

**Verne's Nordic journey in 1861  
and its literary connections to *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, three years later.**

**Abstract**

Recent studies of Verne's travel diary from his journey to the Nordic countries in 1861, indicate that real life experiences were valuable inspiration for his prose, shortly after. In 1864 he took his readers along on a 'voyage extraordinaire' to Germany and further North. Several narrative elements of *Voyage au centre de la Terre*, apparently originate from the author's own journey to the centre of Scandinavia.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how certain parts of the novel seems to have direct links to the author's own journey and diary – such as passages describing Lidenbrock's Hamburg or Axel's preparations for coping with heights, from the summit of a Copenhagen church tower. When in Norway, during the author's visit down into the corridors of the Kongsberg silver mines, material was easily accessible for the lively descriptions of the protagonists' volcanic descent. Likewise, the Norse, runic letters of the cryptogram that opens the story, may also have been an idea conceived in this area. Just after entering Telemark, Verne spent several hours to admire the wooden, 13<sup>th</sup> century church at Heddal – with its famous runic inscriptions.

This paper aims also to discuss the novel's connections to the works of Nordic writers. We know that Verne had extensive knowledge of the Sagas of Snorre Sturlason (1179-1241). Therefore, intertextual connections to "Niels Klim's journey to the underground" by Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754), may also exist.

.....

**Nordic literary sources and carnet de voyage**

*Voyage au centre de la Terre* (CT), is the third novel in Verne's VE series. The book was published a half-year after *Voyages et Aventures du capitaine Hatteras*, and together they reflect the author's field of interest and literary project. Jules Verne takes his readers along into his own fascination for our planet, and his particular northern enthusiasm. At the same time he introduces several storytelling elements, later to reappear in his writing. Often, his novels are based on cryptograms to be decoded, and frequently during his extraordinary journeys, we follow a small group of male travelers. And repeatedly, as in CT, volcanoes or seismic activity plays a central part.

In this article, I will first try to point out some of Verne's possible, Nordic literary sources of inspiration. Then, while tracing the route he followed when in Scandinavia, I will demonstrate selected quotes from his carnet de voyage 1861 (VCV), relevant to shed light on the composition of the novel. Thanks to Bibliothèques d'Amiens Métropole, and Bernard Sinoquet, responsable de la Collection Jules Verne, I have had the opportunity to work extensively with this unique text. Verne's handwriting in the travel diary, using a not too sharp pencil, is somewhat blurry and difficult to decipher - not like studying the manuscripts

for his novels. Some of the transcriptions I present here is the result of a collaboration with fellow Vernian Volker Dehs.

**«je choisis les Etats scandinaves pour but de mes explorations;  
j'étais attiré vers les régions hyperboréennes, comme l'aiguille aimantée vers le Nord,  
sans savoir pourquoi. [...]»  
Au surplus, j'aime les pays froids par tempérament: la Scandinavie faisait mon affaire»**

These lines are taken from Verne's unfinished *Joyeuses Misères de trois voyageurs en Scandinavie* (JM), a text which describes his preparations for a journey to Scandinavia in 1861. The enthusiasm, and urge to travel North is evident. At the time, he had finished his studies in law, and was working at the Paris stock exchange, while writing was only a part time activity. Accompanying him on the Scandinavian journey, was the composer Aristide Hignard (1822–1898) and Émile Lorois (1831–1899), another lawyer. Their destination was Norway, and together they spent 17 days in the counties along the west side of the Oslo fjord, in the Norwegian Capital, and at the southern end of lake Mjösa. Prior to the journey, Verne had studied Nordic travel literature extensively, but also ancient Norse, literary sources – like *Edda* and *Heimskringla*, written by the Islandic historian Snorre Sturlason (1179-1241). Verne's knowledge regarding the latter, the 'Norwegian saga of kings', is clearly demonstrated in CT. The fact that he also had an in-depth knowledge about the *Edda*, which is a narrative of Norse Mythology, is displayed in JM.

The novel about a journey to Iceland and into the Earth, was conceived while Verne's Nordic journey was still a fresh memory. And in fact, many stops along Professor Lidenbrock's and nephew Axel's route towards Iceland, coincide with the author's own route in 1861. As we later shall see, studies of Verne's diary clearly indicates that several details of the story originate from his own travel experiences.

### **Subterranean ideas and inspirations**

The novel probably was written early in 1864, while Verne was preparing 'Hatteras' for publishing. He may have worked on material for both texts at the same time, because there is a connection thematically, as the Hatteras novel anticipate subterranean travel ideas.

Fabulations about a hollow Earth that could be reached from the Poles, is an idea dating back to the Medieval ages, that was kept alive until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Jules Verne had studied sources about the mythical Hyperborea (the land beyond the Northern winds) and texts about a treacherous maelstrom, close to the island Mosken outside Lofoten. Later he incorporates this phaenomenon into several of his own stories. In 'Hatteras', we find both a drawing and a description of the Mosken current.

In '20000 Leagues' the author refers in detail, to various Nordic sources describing nature phenomena of the North. We have every reason to believe that he also was familiar with certain old sources that even claimed the existence of an undersea channel leading from the whirlpool on the Norwegian coast all the way to the Baltic. A clear parallel to this is Professor

Lidenbrock's underground journey from the volcanic island (Iceland) in the North Atlantic, over to the volcanic island (Stromboli) in the Mediterranean.

In the book *Mundus Subterraneus* (1665), the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680) published the first maps indicating global ocean currents. His detailed drawings, show undersea connections between oceans in the North, and also a channel from the Lofoten current, leading over to the other side of the Scandinavian Peninsula. The ideas of Kircher were reprinted far into the 1800s. The *Atlas of the Nineteenth Century World* from 1851, says about Norway: «The celebrated whirlpool of Malstrom on the north coast is about two miles wide and probably communicates with a subterranean passage through which the sea finds it's way into the Gulf of Bothnia.»<sup>1</sup>

As previously mentioned, Verne anticipates underground travels as a topic in the Hatteras novel, and he even puts a volcano on the North Pole itself. A conversation amongst the members of the expedition, about old legends connected to the North Pole and a corridor into the interior of the earth, can be found in part 2, chapter 24:

--Vous disiez tout à l'heure, reprit Altamont, que ce serait peut-être le cas de tenter **une excursion au centre de la terre! Est-ce qu'on a jamais pensé à entreprendre un pareil voyage?**

--Oui, et cela termine ce que j'ai à vous dire relativement au **pôle**.

Il n'y a pas de point du monde qui ait donné lieu à plus d'hypothèses et de chimères. Les anciens, fort ignorants en cosmographie, y plaçaient le jardin des Hespérides. Au Moyen Age, on supposa que la terre était supportée par des tourillons **placés aux pôles**, sur lesquels elle tournait; mais, quand on vit les comètes se mouvoir librement dans les régions circumpolaires, il fallut renoncer à ce genre de support. Plus tard, il se rencontra un astronome français, Bailly, qui soutint que le peuple policé et perdu dont parle Platon, les Atlantes, vivait ici même. Enfin, de nos jours, on a prétendu **qu'il existait aux pôles une immense ouverture**, d'où se dégageait la lumière des aurores boréales, et par laquelle on pourrait pénétrer dans l'intérieur du globe; puis, dans la sphère creuse, on imagina l'existence de deux planètes, Pluton et Proserpine, et un air lumineux par suite de la forte pression qu'il éprouvait.

--On a dit tout cela? demanda Altamont.

--Et on l'a écrit, et très sérieusement. Le capitaine Synness [Symmes], un de nos compatriotes, proposa à Humphry Davy, Humboldt et Arago de tenter le voyage! Mais ces savants refusèrent.

--Et ils firent bien.

--Je le crois. Quoi qu'il en soit, vous voyez, mes amis, que l'imagination s'est donné libre carrière à l'endroit du pôle, et qu'il faut tôt ou tard en revenir à la simple réalité.

--D'ailleurs, nous verrons bien, dit Johnson, qui n'abandonnait pas son idée.

--Alors, à demain les excursions, dit le docteur, souriant de voir le vieux marin peu convaincu, et, **s'il y a une ouverture particulière pour aller au centre de la terre, nous irons ensemble!**» (AH /Hatteras)

---

<sup>1</sup> Gjevik, Bjørn N. (1997): *Maskstraumen – myter, diktning og virkelighet*. Oslo, Yearbook – The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.

The statement, and this Captain ‘Synnes’, that is referred to in this conversation, probably is the American Army officer, John Cleves Symmes Jr<sup>2</sup>, who in 1818 wrote this, in what he called “Circular number 1”:

I declare that the earth is hollow and habitable within; containing a number of solid concentric spheres, one within the other, and that it is open at the poles twelve or sixteen degrees. I pledge my life in support of this truth, and am ready to explore the hollow, if the world will support and aid me in the undertaking.<sup>3</sup>

### **Poe and Holberg**

All these legends, about a hollow Earth, openings at the Poles and the Mosken Maelstrom of the North, play a central part in texts by Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849). On several occasions, Jules Verne acknowledged his debt to the stories of Poe. Poe’s only novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* was published in 1838, and three years later his novella, *A descent into the maelstrom* (1841). This short story is set on Mosken and Vaeröy, two of the outermost islands in the Lofoten archipelago. Poe’s novel about the whale hunter Pym from Nantucket, describes an adventurous sea voyage to the Antarctic, which ends abruptly as a chasm opens to the interior of the Earth.

Fascinated over Poe’s work, Jules Verne not only made a sequel to the Antarctic<sup>4</sup> story, he even wrote a literary essay on the American Author. The text «Edgar Poe et ses œuvres» was published April 1864, while Verne’s *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* was under way. In the essay, he comments the above mentioned stories, and also the *The Gold Bug* (1843). They all have elements, also to be found in the Verne novel. The coded message in runic letters that opens the novel (CT), is solved in a similar way to how it is done in the Gold Bug mystery.

To extend the list of early texts with a Nordic relation, known to Verne, such as the saga texts of Snorre Sturlason, there is every reason to believe that he also was acquainted with the Norwegian-Danish playwright Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754) and his only novel. *Niels Klim's Journey to the World Under Ground*<sup>5</sup> was first printed in 1741, originally in Latin. The book *Nicolai Klimii Iter Subterraneum*<sup>6</sup>, about a young man accidentally discovering a hidden, inhabited world inside the planet, made him widely acclaimed across Europe. The first French edition came in 1743: *Le Voyage souterrain de Niels Klim*<sup>7</sup>

A few years later, an extended edition, with fictitious forewords and afterwords was published. In one of these paratexts, added to the core story by Holberg, the grandchildren of

---

<sup>2</sup> Probably the author of the book *Symzonia* from 1820, under pseudonym: Captain Adam Seaborn

<sup>3</sup> Fitting, Peter (2004): *Subterranean worlds, a critical anthology*.

<sup>4</sup> Verne: *Le Sphinx des glaces* (1897).

<sup>5</sup> Full English title: *Journey to the World Under Ground, being the Subterraneous Travels of Niels Klim*.

<sup>6</sup> Holberg’s story is about Niels from Bergen (Holberg’s hometown) returning from studies in Copenhagen. While exploring a nearby mountain area, he discovers a cave leading far into the earth. Bringing a rope the next day, he climbs down. Unfortunately the rope breaks, and he falls down into an empty space. Eventually, he finds himself floating, orbiting, in the center of the earth, in an inner universe with both a sun and, the planet Nazar. Both the planet and the inner crust of the earth, the ‘firmament’, proves to be inhabited by various creatures. Some are speaking trees, other resemble monkeys, while others are quite humanlike. Through encounters with the population of the different nations, various topics, like theology, way of life and women’s rights, are discussed. Through this, the author gets the opportunity to comment on society back home. In this way, the story has many similarities to *Gulliver’s travels* by Jonathan Swift, written 15 years earlier.

<sup>7</sup> En français par Éléazar de Mauvillon.

the narrator (Niels K.), Per and Anders Klim, ‘defend’ their grandfather against alleged, false accusations. In the book’s foreword they also claim that, to verify Klim’s narrative, they have sent ‘Mr. Peyvis’ from Northern Norway back down to the underground world. And, according to these paratexts, we also understand that the account of Niels Klim, initially was discovered amongst the abandoned papers of one ‘Major Abelin’, allegedly being the first to discover Klim’s handwritten manuscript. In sum, all these added paratexts were supposed to bring authenticity to Holberg’s story

Not only is Holberg’s novel a very early book in the ‘Hollow Earth’-tradition, and therefore may have been an inspiring influence to Verne. Even the narrative structure of Holberg’s work resembles Verne’s story, if we focus on the paratexts that Holberg included in his book. And that is what I find most noteworthy regarding the intertextual relationship between the two novels: An abandoned manuscript, containing explanations and descriptions about a descent into the earth, leads to another traveller deciding to try the same underground journey.

It has to be stressed, though, that Holberg’s work is about a utopia. A journey to alternate worlds of high ethical value, which literary purpose is to point out weaknesses in our own society, whereas Verne’s project has a more scientific-didactic agenda, popularizing science through fiction (Evans, 1988, p.2). Maybe it is this agenda he underlines in the title, choosing the word ‘centre’ - by this indicating that he wants us to get ‘to the bottom’ of something. As the story does not describe a journey to the center-point of the globe – which would have been impossible. This is all clarified by the author, in accordance with recent knowledge, through a conversation between professor Lidenbrock and his nephew, about the Earth’s extreme core temperatures. And, his expedition only explores certain cavities just inside the crust of the Earth. The title, on the other hand, *Voyage au centre de la Terre*, points to the symbolic side of the venture – to get to know the inner secrets of the planet.

### **The country of Odin, Tor and Frey**

Just as intriguing as the idea of a hollow Earth, surely, Norse mythology, the cosmography of the Vikings and the runic alphabet, fascinated Jules Verne. In ‘Joyeuses Misères’ his in-depth knowledge of all this, is clearly demonstrated. We hear about Odin, Thor, and a long list of the Viking Gods and their abilities.

— La Scandinavie, s’écria-t-il ! Visiter le pays d’Odin, de Thor et de Freyr. Les trois dieux du Wahala [Valhalla] connus sous le nom du Sublime, de l’Egalement Sublime, et du Troisième ! Adorer Freya, la déesse de l’amour, Aegyr, le dieu de l’océan, Kar, le dieu des vents, Loki, le dieu du feu, Tyr, le dieu de la guerre, et Bragi, le dieu de l’éloquence ! Et le loup Feuris enchaîné jusqu’aux derniers jours du monde ! Sacrifier aux Trois Parques, Urd, la passée, Verandi, la présente, et Sihuld, la troisième ! M’inspirer des chants de l’ancienne Edda et de la couleur de la cosmogonie scandinave ! M’asseoir au foyer de cette famille antique, Snaer la neige et ses trois filles, Faun, la neige gelée, Driva, la neige fondue, et Miol, la neige blanche ! Ami ! Penses-tu que je puisse hésiter ! (JM)

This excited burst of knowledge, is gathered from the *Prose Edda*, written down by Snorre Sturlason around year 1000. It is no wonder, then, that Iceland, his homeland - is an obvious starting point for the story. By this combining Norse lore, the Norwegian Saga of kings and volcanic activity, a symbol of the creating and renewing forces of the Earth.

As we know, the expedition into the Earth starts with a descent into a volcanic crater on Iceland. The travellers had become aware of this entrance, after studying an ancient version of *Heimskringla*, the other famous, Norse text, by Snorre Sturlason.

Inside this very old book, the previous owner had left a document with an encrypted message, signed ‘Arne Saknussem’, written in runic letters. The Hetzel edition of Verne’s novel contains an image of these, rather strange letters.

### **Saknussem or Magnusson**

We know from many Verne-stories, that names selected for the protagonist, or other characters of the cast, appears to have been inspired by real-world persons. This might also be the case regarding names chosen by Verne for this novel, and is clearly illustrated by looking at early, Norwegian translations of the novel. One translator, probably well acquainted with scholarly history, changed ‘Saknussem’ to ‘Magnusson’. Evidently according to facts; the historian Árne Magnússon (1663–1730) from Iceland, was responsible for collecting and archiving handwritten manuscript of the Sagas, both in Norway and on Iceland. It should be noted, though, that quite possibly Verne misspelled some names intentionally, underlining the fictional element of his prose, while still alluding to historical facts.

As it appears, other names from the story, can also be linked to reality. As mentioned earlier, the novel was written shortly after the author’s own Nordic journey, that did not include Iceland. But still, it is clear that travel experiences from July 1861 was used in describing how the narrator Axel and his uncle travelled towards this North Atlantic island. In fact, as it seems, most details regarding the German mineralogist and his name, may be linked to the journey to visit Norway in -61.

### **Churches in fact and fiction**

According to Verne scholar Volker Dehs, a probable inspiration for the scientist’s name – Professor Lidenbrock – may have been Friedrich Lindenberg (1573–1648, also spelled Lindembrocke), who was philologist and, (like Magnusson) a collector of handwritten manuscripts. He was, what is called ‘Domherr’ at the Michaelis church in Hamburg (Dehs, 2005, p.123). Probably, regarding text and language, he shared mutual interests, both with the novel’s protagonist and its author. But, needless to say, he did not have much to do with mineralogy. There was, however, another connection to the author - Verne’s particular interest in churches. A fascination that has surfaced on various occasions.

This leads us over to impressions from 1861, and the author’s diary, where several church visits are described – and depicted. Verne’s many small drawings<sup>8</sup>, particularly of bell towers, illustrate his comments about churches he observed in Ystad, Stockholm, Kongsberg, Heddal (Hitterdal, close to Notodden) Rjukan and eventually ‘Vor frelsers kirke’<sup>9</sup> in Copenhagen. Connected to these places, quite a few elements, later to be found in Verne’s story, appears to have a relation to incidents in July and August that year.

---

<sup>8</sup> Drawings can be seen at: [julesverne.no/english/verne-diary-2/vernes-drawings](http://julesverne.no/english/verne-diary-2/vernes-drawings)

<sup>9</sup> The Church of Our Saviour

A clear indication can be found in the first chapter of the novel, where Lidenbrock is introduced. Verne and his travel companions left France on Tuesday, July 2. Arriving by train, their first overnight stop after Paris, was Hamburg, and their accommodation was in the vicinity of streets and buildings, particularly mentioned in the novel – or more correctly; which therefore ended up as details in the novel. The author stayed at Hotel Zum Cronprinzen in Jungfernstieg. This location was within walking distance of Königstrasse, where professor Lidenbrock lived, according to the novel – and also the Michaelis church, where the manuscript collector, Domherr Lindenbrocke was based. From the diary, we understand that Verne ascended the church tower, and from there he describes a panoramic view over the city.

Reading the opening lines of *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, we know that both “numéro 19 de König-strasse” and the sound from the bell tower of “Saint-Michel” were among the very first details to be presented.

### **Verne’s Scandinavia**

The journey through Germany, Sweden, Norway and Denmark lasted 5 weeks, and will only be briefly described on this occasion. In the continuation of this paper, selected details only, regarding Kongsberg, Heddal and Copenhagen will be emphasized – for the same reason as my comments about Hamburg, where Verne’s personal experiences resulted in details for the novel: If a change of trains and accommodation for the night, had not been necessary in Hamburg – the protagonist of the novel would not have had his home address in this very city, and Lidenbrock would not have been the mineralogist’s name.

Arriving July 3, Verne and his two friends had the opportunity to spend more than a whole day to enjoy Hamburg before boarding the train for Lübeck on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Here they had tickets, pre-booked for the steamship “Svea”, which took them over to Ystad, at the southern tip of Sweden. From there, the journey continued along the Baltic coast via Kalmarsund, all the way up to Stockholm. In the evening of July 7, they check in at Hotel Rydberg, situated at Gustav Adolf’s square, opposite the Royal Castle. Among the very first comments written down in Verne’s diary that day, are great views of the city, and bells sounding from numerous church towers – “clochers”. Alongside these comments, is a drawing of Katarina-kyrkan (church), down at eastern Södermalm. Above the drawing he has written:

“Maria K<sup>10</sup> – Riddar Holm K – Nicholas K – la plus élevé est Maria K dans le [Södermalm] sud de Stockholm”. (VCV)

For the continuation of the trip, the plan was to cross the country towards Norway, by means of the waterways that connect the east and the west coast. In his diary, Jules Verne describes the canals and the great amount of locks that lift them over the elevated areas and down again, to finally end up in Gothenburg on July 17.

---

<sup>10</sup> K= Kyrka /church

Very early the next morning, after a short night's sleep, they get on the Norwegian steamer «Viken»<sup>11</sup>, a paddle wheeler carrying mail and passengers. After sailing eleven hours in heavy weather, they arrive Stavern (at the time called Fredriksvern), on the coast of southern Norway, at July 18. After delivering mail, the steamer continue swiftly along the coast of the Oslo fjord, calling at Horten, Vallö, Moss and Dröbak. Just after midnight the next day, the ship reaches Christiania harbour, and the travelers checks in at Hotel du Nord. In the following days, they benefit from theatre and other cultural activities, just as in the Swedish capital.

Verne, who had certain chronic health issues, visits a medical office. Apparently, according to the diary, this consultation on July 20, leads to new acquaintances. For the next day, Dr. Boeck<sup>12</sup>, a well-known physician, and also an MP representing Kongsberg, asks Verne to come visit at his country home at Eidsvoll, close to lake Mjösa. He may also have given advice for the following days in Norway, travelling towards his hometown Kongsberg, and finally Rjukan. This is indicated by a certain sentence in Norwegian, written by somebody on the cardboard inside cover of the author's diary: "Herre Boeck sende os her til herre Ole Dahle"<sup>13</sup> (VCV). O. Dahle was the proprietor of the Dale/Rjukan guesthouse in Telemark, where Verne stayed the week after.

### **Inspiring corridors of the Kongsberg silver mines**

Well in advance, the three friends had been in touch with travel organizer Thomas Bennett of Christiania, who provided carioles (karjol) - horse and cart - towards Telemark. The first leg of the trip though, is the steam sloop «Josephine» to Sandvigen, just west of the capital. Here they spend the night before continuing to Drammen, only to stop for a meal at Hotel Scandinavie<sup>14</sup>, and then onwards to Hokksund (Haugund in Verne's days).

In his diary, Jules Verne describes how the short, bright, summer nights of the North makes it possible to continue through the night, all the way to Kongsberg (King's mountain). On arrival the 25<sup>th</sup>, at the last relay station before the silver mining town, they wait in vain for new horses. Eventually they reach Hansen's private hotel – run by the widow Inger Kristine Hansen<sup>15</sup>.

They stayed in Kongsberg until the next day, and Verne observes the numerous wooden houses, narrow streets and the church. The diary contains short, keyword like comments about their excursions to the the Labro waterfall, the forest, and notably, the silver mines of Kongsberg: "entrer dans les mines – atmosphère humide – joyeux mineurs" (VCV). Apparently, as water is dripping from the roof of the mine shaft, their hair gets wet, and the air is damp. They encounter merry miners, wearing a special kind of uniform. Jules Verne demonstrates his observations by adding drawings next to the text in the diary. The

---

<sup>11</sup> «Viken» also appear as ship name in later novels: *Un Billet de loterie* (1886) and *Mirifiques Aventures de Maître Antifer* (1894)

<sup>12</sup> A physician named Boek (sic) appears in *Un Billet de loterie* (1886).

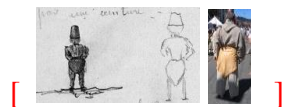
<sup>13</sup> 'Mister Boeck sends us here to Mr. Ole Dahle'.

<sup>14</sup> This hotel, with it's French name, is also mentioned in *Un Billet de loterie* (1886).

<sup>15</sup> Those familiar with *Un Billet de loterie* (1886), might recollect the name of the female innkeeper - the widow, Dame Hansen.



characteristic head gear, and miner's apron on their backside, is typical to European miners of the period. [Verne drawings can be seen on: [julesverne.no/english/verne-diary-2/vernes-drawings](http://julesverne.no/english/verne-diary-2/vernes-drawings)]



It is easy to think that, a visit inside the mountain, exploring the shafts of the Kongsberg silver mines, was an inspiring experience for an author, just about to write a story describing a journey through mountain corridors leading to the interior of the Earth.

### **Stave church with runic inscription, from the days of Snorre**

The agency of Bennett, who at the time provided a modern and well established network for travellers, had organized tours through the Buskerud and Telemark counties for some time. The French travel magazine *Le Tour du monde* (LTdM), well known to Jules Verne, had two years earlier covered such a journey, onwards from Kongsberg up to the famous Rjukan waterfall and the Gausta mountain, as was also the destination for Verne and his friends. The magazine described in detail, the route most frequently used, for tourists headed for this area. Transport by horse and cart through the Jondalen Valley, passing Bolkesjö, over to Tinnsjö (lake Tinn) was considered the shortest and therefore the quickest way to get there.

Also mentioned by *Le Tour du monde*, was another tourist attraction - the medieval, wooden, Hitterdal stave church (now: Heddal), dating back to the 1200s, not far from the Bamble hamlet. «Arrivés à Bamble nous devons faire une pointe sur l'église d'Hitterdal, un des rares monuments de bois du treizième siècle qui subsistent encore en Norvège» (Riant,LTdM,1860)

To get there, travellers had to deviate from the above described plan, after Kongsberg. Evidently, this was also chosen by Jules Verne and his travel party. The prospect of visiting this unique church, may have decided. Descriptions in his diary makes it clear that the three friends chose a path more to the south, leading over what is called the Meheia ridge, between Kongsberg and Notodden: “départ à 06.30 heures – à 9 heures nous nous arrêtons pour déjeuner dans une auberge fort proper – 4 maisons former le village . A l’horizon une chaîne tres elevée” - a midi ½ arrivée à Tiness, puis Listhus” (VCV)



After an early departure from Kongsberg, they apparently made a stop for a meal at a nice,

village like guesthouse, with mountain views. Just after noon they arrive at Tinness, then Listhus - two local hamlets, close to (today) Notodden. By making this choice, en route to Lake Tinnsjø, the author would travel through the Heddal valley, and be able to stop to admire the famous stave church. So, it appears that once again, Verne's fascination for churches played a part. He did not pass up his chance to get a guided tour, and stopped at the Heddal /Hitterdal church for several hours.

One reason why Verne knew about the stave church (staves = wooden columns, supporting the ceiling) and wanted to see it, might also have been the works of Norwegian artist Adolph Tidemand, notably his 'Catechising' /'Le Catechiste', showing the interior of the Heddal church. Several works of his, depicting folklore and everyday life, had been published in Europe, and had already been presented in the same LTdM magazine. Apart from this, the paintings of Tidemand was also previously known to Verne, while working on *Salon de 1857* as an art critic<sup>16</sup>, covering the Paris art exhibition.



At the Hitterdal church, Jules Verne and his friends took their time and made contact with the locals, who were offering various onsite services to visitors. 12 years prior to this, the building had undergone restoration work. An attraction for anyone visiting the stave church, is a runic inscription on the western wall of the building, dating it to the mid-1200s, that is, to the days of Snorre Sturlason (1179–1241). These letters carved in wood, might quite likely be the author's first encounter with a 'real' runic message. Apart from this, printed images of such letters were probably known to him from the magazine *Le Monde illustré*. Anyway, by this, we know that the coded message found inside *Heimskringla*, at the very start of Verne's story, was a system of writing that the author had seen in use, with his own eyes. Such an impression may have triggered the interest for further studies, and therefore could add the Norse authenticity he was after.



[Runic letters at Heddal stave church]

<sup>16</sup> Verne, *Salon de 1857*: «Adolph Tidemand (1814-1876), peintre de scènes historiques et paysagiste norvégien ; un paysage historique exposé en 1855 lui avait valu une médaille de première classe.»

## **Rjukan and Gausta – back to the continent via Copenhagen**

In the afternoon, they continued to Tinnoset, and stayed the night there. Leaving the carioles early next morning, rowboat was used the 30 kilometers along Lake Tinnsjø, all the way to Haakaneset. From there, once again they traveled by horse into the Vestfjord valley, to reach Dale, close to Rjukan.

At Dale they stayed for three days at the local inn, until July 27.

During these days, the travellers enjoyed guided hikes, to see both the famous Rjukan waterfall and even to the summit of the Gausta mountain (1883 mtrs). 25 years later, the Dale guesthouse was featured in Verne's novel *Un Billet de loterie* (1886).

Starting July 30, they made a swift journey back, following exactly the same road. The only overnight stop was Hotel Scandinavie in Drammen. On the first day of August, they are once again back in Christiania. Saturday, two days later, Verne and Hignard was on the passenger list, bound for Copenhagen on the mail steamer «Kronprindsesse Louise».

From this point on, it is particularly interesting to compare the diary with the novel. Once they reach open sea in Skagerrak, north of Skagen - and all the way down to Kiel, then Hamburg - Verne's own travel route is identical to the one he decided for Professor Lidenbrock to follow from Germany towards Iceland, only going in the opposite direction. During the following two days in Denmark, we can trace numerous details from Verne's diary that became literary elements describing the experiences of the professor and his nephew Axel.

The paddle steamer, out of the Norwegian capital, enters the Kattegat, early Sunday morning on August 4, and the passengers can see the Swedish coast. Jules Verne wrote:

“Dimanche — le Cattegat – La cote de Suede – 5.1/4 arrive Elsineur [Helsingör] – le chateau Elsineur”. (VCV)

Evidently, what they see is the beautiful Kronborg castle, made famous in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and for which (according to 'Joyeuses Misères') composer Hignard, declared he intended to write a composition.

In the novel, the same surroundings are described in chapter IX underway to Iceland, as the schooner «Valkyrien»<sup>17</sup> set course direction Kattegat:

[...] donna à pleine toile dans le détroit. Une heure après la capitale du Danemark semblait s'enfoncer dans les flots éloignés et la Valkyrie rasait la côte d'Elseneur. Dans la disposition nerveuse où je me trouvais, je m'attendais à voir l'ombre d'Hamlet errant sur la terrasse légendaire. [...] Mais rien ne parut sur les antiques murailles; le château est, d'ailleurs, beaucoup plus jeune que l'héroïque prince de Danemark. [...] Le château de Krongborg disparut bientôt dans la brume, ainsi que la tour d'Helsingborg, élevée sur la rive suédoise, et la goélette s'inclina légèrement sous les brises du Cattégat. (CT)

---

<sup>17</sup> Verne may have observed the 2 Masted Schooner «Walkyrien af Bogense» (1857), under the command of Cpt. C. Kröll - while exploring the harbour area, close to his hotel. (this, and other local historic details regarding Copenhagen, provided by Leif Rasmussen of the Danish Jules Verne society).

At 8 o'clock the author reach Copenhagen harbour, where the Danish flags are flying, and people speak English. Then a custom visit, and soon they arrive the hotel.

“le Drapeau Danois – dans le port exterieure – visite en la Douane – arrive a l'hotel du Phénix – en la port parlant anglais” (VCV)

Verne checks in at Hotel Phoenix, which was among the best places to stay in Copenhagen at the time. It was situated in Norgesgade (Norway street), known as Bredgade (broad street) by people. Axel and his uncle stay at the same hotel in the novel:

«Enfin, à dix heures du matin, nous prenions pied à Copenhague; les bagages furent chargés sur une voiture et conduits avec nous à l'hôtel du Phoenix dans Bred-Gade.» (CT)

The next day, according to Verne's written notes, most of the day is spent sightseeing.

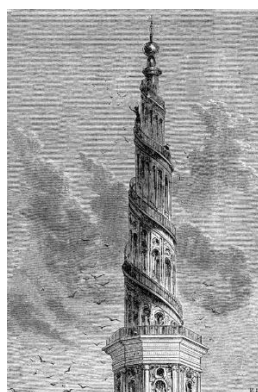
Monday, starting at 8, a morning walk over to an open square, after having admired the view of Copenhagen:

“Lundi 5 – leve à 8 heures – aspect de Copenhague – Dans le ville – arrive a la porte – comestibles – viande – Dejeuner au café dans la place – le theatre” (VCV)

Just a short walk away from the hotel is Nyhavn (new port), where probably several ships were moored, at the time Verne had his morning walk. Close by, is Kongens Nytorv (King's square), with the royal theatre. We understand that at a nearby café, food is served.

### **‘Des leçons d’abîme’ - lessons in abyss**

On Monday, August 5, the author takes a canal roundtrip in the harbour area. A small boat takes him out to the islands. At Christianshavn, not Amager as stated in the novel, ‘Vor frelsers’ kirke (Church of Our Saviour) is located, famous both for it's organ, supported by elephant sculptures, and also for the mighty tower, 90 meter high. A spiral staircase winds it's way up on the outside, all the way to the top.



[Drawing CT, Édouard Riou]

promenade au port – un barque pouvez aller à l'isle – l'église de freisler [frelasers church] – magnifique orgue supportant par ses elephants – marche a le tour – escalier tournant au dep. – tres élevé – vue de la ville – plan bien exact – le palais du roi – les fortification – la prison de fregats – pantalons mi jaune et gris – travail dans le ville – retour (VCV)

Jules Verne describes in his diary, a climb up the winding stairs, and comments on the altitude. From up here, the whole city can be seen, including the Royal Castle and the

fortifications. Close to the jail, or the ‘tukthuset’ as it was called, Verne describes ongoing work, apparently done by inmates, working in yellow and grey trousers.

In the novel (chapter VIII) we read about an almost identical excursion to the same church, next to a drawing of this characteristic bell tower. Here Professor Lidenbrock insists Axel ascend the tower repeatedly, to practice not being intimidated by having the abyss below.

[...] vue d'un certain clocher situé dans l'île d'Amak, qui forme le quartier sud-ouest de Copenhague. Je reçus l'ordre de diriger nos pas de ce côté; je montai dans une petite embarcation à vapeur qui faisait le service des canaux, et, en quelques instants, elle accosta le quai de Dock-Yard. Après avoir traversé quelques rues étroites où des galériens, vêtus de pantalons mi-partie jaunes et gris, travaillaient sous le bâton des argousins, nous arrivâmes devant Vor-Frelsers-Kirk. Cette église n'offrait rien de remarquable. Mais voici pourquoi son clocher assez élevé avait attiré l'attention du professeur: à partir de la plate-forme, un escalier extérieur circulait autour de sa flèche, et ses spirales se déroulaient en plein ciel. (CT)

After the towering experiences, the author describes in the diary, the continuation of the roundtrip on the steam sloop. They pass the Thorvaldsen museum and the Royal Castle, and, once again they stop at the King's square, this time for dinner. We understand that the restaurant is French, and that the proprietor is named Vincent.

apres á le Musee Torvaldsen 11 á 9 – on suivant de la porte – le palais du roi magnificant – bateau á vapeur – Diner a la restauration française chez Vicente sur la place – apres Diner à Tivoli – demande grand de voitures – la route tres charmante – on passe par des bras de mer – des fortifications – arrive a Tivoli – cafe chanteuse – Belge que chante au francaise – promenade (VCV)

As if the diary notes had served as a memo pad for drafting the novel, both the French restaurant, the name Vincent and the museum, are all details to be found in the novel's chapter VIII:

Nous nous rendîmes à Kongens-Nye-Torw, place irrégulière où se trouve un poste avec deux innocents canons braqués qui ne font peur à personne. Tout près, au n° 5, il y avait une «restauration» française, tenue par un cuisinier nommé Vincent; nous y déjeunâmes suffisamment pour le prix modéré de quatre marks chacun. Puis je pris un plaisir d'enfant à parcourir la ville; mon oncle se laissait promener; d'ailleurs il ne vit rien, ni l'insignifiant palais du roi, ni le joli pont du dix-septième siècle qui enjambe le canal devant le Muséum, ni cet immense cénotaphe de Thorvaldsen, orné de peintures murales horribles [...] (CT)

Jules Verne chose, on his part, to end the night at the Copenhagen Tivoli and enjoyed the café entertainers, singing in French. His characters of the novel, though, were sent to bed early. They had to gather strength for repeated ascents in the church tower, before starting their

journey towards Iceland and into the Earth. The author, on the other hand, takes the train to Korsør the day after, and then onwards by the steamship «Hermod» down to Kiel. Back on the continent, he boarded the Hamburg train, bound for Paris. In other words, Jules Verne ends his own Nordic journey along the exact same route, as he sends professor Lidenbrock and nephew away on their's.

Per Johan Moe, January 2020

[www.julesverne.no/english](http://www.julesverne.no/english)

[drawings displayed at: [julesverne.no/english/verne-diary-2/vernes-drawings](http://julesverne.no/english/verne-diary-2/vernes-drawings)]

### Bibliography:

Abbreviations:

CT: Verne, J : *Voyage au centre de la Terre*

JM: Verne, J : *Joyeuses Misères de trois voyageurs en Scandinavie*

VCV: Verne, J : "Carnet de voyage 1861", Bibliothèques d'Amiens Métropole, JV MS 12.5

Dehs, Volker (2005): *Jules Verne, eine kritische Biographie*.

Düsseldorf, Artemis & Winkler

Evans, Arthur B. (1988): *Jules Verne Rediscovered: Didacticism and the Scientific Novel*

Connecticut, Greenwood Press Inc.

Fitting, Peter (2004): *Subterranean worlds, a critical anthology*.

Middletown, CT/USA, Wesleyan University Press

Gjeving, Bjørn N. (1997): *Moskstraumen – myter, diktning og virkelighet*.

Oslo, Yearbook, The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.

Holberg, Ludvig (1828): *Niels Klim's Journey to the World Under Ground*

London, Thomas North

Poe, Edgar Allan ([1841] 2011): "A descent into the Maelström", In: *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*.

New York, Barnes and Nobles

Poe, Edgar Allan ([1838] 1999): *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*.

London, Penguin Classics

Verne, Jules (1861): *Diary / "Carnet de Voyage"*. Bibliothèques d'Amiens Métropole, JV MS 12.5

-----  
Per Johan Moe (1956)

is assistant professor at University of Southeast Norway,

Department of Languages and Literature Studies.

Tel. +47 91598639 e-mail: [pjm@usn.no](mailto:pjm@usn.no)