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## Éclat: Duality and the Absolute in *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras*

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### Abstract

This article explores duality as the fundamental structuring principle of *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras*. Arguing that duality consistently emerges within the apparent absolutes that dominate the text, thereby relativizing or polarizing them, the article examines this process at the level of the hero and the story, as well as discursive regime. The article focuses on ways that Verne mobilizes the metaphor of the *internal fire* in relation to both Hatteras, hero of the absolute, and Dr. Clawbonny, hero of knowledge. Its analysis concludes at the Polar volcano, finding that *Hatteras's* duality at once constitutes and destabilizes the text.

### Résumé

Cet article explore la dualité en tant que principe fondamental qui structure *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras*. En démontrant que la dualité émerge systématiquement parmi les absolus qui dominent dans le texte, pour ainsi les relativiser, l'article examine le déroulement de ce processus au niveau du héros et de l'histoire, aussi bien que du régime discursif. L'article met en valeur comment Verne mobilise la métaphore du *feu interne*, et trouve qu'elle s'applique également à Hatteras, le héros de l'absolu, et au docteur Clawbonny, le héros du savoir. L'analyse se termine au volcan polaire, où s'affirme la dualité qui constitue le texte en même temps qu'elle le déstabilise.

Jules Verne's *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras* holds a place of particular interest in the ensemble of the dozens of novels, published over four decades, that make up his *Voyages extraordinaires*. The tale of the English commander's relentless quest to reach the North Pole was not Verne's first literary effort recognizable as blending scientific and adventure elements into an extraordinary voyage; *Cinq semaines en ballon*, *Voyage au centre de la Terre*, and *De la Terre à la Lune* all preceded its publication, bringing curious

readers through the skies, into the Earth's crust, and even to Florida. With *Hatteras*, however, an overarching project for Verne's work was articulated in a foreword to the first in-folio printing by his editor, Pierre-Jules Hetzel. [1] Presenting and publicizing the specificity of this literary vision, Hetzel writes of his protégé,

His aim is to sum up all the geographic, geological, physical, and astronomical knowledge accumulated by modern science, and hence to rewrite, in the attractive and picturesque form which is his speciality, the history of the universe.

Verne's three previous volumes were to be re-edited, alongside "those yet to appear," under the program promised by the subtitle *Voyages dans les mondes connus et inconnus*. [2]

Due to this founding position, *Hatteras* can provide a compelling site from which to think through programmatic aspects of Verne's output. Prefacing the recent Gallimard Folio edition, Roger Borderie describes the Vernian "system of fiction" that he sees fully represented in *Hatteras*: "Jules Verne requires a hero, a savant, a competitor, a traitor, a dog, and, very often, a volcano." [3] Indeed, Borderie's list traces a straight line through the plot and peregrinations of *Hatteras*. The hero, captain John Hatteras, uses pseudonymous notes to order the construction of a magnificent steam ship, which then departs from Liverpool for an unknown northern destination. Disguised on board as an ordinary sailor, Hatteras hides his true identity and plan to attain the Pole even from his agents. The crew discontent that breaks out at a low-70s latitude forces the captain to reveal all. Hatteras's fellow travelers include the types on Borderie's roll call: the doctor Clawbonny, the rival explorer Altamont, the mutinous Pen, and the "dog-captain" Duk all join Hatteras for various portions of the journey. At the end of the Earth, Hatteras discovers an open sea that surrounds a Polar volcano in full eruption. The struggle to survive and conquer the Arctic comes to a close as Hatteras, whose determination to occupy the exact geographical center has become madness, reaches into the volcano itself. Although he is saved by Altamont and returned with the others to England, the captain has become mute and unresponsive. He nevertheless retains his monomaniacal obsession for the north, treading toward the Pole on daily walks around the sanitarium.

Simone Vierende influentially interprets this story as an initiatory voyage, in her 1973 study of ritual structure underlying Verne's work. Vierende begins by mapping three phases of spiritual initiation onto the basic Vernian unit of the journey, in which preparation and rebirth bracket "the voyage in the beyond." [4] She then examines three kinds of initiation Verne's heroes undergo. The first represents a group's well-defined search for a given unknown and the second a hero's clash with elemental force, but the final possibility is "revelation and contact with the Sacred," occupied in intimate connection with the initiate's living being. [5] According to Vierende, Hatteras breaks free from the confines of a primary initiation and achieves its highest form through his plunge into the volcano: the captain "wants, very clearly, to gain access directly and personally to the Sacred, although he is engaged in the first type of quest." [6] Vierende posits Hatteras's journey under the initiatory paradigm such that, situated at the outset of Verne's *Voyages extraordinaires*, he is elevated to the role of the *absolute* hero. Hatteras is marked as an elect: in addition to producing the thrilling adventure, the protagonist's will and capacities have mystical qualities that permit him alone to approach a special, rarefied experience at the Pole.

Yet the gesture that characterizes *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras* is the calling into question of absolutes. What appears to be single and unified is persistently revealed to be double or multiple—relative. The Pole itself that Michel Butor calls Verne’s quintessential “figure of the absolute” symbolizes the Sacred as it locates pure north. [7] William Butcher points out, however, that the travelers encounter four separate northern Poles. [8] The stellar, cold, magnetic, and geographic Poles refract the absolute into its distinct component qualities. Similarly, the absolute hero that Hatteras represents is not confirmed, but rather refracted to feature Dr. Clawbonny’s role. Emerging as the text’s second lead, the savant anchors *Hatteras* in a second kind of heroism. The duality fundamental to this tale of the absolute extends from the interplay between its two, complementary heroes deep through to its structure and narration. In *Hatteras*, polarity both constitutes and finally comes dangerously close to undoing the novel.

It is natural to see Hatteras as epitomizing the hero of the story that bears his name. He is authoritative and brave, unwaveringly dedicated to his mission:

“ ‘Impossible!’ vehemently exclaimed Hatteras. ‘There are no impossible obstacles; there are just stronger and weaker wills, that’s all!’ (325-326).

The captain’s will is proved to be remarkably energetic. Absent for the opening twelve chapters, Hatteras is nonetheless able to shape the course of events and dictates all of the other characters’ actions. Present, he amply proves the strength of his boldness, skill, and thirst for glory with *actions d’éclat*—risky and ingenious maneuvers nautical and otherwise—and undeniable, imperious leadership. Everyone on his ship, the aptly named *Forward*, is subject to Hatteras’s command and follows it blindly. That is, they move forward up to 78° latitude. There, a mutiny divides the captain and a circle of loyal companions from the rest of the crew, who demand to return south. The mutineers’ attempt to turn back is later revealed to have resulted in grisly death. There are two options aboard the *Forward*: serve the hero’s quest, or perish.

Jolly Dr. Clawbonny, then, appears above all to serve, acting as helpmeet and easygoing foil to Hatteras’s intensity of focus. The doctor bustles around the decks of the *Forward*, where he is most often seen recording data and explaining natural phenomena to any character who will listen. [9] At the story’s beginning, he sets out to learn, declaring,

Now someone has offered to add to or rather remake [10] [*refaire*] my knowledge of medicine, surgery, history, geography, botany, mineralogy, conchology, geodesy, chemistry, physics, mechanics, and hydrography ; well, I accept, and I assure you that there’s no need to beg! (19)

This task is not small. Nevertheless, despite his ambition, the savant appears to hold a peripheral position in relation to the hero’s journey. The “someone” [*on*] making Clawbonny’s scholarly project possible is the absolute hero, Hatteras. In a 1966 article, Foucault considers Verne’s savants to exist “in the margins” precisely because of the compulsion to know that defines them. A “pure intermediary,” the savant character is the mouthpiece of an explicating and imported scientific discourse at a remove from the adventure. [11] Verne concedes that some Vernian savants have “great qualities” that make them eligible for a sort of lesser hero status; but she finds that those qualities, in the exemplary cases of Clawbonny and Aronnax, are “somehow ‘muted,’ without the *éclat* and power that alone allow the great adventures to

take place.” [12] However admirable the kind and generous doctor may be, and even as “his creator’s ideal double,” [13] for these critics Clawbonny ultimately forms part of the background that allows Hatteras’s exceptional heroism to pop off the page.

Although it is the captain who orders the trajectory north and, inside the mouth of the volcano, almost completes it, *Hatteras*’s rich thermodynamic imagination [14] also suggests that Clawbonny’s own drive to learn has a key share in the novel’s events. For Verne, the doctor’s knowledge—“a universal science that even Hatteras does not attain”—can never *direct* the initiatory voyage to the absolute. The doctor joins the expedition on the hero’s invitation, at the start. At the end, unwilling to take the plunge into molten lava, Clawbonny fails not the first but the final test of initiation at the Pole and thus remains a follower, grouped with Hatteras’s other stalwart companions into what Verne calls the “supporting roles.” [15] Only the absolute hero draws into the volcano, which Butor’s powerful essay nominates as the pivotal image of “internal fire” promising salvation on the icy horizon. [16] This sacralized flame of the *point suprême* is not the only fire in *Hatteras*, however. Verne invokes the internal fire in *Hatteras* on two distinct corporeal models of combustion that crucially link and contrast the captain and the doctor. Instead of lacking Hatteras’s connection to the volcano, Clawbonny has his own. Each character possesses an inner mechanism of fire and dynamic mode that propel him to the Pole. One hero fueled by volcanic, transcendental energy and another fueled by the world’s external material, Hatteras and Clawbonny expose a dual use for this elemental presence of fire in the text’s landscape.

The importance of body heat is introduced early in *Hatteras*. Describing the *Forward*’s crew, the narrator announces that they had “a principle of heat capable of fuelling the boiler of the *Forward*; their supple limbs and clear and rosy complexions meant they were suited to resisting the intense cold” (16). This physiological inclination is posed as a principle that body heat, properly applied, can itself move the *Forward* ahead. The ship’s steam engine is fed by precious coal, and so is its central stove; here the very bodies of the crew act as coals, their own heat an energy source for Hatteras’s vessel. Of course, the captain in tirelessly pursuing his purpose displays a rare principle of heat, and in spite of subzero temperatures, forgoes bundling up. The narrator wonders:

As for John Hatteras, he did not seem to feel the temperature. ... Did the cold have no effect on his energetic constitution? Did he possess to the utmost degree that principle of natural heat he had sought in his sailors? Was he so armour-plated in his fixed idea as to escape all external sensation?  
(144)

The captain is indifferent to the stove as a heat source, unlike his crew who cluster around it, and Clawbonny exclaims that Hatteras must have “a fiery furnace within him!” (145).

Hatteras creates his own heat, which seems to originate from somewhere deep inside. Seeing in Hatteras the “announcement of fire, and fire,” Butor synthesizes the novel’s entire picaresque journey to the Pole as the captain “in search of his element.” [17] Obsession fuels Hatteras, providing the energy to propel himself and, aided by the heat of others, his massive steam ship toward the goal. Hatteras’s “principle of heat” embodies his mode of traveling to the absolute north as well as mirroring its ultimate, volcanic image. As the pathology of this hermetic mission becomes obvious, molten magma bubbling up from the sea at the Pole arrives to confirm the shared identity of ends and means for the captain. There is only Hatteras and *le point suprême*; the volcano inside powers him inside the volcano.

Clawbonny's furnace functions on inverse principles. For the doctor, the source of internal heat is to be found on the analogy between food and fuel. Like the ship's stove eats coal, a man's body is fueled by nourishment. Hatteras's caloric intake is never notable throughout the journey, even in periods of extreme privation—a fact logically consistent with his self-contained ability to heat himself. [18] Clawbonny, on the other hand, explains at length the importance of feeding the human engine:

We need to imitate the Eskimos... [They] ingest up to ten or fifteen pounds of oil a day. If you don't like this diet, we'll have to employ substances rich in sugar and fat. In a word, we need carbohydrates [*carbone*]; let's have carbohydrates [*carbone*]! It's good to put coal in the stove [*poêle*], but let's not forget to fill the precious stoves we have inside us! (136)

Although the entire crew's rations are always accounted for and recounted, Clawbonny's diet is specially singled out. An adventurous eater and skillful cook, the doctor is a gourmand. Andrew Martin has shown how this recurring type in Verne's work triangulates an important relationship between food, the world, and knowledge. Highlighting "the metaphorical transaction between eating and cognition," Martin calls attention to the further links the savant-chef cements as "a processor of food and information." [19] On board the *Forward*, an early scene depicts Clawbonny betting the crew he can prepare a delicious meal from the puffin, reputedly disgusting, he has just shot. He wins: "Prepared in this way, the puffin was declared excellent, even by Simpson" (30). The doctor's ability to procure, cook, and consume exotic game demonstrates a capacity not just to take in experience, but also to engage actively with processing unfamiliar phenomena.

This ability to process is critically important to Clawbonny's character: though he finds his fuel in the outside world rather than within, in his vital function he is far from passive. Rather than only swallowing and regurgitating knowledge, Clawbonny the chef can "process" experience of the unknown and raw facts into knowledge, and knowledge into practical action. In a parallel to Hatteras, the very object of his quest powers the doctor to seek it: encounters with new matter produce the comprehension and energy that permit more such encounters. The encyclopedic expertise of this self-professed *ignorant* is, significantly, not so much to be completed as "remade" during the extraordinary voyage. Whereas Hatteras is driven by the strict congruence of his means and ends, themselves absolute and finite, the metaphors that connect food, the world, and fuel for Clawbonny open onto to the doctor's pursuit of relative but infinite understanding. "The more the Vernian savant eats or knows," Martin reminds us, "the more there is remaining to be eaten or known. ... Assimilation contains a principle of proliferation." [20] Clawbonny is a hyper-efficient machine responsive to and seeking understanding of the world, and his internal fire is a healthy blaze throughout *Hatteras*. Others experience precipitous declines in energy and health, but he remains hale and chubby, unchanged by reduced rations and hard labor throughout the months of travel. [21]

The two models of motion incarnated by Clawbonny and Hatteras correspond, in the framework proposed by Michel Serres in 1974's *Jouvences sur Jules Verne*, to a dual cycle within the journey. Confronting the "total exhaustion" of the globe tied to the nineteenth century's colonial and positivist projects, Serres works to pick apart the criss-crossing arcs that overlay geographic and scientific apprehension for Verne's mythic travelers. The adventurers are always moving through space toward a given point, but this movement calls equally upon knowledge:

Here the second voyage is created. Reappropriation through knowledge. ... Thus, the earth-cycle, the space-curve for movements is, identically, the site of the encyclopedia. Knowledge is unquiveringly of things and of the world. It applies itself to the world with neither lacunae nor excess. [22]

In the “canonical Vernian plot [*plan*]” as Serres describes it, Hatteras’s physical goal to set foot on the north Pole spins off an allied rotation through swathes of scientific understanding. Serres finds in each journey multiple journeys, according the loops and swirls of experiment and explanation executed by the savant full participation in Verne’s adventures in a way that Verne’s template of the initiatory voyage does not.

As long as Dr. Clawbonny is aboard Hatteras’s *Forward*, his energies are channeled to advancing along the captain’s path toward the absolute, which stretches straight and short as possible up the surface of the Earth to reach the Pole. Eating and learning, Clawbonny burns like a coal in the steam engine of the ship, and so adds his own power to Hatteras’s volcanic drive. The situation changes considerably, however, with the crew revolt that results in the destruction of the *Forward*. The group of voyagers reduces to a handful as the vessel of Hatteras’s narrative dominance is shattered:

A formidable explosion happened; the earth trembled; icebergs lay down on the frozen field; a column of smoke rose to unfurl through the clouds; and with the conflagration of her powder magazine [*sous l’effort de sa poudrière enflammée*], the *Forward* exploded [*éclater*] and disappeared into the fiery depths. (178)

Standing before the uncontrolled fire that deprives him of the vehicule and its fuel, the captain utters “invigorating words” (179) of determination to carry on north. His absolute conviction that they reach the *point suprême*, set against an anarchic energy contravening this conviction, ends the chapter and part one of *Hatteras*.

The *Forward*’s destruction marks a major formal division in the narrative, as well as the transition from a plot centered on the captain’s absolute heroics to one sustained by the doctor’s heroics of knowledge. The text of *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras* is one tale made up of two volumes, originally serialized between 1864 and 1866 in Hetzel’s *Magasin d’éducation et de récréation*. The short publisher’s note attached to the first installment already announces the work’s odd structure; Hatteras is simultaneously unified by a story arc whose readers “will arrive at the Pole itself,” a clear terminus, and split by “this double title: *Les Anglais au pôle nord* and *Le Désert de glace*” (358). The subheading that connected the two individual titles during their serialization, *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras*, was retained for the 1866 standalone edition. Only the subsequent 1867 publication created a single, two-part novel titled *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras*. [23]

This duality within the main tale that carries through *Les Anglais au pôle nord* and *Le Désert de glace* gives rise to a number of complications, but the most obvious concerns a shift in focus from Hatteras to Clawbonny. If Hatteras’s “invigorating words” close a segment whose text concerns his mission, his ship, and his fiery momentum, then the reader cannot help but notice that Clawbonny speaks the first words of the next segment: “What’s to become of us, my friend?” (182). Chapter One almost immediately puts the doctor in the spotlight: “After the captain’s energetic words, the doctor wanted to gain detailed knowledge of the situation and, leaving his companions waiting 500 paces from the ship, headed for the

scene of the catastrophe” (181). From the captain’s energy and absolute command, Clawbonny’s independent, exploratory movement takes over. The “Doctor’s inventory” occupies the first chapter, but the operation it represents projects over *Le Désert de glace*, bringing the text largely under the savant’s mode and bringing out a second, relativizing concept of the hero. At the level of what Foucault designates the *fable*, or the characters and events that make up Verne’s story, *Hatteras* divides into the geographic charge of *Les Anglais au pôle nord* and the investigative roam of *Le Désert de glace*—starring first Hatteras, then Clawbonny.

Without the *Forward*, the travelers straggle to a plain where, from their base camp, the doctor ranges in widening circles across territories of discovery. His journey’s purpose, proudly stated in *Les Anglais au pôle nord* to “remake my knowledge,” is refined on the ice desert:

So, not far away was a new land, and the doctor burned [*brûler*] with the desire to add it to the maps of the northern hemisphere. It is difficult to imagine the pleasure of surveying unknown coasts, and tracing their outlines with a sharp pencil; this was the doctor’s aim [*but*], just as Hatteras’s was to tread the very Pole... (215)

The direct comparison of Clawbonny’s goal to Hatteras’s is illuminating, as is the use of the verb “to burn,” which again underlines the correspondence between the fiery energies of the two men. Clawbonny wants to exercise his limitless capacity to process, to produce assimilable and actionable knowledge—maps—from the fuel of the unknown. While the voyagers winter, his relative, positivist encyclopedic knowledge and natural disposition to engage with the external world combine to govern the narrative for nearly a hundred pages.

Clawbonny buzzes with the activity as the omnivorous hero of positive knowledge, during which time Hatteras recesses into quarrels with Altamont, the stranded American sailor the voyagers have rescued on the ice. Pursuing his own quest, Clawbonny proves capable of at once grasping the material of a given situation and processing previously ingested understanding in order to discover answers to the pressing diegetic question of survival. He turns a set of facts about the nature of mercury into a real, physical bullet to hunt with; he builds the magnificent ice-house in which the voyagers winter; he constructs an electric lighthouse. [24] This last feat is even considered godlike by Johnson, who exclaims, “Dr. Clawbonny is producing sunlight now!” (231). The captain’s activity, conversely, amounts to plotting, in a murderous and counterproductive way, against the American he perceives as a rival for the Pole. There, too, Clawbonny assesses and handles the situation, promoting compromises that eventually allow the expedition to move forward. Clawbonny demonstrates leadership that works differently from the absolute hero’s crusading zeal, and in fact surmounts difficulties created by the latter’s absolute will. [25] The advantages that Clawbonny’s heroics of knowledge offer become especially significant during a long episode in which he saves all of the travelers’ lives from a group of a hungry polar bears.

The architecture of this incident is instructive, as it offers a vision that unites and contrasts the two heroes and two modes of heroism. Hatteras, Altamont, and Bell are hunting when they encounter the bears, and returning to the ice house, learn that Clawbonny is outside somewhere on his own. Hatteras’s first reaction is classically heroic; “Let’s run!” he exclaims, and leads a push to find, warn, and save the doctor (257). Unfortunately, the bears block the exit, which traps the men in the house. Hatteras’s most ingenious efforts to escape are fruitless, and his power to move forward is checked at every turn. Altamont cries, “This is

getting ridiculous!”—an accurate description of the utterly stymied heroic boldness on display. The narrator first agrees with the American, then offers, “Worse than ridiculous, it was getting worrying” (259). The risk shifts from a valiant fight against the bears to the certain and inglorious doom of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Clawbonny saves them all, not through a Hatteras-like charge ahead but instead because of his remarkable capacity to produce opportune action from engagement with the external world. While the others, and notably Hatteras, thought the doctor *lacked* knowledge of the situation, Clawbonny in fact enjoyed total mastery over it: “Oh, I saw everything,” he says. His language is pointedly active, which underlines the others’ helplessness: “I climbed a hummock, and saw the five bears in hot pursuit... I realized [*j’ai compris*] that you’d had time to barricade yourselves in the house. ... I approached... I arrived... I saw” (272). And then:

“When I realized what the bears were up to, I decided to join you. ... So I started work; I attacked the ice with my snow knife, a wonderful tool, thank goodness! For three hours I burrowed, I dug, and here I am, starving, exhausted, but here...”

“To share our fate?” said Altamont.

“To save us all; but give me some biscuit and meat; I’m weak with hunger.” (272-273)

This sequence recapitulates in miniature the way the doctor functions. He encounters a new situation or phenomenon, processes new observations and stored information, acts effectively, and eats a snack. Unlike Hatteras who is moved only by his volcanic internal fire, Clawbonny in seeking to understand the world always needs to draw from it. The full extent of Clawbonny’s capabilities only becomes clear with his energies liberated from Hatteras’s direct service “heating the *Forward’s* machine.”

The virtues of a Clawbonnian heroics of knowledge are then further illustrated by the episode, as the doctor next draws upon his great information reserves and translates these into the means of triumph. Knowledge is the source of suspense: wondering what the doctor can improvise to save them, Altamont asks, “But what’s your plan?” (273). Vierre faults Clawbonny for lacking *éclat*, compared to the absolute captain’s initiatory hero, and Foucault critiques the savant insofar as a “recording-cylinder, he unspools an already constituted knowledge.” [26] But here, the doctor deploys his knowledge, adapted to the new situation, in an audacious action that produces a considerable, and literal, *éclat*. Clawbonny devises a bomb with an electric fuse, tosses it into the air, and bloodily dispatches the ursine enemy into “unrecognizable pieces, mutilated and burned” in “a massive explosion” (265). Far from abstracted and remote, the doctor’s ability to process knowledge is both vital and viscerally real. He is unmistakably the hero of the episode, and his heroism is equally unmistakably established relative to Hatteras, whose movement as constrained by his limited, absolute capacities lead to imprisonment and danger.

Thus the emergence of Clawbonny as hero establishes that the adventures of knowledge constitute a second aspect of the voyage, of a different nature than the first but not subordinate to it. A heroics of positive knowledge is well elaborated during the wintering, and proves a critical structural *complement* to the heroics of the absolute. If Clawbonny’s heroic role, his active receptivity and attunement to the Pole’s changeable environment does not mean that Hatteras’s may be discounted—as Samuel Sadaune provocatively suggests [27]—neither is it irrevocably lesser. The doctor’s actions are important to the unfolding of the *fable*,



which is in large part shaped by the Pole's explicit refraction into a different kind of end. In the second volume, the second hero is able to pursue a second goal within the extraordinary journey, and so with the hungry savant free from the *Forward* to operate at will in *Le Désert de glace*, the ideas of "hero" and "goal" come to have two poles. This polarization is echoed by North Pole's refraction into the geographic and magnetic poles: alongside the absolute of Hatteras and the *point suprême*, magnetic reversibility and Clawbonny's voraciousness represent the relative.

On the final approach to the final Pole, a second key shift takes place in the text, which plunges from the dualist construction of the *fable* toward the forge where the narrative itself is created. For Serres, this stage marks a *mise en ordre* of the text's peripatetic nature. The "cycle" formed by the physical and scientific voyages finishes, he writes, with "a regularly accelerating series of increasing difficulties." There, the third, initiatory voyage begins:

To arrive turns out to be more and more difficult as the end seems to draw near. At the closest possible point to it, the voyager finds himself naked, without resources, deprived of means of transport and subsistence (sometimes of a sense), starving, injured, threatened from all sides, on the point of death, abandoned to a cataclysm. Then an event occurs that transfers the candidate [*impétrant*] into another world, where a new voyage of a religious type is organized, whose nature reveals in return the first voyages' difficulties to have been the first stages of an initiation. [28]

The spatial charge that Hatteras's command of the *Forward* and the circumambulatory knowledge that Clawbonny's command of life on the ice-desert represent are conjoined and assailed by dangers, according to Serres's view. One character, the *impétrant*, is brought forward during the clarifying "new voyage" that dissolves and resolves the journey in the Sacred. The initiatory path only Hatteras follows into the Pole, however, neither prevails nor provides a conclusion to the voyage of *Hatteras*. Instead, during this final stretch, the scientific voyage and its hero of knowledge persist, independent from the geographical absolute disclosed as spiritual initiation. *Duality* is heightened to the point that it is laid bare as the text's source and its ruin.

Claims situating Verne's originality in the admixture of scientific information and literary adventure stretch back to Hetzel's preface to *Hatteras*, where it is promised that Verne will "rewrite" the better part of current science in engaging stories. Foucault probes past Verne's *fable* to explore the *arrière-fable* or *fiction*, the multiplicity of discursive regimes that roil through the narration. Skeptical of nineteenth-century positivism's ideal, Foucault describes this *fiction* in terms of a crack in blank scientific prose, from which an ensemble of voices emerges to recount the *fable* and its extraordinary search for truth. [29] Timothy Unwin has more recently examined how scientific and literary language join in Verne's work, arguing that "Verne's style is in every sense a hybrid" due to the effects their meetings produce. [30] Although he, like Foucault, often highlights sites of *disjunction*, Unwin is particularly attentive to the Vernian fiction as a kind of organic whole that smelts text from text.

While Hatteras, Clawbonny, and their three companions drift on the Polar sea, something goes haywire in the text's relays between absolute and scientific heroism, at the level of the *fable* but now also in its discursive *fiction*. Over the course of *Hatteras's* plot, Clawbonny's omnivorous engine and the captain's inner volcano work together to burn a route north through the ice, and although the narrative polarizes with two heroes and two volumes, it remains coherent. Both characters, however, find their heroic mechanisms inundated in the new environs. The strange phenomena all around these unmapped and unknown lands

overwhelm the doctor, stunned by “immeasurable depths,” “astonishing waters,” huge screaming birds: “Looking at them, the doctor lost his naturalist’s science; the names of these prodigious species escaped him... The doctor was flabbergasted, stupefied, to find his science powerless” (310). Rather than a failure of positivist science, this moment can be seen to represent his temporary overload with these vast quantities of fresh, unexplained experience to process. Clawbonny’s internal engine takes in an abundance of the sought-after fuel. Similarly, as Hatteras nears the encounter with his obsession, the narrator notices for the first and only time how the hero consumes and is consumed: “So, his eyes staring, compass in hand, Hatteras devoured the north” (309).

Captain and savant burn intensely. The narrator, too, seems to enter a mode of hypercharged excess, and begins to wax lyrical:

What beauty, what variety, what power in nature! How strange and prodigious everything seemed at the heart of these circumpolar regions!

The atmosphere took on a supernatural purity; it might have been over-laden with oxygen; the navigators breathed this air with bliss, which poured burning life [*une vie plus ardente*] into them; without realizing, they were subject to veritable combustion [*une véritable combustion*], of which no idea, even incomplete, can be given; their passionate, digestive, and respiratory functions were exercised with superhuman energy; their ideas, overexcited in their brains, turned grandiose; in an hour they lived an entire day. (311)

The “veritable combustion” within their bodies increases energy input and output. [31] Soon after, the narration itself is subject to the same hypertrophy and excitement, as though it too were affected by the polar atmosphere. Having marveled at the shock of the Polar world with Clawbonny, who furiously stocks away its experience, the narrator then gravitates back toward Hatteras to tell the story of the initiatory hero’s final drive to the absolute. An astonishing number of ordeals are packed into a very short span of time and pages: Hatteras contends with a night of wakefulness, the tempest, the Saint-Elmo’s fire, the glimpsed threat of polar bears, and finally, the Maelstrom. [32] The story sweeps forward at the whirlpool’s dizzying pace. Hatteras is drawn into the polar ocean and thought dead. He washes up on the shores of the polar volcano, “a body wrapped in a Union Jack” (323), then turns out to be alive. The voyagers have arrived. The Pole is discovered.

Here, in a narrative madness, in a jarring break, the stories of Clawbonny and Hatteras part ways completely. One moment, the narrator recounts the sight of Hatteras’s “bloodied body” and miraculous survival. The next, a spread is set out and the doctor’s cheerful, familiar call is heard—“Let’s eat!” (324). This polar meal represents an episode for the hero of knowledge whose compression and heightening equals the initiatory voyage’s rapid-fire series of dangers. In the chapter entitled “Lesson in Polar Cosmography,” the doctor produces a long string of various scientific morsels about the Pole. It is dry stuff; sampling just a taste of the dialogue, one learns that “... the earth moves around the sun seventy-six times as fast as a twenty-four-pound ball, which does 1,170 feet a second. Its speed of translation is therefore 7.6 leagues a second” (327). The narrator listens to Clawbonny with keen attentiveness, but Hatteras does not. The sole time anyone feasting remembers the captain, he declines to join in the pursuit of knowledge. Silent, Hatteras “was evidently not following the conversation, or listening without hearing” (329).

The two adventures are narratively and discursively untethered from each other to the point where the two burning heroes do not seem to occupy the same space, or the same text. In its wild flip from violent ritual events to indigestible hunks of pure fact, the narration exposes a fault line that opens in the text between two discursive regimes. Not only the story, but indeed the mode of its telling is here now divided into the encyclopedic and the mystical, pure positive knowledge and pure initiatory adventure. Disclosed as fundamentally double, the narration is strained to the point of rupture—a fragmentation heightened, in the serial publication, by the chopping up of these chapters into these final installments's mid-chapter divisions. [33] A single journey composed of mutually sustaining polarities is decomposed into two independent and incompatible voyages, each with its own language. Only at the mouth of the Pole can Hatteras attain his absolute; only returned to the world can Clawbonny share and make useful the positive knowledge he has worked to expand and remake.

However, it is *Hatteras's* polar volcano that provides an indelible figure of the text—a vivid expression of both its heroes and their journeys. Just before the break of madness, when all is mounting excitement and confusion, the narration turns to the Pole as it is sighted by the whole group of travelers. The Pole is revealed to bring together the absolute and the relative, the initiatory and the scientific, which in their encounter display a force both creative and cataclysmic.

This new land was only an island, or rather a volcano, standing up like a beacon [*phare*] at the Northern Pole of the world.

The mountain, in full eruption, was vomiting a mass of burning boulders and slabs of glowing rock; it seemed to be repeatedly trembling, like a giant's breathing; the ejected matter rose to a great height in the air amidst jets of intense flames, and lava flows wound down its flanks in impetuous torrents; here inflamed serpents twisted their way past the smoking rocks; there burning waterfalls fell through a purple mist; further on a river of fire, formed of a thousand igneous streams, threw itself into the sea as a boiling outfall.

The volcano seemed to have but a single crater, from which a column of fire escaped, crisscrossed with diagonal flashes of lightning; perhaps electricity played some part in this magnificent phenomenon.

Above the panting flames shimmered an immense plume of smoke, red at the bottom, black at the top. It rose with incomparable majesty before unwinding in broad, thick spirals. (321)

The Pole represents a powerful if untenable uniting of dualities. Its fire set against water, earth, and air is elemental, absolute; the comparisons it sparks to electricity and a beacon [*phare*] combine to echo and twin the electric lighthouse [*phare*] Dr. Clawbonny's positive, relative heroics produced. Fixed at the *point suprême*, the Pole also shifts the fluid contours of its seething island and draws the travelers to it almost magnetically, and so manifests absolute, geographic and relative, magnetic properties. [34] The volcano spits out burning rock and smoke as from its furnace matter is consumed and created. The very shape of the earth's end climactically embodies the story's duality, which at once forms the nature of the text and, soon fragmenting into separate halves, destroys it.

The story's end bears out this split: the decoupled text crumbles, its coherence lost. Hatteras does not finish his trajectory into the Pole's sacralized fire, and so falls silent; in England the absolute hero becomes a mute and unsettling presence left to mime endlessly

the voyage it is impossible for him to complete. Clawbonny, on the other hand, writes a book, called *Les Anglais au pôle nord*. He thus closes the circuit that Unwin identifies: “The journey into unknown regions is a journey in words and time that is also a journey back to the point of departure.” [35] Safe at home, the hero of knowledge’s “account of his journey” [*relation de son voyage*] implicates him in the continued production of scientific discourse, now in such a way that the cracked bedrock of the text’s *fiction* shakes apart. Unwin interprets this doubling of *Hatteras*’s text as a play on the “credibility” of the narration’s existence and textual circulation; but the doctor’s text is neither independent from *Hatteras*’s first volume, despite the “remarkable resemblance” of their titles, nor is it strictly “the story we have just read.” [36]

Instead, like the echo of Verne’s project to summarize all modern knowledge in Clawbonny’s declaration of intent to remake his, another constitutive but unsustainable duality is suggested here at the level of authorship. The narration pauses self-reflexively during a quiet moment in *Les Anglais au pôle nord*: “During the vacant hours the doctor organized his travel notes—of which this narrative [*récit*] is the faithful reproduction” (140). The *récit*, *relation*, notes and reproduction bind together at the text’s end in uncertain configurations of transformation and copy—while no account at all is made for *Le Désert de glace*. Clawbonny’s writing surfaces against *Hatteras*’s narrative to reveal two poles that once again produce the text, and then make it impossible. In Clawbonny’s *Les Anglais au pôle nord*, even the hero of the absolute is jumbled up with the doctor’s own relative heroics, as “he presented John Hatteras as the equal of the great travellers, the successor of those daring men who indefatigably sacrificed themselves for the advancement of science” (348). A story whose *actions d’éclat* belong to two heroes on two journeys, told through a text whose nature is multiple and complex, *Hatteras* represents absolutes that become dualities, and in the end burst apart, dividing in a formidable *éclat*.

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## NOTES

1. How much weight to ascribe to Hetzel in the conceptualization of the *Voyages extraordinaires* remains a subject of debate. In *Le Romancier et la machine*, Jacques Noiray argues that Hetzel's requirements, such as serialization and didacticism, helped shape Verne's work into a coherent project, "most likely formed, we will see, as much by Hetzel as by Jules Verne": "So it is to Hetzel's influence that Verne's *œuvre* owes the character that we know so well," Noiray concludes. William Butcher's notes to his recent translation of *Hatteras* present Hetzel's announcements alongside a contemporaneous draft by Verne. Comparing the two, Butcher writes, "It is unfortunate that Hetzel's interpretation of the nature of Verne's writing was the one that prevailed." See Jacques Noiray, *Le Romancier et la machine. L'image de la machine dans le roman français (1850-1900)*, Vol. 2 (Paris: José Corti, 1982), 11, 33; Jules Verne, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, ed. and trans. William Butcher (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 358-361.
2. All citations refer to Butcher's translation. Translations of critical texts are my own.
3. Roger Borderie, preface to *Les Aventures du capitaine Hatteras* by Jules Verne, ed. Roger Borderie (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 14.
4. Simone Vierne, *Jules Verne et le roman initiatique* (Paris: Éditions du Sirac, 1973), 22.
5. Id., 58. *Voyage au centre de la Terre* models the first type; *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers* the second; and *L'île mystérieuse* the third.
6. Id., 63.
7. Michel Butor, "Le point suprême et l'âge d'or à travers quelques œuvres de Jules Verne," *Essais sur les Modernes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 61.
8. William Butcher, introduction to *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* by Jules Verne, xii.
9. Arthur B. Evans describes the typical practice of explanation in Verne's work as "mediated exposition" of scientific in a pedagogical mode. See Arthur B. Evans, "Functions of Science in French Fiction," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1989), 86-89.
10. Translation modified.
11. Michel Foucault, "L'arrière-fable," *L'Arc* 29 (1966), 9.
12. Vierne, 415.
13. Butcher, xxiii.

14. Following Lewis Mumford, Noiray discerns three historical regimes dominating the imagination of the machine: up until 1750, the eotechnic; the paleotechnic, structured by charcoal and steam power, from 1750-1940; and the electrical neotechnic, from 1880-1980. Verne writes during a period when neotechnic begins to overlap with paleotechnic, and both thermodynamics and electricity occupy important places in his technical and metaphorical creation. See Noiray, 14-17.
15. Verne, 419, 81. Verne views with particular disapproval Clawbonny's willingness "to adopt a reasonable, not initiatory, solution" when faced with a choice between pressing onwards and return.
16. Butor, 51-56.
17. Id., 52.
18. Hatteras's avatar, the "dog-captain" Duk, appears not to eat; a spooked crewmember asks, "And have you ever seen that dog eating? It takes nothing from no one. It never touches its food and unless someone is secretly feeding it, I'm right to say that he lives without eating" (Verne 47).
19. Andrew Martin, "Chez Jules: Nutrition and Cognition in the Novels of Jules Verne," *French Studies* 37, no. 1 (1983), 54. The role of food in Verne's works has drawn the attention of a number of critics, who link exploratory eating to the orality of language and the materiality of geographic space. See Unwin, 160-162; Christian Chelebourg, "Le texte et la table dans l'œuvre de Jules Verne," *Bulletin de la société de Jules Verne* 80 (1986), 8-12.
20. Martin, 56.
21. Martin draws a link between the paean to protein and this hyper-efficiency: "Fortunately, the largely carnivorous input of the human digestive system appears to comprise one hundred per cent protein, utterly unfreighted with roughage, a mass instantly and comprehensively converted into an output of pure energy. In the diurnal cycle of Verne's chaste, constant and indefinitely continent world, there is no recycling, no waste, no discrepancy in the equation of comestibles and productivity: the subtraction of fuel from food leaves a zero remainder. Like his imaginary machines, Verne's digestions are absolutely and inexplicably efficient: they give rise neither to surplus-value nor pollution." Interestingly, the one thing the doctor proves unable to stomach drinking seal oil, possibly suggesting pure fat as a kind of *cas limite*. See Martin, 52; Verne, 201.
22. Michel Serres, *Jouvences sur Jules Verne* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1974), 11, 12.
23. For details on *Hatteras's* publication history, see Butcher, xxvi-xxix. The "bewildering number of titles" (xvi) Butcher tracks from the novel's inception has not yet been fully resolved, as the hesitation between *Aventures du capitaine Hatteras* and *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras* in the 2005 Folio Gallimard edition suggests.
24. Throughout *Le Désert de glace*, Clawbonny is identified with devices employing electricity that he constructs. Thus while Butor discusses electricity as fundamentally a manifestation of "domesticated" fire, its close association with Clawbonny calls upon positive scientific and technical knowledge rather than Hatteras's sacralized absolute. Analyzing the relationship between electricity and machines in the *Voyages extraordinaires*, Jacques Noiray accords the former a key role: "Everything through electricity' could those be considered Jules Verne's motto: the systematic recourse to electric energy gives the technical universe of the *Voyages extraordinaires* its originality, coherence, and modernity." However, Noiray cautions that this electricity, which makes more frequent appearances in the later decades of Verne's career, is often less scientifically plausible than magical, "a marvelous agent that transcends the strictly scientific domain in order to bring the apparatus it animates into the meta-technical universe of imaginary machines." See Butor, 49-52; Noiray, 93, 95-96.
25. The manuscript version contains a dramatic duel between Hatteras and Altamont, the latter revealed to be a true competitor for the Pole instead of merely a stranded explorer. Following Hetzel's directives, Verne removed the duel and downgraded the rival, which Butcher laments: "The

deletion of this dramatic, albeit slightly comic, episode removes from the book some of the *raison d'être* for Hatteras's dream. More seriously, the excision of the climax of Anglo-American rivalry seriously undermines a central theme of the novel, and with it much of the dramatic tension. ... Altamont's survival in the book indeed becomes almost pointless, since he does little except complain and even the argument is watered down to the point of insipidity." Butcher, xix. Portions of the manuscript variation are available in Butcher's translation; see Verne, 350-352.

26. Foucault, 9.

27. Samuel Sadaune, "La stratégie polaire de Jules Verne," *Revue Jules Verne* 17 (2004), 10-11. "The title of the *Voyages extraordinaires* series' second novel—*Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras*—is misleading: the true hero of the novel is Dr. Clawbonny; in many respects, his subjects of conversation unveil the North Pole's role in Verne's nascent aesthetic strategy."

28. Serres, 22-23.

29. Foucault, 12.

30. Timothy Unwin, *Jules Verne: Journeys in Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2005), 11.

31. Increased intake of oxygen has a similar effect on the travelers in Verne's 1870 novel *Autour de la Lune*. Alain Chevrier distinguishes "intoxication by oxygen" from Hatteras's monomania; yet it is the heightened functioning, visible equally in Hatteras, Clawbonny, and the narration, that leads to the sudden breaking apart of absolute and positive heroism. See Alain Chevrier, "La folie polaire du capitaine Hatteras," *Bulletin de la société Jules Verne* 57 (1993), 17.

32. For discussion of these *épreuves rituelles*, see Verne, 79-81; Butor, 64-67.

33. The final six chapters appeared in four installments, cut at somewhat arbitrary midpoints in "The Approach to the Pole," "Lesson in Polar Cosmography," and "South Again." See *Magasin d'éducation et de récréation*, Vol. 2, "Année 1864-1865, 2e semestre" (Paris: Hetzel, 1864-1865).

34. On the conclusion's confusion between geographic and magnetic poles, see Chevrier, 15.

35. Unwin, 47.

36. Id., 65, 68.

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