



Editorial

Daniel Compère

By way of introduction to this collective project, I will begin with a personal observation. At different times in the past, I have felt induced to assess the state of scholarly work on Jules Verne. The first time was back in 1973, during the period of the rediscovery of Verne's œuvre, then on other occasions under different circumstances in 1976, 2001, 2005, and most recently in October 2007.[1] Having thus produced several times a synthesis of the research on Verne, and reflecting on the evolution of these assessments, I am more and more struck by three tendencies.

First, *diversity*: publications on Verne cover every subject imaginable, and give the impression that the field is scattered. For a new reader, and depending on the work that he may fall upon (*fall* – that's the word!), he or she may well believe that Verne's œuvre is concerned chiefly with technologies, medicine, psychiatry, etc. Fortunately, there are also genuinely literary investigations, collections of primary documents, etc.

Next, *confusion*: in these publications there is often a confusion between the novel and reality (Verne is reproached for getting something factually wrong when the matter really bears on the field of imagination) and a confusion of the œuvre and its author. Let me say this one more time: the writer Jules Verne who picks up his pen and sits down at his desk before a sheet of paper cannot be mistaken for the narrator who within a novel tells the story and who belongs only therefore to the domain of fiction. To these confusions I add another of increasing importance: the great muddle of different versions of the texts. (I leave aside here the question of manuscripts and posthumous novels.) Too often, no indication is given as to which version of the text is in question, even though we know that there are multiple versions of some of the novels. For example, if one writes the preface to a re-edition of *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, is it the first edition of 1864 or the second edition of 1867, to which several chapters were added?

Finally, *ignorance*: despite the bibliographies, documentary sources, and diverse publications, I observe in a certain number of studies an ignorance of earlier work – i.e., those who publish an article on a subject that they believe to have discovered when it had already been dealt with years before. In this respect 2005, with its avalanche of publications, reveals a deplorable tendency that one might compare to that of a traveler advancing on a terrain with neither maps nor compass...

My wish is that *Verniana* may become the counter-measure to these tendencies by offering studies of Verne that will allow us to return to serious efforts based on a sound methodology and critical awareness. The method of the journal offers a guarantee of this in its Editorial Board composed of well-known Verne specialists. They are charged with the responsibility of examining articles submitted for publication and alerting the author, if need be – and in complete camaraderie – to points on which the article that might be improved.

I am persuaded that this project – certainly an ambitious one – will in time bring an end to the deficiencies of Verne research mentioned above. The diversity of studies will no longer lead to a scattering effect, but to an enriching of the field by the multiplication of points of view. The

confusions will disappear because each of the authors will be required to stipulate the evidence on which his or her work stands. Ignorance will disappear from a mosaic of studies that plainly advances our understanding of Verne's rich, complex, and compelling œuvre.

Verniana is a truly international journal. Articles will be published in multiple languages, English and French at first, perhaps others later on. Articles will not be translated but will be accompanied by abstracts in each language of the journal. Note also that, unlike some journals, *Verniana* has no predetermined dates of publication. Instead, each article will be published individually in the journal's format and all articles posted online in a year will form a single volume. Volume 1 of *Verniana* will comprise contributions to the journal throughout 2008.

Moreover – and this must be emphasized – *Verniana* is a journal of the 21st century, freely accessible to every Internet user. In a word, a journal worthy of Jules Verne!

I will add one final remark, a note of sadness at the moment when *Verniana* is released. Zvi Har'El, who conceived of the journal and was its first architect, passed away a few days before its scheduled release date. It was his wish that the journal should appear on 8 February 2008, the 180th anniversary of the birth of Jules Verne. The editorial team that formed around him has since taken on the responsibility of bringing the journal into being not only to realize this fine project but also as a tribute to the colleague who first launched the idea.

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(Translated by Terry Harpold)

NOTES

1. Here are the references: "La Vernologie" in *Les Cahiers du CURSA* (University of Amiens), n°1, March 1974; *Le Développement des études sur Jules Verne*, written with François Raymond (Paris: Lettres modernes, coll. "Archives", 1976); "Il reste encore beaucoup à faire..." in *Revue Jules Verne*, n°12, 2nd sem. 2001; "Jules Verne : bilan d'un anniversaire" in *Romantisme*, n°131, 1st trim. 2006; "Jules Verne : bilan et perspective," a lecture given 26 October 2007 at the Maison Jules Verne (Amiens) in a series of meetings organized by the University of Picardie.