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The English Translations of Jules Verne's *Sans dessus dessous*

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Abstract

There exist four different English translations for Jules Verne's *Sans dessus dessous* (1889). The first, by an anonymous translator, was published with the title *Barbican and Company* in the British periodical *The Boy's Own Paper* from October 1889 to September 1890. It was then published as a book by Sampson Low in December 1890 with the revised title *The Purchase of the North Pole*. The first American edition of this novel was also published in 1890 in New York by J.S. Ogilvie. It featured a different but also anonymous translation and a title that attempted to be more faithful to Verne's: *Topsy-Turvy*. There are two modern English-language versions of this work. An abridged and updated version of the Sampson Low translation later reappeared in 1966 in the "Fitzroy Edition" published in London by Arco; it too was titled *The Purchase of the North Pole* and was edited by I.O. Evans. And in 2012 a new translation of this novel was published in London by the Hesperus Press, carrying a title a bit closer to Verne's, *The Earth Turned Upside Down*; it was translated by Sophie Lewis. In the following comparative analysis, all four translations of Verne's novel are examined and evaluated according to their completeness, accuracy, and style.

Résumé

Le roman *Sans dessus dessous* de Jules Verne (1889) existe en quatre traductions anglaises différentes. La première, par un traducteur anonyme, a été publiée à Londres en feuilleton dans *The Boy's Own Paper* (Oct. 1889-Sept. 1890) et portait le titre de *Barbican and Company*. Cette traduction a été ensuite publiée en livre par Sampson Low en Décembre 1890 mais avec le titre *The Purchase of the North Pole*. La deuxième traduction de ce roman de Verne a aussi paru en 1890 mais à New York, publiée par la maison d'édition américaine J.S. Ogilvie et avec un titre un peu plus proche de celui de Verne : *Topsy-Turvy*. Il existe aussi deux traductions modernes de ce roman. Une version abrégée et modifiée de la traduction de Sampson Low a été publiée à Londres par Arco en 1966 dans la "Fitzroy Edition" ; elle portait le même titre *The Purchase of the North Pole* mais a été éditée par I.O. Evans. Et en 2012, une nouvelle traduction anglaise de ce roman a paru à Londres chez Hesperus Press avec le titre révisé et plus vernien de *The Earth Turned Upside Down* ; cette traduction est due à Sophie Lewis. Dans l'analyse comparative suivante, les quatre traductions du roman de Verne sont examinées et évaluées en fonction de leur exhaustivité, leur exactitude, et leur style.

Note: This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the North American Jules Verne Society (NAJVS) in Toronto, Canada on June 10, 2017. It seeks to follow in the footsteps of the pioneering work of the late Walter James Miller and his analyses of the (generally very poor) English translations of Jules Verne's *Voyages extraordinaires* as well as to add to a growing number of contemporary studies on the same topic by Verne scholars such as William Butcher and Kieran M. O'Driscoll. [1]

Before I evaluate the four English-language translations of Verne's 1889 novel *Sans dessus dessous*, it is necessary to say a word or two about the French title. Verne has taken the common French phrase "sens dessus dessous"—spelled S-E-N-S (an expression which means: "turned upside down" or "in total disorder")—and changed it to "sans" spelled S-A-N-S (now meaning: "without a top or bottom"). The second is an archaic variant of the first, dating back to 17th century or before. It was actually Verne's publisher Louis-Jules Hetzel who suggested this title change to Verne in November 1888. [2] Up until that moment, Verne had been referring to his manuscript most often as *Le*

1 See especially Miller's seminal essay "Jules Verne in America" (1966) and his "As Verne Smiles" (2008–2009). See also William Butcher's "Journey Without End: On Translating Verne" (1994), Kieran O'Driscoll's "Around the World in Eighty Gays" (2009) and his *Retranslation Through the Centuries: Jules Verne in English* (2011), as well as my own "Jules Verne's English Translations" (2005), "The English Editions of *Five Weeks in a Balloon*" (2013–2014), and "The English Translations of Jules Verne's *Le Château des Carpathes*" (2016–2017).

2 As Louis-Jules Hetzel wrote in his letter to Verne dated November 21, 1888:

Vous allez dire que je suis bien embêtant ... au sujet des titres, mais *le Monde renversé* ne me va pas ; j'ai tourné le mélémélonite dans tous les sens pour en faire un titre et je n'ai pu aboutir à rien. Ne hurlez pas ! Que diriez-vous de cela :

Sans dessus dessous

Remarquez bien que je n'écris pas : *Sens dessus dessous*, parce qu'il ne s'agit pas de mettre le pôle Nord à la place du pôle Sud, et vice-versa, mais bien de le tripatouiller en grand ...

[You're going to say that I'm being annoying on the topic of titles, but I don't care for *The World Inverted*, and I've turned the word "mélémélonite" around in every way to create a title but I haven't come up with anything. Don't scream! What would you say to the following:

With No Top or Bottom

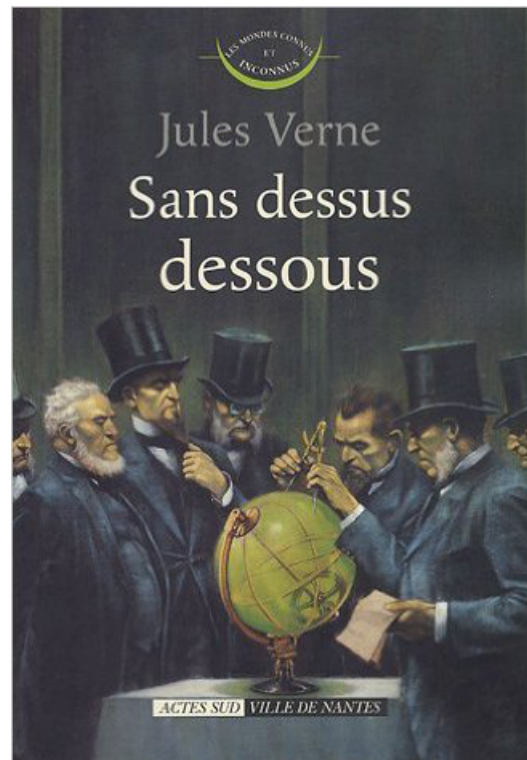
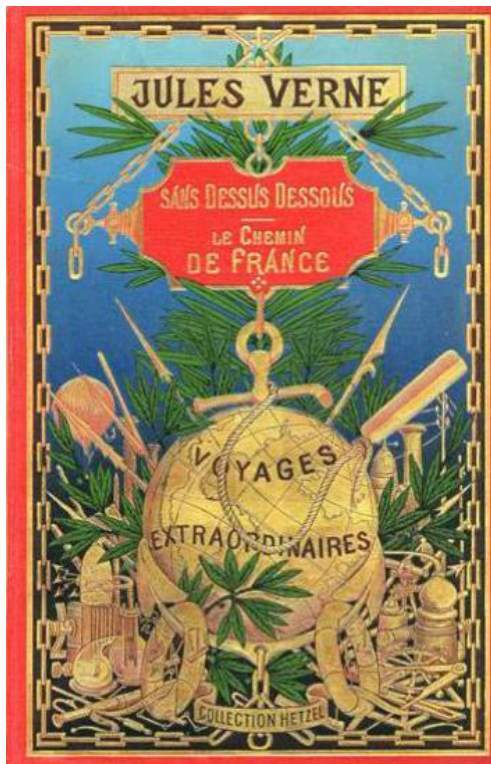
Notice that I'm not writing *Turned Upside Down*, because the story does not put the North Pole at the place of the South Pole and vice versa, but rather just fiddles with it on a large scale ...] (Dumas, 91)

And Verne replied to his editor's suggestion, saying:

Va pour *Sans dessus dessous*, mais écrit comme cela. Je connaissais le *sens* et le *cens*, mais il faut s'en tenir à *Sans*, qui me paraît meilleur et est adapté dans le langage courant.

[Let's go with *Sans dessus dessous*, written like that. I knew the versions using *sens* and *cens*, but we need to stick with *Sans* which seems to me much better and is used in modern speech.] (Dumas, 93)

Redressement d'axe ("the straightening of the axis") or *Le Monde renversé* ("the world inverted")—the latter a very fitting title for a novel that subverts the heroism of Impey Barbicane and his Baltimore Gun Club. Hetzel *fil*s recommended this change for two reasons: first, because it added a unique twist to the title and, second, in the plot of the story itself, "the North Pole was not taking the place of the South Pole and vice-versa" (Dumas et al. 91). In other words, the Earth was *not* being portrayed as doing a total flip-flop, but as only being tipped a bit further on its axis in order to melt the Earth's polar icecap and open up access to the vast coal deposits and other minerals believed to be located there.



In my ensuing remarks about the English translations of this novel, I will identify them as follows:

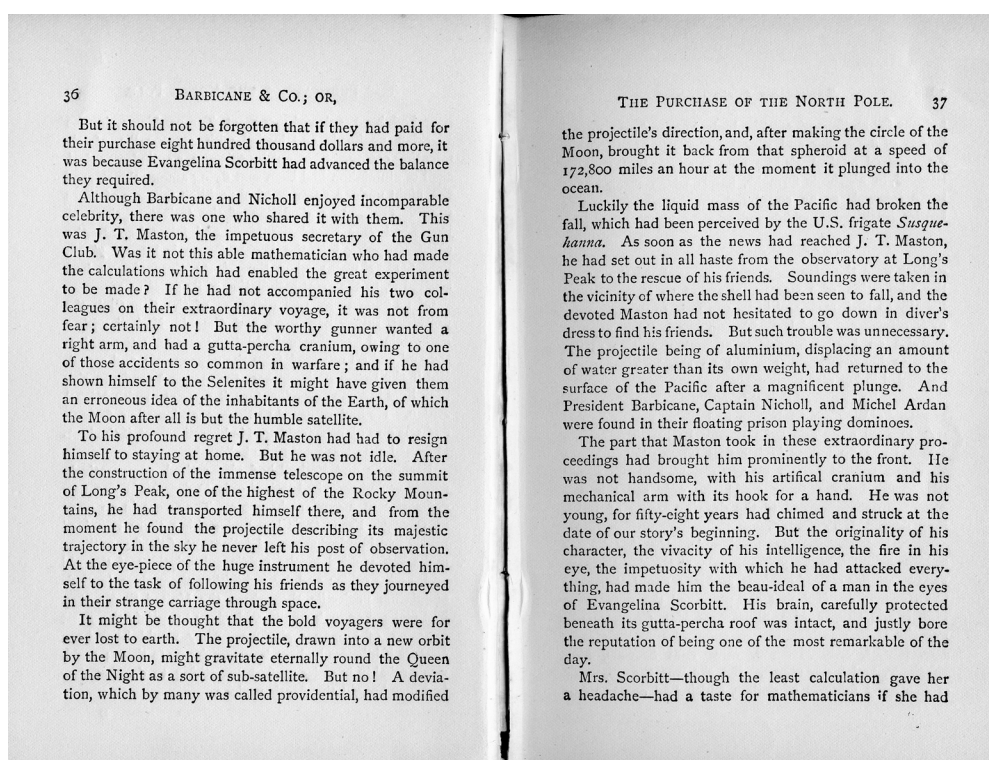
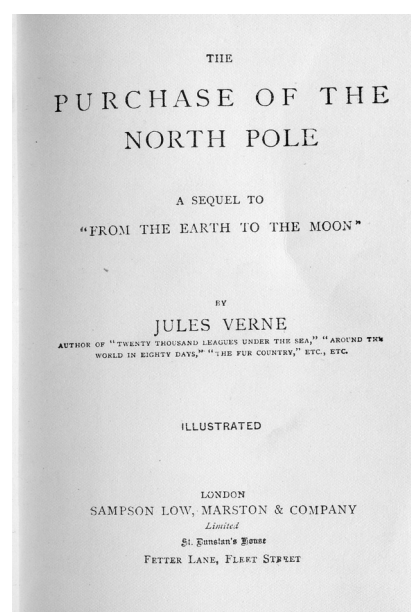
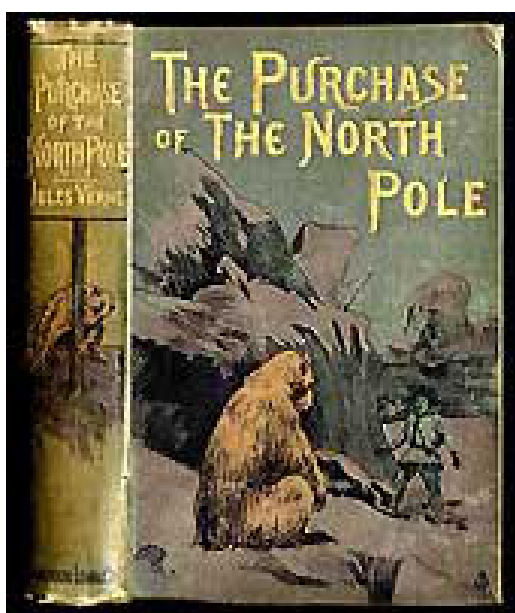
(SL) *The Purchase of the North Pole*. Anonymous translator, London: Sampson Low, 1890.

(OG) *Topsy-Turvy*. Anonymous translator, New York: J.S. Ogilvie, 1890.

(FE) *The Purchase of the North Pole*. Translated and edited by I.O. Evans, "Fitzroy Edition," London: Arco, 1966.

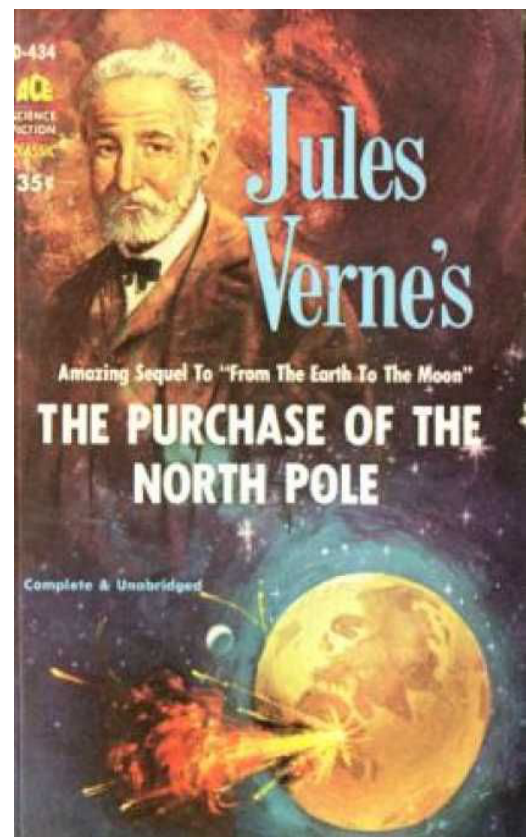
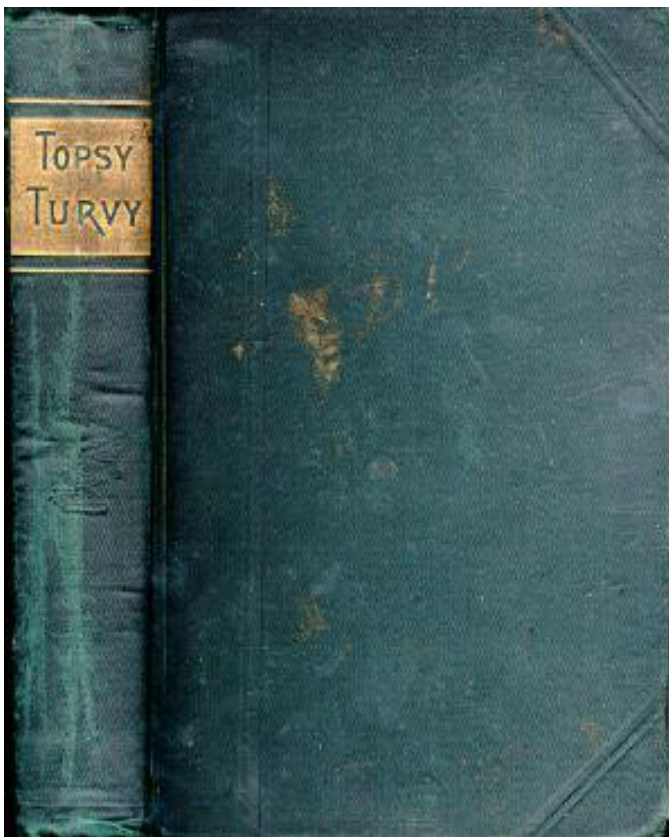
(HP) *The Earth Turned Upside Down*. Translated by Sophie Lewis, London: Hesperus Press, 2012.

As explained in the Taves/Michaluk *Jules Verne Encyclopedia* (174–175), the first English-language version of this work, titled *Barbican and Company*, was published in England in *The Boy's Own Paper* from October 1889 to September 1890. This anonymous translation was then published as a book by the British firm Sampson Low in December 1890. The translator did not attempt to duplicate the original French title, choosing instead to paraphrase it as *The Purchase of the North Pole*. The many subsequent reprints of this translation—including the one in the popular 1911 series the *Works of Jules Verne* edited by Charles Horne and published by Vincent Parke and Company of New York—used this same title.

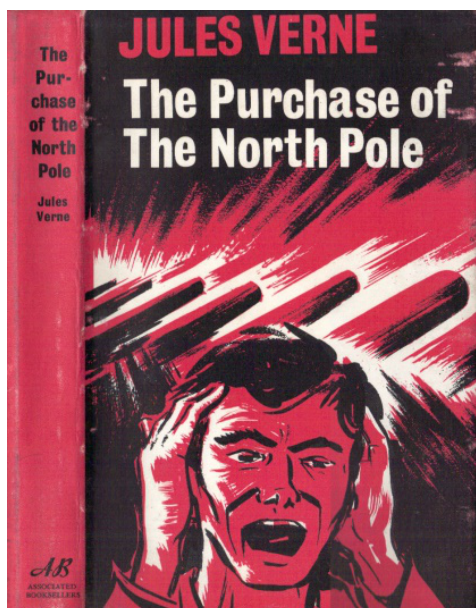


Incidentally, there are two additional curiosities in this early Sampson Low edition: 1) The title page indicates that the novel is “A Sequel to *From the Earth to the Moon*,” and 2) On all the even-page headers, one can see the original title of this translation—*Barbican & Co.*—which had appeared earlier in the *Boy's Own Paper*.

In addition to this early British translation, the first American edition of this novel was published in 1890 in New York by J.S. Ogilvie. Offering a different but also anonymous translation, it tried to be more faithful to Verne's original French title, calling it *Topsy-Turvy*. Interestingly, the paperback reprint of this particular translation, published in New York by Ace in 1960, reverted back to the title of *The Purchase of the North Pole*.



Finally, there are two modern translations of this Verne novel. The prolific British translator of Verne, I.O. Evans (no relation), updated the Sampson Low translation in 1966, publishing it in his “Fitzroy Edition” series by Arco, and choosing to keep the same title *The Purchase of the North Pole*. And in 2012, a new translation by Sophie Lewis was published by the Hesperus Press in London, carrying the more Vernian title of *The Earth Turned Upside Down*.



As I have done in my previous studies of Verne's English translations, I will focus on three basic criteria: completeness, accuracy, and style. In addition to looking at each book's "macro" structure—its title, number of chapters, author footnotes, illustrations, etc.—I will also do a more detailed "micro" analysis of the translated texts by examining selected passages line-by-line and comparing them with Verne's original French versions as published in the 1889 Hetzel in-octavo edition.

In checking for their completeness, let us begin by looking at the number of chapters in all four translations. Verne's original novel had 21, and all the translations have 21 except the Sampson Low edition, which has 20. But a closer inspection reveals that Verne's 21st chapter is extremely brief—a total of three short paragraphs. In the Sampson Low translation, these paragraphs were simply added to the end of chapter 20 with virtually no loss of content (except, of course, for the 21st chapter title which no longer exists).

Speaking of chapter titles, there seems to be a good bit of variation in them across the four translations. For example:

(Verne) Chapitre I - Où la « North Polar Practical Association » lance un document à travers les deux mondes

(SL) Chapter I - The North Polar Practical Association

(OG) Chapter I - In Which the North Polar Practical Association Rushes a Document Across Two Worlds

(FE) Chapter I - The North Polar Practical Association

(HP) Chapter I - In Which the "North Polar Practical Association" Sends Out a Communiqué to Both East and West

(Verne) Chapitre IX - Dans lequel on sent apparaître un *Deus ex machina* d'origine française

(SL) Chapter IX - Sulphuric Alcide [referring to a fictional character in the novel, Alcide Pierdeux]

(OG) Chapter IX - In Which Appears the French Gentleman to Whom We Referred at the Beginning of this Truthful Story

(FE) Chapter IX - Sulphuric Alcide

(HP) Chapter IX - In Which We Sense the Approach of a *Deus Ex Machina* Made in France

(Verne) Chapitre XVI - Dans lequel le chœur des mécontents va *crescendo et rinforzando*

(SL) Chapter XVI - The Chorus of Terror

(OG) Chapter XVI - In Which a Crowd of Dissatisfied People Break Into the Cell of J.T. Maston

(FE) Chapter XVI - The Chorus of Terror

(HP) Chapter XVI - In Which the Chorus of Unhappy People Both Crescendoes and Rinforzandoes

(Verne) Chapitre XXI - Très court, mais tout à fait rassurant pour l'avenir du Monde

(SL) [does not exist; the two paragraphs are included at the end of chapter XX instead]

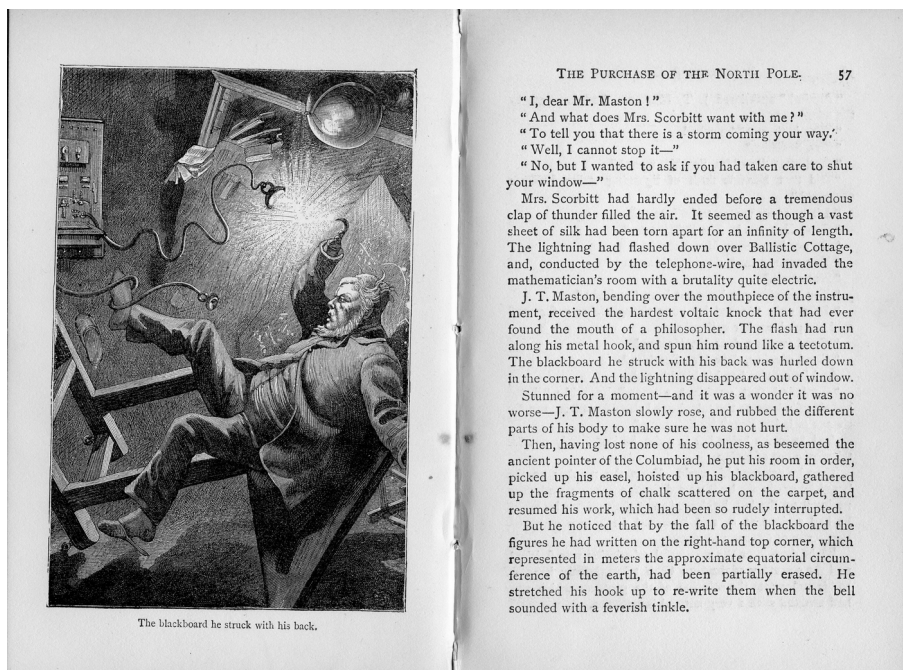
(OG) Chapter XXI - Very Short, Since Enough has been Said to Make the World's Population Feel Perfectly Sure Again

(FE) Chapter XXI - Short but Reassuring

(HP) Chapter XXI - Very Short but Entirely Reassuring as to the Future of our Planet

With the exception of the missing 21st chapter title, the translation of the chapter titles of the Sampson Low edition and the nearly identical I.O. Evans's "Fitzroy Edition" edition (largely based on the Sampson Low) are significantly different from Verne's. The most consistently accurate are the chapter headings found in the Sophie Lewis translation published by the Hesperus Press.

In terms of how many of the original illustrations are included, the competition among these English translations is not even close. Only the Sampson Low edition is illustrated and includes 31 of the original 36 illustrations by George Roux which first appeared in the luxury in-octavo Hetzel editions. The other three translations do not feature any in-text illustrations at all.



THE PURCHASE OF THE NORTH POLE. 57

"I, dear Mr. Maston!"
 "And what does Mrs. Scorbitt want with me?"
 "To tell you that there is a storm coming your way."
 "Well, I cannot stop it—"
 "No, but I wanted to ask if you had taken care to shut your window—"

Mrs. Scorbitt had hardly ended before a tremendous clap of thunder filled the air. It seemed as though a vast sheet of silk had been torn apart for an infinity of length. The lightning had flashed down over Ballistic Cottage, and, conducted by the telephone-wire, had invaded the mathematician's room with a brutality quite electric.

J. T. Maston, bending over the mouthpiece of the instrument, received the hardest voltaic knock that had ever found the mouth of a philosopher. The flash had run along his metal hook, and spun him round like a tectotum. The blackboard he struck with his back was hurled down in the corner. And the lightning disappeared out of window.

Stunned for a moment—and it was a wonder it was no worse—J. T. Maston slowly rose, and rubbed the different parts of his body to make sure he was not hurt.

Then, having lost none of his coolness, as becometh the ancient pointer of the Columbiad, he put his room in order, picked up his easel, hoisted up his blackboard, gathered up the fragments of chalk scattered on the carpet, and resumed his work, which had been so rudely interrupted.

But he noticed that by the fall of the blackboard the figures he had written on the right-hand top corner, which represented in meters the approximate equatorial circumference of the earth, had been partially erased. He stretched his hook up to re-write them when the bell sounded with a feverish tinkle.

One fundamental aspect of Verne's novels is their ubiquitous didacticism. And some of his pedagogical explanations can go on for pages at a time. It is not surprising, therefore, that these passages were the ones most often targeted by English-language translators looking to abridge Verne's prose. And they did so either by chopping out such passages entirely, by paraphrasing them, or by shrinking them down to a pale shadow of what they once were. The following is an example of a lengthy pedagogical passage in *Sans dessus dessous*, a speech by Barbicane outlining the history of Arctic exploration:

« En 1845, reprit Barbicane, l'anglais Sir John Franklin, dans un troisième voyage avec l'*Erebus* et le *Terror*, dont l'objectif est de s'élever jusqu'au Pôle, s'enfonce à travers les parages septentrionaux, et on n'entend plus parler de lui.

« En 1854, l'Américain Kane et son lieutenant Morton s'élancent à la recherche de Sir John Franklin. et, s'ils revinrent de leur expédition, leur navire *Advance* ne revint pas.

« En 1859, l'anglais Mac Clintock découvre un document duquel il appert qu'il ne reste pas un survivant de la campagne de l'*Erebus* et du *Terror*.

« En 1860, l'Américain Hayes quitte Boston sur le schooner *United-States*, dépasse le quatre-vingt-unième parallèle, et revient en 1862, sans avoir pu s'élever plus haut, malgré les héroïques efforts de ses compagnons.

« En 1869, les capitaines Koldervey et Hegeman, Allemands tous deux, partent de Bremerhaven, sur la *Hansa* et la *Germania*. La *Hansa*, écrasée par les glaces, sombre un peu au-dessous du soixante et onzième degré de latitude, et l'équipage ne doit son salut qu'à ses chaloupes qui lui permettent de regagner le littoral du Groënland. Quant à la *Germania*, plus heureuse, elle rentre au port de Bremerhaven, mais elle n'avait pu dépasser le soixante-dix-septième parallèle.

« En 1871, le capitaine Hall s'embarque à New-York sur le steamer *Polaris*. Quatre mois après, pendant un pénible hivernage, ce courageux marin succombe aux fatigues. Un an plus tard, le

Polaris, entraîné par les icebergs, sans s'être élevé au quatre-vingt-deuxième degré de latitude, est brisé au milieu des banquises en dérive. Dix-huit hommes de son bord, débarqués sous les ordres du lieutenant Tyson, ne parviennent à regagner le continent qu'en s'abandonnant sur un radeau de glace aux courants de la mer arctique, et jamais on n'a retrouvé les treize hommes perdus avec le *Polaris*.

« En 1875, l'Anglais Nares quitte Portsmouth avec l'*Alerte* et la *Découverte*. C'est dans cette campagne mémorable, où les équipages établirent leurs quartiers d'hiver entre le quatre-vingt-deuxième et le quatre-vingt-troisième parallèle, que le capitaine Markham, après s'être avancé dans la direction du nord, s'arrête à quatre cents milles seulement du pôle arctique, dont personne ne s'était autant rapproché avant lui.

« En 1879, notre grand citoyen Gordon Bennett... »

Ici trois hurrahs, poussés à pleine poitrine, acclamèrent le nom du "grand citoyen", le directeur du *New-York-Herald*.

« ...arme la *Jeannette* qu'il confie au commandant De Long, appartenant à une famille d'origine française. La *Jeannette* part de San Francisco avec trente-trois hommes, franchit le détroit de Behring, est prise dans les glaces à la hauteur de l'île Herald, sombre à la hauteur de l'île Bennett, à peu près sur le soixante-dix-septième parallèle. Ses hommes n'ont plus qu'une ressource: c'est de se diriger vers le sud avec les canots qu'ils ont sauvés ou à la surface des icefields. La misère les décime. De Long meurt en octobre. Nombre de ses compagnons sont frappés comme lui, et douze seulement reviennent de cette expédition.

« Enfin, en 1881, l'Américain Greely quitte le port Saint-Jean de Terre-Neuve avec le steamer *Proteus*, afin d'aller établir une station à la baie de lady-Franklin, sur la terre de Grant, un peu au-dessous du quatre-vingt-deuxième degré. En cet endroit est fondé le fort Conger. De là, les hardis hiverneurs se portent vers l'ouest et vers le nord de la baie. Le lieutenant Lockwood et son compagnon Brainard, en mai 1882, s'élèvent jusqu'à quatre-vingt-trois degrés trente-cinq minutes, dépassant le capitaine Markham de quelques milles.

« C'est le point extrême jusqu'à ce jour ! C'est l'Ultima Thule de la cartographie circumpolaire ! »

Ici, nouveaux hurrahs, panachés des hips réglementaires, en l'honneur des découvreurs américains.

« Mais, reprit le président Barbicane, la campagne devait mal finir. Le *Proteus* sombre. Ils sont là vingt-quatre colons arctiques, voués à des misères épouvantables. Le docteur Pavy, un Français, et bien d'autres, sont atteints mortellement. Greely, secouru par la *Thétis* en 1883, ne ramène que six de ses compagnons. Et l'un des héros de la découverte, le lieutenant Lockwood, succombe à son tour, ajoutant un nom de plus au douloureux martyrologe de ces régions ! »

Cette fois, ce fut un respectueux silence qui accueillit ces paroles du président Barbicane, dont toute l'assistance partageait la légitime émotion. (VII, 87–88)

This lengthy pedagogical passage is included in its entirety in the Sampson Low and the Sophie Lewis translations, but it is missing from the Ogilvie edition and has been reduced to less than 10% of its original size in the I.O. Evans translation.

Let us now examine the footnotes in the text, those metatextual "add-ons" inserted by Verne (or his publisher) to translate a word, to convert a measurement, to clarify certain technical information, or to publicize other novels in Verne's *Extraordinary Voyages* series.

When these footnotes are present in the translations (which they rarely are), they tend to be of the advertisement variety, as in the following examples. The “Fitzroy Edition” translation even suggests that readers not only read Verne’s novels *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Around the Moon* but that they also purchase the “Fitzroy Edition” version of them!

Au contraire. Et même, grâce à l’invraisemblable tentative qu’il avait faite pour établir une communication directe entre la Terre et la Lune,¹ sa célébrité s’était accrue dans une proportion énorme.

¹ Du même auteur, *De la Terre à la Lune* et *Autour de la Lune*. (IV, 47-48)

(SL) On the contrary, thanks to the unprecedented attempt they had made to open communication with the Moon, as related in the *Moon Voyage*, its celebrity had increased enormously. (IV, 34)

(OG) On the contrary, and even thanks to the incredible attempt which they had made to establish direct communication between earth and moon, its celebrity had grown in an enormous proportion. (IV, 43)

(FE) On the contrary, thanks to the unprecedented attempt they had made to open communication with the Moon, as previously related, its celebrity had increased enormously.*

*See *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Round the Moon* in the Fitzroy Edition of Verne (IV, 42)

(HP) On the contrary. Indeed, thanks to the unlikely attempt it had made to establish a direct means of communication between the Earth and the Moon,* the club’s fame had grown by a huge proportion.

*See, by the same author, *De la Terre à la Lune* (‘From the Earth to the Moon’) and *Autour de la Lune* (‘Around the Moon’) (IV, 45)

In all the translations, the more whimsical and tongue-in-cheek brand of notes (probably added by Verne himself) are as a rule missing. Here is a good example.

[Barbicane’s speech about the many explorers of the Arctic who have attempted to reach the North Pole.]

– Et comment vous y prendrez-vous, monsieur ? demanda le délégué de l’Angleterre.

– Avant dix minutes, vous le saurez, major Donellan, répondit le président Barbicane,¹ et j’ajoute, en m’adressant à tous nos actionnaires : Ayez confiance en nous...

¹ Dans la nomenclature des découvreurs qui ont tenté de s’élever jusqu’au Pôle, Barbicane a omis le nom du capitaine Hatteras, dont le pavillon aurait flotté sur le quatre-vingt-dixième degré. Cela se comprend, ledit capitaine n’étant, vraisemblablement, qu’un héros imaginaire. (*Anglais au pôle Nord* et *Désert de Glace*, du même auteur). (VII, 91)

“And how will you go about it, sir?” asked the delegate from England.

“Before ten minutes are up you will know, Major Donellan,” replied Barbicane,* “and I add, addressing myself to all our shareholders: Have confidence in us...”

* In this listing of discoverers who attempted to reach the Pole, Barbicane has omitted the name of Captain Hatteras, whose flag may have waved above the 90th parallel. This is understandable since the said captain was, in all likelihood, only an imaginary hero. (See *The English at the North Pole* and *The Desert of Ice*, by the same author.)

(SL) (OG) (FE) (HP) – footnote missing entirely

This openly facetious footnote suggests that the list of Arctic explorers enumerated by Barbicane in that long pedagogical passage cited earlier should include one more name: that of Captain Hatteras, whose flag “may have waved above the 90th parallel.” Notice the purposefully speculative verb tense of “may have waved” in this passage. And remark also the tongue-in-cheek pseudo-explanation of Hatteras’s absence from the list, which points out that “This is understandable since the said Captain was, in all likelihood, only an imaginary hero.” The phrase “in all likelihood” is a typically Vernian self-referential flourish, intentionally blurring the boundaries between the fictional and the non-fictional.

Let us now turn to the important question of textual accuracy in these four translations. Once again, there is a broad range of differences, but the Lewis translation in the Hesperus Press edition easily outperforms the other three. Here is just one example, where Verne is describing the duration and speed of the Earth’s orbit around the Sun. He gives the length of a solar year as 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes, 10 seconds, and 37 hundredths of a second, giving our planet a speed of 30,400 meters (or 7.6 leagues) per second. How do the various English translations render these numbers?

Durée de translation de la Terre autour du Soleil : 365 jours un quart, constituant l’année solaire, ou plus exactement 365 jours 6 heures 9 minutes 10 secondes 37 centièmes, – ce qui donne à notre sphéroïde – par seconde – une vitesse de 30 400 mètres ou 7 lieues 6 dixièmes. (VI, 76)

(SL) Duration of the Earth’s journey round the Sun: 365 days and a quarter, constituting the solar year, or more exactly 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes, thus giving the spheroid an average velocity of 66,000 miles an hour. (VI, 54)

(OG) Time of the earth on the orbit around the sun, 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes, 10 seconds, 37 centimes. This gives the globe a speed of 30,400 miles travelled over by the rotation of the earth upon its axis. (VI, 64)

(FE) Duration of journey round the Sun: 365 days and a quarter, constituting the solar year, or more exactly 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes, thus giving the spheroid an average velocity of 66,000 miles an hour. (VI, 54)

(HP) Duration of the Earth’s rotation around the Sun: 365 days and a quarter, constituting the solar year; or more precisely, 365 days, six hours, nine minutes, ten seconds, and thirty-seven hundredths of a second—which gives our sphere a speed of 30,400 metres or seven leagues, six tenths, per second. (VI, 70)

A comparison of these passages clearly shows that the Sampson Low and the Fitzroy Edition both drop the seconds and hundredths and that the Ogilvie includes them but refers to “centimes” (a word normally used in currencies, meaning one hundredth of a franc or today’s euro, etc.). Further, the Earth’s speed listed by Verne is 30,400 meters per second, which both the Sampson Low and the Fitzroy Edition calculate to be 66,000 miles

per hour—except it really isn't; converting from meters to miles actually comes to a little over 68,000 miles per hour. Further, the Ogilvie translation gets it very wrong when it gives the Earth a speed of "30,400 miles travelled over by the rotation of the earth upon its axis." Apart from the glaring error of changing 30,400 *meters* to 30,400 *miles*, the remainder of this sentence seems to confuse rotation with revolution. Once again, the Lewis translation in the Hesperus Press edition offers the most accurate rendering of what Verne actually wrote.

But there also exists a more sinister type of inaccuracy in many of Verne's English translations, a type of inaccuracy that has little to do with linguistic or scientific incompetence or abridging Verne's pedagogy. It constitutes, to my mind, one of the worst crimes that a translator, editor, or publisher can commit: ideological censorship. Many (or even most) early English translations of Verne's novels—especially those published in England—seemed to adhere to a strictly pro-Anglo political agenda and were systematically "purged" of any anti-British references.

Consider, for example, the following brief examples. In the first, the narrator rhetorically wonders where Barbicane and Company might be hiding from the public, perhaps on some desert island in the Pacific or Indian Ocean? But he then dismisses that possibility because, in truth, there no longer exists any such islands because the British have already taken possession of them all. Both the translations published by Sampson Low and in the Fitzroy Edition have expunged this humorous Vernian jab at British colonialism.

En quelle partie de l'Ancien ou du Nouveau Continent, Barbicane and Co. s'était-il si secrètement installé que l'éveil n'eût jamais été donné aux peuplades voisines ? Était-ce dans une île abandonnée du Pacifique ou de l'océan Indien ? Mais il n'y a plus d'îles désertes de nos jours : les Anglais ont tout pris. (XIII, 141)

(SL) In what part of the old or new world had Barbicane & Co. installed themselves so secretly as to be invisible to the nations around? Had they gone to some desert island of the Pacific? But there are no desert islands now. (XIII, 99)

(OG) In which part of the Old or New World had Barbicane & Co. secretly established a foothold so that no hint was given to people living in the vicinity? Was it on a deserted island in the Pacific Ocean or in the Indian Ocean? But there were no more deserted islands: the English had gobbled them all up. (XIII, 109)

(FE) In what part of the Old or New World had Barbicane & Co. installed themselves so secretly as to be invisible to the nations around them? Had they gone to some desert island of the Pacific? There are no desert islands now. (XIII, 119)

(HP) In what corner of the Old or New Continents might Barbicane & Co. secretly have installed themselves yet never roused suspicion among the local people? Was it on a deserted island in the Pacific or the Indian Ocean? But there are no desert islands left these days: the English have nabbed them all. (XIII, 131)

Here is another example. A bit later in the novel, Verne speaks of a tribal leader in Central Africa who is a remarkable ruler, in part because of his resistance to British domination. Once again, both the translations published by Sampson Low and in the Fitzroy Edition delete this passage, whereas the American publisher Ogilvie and the modern Lewis translation include it verbatim.

Bâli-Bâli ... Ce sultan passe à juste titre pour l'un des plus remarquables souverains de ces peuplades de l'Afrique centrale, qui s'efforcent d'échapper à l'influence ou, pour être plus juste, à la domination anglaise. (XVII, 170-71)

(SL) Bali-Bali, who is justly considered to be one of the most remarkable sovereigns of Central Africa. (XVII, 118)

(OG) Bali-Bali ... This Sultan rightly ranked as one of the most remarkable rulers of those people of Central Africa who try to escape the influence, or more correctly, the domination of England. (XVII, 132)

(FE) Bali-Bali, who is quite rightly regarded as one of the most remarkable sovereigns of Central Africa. (XVII, 143)

(HP) Bali-Bali ... The sultan is justly recognized as one of the most unusual of these central African tribal sovereigns who are trying to avoid the English influence or, more precisely, their control. (XVII, 159)

And here is a final example of ideological tampering by the British translators. It involves Verne's critique of Great Britain's imperialistic foreign-policy tendencies as well as his caricaturish portrayal of two British representatives attending the international auction near the beginning of the novel. In contrast to the way I have arranged the translation excerpts so far in this presentation—chronologically—I have decided this time, given their length, to arrange them from best to worst. Here is the original text by Verne and a reasonably good translation of it (by Sophie Lewis in the Hesperus Press edition):

Pour l'Angleterre enfin : le major Donellan et son secrétaire Dean Toodrink. Ces derniers représentaient à eux deux tous les appétits, toutes les aspirations du Royaume-Uni, ses instincts commerciaux et industriels, ses aptitudes à considérer comme siens, d'après une loi de nature, les territoires septentrionaux, méridionaux ou équatoriaux qui n'appartenaient à personne.

Un Anglais, s'il en fut jamais, ce major Donellan, grand, maigre, osseux, nerveux, anguleux, avec un cou de bécassine, une tête à la Palmerston sur des épaules fuyantes, des jambes d'échassier, très vert sous ses soixante ans, infatigable – et il l'avait bien montré, lorsqu'il travaillait à la délimitation des frontières de l'Inde sur la limite de la Birmanie. Il ne riait jamais et peut-être même n'avait-il jamais ri. À quoi bon ?... Est-ce qu'on a jamais vu rire une locomotive, une machine élévatoire ou un steamer ?

En cela, le major différait essentiellement de son secrétaire Dean Toodrink – un garçon loquace, plaisant, la tête forte, des cheveux jouant sur le front, de petits yeux plissés. Il était écossais de naissance, très connu dans la « Vieille Enfumée » pour ses propos joyeux et son goût pour les calembredaines. (II, 23)

(HP) Finally, for England—Major Donellan and his secretary Dean Toodrink. These last two between them represented all the appetites, all the aspirations of the United Kingdom, her commercial and industrial instincts, her tendency to consider as belonging to her, as if by a law of nature, all northern, southern, and equatorial territories as yet unclaimed by anyone else.

An Englishman if there ever was one, this Major Donellan was tall, thin, bony, nervous, angular, with the neck of a woodcock, head resembling Lord Palmerston on sloping shoulders, the legs of a marsh-wader, very spry for his sixty years, indefatigable—and this he had proved while working on the India/Burma border. He was never seen to laugh; perhaps he never had. Why ever should he? Have you ever seen a locomotive, or a crane, or a steamer laugh?

In this, the Major differed fundamentally from his secretary, Dean Toodrink—a loquacious, pleasant youth, with a well-shaped head, locks of hair curling over his forehead, and small screwed-up eyes. He was a Scot by birth, well known back in ‘Auld Reekie’ for his light-hearted quips and his taste for extravagant statements and practical jokes. (II, 21-22)

And now let us examine how the first American edition by Ogilvie translated this same passage.

(OG) Finally for England: Major Donellan and his secretary, Dean Toodrink. The last two named represented all the tastes and aspirations of the United Kingdom, its commercial and industrial instincts, its aptitude to consider, by a law of nature, the northern regions as their own property just as any country which did not belong to anyone else.

If there ever was an Englishman it was Major Donellan, tall, meagre, bony, nervous, angular, with a little cough, a head à la Palmerston, on bending shoulders; legs well formed after his sixty years; indefatigable, a quality he had well shown when he worked on the frontiers of India. He never laughed in those days, and perhaps never had. And why should he? Did you ever see a locomotive or a steam-engine or an elevator laugh? On this point the Major was very much different from his secretary, Dean Toodrink, a talkative fellow, very pleasant, with large head, and his hair falling on his forehead, and small eyes. He became well known on account of his happy manner and his taste for fairy tales. (II, 23-24)

This Ogilvie translation appears to be quite faithful to Verne’s original. It includes both the critique of the United Kingdom’s empire-building and the less-than-flattering descriptions of Major Donellan and Dean Toodrink. (Although it does manage to go astray in translating Toodrink’s “goût pour les calembredaines”—a taste for extravagant statements and practical jokes—as a taste for “fairy tales.”)

But now look at how the British edition by Sampson Low and the Fitzroy Edition translated—or, rather, intentionally mistranslated—this same passage.

(SL) England having declined all participation in the matter, the only representatives of the British Empire were those from the Quebec Company. These were Major Donellan, a French-Canadian, whose ancestry is sufficiently apparent from his name, and a compatriot of his named Todrin. Donellan was tall, thin, bony, nervous, and angular, and of just such a figure as the Parisian comic journals caricature as that of an Englishman. Todrin was the very opposite of the Major, being short and thick-set, and talkative and amusing. He was said to be of Scotch descent, but no trace of it was observable in his name, his character, or his appearance. (II. 22)

(FE) England having declined all participation in the matter, the only representatives of the British Empire were those from the Quebec Company, Major Donellan, a French-Canadian, whose ancestry is sufficiently apparent from his name, with his compatriot Todrin. Donellan was tall, thin, bony, nervous, and angular, like a caricature of an Englishman in the Parisian comic journals. Todrin was his exact opposite, being short and thick-set, talkative and vivacious. He was said to be of Scottish descent, but no trace of this was observable in his name, his character, or his appearance. (II. 28)

In these translations, Toodrink becomes Todrin, the sentence about the United Kingdom’s predatory “commercial and industrial instincts” has been deleted, and the description of both men has been abridged and sanitized. The translator even added a

little anti-French gibe to the text: Major Donellan's portrayal is now compared to how "Parisian comic journals" might caricature an Englishman—an obvious jab at Verne's stereotyping. The I.O. Evans translation in the Fitzroy Edition closely parrots that of the Sampson Low but, perplexingly, makes Todrin "vivacious" instead of simply "amusing."

Finally, let's examine these four English-language translations to see how well they convey Verne's style. As I have argued elsewhere: "Reading Verne's works in French and in English, one is continually amazed at how much is 'lost in translation'—not only because of the latter's incompleteness or inaccuracy when compared to the originals but also because of their very different style" (90).

One aspect of Verne's style that often disappears from his English translations is his use of irony. Consider, for example, this tongue-in-cheek passage, followed by a reasonably accurate translation of it found in the Hesperus Press edition.

Mais, il faut bien le reconnaître, ces moyens que justifiaient les mœurs d'autrefois, ne pouvaient plus être employés à la fin d'un siècle de douceur et de tolérance, d'un siècle aussi empreint d'humanité que ce XIXème, caractérisé par l'invention du fusil à répétition, des balles de sept millimètres et des trajectoires d'une tension invraisemblable, d'un siècle qui admet dans les relations internationales l'emploi des obus à la mélinite, à la roburite, à la bellite, à la panclastite, à la méganite et autres substances en ite, qui ne sont rien, il est vrai, auprès de la méli-mélonite. (XII, 140)

(HP) Still, it must be admitted: those methods justified by earlier moral codes could no longer be applied at the end of a century of gentleness and tolerance, of a century as imbued with humaneness as this nineteenth after Christ, marked by the invention of the repeating rifle, of seven-millimeter bullets capable of shooting under unbelievable pressures; of a century that sanctions the use of melinite, roburite, bellite, panclastite and meganite shells, and many other substances ending in -ite, which are nothing, it is true, compared to our dyna-mix. (XII, 128-129)

Verne's juxtaposition of the 19th century as a time of gentleness, tolerance, and humaneness with its relentless pursuit of ever-more-lethal "weapons of mass destruction" is notable by its tone of acidic irony. But what is even more striking is reading the same paragraph in the Sampson Low, Ogilvie, and Fitzroy Edition translations, which clearly demonstrate to what extent Verne's irony has been "lost in translation."

(SL) But such things were not to be thought of in the century which had invented the magazine rifle, roburite, bellite, panclastite, and other "ites," not to mention the far superior meli-melonite. (XII, 98)

(FE) But such things were impossible in the century which invented the magazine rifle, roburite, bellite, panclastite, and other "ites," not to mention the far superior meli-melonite. (XII, 118)

(OB) But it was answered that, while such means were justified in former times, they could not be used at the end of a century as far advanced as the nineteenth century was. (XII, 108)

Finally, let us discuss what is probably every translator's greatest nightmare: rendering a piece of rhymed poetry into another language. At the end of the novel, after the abject failure of Barbicane, Nichol, and Maston to alter the Earth's axis with their gigantic cannon

blast, they are immediately subjected to waves of mockery and ridicule from around the world. Their epic debacle is even immortalized in French song, and Verne offers a snippet from one of the more popular of these French satiric melodies by the famous singer/songwriter Paulus. [3] Perhaps predictably, both the Sampson Low and the Olgivie translations simply ignore this poetic excerpt:

L'Europe surtout s'abandonna à un déchaînement de plaisanteries tel que les Yankees finirent par être scandalisés. Et, n'oubliant pas que Barbicane, Nichol et Maston étaient d'origine américaine, qu'ils appartenaient à cette célèbre association de Baltimore, peu s'en fallut qu'ils n'obligeassent le gouvernement fédéral à déclarer la guerre à l'ancien Monde.

Enfin, le dernier coup fut porté par une chanson française que l'illustre Paulus – il vivait encore à cette époque – mit à la mode. Cette machine courut les cafés-concerts du monde entier. Voici quel était l'un des couplets les plus applaudis :

Pour modifier notre patraque,
Dont l'ancien axe se détraque,
Ils ont fait un canon qu'on braque,
Afin de mettra tout en vrac !
C'est bien pour vous flanquer le trac !
Ordre est donné pour qu'on les traque,
Ces trois imbéciles !... Mais... crac !
Le coup est parti... Rien ne craque !
Vive notre vieille patraque !

Enfin, saurait-on jamais à quoi était dû l'insuccès de cette entreprise ? (XX, 196)

(SL) And Europe joined in with such vigour that at last America was scandalized. And then remembering that Barbicane, Nicholl, and Maston were of American birth, and belonged to the famous club of Baltimore, a reaction in their favour set in, which was almost strong enough to make the United States declare war against the Old World.

But was is ever to be known why the enterprise failed? (XX, 138)

(OG) In Europe, especially, all the remarks and songs to make the persons of the N.P.P.A. ridiculous were spread broadcast. The greatest hit was made by a Frenchman, who composed a ballad which was sung in every concert hall of France and America. But will we never know to what the failure of this enterprise was due? (XX, 154)

But, as we have come to expect, Sophie Lewis in the Hesperus Press edition does her best to translate it.

(HP) Europe, particularly, abandoned all decorum with such a slew of sarcasm that the Americans were quite scandalized. And, lest we forget it: Barbicane, Nicholl and Maston were Americans, they belonged to that notorious Baltimore association, and they currently saw very little reason not to have the American government declare war on the entire Old World.

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- 3 This reference to the well-known French cabaret singer Paulus—whose real name was Jean-Paulin Habans (1845-1908)—adds to the narrative what Roland Barthes once termed an *effet de réel* (“reality effect”). Such a reference adds local color and also strengthens the story’s verisimilitude, especially for late-nineteenth-century French readers. For more on such *effets de reel* in this novel, see Terry Harpold’s excellent article “Nouveaux Jonas: The Sources of *Sans dessus dessous*’s ‘Stop’ Caricature.”

The last straw was a French ballad popularized by the distinguished singer Paulus (alive and kicking at the time). This ditty did the rounds of the café-concerts around the world. Here is one of the most popular verses:

To fix up our grand old knick-knack
Whose axis had all gone to rack
They constructed a giant smokestack:
The plan was to pack us some flak!
That's enough to give you the jitters!
Word goes out that we're after the critters,
Three fools, after fame, all that glitters...
Then all at once—crack!
The shot has been shot,
We're all here, nothing's not,
So long live our great old knick-knack!

Would we ever know the cause of the operation's failure? (XX, 183-184)

But her use of the term “knick-knack” for the world and “smokestack” for the cannon, as well as her breaking the rhyme scheme in the middle verses instead of using only words ending in “--ak,” all make her rendering of Verne's poetry a valiant effort but not terribly effective.

Surprisingly, it is the I.O. Evans translation in the Fitzroy Edition that does the best approximation of Verne's poetic excerpt. He chooses to include the original verses in French, then adds a footnote at the bottom of the page where he “very roughly” translates it.

(FE) ... and Europe joined in with such vigour that at last the Yankees were scandalised. And then remembering that Barbicane, Nicholl, and Maston were of American birth, and that they belonged to the famous Baltimore Club, a reaction in their favour set in, almost strong enough to make the United States declare war against the Old World.

At last the final blow was dealt by a song: the work of an illustrious French composer, it was soon taken up all round the world. One of its couplets was especially applauded:

Pour modifier notre patraque,
Dont l'ancien axe se détraque,
Ils ont fait un canon qu'on braque,
Afin de mettra tout en vrac !
C'est bien pour vous flanquer le trac !
Ordre est donné pour qu'on les traque,
Ces trois imbéciles !... Mais... crac !
Le coup est parti... Rien ne craque !
Vive notre vieille patraque !*

But would it ever be known why the enterprise failed? (XX, 168)

* This might very roughly be rendered as:

Our old world is off the track,
Now they'll swing its axis back;
Make a gun the rocks to smack:
That'll give us all we lack.

They're the boys who've got the knack.
 Orders given ... Launch attack!
 Those three madmen! ... With a quack,
 It's been fired ... Nought doth crack!
 Good old world keeps on its track.

In conclusion, it must be acknowledged that there are both positives and negatives in each of these four English translations of Verne's *Sans dessus dessous*. The Sampson Low translation is undoubtedly the most egregious in its persistent ideological censorship, but it is otherwise one of the more complete translations available and also contains those wonderful Hetzel illustrations. The unillustrated Ogilvie translation includes all of Verne's anti-British barbs, but it is also among the worst in terms of chopping out Verne's didactic passages. The I.O. Evans translation published in the Fitzroy Edition is little more than an abridged and unillustrated clone of the Sampson Low, but it is also the most creative at approximating Verne's poetry. Finally, the Sophie Lewis translation published in the Hesperus Press edition is excellent both in terms of completeness and accuracy and quite good in terms of style. Although it too lacks illustrations, it would nevertheless be my choice for best English translation of this classic Verne novel.

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