



## Editorial

**Jean-Michel Margot**

In 2005, a century after the death of Jules Verne, the gap between the two worlds claiming him have widened into a definitive abyss. On one side were the two five-letter words—Jules Verne—synonymous with adventure and discovery in the popular imagination, on the other, the man who carried that name produced works that are now part of the heritage of mankind.

Few writers other than Jules Verne have experienced the celebrity and permanent flood of derivatives that are based on their name and work. As a simple example, Nina Ricci, IBM, Nestlé, Toshiba, Vélosolex, Waterman, and many other businesses have used the myths and archetypes born from his name and work to sell their products and services. In the second half of the nineteenth century, wallpaper representing the blindness of *Michael Strogoff* or the cave of snakes in *Around the World in Eighty Days* decorated the rooms of the French bourgeoisie. [1]

Even during Jules Verne's lifetime, his name had become a known term. To a civil servant who told General Lyautey: "All this, sir, it's like doing a Jules Verne", the General replied, "Yes, sir, it's like doing a Jules Verne, because for twenty years, the people who move forward have been doing a Jules Verne". [2]

This famous speech is the beginning of the symbol, the icon "Jules Verne" which has nothing in common with the writer and his work. Jules Verne has become a concept, an archetype referring to adventure. "I am a successor of Jules Verne" Steve Fossett told me in November 2004, when he filed with the House of Elsewhere in Switzerland the first autograph of Jules Verne to travel in space. [3] The symbol reached its peak in 2008 with the launch of the first automated transfer vehicle (ATV) of the European Space Agency, the *Jules Verne*. [4]

Because of these products and his works marketed for youth, which have been abbreviated and even mutilated to look childish both in French and English, Jules Verne has continued to be read and his name has not disappeared into oblivion. Verne has been translated into 93 languages [5] and his readership covers the planet.

But only for the last fifty years has the author of the *Extraordinary Voyages* been the subject of important research and discoveries, sometimes surprising and unexpected.

In 2005, Vernian research was consolidated in Amiens with the celebration of the centenary of the writer's death. Under the theme, "Jules Verne, planetary author", as I suggested at the Documentation Centre in Amiens, dozens of scholars and lovers of Jules Verne gathered to celebrate their common passion. This first (and still unique) gathering saw experts from around the world gathering in Amiens to meet each other and put faces on names that until then only emails had allowed them to enjoy. From France (it was the least they could do ...), Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, China, Portugal, Croatia, and Poland, all driven by the *Jules Verne Forum*, [6] they vowed to work together to continue researching Verne and promoting the works of the most translated novelist in the world.

This global collaboration began in the mid-twentieth century when members of the American Jules Verne Society corresponded with Jean-H. Guernonprez, one of the two founders (with Cornelis Helling) of the French Société Jules Verne. Through science fiction conventions, Verne specialists could also meet on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, in the 1970s Ion Hobana and Arthur Evans, one from Romania and the other from the United States, participated in French science fiction meetings in Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland. The *Bulletin de la Société Jules Verne* and the *Revue Jules Verne* have always welcomed studies of non-Francophone specialists such as Russian Eugen Brandis, British Idrysin Oliver Evans, and American Brian Taves into their pages (with their texts translated into French). However, not until the twenty-first century has working together materialized in books for the general public.

Jules Verne's novels were translated into many languages during his lifetime. Although such translations—of good quality in Portuguese, [7] but typically disastrous in English [8]—have built a base for Vernian studies, they are not part of the international Vernian research. Other basic research material includes the biographies, such as those of family members Marguerite Allotte de la Fuÿe and Jean Jules-Verne which have also been translated into several languages.

Given this context, the 2009 Gallimard edition of *Around the World in Eighty Days* in 2009 can be considered a premiere in the Francophone world. [9] It is a popular edition, with commentaries, and annotated for the general public by Hongkonger of Scottish origin William Butcher. [10]

Similar efforts are ongoing in the United States, where, under the auspices of the North American Jules Verne Society, several Vernian texts are being published for the first time in English. These volumes include notes, comments, and introductions by experts from horizons as diverse as France, Ireland, Mexico, Spain, Czech Republic, Germany, The Netherlands, and Canada. The collection, "The Palik Series", is being distributed by BearManor Media. [11]

As *Verniana* begins its fifth year, it has become part of the international research agora about Verne. The sharing of knowledge from Verne studies is taking place over the whole planet. As the world becomes globalized, it is good to remember that our author already had set for himself a border of the "known and unknown worlds." Abandoning the popular imagination, which sees Jules Verne as a symbol of adventure and discovery (more or less prophetic), the group research efforts around the world will enable studies of Verne to keep moving forward, as Lyautey knew.

## NOTES

1. A simple list (incomplete, of course) of "Verne" objects gives an idea of this flood that helped the concept of "Jules Verne" to become an archetype: streets, schools, hotels, restaurants, sports clubs, music groups and orchestras, festivals, films, radio and television broadcasts, spacecraft and lunar crater, train and ships, boats, "T-shirts", cigar bands, thimbles, combs, pencils and pens, ashtrays, plates, cups, postcards, pins, tortillas, chips, wine, beer, wallpaper, stained glass, puzzles, card games, board games, etc. etc.
2. Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey (1854-1934), French military and academician, officer during the colonial wars, Resident General in Morocco, Marshal of France in 1921. Author of the *Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar (1894-1899) (Letters of Tonkin and Madagascar)*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1920, 2 vols., from which is taken the famous quote, often truncated, about Jules Verne.
3. James Stephen Fossett (1944-2007), American mariner, pilot and adventurer, holder of 62 records, mainly in distance and altitude gliding. On October 4, 2004, SpaceshipOne ([http://www.scaled.com/projects/tierone/041004\\_spaceshipone\\_x-prize\\_flight\\_2.html](http://www.scaled.com/projects/tierone/041004_spaceshipone_x-prize_flight_2.html)) wins the X-Prize with an autograph of Jules Verne on board. Through its relationship with the company responsible for the flight, Steve Fossett was able to put that day on board a letter signed by Jules Verne from the Margot collection. This document can be seen today in the House of Elsewhere in Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland (<http://www.ailleurs.ch>).
4. The page [http://www.esa.int/esaCP/SEMEXY2AR2E\\_France\\_0.htm](http://www.esa.int/esaCP/SEMEXY2AR2E_France_0.htm) of the European Space Agency mentions Jules Verne and from there it's possible to navigate through the history of the first ATV.
5. <http://verne.garmtdevries.nl/en/languages/>
6. The *Jules Verne Forum* (<http://jv.gilead.org.il/forum/>) allows more than 250 Vernian specialists and fans to communicate, interact, ask questions and often get quick answers, avoiding long and tedious research. It is part of the website developed by Zvi Har'el in Israel that has the goal to cover the needs of all lovers of Jules Verne. It provides a complete bibliography of Verne's works, several of his pieces, numerous texts by scholars such as Arthur B. Evans, William Butcher and Brian Taves, and pointers to other sites dedicated to Jules Verne. The quality of the Zvi Har'el's site is such that it has appeared on the front page of both *Le Figaro* and *The New York Times*. On this subject see the tribute to Zvi Har'el in the first volume of *Verniana*.
7. Jean-Michel Margot, "Jules Verne et le Portugal." *Bulletin de la Société Jules Verne*, vol. 16, n°. 61, January-March 1982, p. 175-179.
8. Arthur B. Evans identifies and documents the bad English translations in "Jules Verne's English Translations", *Science Fiction Studies* 32.1 (2005): p. 80-104.
9. Jules Verne. *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours*. Paris, Gallimard (Coll. *Folio*, N°. 4934). Edition presented, prepared and annotated by William Butcher. 2009, 416 p.
10. Jean-Pierre Picot. "*Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours*" — édition de William Butcher. *Verniana*, vol. 2, 2009-2010, p. 203-208.
11. Under the leadership of Brian Taves, four volumes have been published in 2011:  
*The Marriage of a Marquis (Le Mariage de Mr. Anselme des Tilleuls)*, volume also containing *Jédédias Jamet*, with contributions by Edward Baxter, Jean-Michel Margot, Walter James Miller, Kieran O'Driscoll and Brian Taves).

*Shipwrecked Family (L'Oncle Robinson)*, with contributions from Brian Taves and Sydney Kravitz.

*Mr. Chimp and Other Plays (Monsieur de Chimpanzé, Les Compagnons de la marjolaine, Un Fils adoptif, Onze jours de siège)*, with contributions by Frank Morlock, Jean-Michel Margot and Brian Taves.

*The Count of Chanteleine (Le Comte de Chanteleine)*, with contributions by Edward Baxter, Brian Taves, Garnt de Vries-Uiterweerd and Volker Dehs.