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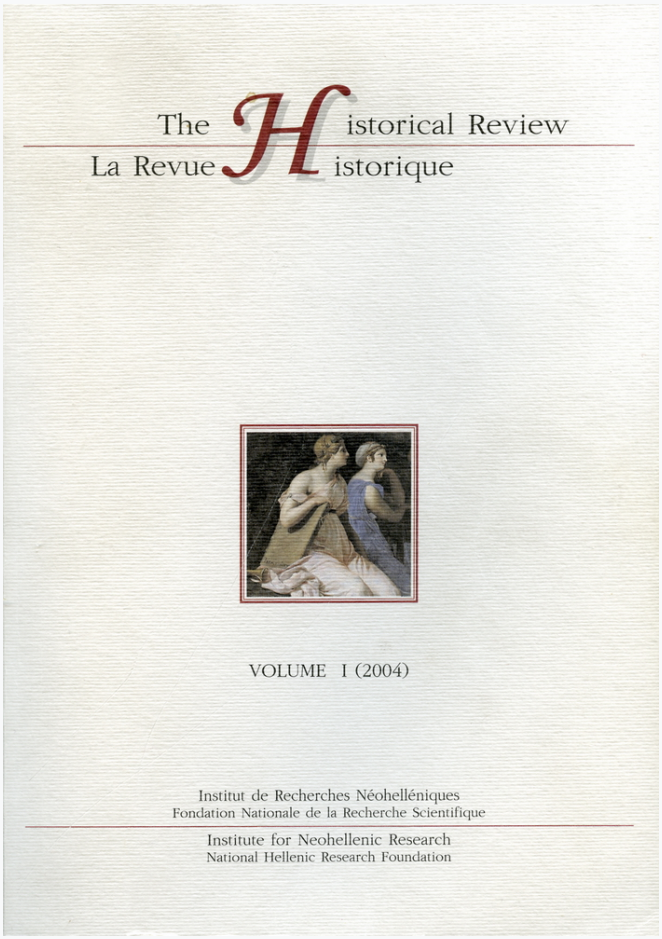

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JULES VERNE'S CAPTAIN NEMO AND FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY GUSTAVE FLOURENS: A HIDDEN CHARACTER MODEL?

Leonidas Kallivretakis

ABSTRACT: This article treats the recent assumption made by Vernian specialist William Butcher that Jules Verne's most famous character, Captain Nemo, is based on the French revolutionary intellectual Gustave Flourens (1838-1871), son of the eminent physiologist J. P. M. Flourens. Gustave Flourens fought in the Cretan insurrection of 1866-1868, later participated in the republican opposition against Napoleon III's imperial regime, eventually became a friend of Karl Marx and was finally killed as a general of the Paris Commune. By comparing step-by-step Verne's inspiration and writing procedures with Flourens' unfolding activities and fame, it is concluded that there is little basis for such an assumption. The article includes also a brief account of the Cretan question in the nineteenth century and of the deep discord between Marx's and Flourens' respective analyses of the Eastern Question.

In the last twelve years few names worldwide have been so closely connected with Jules Verne as that of Dr William Butcher, responsible for the latest and by far most important critical editions in English of the French writer's four most successful novels: *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1992), *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1995), *20,000 Leagues under the Seas* (1998) and *The Mysterious Island* (2001).[1]

Dr Butcher's main area of interest is nineteenth-century literature and he is broadly considered as "the father of Verne studies in English". There is no doubt that his contribution in reintroducing Jules Verne's works to the English-speaking public of our time, is unique. His work was unanimously acclaimed by his British and American colleagues; the most honorific and significant praise, however, came straight from the hardcore of the French Vernian specialists, namely the *Société Jules Verne*, which didn't hesitate to describe him "a pioneer of vernian studies" and his editions "a small revolution", not only for the quality of the translation but also for the introduction and the

[1] Jules Verne, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, tr., intr., notes William Butcher, Oxford: University Press, 1992, third revised edition 1998; *Around the World in Eighty Days*, tr., intr., notes William Butcher, Oxford: University Press, 1995; *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, tr., intr., notes William Butcher, Oxford: University Press, 1998, revised edition 2001; *The Mysterious Island*, tr. Sidney Kravitz, ed. Arthur B. Evans, intr., critical material, notes William Butcher, Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.

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notes, underlying the fact that "no French edition exists worthy to be compared to Butcher's editorial level".[2]

In his lengthy introduction to *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, Butcher puts forward a quite interesting hypothesis on the origins of captain Nemo's character:

> His [= Nemo's] life must be based partly on Gustave Flourens, a freedom fighter in several countries praised in Verne's second book, *Paris in the Twentieth Century*.[3]

In his more recent notes on the *Mysterious Island*, Butcher comes back to his assumption in a more affirmative manner and with more details:

> Nemo is based on Gustave Flourens (1838-71), a French revolutionary and close friend of Mrs Karl and Miss Jenny Marx. Flourens fought in the Polish insurrection (1863) and Cretan uprising (1866), supported the Irish nationalists, lived in exile in London and Belgium, and wrote distinguished volumes like *Histoire de l'homme* (1863) and *Science de l'homme* (1865), as well as political works (1863, 1864). He was active in French politics from 1869 to 1871. Clear similarities exist with Nemo's scientific and revolutionary activities and his romantic rebellion. A vital clue is provided by *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, set in 1960, which describes its hero as 'pass[ing] in front of the Sorbonne where M. Flourens was still giving his lectures with the greatest success, still keen, still young' (he occupied a chair at the Natural History Museum at twenty-five).[4]

It is true that both Verne and Flourens entered in the public scene during the 1860s. In order to clear out the hypothesis proposed by Butcher, one has to start by setting up a detailed parallel chronology, focusing on Verne's inspiration and writing of *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, and comparing it with Flourens' unfolding activities and fame. For Verne's part, we will rely upon the Vernian specialists, mostly on Butcher himself.

Verne's manuscript of what was to become the first novel of the legendary series known as *Voyages Extraordinaires*, was presented to and accepted by editor Pierre-Jules Hetzel in 1862, being published the following year under the title *Five Weeks in a Balloon*. Hetzel asked Verne to write more novels combining science fiction

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[2] Volker Dehs, «L'écrivain réhabilité par son écriture», *Bulletin de la société Jules Verne* 136 (4th trimester 2000).

[3] William Butcher, "Introduction" in Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, p. xvii.

[4] Jules Verne, *The Mysterious Island*, note 139.

and adventure and thus followed *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864), *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865), *Adventures of Captain Hatteras* (1866), *Les Enfants du capitaine Grant* (1867, known in English as *In Search of the Castaways*) and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas* (1869-1870).

As Butcher himself notices in his introduction to *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, Jules Verne wrote his most famous novel partly thanks to George Sand, who sent him a letter as early as 1865, suggesting that the sea was the one area of the globe where his "scientific knowledge and imagination" had not yet been put to use. Already on 10 August 1866, Verne notices that: "I am also preparing our *Journey under the Waters*" (the novel's provisional title).[5] So, *Twenty Thousand Leagues* was written between 1866 and 1869,[6] while some finishing strokes were put in early 1870. The first half seems to be almost finished in August 1868.[7] The novel was primarily published as a serial in Hetzel's periodical *Magasin d'éducation et de récréation*, from March 1869 to June 1870; as a book, the first volume appeared on 28 October 1869 and the second on 13 June 1870.

It seems that the basic inspiration for the novel's main character took place in the early stages of the writing. Butcher accurately points out that "a reading of [...] Verne's *Backwards to Britain* –written in about 1859, but published only in 1989– [...] clearly demonstrates the source of Nemo's [...] general lifestyle". As for the main features of Nemo's character, he demonstrates that they were already shaped in Verne's first manuscript of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, and even in a more radical orientation that in its final version:

> We see, above all, a different Nemo, more independent and more intransigent. In addition to being an engineer, naturalist, collector, writer, and freedom fighter, the earlier Nemo is an original composer as well; and the music he prefers to 'all the ancient and modern' is his own! The often incongruous Christian element is generally absent from his life; and the

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[5] Letter published in Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *Correspondance inédite de Jules Verne et de Pierre-Jules Hetzel (1863-1886),* Vol. I *(1863-1874)*, Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1999, p. 41.

[6] With a fifteen months interval, due to the fact that Verne was asked to prepare an *Illustrated Geography of France and its Colonies*, published in 1867. See Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 62.

[7] "I finished the first volume of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*", he wrote Hetzel on 19 August 1868; he inspected the first illustrations in December 1868 and he was rewriting the second volume in January-February 1869; see Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 76, 80, 84-86, 88-89, 94-96; see also William Butcher, "Introduction" in Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, p. xv.

> published Virgin by Leonardo is here 'a half-dressed woman'. [...] Nemo describes the all-important *Vengeur* as a 'Republican' ship: a red rag designed to enrage Hetzel.[8]

There is evidence however, that some of Nemo's features were still under elaboration up to the spring of 1868: "I'm working furiously. I've had a good idea that emerges nicely from the subject. This unknown man must no longer have any contact with humanity [...] He's not on earth any more, he manages without the earth, [...] the sea must provide him with everything, clothing and food (28 March 1868)".[9]

"Suppose Nemo to be a Pole"

It is widely acknowledged by all Vernian scholars that Verne "originally depicted Nemo as a brilliant Polish scientist driven to violence by his intense hatred for the Russian czar who had massacred his family"; this fact is known to Butcher: "In *Twenty Thousand Leagues* Nemo was originally Polish, and his enemies Russian".[10] This identification was a reference to the so-called Second Polish Revolution, which erupted in January 1863, on the initiative of the most radical fraction of the Polish nationalists, who aimed at complete independence, rejecting the compromise of a semi-autonomous Polish state under Russian rule. The uprising spread rapidly, provoking the diplomatic intervention of Great Britain, France and Austria, but the Russian government reacted severely, securing the support of Prussia. Yet, the insurrection was not finally crushed until May 1864, and then with great cruelty, which provoked a strong reaction in European public opinion.

But Verne's editor was deeply concerned about the possible political and commercial consequences of such a scenario and firmly rejected the author's suggestion for a Polish hero. Although this question seems to have been settled by 1867,[11] Verne often regretted his giving way and kept coming back, whenever there was a disagreement with his publisher, as in the case when Hetzel expressed his repugnance to the "infamies" committed by *Nautilus*, i.e. causing many ships to sink by ramming them, some of them intentionally:

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[8] William Butcher, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

[9] Letter published in Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit.*, tr. in English William Butcher, *op. cit.*, p. xx.

[10] Jules Verne, *The Mysterious Island,* op. cit.; *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas,* op. cit.

[11] "But, to be frank, I regret my Pole, I had got used to him, we were good friends, and in addition it was more straightforward, more sincere", wrote Verne in spring 1867; Jules Verne, *The Mysterious Island*, note 139.

> Suppose Nemo to be a *Pole*, and the ship sunk a *Russian* one, would there be the shadow of an objection to raise? No, a hundred times no! […] the first idea of the book, true, logical, complete: a Pole – Russia. But since we can not say it [...], let's imagine it can be *that* (April 1869);[12] A Polish nobleman whose daughters have been raped, wife killed with an axe, father died under the knout, a Pole whose friends perished in Siberia and whose nationality is going to disappear from Europe, under the Russian tyranny! If that man has no right to sink Russian frigates anywhere he runs across them, then vengeance is nothing but a meaningless word anymore. If it was me, under the circumstances, I would *sunk* and without remorse (June 1869).[13]

The atmosphere became explosive when Hetzel proposed that Nemo "be portrayed instead as a sworn enemy of the slave trade, thereby providing a clear ideological justification for Nemo's merciless attacks on certain seagoing vessels".[14] In a letter dated 17 May 1869, Verne stands up firmly to his editor's suggestions:

> I see now that you are imagining a fellow very different from my own. And this is very serious, even more serious because I am totally incapable of depicting what I don't feel. Obviously, I don't see Captain Nemo as you do. I justify this terrible action of the Captain by the provocation that is aimed at him. Nemo doesn't sink ships simply to sink them; he does not attack; he responds to attacks. Nowhere, despite what your letter says, have I portrayed a man who kills for the sake of killing. He is a man of generous nature whose emotions sometimes become incensed by the milieu in which he is living. His hatred of humanity is sufficiently explained by what he and his loved ones have suffered [...]
>
> You have said to me that abolition of slavery is the greatest economic fact of our time. I agree, but it is totally irrelevant here. I liked the incident of John Brown because of its concision, but, in my opinion, it weakens the Captain. We must keep vague his nationality, his person, and the events that threw him into this strange existence... If Nemo wanted to avenge himself on the slavers, he would only need to serve in Grant's army [...][15]

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[12] Letter published in Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104, tr. in English William Butcher, *op. cit.*

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 112-113. By the way, one cannot avoid noticing how painfully up-to-date this discussion sounds, a hundred and thirty five years later.

[14] Arthur B. Evans, "Hetzel and Verne: Collaboration and Conflict", *Science-Fiction Studies* XXVIII (2001), p. 100.

[15] Letter published in Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 106-108, tr. in English Arthur B. Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

Finally, it was decided that no further information was to be given on Nemo's enigmatic background: "Readers will suppose what they want, depending on their temperament", wrote Verne on 11 June 1869, three months after the first chapters had already appeared in the *Magasin d'éducation et de récréation*.[16] Let us not forget that "Nemo" stands for "no one" in Latin (and, as Butcher cleverly indicates, is also the name Ulysses takes in Odyssey's Latin version, in order to fool the Cyclops).[17]

Yet, some hints are in fact spread throughout the novel, stimulating the more informed readers' imagination. Entering into the Captain Nemo's cabin, professor Arronax's eye was caught by some pictures hanging on the wall:

> They were portraits of great men of history who had spent their lives in perpetual devotion to a great human ideal: Thaddeus Kosciusko,[18] the hero whose dying words had been *Finis Poloniae;* Markos Botzaris,[19] for modern Greece the reincarnation of Sparta's King Leonidas; Daniel O'Connell,[20] Ireland's defender; George Washington, founder of the American Union; Daniele Manin,[21] the Italian patriot; Abraham Lincoln, dead from the bullet of a believer in slavery; and finally, that martyr for the redemption of the black race, John Brown, hanging from his gallows as Victor Hugo's pencil has so terrifyingly depicted.

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[16] Letter published in Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

[17] Jules Verne, *The Mysterious Island*, note 137.

[18] Thaddeus Kosciusko (1746-1817), Polish political and military leader; he participated as a volunteer in the American War of Independence (1775-1783) and later led the Uprising of 1794 in Poland, Belarus, and Lithuania, against Russians and Prussians. Gravely wounded and defeated, he spent two years in a Russian prison, and died in Switzerland.

[19] Thanks mainly to Victor Hugo's romantic poems, the military leader from Souli Markos Botzaris (1790-1823), along with the navy captain from Psara Constantinos Canaris (1790-1877), were the most known –amongst the French public– heroes of the Greek War of Independence (1821-1829).

[20] Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), Irish lawer and political leader; he propelled the use of all the legal means available to win and secure Irish Catholics' emancipation and became the first Catholic in modern history to sit in the British House of Commons (1830); he was later charged by the British government with conspiracy and imprisoned (1843-1844), then left Ireland and died in Italy, while his experience led the new generation of Irish activists to consider that his peaceful tactics had failed.

[21] Daniele Manin (1804-1857), Italian intellectual, whose rank amongst the progenitors of Italian nationalism is slightly below Cavour, Mazzini and Garibaldi; his initial focus was on the legal struggle, but Austria's uncompromising attitude drove him to open agitation, and he led the 1848 revolution in Venice, where a republic was proclaimed with Manin as president. After Venice's capitulation he was obliged to leave for Paris; he died in exile.

> What was the bond between these heroic souls and the soul of Captain Nemo? From this collection of portraits could I finally unravel the mystery of his existence? Was he a fighter for oppressed peoples, a liberator of enslaved races? Had he figured in the recent political or social upheavals of this century? Was he a hero of that dreadful civil war in America, a war lamentable yet forever glorious...?[22]

In this extract both major candidates are not only present but, I believe, ingeniously underlined: On one hand, the Polish revolutionary is the first to be mentioned and his final words quoted, while on the other, the abolitionist fanatic John Brown, surrounded by the remarks on Lincoln's assassination and on the "glorious" American Civil War, closes the description of the pictures and the display of the options.

As we all know, Nemo's identity was to be "revealed", or rather invented, five years later, in Verne's *Mysterious Island*, first published between 1874 and 1875. In this novel, "the noble misanthrope […] made his entire life known", revealing that he was the Indian Prince Dakkar; his father sent him to Europe in order to receive a modern education, so that he would fight one day with equal arms against the oppressors of his country. "Prince Dakkar hated the only country where he never wished to set foot, the only nation whose overtures he constantly refused: he hated England and the more so because up to a point he admired it". When he returned to India (1849), he put his talents and his riches in the service of the cause of freedom, being the soul of the 1857 Indian insurrection. After the uprising was ferociously repressed,[23] his family lost and

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[22] Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, Second Part, Chapter 8, "The Bay of Vigo", tr. F. P. Walter, ed. to HTML Zvi Har'El.

[23] That revolt (also known as the Sepoy Rebellion or the Great Mutiny) which began with the mutiny of Indian troops stationed near Delhi and escalated to a year-long very violent insurrection, resulted to the dissolution of the East India Company and the establishment of the direct rule of India by British government in 1858. Though the revolt dragged on for almost two years it was effectively fought and won in a six-month whirlwind of murder, siege, atrocity, forced marches, heroism, savagery and brutality. Women and children were butchered by both sides. The British army was vengeful and cruel, as the troops saw themselves as dispensors of divine justice and given the frenzy of murder that had accompanied the start of the mutiny felt their cruelties to be simply repayment in kind. "As the myths of the mutiny grew", every dead British child became a slaughtered angel, every woman a violated innocent, every Indian a black-faced, blood-crazed savage. There was little room for mercy in the hearts of the British troops and those, such as the Governor Lord Canning, who spoke of restraint were derided by their countrymen. Canning became known contemptuously as "clemency Canning". *The Times* newspaper called for the execution of every mutineer in India and Lord Palmerston articulated the feelings of most Britons when

his land subjected again under severer oppression by England, Dakar, filled with disgust "against all who carried the name of man", and the hole civilized world, gathered the remains of his fortune, united with twenty of his companions and one day they all disappeared, searching "this independence which the inhabited world refused him, under the water, in the depths of the sea, where none could follow him".[24]

It has been speculated that Nemo's Indian identity was already decided by Verne when he wrote the final version of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, but Butcher considers this idea rather unfounded. Yet, there is an ambiguous passage in the book, when *Nautilus* sailed in the Indian Ocean and Nemo risked his life to save an Indian pearl-fisherman who was attacked by a shark, off the coast of Ceylon island; Professor Arronax, impressed by Nemo's "devotion to a human being, a representative of that race from which he had fled beneath the seas", shared these thoughts with the captain and received the following answer: "That Indian, professor, lives in the land of the oppressed, and I am to this day, and will be until my last breath, a native of that same land!"[25] Of course, this answer can be interpreted literally or as a rhetorical schema.

There is also a more violent but, intensively, even less clarified passage, towards the end of the book, when Nemo decides to ram an unknown warship which attacked *Nautilus*, sending it to the bottom with all her crew. Arronax tried to change his mind, but the captain responded furiously:

> – I'm the law, I'm the tribunal! I'm the oppressed, and there are my oppressors! Thanks to them, I've witnessed the destruction of everything I loved, cherished, and venerated-homeland, wife, children, father, and mother! There lies everything I hate! Not another word out of you! […]
> – From what country is that ship?
> – You don't know? Fine, so much the better! At least its nationality will remain a secret to you. Go below![26]

"Will the nationality of the stricken warship tell us the nationality of Captain Nemo?" is the question asked by Verne in the epilogue of *Twenty*

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he described the atrocities committed by the mutineers as acts "such as to be imagined and perpetrated only by demons sallying forth from the lowest depths of hell".

[24] Jules Verne, *L'Île mystérieuse*, published in *Magasin d'éducation et de récréation* between January 1874-December 1875 and separately in three volumes (10 Sept. 1874, 12 Apr. 1875, 28 Oct. 1875), Part three, Chapter 16, "Captain Nemo", tr. Sidney Kravitz, ed. to HTML Zvi Har'El.

[25] Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, Second Part, Chapter 3, "A Pearl Worth Ten Million", tr. F. P. Walter, *op. cit.*

[26] *Ibid.*, Second Part, Chapter 21, "A Mass Execution", tr. F. P. Walter, *op. cit.*

Thousand Leagues.[27] "It was an English frigate, sir, an English frigate, do you hear me? It attacked me! [...] I had justice and right on my side", answered the question himself a few years later, in *The Mysterious Island*.[28] Yet, there is no solid proof that when Verne posed the question in 1869-1870, he actually knew what answer he was going to give in 1874-1875.

Contrary to his reaction on Hetzel's suggestions about Nemo's character, Verne accepted with enthusiasm his editor's ideas on the enigmatic hero's physical appearance: "What a very good, an excellent idea to take colonel Charras as the model for captain Nemo. How stupid of me not to think about it myself", he wrote in a letter dated 26 December 1868.[29]

The author's demand for a face depicting all of his hero's prevailing qualities, that is "self-confidence, cold assurance and calmness, mixed with nervous temperament and courage", was not the only reason, I believe, for his enthusiasm over Hetzel's choice, brilliantly executed by the famous French illustrator Edouard Riou.[30] One has to admit that the model was interesting not only for his features but also for what he represented as a person.

Colonel Jean-Baptiste Charras (1810-1865) played a leading role in the February 1848 French revolution, that resulted to the overthrow of king Louis-Philippe and sparked movements all over Europe for political and social change, national unification (in most German and Italian states), as well as national liberation (amongst the Czechs, Hungarians, and other nationalities, mainly under the rule of the Habsburg empire). Charras participated, as the undersecretary of war, in the revolutionary provisional government that proclaimed France a republic. As a member of the National Assembly, he opposed President Louis Napoleon Bonaparte's absolutist ambitions and when the latter organized the December 1851 *coup d'état* that led to his proclamation as Emperor Napoleon III, Charras was fiercely persecuted and obliged to leave

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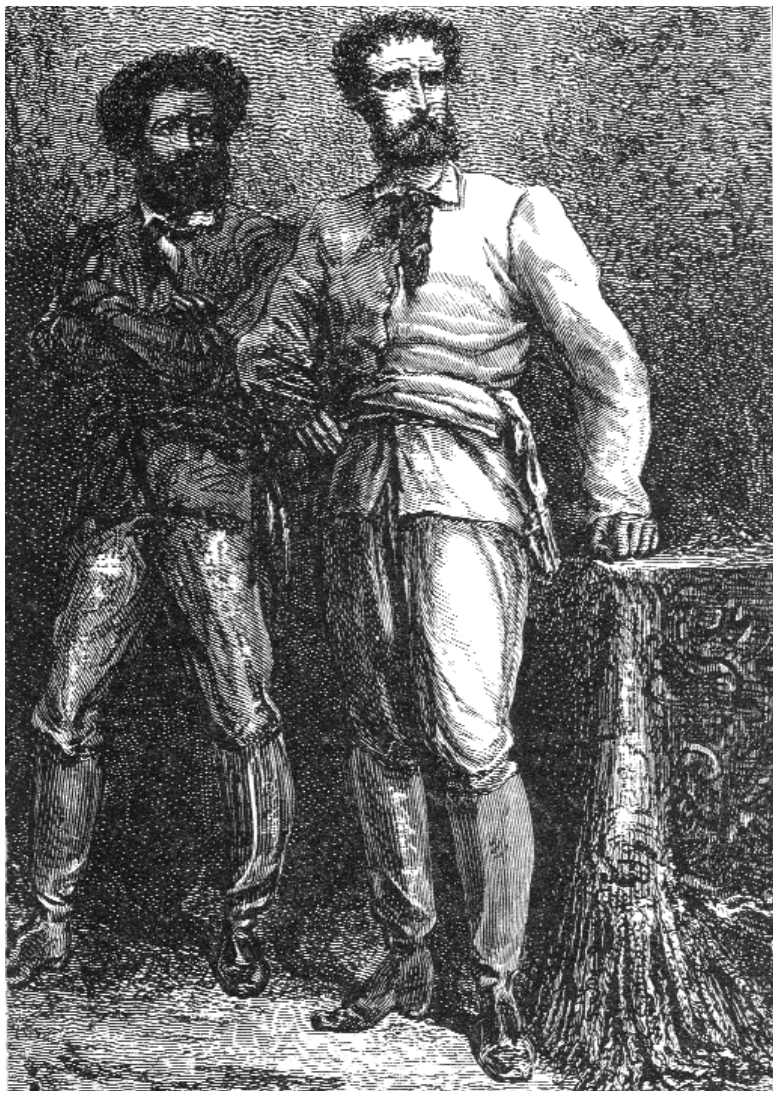
[27] *Ibid*., Second Part, Chapter 23, "Conclusion", tr. F. P. Walter, *op. cit*.

[28] Jules Verne, *The Mysterious Island*, Part three, Chapter 16, "Captain Nemo", tr. Sidney Kravitz, *op. cit*.

[29] Letter published in Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit*., pp. 89-90; see also Charles-Noël Martin, *La Vie et l'oeuvre de Jules Verne*, Paris 1978, p. 176 ; Arthur B. Evans, "The Illustrators of Jules Verne's *Voyages Extraordinaires*", *Science-Fiction Studies* XXV (1998), p. 244.

[30] Edouard Riou (1833-1900) is the first and most recognized illustrator of Verne's *Voyages Extraordinaires*; he illustrated Verne's earliest and most famous novels, including the first eleven chapters of *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, the remaining chapters being done by Alphonse de Neuville (1835-1885), another much-admired painter in France during this period; Charles-Noël Martin, *op. cit*., p. 244.



Captain Nemo in an illustration by Edouard Riou, approved by Jules Verne: "He was tall, his forehead broad, his nose straight, his mouth clearly etched, his teeth magnificent, his hands refined, tapered, worthy of serving a lofty and passionate spirit" (*Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas,* First Part, Chapter 8, "Mobilis In Moble", tr. F. P. Walter, edited by Zvi Har'El).

France, spending the rest of his life in exile. An intransigent democrat, he fought bonapartism up to his last moment, mainly through his political and historical studies, aimed not only at denouncing Napoleon *le Petit*'s intrigues,[31] but also at demolishing Napoleon the Great's military reputation.[32] Therefore, Charras was another one of those numerous *exilés* that resulted from the multiple revolutions and betrayed utopias of the nineteenth century, epitomized as an archetype in the enigmatic creature of Verne's imagination.

"Paris in the Twentieth Century"

According to Butcher, the most important clue for the connection between Nemo and Flourens, seems to be a phrase from another of Verne's novels; a novel that the author wrote before even he had in mind to write his *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, and that was never published during his lifetime; a novel that is another mystery by itself.

As it has been mentioned above, Verne's first manuscript (*Five Weeks in a Balloon*) was presented to Hetzel in 1862, and published the following year. Shortly after the publication (on 31 January 1863) and immediate popular success of this novel, Verne presented his second manuscript, under the title *Paris in the Twentieth Century*.

The story in *Paris in the Twentieth Century* is set in the future, in the Paris of the 1960s, "in a futuristic world where only technological writing is favoured", in an industrial materialist society, where the only "officially sanctioned creativity is government sponsorship of the arts"[33] and 99.9% of the students are studying "the socially 'useful' disciplines of mathematics, economics, engineering, and the natural sciences".[34] After reading the manuscript, Hetzel rejected *Paris in the Twentieth* Century, as simply unbelievable:

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[31] Jean-Baptiste Charras, *Enquête sur le Deux décembre et les faits qui le suivent,* Bruxelles 1852; *Les aides de camp du deux décembre*, Amsterdam 1853.

[32] "Colonel Charras opened the attack on the Napoleon cult in his work on the campaign of 1815", wrote Karl Marx on 23 June 1869. "Subsequently, and especially in the past few years, French literature has made an end of the Napoleon legend with the weapons of historical research, criticism, satire, and wit. Outside France, this violent breach with the traditional popular belief, this tremendous mental revolution, has been little noticed and still less understood"; Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1937; Jean-Baptiste Charras, *Histoire de la Campagne de 1815 – Waterloo*, Bruxelles 1858; J.-M. Largeaud, «Le lieutenant-colonel Charras, soldat de la République», *Revue d'histoire du XIXe siècle* 20-21 (2001), pp. 55-73.

[33] Brian Taves, "Jules Verne's *Paris in the Twentieth Century*", *Science-Fiction Studies* XXIV (1997), pp. 133-138.

[34] Arthur B. Evans, "The 'New' Jules Verne", *Science-Fiction Studies* XXII (1995), p. 35.

> My dear Verne,
> I would give almost anything not to have to write you today. You have undertaken an impossible task and, like your predecessors in such matters, you have not been able to pull it off well. It is much below the level of your *Five Weeks in a Balloon*. If you were to reread it one year from now, you would surely agree with me. [...] In this piece, there is not a single issue concerning the real future that is properly resolved, no critique that hasn't already been made and remade before. [...] I am truly sorry to have to tell you this, but I believe that publishing this would be a disaster for your reputation. [...] You are not yet ready to write a book like this. Wait twenty years, and then try it again. [...] My dear Verne, even if you were a prophet, no one today would believe this prophecy... they simply would not be interested in it.[35]

However, as Brian Taves points out, Verne's prophecies of the world to come in this novel "are breathtaking in their extent and nearly unerring accuracy.[…] The accuracy of the prophecies cannot be overstated, and I would estimate that nearly 90% have come to pass".[36] In any case, as a result of Hetzel's refusal, Verne locked away his manuscript and there was no mention of it again until 1989, when it was found in a family safe, published in France in 1994, and then quickly translated and published in many countries.[37]

Anyhow, in this Vernian "lost novel", there is a scene where the hero, Michel Jérôme Dufrénoy, is "passing in front of the Sorbonne where M. Flourens was still giving his lectures with the greatest success, still keen, still young". This phrase, according to William Butcher's own words, is the "vital clue" that Nemo is based on Gustave Flourens".[38]

Let us keep in mind that Verne presented his manuscript in 1863, "shortly after the publication and immediate success of […] *Five Weeks in a Balloon*",[39] a publication which took place on 31 January 1863. It is therefore evident that the writing of *Paris in the Twentieth Century* must have been completed in early or, at the latest, mid-1863. Right after its rejection, the author returned to his cabinet and in early 1864 came up with two other manuscripts, *Voyages and Adventures of Captain Hatteras* and *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, which

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[35] Letter published in Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 25-27, tr. in English Arthur B. Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

[36] Brian Taves, *op. cit.*

[37] Jules Verne, *Paris au XXe siècle*, intr. Piero Gondolo della Riva, Paris: Hachette, 1994; Jules Verne, *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, intr. Eugen Weber, tr. Richard Howard, New York: Random House, 1996.

[38] Jules Verne, *The Mysterious Island*, note 139.

[39] Arthur B. Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

were immediately accepted by Hetzel; the first one's publication started in March 1864 (firstly as a serial in *Magasin d'éducation et de récréation*), while the second was published as a complete book in November 1864.

A critical question interfering in our discussion is, of course, when did *really* Verne write *Paris in the Twentieth Century*? Let us recapitulate his abundant writings' chronology, in the critical years 1852-1863. Between 1852 and 1856, he wrote the drama *La Tour de Montlhéry* and the comedy *Les Heureux du jour*, both of which were never staged and remained unpublished, and the short story *Un hivernage dans les glaces*, published in the periodical *Musée des Familles*, between April and May 1855. In 1857 he wrote the operetta *Monsieur de Chimpanzé* (staged in 1858-1859, unpublished), and between 1857 and 1860 the comedy *Onze jours de siège* (staged in 1861, unpublished). Between the fall and winter of 1859-1860, he wrote the *Voyage en Angleterre et en Écosse*, in 48 chapters (unpublished). In 1861 he wrote the comedy *Un neveu d'Amérique* (published in 1873), and the first chapter of the *Joyeuses Misères de trois voyageurs en Scandinavie* (unpublished). In 1862 he wrote the *Cinq semaines en ballon*, published in January 1863. Right after the success of this novel, he started writing the *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras*, a writing which preoccupied him all through that year: «D'ici une quinzaine, je vous remettrai la 1ère partie», he wrote to his publisher on 26 June 1863.[40] It seems that he kept his promise, since after two weeks of vacations he came back in his letter of 4 September, informing him that he was working on the second volume, and five days later he received the proofs for the first volume, on which he made corrections and rearranged the title. All through the next six months, between the fall and winter of 1863-1864, he wrote and rewrote *Hatteras*, whose publication as a serial in the periodical *Magasin d'éducation et de récréation* finally started on 20 March 1864. His only distractions during that period seemed to be reading and criticizing the manuscripts of another of Hetzel's books on one hand, and on the other writing a two-page article for the periodical *Musée des Familles* («À propos du Géant», published in December 1863).

Yet, most Vernian scholars –Volker Dehs, Jean-Michel Margot, Zvi Har'El and Butcher himself– take as a fact that during that same period, i.e. in 1863, Verne also wrote the 17 chapters of *Paris au XXe siècle*. Although it is true that Verne was a fast writer, one wonders, first of all, if he had enough time left to write a second complete novel of more than 200 pages, along with *Hatteras*' more than 300 pages, and of a completely different matter: «Je suis en plein dans mon sujet par 80 degrés de latitude et 40º centigrades au-dessous de zéro. Je

[40] Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

m'enrhume rien qu'en écrivant», he wrote on 26 June 1863.[41] Furthermore, it is well known, that during the writing of any of his books, Verne was in constant correspondence with Hetzel, exchanging ideas, comments, remarks and suggestions over the characters and the plot. This practice started from the very beginning of their collaboration, as one can see from their correspondence during the writing of *Hatteras*: «Je voudrais surtout avoir votre avis sur la fin du premier [volume]» (4 September 1863); «J'approuve fort la remarque relative à Hatteras; je vais le faire très audacieux [...], Quant à introduire un Français dans l'équipage, impossible; il n'y faut que des Anglais» (16 September 1863).[42]

In the case of *Paris au XXe siècle*, what do we really have? An undated letter from Hetzel to Verne mentioning an untitled book. Piero Gondolo della Riva, the letter's actual owner, dates it «fin 1863 ou début 1864», based mainly on its context (mentioning that Verne is known to the public only as the author of the *Balloon*, while Hetzel possesses already the unpublished *Hatteras*). In this letter it is made totally clear that, contrary to the other cases we already know, Verne proposed to Hetzel not an idea or some chapters, but a complete book. If, as we presume, this book is what we now know as *Paris au XXe siècle*, this in no evidence about when it was actually written. Olivier Dumas, president of the *Société Jules Verne*, made a suggestion in 1999, which seems to have passed unnoticed: «[Verne] avait eu la naïveté de proposer à Hetzel un récit écrit en période de vaches maigres, un pamphlet dans lequel il développait les futurs méfaits du 'progrès scientifique' qui anéantirait les arts et la littérature».[43] In other words, he suggests that *Paris* was not written in 1863 but before, during the difficult times when Verne's successive works remained unpublished. Taking Dumas' remark into account, I would like to put forward an hypothesis: The book was probably written between the spring of 1860 and the winter of 1860-61. This hypothesis is based on two remarks: Firstly, in a period of Verne's constant writing, we know nothing written after he finished the *Voyage en Angleterre et en Écosse* (winter of 1859-1860) and up to the time he started writing *Un neveu d'Amérique* (in 1861). Secondly, the author gives us a precious clue himself, in the first sentence of his manuscript: "On 13 August 1960, a section of the Parisian population was setting off for the many stations on the Metropolitan Railway and heading via the branch lines towards the site where the Champ de Mars used to be". If this was written in 1863, I believe the date would be correspondingly made "on 13 August 1963". This was a rather

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[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Ibid*, pp. 22, 24.

[43] Olivier Dumas, «Les relations Verne-Hetzel», p. 9.

common cliché in futurist writings and Verne himself seems to go faithfully along with it. A characteristic example: in 1885, an American publisher asked Jules Verne to write a story about the United States a thousand years hence. As this story was not written until February 1889,[44] its first appearance in English was under the title *In the Year 2889*; next year (1890) Verne prepared a French adaptation of it, which he entitled *La journée d'un journaliste américain en 2890*, thus adapting accordingly the title. Furthermore, since the French version was published in 1891, it seems that it was rather the year of the writing than that of the publication that was reflected on a futurist title of this kind.[45]

Therefore, returning to our main subject, the next obvious question is: who was this Gustave Flourens and what Verne could have known of him in 1860-1861, or even in mid-1863, in order to mention him in his rejected futuristic novel and later to be inspired by him for the character of captain Nemo? The answer is that up to mid-1863, Gustave Flourens was nobody – or almost nobody.

Gustave Flourens' early years

Gustave Flourens was born at Paris in 1838. A son of the famous physiologist Jean-Pierre-Marie Flourens, and a brilliant young man himself, he successfully passed in 1859, in a few months distance, both his *licence ès-lettres* and *ès-sciences*. On 27 January 1861, "after the presentation made by Mr [Jean-Pierre-Marie] Flourens, *professeur d'histoire naturelle*" and "the proposition of the administrator of the *Collège Impérial de France*", Gustave was appointed *préparateur* of his father's courses, a duty he continued to fulfill for the next two years, 1862 and 1863.

In his short biographical note quoted in the beginning of the present article, William Butcher mentions that, in 1863, Gustave Flourens "fought in the Polish insurrection",[46] enriching thus his candidate character with early revolutionary credentials and, especially, for a cause so dear to Verne and so related to his early depiction of Nemo as a Polish participating in the Revolution of 1863.

Yet, there is no hard evidence that this Polish adventure ever took place. Neither Flourens himself, in his abundant correspondence and multiple public

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[44] Experts believe that Jules Verne's son Michel may have written at least part of the story.

[45] Jules Verne, "In the Year 2889", *The Forum*, Vol. VI, no. 6 (February 1889), pp. 662-677; Jules Verne, «La journée d'un journaliste américain en 2890», 1st edition *Journal d'Amiens-Moniteur de la Somme* (21 January 1891), complete edition *Le Petit Journal*, supplément illustré (29 August 1891).

[46] Jules Verne, *The Mysterious Island*, note 139.

Gustave Flourens in 1866, in an engraving by James Robertson.

writings, nor his early biographers, including Alexis Kanellopoulos (1871),[47] Pierre Larousse (1872),[48] Domenico Galati (1879)[49] and Edmond Desmaze (1893),[50] mostly people who knew Flourens closely, ever mentioned such a participation. The one and only reference to it comes from Charles Prolès, who published a biography of Gustave Flourens twenty-seven years after his death, in 1898, as part of a series dedicated to the protagonists of the Paris Commune. But even this unique and groundless testimony, does not pretend that he ever literally "fought in the Polish insurrection" – on the contrary. According to Prolès, Flourens, affected by the propaganda of the French media, left for Poland with the intention of putting himself in the service of that cause, but as soon as he arrived there («*à peine arrivé là-bas*»), he immediately realised that the so-called "Polish insurrection" was in reality an "aristocratic and Roman Catholic movement", where "only the reactionary passions and the ambitions of a cast were at stake", while the desperate Polish people "didn't know which party to follow, didn't dare to choose between two hated evils, the czar and their own nobility". Thus disappointed, he took the way back to Paris.[51] Therefore, according to the only author mentioning the –most improbable in any case– presence of Flourens in Poland in 1863, he never actually participated in the insurrection, and –most importantly– his abstention was based on a reasoning diametrically opposed to the one that made the Polish revolution dear to Verne's heart: let us not forget that he pictured his first Nemo exactly as "a Polish nobleman" fighting against the Russians.

Now that is quite established what Gustave Flourens did not do in 1863, let us see what we most certainly know that he did during that year: he was authorised by Victor Duruy, the Imperial Minister of Public Education to undertake a course of lectures at the *Collège*, extending over both semesters of the academic year 1863-1864, always as a substitute of his father. This authorisation took place on 7 November 1863[52] and Gustave Flourens started his courses shortly

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[47] "Gustave Flourens", in the Athens newspaper *L'Indépendance Hellénique* 262 (30 April 1871).

[48] Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe siècle*, Paris 1872, Vol. VIII, pp. 508-510.

[49] Domenico Galati, *Gli Uomini del mio tempo*, Bologna 1879.

[50] [Edmond Desmaze], *Souvenirs d'un Philhellène: Gustave Flourens et l'Insurrection Crétoise*, Lyon 1893.

[51] Charles Prolès, *Les Hommes de la Révolution de 1871: Gustave Flourens, Insurrection Crétoise 1867-1868, Siège de Paris 1870-1871*, Paris 1898, pp. 17-18.

[52] Arrêt Ministeriel no. 3191 du 7 Novembre 1863, *Archives du Collège de France*, document C-XII (3).

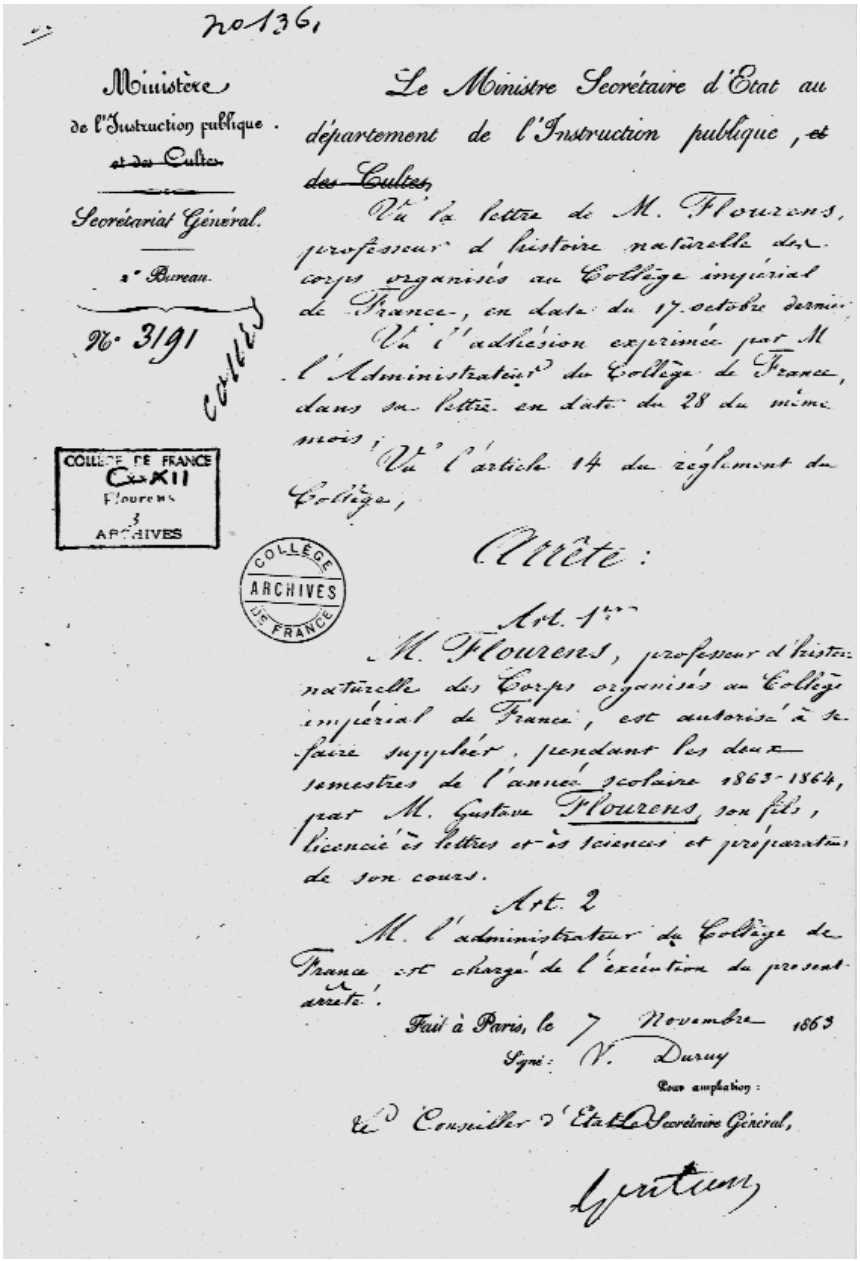
thereafter.[53] Nothing particularly revolutionary up to this point, although teaching in the French Imperial College in the age of twenty-five was quite an accomplishment already, even under the push of one's famous father.

Yet, even if we consider this important step in his academic career interesting enough to attract Verne's attention, the point is that, when Gustave Flourens appeared in the amphitheaters of the *Collège* for the first time, in mid-November 1863, it is almost certain –according to all Vernian scholars– that Jules Verne's manuscript of *Paris in the Twentieth Century* had been already written, submitted and rejected; thus, it is highly improbable that the mentioned "M. Flourens, giving his lectures with the greatest success", is Gustave. What seems most probable, is that Verne refers to Flourens father.

Jean-Pierre-Marie Flourens

Jean-Pierre-Marie Flourens (1794-1867) was born at Maureilhan, in southern France. "Something of a child prodigy", he enrolled at the famous *Faculté de Médecine* at Montpellier when he was only 15 years old and received his medical degree before he had turned 20. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Paris, to work beside George Cuvier, then professor at the *Collège de France*. His paper entitled *Recherches expérimentales sur les propriétés et les fonctions du système nerveux dans les animaux vertèbres* (1824) was received with enthusiasm by specialists, mainly because he used evidence based on experiments never tried before, in order to study the functions of the brain. In 1828 he was appointed Cuvier's substitute in natural history at the *Collège* and in the same year became a member of the Institute. In 1832 he was elected professor of comparative anatomy at the Museum of the *Jardin des Plantes*, a professorship created especially for him, and next year was appointed perpetual secretary of the *Académie des Sciences*. After a brief political intermezzo as an elected member of the *Chambre des Députés* (1838), he reassumed his scientific carreer, rising to become one of France's most influential scientific figures. In 1840 he was elected, in preference to Victor Hugo, at the *Académie Française* and in 1855 he accepted the full professorship of natural history at the *Collège de France*. He published many important scientific essays, including *Expériences sur le système nerveux* (1825), *De l'instinct et de l'intelligence des animaux* (1841), *Anatomie générale de la peau et des membranes muqueuses* (1843), *Théorie expérimentale de la formation des os* (1847), *Histoire de la découverte de la circulation du sang*

[53] *Revue des Cours Scientifiques de la France et de l'Étranger* 4-38 (from 26 December 1863 to 20 August 1864).



Ministère
de l'Instruction publique
~~et des Cultes~~
Secrétariat Général
2e Bureau
N° 3191

Le Ministre Secrétaire d'État au département de l'Instruction publique, ~~et des Cultes~~,

Vu la lettre de M. Flourens, professeur d'histoire naturelle des corps organisés au Collège impérial de France, en date du 17 octobre dernier;

Vu l'adhésion exprimée par M. l'Administrateur du Collège de France, dans sa lettre en date du 28 du même mois;

Vu l'article 14 du règlement du Collège,

Arrête :

Art. 1er

M. Flourens, professeur d'histoire naturelle des Corps organisés au Collège impérial de France, est autorisé à se faire suppléer, pendant les deux semestres de l'année scolaire 1863-1864, par M. Gustave Flourens, son fils, licencié ès lettres et ès sciences et préparateur de son cours.

Art. 2

M. l'administrateur du Collège de France est chargé de l'exécution du présent arrêté.

Fait à Paris, le 7 Novembre 1863

Signé : V. Duruy

Pour ampliation :

Le Conseiller d'État Secrétaire Général,

COLLÈGE DE FRANCE
C-XII
Flourens
3
ARCHIVES

COLLÈGE DE FRANCE ARCHIVES

Ministerial Decree no. 3191 of 7 November 1863, authorising Gustave Flourens to give a course of lectures at the Collège Impérial de France (Archives du Collège de France, document C-XII-3).

(1854), *De la vie et de l'intelligence* (1858). Besides discovering the anaesthetic effect of chloroform and introducing the vivisection in experimental medicine, Flourens father played a leading role in scientific research during the nineteenth century, focusing on the nature and localization of cerebral function, first fully establishing experimentally the view that the brain serves as the organ of the mind and demonstrating the localization of its function. Through his studies, he "articulated a clear distinction between sensation and perception (treating perception as the appreciation of the meaning of a sensation) and localized sensory function in several related sub-cortical structures". Yet, his findings let him to formulate a theory of cerebral homogeneity (against that of functional localization proper, i.e. the notion that specific mental processes are correlated with discrete regions of the brain). "Joined to a strongly held philosophical belief in a unitary soul and an indivisible mind and an uncritical willingness to generalize results from lower organisms to humans, [he came to the conclusion that] the cerebrum was the organ of a unitary mind, and, by implication, it could not therefore be functionally differentiated".[54] In 1863 he published his classic *De la phrénologie et des études vraies sur le cerveau* and, one year later, his last important essay, *Examen du livre de M. Darwin sur l'Origine des Espèces*. So it was he who, in the early 1860s, could be considered as the famous scholar named Flourens, and not his son. It is therefore most improbable that Verne was referring to the latter in his 1863 manuscript.

Therefore, having clarified that no "vital clue" is provided by *Paris in the Twentieth Century* on any relevant relation between Gustave Flourens, Jules Verne and Captain Nemo's character, let us try to figure out if there is some other indication that such a relation ever existed at all.

Gustave Flourens in Greece

It is true that in late 1863 –but too late to be noted in Verne's manuscript– Gustave Flourens started to create his own reputation. His course in the *Collège*, under the rather ambitious title "History of Human Races", was an immediate success. Regularly published in the *Revue des Cours Scientifiques*, from 26 December 1863 to 20 August 1864,[55] his lectures enjoyed great

[54] Robert H. Wozniak, "I.5. Mind, Brain, and Adaptation: the Localization of Cerebral Function", *Catalogue Accompanying the Exhibition of Books from the Collections of the National Library of Medicine, Held in Honor of the Centennial Celebration of the American Psychological Association*, Washington D.C., 1992.

[55] Gustave Flourens, «Histoire de l'Homme-Cours d'Histoire Naturelle des Corps Organisés au Collège de France», *Revue des Cours Scientifiques de la France et de l'Étranger* 14-38 (1863-1864).

publicity, gaining him enthusiastic supporters as well as obstinate enemies. The latter, essentially partisans of the conservative clerical party, were offended by Flourens' strictly biological and therefore rather materialistic approach to the origins of the human race. Their reactions were noisy and their connections within the educational and political establishment of the Second Empire strong enough to secure that the young and impertinent scientist did not dispose of any further chances to use an academic tribune in order to deliver his impious ideas. The government, in order to avoid the scandal, due to his father's eminent position, did not interfere during that academic year, but in November 1864 Flourens was precluded from delivering a second course.

After the ministerial denial to carry on his courses, Flourens also resigned from his post as *préparateur* of his father's courses and, in December 1864, departed for England. It seems that his resignation as well as his departure were partially due to his desire not to involve in this quarrel "any other name but his own". After spending two months in London, he settled in Belgium, where he collaborated with several French republican newspapers published in Brussels (*Espiègle*, *La Rive Gauche*).[56] His articles were illustrating the gradual adoption of quite advanced ideological and political positions in a variety of matters, including the generalization of the right of vote; the condemnation of the reactionary *revanche* all over Europe: «Partout la réaction triomphe. Jeunesse Européenne, souffriras-tu que toute l'œuvre de tes pères soit ruinée?»; the denunciation of the Bonaparte's régime: «Les forfaits du 2 décembre [...] Les sbires napoléoniens empêchent notre feuille de pénétrer jusqu'à la jeunesse française»; and even an aggressive plead in favour of atheism: «Supposer que, sans l'attente d'un dieu rémunérateur, l'humanité serait incapable de vertu, c'est l'avilir et la calomnier indignement [...] Avons-nous eu besoin du manitou, quand notre conscience était calme et ne nous reprochait rien? Brisons l'idole; si elle était vraie, il n'aurait pas fallu tant d'efforts pour la prouver».[57]

Next came his first trip to Turkey and Greece. After spending four months in Constantinople (December 1865-March 1866), impressed with his contacts with the flourishing Greek community of the Ottoman Empire, he decided to visit Athens, "which is a sacred city to us, children of science, in the way Jerusalem, Mecca and Medina are for the religious believers".[58] Arriving in the

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[56] He also published an elaborated summation of his *Collège* lectures under the title of *Science de l'Homme,* Brussels 1865.

[57] Gustave Flourens, *Le Discours du suffrage universel*, Brussel 1865; *La Rive Gauche*, Brussels 27.11.1864; *Appel de La Rive Gauche à la Jeunesse Européenne* [end 1864].

[58] Gustave Flourens, «Discours de l'Hellénisme», *L'Indépendance Hellénique* (28.3.1866).

Greek capital, he collaborated with the locally published French-language liberal newspaper *L'Indépendance Hellénique*, where he published a series of articles for the next two and a half years, starting with one entitled «Des Hommes Complets», on 14 March 1866:

> Thucydides was simultaneously a practical man and a man of theory; so was Herodotus. Aeschylus, who was a good soldier, was also a good poet, since having known the action, he could picture it with its genuine colours, while present time poets, exclusively theoretical philosophers, tear-wet day-dreamers, and today's historians, who never acted, will never come near Aeschylus' powerfulness. If they had grasped the sword, they would be able to seize the pen with greater success. During our deplorable and decolourised times, men of action are deprived of intelligence and ignore science; on the other hand, those who possess the knowledge, are unable to act. This phenomenon stands in the origin of the bitter disillusionment of our hopes. Ancient Greeks had accomplished the plain development of the human soul: they knew how to think and to intend, how to speak and to act. They were complete men.

This anxious desire for action, which would allow to the theory not to remain a dead letter, was the axis around which would spin Gustave Flourens' short, yet turbulent life. But, returning to our primary question, let us not forget that we are already in the middle of the year 1866, and all this is still nothing but talk: beautiful ideas, radical conceptions, yet no action accompanying them. In other words, not much to inspire a writer as the prototype of Captain Nemo's character, the action man *par excellence*. Because, we must not forget that during that time, Verne was already working on his *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, although a lot of the novel's main questions (including its title) were still under consideration. In the meantime, during the end of that same year, 1866, Flourens would finally cross the Rubicon and attempt to put his theory into action, grasping the opportunity given to him by the outbreak of the Cretan insurrection.

The Cretan Question

The island of Crete had been excluded from the Greek Kingdom that emerged after the War of Independence of 1821-1829, remaining under Ottoman domination. Yet, Crete had a distinctive character within the Ottoman empire, defined by the following characteristics: in a region that was geographically demarcated by its insular character lived a population that was for the most part homogeneous with respect to its language (Greek), religion (Orthodox) and its

clear consciousness of belonging to a particular national group that already existed as an independent state a few dozen miles away.[59] It was a population firmly rooted in the land which had, moreover, officially acquired the right to possess arms. As a result, successive rebellions of varying range and intensity broke out throughout the whole of the nineteenth century, sometimes with the backing of the Greek governments but frequently, even against the wishes of the official Greek state.

One such rebellion broke out in 1866. In May of that year, several leading figures in the Christian population of the island submitted a long report to the Ottoman government with several requests, including relief from the excessive taxation, improvement of public transportation, free elections to the councils of elders, the creation of a loan bank, improvement of the juridical system and the reintroduction of the Greek language in legal transactions, the securing of guarantees of personal liberty, the creation of schools and hospitals, permission to trade freely from all the ports on the island and, finally, a general amnesty for those who had participated "in the general uprising in our Homeland".

Before carrying out their revolutionary plans, the Cretans had been in contact with the Russian and Greek consuls in Chania. The former, though declaring himself "opposed to revolutionary movements", nevertheless counselled them to pursue certain reforms by peaceful means, including the abolition of the new taxes, free elections to the councils of elders, etc., promising his "probable support". The Greek consul "avoided giving them encouragement", since the government in Athens strongly disapproved of a Cretan uprising at that point in time, observing that the current political situation in Europe was "not favourable to a serious enterprise of this nature", and advising the Cretans to content themselves with seeking "with moderation, relief from some of the unbearable taxes, and nothing more".

The situation was already deteriorating, however. The Moslems and their families sought refuge in the fortified towns, while the Christians armed themselves and gathered in the mountains. The Ottoman governor, Ismail Pasha called upon the committee to disband, stating that he regarded its continued existence as a revolutionary act. The Sublime Porte's answer, publicly posted on 20 July, rejected the demands with menaces. "More than all the subjects of the empire", it noted, "the Cretans enjoy benefits", and "they have no right or reason

[59] The censuses of the period before 1881, though rarely agreeing with each other on the precise numbers, nevertheless concur in attesting to a clear and steadily increasing Christian majority that fluctuated between 62.5 and 77.4%, depending on the decade and the source of information.

to request the abolition of taxes", while "with regard to roads, schools, hospitals, etc.", improvements "cannot be implemented forthwith, but very gradually". On the other hand, by advancing these demands, the Cretans "have risen in revolt, arranged gatherings, and behaved in a way that could not but be described as rebellion". The General Governor of the island was ordered to send forces to arrest the leaders of the "rebellion", and disperse the rest "by force", unless they "submitted and provided written guarantees of their submission in the future".

After this, the insurgents, who had already formed themselves into a "General Assembly of Cretans", on 21 August, voted in favour of the dissolution of Turkish authority and "the unbroken and eternal unification of Crete and all her dependencies with Mother Greece". The implementation of the vote was assigned "to the bravery of the courageous people of Crete, to the assistance of Greeks throughout the world and all Philhellenes, to the Mighty intervention of the Protecting and Guarantor Great Powers, and to the omnipotence of God on High".

There followed the longest and bloodiest of all the Cretan uprisings of the nineteenth century. It lasted about three years, during which Egyptian forces landed on the island to reinforce the Turkish efforts, while on the other side, a number of volunteers from Greece and also from Europe and America hastened to fight on the side of the rebels. During the same period, five Ottoman General Governors were replaced one after the other in an endeavour to quell the insurrection, and six Greek Governments followed one upon the other as a result of the reverberations of their policies on the Cretan question. The Kingdom of Greece and the Ottoman Empire broke off diplomatic relations and came to the verge of open military conflict, which was averted at the last moment through the intervention of an international conference convened in Paris to determine the terms on which the crisis could be resolved. During the course of the rebellion thousands were killed on both sides, hundreds of villages were torched and looted, and the productive base of the island suffered a severe blow, while 50,000 women and children fled to Greece as refugees.

Despite the subsequent isolation of the maximalist supporters of unification with Greece and the predominance of the moderate group that favoured an autonomous principality of Crete within the Ottoman Empire, and despite the global sympathy elicited by the struggles and sacrifices, the insurrection failed to influence the prevailing attitude of international diplomacy, which favoured the maintenance of the status quo in the Ottoman empire. After a series of desperate battles, most of the revolutionaries retreated before the superiority of the enemy forces and, having neither food nor munitions, submitted to the

Turks or fled to Greece, though a few isolated groups continued to wander in the gorges, becoming involved in minor skirmishes until the spring of 1869.[60]

"Roughing it in Crete"

Among those who hastened to participate in that struggle, was Gustave Flourens. On 14 November 1866, he embarked aboard a Greek block-runner, along with four hundred Greeks and some forty foreign volunteers, mostly Garibaldian veterans of the Italian *Risorgimento*. Six days later he first set foot on the south-western coast of Crete, where he was to spent eight months altogether in the next two and a half years, in two separated sojourns, the first of which lasted seven months (November 1866-May 1867) and the second a little more than a month (April-May 1868). During all that time, he shared with resolution the difficulties and the dangers encountered by his comrades-in-arms in a rough guerrilla warfare, constantly moving along snow-covered mountains and precipitous rocky coasts, courageously participating in, mostly small-scale, battles and patiently enduring privations that forced many tough veterans to abandon the fight – veterans much more accustomed to the hardships of war than this delicate Parisian youngster. During that same period, he also put his talents and contacts in the service of the insurrection, corresponding with Greek and French newspapers, as well as seeking the support of various public figures of international status, including Jules Favre, Adolph Thiers, Edward Stanley, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Victor Hugo.

It is interesting to notice that the Cretan insurrection of 1866-1869 also caught the attention of Jules Verne, to the point that he devoted to it a few lines in his *Twenty Thousand Leagues*. As *Nautilus* sailed in the Aegean Sea, on 14 February 1868, heading "toward the ancient island of Crete, also called Candia", Professor Arronax remembered that, at the time he was travelling aboard the *Abraham Lincoln*, "this whole island was in rebellion against Turkish despotism", adding that, since then, deprived of all contact with the shore, he had "absolutely no idea what had happened to this revolution". Then, while being in the lounge of the submarine along with Nemo, studying through the crystal panels the fish

[60] For a detailed account of the insurrection of 1866 by an independent observer, see the book published by the U.S. Consul in Chania William J. Stillman, *The Cretan Insurrection of 1866-1869*, New York [1]1874, Austin [2]1966. For an interesting description from the point of view of a British volunteer, see J. Hillary Skinner, *Roughing it in Crete*, London 1867. For a broader view of the Cretan Question within the frame of the European and Near Eastern politics, see Douglas Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770-1923*, London 1972, pp. 107-115; Domna N. Dontas, *Greece and the Great Powers*, Thessaloniki 1966, pp. 65-93, 114-118.

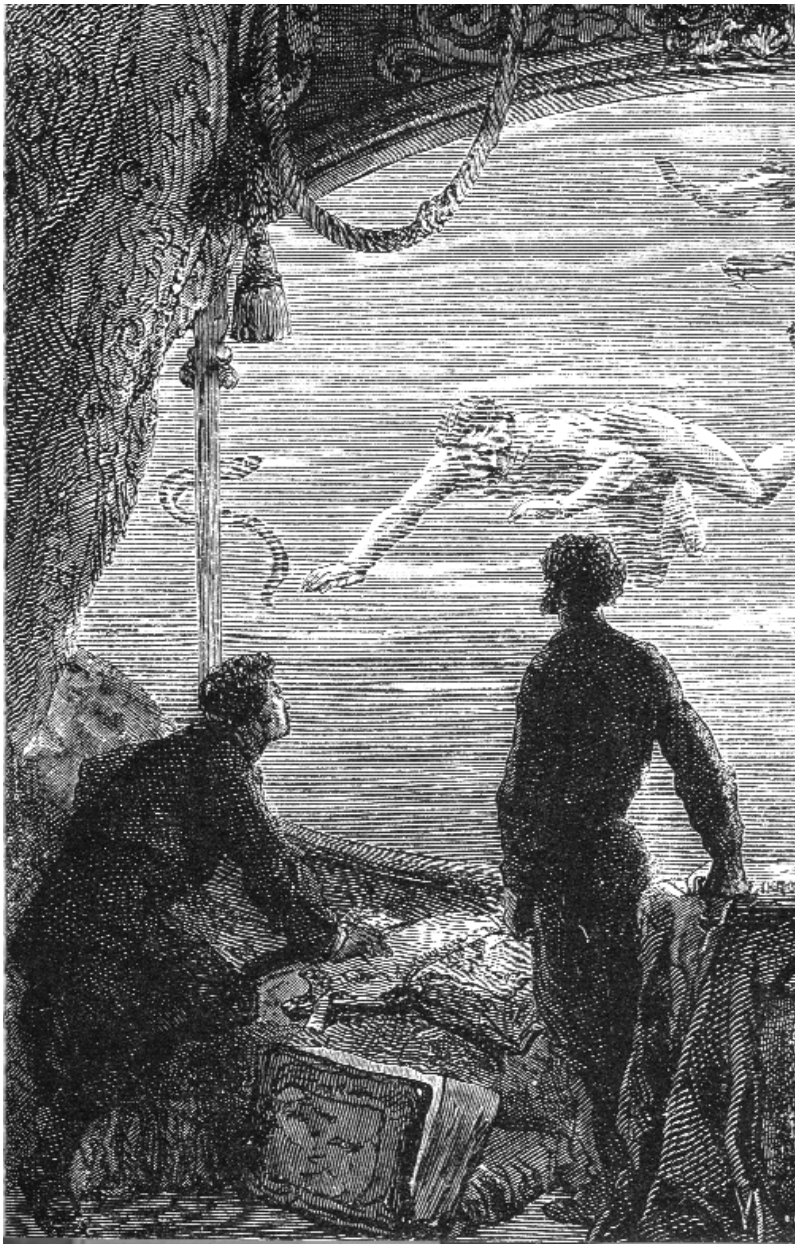
that passed before his eyes, Arronax "was suddenly jolted" by an unexpected apparition:

> In the midst of the waters, a man appeared, a diver carrying a little leather bag at his belt. It was no corpse lost in the waves. It was a living man, swimming vigorously, sometimes disappearing to breathe at the surface, then instantly diving again.
>
> I turned to Captain Nemo, and in an agitated voice:
>
> 'A man! A castaway!' I exclaimed. 'We must rescue him at all cost!'
>
> The captain didn't reply but went to lean against the window.
>
> The man drew near, and gluing his face to the panel, he stared at us. To my deep astonishment, Captain Nemo gave him a signal. The diver answered with his hand, immediately swam up to the surface of the sea, and didn't reappear.
>
> 'Don't be alarmed', the captain told me. 'That's Nicolas from Cape Matapan, nicknamed *Il Pesce*. He's well known throughout the Cyclades Islands. A bold diver! Water is his true element, and he lives in the sea more than on shore, going constantly from one island to another, even to Crete'.[61]

Immediately after that scene, Arronax noticed Nemo preparing a chest full of golden ingots, estimated worthy of about 5 million francs, on whose lid he wrote an address "in characters that must have been modern Greek" and then sent it to some unknown destination, using the longboat attached to *Nautilus*. Four days and two chapters later, while he witnessed *Nautilus*' crew gathering treasures from sunk vessels in the bottom of the ocean, literally "fishing" silver and gold, Arronax made a comment about the thousands of unfortunate people who would have benefited from a fair distribution of all this wealth, whilst "for them it will be for ever barren." To that remark, Nemo reposted angrily:

> 'Barren!' he replied with growing animation. 'Sir, what makes you assume these riches are wasted, when I'm the one amassing them? Is it for myself, according to you, that I take the trouble to collect these treasures? Who says I don't put it to good use? Do you believe I'm unaware that there are suffering beings and oppressed races on this earth, miserable people to console and victims to avenge? Don't you understand...?'
>
> Captain Nemo stopped on these last words, perhaps sorry that he had said too much. But I had guessed. Whatever motives had driven him to seek independence under the seas, he remained a human being before all else! His heart still throbbed for the

[61] Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas,* Second Part, Chapter 21, "A Mass Execution", tr. F. P. Walter, *op. cit.*



Nicolas, the fictitious Greek diver from Cape Matapan, nicknamed *Il Pesce*,
in an illustration by Alphonse de Neuville.

> sufferings of the humanity, and his immense philanthropy went out both to subjugated races and to individuals!
>
> And now I understood to whom were destined those millions which were forwarded by Captain Nemo, when the *Nautilus* navigated the waters of rebellious Crete!

So, the fictitious commander of the *Nautilus* was supposed to finance the revolutionary Cretans, on whose side the very real young physiologist from Paris was already fighting a desperate battle! This incident, in my opinion, is as near as Captain Nemo and Gustave Flourens ever got.

One cannot avoid to notice, though, that there is also another impressive coincidence involving Flourens and Vernian Captain Nemo: they both kept dear to their heart the memory of a rather minor incident which occurred in 1794, during the French Revolutionary Wars. On his way to Crete, during the night of 15 November 1866, Flourens wrote in a letter to his Greek friend Miltiades Canellopoulo, the publisher of the *Indépendance Hellénique*, in order to underline his determination:

> When there will be no more women, children or old people left in Crete, exposed to the exterminating war of the Turks, when all the useless mouths will be evacuated from the island, as from a place under siege, then everyone will see what deadly duel we are capable of, against barbarity. Several courageous battles, where one fights against ten, are to be witnessed on this island of Crete, on this beautiful vessel grounded along the Mediterranean, almost in equal distance between three worlds, Asia, Africa and Europe. And the day that there will be no other resources left, if the justice of our cause and our courage will not be enough to bring us victory, we will blow ourselves up, like the sailors of the *Vengeur*.

In his *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, Verne describes how on 1 June 1868, *Nautilus* visited the underwater grave of a ship sunk in the Atlantic Ocean and, as Arronax inspected the wreckage, heard Captain Nemo slowly say:

> Originally this ship was named the *Marseillais*. It carried 74 cannons and was launched in 1762. On August 13, 1778, commanded by La Poype-Vertrieux, it fought valiantly against the *Preston*. On July 4, 1779, as a member of the squadron under Admiral d'Estaing, it assisted in the capture of Grenada. On September 5, 1781, under the Count de Grasse, it took part in the Battle of Chesapeake Bay. In 1794 the French Republic changed the name of this ship. On April 16 of that same year, it joined the squadron at Brest under Villaret de Joyeuse, who was entrusted with escorting a convoy of wheat coming from America under the

> command of Admiral Van Stabel. On the 11th and 12th of the Month of Pasture of the year II [according to the French Revolutionary Calendar], this squadron came across the English vessels. Sir, today is the 13th of the Month of Pastur, June 1, 1868. 74 years ago, day by day, at this very spot in latitude 47° 24′ and longitude 17° 28′, this ship, after a heroic battle, its three masts gone, water in its hold, a third of its crew out of action, preferred to go to the bottom with its 356 seamen rather than surrender and, with its flag nailed up on the afterdeck, it disappeared beneath the waves to shouts of 'Long live the Republic!'"
>
> 'Le *Vengeur*!' ['The *Avenger*!'] I exclaimed.
>
> 'Yes, sir! Le *Vengeur* ! A beautiful name!' Captain Nemo murmured, crossing his arms.[62]

The casual way in which Flourens, addressing his Greek correspondent, refers to the ship, just by her name without any explanations; the detailed knowledge that Verne demonstrates of her adventures; and the immediate identification that Arronax is presented to attain as he is listening to the ship's history, are evidence that the *Vengeur* affaire was common knowledge among French and French-educated people during the 1860s and provides no evidence of any other "mysterious" connection.

An abortive academic career

In the meantime, Gustave Flourens, having completed the first part of his Cretan expedition, returned to Greece and then to France, in July 1867, where his father was seriously ill. Jean-Pierre-Marie Flourens eventually died at Montgeron, near Paris, on the 6th of December 1867, at the age of 73. A few weeks later, Gustave officially submitted his candidature in succeeding his father in the *Collège*, addressing the following letter personally to the Emperor:

> January 21, 1868.
>
> Sire,
>
> After a brilliant career of forty years as a professor in the *Museum d' Histoire Naturelle* and in the *Collège de France*, my father charged me to replace him in 1863 in the *Collège de France*. The precipitation and the constant benevolence of the public seemed to ratify this choice.
>
> I come forward, Sire, to ask Your Majesty to put in execution the dearest wish of this illustrious man, by authorizing me to restart this tuition, to which I am devoted.

---

[62] Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, Second Part, Chapter 20 "In Latitude 47° 24′ and Longitude 17° 28′".

> If I am to obtain this high mission, I dare to believe that my zeal and my complete devotion to the duties of the professorship will prove that I deserve it.
> I beg Your Majesty to accept my humble homage.
>
> Gustave Flourens[63]

This letter is crucial both for the understanding of the rest of Flourens' life and for answering the question treated in the present paper. Up to that point, what Flourens had accomplished or attempted, was more or less socially and politically acceptable. A member of a respectable family, a brilliant student and a promising scientist, he professed some radical ideas, but that was tolerated for a young intellectual, within the rather permissive context of nineteenth-century French society. Even his activities in the ranks of the opposition (rather some sort of "His Majesty's opposition", if we consider the tone of his letter) was no longer considered a *lèse majesté*, during the "liberal" phase of the Second Empire.

Up to that moment, his only action that seemed to cross the line was his participation in the Cretan insurrection, but then this was seen by many as a noble unselfish engagement of a romantic youngster against a remote despotic oriental Sultan, comparable to the participation of Byron in the Greek War of Independence;[64] moreover, let us not forget that Napoleon III himself, for a brief period extending from November 1866 to April 1867 (incidentally coinciding with Flourens' first sojourn in Crete), considered endorsing the annexation of Crete to Greece, as part of a rather complicated diplomatic billiard game, targeting a favourable solution of the Luxembourg affaire.[65]

In other words, up to January 1868, as all that has been said above suggests and as his letter to the Emperor confirms –and despite his eccentric *curriculum vitae*– Flourens kept himself within limits and was far from considering himself or considered by his fellow countrymen, or even his government, as an outlaw or an outcast. So, it is rather difficult to imagine how he could serve, *yet*, as the model for a literary character as radical and intransigent as Captain Nemo. For, despite the time at which *Twenty Thousand Leagues* was finished and published, one must always keep in mind that, according to Verne's own confirmation, the principal hero's conception, profile and main characteristics were more or less completed, as early as the spring of 1867.[66]

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[63] Charles Prolès, *Les Hommes de la Révolution de 1871*, p. 31.

[64] Flourens was actually called "The New Byron" in a poem published in the Greek newspaper *Εθνεγερσία* (29.5.1868).

[65] O. Aubry, *Le Second Empire*, Paris 1938, pp. 446-462; J. B. Barbier, *Outrances sur le Second Empire*, Paris 1956, pp. 291-298, 390-392, 444-447, 472-475.

[66] Letter published in Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit*, pp. 106-108.

But, if as far as shaping Captain Nemo's character, the chronology forbids any association with Flourens, for the real man himself the answer he received to that letter of January 1868 was to be a milestone, which eventually changed radically the course of his life. Napoleon III naturally declared that he had no competence in interfering in the nominations of the *Collège*, and handed the petition over to the Minister of Public Education, who simply rejected the request.[67] Thus failed Flourens' last attempt to re-enter normal peaceful life.

Radical politics

Three months later, he was back in Greece and, in 16 April 1868 was setting for the second time foot on Crete, where the insurrection was in a desperate situation. Impressed by his coming back and his lasting faith in their cause, at a moment that almost everybody was turning his back on them, the Cretans decided to express their gratitude to their French comrade by granting him the Cretan citizenship and electing him as a member of their Revolutionary National Assembly;[68] titles of a limited practical value but of an invaluable moral importance, especially if one takes into consideration the proud character of the Cretan people, and thus indicative of the high esteem in which they held him.

His last stay in Crete did not last long, as in May 1868 he sailed back to Athens, escorting a Cretan delegation. He soon got himself in a hazardous situation, by rushing to the royal summer residence, in an attempt to persuade King George "not to betray the Cretan cause"; to that first scandal soon a second was added, when he declared in public what the French ambassador –no other than the famous writer Arthur de Gobineau– confided in him in private, i.e. that the new Greek government intended to give up any help to the insurrectionists of Crete. Forced to leave the country by the Greek authorities, he was embarked under surveillance on 29 May with France as his destination. Setting foot in Marseille, he was released and immediately sailed back, but realizing that he couldn't accomplish anything in Greece under the circumstances, he finally left for Italy; an article he published in the *Popolo*

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[67] One year later, on 12 December 1868 the chair of general physiology was transferred from the Sorbonne University to the *Musée d'Histoire Naturelle*; as the titular holder of that chair, Claude Bernard (1813-1878) succeeded Jean-Pierre-Marie Flourens, who had held it as professor of comparative physiology, on the council of professors to the Museum. Flourens' chair was transferred to the Sorbonne, and was awarded to Paul Bert (1833-1886).

[68] *L'Indépendance Hellénique* (28.3.1866).

d'Italia, denouncing the European monarchies for their hypocritical behaviour on the Cretan question, caused his arrest and imprisonment in Naples.

Arriving finally in France, towards the end of 1868, Flourens zealously devoted himself into politics, becoming a major orator of the republican opposition against Bonaparte's imperial regime. In March 1869 he was arrested and condemned to three-months imprisonment at Mazas prison, for breaking the law on public gatherings. Coincidentally, on that same month began the publication of the *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, as a serial in the *Magasin d'éducation et de récréation*. Therefore, when Flourens' radical personality really started to emerge in public, it was too late to be of any inspiration to Verne, in his sculpting of Captain Nemo's character. There is evidence, *d'ailleurs*, of the writer's resolute reaction during that period, against his publisher's suggestions for last minute reshaping:

> In explaining him [= Captain Nemo] in a different manner, you change him to such an extent that I can no longer recognize him. [...] It would be impossible for me to remake this man, because for two years now I live with him and I couldn't see him in any other way (17 May 1869).[69]

Meanwhile, Flourens' engagement in audacious and adventurous activities continued in an ever-accelerating pace. His imprisonment impeded him from participating in the general elections of May 1869. Immediately after his release, he nearly lost his life, on 5 August 1869, in a duel with Paul de Cassagnac, a fanatic bonapartist. After recovering, he returned back to action with even greater zeal. In February 1870, having organized a "night of barricades" in Paris' popular district of Belleville and accused for machinating a plot to kill Napoleon III, he found himself compelled to flee from France and take refuge in England. Returning to Paris on the downfall of the Empire, following Bonaparte's declaration of war on Prussia and his subsequent capitulation at Sedan in September 1870, Flourens was elected commander of a battalion of the National Guard, based in the 20th Parisian arrondissement (Belleville). He immediately presented a plan of active defense against the continuing Prussian offensive, but he soon came to the conclusion that the Provisional Government, which comprised many of his old companions of the republican opposition, had no will to carry on a total patriotic war, as the one he perceived, based on a mass-call to arms of the French people.

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[69] Letter published in Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, Volker Dehs, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 106-108, tr. in English Arthur B. Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

On 31 October, upon the receipt of news that the government had delegated Adolph Thiers to start negotiations with the Prussians, a numerous angry crowd, followed by 400 *tirailleurs* of the National Guard led by Flourens, seized the Hôtel de Ville[70] to shouts of "Treason!" and set up a *Comité du Salut Publique* (in imitation of the Jacobin homonymous institution of 1793), headed by the sexagenarian veteran socialist leader August Blanqui. During the confusion, Flourens' decisive personal intervention prevented any members of the government from being shot, as had been suggested by some of the crowd. That same night, troops loyal to the government invaded the building and, in order to prevent a bloodbath, on Flourens' initiative a compromise was worked out (including an amnesty granted to both sides), following which the insurrectionists withdrew. As soon as the government recovered power, it made clear that it had no intention to carry out promises made under threat and soon its major opponents were imprisoned, while others scarcely escaped the arrest – Flourens was among the last group.

Once again on the run, he was nevertheless elected, in the 7 November communal elections, vice-mayor of the Belleville district, but the election was annulated on the grounds that he was pursued for mutiny. One month later he was finally arrested and confined –once again– at Mazas, but was released by his National Guardsmen, who assaulted the prison on the night of 21 January 1871.

The following month, the new government under Thiers eventually signed an armistice, accepting to surrender Alsace-Lorraine and pay enormous indemnities to victorious Germany. The Paris population reacted angrily to the capitulation, which imposed in addition a humiliating parade of the German army across the besieged, yet unsubjugated French capital and it was then that Flourens published his furious pamphlet *Paris livré* [Paris Delivered]. On 26 March, he was elected in the Council of the Paris Commune, and he soon emerged as one of the most active leaders of the movement. He was appointed in the Military Committee, as well as General in command of the 20th Legion of the National Guard.

The constitution of the Commune was openly contesting the government's authority, which prudently chose to establish itself at Versailles, and thus civil war was inevitable. It was to be a two-months long bloody conflict, during which the world held his breath and generations upon generations since then study its meaning and its consequences; yet, Flourens did not have the opportunity to really experience it as a whole, since on the 3rd of April 1871, during a premature and ill-planed sortie against the enemy and after a

[70] The Paris City Hall, which served as seat of the Provisional Government.

courageous fight, was cut to pieces by the sword of Captain Desmarets, while in custody of the *Versaillais* Gendarmes at Rueil, near Malmaison.

Gustave Flourens and Karl Marx

On the next day, Victor Hugo wrote in his diary: "Yesterday a battle in front of Paris walls. Flourens was killed. Very brave and a little crazy. I feel sorry for his death. He was the red chevalier".[71] In a letter addressed to Dr Ludwig Kugelmann, on 12 May 1871, Jenny Marx (wife) underlined how "the death of Flourens, the bravest of the brave, put us all –my husband, my daughters and myself– in deep sorrow". Karl Marx himself, a few days later, could not restrain his anger: "Desmaret, the gendarme, was decorated for the treacherous butcher – like chopping in pieces of the high-souled and chivalrous Flourens, who had saved the heads of the Government of Defence on the 31st of October 1870".[72] After Jenny Marx (daughter) died in 1883, Engels published an obituary, in which he described how she and her youngest sister were arrested in France during the summer of 1871, further confirming the Marx family's close personal relations with Flourens: "Jenny had a letter in her pocket from Gustave Flourens, the leader of the Commune who was killed near Paris; had the letter been discovered, a journey to New Caledonia [=a place of exile for the communards] was sure to follow for the two sisters. When she was left alone in the office for a moment, Jenny opened a dusty old account book, put the letter inside and closed the book again. Perhaps the letter is still there".[73]

It is most certain that it was during his second stay in London in 1870 (and not in 1864), that Flourens made the acquaintance of Karl Marx and his family, to which Butcher also refers.[74] However, he didn't share Marx's ideological and even political ideas concerning many issues, the Eastern Question being not the least of them. From Marx's point of view (and in this case he almost completely adopted the British one), the "so called Cretan revolution",[75] as he referred to it,

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[71] Victor Hugo, *Carnets intimes*, Paris 1953, p. 123.

[72] Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, 1st edition, London, 30 May 1871; English editions, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972, p. 48 and Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977, p. 63.

[73] Fr. Engels, "Jenny Longuet, geb. Marx", *Der Sozialdemokrat* 4 (18.1.1883).

[74] Jules Verne, *The Mysterious Island*, tr. Sidney Kravitz, ed. Arthur B. Evans, intr., critical material, notes William Butcher, *op. cit.*, note 139.

[75] Marx to Auguste-Jean-Marie Vermorel, editor of the *Courrier Français*, 27.8.1867, letter published in K. Marx and Fr. Engels, *Collected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975, Vol. 42, pp. 413-414.

was nothing but another machination of the Russians, "because Greeks are the instruments of Russia", aimed to break down the Ottoman Empire into a multitude of weak Lilliputian states under Russian domination or, at least, influence. For Marx, to make a long story short by oversimplifying his analysis, maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire –as long as the triumphant socialist revolution did not achieve the establishment of a new world order– was crucial and in accordance with the proletarians' long-term interest, because whatever weakened the Ottoman Empire reinforced automatically Russia; whatever reinforced tsarist Russia, the bastion of European reaction, strengthened developed Europe's most dangerous enemy; and whatever took backwards capitalist developed Europe was to provoke a general fall back of the economic, social and political factors, whose normal evolution would inevitably lead, sooner or later, to the emergence of socialism. Marx's only concession towards the various Balkan nations or smaller ethnic groups that suffered under Turkish rule and longed for their emancipation, was a vague promise for the future, as Friedrich Engels was to put it elegantly, a few years later:

> As long as the situation remains the way it is, I cannot be interested in their immediate liberation; they remain our direct enemies as much as their ally and protector, the Tsar [...] I will say to them: 'Stop where you are! You must be as patient as the Western European proletariat is. If the latter liberates itself you will be automatically free, but until that moment comes, we won't tolerate your intervention as an obstacle in the march of the fighting proletariat'.[76]

Flourens on the other hand, as one could anticipate, resentfully dismissed this position:

> The principal lie exploited by the Ottoman supporters against Hellenism is that the Greeks are nothing but agents of the Russians. Nothing is more incorrect. I can assure you, as one knowing well this country, that all its sympathies lie on the side of France, that the Russian autocracy inspires nothing but repulsion, that modern Greeks are worthy of their ancestors, lovers of liberty and of true democracy.[77] [...] I found out something that does infinitely more harm than the Turkish bullets: the Russian prejudice. It is the lie, skilfully diffused at a money price by our adversaries, according to

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[76] Engels to Edward Bernstein, 22-25.2.1882, letter published in K. Marx and Fr. Engels, *op.cit.*, Vol. 46, pp. 203-211.

[77] Flourens to Hugo, 2.8.1867, letter published in Victor Hugo, *Actes et Paroles II*, Paris 1938, p. 550.

> which Greeks long to be liberated just in order to deliver themselves to the Russians. We must fight against this lie, by all means.[78] [...] How can the Christians of the European part of Turkey be able to repel the Russian attacks, if we keep them under Turkish rule? They won't even learn how to handle guns, being excluded from the Turkish army. Staying in a state of perpetual infancy, powerless to defend themselves, they are to become an easy prey for Russia. As long as this odious policy of Europe doesn't change, every one of us owes to those so unfortunate and so dignified populations, at least his personal example.[79]

In any case, and regardless to his deep disagreement with Marx on the Eastern Question, Flourens never became a Marxist. His political convictions cannot be easily classified: a partisan of the irreconcilable national defence during the Franco-Prussian War and a believer in the French people's "chosen" mission, he was driven by ardent nationalism, which possessed, though, strong ecumenical overtones, as proved by his involvement in Cretan affairs; his austere way of life, his moral severity, his intransigence, his republicanism and his extreme patriotism refer to the most authentic traditions of Neo-Jacobinism; his daring revolutionary *coups de force*, his quest for immediate action and his inclination to conspiracies brought him close to Blanquism; finally, his sincere thirst for social justice, his gradual opening towards socialist ideas and his cosmopolitan internationalism, put him in contact with some aspects of the Marxism. It is difficult, if not futile, to define him at any cost, by putting a label on him. Even in this field, Flourens reflects his time. Full of contradictions, an ardent, fervent and restless nature, daring to the imprudence, gifted and a little "crazy", a real wandering chevalier of the revolution, a passionate lover of grandiose undertakings and an indefatigable seeker of heroic adventures, he incarnates admirably the romantic revolutionary of the nineteenth century.

It is then understandable how one has the tendency to connect him with maybe the most famous rebel personage in nineteenth century's literature. As a devouring reader of Verne's novels during my childhood, fascinated by Captain Nemo's mysterious character and adventures in particular, and as a passionate researcher of Gustave Flourens' life and ideas during my studies at the

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[78] Flourens to Miltiades Canellopoulo, 16.8.1867, letter published in *L'Indépendance Hellénique* (5.9.1867).

[79] G. Flourens, «La mort d'Achille de Grandi», *L'Indépendance Hellénique* (5.9.1867). For a complete presentation of his positions, see his book *La Question d'Orient et l'Insurrection Crétoise*, Paris 1868.

Sorbonne,[80] I must admit that Butcher's idea excited me in a very personal way, since it provided an unexpected link connecting my enchantment as a child, with the rebellious effervescence of my university youth. Yet, as the first enthusiasm gave its place to a more sober approach to Butcher's imaginative speculation, one concludes that there is precious little basis for such an assumption.

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[80] Léonidas Kallivretakis, *Gustave Flourens (1838-1871) et la Grèce*, doctoral thesis, Université de la Sorbonne, Paris 1983; published in Greek under the title *Η ζωή και ο θάνατος του Γουσταύου Φλουράνς*, Athens: Cultural Foundation of the National Bank, 1998.