

Introduction

Lighthouse at the End of the World (1905) by Jules Verne (1828-1905) is not well-known in the English-speaking world, yet this gripping adventure story set on the remotest of islands deserves much better. Before studying its composition, characters, and themes, it is useful to summarize the plot and examine Verne's life at the turn of the century.

Plot

In 1859 the Argentine sloop *Santa Fe* leaves Vasquez, Felipe, and Moriz on deserted, near-polar Staten Island. They are to tend the new lighthouse at Elgor Bay, and hence protect the world's ships. But a gang of wreckers, led by the diabolical Kongre and Carcante, have long been stranded here. The merciless pirates hoist a light to lure the schooner *Maule* onto the reefs, killing all hands. In order to repair the vessel and thus escape to the South Seas, the wreckers sail her to Elgor Bay. While a powerless Vasquez observes from the lighthouse, they kill the trusting Felipe and Moriz. Unable to leave the island, the keeper needs to avoid his enemies while waiting for the sloop to return. The pirates draw in an American ship, killing all on board except First Officer John Davis. After bad weather slows the repairs, Vasquez and Davis, who have jointly sworn revenge, further delay the *Maule* using a salvaged cannon. The pirates are finally leaving the bay at dusk - when the *Santa Fe* hoves into sight. The climax involves much drama and bloodshed.

Biography

Verne's fascination for Latin America was visible from his childhood. His family holidayed in idyllic countryside with his great-uncle Prudent Allotte de la Fuy e. Uncle Prudent, a retired slaver, had done business in Venezuelan trading ports - and the boy idolized him for traveling so far. Verne's earliest prose publication was "The First Ships of the Mexican Navy," and his third, "Martin Paz," set in Peru.

Verne's life and career are useful for understanding *Lighthouse*. However, the main events are outlined in the Chronology below (pp. 00-00), so we should proceed directly to the final years.

Since 1886, when his publisher and mentor had died and a premeditated murder attempt by his favorite nephew had left him permanently lame, Verne's life had entered a spiral of decline, with increasing isolation and plummeting popularity.

The novelist turned staunchly conservative, being anti-Dreyfusard in the 1896 Affair; the same year he was sued for libel. His contemporaries died one by one: his younger brother Paul in 1897, his traveling companion Aristide Hignard in 1898, his family maid in 1900, his great love and first cousin Caroline Dezaunay in 1901.

Verne's last journey was in 1899, to Les Petites-Dalles on the Normandy coast, with his son Michel and Michel's family (Dusseau 483).¹ He resigned from the Paris Society of Geography and skipped the Universal Exposition (1900) - including the first Metro. That same year, he and his wife moved out of rented accommodation at 2 Rue Charles Dubois, Amiens, and back to their own dark and cramped 44 Boulevard de Longueville. The furniture huddled in the dining and living rooms and the "tiny garden [was] invaded by sparrows" (Jules-Verne x). On the first floor, Verne's study had just "two tables, a padded armchair, and a camp bed" (Jules-Verne x).

The novelist's health deteriorated. On 15 October 1898 he wrote to his sister, "I'm living off milk and eggs and my legs are useless with rheumatism." With increasing hunger pangs from the diabetes that would kill him, he could not wait for meals, but ate alone, sitting on a stool so as "to go faster" (Jules-Verne x). To the cataract in his left eye was added one in his right. Canceling the needed operation in 1900 made him "very distressed": "I can scarcely see what I'm writing."² In March 1901 a nasty flu kept him in his room for two months; he was "very, very ill" (*Entretiens* 146).

His presence, taking refuge in silence, "more aged than really old," terrified his future biographer Jean Jules-Verne, aged nine - except when he animatedly discussed his books with Jean's father Michel (Jules-Verne x). From 1902 his condition worsened, his "words run[ning] away and ideas no longer com[ing]," and many journalists departed disappointed. In 1903 "the only time he went out was for his short constitutional."³

Yet Verne struggled on through the growing gloom. He had been triumphantly re-elected in the Amiens municipal elections of 1900, although now nodding off in meetings and speaking less and less. In 1902 he was still rising at four o'clock to write for seven hours.⁴ Not only did he compose the first draft of *Lighthouse* between March and May 1901, but on occasion he could still appear "upright, like the master he is . . . [with in] his eyes . . . a singular vivacity" (*Entretiens* 146).

And still the books kept pouring out: *The Mighty Orinoco* (1898), about a search for a river source; *The Will of an Eccentric* (1899), a board-game across

¹ A short reference system is used here for works cited in the List of Abbreviations or the Bibliography, consisting of the book or article name followed by either page number in normal numerals or chapter number in roman numerals (preceded by part number, if any), e.g. Dehs 14, *Jonathan* I ii, or *Vairo* xiv.

² Letters to Mario Turello of 20 December 1900 and 6 January 1901 (*Europe* 58 (May 1980), 128). That summer his eyesight was no better: "he can no longer read, no longer write" (*Entretiens* 156).

³ Jan Feith, "Le Globe-trotter chez lui," *BSJV*, 145 (2003), 10.

⁴ *Jules Verne en son temps*, ed. Jean-Michel Margot (Amiens: Encrage, 2004), 243.

the United States, still unpublished there today; the anti-Robinsonade *Second Homeland* (1900); the missing-link *Village in the Treetops* (1901); the sea-monster *Yarns of Jean-Marie Cabidoulin* (1901); the judicial error embroiling the *Kip Brothers* (1902); *Traveling Scholarships* (1903), about touring the West Indies; *A Drama in Livonia* (1904), featuring German-Slav rivalry; *Master of the World* (1904), where a megalomaniac Robur-the-Conqueror returns in a car-plane-sub; *Invasion of the Sea* (1905), about flooding the Sahara.

Yet others were composed, creating a backlog, for only one or two could come out each year: *Magellania*, where the solitude-seeking hero has to rule castaways; “The Secret of Wilhelm Storitz,” about an invisible man; “The Beautiful Yellow Danube,” sailing across central Europe; *The Meteor Hunt*, featuring a gold-bearing asteroid; “The Golden Volcano,” set in the Klondyke; and four and a half chapters of “Study Visit”, set in French colonial Africa.

On 17 March 1905 the only universal Frenchman fell ill, dying on 24 March, surrounded by his extended family. The French government boycotted the funeral.

Sources

The idea for the eponymous lighthouse probably came from the first one in the South Atlantic, the real-life beacon built in Port San Juan (1884). While both were inexplicably positioned behind 800-foot ranges, and so invisible from most ships, the differences are more important than the similarities.⁵ Whereas Verne’s beacon is the classic stone-built cylinder, with a range of eight to ten miles, the one-story wooden lighthouse of 1884 was polygonal, with a banal galvanized roof but a range of fourteen miles. While the novel talks loftily of benefiting sailors of every nation, in reality the motive was territorial, to shore up Argentine’s brand-new, still disputed, sovereignty.⁶

5. Google Earth (earth.google.com) provides a useful topography of the island. Vairo (xiv) indicates many differences between Verne’s account, set in 1859, and the historical one of 1884. Verne’s Elgor Bay is on the east coast, between Cape San Juan and Several (or Fallows) Point (Pétel 209), whereas the historical lighthouse was on the north coast, on the west side of San Juan Bay, itself to the west of Cape San Juan. Verne’s choice seems strange, since the northern coast is better for the busy Le Maire Strait. The name Lighthouse at the End of the World seems to have been retrospectively applied after 1905 to the 1884 beacon to benefit from the link with Verne.

6. A second lighthouse was lit in 1902 in a more sensible place on Observatory Island, six miles north of Staten; it is still standing and resembles Verne’s, with its cylindrical shape, lookout gallery, and shed-like outhouses. A third was later built at Cape del Medio on the western tip of Staten (Pétel 209), sometimes called the Le Maire Lighthouse.

Otherwise, the genesis of *Lighthouse* is largely *terra incognita*. Bougainville's *Voyage around the World* (1772) could be a slight source, given that rare terms like "guanacos" and "Pécherais" occur. The novelist may have known of Darwin's visit of "the rugged and inhospitable cliffs of Statenland." He perhaps read about a herculean Finn called Iwan Iwanowsky, deserter from the Argentine Navy, who escaped from prison in Port San Juan three times between 1881 and 1885, provoking admiration at his survival, although finally dying of cold and starvation.⁷ Verne was presumably aware of the visit to Staten Island in 1899 of Adrien Gerlache and Roald Amundsen's Antarctic expedition.⁸ Some of Verne's information on Patagonia was supplied by an unidentified lady correspondent in "deepest Argentina."⁹

No other plausible sources have been suggested. Since Verne's *Extraordinary Voyages* were published as a series, with many recurring themes and situations, it may consequently be more fruitful to explore these recurrent variations, one convenient way being to simultaneously study the genre, or rather genres, the novel belongs to.

Lighthouse is, firstly, a Robinsonade; the castaway genre best describes Verne, infinitely more than the inaccurate science-fiction label stuck on him from the 1920s - long after he was able to defend himself. Desert islands

Apparently just for its symbolic value, French entrepreneur and publicist André Bronner decided to build a fourth Lighthouse at the End of the World, at Cape San Juan (Dominique Buffier, *Les Archives du Monde*, special number: "Jules Verne l'universel" [March 2005], 78). His aim seems to have been to pay homage to Verne, even if both the location and the shape of the building were different. Apparently linked with Bronner's endeavor, President Jacques Chirac gave President Carlos Menem a copy of the original edition of *Lighthouse* (Michel's) during his official visit to Argentine in 1997. With a budget of three million francs and the support of corporate sponsors, senior politicians, and the Argentine Army, the solar-panel lighthouse was lit in 1998. In 2000 a replica of Bronner's reconstruction - a fifth iteration - was built at Pointe de Minimes, La Rochelle, the nostalgia being increased by the realization that GPS will render lighthouses increasingly obsolescent.

7. Vairo xiv. The plot of *Lighthouse* also resembles a violent prison riot on Staten Island. When the 1884 lighthouse was decommissioned in 1902, the climate being found too harsh, the island's prison settlements were also abandoned. During the transfer, the eighty-three prisoners mutinied, killing two wardens and all comrades who refused to join them. After manhunts over several months, the ringleaders were executed, although five prisoners remained unaccounted for (Vairo xiv). However, all this occurred after Verne's first draft, so may be coincidental.

8. Vairo in private correspondence. Gerlache's "Fifteen Months in the Antarctic" (Gallica), with a preface by Elisée Reclus (Brussels: Guy Leprat, 1902), contains a brief description of the area around San Juan.

9. Letter from Verne to Mario Turiello (5 February 1895), reproduced in *Europe*, 1936 2.1: 171-72.

obsessed him from childhood, for the ten year old sailed a skiff down the Loire, sank on an island, and played at being a solitary castaway until hunger drove him home again.¹⁰ His only known early reading was Robinsonades: Mallès de Beaulieu's "Twelve-Year-Old Crusoe," Louis Desnoyers' "Adventures of Robert Robert," and Ernest Fouinet's "Crusoe of the Ice," followed by Johann Rudolf Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and Fenimore Cooper's *The Crater*. Verne later read Captain Marryat, Mayne Reid, and Robert Louis Stevenson, especially *Treasure Island*, with its "extraordinary freshness of style and enormous power," but also *The Ebb-Tide* and, significantly, *The Wrecker* (*Entretiens* 105).

Lighthouse is, secondly, a marine novel. Large numbers of Verne's novels demonstrate his passion for navigation, which emerges even in the *Center of the Earth*, *At the North Pole*, or *Off on a Comet*. The 1905 novel remains true to type, with undoubtedly the widest range of nautical terms and themes of any of the works, paradoxically enough as it never leaves Staten. It thus parallels Verne's own life, stranded on dry land since he gave up sailing in 1884.

The novel is, lastly, defined by the island's role as gateway to the Antarctic. Verne had long been fascinated by the Poles, the last virgin expanses on the globe. In 1851 he visited an uncle in Dunkirk, a major port for Arctic whalers, and subsequently wrote "Wintering in the Ice" (1855). The northern urge also dominates Verne's 1859 journey, his first outside France. In the Scottish chapters of his *Backwards to Britain*, the hero, the Count of the North, constantly dreams of penetrating ever further into the Highlands. In 1861 Verne traveled for six weeks, missing the birth of his only child, Michel. The resultant account, "Joyous Miseries of Three Travelers in Scandinavia," contains a lifelong manifesto: "I was drawn to the hyperboreal regions, like the magnetic needle to the north, without knowing why . . . I love cold lands by temperament." Verne equates altitude with latitude and the delicious chill, three scales measuring out his search for the absolute. He especially indulges his mesmeric obsession in three novels set entirely in the icy wastes, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* (1864), *The Fur Country* (1873), and *An Antarctic Mystery* (1897).

Both Poles shared the conundrum of whether they were land or sea, the first new continent discovered since 1606 or the open polar ocean proposed by Sir Francis Drake (*Grant* I ix). While hundreds of expeditions had assaulted the Arctic, the South Pole came into vogue more slowly. In 1901 the melded dreams of a classical temperate Hyperborea and a Terra Australis Incognita burned as strongly as ever amongst scholars and cranks. Blended in were wild substrata of utopias, whether founded by Europeans to escape society's ills or pre-existing, unsullied communities.

10. "Memories of Childhood and Youth" (1891).

This was where Staten Island came in. *Lighthouse* may in fact have been a spin-off from *Magellania*, written in 1898 but published only in 1909 (radically altered by Michel Verne). The two novels cover the same geographical area, the same flora and fauna, the same ports; both emphasize the danger of shipwreck and misery of the “Fuegians” or “Pécherais”; and both revel in the inhospitability of the terrain and the fact that it remains independent of all sovereignty. *Magellania* closes with the erection of a lighthouse on an island, explicitly compared to “the light on Staten Island” (xvi). *Lighthouse* opens with an identical image - and indeed closes again with it. The triple depiction of the structure defying the world may symbolize the fight against the darkness invading Verne’s eyesight and mind - against the grim reaper.

As the writer points out in *The First Explorers* (1870), Tasman discovered a “Staten Land” in 1642, part, he thought, of a great southern continent (it was later re-baptized New Zealand). Tasman and Darwin’s use of the same geographical term for land at the opposite ends of the earth shows the extent of the imagined continent and the grip it held on the global imagination.

Staten Island, the remotest tip of the known continents, formed the obligatory staging post for the many cumbersome fin-de-siècle expeditions into the southern unknown. Together with neighboring South Georgia, the island resembled Siberia or Greenland in both climate and tantalizing otherness, a lingering whiteness on the map, an idealistic hope it might stay independent for ever, blended with the selfish dream of printing one’s name on the virginal expanse.

Verne’s problem, though, was that he had already been to both Poles, in *Hatteras* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues*. In a fallen century where there are no discoveries left, Staten thus represents the derisory least bad solution, a mocking memory of geographical heroism, a spin-off from an already lost dream. Despite the no-man’s land’s extreme latitude and weather, despite its brave last stand against the colonial empires, it is in many ways a retreat. Travel is pointless for everything has been done. All Verne’s islands represent this pitiful inversion of the voyage - the aim of his life and works. Staten can be seen as both the culmination and the denial of the polar urge, both a new discovery and the reluctant recognition that salvation will have to be sought within. *Lighthouse* is a dream of elsewhere tempered for a bourgeois century.

Composition

While the inspiration for *Lighthouse* remains a black box, we do have information about its path to publication. On 29 March 1901, three years

after *Magellania*, Verne finished writing “The Beautiful Yellow Danube.” That same day, he began *Lighthouse*, completing the draft on 17 May.¹¹

Jean Jules-Verne (*Jules Verne* 346) claims the novel was written during a period of depression, but may simply be arguing from its somber tone. Examination of the manuscript shows that, as usual, Verne inked over his pencil draft, then made a few further minor deletions and insertions; with an increasing backlog of unpublished novels, he normally did the ink version several years after the pencil one.¹² His errors betrayed his failing eyesight and fatigue, with more stylistic tics than usual and words incorrectly crossed out; the writing, however, remains nearly as well-formed as ever.¹³ As in the previous manuscripts, there are a few gaps for distances, technical words, etc.¹⁴

On 25 February 1905 we have the only mention of *Lighthouse* in Verne’s extant correspondence. He told Hetzel *filis*, his publisher since 1886: “I will soon send you the manuscript. It will probably not be the one I mentioned, ‘The Invisible Man’ (‘L’Invisible’), but *Lighthouse at the End of the World*, set on the last tip of Tierra del Fuego.”

In addition to *Invasion of the Sea*, which had started coming out in Hetzel’s *Magasin d’éducation et de récréation* (MÉR) on 1 January, another book was needed for August. On 4 March Hetzel wrote to confirm receipt of the manuscript, remarking that although he had not actually read it, the title itself was “destined to succeed.”¹⁵ However, he continued, it would “overshadow” the title of *Invasion of the Sea*, so it was perhaps “stupid” to publish them in the same annual volume. He enquired whether Verne could send “The Invisible Man.” Verne replied on 5 March that he had sent *Lighthouse* because he thought there would not be changes to it. But he agreed to send what he preferred to call “Storitz’s Secret.” On 12 March Hetzel confirmed he had received the second manuscript, but said he had to leave for Italy, having left instructions for it to be copied, so he could read it on his return (*BSJV*, 103:40).

On 24 March Verne died. Clearly he considered the manuscript finished - *qua* manuscript. But he had earlier pointed out: “I consider my real labor begins with my first set of proofs, for I not only correct

11. *BSJV*, 119 (1996), 12-14.

12. In fact, only part of the manuscript seems to have a pencil version below the ink one. The manuscript (reference B 123) was kindly made available by the Municipal Library of Nantes; *BSJV*, 103 (1992), 52.

13. As can be seen from the folios on http://www.arkhenum.fr/bm_nantes/jules_verne/_app_php_mysql/ms/recherche_alpha_cles.php.

14. In the present edition, most of Michel’s insertions in the gaps are retained, following the Gallimard Folio edition.

15. The March 1905 exchange of letters has disappeared, but was summarized by Hetzel after Verne’s death (*BSJV*, 103 (1992), 40; 12 May 1905).

something in every sentence, but rewrite whole chapters.”¹⁶ However, “with age and infirmity there were some books . . . which Verne did not [revise intensively on proofs] and their sales suffered” (Hetzl *fil*s’s note in May 1905, in *BSJV*, 104:4). In sum, Verne would certainly have made many changes to *Lighthouse* at the successive proof stages.

On 30 April Michel Verne wrote a letter to *Le Figaro* and *Le Temps*, referring to eight manuscript works, including one volume of stories, but mentioning only three actual titles.¹⁷ All eight were in his physical possession, except *Lighthouse* and “Storitz.”¹⁸

Who now owned the right to bring out the eight works, and these two in particular? Hetzel *fil*s stated that he “had been charged by M. Jules Verne to publish [the eight posthumous works, including *Lighthouse*], while retaining the author’s text as much as possible, except where there were mistakes” (*BSJV*, 104:19).¹⁹ On 9 May the publisher wrote to Michel that he could not return the manuscripts of *Lighthouse* and “Storitz,” as requested, since Verne had entrusted them for publication - and that Verne’s son could contact a lawyer if he wished (*BSJV*, 103:40). The following day, a visibly upset Michel countered that on his deathbed his father had explained why he had submitted two manuscripts, saying that his son could do as he wished with them (*BSJV*, 103:42). Michel also referred to his father’s will, which read: “I hereby bequeath all my manuscripts, books, maps, library, and papers, without exception . . . to my son Michel Verne” (Martin 252). (The location of Verne’s will, of vital importance for understanding both his life and works has surprisingly not been identified.) In sum, the manuscripts belonged to Michel and he had the power to refuse publication. Hetzel responded on 11 May that he was consulting his own lawyer, and attached a “Note concerning the manuscript *Lighthouse at the End of the World*,” summarizing the epistolary exchanges of early March (*BSJV*, 103:43-45)). He maintained that he had the right to bring *Lighthouse* out (although later

16. Cited by Amazon.com in publicity for *Magellania*. Olivier Dumas, “Les Romans modifies,” *Cahiers du centre d’études verniennes* 4 (1984), 4, cites a similar description of the importance of Verne’s work on proofs.

17. The letter is cited in Charles-Noël Martin, *Jules Verne* (Paris: Michel de l’Ormerie, 1978), 254.

18. On 1 April, accompanied by Emile Berr, director of the *Figaro*, Michel claims to have “discovered” a number of his father’s manuscripts in a drawer (*Entretiens* 250-52); Jules-Verne (346-47) mistakenly implies that *Lighthouse* was amongst them.

19. In mid-1905 Michel reported (*Entretiens* 251) that “last year, Jules Verne, tired, had finished another book (probably *Invasion of the Sea*, published in the *MÉR*, 1 Jan.-1 Aug. 1905), received proofs, but had no strength to correct them to the end, so returned them to Hetzel with a note ‘Revise that yourself . . . I can’t do it any more.’ “

agreeing to return “Storitz” (*BSJV*, 103:50)). At this point, although he seems to have been in the right, Michel gave in.

On 25 June, perhaps heartened by a handsome publisher’s check, he wrote about a back-up copy of the manuscript of *Lighthouse*: “I read [it] this morning. I realized that it needed very few changes, all of small details.” He added he would start “correcting” it as a matter of urgency.²⁰ *Lighthouse* was then serialized in the *MÉR*, coming out from 15 August to 15 December. The first publication in volume form was in about November, with the copyright date unusually indicated as “29 July 1905”; the text had been slightly revised from the *MÉR*.²¹

Hetzel *fiils* and Verne *fiils* signed a contract in December 1905 covering *Lighthouse* and the seven other manuscripts. It stipulated notably that “Mr. Michel Jules Verne undertakes to carry out the revisions and corrections which may be necessary on each of these volumes” (*BSJV*, 104:18). The seven works duly came out from 1906 to 1914.

In English, the book first appeared as *Kongre, the Wrecker, or, The Lighthouse at the End of the World* in *The Boy’s Own Paper* (October 1914 to September 1915), then in volume form with Sampson Low (1923). Cranstoun Metcalfe’s translation, of “relatively good quality,”²² was praised in the *New York Times* for the “velocity and the variety of [the] narrative.”²³ Surprisingly, however, no substantive book review or study of *Lighthouse* has ever been produced in any language.

20. In several previous letters, Michel had suggested transferring the title “Lighthouse at the End of the World” to the longer manuscript then entitled “The Magallanes: At the End of the World,” as it was “more poetic,” using the title “Looters of Wrecks” (“Pilleurs d’épaves”) or “The Wreckers” (“Les Naufrageurs”) for the shorter work; but Hetzel *fiils* rejected the idea.

21. Dumas, “Les Romans modifies” 5. The differences have not been studied to date, but brief extracts from the *MÉR* version of ch. 6 (transcribed by Dumas) are cited in Riegert. These variants are detailed in the relevant notes of the present edition; they mainly remove repetition.

22. Arthur B. Evans, “A Bibliography of Jules Verne’s English Translations,” *Science Fiction Studies* 32.1 (2005), 105-42. It starts: “Chapter 1. | The Inauguration | The sun was setting behind the hills which bounded the view to the west. The weather was fine. On the other side, over to the east, which to the north-east and east was indistinguishable from the sky, a few tiny clouds reflected the sun’s last rays, soon to be extinguished in the shades of the twilight which lasts for a considerable time in this high latitude of the fifty-fifth degree of the southern hemisphere. | At the moment when the upper rim of the solar disc alone remained visible, a gun rang out from on board the sloop *Santa-Fe*, and the flag of the Argentine Republic, unfolding in the breeze was run up to her peak.”

23. “Jules Verne, Master of the Improbable,” F. Fraser Bond, 4 January 1925, III 21, review of *Their Island Home*, *Castaways of the Flag*, and *Lighthouse*.

The inevitably unfaithful Spanish-American film got poor reviews in 1971, although one critic praised the harsh realism (ten minutes were cut for U.S. cinemas). Set partly at night and with a woman inserted - and raped - Yul Brynner and Kirk Douglas remain the focus of attention as the opposing protagonists.

Thinking about *Lighthouse* has, however, been transformed recently. At a 1978 conference in Cerisy, scholar Piero Gondolo della Riva showed the posthumous works were not really by Jules Verne, for Michel's revisions and additions were substantial, amounting to up to two-thirds of each work. His argument was based on the typescripts of five works (not including *Lighthouse*), previously in the possession of Hetzel's heirs. These were very different from the published versions but conformed to the manuscripts owned by Jean Jules-Verne. Three years later the grandson's estate sold the ninety plus manuscripts to the City of Nantes for six million francs. The Société Jules Verne then published the original, Jules Verne, versions of the five novels (1985-89), with the approval of Nantes in the case of "Storitz."²⁴

Jules's manuscript of *Lighthouse*, which had not been examined closely in the mistaken belief that Michel made few changes, was finally published in 1999.²⁵ It is this version which appears here for the first time in English.

The Two Versions of the Text

We now therefore have access to both versions of the novel, the one entirely by Jules and the one revised by Michel (henceforth: the Michel version), and so can assess their relative literary value.

The general question of the posthumous alterations has generated a great deal of heat in France. Many critics consider the Michel version better in significant respects. Heuré (82) points out that the Jules manuscript is sometimes repetitive and clumsy, although problems remain in both versions. In the article that started off the whole debate, Gondolo della Riva (*Europe*) considers that several of the novels published before 1905 lack action and originality, with too many enumerations and digressions, whereas the posthumous works are rich with ideas, due to Michel's intervention. Martin concurs, opining that "the main interest of the [posthumous] novels comes most often from the son's work" (*Jules Verne* 258). Compère points out that from 1891 Verne had his son, wife, granddaughters, and others

24. Olivier Dumas, "L'Attrape-nigaud de Michel Verne," *BSJV*, 153 (2005), 21-24.

However, the copyright situation has never been clarified. Some of Verne's descendants attempted to prevent the 1995 publication via the courts, but failed (Dumas, *BSJV*, 153). In 2003, however, far-reaching changes in European copyright law meant that all of Jules Verne's works, whether published or not, including *Lighthouse*, were henceforth out of copyright.

25. Stanké then *L'Archipel*, then again in the Gallimard Folio edition (2004).

copy out his manuscripts, and claims that he collaborated extensively with his son.²⁶ He deduces that many of the differences between the manuscripts and the posthumous publications were in fact introduced by Verne himself on intermediate versions that have not survived. Above all, he argues, since Verne always revised extensively on proofs, the posthumous text is closer to his intentions than the manuscript version, which represents a mere “first draft.” A review of the English *Magellania* claims that it reads like an outline rather than a polished book, with little happening for the first hundred pages, and too much telling and not enough showing; but that Michel’s version, in contrast, although reflecting his own personal views, constitutes a vivid, literary novel with comprehensive development of the many ideological crosscurrents.²⁷

However, in a co-authored article of 2000, Gondolo della Riva apparently changes position, now stating that Michel’s “revisions often betray the thinking of the author.”²⁸ Mostly in the *Bulletin* that he himself edits, Dumas has written scores of polemical articles on the posthumous question - “with excessive vehemence,” according to the *Extrapolation* review. He strenuously argues that Michel’s work on the posthumous volumes was duplicitous and morally reprehensible. In the case of *Lighthouse*, he says the son failed to check the typescript against the manuscript, “weakens” the style,²⁹ and that nearly all his changes were for the worse. His position is reflected in his title, “Do You Prefer the True or Fake Jules Verne?”³⁰ Dumas’s arguments have greatly influenced recent debate, especially in the half-dozen popular biographies that came out for the centenary in 2005.

It might be expected that publishers, with access to expert legal advice and their reputations at stake, would have addressed the three-decades-old Jules-Michel question of the posthumous works, if only to reconsider the authorship formula of their books - but such a view overestimates their literary sensibility and speed of reaction.³¹ Apart from those specifically publishing the Jules version, a deafening silence has ensued. Livre de Poche has issued neither edition since 1978; and a few publishers - including one of

26. Daniel Compère, *Jules Verne* (Amiens: Encrage, 1996) 61-62.

27. Brian Taves, “Verne, Jules: *Magellania*,” *Extrapolation*, 43.2, (summer 2002), pp. 232-34.

28. Piero Gondolo della Riva and Jean-Paul Dekiss, “Aperçus biographiques” in *Jules Verne à Dinard* (Dinard: Mairie de Dinard [2000]) 23.

29. *BSJV*, 116, 18; “Le Mystère des romans posthumes,” *Europe* 83 (2005), 203-07.

30. Olivier Dumas, “Préférez-vous le vrai ou le faux Jules Verne?” *BSJV*, 122 (1997), 11-15.

31. The first brave pioneer was Acadian, based in Greater China, who published “*Humbug*, by Jules Verne, Revised by Michel Verne” in 1991.

the English *Lighthouse* - are still continuing to issue the Michel version under Jules Verne's sole name, despite the clear untruth and illegality of such an action.

The Michel controversy is, in sum, still in full flow, in France at least. Most critics have taken on trust Dumas' claim of the literary superiority of Jules's version – but his arguments have often been one-sided and indeed tendentious. Commentary to date has suffered from lack of a detailed comparison of the two texts. This missing evidence will be adduced here for the first time.

Even Dumas admits that the manuscript of *Lighthouse* needs some revision (*BSJV*, 116:19). In addition to the errors of crossing out and the gaps, there are stylistic tics, such as the overuse of sentences beginning with “and,” “and then,” “and indeed,” or “here is.” Some of the paragraph divisions also seem redundant.

Although the text can be considered to read well, in the later chapters Verne may perhaps go too far in drawing up hypotheses in elaborate detail, then repeating them, although often the eventuality never happens. A better balance between creation of anxiety and depiction of gruesome events might sometimes be preferable.

Michel makes few changes in chapters 1-3. The remainder of Verne's text sometimes has inappropriate prepositions, lacks continuity, or contains inconsistencies. Michel corrects factual discrepancies, polishes and shortens sentences, improves flow, and cuts repetition. Despite their number, his changes rarely introduce new material; he attempts, the most often successfully, to render the text more concise and coherent. As an indication, the significant variants in chapter 4, similar to those of the later chapters, will be indicated here in the relevant notes (pp. 00-00).

In later chapters Michel removes Vasquez's tears and appeals to divine aid. He adds an episode of six pages in chapter 13 where Vasquez heroically blows up the schooner's rudder with a cartridge he has invented (p. 00). Finally, he improves the concluding paragraph (p. 00).

In ten previous studies of Jules Verne's manuscripts, I have keenly defended the original versions of the earlier novels, since the involvement of Hetzel *père* often distorted the contents, including the plot and the ideology. But in the case of *Lighthouse*, I consider Michel's interventions different, since they are concerned with consistency, brevity, elegance, and balance, rarely changing the contents. To a large extent, they represent what Jules himself might have done.

In the absolute, we must consider Michel's changes on balance improvements of the book. However, the modern tendency is to restore literary texts to versions before editing by publishers and later generations; and Verne has the moral right for his text to be available. As a result, literary scholars, at least, are obliged to refer to the Jules Verne version. It is hoped

the present edition can contribute to the debate on the merits of the two books.

Characters and Themes

In some ways *Lighthouse* is the writer's *Lost Illusions*. Always a trenchant observer of human society, often mocking humanity's greed and thirst for power, even Verne's earliest works rarely present human endeavor positively, apart from the - quickly exhausted - exploration of new lands. Knowledge for the sake of it, family life, indulgence of the senses, public service, political or social improvement - all values appear at the very least distinctly skew-whiff in Verne. Science always receives short shrift except as a quicker method to transport the characters away from modern civilization. In the later works science has become systematically nefarious; and the pessimism, which had been present since before *Paris in the Twentieth Century* (c. 1863), becomes stronger. After the first great wave of geographical discovery, what is lacking is simply any metaphysical system, any successful transcendence, any vision of what life is about. All Verne's creatures are first cousins to Captain Nemo and Phileas Fogg, unable - or unwilling - to articulate any coherent scheme of things, any overall philosophy. As a result, and according to the definition of modernity as escaping the ideological straitjackets of the nineteenth century - whether social, political, religious, or academic - the French novelist must be considered to verge on the postmodern. Anyone looking for explicit messages in *Lighthouse* will be disappointed.

What the reader finds instead is a suspense thriller crossed with a desert-island and sea novel. Verne usually inserts an occasional comic scene in his dramatic or tragic works, but light relief is entirely lacking here.

While *Lighthouse* has been called as "desolate and . . . harsh as the landscapes it describes" (Jules-Verne 211), most critics have praised its readability and ingenious plotting. Some have argued that the story is slight (Evans 119-20) or that the literary qualities do not reach those of the other works of the period (Dumas, *BSJV*, 116:17). However, others have nothing but praise: Martin lauds "its purity and simplicity," calling it "a very fine novel" ("Préface" 96), and Metcalfe unequivocally defines it as "a little masterpiece."

Those expecting a traditional psychological novel - or a science-fiction one - will, nevertheless, be disappointed. Characters and even action are secondary. Women are totally and irrevocably absent, apart from the true heroine, the sea. Her perfect companion is the lighthouse, a powerful symbol of the impotence of human technology against the savage elements. Against all the bloodshed and evil, the darkness, death, and despair, the beacon brings only a little light: positive action in a fallen world can at best hold back the dark forces for a while.

Almost as a backdrop to the raging natural forces, two tales of suspense run in parallel: Kongre and Carcante's attempts to escape before the authorities return; and Vasquez and Davis's efforts to stop them. The narration identifies successively with the intelligent and far-reaching cogitations of each group and ultimately and contradictorily with both. But heroes and villains are kept apart, in both the chapter structure and the flesh. Only at the very end does the camera pan from attackers to attacked, who meet for the first time at the lighthouse - and in death.

Nevertheless, Verne's four main characters are relatively well-drawn for an adventure story. All are equally determined and energetic, experienced and brave.³²

Argentine Chief Petty Officer Vasquez, without a Christian name, is forty-seven but still hale and hearty, and inspires confidence as head keeper. Having sailed the seven seas with the Navy and volunteered for the Lighthouse, he wrong-headedly tries to convince his fellow keepers their isolation is not frightening. After the massacre, his sole thought is revenge, with regular appeals to his God, an Old-Testament-style one a million miles from Christian ideas of forgiveness or redemption. But God - as distinct from providence - rarely intervenes clearly in the Extraordinary Journeys; and Vasquez, surviving through his own audacity, has to do all His dirty work for Him.

American John Davis, hailing from Mobile, thirty to thirty-five, ex-Navy, first officer in the Merchant Marine, has an iron temperament. Davis and Vasquez are both passionate and efficacious individuals, working perfectly together, Davis's control and laconicism complementing the Argentine's hot-headedness and occasional sentimentality. Although of superior rank, Davis follows rather than leads, presumably because he is younger and not on home ground.³³

Kongre, forty, possesses no other name; it is not even clear whether he is European or Indian; a former captain, his first pirate activities were near the Solomons. With wild features and a thick beard, he is a combinatorial genius like Vasquez, a laconic, efficient doer like Davis, courageous, persistent, and loyal like them both - and a violent sociopath, almost in the Lector league in calculating his own naked advantage. At the end, rather than give in, he proudly chooses the absolute gesture.

32. The following analyses benefit from Claude Lengrand, *Dictionnaire des "Voyages extraordinaires"* (Amiens: Encrege, 1998) 153 and 241-42.

33. Verne's Spanish-speakers are sometimes considered negatively, especially in the early works. But Americans range over the whole spectrum: from the brilliantly polymathic Cyrus Smith of *The Mysterious Island* via the bloodthirsty but sympathetic Civil War veterans of *From the Earth to the Moon*, the devious but generous Altamont in *Hatteras*, or the credulous denizens of *Humbug: The American Way of Life*, to the megalomaniac capitalists Purchasing the North Pole.

Chilean Carcante is thirty-five to forty, of unknown family and origin. Of medium height but sinewy, immensely strong and brave, a faithful deputy and a false heart, he similarly stops at nothing.

The titanic struggle between good and evil, between civilization and its enemies, is in sum presented here in its most basic, stripped-down form. With cold perseverance and great resourcefulness on both sides, *Lighthouse* resembles a game of chess played by Chinese businessmen, endlessly guessing what the opponent might know and doing multivariate probabilistic analysis on the multiply-branching courses of action open to them.

Verne's ultimate wish, of course, is for civilized behavior and convictions to finally beat human savagery. In other works, he poses a similar question, but distributes good and evil differently. In the Robur novels, light and dark mix and fight within the same great mind. In *Twenty Thousand Leagues* the question is simply how to respond when unjustly attacked. This simultaneously moral and practical question is often avoided by the woolly-minded in safe democracies: what to do when confronted with ruthless adversaries - behave like them or uphold liberal standards?

Lighthouse answers that there is no perfect response, that civilized behavior does not win the day, for two out of three keepers die, together with scores of innocent shipwrecked sailors. Turning the other cheek is never even contemplated. Although evil eventually loses all the more, the bleak conclusion is that life is not always fair, there is no universal redemption. But to compensate, Verne's main answer is practical and resounding: you riposte and you seek full revenge and punishment! As a result, there are an unusual number of deaths in this tale (making one wonder what effect it had on the children it was often given to).

With perfect unity of time and place, with fatal wrecks, cruel pirates, and model sailors, *Lighthouse* is the only Extraordinary Journey without a journey. A pagan story of sky, land, and water mixed with wind, wave, and rock, it revels sensually in the tempting cavities, the vertical cliffs, and the climactically tempestuous hurricanes.

In guise of conclusion, it may be best simply to cite Metcalfe's, of eighty years ago: *Lighthouse at the End of the World* stands out through the remoteness of its setting, its creation of dramatic dread, the excitement of its race against time. The rest is pure action, courage, and resourcefulness pitted against ferocity and power of numbers. The greatness of Jules Verne, unparalleled master of the adventure story, is perhaps most apparent in his simplest work.

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