and he proceeds through that whole paragraph on the basis of my (wrong) say-so. In fact, there are *no* differences between the Pearson second edition (P2) and the Tauchnitz. Therefore Tauchnitz was not in the line of any further development, and should be eliminated not only from my stemma of 1989, but also from Dr Little's stemma of 1993.

Apart from that, Dr Little's article is a fine one, and corrects my earlier work from the vantage-point of superior knowledge. When I wrote in 1989 I did not know of the existence of P2, the Pearson second edition of 1897. Well, no-one did except Dr Little, who owns the only known copy of this edition. Consequently, innovations I credited to Tauchnitz really belong to P2 – as Dr Little has explained. Hence readers may correct my 1989 article in many places by simply substituting "P2" wherever I have written "T".

The major point on which I have now reversed my opinion is the relative dating of the New York: Arnold (NY) edition and the London P2 edition. I formerly thought that the P2 was earlier, and Wells transmitted a revised edition of the Epilogue and the main story ending across the Atlantic in time to catch the New York first edition. Now I think the opposite: both external and internal evidence suggest that NY is textually

"earlier" than P2 – this in spite of the fact that NY's main-story ending is, in literary terms, superior to that of P1 or P2.

External evidence: It appears that both NY and P2 were published in November 1897. If they were simultaneous, NY must be textually earlier, since scripts took two weeks to cross the Atlantic. Moreover, Wells corrected proofs for British books but not for American ones, and he frequently made changes at the proof stage (for example, in the galleys for the Atlantic edition of this novel, in 1924). The Epilogue variants could well be all cuts made at the proof stage of P2.

There are four Epilogue variants, three being merely stylistic, where NY has a few words missing from P2. Personally, I prefer the more leisurely versions in NY, but the fact is that Wells's revisions for this novel, through many editions, show an overwhelming preponderance of stylistic cuts over stylistic expansions. Hence it is much more likely that these Epilogue variants are cuts, and consequently P2 is later than NY.

The fourth variant concerns Adye, who is alive and conducting investigations in NY, but is missing in P2. On the above reasoning, this also must be a cut, and so Wells's "final word" – at least in 1897 – would leave Adye most likely dead.

I suspect that when Wells chose the Arnold (NY) as his copy-text for the Atlantic edition, he did not even look at the Epilogue, so his final intention there remains vague. My hunch is that he chose the Arnold because, in 1924, he came to prefer the Arnold version of the main-story ending – just as I do.

One last point: it is now clear that the London: Pearson *first* edition (P1) was published in late September 1897, some two months before the New York edition. It is not at all clear when exactly Wells transmitted the bulk of the text for NY across the Atlantic. It could have been later than September, later, therefore, than P1; certainly the main-story ending of NY is a clear improvement on P1. But that ending – the last two paragraphs – could have been transmitted at the same time as the Epilogue – between September and November. I still think it likely that the bulk of the text for NY was sent earlier, since the revisions of the serial for NY are almost entirely different from those for P1. For copyright reasons, Wells normally tried to arrange simultaneous publication of *first* editions on both sides of the Atlantic. It remains a puzzle as to why the New York edition was held up till November 1897.