

Canada and Jules Verne

By Andrew Nash and Jean-Louis Trudel

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Hello,

My name is Andrew Nash, and I am from Toronto Canada. I have been a fan of Jules Verne since 1968 when I read Franz Born's *Biography of an Imagination*. I have been a member of the Société Jules Verne since 1978.

Before writing this, and coming to Amiens, I consulted with fellow Canadians Phillipe Bedard and Jean-Louis Trudel and some of their thoughts are included in this presentation.

After travelling to North America on the Great Eastern, Jules Verne visited Canada for less than 1 day when he took a tour of Niagara Falls in April 1867. Despite this fact, Canada became the backdrop for numerous of the Voyages Extraordinaires.

The novels with a Canadian presence include:

- *Fur Country (Le Pays des fourrures)*
- *Family without a name (Famille-sans-nom)*
- *Volcan d'or* {Montreal, Ottawa, Vancouver ...etc}
- *Robur the Conqueror (Robur-le-Conquérant)* {Niagara Falls, Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa}
- *Master of the World (Maître du monde)* {Niagara Falls}
- *Captain Hatteras* {Canadian Arctic waters, Baffin Island etc}
- and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (Vingt Mille Lieues sous les mers)* with the presence of Ned Land, the great Canadian harpooner

The Canada as presented by Jules Verne is NOT the Canada that we know today. In 1867, when Jules visited, Canada was just coming into being and was made up of 4 provinces (Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick). In 1900 it had 7 provinces and 2 territories (Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Yukon and Northwest Territories). Today, 2005, Canada has 10 provinces and 3 territories.

The Canada as presented by Jules Verne, is mostly an extension of other broad categories that appear in his fiction.

Canada the frontier – In the *Fur Country* and in *Volcan d'or*, Canada is a frontier like the US frontier (but colder). Canada has wilderness, it has Indians, it has exotic wildlife and it has highly skilled hunters including Ned Land who uses a harpoon instead of a gun.

Canada the Arctic – In *Fur Country (Le Pays des fourrures)* and *Captain Hatteras*, Canada is the Arctic sublime and majestic. Most of the Arctic is now claimed by Canada, but it wasn't quite the case in Verne's time. It was seen as a nearly barren wilderness.

Canada as America – In *Volcan d'or*, *Robur the Conqueror*, and *Master of the World* Canada appears as an extension of the United States, as Verne saw that country, as both crassly commercial and immensely energetic.... fortunes are made, cities are built on the go...

Canada as oppressed nationality – Canada in *Family without a name (Famille-sans-nom)*, is a case of the dominant majority oppressing a minority as also seen in *Foundling Mick (P'Tit*

Bonhome), *Mathias Sandorf* etc. But let me add that this was a true conflict that, of course, could only be set in Canada. Events are based on true historical events, including the Caroline going over the falls.

Canada as France – Canada is seen as French in *Family without a name (Famille-sans-nom)* with Jean-sans-nom, *Volcan d'or* with Summy Skim and Ben Raddle from Montreal and even *20,000 Leagues under the sea* with Ned Land a Frenchman from Quebec. To Verne, do all Canadians speak French? (I wish that were so). For Quebec, this was not entirely false, but the British heritage of other parts of Canada is almost forgotten.

English Canada's attitude towards Jules Verne as the *Voyages Extraordinaires* were issued, is probably the same as in the United States and Great Britain (and the rest of the British Empire), very enthusiastically received. Canadians were not only reading British (Sampson Low) and US (Scribners) editions, but in some cases unique Canadian editions:

- *Fur Country*, 1876, H B Bigney and Co. Montreal, Canada
- *Wreck of the Chancellor*, 1875, Belford Brothers, Toronto, Canada
- and the first English edition anywhere of *Flight to France*, 1888 National Publishing Company of Toronto, Toronto, Canada
- and even Ukrainian editions published in Winnipeg, Canada where there is a large Ukrainian population

It is harder to define the attitude in French Canada. Verne was well known, but more-so for his plays and travelogue-like novels like *Around the World (Tour du Monde)*

But what is clear is that Verne was well known in Canada and among the most read authors of the day. The register of the Institut Canadien library in 1875-76 shows that only the books of Dumas (father and son) are more popular than those of Verne, and Verne was only partway through his *Voyages Extraordinaires* at that point!

I think now, like in many other countries, Verne is considered a children's author. In the bookstores, only the more common of Verne's titles are seen, oftentimes the poorer translations are the best represented. Canadian translator, Edward Baxter has tried to right this wrong by publishing new translations of *The Fur Country* (1999), *Invasion of the Sea* (2001), and *Journey Through the Impossible* (2003). Other unique Canadian editions continue to be produced and these ones will help show Jules Verne in a new light. Éditions internationales Alain Stanké, a publisher from Quebec, publishes the Original versions of Verne's later works in gorgeous paperback editions, some of them reissued this year (2005):

- Beau danube jaune
- Chasse au meteore
- En magellanie
- Phare du bout du monde
- Secret de Wilhelm Storitz

As in other countries, there are numerous collectors of Jules Verne in Canada. I am constantly reminded of this when I visit a book fair, only to be told, that a rare first edition has already been sold to a previous visitor. The collectors and fans are not represented with our own Canadian society, but instead we are members of the *North American Jules Verne Society*, of which I am one of the founding members, and for many years was the editor of the NAJVS newsletter *Extraordinary Voyages*.

There are a few Jules Verne websites created in Canada, including my own www.julesverne.ca. Through my website and my collection I strive to pass on information about English editions of Jules Verne's works. In the early 1980's, I brought to the attention of Piero Gondollo della Riva, the existence of the short article *The Future of the Submarine*, attributed to Jules Verne, published in *Popular Mechanics*, June 1904. Piero was able to include reference to this in *Bibliographie Analytique de Toutes les Oeuvres: II*, published in 1985. More recently I have discovered that the First English publication of the short story *Fritt Flacc* is NOT the 1892 version published by the Strand Magazine, London, but instead is a version published in an English edition of *le Figaro Illustré*, supplement, Paris, December 1884.

I'd like to conclude with a poem I found in the Evening Telegram, St John's, Newfoundland, Monday March 27, 1905 (at the time, not yet a province of Canada)

Jules Verne

Magician of our boyhood's days who've led
Us where mysterious isles with treasure teems;
Who in the depths of ocean's sunless bed
Has found a charm to fetter youthful dreams.
With you we've trod the banks of sacred streams,
In ancient temples bowed the reverent head.
Alas! to-day we learn that you are dead--
Youth loved hero -- whom the world esteems.
Science advanced thro' light thy fancy's flame
Across the genius of Invention threw
The youth of many peoples know thy fame,
And while the fancy of the boy is true
To wanderings far, adventures weird and stern,
He'll seek with joy the tales of Jules Verne.

--D.C.
March 25th, 1905

Thank You,

Andrew Nash