

So determined was she not to irritate the First Consul whose rise was far from her preferred turn of events that she insisted her *Delphine* was in no wise a political work. Instead she strove for a female readership with a novel exploring the parlous situation of women in the Revolution's first years: 1790–92. For *Delphine* the Revolution is not merely a backdrop, but its very warp; and yet it dwells upon private matters. Is this novel the “mere pastime” Staël claimed?

Young widow Delphine, left wealthy by her protector Albémar, is lioness of a lively circle. Her peace is undermined as she falls in love with Léonce de Mondoville, unlike her, a political and social reactionary. Delphine's dear friend, M<sup>me</sup> de Vernon, whose daughter Mathilde is engaged to Léonce, betrays Delphine's trust and Léonce weds Mathilde. The lovers' passion persists. Delphine's offer to harbor another friend, Thérèse, leads to disaster. Improvident, she shelters a political fugitive, inspiring Léonce's wrath. The novel's first ending has Delphine flee to a convent, pursued by her lover. Léonce is killed in battle, and Delphine takes poison. Attacked for letting Delphine kill herself, Staël wrote a second ending to the novel, published only after her death in 1817, and an essay on suicide. The present edition includes these annexes.

Alongside scenes of trumped-up melodrama, the novel offers superb characterizations in the manner of the seventeenth-century *portrait* and sagaciously plumbs bourgeois, and aristocratic milieus. Women's roles in society are its central preoccupation, but braided into it are issues of marriage and divorce, reason vs. passion, natural vs. churchly religion, the indissolubility of monastic vows, a right to suicide, and the clash between opinion and individual freedom. These all interrogate the impact of the Revolution upon private life.

Visibly, *Delphine* is a novel of disaffection, illustrating how the elation of early Revolution was dissipated by personal, familial and structural limitations in a French society suspicious of generosity of spirit and wary of the rights of individuals. Attacked and defended with almost equal fervor, despite its flaws, it continues to unfold itself to feminist, textual, and historically based critics' exegeses.

This edition, undertaken by Lucia Omacini and Simone Balayé before her death, has been ably completed by Omacini. Its notes are excellent for their range, yet unintrusive. Her introduction treats *Delphine's* origins, its place in epistolary tradition, its reception, its publication history, and the rationale for establishing the text. A superb presentation of *Delphine*, no one interested in Staël, the novel, or literature and the Revolution should find it less than illuminating.

**Verne, Jules. *The Kip Brothers*. Translated by Stanford L. Luce, edited by Arthur B. Evans, introduction and notes by Jean-Michel Margot. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007. Pp. 476. ISBN 978-0-8195-6704-8**

*William Butcher, Hong Kong*

This first-ever English edition of *The Kip Brothers* is a fine addition to the Wesleyan series of Verne's previously untranslated novels, skillfully managed by Arthur B. Evans. Together with the novels in the versions unrevised by Verne's son Michel (Nebraska University Press), the series thus greatly contributes to knowledge of probably the most popular classic writer worldwide.

In line with modern practice, the translation, by the late Stanford L. Luce, is scrupulously faithful, adhering to the sentence and paragraph structure of the French original and conveying its full meaning. While the original text, written late in Verne's life, may lack some of the sparkle and excitement of the bestsellers, the translation itself also sometimes seems slightly uniform in tone, although such reactions are of course highly personal.

The introduction ably presents the documentary sources of the novel, whose central theme, often used in detective fiction, is that the retina of a dying man can retain an image of the last thing he sees. It points out in particular that, while presenting troubling analogies with the Dreyfus Affair, the novel was in fact written too early to reflect that episode. While such a demonstration, and a connected one, that in the late 1890s, Verne exhibited right-wing tendencies, might seem obvious in light of the evidence, Jean-Michel Margot has nevertheless been the subject of personal attacks in a Verne forum for venturing into other *chasses gardées* and questioning accepted dogmas. Margot also goes some way to redressing the imbalance in recent American publications, which, while emphasizing Verne's negative comments on British imperialism and manners, often omit the criticisms of US colonialism and social behavior. Although greater concision might sometimes have been possible, the notes authoritatively explain and contextualize the large number of real-life allusions and names in this novel.

While very good on the problems of the later years and on the Michel question, the brief biography at the end of the volume, first published in 2001, would benefit from updating, placing for instance more emphasis on the vital early years. In addition, the story of the young Verne wishing to run away to sea was not invented by Allotte de la Fuÿe—although much of the information taken from this early biographer should be taken with a pinch of salt; the account of the initial contacts with Hetzel is not really based on documentary evidence; *Uncle Robinson* was not rejected by the publisher in 1865; and the idea of Michel acting as Verne's secretary-typist has not gained much general traction.

The Wesleyan and Nebraska series have both benefited from wide circulation among the science-fiction community, but this may be based on a misunderstanding. As Evans points out, the idea of Verne as “father of science fiction” must, in the last analysis, be thought a legend. In this perspective, for the cover to label *The Kip Brothers* an “early classic of science fiction” requires considerable pushing and pulling.

If such a wide-ranging critical apparatus and extensive translation inevitably raises a few quibbles (it is misleading to quote the initial print run of only the unillustrated edition; a typographical error remains on p. 421), this volume's essential contribution to Verne Studies must be emphasized. Its well-researched, patient and objective material is a model for critical editions. The lack of corresponding volumes in French, or even of very much detailed textual exploration, appears then all the more surprising. Grandiose publication schemes have in fact often been announced, and the time may indeed be ripe for considering a Collected Works—normal, after all, for less esteemed novelists. Those contemplating such an exhaustive venture would not go far wrong if they started from the achievements of this volume.