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Jules Verne

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anomaly in an otherwise homogeneous masculine and human world, but part and parcel of an often difficult but always diverse future. And it is precisely through the creation of such futures that James Tiptree Jr has earned an enduring place in the sf canon.

See also: **Isaac Asimov, Greg Bear, Alfred Bester, Leigh Brackett, Octavia Butler, Samuel R. Delany, Philip K. Dick, William Gibson, Donna J. Haraway, Robert A. Heinlein, Frank Herbert, Nalo Hopkinson, L. Ron Hubbard, Gwyneth Jones, Ursula K. Le Guin, C.L. Moore, Joanna Russ, Mary Shelley, Neal Stephenson, Sheri S. Tepper, and Gene Wolfe**

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JULES [GABRIEL] VERNE (1828–1905)

French novelist, short-story writer, and dramatist.

Often called the "Father of Science Fiction," Jules Verne invented and popularized an early brand of hard sf called the *extraordinary voyage*. His series of more than 60 novels combine the epic qualities of the imaginary voyage *à la* Lucian with a concern for scientific verisimilitude and didacticism *à la* Kepler. They feature adventure-filled quests to the ends of the Earth and beyond, where the heroes make use of scientific knowledge and the latest technology to explore "known and unknown worlds" (the subtitle for the series). Expertly marketed by his publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel, Verne's novels became bestsellers in France and around the world. Today he is ranked as the third most-translated author of all time, according to UNESCO's *Index Translationum*.

Verne's life and works can be divided into four periods: 1828–62 (before Hetzel), 1863–86 (early novels), 1887–1905 (later novels), and 1905–19 (posthumous works). Born and raised in Nantes, Verne was sent by his father in 1848 to study law in Paris, but he fell in love with the theater, writing a number of plays and serving as the secretary of the Théâtre Lyrique in 1852. He also published articles on scientific topics and a few short stories, including "A Voyage in a Balloon" (1851) and "Master Zacharius" (1854). Verne's early writings display many of the narrative traits that will later characterize his extraordinary voyages: melodramatic plot twists, quick-witted dialogue, attention to historical detail, and a tone that oscillates between the Positivist and the Romantic.

In 1857, unable to make a living from his writing, Verne became a stockbroker at the Bourse de Paris. He spent his spare time at the Bibliothèque Nationale reading, collecting scientific news items and copying them onto note cards, and dreaming of a new kind of novel that would combine both science and fiction. In September 1862 Verne submitted to Hetzel a story about an exciting aerial trek across Africa in a high-tech balloon. Hetzel immediately accepted the novel for publication. Following the success of *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1863), Hetzel then offered Verne a long-term contract for more novels of the same type. Verne quit his job at the Bourse, saying "My friends, I bid you adieu ... I've just written a novel in a new style, truly my own. If it succeeds, it will be a gold mine" (Evans 1988: 21). And a gold mine it would prove to be, not only for Verne and his publisher but also for world literature, as Verne's extraordinary voyages would give birth to a new literary genre.

Verne's historic meeting with Hetzel began his most creative period, which would continue until the latter's death in 1886. Hetzel rejected his next novel, the futuristic/dystopian *Paris in the 20th Century*, but Verne went on to write *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864), a novel that would become one of his most popular. After deciphering a cryptogram, Professor Lidenbrock, accompanied by his reluctant nephew, Axel, and a resourceful guide named Hans, journey to an extinct volcano in Iceland, descend into the Earth, and discover a vast underground world. The sources for the story include then-popular "hollow Earth" theories as well as growing public interest in geology, paleontology, and the new ideas of Darwin. Narrated in the first person by the impressionable young Axel, the novel's discursive structure maintains a balance between Lidenbrock's detailed scientific exposés and his nephew's poetic *rêveries*. This delicate intertwining of fact with fantasy, mathematics

with myth, and didacticism with daydreaming will constitute the narrative core of many of Verne's most successful extraordinary voyages.

Verne's 1865 *From the Earth to the Moon* and its sequel *Around the Moon* (1870) comprise the first "realistic" (scientifically plausible) manned lunar voyage in Western literature. Breaking with the long tradition of utopian imaginary voyages to the moon, Verne based his tale on modern astronomy and astrophysics. Many of Verne's technical extrapolations would prove true 100 years later during America's Apollo program. If Verne's principal error was to launch his "space-bullet" using a gigantic cannon, such a choice was a logical extension of the other major focus of these novels: humorous satire of Yankees and their post-Civil War weapons technology.

In 1866 Verne's first "polar quest" novel appeared, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, which chronicles a danger-filled voyage to the North Pole and recalls Sir John Franklin's real-life Arctic expedition 20 years earlier. *The Children of Captain Grant* (1867) details an around-the-world search for a castaway (a recurrent topos in Verne's *oeuvre*). That same year Verne purchased his first yacht and, ensconced in the ship's cabin with its portable library, he soon completed a novel about oceanography that would be published as *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1869).

The sheer imaginative power of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, the brooding and enigmatic genius of Nemo, and the "dream machine" character of the *Nautilus* itself (named after Fulton's experimental craft of 1797) have made it the most memorable of all Verne's extraordinary voyages. Verne originally wanted Nemo to be a Pole and his implacable hatred to be directed against the Russian czar (a direct reference to the bloody Russian suppression of Poland in 1863). But Hetzel was concerned about the possible political ramifications and the likelihood of the book being banned in Russia. Both author and publisher were adamant but eventually reached a compromise. It was decided that Nemo's identity and motives would remain intriguingly mysterious – at least until the novel's sequel, Verne's robinsonade *The Mysterious Island* (1874).

In 1872 Verne published his most commercially successful novel, *Around the World in 80 Days*. Among other sources for this circumnavigation novel was Edgar Allan Poe's "Three Sundays in a Week" (1850). On a wager, the imperturbable Englishman Phileas Fogg and his servant Passepartout set out to circle the globe in 80 days, experiencing along the way many adventures ranging from the rescue of an Indian princess to a shoot-out in the Old West. The

surprise ending was rendered all the more effective in its initial published format, a suspense-filled weekly serial in the Parisian newspaper *Le Temps*. Published in volume, the novel quickly set new sales records both in France and abroad, and an extravagant stage adaptation of the work (written by Verne and Adolphe D'Ennery) proved extremely successful, with more than 2,000 performances between 1874 and 1900.

Verne published a curious novel in 1879 called *The Begum's Millions*, which, when viewed in retrospect, seems to foreshadow certain changes in the author's attitudes to science and human values after 1886. The only utopia/dystopia in Verne's fiction, it tells the story of two scientists – Dr Sarrasin of France and Herr Schultze of Germany – who receive a huge inheritance from a long-lost relative who was the widow (begum) of a rich Indian rajah. Each decides to build the city of his dreams: Sarrasin a modern utopia built on the principles of hygiene and Schultze a fortress-like factory to produce high-tech armaments. A kind of Nietzschean megalomaniac, Schultze is Verne's first truly evil scientist. Although his murderous schemes are defeated in the end by a providential *deus ex machina*, he expresses for the first time in Verne's *oeuvre* the idea that personal power generated by scientific knowledge can breed moral corruption.

Verne's novels from 1886 to 1905, although varied, often reflect this change of tone. They show a slow metamorphosis away from his earlier Saint-Simonian optimism toward an outlook that is more often pessimistic, cynical, and anti-progress. This contrast can especially be seen in those later novels that include characters from, and/or continue the plot from, earlier works, such as *Topsy-Turvy* (1889) and *Master of the World* (1904). These sequels invariably contain some form of *reversal* when compared to their prequels. In *Topsy-Turvy*, for example, Barbicane and the other ballistics engineers of Verne's moon novels, indifferent to the catastrophic environmental damage that would result, now seek to alter the angle of the Earth's axis in order to melt the polar ice cap and uncover vast mineral wealth. The once-heroic Robur of *Robur the Conqueror* (1886) becomes, in *Master of the World*, a demented psychopath who threatens global terrorism with his high-tech, Transformer-like vehicle called *The Terror*. In both novels, only the intervention of providence saves the day.

Many other post-1886 novels target social and environmental issues: the cruel oppression of the Québécois in *Family without a Name* (1889), the intolerable living conditions in orphanages in *Foundling Mick* (1893), the dire effects of colonial imperialism on Polynesian island cultures in *Propeller Island* (1895), the dangers of science used

for military purposes in *Facing the Flag* (1896), the overhunting of whales in *The Ice Sphinx* (1897), and a Dreyfus-like case of judicial error in *The Kip Brothers* (1902), among others.

With a drawer full of nearly completed manuscripts in his desk, Verne died in March 1905; two years later a sculpture depicting the author rising from his tomb and engraved with the words "Towards immortality and eternal youth" was placed over his grave. In 1926 the American-based publisher **Hugo Gernsback** would use a representation of Verne's tomb as a logo for his first magazine of "scientifiction," *Amazing Stories*.

From 1905 to 1919 Verne's son, Michel, arranged for the publication of the remaining manuscripts: eight novels and several short stories. Since the late 1970s these posthumous works have been the topic of great controversy among Verne scholars. On close inspection, it was learned that Michel's hand in their composition was much greater than had been supposed. The debate about their authenticity continues to this day.

During the century since his death, Verne has become a cultural icon for sf, and the general public now remembers him as much for movies and theme-park rides as for his novels. From Georges Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) to the more recent 3-D blockbuster *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (Brevig 2008), Verne is arguably "the best dead writer Hollywood has ever had" (*Time* 1960). Over 300 full-length movies and TV shows have adapted Verne's works, with versions derived from *Around the World in 80 Days* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* leading the way (Taves 2005: 1).

Jules Verne's reputation within the French literary establishment and among English-language scholars has evolved during the past few decades. In France, Verne's *oeuvre* appears to have finally shed its stigma as paraliterature. For some Anglo-American critics of sf, however, Verne's status as one of the originators of this genre seems to be increasingly eclipsed by that of **Mary Shelley** and/or Hugo Gernsback. Although sf can be viewed as the convergence of many different narrative traditions, it was Verne's extraordinary voyages that established the first successful "institutional 'landing point' and ideological model" (Angenot 1978: 64) for the genre. By the early twentieth century, before the term existed in its current sense, Jules Verne was synonymous with sf.

See also: **Samuel R. Delany, Hugo Gernsback, Stanisław Lem, Mary Shelley, Olaf Stapledon, Darko Suvin, and H.G. Wells**

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H[ERBERT] G[EORGE] WELLS (1866–1946)

British novelist, essayist, and screenwriter.

If anyone can claim to be the founding father of modern sf it is H.G. Wells. He brought to the scientific romance a haunted, Gothic imagination reminiscent of **Mary Shelley** and Edgar Allan Poe, together with a gift for technological anticipation that outstripped **Jules Verne**'s. He invented such themes as time travel, interplanetary warfare, and the totalitarian future city, and his Martians in *The War of the Worlds* (1898) were the first of the "bug-eyed monsters" – sinister and biologically plausible aliens. Unsurpassed in the genre as a storyteller, he was also a pioneer of political sf, drawing on utopian speculation and philosophical satire. His later career was that of a