

# EXTRAORDINARY VOYAGES

## THE CURATE'S EGG: THE TRANSLATIONS OF (A)ROUND/A TOUR OF THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS

By William Butcher and Arthur Evans

The following list attempts to provide some basic information about the bewildering variety of English translations of *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours* (1872).<sup>1</sup> Although more than a hundred distinct editions have been published, all seem to derive from the eleven original translations listed below. It should be emphasised that much more work is needed on the general question of English versions of Verne's work,

which range from the outstanding to those illegally passing themselves off as authentic. What is clear from the outset, however, is that the translations reprinted most often are far from the best ones.

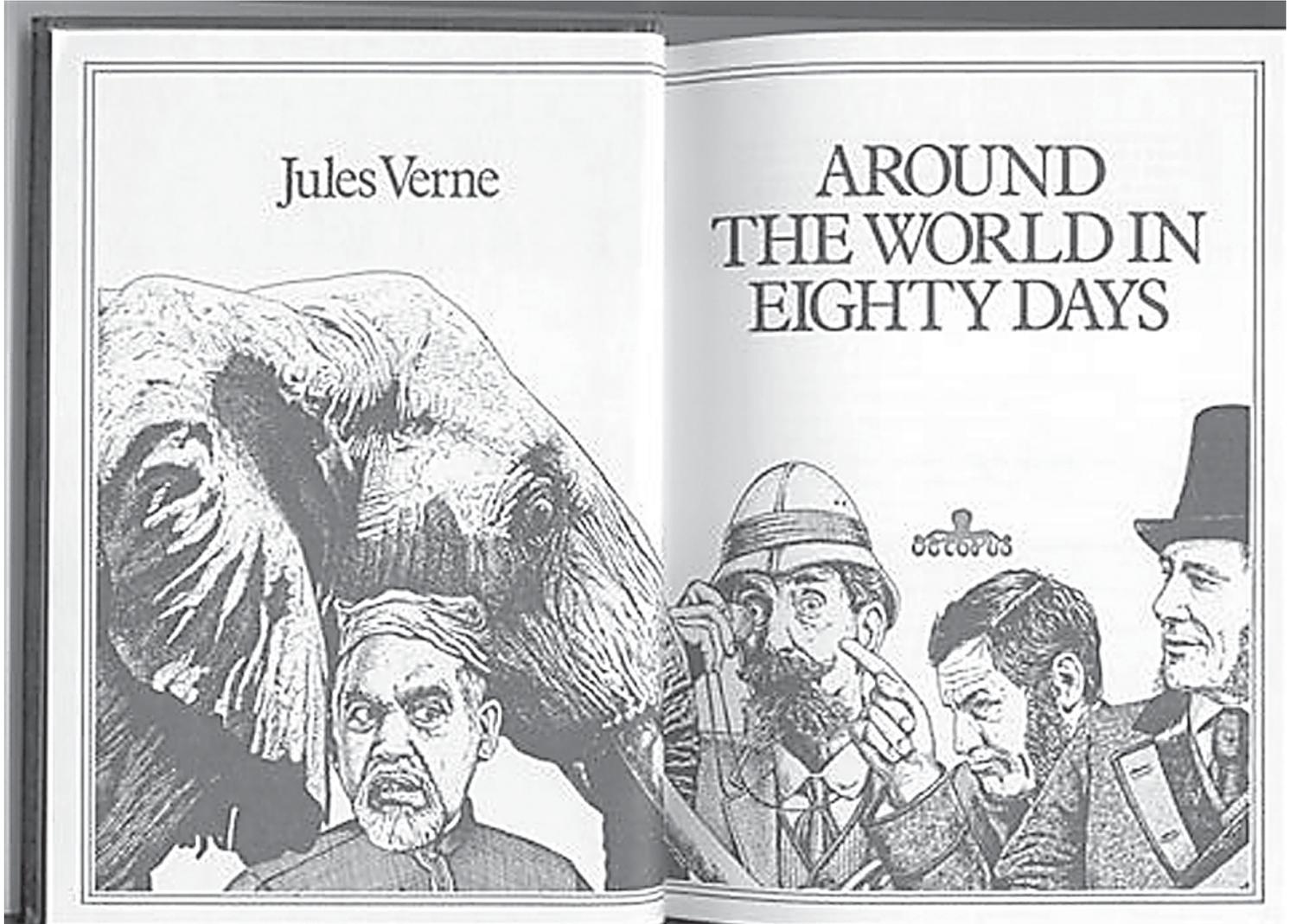
In line with the aim of identifying original translations, the list below omits the many scores of abridgements, simplified readers, etc. Each entry contains the name of the translator, the original publisher, place and date, and the title, if different from *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Next is cited the translation of the first paragraph:<sup>2</sup>

En l'année 1872, la maison portant le numéro 7 de Saville-Row, Burlington Gardens — maison dans laquelle Sheridan mourut en 1814 —, était habitée par Phileas Fogg, esq., l'un des membres les plus singuliers et les plus remarquables du Reform-Club de Londres, bien

qu'il semblât prendre à tâche de ne rien faire qui pût attirer l'attention.

In addition, the opening paragraph of chapter 2 is given since this varies considerably ("Sur ma foi, se dit Passepartout, un peu ahuri tout d'abord, j'ai connu chez Mme Tussaud des bonshommes aussi vivants que mon nouveau maître!"). Finally, an overall assessment of the quality of each translation is attempted, based on the completeness, accuracy and style of the text, and a few comments are made. Some reprints have been indicated to show the general pattern, but without attempting to be exhaustive.

One or two general conclusions emerge from the comparison. Most of the versions of this novel have been unimpressive. With three exceptions, they are generally of the same order of length as the original text, at



Frontispiece illustration by David Hopkins for translation #1a (pages 2 & 3).

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63,000 to 66,000 words, compared with the 67,000 words in French. Most are also pleasant to read, but nearly all change the contents or the structure of Verne's text. A few "translators", including Edward Roth, Irene R Gibbons and, to a certain extent, Jacqueline Rogers, seem to have untruthfully claimed work copied from previous texts to be their own.

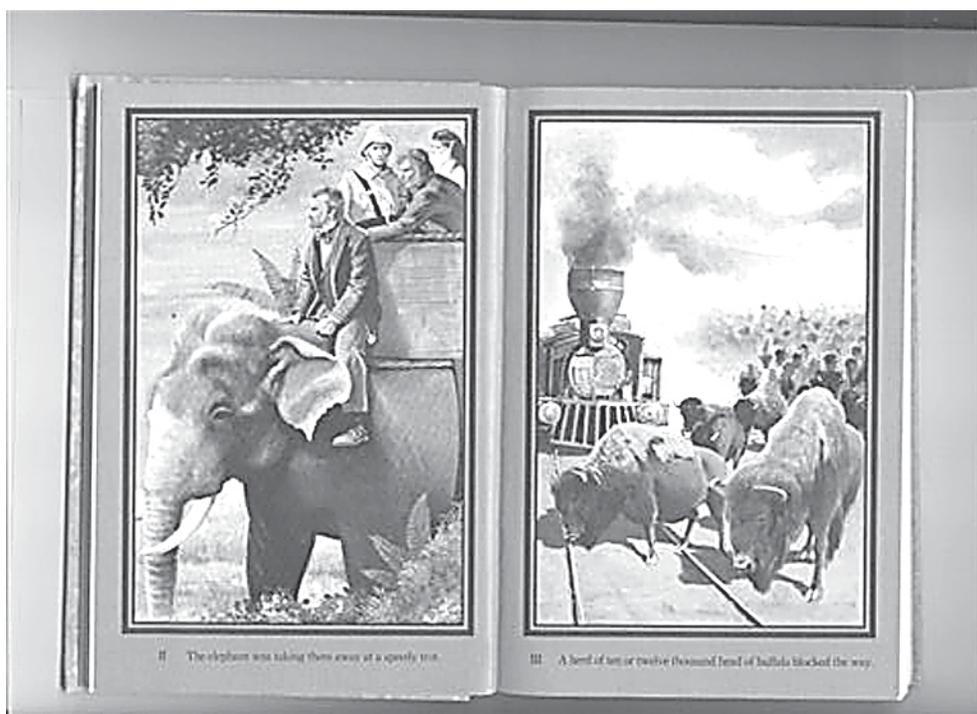
The opening paragraphs of chapters 1 and 2 in the reprints cited are identical to the source translation unless indicated otherwise. There are very few reprints of the best translations; as reported by David Cook (private correspondence), twenty-three of his collection of fifty-six editions of this novel are by Towle/d'Anvers (translation no. 1) and eleven by White (or Roth — translation no. 2). Given that both contain errors and omit phrases and sentences, this means that at least two-thirds of editions are unsatisfactory.<sup>3</sup> The majority of publishers of this novel, including most modern ones, in fact violate the moral right of the translators to be identified.<sup>4</sup> Few even identify the text as a translation, and fewer still, from what language. Some of the most reputable publishers are thus continuing to behave in an illegal fashion.<sup>5</sup>

1. Trans. **Geo M Towle; JR Osgood** [only Towle is indicated as translator], Boston [1873] and **Geo M Towle and N d'Anvers; Sampson Low, Marston & Co**, London, 1873, *The Tour of the World in Eighty Days*, then changed to *Around the World in Eighty Days* in later editions; some early Osgood editions even carry the former title on the cover and the latter on the title page.

Mr. Phileas Fogg lived, in 1872, at No. 7, Saville Row, Burlington Gardens, the house in which Sheridan died in 1814. He was one of the most noticeable members of the Reform Club, though he seemed always to avoid attracting attention; an enigmatical personage, about whom little was known, except that he was a polished man of the world.

"Faith," muttered Passepartout, somewhat flurried, "I've seen people at Madame Tussaud's as lively as my new master!"

5 out of 10; sentences are omitted (including the elephant's "musth"), phrases added and a number of mistakes made. Thus we learn that Fogg wears "vests", is bearded, is served by waiters with "swan-skin soles", reads the "Pall



Illustrations by Paul Crompton for translation #7a, between pages 64 and 65.

*Mall*" and "Morning Post and Daily News", and eats "a chop" for breakfast. But this translation, of 63,000 words, above all contains clumsy phrases: "wishing to taste the sweets of domestic life", "viâ", "[a] grin overspread [his] face", "the words which Mr Fogg dropped", "bending his eyes on Aouda", or "[Fogg,] like a racehorse, was drawing near his last turning-point". But in the end Fogg gets a fine reward for undergoing all this gobbledygook — the passionate response to the proposal scene is: "Ah!" cried Aouda, pressing *his* hand to her heart!"

Reprinted:

- a) Trans. Anon.; **Octopus**, London, 1978
- b) Trans. GM Towle and N Danvers [*sic*]; **Folio Society**, London, 1982
- c) Trans. Anon.; **Bantam**, New York, 1984
- d) Trans. Anon.; **Regent Classics**, London [n.d.]
- e) Trans. Anon.; **Thames**, London [n.d.]
- f) Trans. Anon.; **Dean**, London [n.d.]
- g) Trans. Anon.; **Bancroft**, London [n.d.]
- h) Trans. Anon.; **Miller**, London [n.d.]
- i) Trans. Anon.; **Reader's Digest**, 1988
- j) Trans. Anon.; **Puffin**, London, 1990
- k) Trans. Anon.; **Signet**, New York, 1991
- l) Trans. Anon.; **Library of the Future** (on CD), 1991 ("... in 1816...")
- m) Trans. Anon.; **Fabbri**, London, 1992

n) **Penguin Popular Classics**, London, 1994 "Revised and updated by Jacqueline Rogers" [directly from Geo M Towle and N d'Anvers's text, but not acknowledging it!]. In fact, even the claim of "Revising and Updating" is false, since the translation seems to be changed only in the Americanisation of the spelling and certain expressions.

Mr. Phileas Fogg lived, in 1872, at No. 7, Saville Row, Burlington Gardens, the house in which Sheridan died in 1814. He was one of the most prominent members of the London Reform Club, though he never did anything to attract attention; an enigmatic character about whom little was known except that he was a polished man of the world.

"To be sure," muttered Passepartout, somewhat flurried, "I've seen people at Madame Tussaud's as lively as my new master!"

- o) Trans. Anon.; **Viking (Penguin)**, New York, 1994
- p) Trans. Towle; **Dover**, London
- q) Many online sites, e.g. <http://JV.Gilead.org.il/works.html#1> ("...in 1816...").

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2. Trans. **Stephen W White** (according to Taves, *op. cit.*); **Warburton**, 1874, *The Tour of the World in Eighty Days* (or Trans. **Edward Roth**, as indicated in the 1983 Scholastic edition: “. . . No. 1 Saville Row . . .”)

In the year 1872, the house No. 7, Saville Row, Burlington Gardens—the house in which Sheridan died, in 1814—was inhabited by Phileas Fogg, Esq., one of the most singular and most noticed members of the Reform Club of London, although he seemed to take care to do nothing which might attract attention.

“Upon my word,” said Passepartout to himself, “I have known at Madame Tussaud’s good people as lively as my new master!”

6 out of 10; a few paragraphs and sentences omitted, eg the paragraph about Byron in ch. 1

*Reprinted:*

- a) **Vincent Parke**, New York, 1911
- b) Trans. Anon.; **RE King**, London [1914]
- c) Trans. Anon.; **Collins**, Pocket Classics, London [1920s?] (reprinted in various Collins imprints, including **Fontana**, 1956, and **Seagull**, 1958), *Round the World in Eighty Days* (the same title is used for d) to g) below)
- d) **Airmont**, New York, 1963
- e) Trans. **Irene R Gibbons; Blackie**, London, 1965. This version (which is reprinted in Priory Classics, London [n.d.]) appears to be a slightly modified version of the White translation: In 1872, No. 7 Savile Row, Burlington Gardens — the house where Sheridan died in 1816 — was occupied by Phileas Fogg, Esq., one of the oddest and most conspicuous members of the Reform Club in London, although he appeared to make a point of never doing anything that could possibly attract attention. “Upon my word,” Passepartout said to himself in slight bewilderment, “I have seen some fellows every bit as alive as my new master at Madame Tussaud’s!”
- f) Trans. **Edward Roth; Scholastic**, 1983 London (reprinted in the **Apple Classics** imprint, London, 2002)
- g) Trans. Anon.; **Derrydale**, New Jersey, 1994 (“. . . No. 7 Saville Row . . .”).

3. Trans. Anon, *Round the World in Eighty Days*, **Hutchinson & Co** [n.d.]

In the year 1872, No. 7 in Saville Row, Burlington Gardens, the house in which

Sheridan died in 1814, was inhabited by Phileas Fog, Esq., one of the most eccentric, and noticeable members of the Reform Club, although he seemed to be especially careful to do nothing which could attract any one’s attention.

“Assuredly,” said Passepartout to himself, though rather startled at first, “I have seen people at Madam Tussaud’s quite as lively as my new master.”

8 out of 10; complete and fluent translation.

4. Trans. Anon; **Ward, Lock & Co**: Youth’s Library of Wonder and Adventure [1879]

In the year 1872 the house, No. 7, Saville Row, Burlington Gardens, in which Sheridan died in 1816, was occupied by Phileas Fogg, Esquire, one of the most remarkable members of the Reform Club, though he always appeared very anxious to avoid remark.

“Egad,” said Passepartout, who was rather flurried for the minute, “I have seen figures at Madame Tussaud’s quite as cheerful as my new master.”

6 out of 10; reasonably complete, although old-fashioned style. The translator may be Frederick Amadeus Malleon, since he did other Verne volumes for the same publisher.

5. Trans. **Lewis Mercier; Collier**, London, 1962

Mr. Phileas Fogg lived, in 1872, at No. 7, Saville Row, Burlington Gardens. He was one of the most noticeable members of the Reform Club, though he seemed always to avoid attracting attention.

4 out of 10; since Lewis Mercier is notorious for the liberties taken in his version of *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1872), this must be a reprint of a nineteenth-century text *Reprinted Doubleday*, New York, 1964, with however the beginning of chapter 2 identical to Towle/d’Anvers’s!

6. Trans. **Henry Frith, Routledge**, London and New York, 1879 [“1878”], *Round the World in Eighty Days*

In the year of Grace one thousand eight hundred and seventy-two, the house in which Sheridan died in 1816—viz. No 7, Saville Row, Burlington Gardens—was occupied by

Phileas Fogg, Esq. , one of the most eccentric members of the Reform Club, though it always appeared as if he were very anxious to avoid remark.

“Faith,” muttered Passe-partout, who for a moment felt rather in a flutter; “faith, I have seen creatures at Madame Tussaud’s quite as lively as my new master.”

8 out of 10; although the style is dated, this is a reasonably faithful translation.

7. Trans. **P Desages; Dent**, London, and **Dutton**, New York: **Everyman** [1926]

In the year 1872, No. 7 Saville Row, Burlington Gardens, the house in which Sheridan died in 1816, was occupied by Phileas Fogg, Esq. Of the members of the Reform Club in London few, if any, were more peculiar or more specially noticed than Phileas Fogg, although he seemed to make a point of doing nothing that could draw attention.

“My word,” said Passepartout to himself, a little dazed at first, “I have known at Madame Tussaud’s folks with just as much life in them as my new master!”

8 out of 10; generally a good translation

*Reprinted:*

- a) Trans. Anon.; **World International**, Manchester, 1991 (“. . . Savile . . .”)
- b) Trans. Anon.; Ravette, London, 1992
- c) **Wordsworth**, London, 1994, followed by *Five Weeks in a Balloon*
- d) **Trans. P Desages; Dent: Everyman**, 1994, with some very minor changes (“revised from an earlier version by P. Desages” [xxxiii] according to the editor, Peter Costello): In the year 1872, No. 7 Saville Row, Burlington Gardens (the house in which Sheridan died in 1814) was occupied by Phileas Fogg, Esq., one of the most unusual and more remarkable members of the Reform Club of London, although he tried his best to do nothing that would draw attention to himself. “Pon my soul,” said Passepartout to himself, a little bewildered at first. “I have known folks at Madame Tussaud’s as lively as my new master!”

8. Trans. **KE Lichteneker; Hamlyn**, 1965

In 1872, the house at Number Seven, Saville Row was occupied by Phileas Fogg, Esquire, one of the most remarkable and unusual members of the London Reform Club. It was

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his habit to avoid everything which could arouse attention.

Passepartout was alone. He dropped into a chair in blank amazement. The wax models in Madame Tussaud's were, he thought, at least as spirited and high-strung as his new employer. (appearing mid-way through Chap. 1)

3 out of 10; the omission of the reference to Sheridan is indicative of the liberties and shortcuts in this version, which has only twenty chapters, instead of Verne's thirty-seven.

9. Trans. **IO Evans**; Associated Booksellers, Arco, 1966

In 1872 No. 7, Savile Row, Burlington Gardens, the former home of Sheridan, was occupied by Mr Phileas Fogg. He belonged to the Reform Club of London, and although he never did anything to attract attention, he was one of its most unusual and conspicuous members.

"My word!" reflected Passepartout, feeling somewhat overwhelmed, "I've seen people in Madame Tussaud's who are quite as much alive as my new master!"

3 out of 10; generally condensed rather than translated, with many of the historical and geographical passages deleted and descriptions truncated.

10. Trans. **Jacqueline and Robert Baldick**; Dent, London, 1968

In 1872 No 7 Savile Row, Burlington Gardens — the house in which Sheridan died in 1816 — was occupied by Phileas Fogg Esq. He belonged to the Reform Club of London, and although he seemed to take care never to do anything which might attract attention, he was one of its strangest and most conspicuous members.

"Upon my word," Passepartout said to himself, feeling slightly taken aback, "I've seen people in Madame Tussaud's who have just as much life in them as my new master!"

7 out of 10; the Baldicks' Verne translations are generally fluent and lively  
*Reprinted: Armada*, London, 1988.

11. Trans. with an introduction and notes by **William Butcher**; **Oxford University Press**, World's Classics, 1995 (3rd revised edn 1998)

In the year 1872, No. 7 Savile Row, Burlington Gardens — the house where Sheridan died in 1814 — was occupied by Phileas Fogg, Esq. This gentleman was one of the most remarkable, and indeed most remarked upon, members of the Reform Club, although he seemed to go out of his way to do nothing that might attract any attention.

"I do believe," he said, a little dazed at first, "that I have bumped into blokes at Madame Tussaud's with as much life in them as my new boss!"

Translation (66,000 words) attempts to be scrupulously faithful to Verne's text, aided by an in-depth knowledge of the manuscripts and the correspondence: "excellent, up-to-date and informed" Professor T Unwin, *Australian Modern Languages Association Journal*, 1998, p. 115)

*Republished: Questia.com*, 2001.

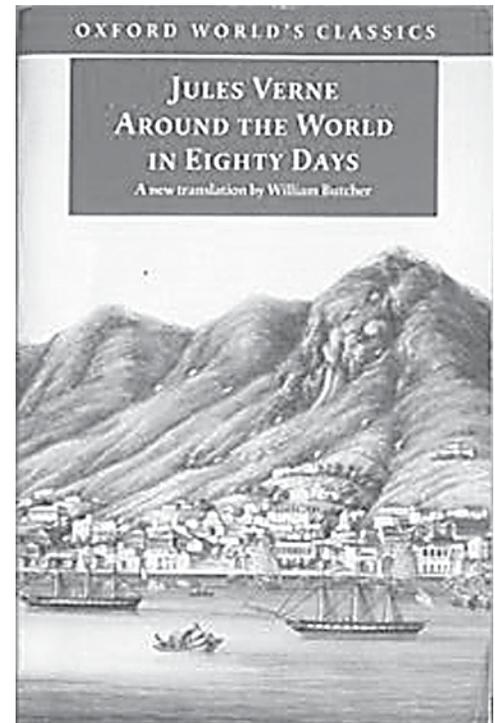
## (FOOTNOTES)

1. A forthcoming article by Arthur B. Evans, "The English Translations of Jules Verne's *Voyages Extraordinaires*", will be the first to identify the different translations of all of the novels of the Extraordinary Journeys. The only other relevant article is Stephen Michaluk, Jr, "Jules Verne: A Bibliographic and Collecting Guide", pp. 103-92, in Brian Taves and Stephen Michaluk, Jr, *The Jules Verne Encyclopedia* (1996). However, this article merely lists the many successive publishers, without citing the text itself or considering the translation.

Grateful acknowledgements are recorded to David Cook who provided much vital information for this article from his valuable collection of editions.

This piece is a revised version of "The Most Translated Verne Novel", published in *Nautilus*, no. 2, Jan. 2002, pp. 6-9.

2. The opening, as Roland Barthes famously pointed out ("Par où commencer?", *Poétique*, vol. 1, pp. 3-9), is of course vital for setting the voice and structure of the whole novel. Michael Crichton has also perceptively commented on the role of Verne "perfect[ing his] technique" in his first sentence, especially *Around the World*, so as to create a dense, factual tone and hence credibility ("Introduction" to



Cover illustration for translation #11 by an unknown artist, from 1853-1860.

*Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, trans. William Butcher, The Folio Society, 2001, p. xvii).

3. As if to emphasise the publishers' lack of respect for the translators, in both cases contradictory information is provided as to their identity: Towle alone or Towle and d'Anvers? White or Roth?

4. Under European law, translators have the right of paternity, that is the right to be identified as translators, although this does not extend to translators who died before 1989.

5. The Trades Description Act forbids false advertising, including publishers' catalogues and covers of books. Modern publishers of translations falsely claiming to be "unabridged" or wrongly identifying the translator could therefore be taken to court.

Michael Crichton has recently come to a similar conclusion regarding most English translations of Verne, although adopting a moral rather than legal standpoint: "At best . . . clunky, choppy, tone-deaf prose . . . it is surprising that . . . it is still printed and sold as Verne's work; one would think present-day publishers would be ashamed." (*Ibid.*, pp. ix-x)