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Hidden Treasures: The Manuscripts of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*

The novelist Jules Verne is the most translated writer ever and one of the best-selling of all time.¹ We all know his most popular novels—or at least think we do. In fact his works have largely been ignored by university departments of literature, and knowledge of them still remains limited. The manuscripts, in particular, are virgin territory, with no general studies to date of how the famous works came to be written, even for a masterpiece like *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*.²

Many English-language commentaries have concentrated on the workings of the *Nautilus*, but Verne emphatically did not introduce the idea of travel by submarine or make any predictions. His reputation as father of science fiction is erroneous, I believe, being both anachronistic and based on a misunderstanding. It has, above all, distracted attention from serious literary study of his novels.

In March 1868, on the rebound from writing the arid, half-million-word *Géographie illustrée de la France* (Illustrated Geography of France), Verne began creating his most ambitious book. Over the next eight months, his letters revealed mounting excitement at the ideas of what he called “l’homme inconnu” (“the unknown man”) and the “absolute” subject:

Mon cher père ... Je suis en plein dans le “Voyage sous les eaux” ... j’y travaille avec un plaisir extrême. (March 10, 1868)

Ah! Mon cher Hetzel, si je ratais se livre-là, je ne m’en consolerais pas. Je n’ai jamais eu un plus beau sujet entre les mains ... certainement, on n’a jamais fait cela. (March 28, 1868; end of August 1868)³

(My dear father ... I’m deep in “Journey under the Waters” ... I’m working on it with tremendous pleasure.

Oh, my dear Hetzel, if I don’t pull this book off, I’ll be inconsolable. I’ve never held a better thing in my hands ... certainly, no-one has ever done it before.)⁴

However, following submission of the manuscript in autumn 1868 and March 1869, the novelist’s world was turned upside down. The publisher Hetzel didn’t like the book very much. And he wanted the best parts removed.

It is clearly important to determine (a) what Hetzel did not appreciate and (b) what Verne did about it, questions not considered to date.

Twenty Thousand Leagues, first published in serial form in 1869-70, recounts a circumnavigation, with Captain Nemo as the somber hero. Although it includes many dramatic episodes, much of the interest comes from the intense if distant relationship between Nemo and his passenger, Dr Aronnax, and from the anguish gripping the captain. Aronnax is the narrator, meaning we see all

events through his interpretations—or lack of them, for this aging academic is slow on the uptake and fails to understand the reasons for the captain's underwater life or exile from humanity. His main deduction is that Nemo has an unhealthy interest in vessels in distress. A further mystery is the portraits in his room of nationalist heroes.

The enigmas come together at the end of chapter 20 of Part Two (henceforth II§20), as the novel builds to its crescendo. After much searching, the submarine locates a ship on the Atlantic seabed, the *Vengeur*, sunk in 1794 and of great significance to the brooding captain. Then, in the following chapter, a warship attacks Nemo, who retreats overnight but finally sinks it. As the submarine disappears into the Maelstrom (II§22), Aronnax and his companions escape to the Norwegian coast. Even in the "Conclusion," however, the climax remains mysterious, and it is not clear whether the captain survives.

All these mysteries had a disreputable *raison d'être*: Hetzel's censorship. Because of the market the publisher aimed for, Verne was not allowed to deal with politics, sex, or violence; fundamental alterations were imposed on such works as *The Voyages and Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, and *The Mysterious Island*.

There are two known manuscripts of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, MS1 and MS2. Although the latter undoubtedly served for the proofs, Verne generally corrected several sets, and the second manuscript presents many variants with the published versions, albeit of a stylistic nature. However, MS2 itself contains numerous corrections: the crossed-out sections, often still legible, conveniently comprise the parts not read to date. MS1, in contrast, is written in a scrawl and the corrections, especially, often cannot be made out.

In another study,⁵ I explore several passages deleted from II§22. In the published version we have little information about the submarine's route to the Arctic, a frustrating gap since Verne was deeply attached to the waters around Britain. He visited the British Isles at least fourteen times and, from 1865, when he bought his first boat, sailed along the French coast at every opportunity. Having gone round the world, the writer returns to the English Channel, but creates a geographical vacuum at the very area where he is composing his masterpiece.⁶ These obliterated descriptions are significant in presenting the Channel coast—and in constituting the only extant description of France in Verne's first forty novels. In one, Nemo and Aronnax explore the Channel floor; in another, the narrator conjures up medieval visions from dark cliffs near Le Havre; and in one especially fine seascape, finally, the *Nautilus* floats on a tranquil and harmonious North Sea.⁷

In the present article, the focus will be on II§21 and §23.⁸ These twin chapters represent the heart of both the plot and the ideological and ethical debate. Scores of commentators have pored over the texts and "meta-texts," the intensive, sometimes bad-tempered, epistolary debate about the closing chapters. However, all commentary to date has been based on the version bowdlerized by Hetzel, not on what Verne actually wrote.

I will work from the final version, via the correspondence, to MS2 and thence to MS1. The image of a palimpsest, where layers of paint mix and

interfere with each other, will be constantly in mind in juggling the successive drafts.

In the known version of II§20, entitled “Par 47°24' de latitude et de 17°28' de longitude” (“47° 24' N, 17° 28' W”), the *Nautilus* follows the Transatlantic Cable and passes Land’s End to port. At midday on “31 juin [*sic*]” (“31 June”) it locates the *Vengeur* and Nemo declaims the glory of the scuttled ship’s cause. In the next chapter, “Une Hécatombe” (II§21—“A Massacre”), a warship attacks the submarine, which lures it eastwards. Nemo intones “Je suis le droit, je suis la justice! ... Je suis l’opprimé, et voilà l’opresseur!” (“I am the law, I am the justice! ... I am the oppressed, and they are the oppressor!”)—then sends his submarine clean through the vessel. As a horrified Aronnax watches the drowning sailors’ death-throes, the chapter closes dramatically:

Je vis le portrait d’une femme jeune encore et de deux petits enfants. Le capitaine Nemo les regarda pendant quelques instants, leur tendit les bras, et, s’agenouillant, il fondit en sanglots.

(I could see the portrait of a woman, still young, with two small children. Captain Nemo looked at them for a few moments, stretched out his arms to them, and then knelt down sobbing.)

One question is the position of the sinking, although the persistent exegete can calculate it to be at least 350 miles west of Finistère. But the biggest mystery remains Nemo’s motive. The warship may perhaps be British, French, Italian, or American, but elsewhere in the book Nemo is implied to be Polish, in which case his enemy would be Russian. In *The Mysterious Island* (1875), Verne claims that the captain has been Indian all along, but the idea simply does not make sense at this stage. In sum, the nationality of the ship, of Nemo himself, and hence his possible motive for the attack cannot be deduced in the published book.

The main reason for this was the publisher’s expurgation of the work. One bone of contention for many of Verne’s novels was the title, and the underwater epic was no exception, being successively called *Journey under the Waters*, *Twenty-Five Thousand Leagues under the Waters*, *Twenty-Five Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Oceans*.

Another irritation was that, after Verne had finished the book, Hetzel casually suggested adding a new volume to increase its length by half, rather like a butcher measuring out sausage. To achieve this, he wrote on April 25, 1869, episodes could easily be added, such as the escape, capture, and reconciliation of one of the guests, an episode involving John Brown, the famous abolitionist murdered in 1859, or a scene where Nemo could save a few Chinese boys from Chinese pirates and keep one on board, thus “*egay[ant] le Nautilus*” (“cheering things up on board”)! Fortunately, the ideas were not implemented.

For seven months from March 1869, when the novel started coming out, Hetzel rejected the closing chapters. The publisher insisted that Verne delete his cherished idea of making Nemo a Pole whose country had been wiped out following the 1863 insurrection—because the idea would upset the Russian government. Furthermore, Hetzel claimed that the captain’s attacks were intolerably violent and morally unacceptable.

Verne tries first to circumvent the problem, using gentle persuasion on the publisher:

Si Nemo eût été un Polonais *dont la femme fût morte sous le knout et les enfants morts en Sibérie*, et ... se fût trouvé en face d'un navire russe ... tout le monde admettrait sa vengeance. (May 8, 1869)

Quant à un navire négrier, corsaire, pirate, vous savez bien qu'il n'y en a plus ... Le mieux, c'était Nemo luttant contre la société tout entière. Situation belle, mais difficile à faire admettre parce que le motif d'une telle lutte manque.

Moins bien, il y avait la lutte d'un proscrit contre les proscriptionnaires, d'un Polonais contre la Russie. C'était *net*. Nous l'avons rejeté pour des raisons purement commerciales.

Maintenant, s'il n'y a plus que la lutte d'un Nemo contre un agresseur chimérique, aussi mystérieux que lui, ce n'est plus qu'un duel entre deux individus. Cela rapetisse singulièrement la chose.

Non, comme vous le dites, il faut se tenir dans le *vague*, et nous y arriverons. (May 15, 1869)

(If Nemo had been a Pole *whose wife died under the scourge and children perished in Siberia*, and ... had found himself faced with a Russian ship ... everybody would admit his revenge.

As for a slaver, corsair or pirate vessel, you know well that they don't exist any more.... The best was Nemo fighting against the whole of society. A fine situation but difficult to make people believe in, since there was no motive for such a fight.

Less good, there was the outlaw's battle against those who had made him an outlaw, a Pole against Russia. That was *forthright*. We rejected it for purely commercial reasons.

But if it's now just a battle by Nemo against a chimerical enemy as mysterious as him, it's not a duel between two individuals any more. It singularly reduces the whole thing.

No, as you say, we need to keep it *vague*, and we'll manage to.)

In the face of Hetzel's insistence, Verne details why the proposed changes are unacceptable. His own words convey the scope of the recommendations, the extent of his indignation, and the strength of his logic:

Je vois bien que vous rêvez un bonhomme très différent du mien ... Il suffit que je justifie l'action terrible du capitaine par la provocation dont il est l'objet. Nemo ne court pas sur les navires pour les couler ; il n'attaque pas ; il répond aux attaques. Mais, nulle part, quoi qu'en dise votre lettre, je n'en ai fait un homme qui tue pour tuer. C'est une nature généreuse dont les sentiments s'exercent à l'occasion dans le milieu où il vit. Sa haine de l'humanité est suffisamment expliquée par ce qu'il a souffert en lui-même et dans les siens. (May 17, 1869)

Je ne vous écrirai point la lettre en question à propos du capitaine Nemo; si je ne puis expliquer sa haine, ou je garderai le silence sur la cause de cette haine comme sur toute l'existence de ce héros, sa nationalité etc.—ou, s'il le faut, je changerai le dénouement.

Vous dites: mais il commet une infamie! Je réponds non; supposez toujours ce qui était l'idée première [*sic*] du livre, un seigneur polonais, dont les filles ont

été violées, la femme tuée à coups de hache, le père mort sous le knout, un Polonais dont tous les amis périssent en Sibérie et dont la nationalité va disparaître de l'Europe sous la tyrannie des Russes! Si cet homme-là n'a pas le droit de couler des frégates russes partout où il les rencontrera, alors la vengeance n'est plus qu'un mot. Moi, dans cette situation, je *coulerai* et sans remords. Pour ne pas sentir comme je sens à ce propos, il faudrait n'avoir jamais haï! (June 11?, 1869)

(I can see full well that you're picturing a very different fellow from mine.... All I need to do is justify the captain's terrible action in terms of the provocation he undergoes. Nemo doesn't run after ships to sink them, he responds to attacks. Nowhere, whatever your letter says, have I made him a man who kills for killing's sake. He has a generous nature and his feelings are sometimes brought into play in the environment he moves in. His hatred of humanity is sufficiently explained by what he has suffered, both he and his family.

I refuse to write the letter for you concerning Captain Nemo; if I cannot explain his hatred, either I will stay silent about the reason for the hero's hatred and life, his nationality, etc., or, if necessary, I will change the ending.

You say: but he performs an evil act! I reply no; imagine again—this was the original idea for the book—a Polish noble whose daughters have been raped, wife killed with an axe, father killed with a scourge, a Pole whose friends all perish in Siberia and whose nationality will soon disappear from Europe under the Russian tyranny. If that man doesn't have the right to sink Russian frigates wherever he finds them, then revenge is but a word. In such a situation, I myself would sink unremorsefully. In order not to feel like me on this matter, you'd need to have never hated!)

Reading the correspondence, of which the above is only a small selection, one must side with the author, “tourmenté” (“tortured”), as he says, by Hetzel's blind obstinacy. The publisher fails to understand the book or Nemo's character. He falls into the elementary trap of judging the captain's violent actions without looking at the reasons behind them. The quick-fix changes, made for basely “commercial reasons,” do seem absurdly wrongheaded.

In the end, however, Verne is forced to take on board most of the publisher's ideas. He does manage to subvert some of them, so subtly as to have taken in many readers, and indeed critics. But the final effect on Nemo's agenda and the meaning of the novel is to make both less convincing. Nemo is not allowed to be French, or Polish, or any nationality at all. His rebellion cannot strike at any governmental authority, only *all* the great powers, with a mishmash of evasive hints at Confederate, Russian, British, French, and even Turkish ships. It is a sad result for Verne's greatest hero.

All is not irremediably lost, though, for the novelist kept the evidence, just in case posterity might be interested. Here we will explore the two earlier drafts and hence what Verne really intended when he wrote his finest masterpiece.

In the manuscripts, a debt to Alexandre Dumas *filis*, Verne's friend, protector, and collaborator, is acknowledged. Aronnax is Nemo's “prisonnier” (“prisoner”) rather than “hôte[s]” (“guest”), and has to formally undertake never to escape; however, at the end the doctor claims the moral right to leave, and Nemo shouts back: “Well, leave then!” The location of the captain's home

port, secret in the book, is now near “Tenerife,” and he is “Juan Nemo”—perhaps an allusion to his Hispanic grandiloquence or anti-Don Juan lifestyle.

We see, above all, a different personality, more independent and more intransigent. In addition to being an engineer, naturalist, collector, writer, and freedom-fighter, the original Nemo is a composer, preferring his own music to all others'. In place of Da Vinci's Virgin, there is a half-dressed woman. The absurd Christian element disappears, especially Nemo's published cry “Dieu tout puissant ! assez ! assez !” (“God almighty! Enough! Enough!”). When hundreds of wild Papuans invade his ship, the captain electrocutes them, deliberately and without remorse.

The climax of II§21 has not yet undergone its harrowing political cleansing. We immediately observe in MS2 that Nemo corrects Aronnax's mealy-mouthed identification of the ship: “~~Mais rendez-lui son vrai nom: Le Vengeur du peuple!~~” (“~~But give it its real name: Le Vengeur du peuple!~~”) Again, “la glorieuse épave” (“the glorious wreck”) of the published version here lies in a “grande tombe heroïque,” part of “la légende républicaine” (“grand heroic tomb”; “the Republican legend”). Clearly Nemo is emphasizing his support for the people: the underdog, Republicanism, and left-wing values in the specific context of the French Revolution. The deletion of such radical ideas conformed to the publishing house's policy, for the two R words are absent from Verne's collected works, even though he was to serve Amiens City Council on a Republican list for fifteen years.

Another significant phrase in the draft, “ne s'était-il pas attaqué à un navire d'une certaine nation qu'il poursuivait de sa haine?” (“had he not attacked some ship of a certain nation which he pursued with his hate?”), implies that Nemo's attacks are against a particular country—although it already is not considered prudent to name it.

Before Nemo's attack, his interchange with Aronnax is franker and less courteous in MS2. Thus the doctor claims that sinking the warship “serait le fait d'un barbare” (“would be the act of a barbarian”), provoking Nemo to respond, “d'une voix irritée” (“in an irritated tone”), “L'attaque est venue! d'eux! ... Descendez, je vous dis” (“The attack has come! from them! ... Go down, I tell you”). The “from them!” vitally emphasizes Nemo's policy of only responding to, rather than initiating, attacks. An important self-justification then follows:

~~Savez-vous qui vous implorez? Un homme chassé de son pays, exilé despotiquement, loin de sa femme, loin de ses enfants que la douleur a tués, ... Pour la dernière fois taisez-vous!~~

~~(Do you know whom you're imploring? A man thrown out of his country, despotically exiled, far from his wife, far from his children, dead of suffering ... For the last time, keep quiet!)~~

Then, after the submarine has passed through the ship, a horror-stricken but fascinated Aronnax observes the underwater death-throes. The manuscript again contains more melodrama: “~~Là, dans une dernière convuls un pauvre petit mousse, comme enchaîné dans la flamme livide, se tordait dans une dernière~~

convulsion” (~~“There, in a last convuls a poor little cabin boy, as if chained in the pale flame, twisted in a last convulsion”~~). Whereas the book version refers to Nemo’s “terrible représaille” (“terrible reprisal”), MS2 calls it his “sa sanglante exécution” (“his bloody execution”).

The chapter’s closing words are also different. In place of the sentiment involving Nemo’s dead family, added in the margin, aggression is here the dominant emotion:

~~... l’œil ardent, fixé du côté, les dents découvertes sous sa lèvre relevée, son corps raidi, ses poings fermés, sa tête rentrée entre les épaules. Véritable statue de la haine, telle que je l’ai qu’il était déjà apparu à mes yeux dans les mers de l’Inde.~~

~~(... his eye shining, fixed to one side, his teeth uncovered under his raised lip, his body stiff, his fingers clenched, his head hunched in his shoulders. A veritable statue of hatred, such as I had he had already appeared to my eyes in the seas of India.)~~

It is interesting to compare these variants with the correspondence.⁹ First, Verne promises that he will take out

l’horreur que Nemo inspire à la fin à Aronnax [sic], [et] ... cette attitude de haine que prend Nemo en voyant couler le navire. Je ne le ferai même pas assister à ce coulage. (April 29?, 1869)

(the horror Nemo inspires in Aronnax and ... that attitude of hate Nemo adopts on seeing the ship sink, and will not even make him present at the sinking.)

Verne’s concession involves the epiphenomena of what the doctor observes and feels, rather than the captain’s actions. Nor does he entirely keep his promise, for, although Aronnax does not attend the attack (how could he, since it is underwater?) and the cabin-boy’s convulsions are sacrificed, the good doctor does devour every gruesome detail of the ship’s descent.

Perhaps predictably, MS1, where it can be deciphered, is more forthright. Perhaps surprisingly, however, it appears less complete than both MS2 and the published version. II§21 is now entitled “An Attack”—possibly a reference to the unprovoked one *by* the warship.

The vessel is duly sighted, but only here is it “un trois-mâts,” “du type Solferino,” “teigna[nt] le fond du ciel” (“a three-masted ship,” “of the Solferino class,” “darkening the depth of the sky”). In the following folio, Nemo ascribes it to “une nation maudite, disgraciée” (“a cursed, disgraced, nation”). “Solferino” meant a type of armoured battleship, at the time the last word in naval aggression. It was, above all, French.

In the earliest version of the climactic episode, then, Nemo is an ardent supporter of the French Revolution and Republicanism—and a fierce opponent of the current regime and what it has done to France. The phrase “darkening the depth of the sky” surely indicates Verne’s own dislike of Napoleon III’s government. Given the absence of politics in Verne’s novels, the warship’s French nationality and the condemnation of the catastrophic state of the nation are crucial.

Only now does the wrongheaded Aronnax surmise:

Eh, ami Ned, que voulez-vous qu'il puisse faire au Nautilus! xxx l'attaque[r] sur les flots, et d'ailleurs pourquoi l'attaqueront-ils ? Le Nautilus n'est en guerre avec personne que je sache.¹⁰

(Hey, friend Ned, what do you think it can do to the Nautilus! xxx attack it on the surface, and in any case why would they attack? The Nautilus isn't at war with anyone as far as I know.)

Showing the value of the doctor's prognoses, the warship immediately fires on the submarine. Aronnax now speculates that the vessel has guessed Nemo's mission:

[Le navire n'était-il pas] d'une certaine nature qu'il poursuivait de sa vengeance? ... ne poursuivait-il pas sur toutes les mers, non plus un être chymérique, mais un engin formidable manoeuvré par quelque homme qui avait voué à l'humanité une haine formidable?

([Was the ship not] of a certain nature that he was pursuing with his vengeance? ... was it not pursuing over all the seas, no longer a chimerical being, but a formidable machine controlled by some man who had sworn a formidable hatred of humanity?)

One possibility is that the "formidable hatred of humanity" represents Nemo's attitude at the stage before he becomes a Pole, "fighting against the whole of society," as we saw Verne writing to Hetzel, a motive he calls "the best." However, the doctor may have again got the wrong end of the stick, uncannily like Hetzel, in extrapolating from the mere existence of a submarine and its defense when attacked, to such a broad existential position. The ship, after all, has little way of knowing Nemo's political or social agenda. It is certainly fascinating to see in the text what we only knew from the correspondence, namely Nemo's earliest position, fighting everyone. Given, however, the danger of equating Verne's thought with the ideas ascribed to the warship by Aronnax, we should be prudent. There may in any case be further shadows, like Banquo's ghosts, lurking below the surface of MS1.

As for the actual scene where the two men watch the mariners' death-throes, the closing twenty words of MS1 vitally differ from MS2. Given the lack of information about Nemo's crowning action, this passage constitutes perhaps the most important in the novel. After the lines showing Nemo as a "statue of hate" appears a partly illegible passage, apparently as follows: "Horrible. / ... hurla ... de se demander ... nous avons causé un contretemps. / Malheur! Malheur!" ("Horrible. / ... screamed ... to wonder ... We have caused a slight problem. / Damn! Damn!")

Nemo's dominant sentiment is, then, regret rather than remorse; he shouts rather than sobs; and the idea of revenge may be present, albeit understatedly and confusingly expressed.

After this brief analysis of chapter 21, the difficulties of studying variants over an extended text may have become apparent. For reasons of space and, sometimes, legibility, one cannot cite the manuscript versions *in extenso*. However, listing the changes in isolation may undermine the continuity of the literary text. One alternative, of course, is to accept the discontinuity, to

produce an edition with the variants indicated in notes (the method adopted in the four OUP critical editions of Verne). Another is to show the variants within a single text, distinguished by typographical means.

It is this latter solution that I now attempt for MS2, encouraged by the brevity of the last chapter of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*. (In the following passages, italics in the manuscript have been ignored, text only in the published version is in *italics*, text only in the manuscript is underlined, additions in the margin are indicated as { }, text crossed out in the manuscript is indicated as ~~strikeout~~, text not deciphered is indicated as xxx, and spelling and capitalization, but not punctuation, have generally been corrected.)

Conclusion

Voici la conclusion de ce voyage sous les mers. Ce qui se passa pendant cette nuit, comment le canot échappa au formidable remous du Maelstrom, comment Ned Land, Conseil et moi, nous sommes sortis sortîmes du gouffre, je ne saurai le dire. Mais quand je ~~sors~~ revins à moi, j'étais couché dans la cabane d'un pêcheur des îles Lofoden Loffoden. Mes deux compagnons étaient près de moi et me pressaient les mains. *Nous nous embrassâmes avec effusion.*

~~J'étais fort éprouvé.~~ En ce moment, nous ne pouvons songer à regagner la France. Les moyens de communications entre la Norvège septentrionale et le sud sont rares. Je suis donc forcé d'attendre le passage du bateau à vapeur qui fait le service bimensuel du Cap Nord.

Donc, c'est parmi ces braves gens qui nous ont recueillis, que j'ai revu je revois le récit de ces aventures; elles me donnent le. Il est exact. Pas un fait n'a été omis, pas un détail n'a été exagéré. C'est la narration fidèle de cette invraisemblable expédition sous un élément inaccessible à l'homme, et dont le progrès rendra les routes libres un jour.

Me croira-t-on? Je ne sais. Peu importe, après tout. Ce que je puis affirmer maintenant, c'est mon droit de parler de cette ces mers sous laquelle lesquelles, en moins de dix mois j'ai franchi vingt mille lieues{, de ce tour du monde sous-marin qui m'a révélé toutes ces merveilles à travers le Pacifique, l'Océan Indien, la mer Rouge, la Méditerranée, l'Atlantique, les mers australes et boréales}!

Mais qu'est devenu le Nautilus? A-t-il résisté aux terribles étrointes du Maelstrom? Le capitaine Nemo vit-il encore? Poursuit-il sous l'Océan ses effrayantes repréailles, *ou s'est-il arrêté devant cette dernière hécatombe?* Les flots apporteront-ils un jour cette bouteille ce manuscrit qui renferme toute l'histoire de sa vie? Saurai-je enfin le nom de cet homme? Le vaisseau disparu nous dira-t-il, par sa nationalité, la nationalité du capitaine?

Je l'espère. Je crois aussi, ie crains{, plus encore—car dois-je l'espérer?}—que sa puissante machine ait ait J'espère également que son puissant appareil a vaincu la mer dans son gouffre le plus terrible, et que son le Nautilus ait a survécu là où tant de navires ont péri! S'il en est ainsi, s'il habite encore cette vaste mer, sa patrie d'adoption, puisse la haine s'apaiser dans ce coeur farouche! Que la contemplation de tant de merveilles éteigne enfin en lui cet esprit de Vengeances vengeance! *Que le justicier s'efface, que le savant continue la paisible exploration des mers!* ~~Car~~ Si sa destinée est étrange, elle est ~~xxx~~ aussi sublime aussi. *N'ai-je pas compris par moi-même? N'ai-je pas vécu dix mois de cette existence extranaturelle? N'est-il pas le seul homme qui puisse répondre "Moi" à cette demande de l'Écclésiaste: Qui a jamais sondé les profondeurs de l'abîme?* {Et à cette demande faite il y a six mille ans par l'Écclésiaste: "Qui a

jamais pu sonder les ~~secrets~~ profondeurs de l'abîme?" deux hommes seuls entre tous les hommes peuvent ont le droit de répondre à voix haute: maintenant. Le capitaine Nemo et moi.}

(Conclusion

This is the conclusion of the journey under the seas. What happened that night, how the boat escaped from the formidable undertow of the Maelstrom, how Ned, Conseil and I got out emerged from the deep, I cannot say. But when I come out, I was lying in the hut of a Lofoten Loffoten Islands fisherman. My two companions were safe and sound beside me, squeezing my hands. *We embraced warmly.*

~~I was in a bad state~~. At this moment, we cannot think of returning to France. There are not many means of transport between the north and south of Norway. I am therefore forced to wait for the steamship which makes the fortnightly run to North Cape.

So it is here, in the midst of the good people who saved us, that I have revised am revising the tale of these adventures; they give me the. *It is accurate. Not a single fact has been omitted, not the slightest detail exaggerated. It is the faithful narration of an incredible expedition through an element inaccessible to man, although progress will open it up one day.*

Will I be believed? I do not know, but it is not that important. What I can proclaim now is my right to speak of this these seas through which I covered twenty thousand leagues in less than ten months; and to speak of that submarine journey around the world, which has revealed so many of the marvels of the Mediterranean and Red seas and of the Pacific, Indian, Atlantic, Arctic and Antarctic oceans}!

But what became of the Nautilus? Did it resist the terrible embrace of the Maelstrom? Is Captain Nemo still alive? Is he continuing his terrifying reprisals under the ocean, *or did he stop at that last massacre?* Will the waves one day wash up the bottle the manuscript containing the entire story of his life? Will I finally discover his name? Will the nationality of the vessel sunk tell us Captain Nemo's own nationality?

I hope so. I also believe, I fear{, still more—for should I hope}—that his powerful machine may have may have *I also hope that his powerful vessel has overcome the sea's most terrifying deep and that his the Nautilus survived where so many ships have perished! If this is the case, if Captain Nemo does still inhabit his adopted oceanic homeland, may hate die down in that wild heart! May the contemplation of so many marvels finally extinguish his desire for Vengeances vengeance! *May the lawgiver disappear and the scientist continue his peaceful exploration of the seas!* ~~For~~ If his destiny is strange, it is ~~xxx also~~ sublime. *Do I not understand it myself? Have I not lived ten months of that extra-natural existence? Is he not the only man who can reply "I have!" to that question of the Book of Ecclesiastes, "hast thou walked in the search of the depth?"* {And so, to that question which the Book of Ecclesiastes posed 6,000 years ago, "hast thou walked in the search of secrets the depth?" two men, alone amongst all men, *now have the right to reply out loud*. Captain Nemo and I.}*

The importance of the final chapter of any novel is of course to pull the threads together, to resolve the enigmas, to effect the transition from the fictional to the real world. It is no coincidence that Roland Barthes, in a famous

article, analysed the opening and closing chapters of *The Mysterious Island* and how the plot gets from one to the other.¹¹

Some of the details help clarify points that exegetes have long puzzled over. Thus the “Loffoten” of the published version is here the more correct “Lofoten” (Verne’s texts are riddled with mis-spellings, often the fault of the editor). Verne may be citing the closing Biblical quotation from memory—which would explain why it is so difficult to place.

The two changes of tense are a delicate balancing act, with narrative and fictional time precariously converging. Since Aronnax is using the present to describe his own writing process, what events can he narrate without disappearing up his own temporal vortex, how can the narration present its own demise? This is a problem of much fiction, but the good doctor’s claim to be *revising* the manuscript of his adventures renders it more complex here. The past tense, in contrast, makes Aronnax the author of the book the reader is holding.

Many changes are significant in the light of Hetzel’s baleful influence. Our ultimate assessment of Nemo is surely colored by the insertion of the words “that last massacre.” The complexities of Aronnax’s feelings appear in the hesitation between believing, fearing, and hoping in the successive versions. The corresponding subjunctive form, crossed out but replaced with an identical phrase, seems to imply that the submarine did escape, an idea reinforced by the more emphatic expressions, “finally,” “alone,” and “out loud.” Having Nemo take the curtain solo may similarly imply he is still alive, and we may accordingly regret the doctor’s writing himself into the closing sentence of the book version.

The reason Aronnax hesitates about Nemo’s fate may be his vacillation between Verne’s and Hetzel’s views, both of them ambivalent. The publisher may not have wanted to kill the captain off, not because of any affection for him but because he may already have been planning a sequel. Although Verne later stated he had no plans to bring him back, Nemo was in reality resuscitated after only four years, in a very late draft of *The Mysterious Island*. The fact that the captain was absent from Verne’s planning and was unrecognizable implied that the idea came from Hetzel. Given that the publisher censored many of the deaths, even accidental ones, in Verne’s works, he may have been doubly opposed to Nemo dying in *Twenty Thousand Leagues*. As for Verne, despite his sympathy, he may have considered that underwater burial was the kindest fate for his massacred character—and the best way to avoid him being dug up again.

Above all, Aronnax’s plea for “the lawgiver [to] disappear” constitutes the most direct criticism of the captain’s behavior in the published book. It thus provides a key to the most important misunderstanding about the novel, for many more naive readers, especially in America, have taken the captain to be a villain. But this is a narrative trap. Elsewhere in the works, although we often read Hetzel’s half-baked ideas, they are invariably expressed by the characters—and refuted before the end. My claim, then, is that this criticism of Nemo is Hetzel’s rather than Verne’s, and that, like most European readers, we should mistrust Aronnax’s final condemnation and instead support the captain’s freedom-fighter side.

Fortunately, my idea is supported by MS1:

Conclusion

Ce qu'il se passa, je ne sus pendant la nuit, ni xxx sortait du gouffre. Mais nous en sortîmes.

Mais le matin, nous étions à terre, et je revenais de mon évanouissement dans la cabane d'un pêcheur de Lofoden.

xxx faire, je restai long-temps xxx digne Ned et Conseil qui avaient xxx que moi.

Et c'est de là que j'ai écrit ces charmantes xxx, et c'est de là que je les adresse à Paris. {qui compléteront les connaissances sur les fonds de la mer}

Et maintenant qu'est devenu le Nautilus? a-t-il succombé. Peut-être! Mais peut-être aussi sa formidable constitution lui a-t-elle permis de résister et de sortir du gouffre. {ayant fait 20000 lieues, tour du monde}

Qu'est devenu le capitaine Nemo? Personne ie pense ne le saura jamais; peut-être mouru-t-il [sic].

Quant à la frégate disparue, on saura bien à quel gouvernement elle manque, et on saura sa nationalité, et d'où il vient {mais qu'on le sache bien, il est imprenable!} et où il va!

Et moi qui ai assisté a tant de scènes comment l'oublierai-je.

Et lui, vit-il encore, avec son Nautilus et les siens, l'homme des eaux, dans sa demeure fabuleuse. L'homme libre!

(Conclusion

What happened, I did not discover during the night, nor xxx emerging from the abyss. But we did get out of it.

But in the morning, we were on dry land, and I was coming out of my faint in the hut of a Lofoten fisherman.

xxx doing, I remained for a long time xxx good Ned and Conseil who had xxx as me.

And it is from here that I have written these charming xxx, and it is from here that I am sending them to Paris. {which will complete our knowledge of the depths of the sea}

And now what became of the Nautilus? Did it succumb. Perhaps! But perhaps also its formidable construction allowed it to resist and to emerge from the abyss. {having done 20000 leagues, circumnavigation}

What became of Captain Nemo? I do not think anyone will ever know. Perhaps he died?

As for the vanished frigate, it will easily be discovered which government has lost it, and its nationality will be known, and where it/he comes from {but, one should take careful note, he is unassailable!} and where he is going!

As for me, who have assisted at so many scenes, how can I forget him.

As for him, is he still alive, with his Nautilus and his companions, the man of the waters, in his fabulous abode. A free man!

In this ur-version, shown here without the published variants, Aronnax again self-centeredly talks of "his" book "completing" knowledge of the depths and generally emphasizes his own role. The survival of the manuscript, even after the death of the narrator, constitutes an important *topos* of the adventure story; here we may note that Paris is the location of Hetzel's publishing house. By alluding in this way to the real-world publishing of the book, Aronnax is half-

jumping out of the fiction—but also breaking the rule of France’s invisibility, making subsequent deletion again inevitable.

In an interesting slip, one sentence starts off talking about the sunk frigate, but then switches to where “he” comes from and “where he is going,” meaning that the captain is being discussed.

As we might imagine from the later draft, MS1 envisages Nemo’s survival. Above all, it does not criticize his actions, and indeed closes with a resounding support for his way of life, “still alive, with his Nautilus and his companions, the man of the waters, in his fabulous abode. A free man!” The idea of Nemo’s “unassailability” or “impregnability,” deleted because of bourgeois values, sounds very much like an ultimate defiance thrown at Hetzel and all conformists.

On the basis of our examination of two manuscript chapters of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, we have found, in very brief summary, that in them Captain Nemo supports the French Revolution and Republican ideas, and the ship he attacks, in legitimate self-defense, is French. In the original “Conclusion,” Nemo survives and is not criticized by the egregious Aronnax, but rather praised as the ultimate free being.

Several general conclusions follow on. The novel where, with *Hatteras*, Verne most revealed his soul, one of the great masterpieces of western literature, only saw the light of day in hacked-about and censored form. Nevertheless, the question of whether MS1 and MS2 should be considered superior to the final version is a complex one, involving considerations of style, structure, and ideology. Given the confusing published book, the good doctor’s wild speculations in the earlier versions may actually clarify matters, for they pose the essential questions but also, by their very wrongheadedness, show how unreliable his thinking always is. This logic applies especially in the Conclusion, but with the additional observation that the original versions are clearly superior in many respects, especially in producing an accurate interpretation of Nemo’s actions and way of life.

Would it be better, then, to publish the novel by reinstating the passages lost due to the publisher’s pressure? The answer must take into account the stylistic improvements Verne made, of his own free will, over the successive drafts. Some of the substantive changes may also fall into the category of spontaneous changes of mind. Some of Hetzel’s suggestions may actually be beneficial—and often Verne adapts them to his own ends. But we shall probably never know which of the categories most of these changes fall into. Even if we wished to use the earliest draft, it is not clear if it can ever fully be deciphered. Might it not then be advisable to mix and match from the later versions? Also, can the correspondence be adduced as evidence? Can new sections be written in to improve “continuity”? It would be dangerous, in sum, to conclude that MS2 or, *a fortiori*, MS1 should always be used for future editions of the novel.

To reverse the underlying question, it would seem clear that the Hetzel text can no longer be accepted as accurate or authentic. Knowing the harrowing cuts made in the other novels, with the additional evidence of the correspondence, and aware as we are now of major variants, we can no longer accept the

published version as representing Verne's intention. Even if we did not wish to remove the Hetzelized version from the bookshops, nothing would prevent the parallel publication of "Voyage sous les eaux" ("Journey under the Waters") as a work in its own right. Much less famous novels are available in competing versions. Why not for the only French author of world renown?

Equally clearly, all future interpretations of the novel must take the manuscripts into account. It is no longer possible to study the *Nautilus's* route, the protagonists' minds, and the interchanges between Aronnax, Nemo, and the assailants without referring to the original versions. The sandy bed of the English Channel, the medieval cliffs of Le Havre, and the sea where the beloved submarine bathes in perfect harmony henceforth form part of our vision of Nemo. The image is obsessive, of the Man of the Waters as a Republican hero sinking the cream of Napoleon the Little's fleet in self-defense and thereafter prowling the oceans as *the* Free Man.

The final conclusion concerns the urgency of establishing a reference edition of *Vingt mille lieues*. All the current French texts contain obvious faults of logic, fact, and spelling. That Verne's nineteenth-century publisher edited so poorly provides no excuse for reproducing the problems in the twenty-first. A properly researched and annotated French edition is essential.

At the end of our journey to the center of the text, then, we have rescued the true Nemo and the conceptual core of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, before Hetzel's eviscerating and Aronnax's moralizing. What we should remember of Nemo is not the Hollywood version, betraying a truncated mistranslation of a bowdlerized text. We should think instead of a musician playing his own compositions in his self-constructed submarine. We must allow him a politically incorrect self-defense in line with his Scottish motto, "Nemo me laessit impune" ("No one attacks me scot-free"), the right to imprison the egregious, invasive Aronnax; to execute the savages assailing him; to unhesitatingly sink his enemies' ships. We must permit him the consolation of Le Crotoy's sands and one last sunny, peaceful dawn. It is a shame, though, that the journey has taken 126 years.

In some dark corner of the French National Library, Nemo still freely rides the ocean. Let us hope that a publisher will, one day, be brave enough to let him out.

NOTES

1. On a cumulative basis. While Verne is currently second on an annual basis, behind Agatha Christie (< <http://databases.unesco.org/xtrans/stat/xTransStat.a?VL1=A&top=50&lg=0> >), it is clear that his total number of translations since 1867 exceeds hers.

2. There have been a few pioneering studies, such as those by Destombes, Dehs, or Scheinhardt. But nobody apart from myself seems to have read the whole manuscript of a non-posthumous novel. The present study employs ... *under the Seas* for reasons of fidelity to Verne's title.

3. Apart from the letter of March 10, 1868 (from Dumas, *Jules Verne*), all correspondence cited is from Dumas, Gondolo della Riva, and Dehs.

4. All translations from the French are my own.

5. “Verne en version originale: Les Véricques aventures du capitaine Hatteras,” *Jules Verne cent ans après*. Ed. Jean-Pierre Picot and Christian Robin (forthcoming Nantes: Terre de Brume, 2005).

6. “Je suis mouillé devant Gravesend ... et je finis le 1er volume de *Vingt mille lieues*” (August 19, 1868); “je t’écris de Dieppe. je travaille comme si j’étais au Crotoy” (a “Tuesday,” undoubtedly the same month) (“I’m moored off Gravesend ... and I’m finishing the 1st volume of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*”; “I’m writing to you from Dieppe ... I’m working as if in Crotoy”).

7. “En ce moment, le Nautilus flottait à la surface des flots. Je [montai] sur la plateforme déserte. Il se tenait quelques milles de terre basse par devant xxx de la Hollande, à peine estompée dans la vapeur épaisse de l’horizon.

“La journée menaçait d’être très chaude. Le ciel n’était déjà ni gris ni bleu. Il était blanc. Le temps calme; la brise ne soufflait pas comme déjà dxxxrée; sur la mer, de petites rides régulières formaient des losanges qui s’entrecroisaient. Le soleil les piquait de points brillants. L’eau était verte émeraude, et formait de larges ondulations bien étendues que le Nautilus ne sentait même pas. Quand une légère risée arrivait, la mer se ridait un peu. Elle avait l’air de veiller.

“Au loin dans la grande brume, quelques chaloupes de pêche, ou chasse-marées [*sic*], aux voiles flasques et pendantes, ou une fumée de steamer qui s’xxxait dans le ciel.” (MS1 II§22)

(“At this moment, The Nautilus was floating on the surface of the billows. I went up to the deserted platform. It was keeping a few miles from a low land off xxx of Holland, scarcely shaded through the thick mist of the horizon.

“A hot day was in store. The sky was already neither grey nor blue. It was white. The air calm; the breeze did not blow, as if already xxxed; on the sea, small regular ripples formed intersecting diamond shapes. The sun picked them out in sparkling points. The water, like liquid emerald, heaved in broad, extended waves the Nautilus did not even feel. When a small gust arrived, the sea would ripple slightly. It seemed to be on the lookout.

“In the haze in the distance, a few fishing smacks, or coastal luggers, with flaccid, hanging sails, or the smoke from a steamer xxxed in the sky.”)

8. Brief extracts from the first manuscript were cited by Destombes in his brilliant pioneering article, with, however, some transcription errors.

9. We have here a valuable cross-reference between Hetzel’s suggestions and his author’s changes, for Verne writes “rassurez-vous, je ne récris pas tout le manuscrit. Je transporte seulement tous les changements sur mon manuscrit” (June 8, 1869) (“rest assured, I’m not *rewriting* the entire manuscript ... just transfer[ring] all the changes to it”). It is probably therefore MS2 being referred to in the letters from April to August that year.

10. Other details are the ship approaches for “une autre demi-heure” (“half an hour more”); and Ned succeeds in making signals to the warship before being floored by Nemo, brutal in this version (“le tenait courbé”—“held him bent down”), as is his reaction to the ship (“son corps penché en avant”—“his body leaning forward”).

11. What Barthes omits to say is that, when faced with 200,000 words, such a reductionist approach removes the need to read the whole book.

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ABSTRACT

This first study of the manuscripts of *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas* shows that before the publisher's harrowing censorship, the antepenultimate chapter of the novel was radically different. In the earlier drafts Captain Nemo supports the French Revolution and Republican ideas, and the ship he attacks, in legitimate self-defense, is French. In the original "Conclusion," Nemo survives and is not criticized by the egregious Aronnax, but rather praised as the ultimate free man. In the light of these variants, changing the ideological tenor of the novel, it would appear increasingly urgent to have further detailed textual knowledge of the publisher's censorship, so as to understand Verne's real intentions in writing his masterpieces.