

LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS

Even More Than the *Nautilus*

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After attacking the "Captain Nemo is Moriarty" theory so thoroughly in "The Subterfuge Surfaces," one may wonder what my stance is on *The Other Log of Phileas Fogg* and other tales of Philip Jose Farmer's Wold-Newton Family.

In this essay, I will use the dialogue format so beloved of philosophers of the past.

All right, I'll play the devil's advocate. Perhaps you should first define the problem.

I believe I can divide the problem into four statements:

1. In my proposed series of novels, Captain Nemo is more-or-less the hero. I have my own storylines for him, some I've kicked around since elementary school, that have nothing to do with Eridaneans, Capelleans, or Professor Moriarty.
2. While "my" universe is independent of Philip Jose Farmer's (hereafter PJF) Wold-Newton Universe, it would be fun if the Nemo series could fit in. And fun is, after all, the main purpose of life.
3. PJF's book *The Other Log of Phileas Fogg* is an integral part of the WNU, being a full-fledged novel incorporating many concepts seen in his biographies of Tarzan and Doc Savage.
4. In "Other" Captain Nemo is depicted as a dyed-in-the-wool Bad Guy, "a bloodthirsty, money-hungry pirate who sent hundreds of the innocent to a watery grave" [p. 126], a criminal mastermind who, in fact, is one the same as Professor James Moriarty from the Sherlock Holmes canon.

That's quite a problem! Surely Statements #1 and #4 are completely incompatible.

It seems so, given these simplistic statements. But let us look at the possibilities of "Other":

1. It is a work of fiction by a twentieth century SF writer.
2. It is a hoax, perpetrated by:
 - a. A member of Moriarty's organization.

b. Phileas Fogg, who had too much free time in his rooms at No. 7 Saville Row.

c. An independent third party, as in the case of the "Jack the Ripper" diary.

3. It is partly true, but fictional sections have been added to confuse certain parties.

4. It is, for the most part, an accurate document of real events.

I don't see why you should go to all this trouble. Choice #1 seems to be the easy way out, and PJF himself decided that certain recorded adventures of his favorite heroes were works of fiction.

True, but it is hard to delete such a major part of the WNU. It's like saying Middle Earth was real, but *The Hobbit* was just a fairy tale spun before a Gondoran hearth fire.

How about #2? I think others have suggested a hoax.

A hoax? For what purpose? Choice 2a might be possible, if the Circle of Life were trying to muddle Moriarty's true origins -- but one of their goals is to suppress belief in extraterrestrial life. The Log was discovered in 1947, remember, and the Circle was already having trouble with extraterrestrial interventions that year.

Choice 2b is possible but unlikely. To concoct such a story in the 1870s, Mr. Fogg would have required an even wilder imagination than M. Verne's. By all accounts he seemed totally uninterested in literature. He owned no fiction and got all his information from newspapers, journals, and almanacs.

Choice 2c is possible -- but, again, to what purpose? There have been many literary hoaxes perpetrated for gain -- as with the Hitler Diaries and the above-mentioned Ripper document -- but while "Other" did reach print, it was no bestseller, merely one yellow-spined DAW SF book out of hundreds (No. 48, to be precise).

Choice #3 is another easy way out, but which areas do we pick and choose as "real"? We might as well go back to #1.

In mathematics, we prove a theorem false by trying to prove it true for all conditions. I propose we go straight to choice #4. The events depicted in "Other" actually happened.

All right, but it seems totally contradictory. So: James Moriarty, brilliant, egotistical and cruel, took on the name Captain Nemo merely to become a

murderous undersea pirate. The marvelous *Nautilus* lies battered and broken at the bottom of Norway's infamous Maelstrom --

Here I must interrupt. I said the events depicted in "Other" actually happened. The events you just outlined do not occur in "Other".

Then I confess I'm confused. What does happen in "Other"?

An Eridanean agent called Passpartout is assigned to serve under another agent called Phileas Fogg. They travel around the world, decoys drawing the attention of a major Capellean plot against the Eridaneans. The pair battle Capellean agents along the way, including Detective Fix and the criminal genius Fogg calls Nemo. And while they travel, Fogg fills Passpartout's head with stories about this man, claiming that he is the same "Nemo" who helmed the *Nautilus*, and that Fogg himself was a crewman on that fantastic submersible.

Doesn't the omniscient third-person narrator have Fogg remember his time with Captain Nemo? You love to throw around quotes, so here's one: "Yes, it was he. The man he had served under, the man in the doorway. . . Fogg uttered the man's name softly. 'Captain Nemo!'" [p. 68]

To this I can only say that the third person narrator -- a certain famous science-fiction writer -- is not omniscient, though he is a meticulous researcher. His source was the Other Log, which, as you may recall, had several pages ruined over the years by water. And only one-third of what was left had been translated by 1972, the year "Other" was published.

Yes, I do throw around quotes. "Verne, like every good novelist, had inserted some remarks of a purely fictional character to inform the reader swiftly of what was going on." [p. 78] PJF had even more holes to plug with speculation than M. Verne, and once he reached Fogg's outline of the Moriarty-Nemo story, he backed up and gave him "memories" of that time -- and only once, by my count.

The Other Log, the source of the Captain-Nemo-as-Moriarty story, was never meant to be seen by the general public. It was well hidden for decades, and decades more were required to translate it. [1] Phileas Fogg's Nemo-Moriarty tale was meant for a specific audience, an audience that numbered precisely one: Jean Passpartout. [2]

Good Lord! * choke * You don't mean to imply that Passpartout was a Capellean spy -- a turncoat -- a double agent?

No, there were other reasons for this cover story.

The Eridaneans were very tight-lipped beings, as were their adopted terrestrial children. Part of this secrecy stemmed from the fact that their enemies had advanced spy devices that might be watching and listening to them at any time and

in any place. Part was because "The less any individual in the Race knew, the less he could tell if he were captured and tortured." [p. 28] There was also the fear of Terran xenophobia: "The Earthmen must not discover that there existed, and had existed for two hundred years, two groups of nonterrestrial origin among them. The Earthlings would become hysterical; a relentless hunt by all the governments of the globe would be conducted." [pp. 29-30] A superior often gave only "hints" about an assignment to an underling. "This sparseness of information indicates the strictness of the Eridanean security." [p. 32]

Phileas Fogg, however, gave a long expose about Captain Nemo, the *Nautilus*, and Fogg's part in the adventure known as *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, going out of his way to dissuade any beliefs Passpartout might hold about Nemo being a hero.

As PJF notes, "Passpartout, though an Eridanean, was also human." [p. 54] Although he feigned drunkenness for Mr. Fix on several occasions, he was still fallible, as his misadventure in the opium den reveals. "There is no need to recount the adventures of the Frenchman after he awoke," writes PJF, but it is important to note that he could be tricked and he could be drugged -- possibly to the point of revealing information.

A "talk risk" would have been eliminated immediately on the Capellean side, and no doubt the Eridanean leaders pondered the matter -- but Passpartout was one of their best agents. "No genuine coward would have survived to the age of thirty in this secret war. Nor would Stuart have entrusted this mission to anybody who had not proved himself many times over." [p. 64] Passpartout was thus given a false story about Captain Nemo, Moriarty, and the fate of the *Nautilus* that would do no harm if leaked.

I can understand the need for the agents working on a need-to-know basis -- even to the extreme used by the Eridaneans. But Fogg might have simply given Passpartout a description of Nemo and told him he was the enemy. Why feed Passpartout a false tale about the other Nemo (and the *Nautilus*)?

First I should mention that giving out false information is commonplace even among the "good guys" of the WNU. Countless Wold-Newton characters have given cover stories to their friends and loved ones. Immortals create new identities and move on to new lives, Clark Kent tells Lois Lane he's not Superman, Sherlock Holmes takes his Great Hiatus as the explorer Sigerson. One could call some of these stories outright lies, but "cover story" sounds better. The very names of the Eridaneans were false, code words indicating their functions.

In this instance, nothing cruel was done to Passpartout. He knew no more about Captain Nemo or the *Nautilus* than anyone else in the civilized world. As for why Fogg told him the Nemo-Moriarty story instead of keeping to his customary silence - - the story might actually have done some good if it leaked.

I think I see where you're headed. If your Captain Nemo is a hero, and Phileas Fogg is a hero, they might be allied somehow. So Fogg might have been doing the real Captain Nemo a favor by saying the *Nautilus* was no more -- allowing Nemo to operate without the eyes of the world (and assorted Bad Guys) upon him. That, too, is very Wold-Newtonish. But that doesn't explain why Fogg also insisted that Moriarty was Captain Nemo.

First of all, after the publication of *20,000 Leagues*, the name "Nemo" became a very common pseudonym and nickname. There was that famous young lucid dreamer known as Little Nemo; a man who called himself Nemo sent letters to the London *Times* during the Ripper murders (letters so strange he was suspected by some of being the Whitechapel killer). I've just learned that Sexton Blake's bloodhound Pedro was given to him by a man called "Mr. Nemo." Second, Moriarty was assigned the name Nemo. Remember, the Eridaneans and Capellans bore names reflecting their functions, from Fogg clouding the enemy's senses to Fix fixing Fogg quite good. "Nemo" means "No Man" -- an appellation that could be given to different operatives at different times, hopefully fooling the other side into thinking there was one major Capellean "Nemo" they should hunt for.

That, too, seems very Wold-Newtonish; I've seen that ploy used in *The Avengers* and other shows.

Thirdly, consider this: After the 80 day trip, Fogg and Passpartout were famous worldwide. And the very human Passpartout did enjoy his liquor. No doubt there were plenty of gregarious folk who would happily pay for a drink or three to hear the manservant speak of the round-the-world trip. More importantly, the last of the actual Capelleans had died, and possibly the last Eridanean as well; the need for absolute secrecy passed with them. Indeed, it might have become hard at that point to prove there had been aliens among us. Captain Nemo and the *Nautilus* were also known everywhere. Somewhere, sometime Passpartout would have had a bit too much at the same time that the subject of Nemo came up, as this imaginary dialogue demonstrates:

"Oh! Captain Nemo! The base villain! If I should see him again --" (Punches at the air.)

"But, Mr. Passpartout! Nemo sank with the *Nautilus* into the deepest abysses of the ocean!"

"No. *Monsieur*, no! Captain Nemo is not dead! My master and I encountered the scoundrel more than once on our trip. We should have slain him when we had the chance."

"So he still lives? He is on the loose at this moment?"

"*Oui, Monsieur*, regretfully so."

Passpartout's tales -- coupled with the genuine activities of the Moriarty-Nemo -- would give "Nemo" the reputation of a master of villainy, a general in an army of crime. Lesser -- but nonetheless dangerous -- villains would see advantages in joining his gang. Thus they would go forth to offer their services to Nemo.

The Moriarty Nemo *was* a master of villainy, and he would have welcomed skilled and unskilled labor into his organization to make it grow after the Capellean-Eridanean peace talks. But thanks to Fogg (and Passpartout), the cream of the underworld sought *Captain* Nemo of the *Nautilus* -- and if they found him, they were probably dealt with quietly -- and fewer Bad Guys roamed the world.

Moriarty figured this out eventually and abandoned the name Nemo. He started from scratch and built his own reputation as the Napoleon of Crime. By this time Phileas Fogg had buried his Other Log in the wall, and the Nemo/Moriarty tale along with it. Its usefulness had ended.

Sounds good to me. But what about *The Mysterious Island*, Arthur Gordon Pym, The Nine Unknown, Prince Dakkar, Neptune Perkins, and all that?

Please! I can handle only one catastrophe at a time!

NOTES

1. It appears that a few words of the Other Log were translated as early as 1959 -- perhaps a sentence or two describing Fogg's villainous Nemo. Given this vague outline (and the name "Nemo"), Prof. H. W. Starr created his famous theory that Professor Moriarty was formerly the captain of the *Nautilus*.

2. Aouda sat in during Fogg's tale of Captain Nemo, yes, but it was Passpartout who asked endless questions about the man -- more, perhaps, than a good Eridanean should. It is interesting to note that Aouda was an Eridanean spy -- "an exceptionally competent agent" -- in the Rajah of Bundelcund's palace (hey, she was his *wife*), yet she seemed to know nothing of Captain Nemo -- at least, she volunteered nothing during Fogg's long explanation [pp. 125-130]