

**EXOTIC NORTHS? REPRESENTATIONS OF  
NORTHERN SCANDINAVIA IN S. H. KENT'S *WITHIN THE  
ARCTIC CIRCLE* AND BAYARD TAYLOR'S *NORTHERN TRAVEL***

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Bayard Taylor's *Northern Travel* and Susannah Henrietta Kent's *Within the Arctic Circle* were published two decades apart; the former in 1858 and the latter in 1877, during a time when Scandinavia became firmly established as a destination for travellers and tourists alike. Despite increased interest in nordicity and the North as a destination, comparatively little critical attention has been directed to these travellers. Even in comprehensive studies focusing on Scandinavia, such as Mark Davies' *A Perambulating Paradox* (2000) and Peter Fjågesund's and Ruth A Symes' *The Northern Utopia* (2003), Kent and Taylor are mentioned only in passing. In recent research, the travelogues are examined from gender perspectives in Heidi Hansson's "Bayard Taylor's *Northern Travel* and the Genders of the North" (2006) and "Henrietta Kent and the Feminised North" (2007).<sup>1</sup>

As Hansson demonstrates, Taylor journeys to Scandinavia predominantly to test his masculinity against the harsh climate whereas Kent establishes the North as a safe destination which "even lady travellers" can reach (vol. I: ix), differences which evidence gendered constructions of the area traversed. The many similarities between the texts, on the other hand, reveal that discourses connected to the destination to an extent determine representations and supersedes the gender and nationality of the traveller, and the seasons during which they travel. The importance of the destination in structuring representations becomes particularly clear when the texts are read with a focus on exoticism, an aspect of travel and travel writing seldom surfacing in discussions about the Scandinavian periphery. Close readings of the traveller's depictions of the cold, the life of the Sami, the perceived un-modernity of the area, and more specific details such as the northern lights and the midnight sun, illustrate that while some representations are figured in terms of a rather benevolent exoticism attached to aspects which are not perceived as in need of 'amendment,' others evidence a more imperialist stance in both travelogues. The examined travelogues thus vacillate between different exotic constructions of the North and the conflicting aims of Kent's and Taylor's journeys impact on how the exotic is negotiated and framed.

Terms such as the 'exotic' and 'exoticism' warrant further definition especially considering their origins in a Western-oriented world view. According to Roger Célestin, the traditional usage of the terms signals "a lyrical celebration of things

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<sup>1</sup> Hansson also examines Taylor's winter journey in more detail in "Istappar i skägget: Bayard Taylors norrländska resa" (2004). Taylor has also been the subject of biographies, the most recent by Paul C. Wermuth published in 1973. The biography does not contain any critical analyses of Taylor's travelogues, however, but rather summaries of their contents.

tropical or Oriental” (3), that is, decidedly non-European and non-North American, and while ‘tropical’ and ‘Oriental’ would suggest a lack of applicability to the northern context, a wider definition is based on the notion that the exotic is always figured in terms of difference in relation to the more or less stable reference point of home (Célestin 7). Chris Bongie further defines exoticism as “a binary opposition between the world of the Same and that of the Other, between modernity and what is not (yet) modern” (90), positing an alternative space within which “values ‘lost’ within the modernization of European society” can be recovered (5). In terms of contrast, then, the ‘home’ needs not be the actual point of departure. Rather, it can be the modernity perceived as residing in parts of Europe and America, but lacking in other areas such as the peripheral Scandinavia. This lack is not necessarily construed as something negative (although it does furnish authors with opportunities to advise and suggest improvements) but rather as a reaction to the unease with which modernisation was perceived, representing other places as alternatives.

The time period in which Taylor and Kent were travelling saw both democratic processes and the height of imperialism and these conflicting strands produce tensions in many travelogues from the period, seen in resistance to and/or compliance with discursive elements. Journeying to a destination which is not ‘available’ for imperial domination would perhaps suggest that these tensions can be resolved, but Scandinavia’s position at the periphery defamiliarises the area and it is in some aspects subsumed under conventional discursive practices of narrating people and places as ‘conquerable.’ Bongie anticipates the impact the destination as such can have on the exoticist project, delineating two different strands within it. “[I]mperialist exoticism” he argues “affirms the hegemony of modern civilization over less developed, savage territories, [while] exoticizing exoticism privileges those very territories and their peoples, figuring them as a possible refuge from an overbearing modernity” (17). Both Davies’ and Fjågesund and Symes’ overviews of Scandinavian travelogues illustrate that the criticism levelled at the lack of development resulted in the perpetuated image of Sweden and Norway as in need of modernisation, an ‘imperialist exoticism’ striving to portray the traveller’s own home as more advanced, and in many senses ‘better.’ Simultaneously, however, many characteristics which come as a result of the un-modern state of affairs are celebrated. They become part of an ‘exoticizing exoticism’ and constitute “a parallel ‘discursive consistency’, which eulogise[s] the very features criticised and condemned in other contexts” (Davies 199). Taylor’s and Kent’s texts demonstrate this parallelism as different aspects of Scandinavia produce either an ‘imperialist exoticism’ or an ‘exoticizing exoticism’ and, at times, both.

As the exotic is defined against the ‘Same,’ the travellers’ national belonging and previous experiences help delineate what they exoticise. Taylor worked as a correspondent for the New York *Tribune* and regularly published texts about other countries and cultures.<sup>2</sup> Previous to the Scandinavian trip he had visited what is

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<sup>2</sup> *Northern Travel* consists of letters originally published in the *Tribune* and Wermuth reports that Taylor and his new bride Marie Hansen-Taylor jointly prepared the letters for publication in the

today the Middle East, India, China, Japan, and travelled the European continent as well as parts of Africa. He had also published texts centring on the United States, his home country.<sup>3</sup> The point of departure is not as easily identifiable in Kent's case. In *Itineraria Svecana* Samuel Bring claims that she is English (290). Hansson, however, argues that the numerous references and comparisons between Scandinavia and Ireland rather suggest the latter as the place of Kent's origin ("Henrietta Kent" note 72). Comparisons and contrasts in *Within the Arctic Circle* indicate that Kent, like Taylor, had travelled in Europe and possibly also in North Africa before her northern trip. She had also published a previous travelogue, *Gath to the Cedars*, which chronicles her travels in the Holy Land in 1872. Kent makes several comparisons between the Scandinavian landscape and places such as Vesuvius (vol. I 115-6), the Matterhorn (vol. I 69) and the Nile (vol. II 63). In *Northern Travel* people and behaviour are contrasted to North American equivalents (196, 279), the desolateness of Dalarö is compared to Kamstchatka (7) and snow is likened to "the sandy plateaux [sic] of the Nubian Desert" (125), to mention only a few examples. The numerous comparisons in both texts establish the authors as well-travelled and, as such, authoritative, and help situate Scandinavia in a larger context, whereby some sights are 'translated' through parallels and others are represented in ways which underscore their exoticism.

There are noticeable differences between the texts' prefaces which indicate that the authors have different aims for their journeys, aims which also influence how the exotic is rendered. Certain reader expectations, engendered by Taylor's previous publications, are hinted at as he states that he has approached Scandinavia in a manner similar to how he has approached other destinations. His overarching aim is to create lively pictures in the minds of readers at home and achieving a sense of authenticity by "liv[ing], as near as possible, the life of the people" he comes in contact with (v). Taylor's experiences, thus, are represented as replacements for the real experience for people with an interest in the area, but without means or opportunities to travel. Whereas Taylor does not mention other foreign travellers in his preface, Kent acknowledges that the area is becoming a popular destination and takes the opportunity to give advice to future visitors. She mentions the types of food which will be had, the speed to travel at, and includes instructions for what clothing to pack (vol. I ix-x). The added twenty years of journeys and textual production likely influence Kent's approach, and the imagined reader is no longer solely the armchair traveller but a potential visitor to the North. Consequently, whereas Taylor can offer renderings of exotic elements simply on the grounds of them being unusual or 'new,' Kent's text is marked by a greater awareness of the possibility of being checked. This does not mean,

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travelogue format in 1857. Hansen-Taylor describes the process as follows: "'it was only necessary to put [the letters] together into a consistent whole ... he ... allowed me to cut out and paste the published letters on sheets of paper'" (quoted in Wermuth 55-6).

<sup>3</sup> See for example, *Eldorado, or, Adventures in the Path of Empire* (1850), *A Journey to Central Africa; or, Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile* (1854), *The Lands of the Saracen; or, Pictures of Palestine, Asia Minor, Sicily and Spain* (1854) and *A Visit to India, China, and Japan in the year 1853* (1855).

however, that exoticism is absent from Kent's narrative as she frames the area as an exciting alternative to more frequented destinations.

The difference between Kent's and Taylor's approaches to their trips and to their readers is connected to the shift from travel as an exclusive undertaking to tourist trips 'invading' most accessible areas. This process, which started already in the eighteenth century, led to a diminished sense of authenticity connected to travel. As a consequence, focus was gradually shifted from the European continent to other areas. The authentic travel experience, as James Buzard argues "was represented as lurking in secret precincts 'off the beaten track' where it could be discovered only by the sensitive 'traveller', not the vulgar tourist" (6).<sup>4</sup> - While Scandinavia is by no means exempt from 'touristification,' textual representations frame the area as having possibilities both for unconventional experiences and for a distance from the 'vulgar' tourists. However, labelling the North as 'off the beaten path' becomes a "literary convention" rather than "neutral inventories of an actual situation" (Davies 60), especially in Norway which had a longer tradition as a tourist destination and was surrounded by a greater number of texts (Fjågesund and Symes 18). Kent's and Taylor's constructions of the area as an alternative which holds promises for something 'new' are part of the "sustained discourse" in which "there is a tendentiously determined structure of image reinforcement" [through which Scandinavia] continually *needs* to be approached as an unknown quantity" (Davies 337, 339, original italics).<sup>5</sup> The discourse constructing the North as less accessible and less travelled justifies the traveller's own journey, creates a position for him or her as unusually 'sensitive' and original, and attracts readers to the ensuing literary production.

Kent's preface succinctly encompasses these aspects of construction and framing as she presents areas as alternatives to the mundane and commonplace. Contrasting Scandinavia to Europe, she admits that although "[t]he far North is not an unknown land ... it cannot yet be called a well-beaten track" (vol. I vii) and emphasises her own adventurousness by noting that she travels *despite* the fact that the countries are reported to be inhospitable and uncomfortable. She makes a distinction in this regard between the southern and northern parts of the destinations as the relatively 'civilized' areas of southern Norway and Sweden, are contrasted to "the difficulties ... and the hardships" she encounters in Lapland (vol. I ix). The title of her travelogue, although indicative of only part of her journey, also emphasises the far North and may be designed to attract readers in search of the armchair exotic. The attention directed at her adventurousness is paired, however, with her emphatic statement that "even lady travellers" can derive great pleasure from the trip (vol I. ix). That is, although offering exciting alternatives, the area is constructed as safe for all travellers.

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<sup>4</sup> The distinction between travellers and tourists is longstanding in both travelogues and academic scholarship. See for example Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (1980) and Ian Ousby, *The Englishman's England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism* (1990).

<sup>5</sup> Davies' quotation pertains specifically to Sweden, but Norway emerges in similar ways in textual representations (Fjågesund and Symes 48-56).

In Taylor's text the differences between North and South are pronounced, textually and imaginatively transferring the exotic to the arctic areas. Whereas the southern parts of both Sweden and Norway are depicted as mundane and are often criticised, his winter journey into Swedish Lapland represents a far more original experience, the emphasis on the necessity of endurance and hardships constructing the traveller as heroic and the landscape and the cold as exotic alternatives to "more genial climes" (138). In contrast to Kent, Taylor does not recommend others to undertake a similar project unless they have: "an unusual capacity to enjoy the experiences of varied travel." He continues that it is like being born again "into a living world" when returning south (167). When seen in relation to the images of icy death which abound in his narrative, his own journey emerges as requiring a particular heroism. After completing the winter journey Taylor concludes that

interesting as was the journey, and happily as we endured its exposures, I should not wish to make it again. It is well to see the North, even *after* the South; but, as there is no one who visits the tropics without longing ever after to return again, so, I imagine, there is no one who, having once seen a winter inside the Arctic Circle, would ever wish to see another. (166, original italics)

This textual move puts continued stress on the far North as inhospitable and exclusively enjoyable for the 'right' kind of traveller. While Taylor thus does not completely eliminate the North from other travellers' itineraries, he emphasises that it is an experience which produces no desire to be repeated.

Taylor's division into North and South indicates that while Scandinavia at the outset is constituted as a cohesive North, once *in situ* the boundaries start to shift, a tendency in compliance with the discursive construction of both Sweden and Norway. The countries were early on and routinely divided in this manner with the North more 'admirable' than the South, and seen as representing values connected to hardiness, work ethics and a nobility of spirit. The exact boundary between South and North, however, is unstable to say the least; as Davies notes, "the 'north' could be apprehended or construed as lying anywhere from Uppsala to Haparanda" (204). The idealisation of the North pertains to both landscapes and people and on Taylor's winter journey he is of the opinion that "both country and population improved in appearance as we went northward" (24-5). No clear boundary can be drawn but there is a marked difference between the "absurd affectations" of the people in Stockholm (182) and the "noble specimens of the physical man" he encounters north of Sundsvall (32). He laments his own belated search for the exotic and wishes to have seen the capital in its 'uncorrupted,' unmodernised state. His celebrations of the simple life in the North are by contrast indicative of the 'exoticizing exoticism' of his text.

The North/South dichotomy is found also on his Norwegian trip as people in the North are "more agreeable and promising specimens of humanity than their brothers of Southern Norway" (240) still, his criticism of Norwegian life is scathing as he concludes that the Norwegians are "more over-praised than any

people in the world” (306). As Hansson argues, because of Norway’s longer tradition as “a tourist country [...] Taylor could not represent himself as an adventurous explorer ... but fashioned an authorial role for himself as critic instead” (“Bayard Taylor” 28). He zeroes in on the dirt, squalor and moral shortcomings of the nation, especially dishonesty, but then argues that tourism is to blame. Visitors, “and especially English” are the true culprits. “You introduce towels and fresh water, and tea, and beefsteak, wherever you go, it is true; but you teach high prices, and swindling, and insolence likewise!” (223). As an American, Taylor seems to divorce himself from the foreign influence, but still appreciates the cleanliness and palatable food. While these aspects may be seen as positive outcomes, and as such denoting an ‘imperialist exoticism,’ they cannot be completely separated from less benevolent consequences and, in Taylor’s view, the price of modernity is too high.

Although less pronounced, the North/South dichotomy is apparent also in Kent’s text establishing the South as an ordered, familiar place and the North as demanding almost imperialist characteristics in the traveller. In the southern parts, she describes the assistance and guidance she receives and emphasises aspects such as kindness, cleanliness and rationality, aspects which correspond to ‘home’ and to the traveller’s own self. In Swedish Lapland, however, where no guide is to be found, Kent’s own rationality is overridden by the “desire excited in [her] to penetrate into the interior of that strange northern land.” This ‘desire’ is further likened to a “passion” rendering Kent “insensibl[e]” (vol. I 220-1). The colonial imagery of an almost forced entry into an unknown land indicates that Lapland is still ‘there for the taking’ and is paired with an emotional abandon elicited in the traveller, setting the area apart from the home-like South, and creating a new role for Kent as an explorer.

The lack of polemical discussions on the relative merits of southerners and northerners may be read as sign of Kent’s desire to promote Scandinavia as a safe yet alluringly exotic destination, and also signals gender differences between the texts. Despite being able and independent, especially in Swedish Lapland, Kent still moves within what is prescribed as allowed for women, evident in how her text is structured as “a private document, a direct communication to a friend” and how both the textual persona and the descriptions of people and places are presented as “properly feminine” (Hansson “Henrietta Kent” 79-81). In addition to this alignment with a ‘feminine’ writing style the text can also be situated within the gender neutral tourist discourse and the “pleasure of seeing” rather than illustrating the “ideology which strives to possess what [is] seen” connected to the imperial stance (Korte 94). The tourist discourse is mainly evident in how views are presented through fleeting glances rather than being mastered and controlled but Kent’s descriptions of people, customs and behaviours also indicate that the roles as cultural critic and imperial traveller are avoided.

The shifting boundaries of the North and the stress on original experiences are complemented by several other strategies whereby the travellers make their own texts stand out from the literary tradition preceding them. To be able to refute previous notions is one way to gain such originality and possibly “escape from the prison of prior texts” (Buzard 170). In his long discussions on the dishonesty of

the Norwegians, for example, Taylor notes that the area might have been “a fresh field” and “the people honest” at the time of Scottish travel writer Samuel Laing’s trips (in the 1830s) and that “later travellers have been content with echoing his opinion.” Echoing opinions is not for Taylor, however, as he singles out the Norwegians as surpassing even the Italians in trying to swindle him (336-7). To contribute something new to the works describing the encountered place Taylor downplays previously positive attributes, again acting as critic rather than explorer.

Kent’s text is also situated within the matrix of previous texts (with an added twenty years of literary production), and while she carefully acknowledges references to Linnaeus, intertextual links are often signalled through vague comments, such as leaning on “an old writer of the Lapps” when describing the Sami (vol. II 73). At one point, on board a boat in the southern waters of Sweden, she remarks that “[a]n enthusiastic writer once declared that nothing in Italy, nothing in the tropics, could equal the magnificence of the polar skies” (vol. II 203). The ‘enthusiastic writer’ is none other than Taylor as the sentence is lifted almost *verbatim* from page 64 in his travelogue (“Nothing in Italy, nothing in the tropics, equals the magnificence of the polar skies”). Kent exhibits an awareness of the literary production preceding her own text but the lack of specificity concerning references may come as a result of the fact that she seldom uses her own experiences to refute others’ opinions but rather uses other texts to embellish aspects of her own.

It is not only the actual destination which is seen to hold promises of the exotic and original, but concrete ways of travelling as well. Time and speed are intimately connected to modernisation and as a consequence “[o]ther cultures are often portrayed as occupying remote places [...] where one can escape the social and psychological pressures of modernity and retreat into a ‘simpler’, more ‘natural’ place and time” (Duncan 46). Railroads and steamships facilitated aspects of journeying but also emphasised “the sense of arriving at the very moment that a non-modern world was fast disappearing under the impress of modernity” (Duncan and Gregory 7). While Taylor and Kent use ships to reach many of the Scandinavian destinations, descriptions of travel in carriages and sleds are given prominence in their texts. Although presenting these ‘primitive’ modes of travel as exotic alternatives, both travellers are annoyed at the restricted speed and the long delays at the stations, Kent and her party resorting to “books and knitting” while waiting (vol. I 27). Resting for a few days in Lapland, Taylor tries to master the reindeer-drawn pulk. After several mishaps which send him sprawling into the snow, he comes to the conclusion that this is indeed the ‘correct’ way of travelling in the North, his “first true experience of Lapland travelling” (86).

These modes of travel suggest that the North is constructed as an area peripheral to “the railroad world” of modernity (Taylor 19). Both travellers suggest improvements to roads and the system of ‘förbud’ (to have fresh horses waiting at the stations), suggestions illustrative of an ‘imperialist exoticism,’ but the lasting impression is that these modes of travel come to represent a journey in

time, back to a ‘simpler’ and more ‘natural’ life, untainted by the development associated with modernity, that is, an ‘exoticizing exoticism.’

Kent’s construction of the North as safe is emphasised by the fact that she travels in the summer accompanied by her mother, and the somewhat surprising lack of stress on adventures or possible dangers. This lack illustrates a departure from much of the travel writing by nineteenth-century women which often draws attention to the traveller’s own, vulnerable position (Mills 94-107). In contrast, Kent repeatedly assures the reader that he or she can feel quite safe in these northern regions, downplaying the majority of the difficulties and presenting herself as able to overcome them. There are a few instances in which Kent experiences some potentially dangerous things such as falling out of a carriage (vol. I 51), being “chased by some cows” (vol. II 132) and having to contend with mosquitoes (vol. II 125). However, the only real danger takes place on the journey into Lapland, the place visited which is early on and emphatically constructed as the least ‘civilised.’ The boatmen escorting them resort to extortion and Kent delivers an angry speech ending with the words “you cannot be Swedes, you must be Lapps; I wish to have nothing to do with Lapps – go” (vol. II 166). She then realises that she and her companions might be in danger, not only because of her taunting words but because of their vulnerable position as women alone with these men.

[W]e had no weapons beyond sticks and umbrellas; we wore valuables [and] there was nothing ... to prevent them from murdering us, possessing themselves of our valuables, and accounting for our disappearance by sending our bodies and an over-turned canoe down the Falls. (vol. II 167).

The feminine walking sticks and umbrellas are clearly unsuitable as weapons of defence and as they are away from ‘civilisation’ the travellers’ disappearance would easily go unnoticed. Their relative wealth and the manner of travelling in adventurous canoes are mentioned as additional facets of the danger they face. Despite this short paragraph of worry, the situation is not used to dissuade future travellers (even if they are ladies) from visiting the area. Kent’s “parting word [to the crew is] an admonition never to behave ill to travellers again” (vol. II 169) turning the situation into an opportunity to ensure the safety of future travellers.

In *Northern Travel*, nature itself is at times presented as an obstacle to be overcome, and descriptions centering on forbidding and dangerous aspects, particularly of the climate, are used to emphasise a heroism belonging to a more imperialist stance in which the landscape, and by extension the people, can be controlled and mastered. Although spending half a year in Scandinavia, the main aim for Taylor is to see the North in the winter – in fact, the cold climate is a prerequisite to see the area in its ‘correct’ form. Stating that the “Handbooks for Sweden are next to useless north of Stockholm” (12) and that the existing maps are insufficient for the polar regions, immediately also establishes that he ventures into an ‘unknown’ land.

Although Taylor is not an explorer in the traditional sense, and although the area is not completely devoid of human life, strategies are employed in his text

which allow him to present himself as unusually well suited for the task and the climate and the areas are rendered as foes to conquer. Planning for the journey in Stockholm he is informed that “Swedes feared the North, and few of them ever made a winter journey thither” which indicates that the area is essentially uncontrolled. The same informant is also convinced that “nothing could stop the American and the English from going anywhere” (20) signalling the opportunities available for the foreign traveller to master the North if not literally then through endurance. On the winter journey, Taylor notes that the cold is “unusually severe” but he and his travelling companion Braisted are proud to withstand it fairly easily. The cold increases as they progress, frost coating their faces and clothes until they are “scarcely recognisable by each other.” The extreme weather and the defamiliarising process lead Taylor to exclaim: “This was Arctic travel at last. By Odin, it was glorious!” (37-8). Taylor’s mere survival indicates that the harsh conditions and the landscape are mastered and controlled, at least temporarily, and the imperialist stance is emphasised by the endeavour taking on national proportions.<sup>6</sup>

The winter climate not only alters the appearance of Taylor and Braisted, but works to exoticise the landscape. Although Taylor promises in the foreword to create a lively picture through his words, he contends that “[i]t is almost impossible to paint the glory of those winter forests.” The woods become full of “Gothic fountain[s],” “candelabra [and] colossal sprays of coral” and the beauty is “inexhaustible” (50, 152-3). Repeatedly stressed are the “marvellous transformations” caused by the temperature and the precipitation turning the countryside into “an enchanted land” (67). These transformations are independent of human action, and it is in features of the landscape Taylor can find the exotic. Although Kent’s journey is carried out in the summer, the discursive construction of the North as synonymous with the cold and with defamiliarising transformations is still visible, projected as a wish to “see the country in its winter garb of snowy whiteness” and the corresponding colour-changes in the indigenous fauna (vol. II 84). Concrete aspects of the cold are incorporated on a walk through the snow to the North Cape. Upon reaching the icy Cape, however, the cold is alleviated by “super-excellent tea” made in Kent’s portable cooker (vol. I 111). The ‘Etna’ becomes an extension of home, and the tea a way to master the cold.

Mainly appearing in Arctic areas, the midnight sun and the northern lights are exotic aspects worked into the discursive formation of the North. A trip to Scandinavia was thought incomplete without a rendering of at least one of these phenomena. Taylor first sees the northern lights comfortably leaning back in Braisted’s lap and while he often concludes that sights “are beyond the power of pen or pencil” (152-3, 92), the northern lights are decidedly not part of this category as several detailed paragraphs describe the wavering, undulating dance of the lights. Kent has no opportunity to observe the northern lights, but they are worked into her text as a Norwegian travelling companion tells her that the Aurora Borealis in the winter affords such light that the people can both “read and

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<sup>6</sup> In Kalix they are saluted by one man who states that “no American has ever been [there] before, and I shall call my friend to give a *skål* to your country” (51).

go about their household duties without the aid of lamp or candle” (vol. I 205). This information is given as Kent herself has just experienced the midnight sun. By contrasting one atmospheric phenomenon to another she approaches an understanding of what she cannot experience herself.

Represented as an exotic aspect of the arctic summer, the midnight sun is an enjoyable novelty to both Kent and Taylor, but it soon loses its appeal. Kent feels the same guilt going to sleep as “when yielding to drowsiness, on a sultry summer day, in lands where siestas are not habitual!” (vol. I 76) and Taylor experiences “a certain nervous life of the body” (245). The phrasing of Kent’s further descriptions again suggests her awareness of Taylor’s narrative, especially when discussing the idea that the sun appears in two places at once. Taylor notes with fascination that it is “shining at the same moment, in the heat and splendour of noonday, on the Pacific Isles” (268), whereas Kent with a slight turn of phrase emphasises that it is “the *same* orb which at that very moment was beaming in noonday fierceness on the Pacific Isles!” (vol. I 75, original italics). Despite these similarities, and despite the slight sense of guilt, Kent appreciates the midnight sun for its exotic appeal and the opportunities it affords in seeing more of the sights and having her photograph taken at midnight (vol. I 80-2). In Taylor’s text, the midnight sun is worked into his general criticism of dishonesty, and he sees the “eye of God” as another indication that the people in Norway need to be continually prevented from committing crimes. He complains: “Let the patrolling sun go off his beat for awhile, and show a little confidence in my ability to behave properly, rather than worry me with his sleepless vigilance” (280). As Taylor himself harbours no vices, the controlling ‘eye’ is a nuisance, but for the incorrigible Norwegians he can appreciate the role it performs during the short and, one is led to imagine, crime-free summer months.

In the discursively constructed North the minority Sami population is often featured as an exotic aspect corresponding to exoticised representations of the Other elsewhere. While some accounts contain condescendingly positive descriptions, others are influenced by phrenology, seeing the Sami “as creatures somewhere between the animal and the human” which, although openly racist, furnished travellers with “exciting new material for observation” (Fjågesund and Symes 203, 199). Taylor’s expectations are clearly textually shaped, but his first descriptions are used to refute previous accounts. Young men he encounters are not “so ill-favoured, short, and stunted as [he has] imagined” (67-8), neither are women “remarkable ugly, as the Lapps are generally represented” (101). This lack of conformity with previous descriptions indicates a loss of exotic elements, and after additional encounters he contends that although he has “seen enough of the Lapps to undeceive [him] in regard to previously-formed opinions” he has experienced enough “to take away the desire for a more intimate acquaintance” (114). He confesses to being “disappointed [...] with the reality” (130), one that is mundane and anything but exotic.

The Sami people’s conversion to Christianity is a contributing factor to their diminished exoticism in Taylor’s view and he cautions future visitors that:

It is in vain, therefore, for the romantic traveller to seek in them the materials for weird stories and wild adventures. [...] Their conversion has destroyed what little of barbaric poetry there might have been in their composition [...] As human beings, the change, incomplete as it is, is nevertheless to their endless profit; but as objects of interest to the traveller, it has been to their detriment. (115)

The past appeal of the Sami, their ‘weird stories’ and ‘barbaric poetry,’ no longer exists and Taylor is unable to find what has textually been constructed as exotic. The self-reflexive comment about the Sami population being uninteresting as objects of study for the traveller further reveals both an anxiety of belatedness and a realisation that the traveller’s desire may be at odds with what may be beneficial to the people he meets and describes.

Twenty years later, Kent encounters Sami people in Hammerfest, and her descriptions paradoxically resemble those Taylor refutes. “Diminutive, yellow-skinned, swinish-eyed, high-cheek boned, squat-nosed, thick-lipped” is the first less than favourable comment (vol. I 85). She has some difficulty in distinguishing adults from children and men from women, depersonalisations which are common discursive elements in representations of the Other. Throughout one encounter she refers to an individual as an “it” or a “creature” (vol. II 141) which reflects the tendency to view the Sami as being at an intermediary stage of development and not fully human. In Tromsø the travelling company visits a Sami encampment, in which people, reindeer and tools are represented as tourist attractions, paid for with “a couple of dollars” (vol. I 149). While details concerning people and reindeer are included, the distance between traveller and observed precludes any elaboration of exotic aspects.<sup>7</sup> Kent’s derogatory descriptions of the Sami, and her rendering of the camp as a kind of staged show may be read as an illustration of an imperialist and oppressive view of the encountered Other. However, such a reading “falters somewhat [when] the Sami passages are juxtaposed with sections showing that the tourists, too, become spectacles” (Hansson “Henrietta Kent” 88). Kent causes curiosity among both Norwegians (vol. I 86, 204) and the Sami (vol. I 139, vol. II 131). Reporting these incidents reverses the gaze, illustrating that Kent, too, is a not fully comprehensible object of study.

If Kent describes herself as a curiosity, studied and not fully understood by the people she encounters, Taylor represents himself as being perceived as both

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<sup>7</sup> Twenty years earlier, Taylor is also in the vicinity of the encampment and remarks that: “They scented profit, and received us in a friendly way, allowing the curious strangers to go in and out at pleasure, to tease the dogs, drink the reindeer milk, inspect the children, rock the baby, and buy horn spoons to the extent of their desire” (255). In Swedish Lapland, Kent expects to interact with the Sami in a less constructed environment, but misses the “wild, nomadic people” by a few weeks (vol. II 131). The missed opportunity ironically makes the Tromsø attraction appear in a more positive light as the travellers at least can “congratulate [themselves] on having seen the herd near Tromsøe” (vol. II 130). A ‘show,’ regardless of how elaborately it is staged is thus judged better than no experience at all, illustrating the discursive importance of representations of the Sami.

dangerous and powerful when sketching a Sami man in Lapland. “‘I know what travellers are,’ [the man says,] ‘and what habit they have of getting people’s skulls to carry home with them’” (88). Taylor’s nationality not only guarantees mastery of the far North, but is also a source of exoticism, one of their guides “continually shouting to the people in the fields: ‘Here, these are Americans: they were born there!’ whereat the people stared, saluted, and then stared again” (309). When unexpectedly meeting an English gentleman in Swedish Lapland, Kent remarks that “the sight of ladies in that remote and desolate region equally astonished him” (vol. II 118), emphasising gender as an additionally exoticising factor. These representations of the travelling self as original effectively draws attention to the area as seldom visited and becomes a component of a self-perpetuating cycle of exoticism. The unusual prospect of strangers indicates that the destination is still ‘off the beaten track,’ offering exotic possibilities, and as long as it stays that way the traveller is in the exclusive position of supplying the armchair adventurer with novel adventures.

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Both writers end their travelogues with quotations from Swedish authors, quotations which are indicative of the main differences between the two travelogues and of the different Norths the reader encounters in them. Kent uses a section from Fredrika Bremer’s *The Midnight Sun: A Pilgrimage* (in translation 1849) in which the North represents a contrast, “a renovating spirit of life,” to the South and its “over-stimulus of culture” (quoted in vol. II 224). The quotation emphasises the future role of the North as saviour, which is in line with Kent’s consistent use of modern aspects of the society she encounters to establish the area as welcoming and easily traversed. *Within the Arctic Circle* presents the North as a familiar place, open and inviting to travellers of both genders and all ages and Kent downplays exotic elements and translates her experience in familiar terms. Still, it is an area which in contrast to the rampant modernity elsewhere offers alternatives of simplicity and ‘renovation’ of the senses. Taylor lets Esaias Tegnér’s *Frithiofs Saga* (1825) be the end. In the untranslated quotation Frithiof himself bids farewell to the fjells, rune stones, blue lakes and archipelagos of Sweden (Taylor 389). Stress is here on the image of unaltered landscapes, the rune stones being the only, and ancient, human-made sign. Taylor’s main objective, the winter journey, constitutes a contrast to the heavily criticised areas in the South, connected to modernity and human civilisation, the climate defamiliarising both travellers and the landscape. Taylor’s conclusions upon returning from Lapland that this is a once in a lifetime trip, reveals that from his perspective as a heroic traveller, aspects of the North remain forbidding and dangerous. The actual landscape, consequently, holds the potential of remaining exotic.

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### Summary

In this article I analyse aspects connected to exoticism in Bayard Taylor’s *Northern Travel* (1858) and Susannah Henrietta Kent’s *Within the Arctic Circle* (1877). Despite gender differences and different seasons in which the travellers undertake their trips, there are similarities between the texts which indicate that discourses connected to the destination to an extent structure representations and determine what is to be rendered as exotic. The close readings are focused on Kent’s and Taylor’s depictions of Sami life, the cold, the perceived ‘backwardness’ of the area, the midnight sun and the northern lights. The analyses illustrate that two forms of exoticism feature in the travelogues; an exoticising exoticism figure aspects of the landscape and the people which are benevolently viewed and not in need of improvement or change, and an imperialist exoticism structure depictions of aspects which are seen as in need of amendment. Kent and Taylor express different aims with their journeys; the former to establish the area as a ‘safe’ destination for travellers of both genders and all ages, the latter to test his masculinity against the harsh climate. These different aims, as well as the time period which sees Scandinavia established as a tourist destination, thus threatening what was perceived as authentic travel experiences, are also discussed in the analyses of how both travellers vacillate between different exotic constructions of the North.

### Key words

Bayard Taylor, S. H. Kent, *Northern Travel*, *Within the Arctic Circle*, exoticising exoticism, imperialist exoticism, Scandinavia, the North, discourse, modernity