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# JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH

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Jules Verne

*With an Introduction and Notes  
by Ursula K. Heise*

*Translated by Frederick Amadeus Malleon  
Translation revised by Ursula K. Heise  
Illustrations by Rachel Perkins*

George Stade  
Consulting Editorial Director



**BARNES & NOBLE CLASSICS**  
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## From the Pages of **Journey to the Center of the Earth**

Otto Lidenbrock had no mischief in him, I readily admit that; but unless he changes in unlikely ways, he will die a confirmed original. (page 3)

My uncle went on working, his imagination went off rambling into the ideal world of combinations; he lived far away from earth, and genuinely beyond earthly needs. (page 26)

“All the theories of science demonstrate that such a feat is impossible!” (page 32)

Large though it is, that asylum is not big enough to contain all Professor Lidenbrock’s madness! (page 44)

We traveled around the enormous base of the volcano. The professor hardly took his eyes off it; he gesticulated, he seemed to challenge it and say: “Here’s the giant that I’ll tame!” (page 76)

The crater of Snaefells resembled an inverted cone, whose opening might have been half a league in diameter. Its depth appeared to be about two thousand feet. Imagine the aspect of such a container when it filled with thunder and flames. The bottom of the funnel was about 250 feet in circumference, so that its rather gentle slopes allowed its lower brim to be reached without difficulty. Involuntarily I compared the whole crater to an enormous hollow grenade launcher, and the comparison frightened me. (page 89)

My hair stood on end with terror. The feeling of emptiness overcame me. I felt the center of gravity shifting in me, and vertigo rising up to my brain like drunkenness. There is nothing more treacherous than this attraction toward the abyss. (page 94)

“To Hell with your calculations!” replied my uncle in a fit of rage. “To Hell with your hypotheses!” (page 131)

If the ‘average’ number of difficulties did not increase, we could not fail to reach our goal. And then, what glory! I had come around to reasoning in this way, quite like a Lidenbrock. Seriously. Was this due to the strange environment in which I was living? Perhaps. (page 133)

Impossible to get away. The reptiles approach; they wheel around our little raft at a

speed that express trains could not match; they swim concentric circles around it. I've gripped my rifle. But what can a bullet do against the scales that cover the bodies of these animals? (page 168)

Ah! the descent of this electric sphere has magnetized all the iron on board; the instruments, the tools, the weapons, move about and clash with a sharp jangle; the nails in my shoes cling tenaciously to a plate of iron set into the wood. I cannot pull my foot away! (pages 180-181)

“As long as the heart beats, as long as the flesh pulsates, I can't admit that any creature endowed with willpower needs to be overwhelmed by despair.” (page 215)

Ah! What a journey! What a wonderful journey! Having entered through one volcano, we had exited through another, and that other one was more than twelve hundred leagues away from Snaefells, and from that barren landscape of Iceland at the edge of the world! (pages 228-229)

From that day on, the professor was the happiest of scholars, and I was the happiest of men, for my pretty Virland girl, resigning her place as ward, took up position in the house on the Königstrasse in the double capacity of niece and wife. No need to add that her uncle was the illustrious Otto Lidenbrock, corresponding member of all the scientific, geographical, and mineralogical societies on the five continents of the earth. (page 232)

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## *Jules Verne*

The creator of the *roman scientifique*, the popular literary genre known today as science fiction, Jules Gabriel Verne was born in the port town of Nantes, France, in 1828. His father, Pierre, was a prominent lawyer, and his mother, Sophie, was from a successful ship-building family. Despite his father's wish that he pursue law, young Jules was fascinated by the sea and all things foreign and adventurous. Legend holds that at age eleven he ran away from school to work aboard a ship bound for the West Indies but was caught by his father shortly after leaving port.

Jules developed an abiding love of science and language from a young age. He studied geology, Latin, and Greek in secondary school, and frequently visited factories, where he observed the workings of industrial machines. These visits likely inspired his desire for scientific plausibility in his writing and perhaps informed his depictions of the submarine *Nautilus* and the other seemingly fantastical inventions he described.

After completing secondary school, Jules studied law in Paris, as his father had before him. However, during the two years he spent earning his degree, he developed more consuming interests. Through family connections, he entered Parisian literary circles and met many of the distinguished writers of the day. Inspired in particular by novelists Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas (father and son), Verne began writing his own works. His poetry, plays, and short fiction achieved moderate success, and in 1852 he became secretary of the Theatre lyrique. dow with two

In 1857 he married Honorine Morel, a young widow with two children. Seeking greater financial security, he took a position as a stockbroker with the Paris firm Eggy and Company. However, he reserved his mornings for writing. Baudelaire's recently published French translation of the works of Edgar Allan Poe, as well as the days Verne spent researching points of science in the library, inspired him to write a new sort of novel: the *roman scientifique*. His first such novel, *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, was an immediate success and earned him a publishing contract with the important editor Pierre-Jules Hetzel.

For the rest of his life, Verne published an average of two novels a year; the fifty-four volumes published during his lifetime, collectively known as *Voyages Extraordinaires*, include his best-known works, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*.

In 1872 Verne settled in Amiens with his family. During the next several years he traveled extensively on his yachts, visiting such locales as North Africa, Gibraltar, Scotland, and Ireland. In 1886 Verne's mentally ill nephew shot him in the leg, and the author was lame thereafter. This incident, as well as the tumultuous political climate in Europe, marked a change in Verne's perspective on science, exploration, and industry. Although not as popular as his early novels, Verne's later works are in many ways as prescient. Touching on such subjects as the ill effects of the oil industry, the negative influence of missionaries in the South Seas, and the extinction of animal species, they

speak to concerns that remain urgent in our own time.

Verne continued writing actively throughout his life, despite failing health, the loss of family members, and financial troubles. At his death in 1905 his desk drawers contained the manuscripts of several new novels. Jules Verne is buried in the Madeleine Cemetery in Amiens.

## ***The World of Jules Verne and Journey to the Center of the Earth***

- 1828** Jules Gabriel Verne is born in the port city of Nantes, France, the first of the five children who will be born to Pierre and Sophie Allotte Verne. His father, an attorney, will encourage young Jules to pursue a career in law. His mother, from a ship-building family, instills in him a love of the sea.
- 1831** Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris (The Hunchback of Notre Dame)* is published.
- 1833** George Sand's novel *Lélia* is published by the well-known publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel, who later will publish Verne's novels.
- 1834** Jules begins attending secondary school. During his years at school, he excels in geology, Latin, and Greek. Also greatly interested in machinery, he makes frequent visits to nearby factories.
- 1839** It is said that the adventurous boy tries to run away to sea aboard a ship bound for the West Indies but is apprehended by his father before reaching open waters.
- 1843** Tahiti becomes a French protectorate.
- 1844** Alexandre Dumas's *Le Comte de Monte Cristo (The Count of Monte Cristo)* is published.
- 1847** Jules begins studying law in Paris; he will receive his degree in two years. In Paris, family friends introduce him to some of France's most distinguished writers, including Victor Hugo. Jules begins writing to supplement his meager allowance. Several of his plays are well received in theaters; his fiction appears in the Parisian magazine *Musée des familles*.
- 1852** Louis-Napoleon becomes emperor of France as Napoleon III. Novelists Alexandre Dumas (père and fils) secure Verne a position as secretary of the Theatre lyrique.
- 1853** French administrator Georges- Eugène Haussmann begins alterations and municipal improvements in Paris, including the construction of the wide boulevards that distinguish the city to this day. The Crimean War begins, pitting Russia against France, England, and the Ottoman Turks.
- 1854** French poet Charles Baudelaire's translation of the works of Edgar Allan

Poe captivates Verne and initiates his lifelong admiration of the American author.

- 1857** Verne marries the widow Honorine de Viane Morel, whom he had met the previous year. Quitting his position at the Théâtre lyrique, he embarks on a career as a stockbroker at Eggly and Company, although he continues to devote his mornings to writing. Charles Baudelaire's volume of poems *Les fleurs du mal (The Flowers of Evil)* and Gustave Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary* are published.
- 1859** Verne spends hours in the library gaining the scientific knowledge that will inform his fiction. He travels to England and Scotland. English naturalist Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* is published. Work begins on the Suez Canal.
- 1861** Verne travels to Norway and Denmark. His son and only child, Michel, is born. He meets the legendary photographer Nadar.
- 1862** Verne's manuscript *Cinq semaines en ballon (Five Weeks in a Balloon)* is accepted by Hetzel for publication. Until his death, Verne will publish an average of two books a year with Hetzel, forming the cumulative series known as *Voyages Extraordinaires (Extraordinary Voyages)*. Hugo's *Les Misérables* appears.
- 1863** *Five Weeks in a Balloon* is published to great success.
- 1864** *Voyage au centre de la Terre (Journey to the Center of the Earth)* is published. Verne writes an article on Poe for *Musée des familles*.
- 1865** *De la Terre à la Lune (From the Earth to the Moon)* appears. English writer Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is published.
- 1866** *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras (The Adventures of Captain Hatteras)* is published.
- 1867** Verne travels with his brother Paul to New York aboard the
- 1868** *Great Eastern. Les enfants du capitaine Grant (The Children of Captain Grant)* is published. He purchases his first yacht, the *Saint-Michel*, named for his only son.
- 1869** *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers (Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea)* is published in two volumes (1869-1870). Its depiction of the submarine *Nautilus* (named after the first submarine, invented around 1800 by American engineer Robert Fulton) predates the construction of the first submarine by twenty-five years.

- 1870** The Franco-Prussian War breaks out; Verne serves in the Coast Guard.
- 1871** *Une ville flottante (A Floating City)*, partly inspired by a trip to Niagara Falls, New York, is published. Verne's father dies. The Franco-Prussian War ends.
- 1872** The Verne family moves to Amiens, where Verne will reside the rest of his life.
- 1873** Another Verne masterpiece, *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours (Around the World in Eighty Days)*, is published. French poet Arthur Rimbaud's confessional autobiography *Une Saison en Enfer (A Season in Hell)* is published.
- 1874** *Le Docteur Ox (Dr. Ox's Experiment and Other Stories)* appears, along with *L'Île mystérieuse (The Mysterious Island)*. *Around the World in Eighty Days* is adapted for the stage. Verne purchases a new yacht, the *Saint-Michel II*.
- 1875** *Le Chancellor (The Chancellor)* is published.
- 1876** *Michel Strogoff* is published.
- 1877** *Les Indes noires (The Child of the Cavern)* and *Hector Servadac* are published. Verne buys his last yacht, the *Saint-Michel III*.
- 1878** A leisurely cruise aboard the *Saint-Michel III* takes Verne and his brother to North Africa, Portugal, and Gibraltar.
- 1879** *Les Cinq cents millions de la Bégum (The Begum's Fortune)* and *Les tribulations d'un Chinois en Chine (The Tribulations of a Chinaman in China)* are published.
- 1880** Verne cruises to Scotland and Ireland. *La Maison à vapeur (The Steam House)* is published.
- 1881** Verne cruises to Holland, Denmark, and Germany. *La Jangada (The Giant Raft)* is published.
- 1882** Verne moves his family to a larger house in Amiens with a circular tower; today it is a well-known Verne landmark and the headquarters of the Jules Verne Society in Amiens.
- 1883** Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island* is published. War in Indochina breaks out.

- 1884** Verne voyages to Italy, where Pope Leo XIII personally blesses his work.
- 1885** Victor Hugo dies. English novelist Henry Rider Haggard publishes *King Solomon's Mines*.
- 1886** Verne's deranged nephew, Gaston, shoots him in the leg, laming him for life. This personal disaster, and his growing cynicism about industrialization, marks a turn toward pessimism in Verne's outlook and writing. His longtime publisher, Hetzel, dies. Verne sells the *Saint-Michel III* because of financial concerns. Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.
- 1887** Verne's mother dies.
- 1888** Verne is elected to the municipal council of Amiens, where he will serve for fifteen years.
- 1889** *Sans dessus dessous (Topsy-Turvy)* appears, which contains notably negative views on the potential of technology. His later novels will take on various forms of social injustice, from the plight of orphans to the corrupting power of missionaries in foreign lands.
- 1895** English novelist H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* is published .
- 1897** *Le Sphinx des glaces (The Ice Sphinx)*, written as a sequel to Poe's 1838 novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, is published. Flagging health plagues Verne. His brother Paul dies. English writer Rudyard Kipling's *Captains Courageous* and Edmond Rostand's play *Cyrano de Bergerac* are published .
- 1899** Verne's *Le testament d'un excentrique (The Will of an Eccentric )* deals with the oil industry's ravages of the environment.
- 1905** Leaving a drawer filled with manuscripts, and with his family gathered at his bedside, Jules Verne dies of complications

from diabetes. He is buried in Madeleine Cemetery in Amiens. His posthumously published novels, altered considerably by his son, Michel, remain a source of scholarly debate and interest.

## ***Introduction***

Traveling to the center of the Earth would involve a downward trip of about 4,000 miles that would cut through the Earth's crust and its mostly solid, rocky mantle into a liquid core of iron alloy, then end at a solid inner core of iron and nickel. Pressure and temperature would rise with increasing depth, and temperatures would reach about 10,300 degrees Fahrenheit at the Earth's center—hardly a climate that many geotourists would enjoy! Much of this knowledge about the geophysical structure of the Earth was acquired in the course of the twentieth century, long after Jules Verne published *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. In 1864, when the book appeared, different hypotheses about the nature of the Earth competed with each other. Even then, though, in light of any of the contemporary scientific theories, a journey to the Earth's core belonged to the realm of the fantastic. Why then did Verne, who was intensely interested in the science and technology of his day, choose this idea as the founding assumption of what was to become one of his most famous novels? And why is this journey undertaken not by a dreamer or a madman, but by a hard-core scientist, a professor of mineralogy and geology who is thoroughly familiar with the scientific debates of his time?

For a reader who first encounters *Journey to the Center of the Earth* at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the enthusiasm of Professor Otto Lidenbrock, his nephew Axel, and even Lidenbrock's goddaughter Graüben for mineralogical specimens and geological theories may seem nothing short of eccentric. After Alfred Wegener's theory of continental drift—originally proposed in the 1920s—had been generally accepted in the 1960s, geology disappeared from public awareness as a science that could bring about exciting new discoveries and theories. But in the middle of the nineteenth century, geology was a brand-new branch of knowledge rife with the opposing theories and opinions of some of the best minds of the day. Far from being an arcane branch of scientific knowledge of mostly academic interest, it touched upon the most basic questions of the origin of life and human beings and the nature of the very soil they walk upon. Not just scholars but public and religious authorities believed they had a vital stake in the outcome of geological controversies.

As a scientific discipline, geology had in fact only come into being in the first half of the nineteenth century. Before that, mineralogists had been just about the only scientists to study the inanimate environment, conducting their investigation of the Earth most frequently in the context of French and German mining schools. Their study consisted of a mix of natural philosophy, theology, and the beginnings of empirical observation, without the benefit of an established academic framework. Abraham Gottlob Werner, a German professor at the Mining School of Freiberg in the late eighteenth century, combined the study of rock formations with the biblical account of Genesis. The Scottish naturalist, chemist, and geologist James Hutton opposed Werner's theories and grounded his own account of the development of the Earth on observable processes and on the principle of uniformitarianism—that is, the idea that the processes that had gone into the shaping of the Earth over immensely

long periods of time had not fundamentally changed and could still account for geological development. Hutton's work was followed by that of Scottish geologist Charles Lyell, whose classic book *Principles of Geology*, published in 1830, laid down the foundations of a new, empirically based science of the Earth.

But the Earth is so vast and all-encompassing that it often appeared complicated to infer its general operating principles from the processes observable in one particular place. Indeed, huge areas of geology—the 70 percent of the Earth's surface that is under water, as well as its interior—are simply inaccessible to direct human observation. (Lyell once joked that an amphibious observer who could inhabit both land and sea would be a more suitable geologist than a human being.) For these reasons, divergent theories about the nature of the Earth continued to rage throughout the nineteenth century. While some scholars argued that the interior of the Earth had to be mostly liquid, with the solid ground a mere thin crust not unlike ice on lake water, others replied that on mathematical grounds the Earth could not be anything but for the most part solid. The age of the Earth was similarly subject to vastly divergent estimations, and this issue became part of the violent controversy over Darwin's theory of evolution in the 1850s and 1860s. Biological evolution occurs over immense periods of time, and in general, the development of the physical structure of the Earth over hundreds of thousands or even millions of years contradicts creationist accounts of a much shorter time span for the origins of the Earth.

In Verne's day, therefore, geological theories about the origin and gradual shaping of the Earth, along with biological insights into the evolution of life, were what genetic engineering and nanotechnology are for us today: innovative and exciting areas of scientific research that have a profound bearing on the way we think about our own identity and experience our everyday lives. Verne's familiarity with these debates shows up in every chapter of *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, which abounds in references to the leading scientific minds of his day, from naturalists and geologists such as Georges Cuvier to explorers such as Alexander von Humboldt and archaeologists such as Jacques Boucher de Perthes. Caught up in the evolving plot, a contemporary reader's attention might easily slide over such references unawares. But their presence is the equivalent of mentions of James Watson and Francis Crick, Stephen Hawking, or Bill Gates in a novel written today.

Verne's editor, Pierre-Jules Hetzel, claimed in a preface he wrote in 1866—just two years after the first publication of *Journey to the Center of the Earth*—that Verne's novels were finally making a place for science in the domain of literature, and that Verne would eventually present all the knowledge of geography, geology, physics, and astronomy that modern science had accumulated. Verne himself once remarked to the French novelist Alexandre Dumas père, “Just as you are the great chronicler of history, I shall become the chronicler of geography.” It is not hard to see why an integration of scientific knowledge with compelling literary characters and plots would have proved an attractive mix both to the audience of Verne's own day and those of subsequent periods: It combines the heady excitement of techno-scientific innovation with the pleasures of narrative storytelling and the free flight of the imagination.

This combination of science and fantasy may explain why Verne did not stick with

the serious scientific theories of his day, but included marginal and controversial notions, too, such as that of a hollow Earth. English astronomer Edmund Halley proposed the idea that the Earth is hollow in the late seventeenth century. Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler pursued the theory in the eighteenth century, as did Americans John Cleves Symmes and Jeremiah Reynolds and Scottish mathematician Sir John Leslie in the nineteenth century. (Axel alludes to Symmes in chapter XXIX, mistakenly identifying him as English rather than American.) Such theories influenced not only Verne, but also other writers and were sporadically revived until the early twentieth century. Edgar Allan Poe's "Manuscript Found in a Bottle" and *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* and Edgar Rice Burroughs's *At the Earth's Core* and *Pellucidar* are other examples. Yet by the time Verne published *Journey to the Center of the Earth* in 1864, hollow-Earth theories, while not entirely disproved, were not a central topic of debate among leading scientists.

Verne, famous for his extensive and meticulous note taking, was surely not unaware of this fact; what led him to use the idea of a hollow Earth as the foundation for his novel was no doubt the way in which the notion allowed him to tie scientific exploration into some of the oldest and most significant motifs of the Western literary tradition. On the surface, the plot of *Journey to the Center of the Earth* seems relatively straightforward: Lidenbrock and his nephew by sheer coincidence discover an ancient cryptogram that points to the bottom of an Icelandic volcano as the entryway to a passage that will eventually lead to the Earth's core. Axel prefers the safety of life above ground and is reluctant to leave his fiancée, the professor's goddaughter Graüben, but Lidenbrock becomes obsessed with the idea of retracing the steps of his illustrious predecessor, the sixteenth-century Icelandic scholar Arne Saknussemm, [...] to the center of the Earth. Lidenbrock, Axel, and their Icelandic guide Hans penetrate deep beneath the Earth's crust, where they discover an alternative world of plants, animals, and even human beings that have long gone extinct on the surface, and return to ground level through another volcano. Although this plot may at first appear to be quite linear, it derives much of its narrative force from the way in which it invokes some of the founding stories of Western culture: the quest narrative, the descent to the underworld, and the initiatory voyage.

Professor Otto Lidenbrock is without any doubt a prime example of a hero on a quest so urgent that no one and nothing can stop it. His obstinacy in reaching the center of the Earth in spite of seemingly insurmountable obstacles puts him in the company of other literary figures whom we remember principally because of their overriding obsession with a single project: Jules Verne's own Captain Nemo from *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* and Phileas Fogg from *Around the World in Eighty Days* provide the most obvious parallels, but one is also reminded of Captain Ahab, the protagonist of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. While these may well be more complex characters, Lidenbrock shares with them their stubborn single-mindedness, their iron determination, and the reckless imposition of their will on others who have no desire to take part in the pursuit but are dragged along regardless. Even seen through Axel's reluctant eyes, however, Uncle Lidenbrock remains likable: His personal foibles, which Axel dwells on with a mix of gentle malice and affection, make him a more human figure than Nemo or Ahab, and the novel leaves us in no

doubt that Lidenbrock is genuinely attached to his nephew and his ward Graüben—though his concern for them will never in the end deter him from his quest for knowledge.

While there is no doubt something clichéd about this portrait of the fierce scientist with the warm heart under his crust of social brusqueness, it is Lidenbrock's enthusiasm and determination in the pursuit of science that gives the novel much of its propulsive energy (as literary critics have pointed out, his temper is compared to volcanic eruptions and electric discharges long before his expedition actually encounters these phenomena in their literal shape). Yet it is curious that Lidenbrock's scientific obsession is not presented as a quest for genuine innovation and original discovery, but rather as the repetition of a project that was already executed by someone else centuries earlier. The discovery of sixteenth-century scholar Arne Saknussemm's manuscript certainly strikes a familiar note, as ancient books or maps and lost manuscripts written in secret codes play a crucial role in many nineteenth- and twentieth-century adventure romances. But here, the discovery turns the journey into the realm of the unknown into a simultaneous quest for the traces left by the historic predecessor; the search for the new combines with an attempt to reconnect with the past. These two time vectors in Lidenbrock's voyage point to two quite different conceptions of history: on one hand, the idea of progress and its association with the increase of scientific knowledge, and on the other hand, the idea of a heroic past in which great men accomplished tasks that are difficult to repeat for ordinary individuals of the modern age. The ultimate outcome of Lidenbrock's quest should be seen in light of this tension between different perspectives on the relationship of modern society to its past and future.

But whatever the philosophical implications of the professor's expedition into the unknown may be, the reader's attraction to following the journey lies above all in the abundance of physical detail that Verne provides. Whether the expedition's goal is reached or not soon seems less important than the marvelous details that unfold before the travelers' eyes. As the famous science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov has shrewdly noted, the scientific implausibility of humans penetrating deep into the Earth's mantle despite increasing heat and pressure is compensated by Verne's emphasis on precise details. From the meticulous attention paid to the tools and instruments the expedition requires to the narrator's lovingly detailed descriptions of the physical features of each geological layer they encounter, Verne's writing bewitches the reader with its insistence on the wonders of sheer materiality. He writes of the ingenuity of Ruhmkorff lamps with as much devotion as he describes the colored striations of marble in underground tunnels and the festive scintillations of light falling on thousands of bits of crystal and quartz embedded in walls and vaults of rock. Of course, this intense physical presence of nature is not always inviting for the characters: Steep vertical slopes, regions without a drop of water, heat, fierce storms, and darkness so absolute as to be almost palpable endanger the travelers, just as the primeval magnificence of the subterranean landscapes delights them. But whether it is splendid or menacing, the physicality of the environment in Verne's novel holds the reader spellbound.

At the same time, Verne associates the materiality of the Earth with symbolic and

metaphoric dimensions that may be quite familiar to the reader. Some of the most influential texts of the Western cultural tradition, from Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid* to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, prominently feature the protagonist's descent into the underworld, the realm of the dead, as an important part of his social and spiritual development. Usually, the point of this voyage to the underworld is to confront deceased individuals whom he used to know: parents, lovers, friends, or public figures from his own era, whose manner of death and afterlife are significant for his own course of life and contribute to a deeper understanding of his past and present. In *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, this confrontation with death and desolation starts long before the protagonists descend into the crater of the Snaefells volcano; fully a third of the novel is taken up with the description of their journey toward and across Iceland. This part of the trip takes the expedition through a magnificently portrayed wasteland of cold, solitude, and poverty where plants, animals, and humans are barely able to survive and shadowy lepers scurry away at the travelers' approach. The impoverished Icelanders, portrayed as almost congenitally prone to silence and stolid acceptance of extreme adversity, sometimes seem to form part of an all-encompassing landscape of rock, ice, and steam more than of human society as we usually conceive it. All of these elements already suggest that the protagonists have entered a netherworld that will confront them with the bare essentials of their own existence.

Once the travelers start descending below the surface of the Earth and move outside the boundaries of human society, their exploration turns into a temporal as much as a geographical journey. They discover a prehistoric world of gigantically sized plants and mushrooms, a realm not only of fossils and bones but also of living, breathing, and battling dinosaurs and other animals long extinct on the planet's surface. In large segments of two chapters (XXXVIII and XXXIX) that were not part of the novel when it was published in 1864, they even encounter predecessors of the human species itself. Verne added them in 1867 as a direct fictional transplantation of discoveries about Stone Age humans that the French archaeologist Jacques Boucher de Perthes made in the 1830s and 1840s, but which were only generally accepted in the late 1850s and early 1860s. They were the basis for his claim, revolutionary at the time, that not only fauna and flora but human beings themselves have a history that counts in the hundreds of thousands of years. When the members of the Lidenbrock expedition encounter such long-extinct humans living in a prehistoric natural environment, they are confronted not just with a personal or social past, but with ecological and biological history. Geological layers, therefore, function in the novel as metaphors for both collective cultural and scientific memory, and traversing these layers implies traveling back in time.

As a precursor of such present-day imaginary encounters with prehistoric flora and fauna as Steven Spielberg's film *Jurassic Park*, Verne's *Journey* invites us to ask questions about how we remember, reconstruct, and invent the past and present of our biological surroundings. But while *Jurassic Park*, with its rampaging, man-eating dinosaurs, is ultimately intended as a warning about the excessive manipulation of nature by science and consumerism, the point in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* is quite different. Professor Lidenbrock and his nephew also encounter dangerous dinosaurs—but they end up battling each other, not the intruding humans, and in fact