



The Secret of Wilhelm Storitz: The First English Translation of Verne's Original Manuscript

Jules Verne , Peter Schulman (Translator)

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Widely rumored to exist, then circulated in a corrupt form, Jules Verne's final and arguably most daring and hauntingly beautiful novel—his own “invisible man”—appears here for the first time in a faithful translation. Readers of English can rediscover the pleasures of Verne's storytelling in its original splendor and enjoy a virtually unknown gem of action, adventure, and style from a master of French literature.

Wilhelm Storitz, the son of a famous Prussian scientist (and possessor of his father's secrets—even, perhaps, a formula that confers invisibility), vows revenge on the family that has denied him the love of his life, Myra Roderich. Wilhelm's actions on the eve of Myra's wedding unfold in a surprising and sinister way, leading to an ending that will astonish the reader. Like many works left unpublished when Jules Verne died, *The Secret of Wilhelm Storitz* was prepared and edited by his son, Michel. After a century of obscurity, this unique work in Verne's oeuvre is finally in the hands of readers, in a fine, authentic translation.

The Secret of Wilhelm Storitz: The First English Translation of Verne's Original Manuscript Details

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Fabish Caruri says

C?ng ???c, ?áng 3 sao r??i. C?t truy?n ??n gi?n, không li k? nh? nhi?u tác ph?m khác c?a Verne.

Matt Kuhns says

Probably worthwhile for completists, only.

The introduction and notes to the new Schulman translation make much of this late, "darker" work by Verne and various symbolic interpretations. But the fact that the story closes in a somewhat jarring, unresolved manner doesn't really make it great art. Overall, what we have here is a readable but fairly sloppy, lesser work by a great author, written when he was bitter at Germany and perhaps life itself for France's 1870 humiliation.

Otherwise, the novel is probably only notable for its astounding sexism. Even allowing for more than a century's distance, the attitude toward women represented by the entire female cast's extreme fragility is appalling.

For the merely curious, it may be better to skip this and go re-read one of Verne's classic works instead.

Tony says

THE SECRET OF WILHELM STORITZ. (1910). Jules Verne. ***.

This novel was published after Verne's death under the direction of his son, Michael, who took great liberties with both the style and content of the book. A recently discovered copy of the original manuscript was discovered and newly translated – faithful to Verne's wishes. It is, essentially, Verne's 'invisible man' novel. The 'invisible man' theme has been used in scads of novels. It is always the bad guy who gets to be invisible, and this one is no exception. There is a twist at the end, however, that Verne uses to try and lift this effort above the usual plot. Wilhelm Storitz is the son of a professor who was said to possess powers of the occult that he passed on to Wilhelm when he died. Wilhelm was, generally, a thoroughly unpleasant man. His one mania was to possess Myra Roderick. He asked for her hand in marriage, but was turned down by both Myra and her parents. He then vowed that if he couldn't have her, then nobody would. Here's where the invisibility comes into play. In addition to his own use of this power, he could also share it with others – in his case, with his man-servant. The twist at the end is interesting, but it is left unresolved at the end of the book. This wasn't a bad book, but the subject had become time-worn, and even Verne couldn't resuscitate it.

Dennis says

In the comparison of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells as forefathers of science fiction, here is a case where they have a similar story. This is Verne's invisible man story, and quite frankly in this case Verne gets it wrong, when one ingests a potion to become invisible, it does not also make ones clothing invisible. Otherwise, Verne's invisible man, as opposed to Wells' invisible man, is in full control of his power and uses it to terrorize the family of a woman, her family and town where they live when his request for her hand in marriage was denied, but later given to of all people, a Frenchman.

This edition is the first English translation of Jules Verne's original manuscript. The tale was originally published in 1910, 5 years after Verne's death and his son altered the tale to have a happier ending. The first English translation appeared in 1963 and edited out complete passages of Verne's text. Peter Schulman does a great job with the translation, a great introduction, but I feel his afterword gets a little too scholarly for my own taste.

Veronique says

3.5

Filip says

Do you read synopsis on a back or a cover of book? Just don't in this case. This Czech edition printed in 1985 gives away practically the whole plot. And the story itself does not help either. It's not very clever, characters are unreasonably hysteric at times, there is a lot of the wrong kind of nationalism etc. Simply put, almost every page pi*sed me off. But I've finished it anyway - come on, it has only 100 pages and I thought I must get better at some point (because Verne! But it didn't).

It is also possible that the Czech translation is terrible or I am just ignorrat (in that case, enlighten me, please). But all in all, I hated this book.

Joni says

Escrito una década después del clásico de Wells, El hombre invisible, parecería que resultó en inspiración, homenaje o plagio para Verne. No está mal ya que aporta su estilo pero me queda la duda si Verne leyó antes la obra mencionada.

Mary says

In "The Secret of Wilhelm Sotritz", Verne is giving us a view of the scientific and spiritual aspects of being invisible.

On one hand he addresses the havoc that could ensue if one had the ability to become invisible; the concerns

from personal family life to political security that would be breeched. On the other hand he gives us insight to some 19th century social concerns about spirituality.

Wilhelm is a bachelor, foreigner, and a stranger and as such is suspect from the beginning in the community that he is residing in.

Because Wilhelm is rejected by Myra's family for her hand in marriage he socially becomes invisible and not able to become spiritually complete in marriage, basically a nobody. So in essence, because he cannot attach himself to the well respected Roderich family and become somebody, he then falls back on the power that invisibility gives him to create havoc and terror in the unenlightened superstitious population of the town.

The story is a quick read and very well written. I would recommend it to anyone who likes some of the late 19th century science fiction writings.

Larry Wegman says

More psychological and darker, and less of a "grand adventure" than his earlier, more well-known works. He clearly doesn't like Germans at this point in his life. It's less future-science predictive, too, but still pretty exciting.

Ehsan'Shokraie' says

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Rafael Ontivero says

Leída la versión de Sáenz de Jubera de finales de los años 1910, que se corresponde con la versión modificada por Michel Verne, aunque creo que no difiere de la original más que en el final y alguna cosa de por el medio, siendo la de Verne un poco menos final feliz, pero tampoco puedo confirmarlo ya que la edición original anda en el correo y estoy a la espera de recibirla.

Can Kartoglu says

Bu kitap di?er Verne kitaplar?nda oldu?u gibi bilimsel ya da co?rafi ö?retilerden ziyade psikolojik gerilim temas? üzerine yaz?lm??. Jules Verne'den ziyade Arthur C. Clarke ya da Agatha Christie romanlar?n? and?r?yor.

Luís C. says

Here is a beautiful story of adventure both surprising and very playful, the great Jules serves us with great simplicity that lets itself embarked by human hatred that over time appealed to the supernatural rather advanced science for sow terror or simply wreak vengeance, but at the same time, we discover that what man can build, it can also untie it, we need intelligence to fight another intelligence ...

This is the adventure that Henri remembers. It tells us for misfortune has drilled the skin of his brother Marc, a painter about to marry Myra Roderich but previous suitor, Wilhelm Storitz , whom the Roderich family had refused the hand of their daughter, being son of a great scientist who would have made great discoveries that the world could not imagine, openly proclaims revenge against Henry and Marc Vidal because Myra will marry no one but him. So a series of terror will win the city of Ragz. The torn posters, the wedding contract torn by the wind, the bouquet of flowers flying in the void, voices thundering in the void, people struck by the wind ... oh yes, it is the art Wilhelm Storitz choses the invisible to make this marriage fail ... but Henri is not ready to abandon his brother in this hell, there is always a way to fight the invisible, just find his secret ...

Tim says

You're likely to get an odd look when someone asks what you're reading and you tell them it's the "new" Jules Verne novel. After all, Verne died 106 years ago and all of his work has been published. Yet therein is a tale itself.

The Secret of Wilhelm Storitz is a novel Verne hoped would be published before his death. It is, though, among roughly half a dozen novels and a short story collection published after he died. The problem is Verne's son rewrote many of them, recasting plots and adding characters. *The Secret of Wilhelm Storitz* is emblematic of this. When first published, Verne's son placed the story in the 18th century rather than the 19th and changed the ending. Now, though, Peter Schulman, a professor of French literature at Old Dominion University and a trustee of the North American Jules Verne Society, brings us the first English translation of Verne's original manuscript.

The title character is the son of a famous German scientist, one many near his home regarded as possessing close to supernatural powers. The scientist's rumored secrets bring people to his grave on the anniversary of his death, many expecting him to rise from it. Yet it seems his son has possession of those secrets, one of which is the key to this blend of science fiction and fantasy.

The story is told by Henry Vidal, who travels from Paris to a fictional city in Hungary, where his brother intends to marry Myra Roderich, the daughter of a highly respected family. Myra and her family spurned Storitz's earlier marriage proposal. He invokes one of his father's secrets to prevent the marriage and take his revenge on the Roderichs. In fact, one of his misdeeds might shock even the modern reader. Who can imagine the effect it would have had on an early 20th century audience?

Naturally, *The Secret of Wilhelm Storitz* carries the style and tropes of the time in which it was written (1895). Thus, women who suffer an emotional shock must take to their bed until they recover their constitution. Geopolitical emotions and biases into play. Hungarians are portrayed as being prone toward

superstition, far more ready to accept supernatural explanations than scientific ones. It also is not coincidence that Storitz is German as Verne displays an anti-German sentiment that set in following the Franco-Prussian War. For example, when Henry Vidal unknowingly encounters Storitz en route to Hungary, someone comments that Storitz "might be German twice over, as he's got to be a Prussian." Vidal's response? "And that's already once too many!"

Verne's style frequently incorporates references to contemporary scientific advances, artists and authors. Schulman does an excellent job footnoting names and terms that are of little or no significance today. These and more general footnotes also help explicate Verne's literary style, occasionally referring to Verne's life or other writings.

The Secret of Wilhelm Storitz may show its age to the modern reader. But there is never anything wrong with having something "new" from a classic author, particularly when earlier versions deviated from the author's original work.

(Originally posted at A Progressive on the Prairie.)

Etienne Mahieux says

Aussi bien Goodreads que la couverture de l'édition Folio actuelle déforment le titre du "Secret de Wilhelm Storitz", roman qui a subi bien des outrages puisqu'on l'a longtemps connu dans une version très réécrite due à Michel Verne, le fils de l'auteur. C'est l'un des derniers ouvrages de l'auteur, devenu avec le temps plus sceptique face au progrès technique, et répondant ici à un fameux livre de H.G. Wells. Je ne dis pas lequel, car vous l'avez déjà deviné, et il faut admettre que de connaître le fin mot ôte du piquant au roman. Toujours construit sur le principe des "Voyages extraordinaires", qui nous vaut une pittoresque descente du Danube, il est cependant centré sur le drame d'un jeune couple poursuivi par la jalousie d'un prétendant éconduit, et qui prétend disposer de pouvoirs surhumains ; très vite les phénomènes les moins explicables se multiplient autour du Français Marc Vidal et de la Hongroise Myra Roderich. Verne mène son récit avec beaucoup d'intelligence vers une conclusion d'une poétique étrangeté ; mais il faut dire, avec les réserves d'usage puisqu'au bout du compte cette version rétablie n'est elle-même qu'un premier jet, que son style est peut-être cette fois-ci trop tranquille, trop madré pour établir un véritable malaise. Verne ne retrouve pas tout à fait la veine du "Château des Carpates" — mais nous pouvons déjà nous réjouir de la résurrection de son texte.
