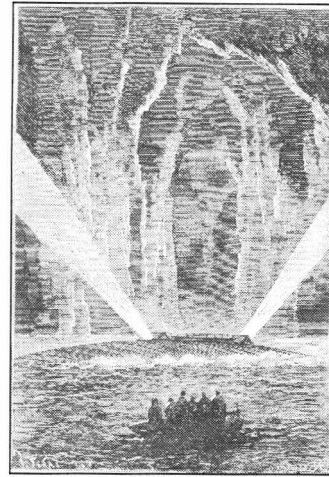


Verne - The Manuscripts

William Butcher

Verne's manuscripts are a vital source of knowledge about the *Extraordinary Journeys*. They provide not only a general insight into his creative process but also highly significant variants with the published editions. Verne seems to have prepared at least two or three MSS for each published novel, with one or more known to survive for all except *Five Weeks in a Balloon*. The vast majority are owned by the Municipality of Nantes, although also available in microfilm form at the National Library in Paris. A remarkable event was the revelation in 1995 of an unsuspected MS in private hands, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*.

Few of the MSS have really been studied to date. However, they have been shown to be vital in understanding the authorship of the posthumous works. It is also known that Hetzel required drastic alterations to *Hector Servadac*, *Captain Hatteras*, and *The Mysterious Island*, imposing incongruous happy endings. Thus the MS Hatteras, driven on by his northward monomania, plunges suicidally into the volcano at the North Pole. The MS Nemo gives the Island's colonisers the giant pearl he had so carefully nurtured in *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*; and instead of his life as a 'mistake' and the absurd 'God and my country!', the MS has a dying 'Independence!' Startling revelations about Verne's most successful novels are made in the three 'World's Classics' volumes translated and edited by William Butcher. Thus in the OUP *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (2nd edn 1997), exclusive information about the MS is provided: Lidenbrock appears less sympathetic, the underground cavern seems quite different, the logbook is narrated partly in the past tense, and a new source for the novel is acknowledged. Similarly *Around the World in Eighty Days* (OUP, 1995; 2nd edn 1997) shows that the opening page of the MS contains such surprises as clear anti-Semitism, a fourteen-year backdating, political references to 'Hanover' and 'the Duke of Wellington', and an explicit remark as to Phileas Fogg's motivation, 'Face isn't the only expressive organ!' An even earlier fragment jots down



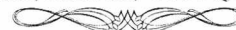
'Britain', 'clubs', and 'Fog [sic]': meaning that social observations are paramount when the archetypal modern hero is born and that a journey and a time_limit have not yet begun to be dreamed of. The two MS of *Twenty Thousand Leagues* (OUP, 1998) present comparably illuminating variants. Thus a three-clause agreement is made between Nemo and Dr Aronnax governing their life on board. The two visit the seabed of the English Channel; Aronnax conjures up medieval visions from the cliff shadows near Le Havre; and the *Nautilus* forms a poetic scene of happy dawn and sunny tranquillity off Dover. Nemo above all appears more independent and intransigent. He is a composer, preferring his own music to 'all the ancient and modern'; the scores of Papuans invading his ship are electrocuted, deliberately and without remorse; and the all-important *Vengeur* is a 'Republican' ship. The closing words praise Nemo as 'the Man of the Waters, entirely free'.

In sum, the MSS are vital for understanding Jules Verne's novels. Given this writer's historical and literary stature, it is clearly urgent to integrally publish the major ones as soon as possible.

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NAUTILUS - Editor Stuart Williams

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