

‘MY PETTICOAT ENCUMBRANCES’; THE ‘FEMALE ADVENTURER’ AND THE NORTH’

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Next day, on going up on deck, I found the ship presenting quite an arctic appearance. A crow’s nest had been fastened on to the main topmast to facilitate a good look-out for ice or other impediment. The situation fascinated me enormously, and my wish was to climb to the top, and had it not been for my petticoat encumbrances I should not have hesitated to follow in the sailors’ track. (Peel 1894, 36)

In her account of travelling to the Kara Sea on board the steam yacht, *Blencathra* in 1894, Helen Peel signals her adventurous spirit but notes how she is constrained by her dress from enacting her ‘explorer’ status. Here Peel figures the ship as ‘dressed’ for the Arctic but insists that her own adoption of the conventions of Victorian femininity prevent her from enjoying adventures. There has been considerable scholarship about travelling to the poles, particularly the Arctic, in which Arctic travel is associated with the development or assertion of British masculinity. For example in *White Horizon*, Jen Hill notes that, ‘Empty Arctic space, despite or because of its removal from colonial spaces, had helped to define a form of British masculinity that enabled and naturalized British rule of colonial spaces’ (Hill 2008, 8).¹ However, more recently, efforts have been made by Scandinavian scholars, such as Heidi Hansson and Anka Ryall, to assert other views of the Arctic, particularly those by British women travellers, and to draw attention to a body of work which describes a ‘feminised north’ (Hansson 2007).² Focussing on the northern travelogues of two women travellers from the late nineteenth century, Ethel Brilliana Tweedie’s *A Winter Jaunt to Norway: with Accounts of Nansen, Ibsen, Bjornson, Brandes, and Many Others* and *Polar Gleams; an Account of a Voyage on the Yacht ‘Blencathra’* by Helen Peel, in this article I suggest that rather than presenting a polarized gendered perspective of Arctic travel, Peel and Tweedie negotiated between masculine and feminine-coded associations in order to legitimate and popularize their travels, whilst remaining within the conventions of Victorian femininity. Feminist scholars have noted the tendency of women travel writers of the nineteenth century to adopt modes of writing and practices associated with conventional femininity, whilst at the same time challenging the borders of such conventions and including material perceived as ‘masculine’ in content and style. Sara Mills refers to this as the ‘double-voiced quality of women’s writing’ (Mills 1991, 44). In this article I suggest that accounts of northern travel by women writers are similarly balanced.

Both authors engage with the prevalent masculine discourse of polar exploration in order to construct themselves as female Arctic ‘adventurers.’ Much critical attention has been paid to the figure of the British male explorer and the way in which nineteenth-century expeditions by men to polar territories can be read in an imperialistic frame (Spufford (1996); Hansson and Norberg (2007); Hill (2009)). However, few studies have focused on the relationship of women travellers in the

Arctic to the discourse of imperialism. Alongside this familiar discourse of masculine exploration of the north, Peel and Tweedie both use a number of strategies in order to construct themselves as 'adventurers' and at the same time assure readers of their adherence to conventional codes of femininity. This careful negotiation resulted in the favourable reception and popularity of both texts and indicates both the tremendous benefits which Victorian women gained from travel and also the limitations to which they were subject.

Constructing the 'female adventurer'

In *Polar Gleams* and *A Winter Jaunt to Norway*, Peel and Tweedie present their journeys as 'adventures' and their narrative voices as those of 'explorers.' As 'adventurers', they could promote their travels as extending beyond the conventional scope for the 'lady traveller' and their text as presenting a novel slant. Both authors employ remarkably similar techniques; they emphasize the remoteness of the territory; they give examples of the surprised reactions to their journey by fellow travellers or native people; and most notably, they parallel their own travels to Fritjof Nansen's polar expedition. In fact both texts, published in the year of Nansen's attempt at the North Pole, are haunted by the masculine presence of Nansen and are concluded with chapters detailing the latest news of his Polar expedition. Thus, written as Nansen promoted his first text on the London literary scene and prepared for his ambitious attempt on the Pole the following year, these travelogues were also timely, capitalizing on the public interest in Nansen and his adventures.

Ethel Brilliana Tweedie, or Mrs. Alec Tweedie as she is called on the cover of *A Winter Jaunt to Norway: with Accounts of Nansen, Ibsen, Bjornson, Brandes, And Many Others*, was in her middle twenties when she set out for Norway with her sister in the winter of 1892. She had married a wealthy broker, Alexander (or Alec) Tweedie in 1887 and had two sons (Tweedie 1932). In all she published three book-length travel texts about Scandinavia, *A Girl's Ride in Iceland* (1889), *A Winter Jaunt* (1894) and *Through Finland in Carts* (1897) before travelling more widely. My focus is her 1894 text, which details Tweedie's travels to Christiania (now Oslo) across land, having crossed the channel to Calais, with excursions east and inland. Tweedie sets her accounts of experiences in and around Christiania in winter, including a detailed description of skiing and ski jumping, alongside biographical sketches of Fridtjof Nansen as well as Ibsen and Bjornstjerne Bjornson, the Norwegian poet and politician. Helen Peel's northern journey was far more extensive than Tweedie's. She travelled through Norway on her journey to Siberia on the steam yacht *Blencathra*, as part of an expedition to deliver a 1600 ton cargo of rails which were to build the Trans-Siberian Railway. Peel was the grand-daughter of the former Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel and god-daughter of the Marquis of Dufferin, himself a Polar traveller, having published *Letters from High Latitudes* an account of his voyage to Iceland, in 1857 (Matthew 2007; Theakstone 2006, 210).

In their assertion of themselves as 'explorers,' Peel and Tweedie emphasise the novelty of their presence in the north. Arriving in the Kara Sea, Peel notes:

In the afternoon [of 29th August] we entered the Kara Sea, which was to me full of interest. First of all, the fact that I was the first lady who had navigated its

waters naturally caused me great delight; secondly, it had been pictured to me before my departure with every sort of danger, a warning which appeared all the more to entice me. (51-2)

In this extract Peel establishes her status as ‘explorer’ by referring to the dangers which she might encounter and identifies herself as ‘the first lady who had navigated the waters of the Kara’ despite there being another woman on board – a Mrs. James. At other points in the text Peel notes the surprised reactions of native people and sailors at the ‘ladies’ presence.’ For example, at the Custom-House at Solombola, she writes,

The ladies’ presence particularly puzzled them. They could not believe that we had thus voluntarily accompanied an expedition to the Yenesei, braved the perils of the Kara Sea, and all the dangers attached to arctic exploration. I suppose they looked upon us as very eccentric beings; but I afterwards heard that we were the subjects of much admiration and astonishment, on account of the dangers and the novelty of our enterprise (103).

Peel’s account of the custom house officers, both at the time of, and following, their meeting, emphasises the officers’ positive reactions as well as their surprise. Again Peel associates the word ‘dangers’ with the Arctic, twice in this short extract, yet is unspecific of what these might entail.

In *A Winter Jaunt*, the focus for the novelty of Tweedie’s trip rests on the fact that it is unusual for women travellers to venture into the Norwegian countryside during the winter. Of their arrival at Sundvollen, Tweedie writes, ‘we pulled up in style at the little inn at Sundvollen, where our host seemed somewhat staggered at the arrival of two ladies.’ (59)

The girl who greets them exclaims, ‘Oh yes; dinner and rooms for four; but we did not expect ladies – ladies never come here in winter!’ (59) The text opens with Tweedie’s account of the surprised reaction of the ticket clerk. She writes,

When securing our tickets for this distant land, the clerk laughed at the idea of two ladies going at all, as none but commercial travellers ever venture there between October and May. (1)

Indeed, although Tweedie and her sister only travel about sixty miles inland, it was rare for tourists to travel to Norway in the winter. The text opens with ‘Norway in winter! Yes, Norway in winter. Norway covered in snow and ice; its rivers, fjords, waterfalls and lakes all frozen; its mountains cloaked with purest snow; its people swathed in fur’ (1). Much is made of the extreme weather in northern Europe, she writes that, ‘The winter of 1892-93 was unusually severe. For nearly a month the great German naval station of Kiel had been so completely ice-bound, that no vessel had been able to enter or leave its harbour’ (3) bringing to mind images of Nansen ice-bound in the Arctic Ocean, to which she refers later in the text (316). As Anka Ryall has noted, Tweedie constructs Norway as part of an ‘imaginary Arctic’, which is signalled largely by reference to its climate. She writes, ‘Climate is an obvious

cultural marker of geographical extremity, and Tweedie's imaginary Arctic is established primarily via references to the cold and harsh northern climate and its cultural ramifications' (Ryall 2009, 275-6). On their arrival in Christiania, Tweedie describes how,

Verily, we might have been in the Arctic regions...Through fairyland and wonderland indeed was our first drive. The ground was covered a yard deep in snow; the trees were besprinkled with the glistening drops of hoar-frost; the sky above was clear and blue; not a sound rent the air but the tingle of our sleigh bells. (15, 17)

Again Tweedie reinforces the connections between her travels to Christiania and expeditions further north. Tweedie's depiction of herself situated in such harsh natural surroundings, as Ryall has noted, allows her, 'to turn her holiday tours into a mode of exploration and her narrative persona from tourist to trail blazer' (Ryall 2009, 275).

Peel also foregrounding the adventurous nature of her trip, begins, 'She is off to the North Pole! Was the exclamation of my friends as I left London on the 18th July, 1893, bound for Siberia' (1). This slippage between North Pole and Siberia is significant in the context of Peel's references in the remainder of the text to the Polar explorations of Frederick G. Jackson and Fridtjof Nansen. Her journey becomes 'our Arctic expedition' and at their most northerly point, 'latitude 74°', she notes that:

I felt so excited at being comparatively in such close vicinity to the pole, that had we suddenly turned our prow northwards and changed our goal, the spirit of enterprise and adventure would have taken full possession of me. (59-60)

In blaming the ship for the fact that they do not head further north, Peel's lack of spirit cannot be questioned – she retains her credentials as 'adventurer.' And yet, the limits of Peel's status are indicated here. In spite of her apparent desire to head towards the Pole, her position on the ship is ultimately passive, as a passenger. Unlike the male explorers she cites, she has no agency and thus the role of the adventurer is played out rhetorically rather than actively. Despite its geographical interest, Peel's journey is relatively uneventful. She notes that, 'In fact, I was on the whole rather disappointed with the Kara Sea, as everything was far too plain sailing; no adventures occurred on the way, and nothing even to cause the slightest anxiety'(60).

Although there had, by the end of the nineteenth century, been considerable exploration beyond the Arctic Circle, travels to the far North were not commonplace. As Robert R. David establishes, it was only after the Napoleonic Wars that travels to the Arctic became more popular (David 2000, 6-7). Indeed there are few records of women travelling to the Arctic before this period; Frenchwoman Léonie D'Aunet travelled overland to Spitzbergen in 1839 with her husband to meet up with the French polar-explorer ship, *La Recherche* and was the first to write up her experiences in a travelogue. In the first half of the nineteenth century, there had been a number of accounts of Arctic travel written under the auspices of 'explorer

accounts' but interest in the Arctic grew in the aftermath of the infamous expedition by Sir John Franklin to discover the North-West Passage.³ Although Franklin had set off in 1845, there was to be a resurgence of interest as John Rae returned home in 1854 with news of Franklin's fate.⁴

Towards the end of the century, attention shifted to Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen, whose first expedition in the summer of 1888 to cross Greenland on skis had been followed with great enthusiasm in Britain. The following year Nansen made several journeys to England to give lectures about his achievement and to plan the publication of his book about the expedition. These visits were accompanied by newspaper articles extolling Nansen as 'the hero of the hour' and admiring his physique. Dr. Nansen', the Daily news wrote about his appearance at the Royal Geographical Society on May 25th 1889, 'is a tall, strongly-built, handsome young fellow, of a very modest and prepossessing appearance.' Nansen's lectures were very well-attended and by July the rights to his book *Eskimo Life*, published in 1891, had been bought. Henning Howlid Wærp describes the cultural impact of polar travel, noting that,

The 1890s in Norwegian history is the decade in which cultural life was challenged by the life of sports, as musclemen recounting physical achievements struggled for attention with pale-skinned writers of decadent poetry and prose in the period's newspapers. In general the polar expeditions from the end of the nineteenth century led to a growing interest in travel literature. (Wærp 2007, 45)

It is in the context of this popular interest in Northern explorations that Peel and Tweedie frame their own journeys.

The first mention of Fridtjof Nansen in Peel's travelogue comes as the *Blencathra* arrives at Vardø, when a young English explorer, a Mr. Jackson, joins their party with the intention of acclimatising for his own attempt towards the North Pole. It is clear that whilst Peel is admiring of Jackson, indeed he contributes a chapter to the text about his expedition, Nansen is the focus of her attention. Nansen haunts the text. He is, it seems always a short distance ahead of Peel's party. In Chapter V, when at Waigatz Island Peel is told by a Russian lieutenant that Nansen had left only ten days previously. She remarks,

Dr. Nansen also, in furtherance of his expedition towards the North Pole, recently passed across the Kara Sea; and in conclusion let us hope that his aim and anticipation will meet with success outshining that of all previous expeditions, and that he may as the greatest arctic explorer the world has ever produced. (65)

The 'also' is significant in linking Peel's journey with Nansen's. On her return, passing the North Cape, she is contemplative. Here she makes the association between herself and Nansen more explicit:

Spell bound, [she writes] I sat on deck in presence of sublime and wonderful works of nature, in silent thought. I felt as though my eyes were peering into the

unseen, as though I were on the threshold of a new world, teeming with unknown perils. All my sympathies were with those gallant explorers who have risked their lives for the advancement of science and challenged an untoward fate in the hope of obtaining an advantage for mankind. Yes, indeed, we cannot sufficiently admire such heroic enterprises. And now that I can in a modest way number myself among arctic voyagers, I am able in some small degree to picture to myself the numerous and perilous obstacles to be overcome. May the Norwegian Dr. Nansen, in his endeavour to solve the greatest problem in the world meet with every success, assured of the warmest sympathy of the civilised world for the realisation of his venturesome enterprise. (125-6)

This passage shows a shift as Peel attempts to dramatise her presence in the Arctic landscape and at the same time illustrate that her voyage affords her an insight into the dangers faced by Nansen. At the beginning of the extract the 'perils' of the Arctic are 'unknown' and yet several sentences later, Peel asserts that following her trip she is 'able in some small degree' to imagine the dangers faced by Nansen and his team. The tentativeness in this passage signals Peel's attempts to illustrate the dangers and novelties of her journey, whilst remaining in the confines of respectability for a Victorian woman of society.

Tweedie's travelogue has an unusual structure in that six of its seventeen chapters are given over to accounts of illustrious men of the region, Fridtjof Nansen, Ibsen, Bjornstjerne Bjornson, the Norwegian poet and politician, and Georg Brandes, Danish critic and writer and of these three are dedicated to Nansen, Chapter XII entitled 'Dr. Nansen at Home', Chapter XIII, 'Dr. Nansen's Ship and Plans' and the final chapter of the text, 'Latest News of Dr. Nansen'. Nansen's voice and figure dominate Tweedie's text in several ways; in terms of volume, almost a third of the text is dedicated to a discussion of Nansen, with further citations from *Eskimo Life* and references to his assistance of their journey in the remaining pages. Next, even when Nansen is not physically present, Tweedie analeptically brings him back into the account with descriptions of him in London, visiting her home for a party and also anticipates his polar expedition, speculating on what may happen. For example, on the day she goes to visit Nansen's ship the *Fram*, in the harbour at Christiania during its preparations for the expedition the following June, Nansen is not on board. However into her description of the ship, she incorporates Nansen's comments about it as direct speech – ventriloquizing his words. She also adds his figure imaginatively and describes him in relation to the ship noting that it is, 'Not very large and not very high, for when Dr. Nansen stands erect his noble head almost touches the roof' (229).

The final chapter of *A Winter Jaunt* discusses Nansen's progress after six months, as the text was published in December 1893. By this point the *Fram* had been enclosed in pack-ice since September and was drifting northwesterly (Nansen, 1897).⁵ Tweedie's final chapter opens with the admission that, 'We have probably heard the last that will be known of Nansen for at least a couple of years, and perhaps twice that time' (300). In spite of this, Tweedie speculates on his progress from information she has about the condition of the weather and the ice. She cites his last letter, received in August, describing his satisfaction with the ship and includes part

of an article he wrote about the sledge dogs which were accompanying the party. She writes,

The sledge dogs are of such great importance on an expedition of this kind, that Nansen's own account of them, which appeared in the Norwegian *Orebladet*, will be of interest:- (307)

This assertion is followed by a four-page citation of the article, before setting his attempt at reaching the Pole in the context of previous expeditions. Remarkably Tweedie even uses Nansen's words, "Forward!' is our motto, remember. Farewell!" to end her text (316).

The amount of material pertaining to Nansen and his expedition in *A Winter Jaunt* and *Polar Gleams* took advantage of Nansen's popularity in Britain and secured a market for Tweedie and Peel's texts. Certainly reviewers of *A Winter Jaunt* acknowledged the information about Nansen in the text with approval. In 'The Wares of Autolycus', in the 'Pall Mall Gazette', the reviewer writes,

In the case of Dr. Nansen, indeed, there is good matter. Thanks to her timely winter visit, the author saw the *Fram* all dressed out in her icicles as she will look alone by the North Pole. Mrs. Tweedie tasted the provisions, tried on the dresses, crept into the sleeping pockets, and looked into the books of Dr. Nansen's voyage, and bade him the final farewell.

The book was commercially successful and went into a second edition with Bliss, Sands and Foster within the year.

In addition to the commercial opportunism presented by the inclusion of the descriptions of Nansen's expedition, the references to the explorer in *A Winter Jaunt* and *Polar Gleams* provided further benefits for their authors. By describing their own trips alongside Nansen's expedition the shortcomings of their own voyages in relation are illustrated, signalling an apparently appropriate feminine modesty. The narrators of the text indicate the ways in which their journeys cannot rival that undertaken by Nansen. However, even in their references to the similarities between their journeys to Nansen's expedition and insights into its dangers, Peel and Tweedie's texts become implicitly associated with a discourse of adventure and exploration, thus differentiating them from the numerous female accounts of the Northern tour which had been published by the final decade of the century.⁶

Peel and Tweedie were successful in their negotiation of the conventions of femininity in their construction of the narrators of their texts as 'female adventurers', it seems. Reviewers were overwhelmingly positive about both texts and neither author was criticised for challenging the boundaries of acceptable feminine behaviour.⁷ Both texts were described in appropriately feminine terms as 'delightful.'⁸ Reviewers were not concerned by Peel's attempts to construct her narrative persona as an adventurer; some, such as in the review in *Hearth and Home* celebrated her achievement.

In every way "Polar Gleams" is an excellent book, and we congratulate the authoress on the great success of her first essay at literature – no less than at Arctic exploration. (*Hearth and Home* 1894, 328)

Others, such as Blaikie William Garden, overlooked or dismissed the significance of her journey. In an article in *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, called 'Lady Travellers', he asserts that it is 'an extremely pleasant book to read' but 'it contains little with which Arctic voyagers have not already made us familiar' (Garden 1896, 64). Garden concludes his account of Peel and the other 'Lady Travellers' by noting that,

It goes without saying that our story reflects high credit on the courage, the perseverance, and the benevolence of the gentler sex; it is a record of which women may well be proud. And there is this further to be said – that in no case has their travelling enthusiasm involved the sacrifice of obvious domestic duty nor has it brought out any qualities inconsistent with the modesty, the grace, and the gentleness that must always be regarded as the fitting ornaments of the sex. (Garden 1896,66)

Peel's travelling persona corresponds with the expectations of women of the period. She was not married until the following year, did not have aged parents and thus had no 'domestic duty' to relinquish.⁹

Tweedie's narrative persona was potentially rather more contentious. In 1889, as Ethel Harley, she had published *A Girl's Ride in Iceland* which had featured an occasion where Tweedie and her female companion had ridden their horses astride, rather than side-saddle, something that becomes in nineteenth-century travel literature 'a discursive marker of respectable femininity' (Ryall 2009, 275). Unlike the reviewers of Peel's text, some critics did pick up on the discourse of adventure in her travels. For example in an 1898 article entitled 'Mrs. Alec Tweedie at home and abroad' in *The Young Woman* magazine, Percy L. Parker notes, 'The spirit of adventure seems to be in her blood' (Parker 1898, 321). However critics were largely approving of Tweedie's texts; the reviewer of her 1901 travelogue, *Mexico as I Saw it*, summing up most responses by noting that 'Mrs. Alec Tweedie is the clever lady who goes to places on things' (*The Academy* 1901, 408).

The reception of both texts signals the success with which both Tweedie and Peel negotiate conventional codes in addition to their portrayal of themselves as 'female adventurers.' The construction of the narrative persona in Peel and Tweedie's travelogues corresponds to the importance, noted by Kristi Siegel, of maintaining an image of conventional femininity in order to retain the interest of the reading public in the nineteenth century. Siegel's frequently-cited assertion claims, 'to get an audience, a woman needed to provide material that was reasonable exciting; to keep an audience, she needed to remain a lady'¹⁰ Peel and Tweedie use a series of strategies in order to retain a sense of propriety for their narrators; including those identified by Susan Bassnett, who notes that in accounts by nineteenth-century women travellers, 'there is a clear assertion of femininity, either

through ‘attention to details of clothing, accounts of domestic life, or the inclusion of romantic episodes’ (Bassnett 2002, 239).¹¹

Whilst Peel does not have a great deal of opportunity to include details of domestic life, other than her brief accounts of the ‘Lapps’ and the ‘Samoyedes,’ her text does contain several flirtatious encounters with Russians. At the entrance to the Yugor Straits, for example, Peel notes that, ‘a young Lieutenant from the Russian man-of-war came on board the *Blencathra* to pay his respects’ (40). She notes that he is ‘tall, fair and promised to be remarkably handsome’ (40). Later the captain and officers of the Russian man-of-war, ‘received us in the most hospitable manner, champagne flowing liberally and toasts being drunk’ (42). On land she is taken for a sledge ride by a Russian merchant and notes that she ‘had to cling with both my arms round my companion’s neck’ to avoid being thrown from the sledge and ‘on returning, another prepossessing Russian seemed anxious to sledge with me, and as it was difficult to resist his pressing invitation, I set off on another trial’ (49). The sledging incident comes to signal Peel’s femininity in Lord Dufferin’s preface. After some examples of how Peel’s adventures show ‘the untameable audacity of our modern maidens’, Dufferin notes, ‘Once only, I observe. Does her stoicism falter, when, in order to save her own, she threw her arms round the neck of her skin-clad Jehu’ (xiv).

In *A Winter Jaunt*, whilst including fewer obvious accounts of flirtatious encounters, Tweedie also signals her femininity through references to her physicality. Her account of wearing skis for the first time includes some of the humour and self-deprecation we might expect in a description of a sporting activity by a woman during the nineteenth century. Of her first attempts, she writes:

Sliding off felt delightful, something like skating down a mountain; but the pace, being unregulated, was somewhat alarming, and the feeling became one of utter helplessness. The worst of it was that without assistance we simply could not get up again, but had to lie in the snow, entangled in ski, waiting until called for. (33)

There are a number of similar instances in which the narrator and her companion are, as here, passive or ‘helpless’. She tells how she and her sister met ‘with a fall every twenty or thirty yards’ and intersperses the accounts of her own attempts at skiing with long descriptions of them passively watching ski racing and jumping competitions (33). After a description of her and her sister’s attempts at ski racing, she adds, ‘The more we tumbled about the more courageous we became, until at last Herr Schmelk kindly remarked, “Why, there is nothing you English ladies will not dare”’ (178). In this way Tweedie reminds readers of her class and gender status. During their excursion to a mountain *saeter*, Halver, the man who is looking after them, fails to provide enough hot water at first. Tweedie notes that,

At last he understood, and from that moment a cauldron of snow was ever melting on his fire for the “ladies,” because, as he remarked, “they used more warm water in a day than he had seen in his life.” (173)

Once again, Tweedie's emphasis is on her difference both in terms of class and gender to the speaker, and on the physical requirements of maintaining this status.

Tweedie foregrounds her feminine approach in a different way in the second section of the text, which includes a series of chapters offering accounts of illustrious Scandinavian men. Her account of Nansen, and indeed all of the other men she features in the text, begins with him in his own domestic environment. In choosing to represent Nansen, Ibsen and Bjornson at home she foregrounds her feminine approach as superior to other ways of biographical research; a familiar slant in women's writing of the period (Foster and Mills 2002, 88). Tweedie's account of 'Dr. Nansen at home' opens with both of these. She writes, 'A house is oftentimes the true reflex of its owner's mind...It is an old saying that, "you never know a man till you are married to him," and the words apply equally that "one never knows a man at all until one has seen him in his own home"' (180). The domestic focus then allows Tweedie to remain within nineteenth-century conventions for women's knowledge and yet make ambitious claims, that her knowledge of Nansen is from a privileged standpoint and more informative than other accounts.

Of these strategies for asserting the appropriate femininity of the narrator, the most important is, particularly in Peel's case, the accounts of their dress. For women travellers, like Peel, clothing was often a key indicator of respectability (Anderson 2004, 209). As the title of this article and the quotation with which I began indicate, female clothing during the Victorian period has largely been considered in terms of its role as a physical manifestation of Victorian conventions of femininity.¹² However, as Lila Marz Harper and others have suggested, where earlier nineteenth-century travellers (such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Harriet Martineau) had purposely avoided the subject of dress because it was associated with female frivolity, in the second half of the century, women travellers deliberately mentioned the issue 'because they wished to separate themselves from the various developing women's movements, (...) including the rational dress movement, which were being mocked in the popular press' (Harper 2001, 156).

In Peel's text, clothing is central to the negotiation of boundaries of acceptability as it would seem that her texts risked being judged beyond the remit of a society lady and indeed the grand-daughter of a Prime Minister. Sailing on the Kara Sea north of Siberia, Peel notes,

My costume, which in fact formed my daily and never-varying dress throughout the whole of the voyage, may be summed up in very few words. A blue serge skirt, jacket to match, which by the way was not lined, a red flannel shirt, and a straw sailor-hat, constituted my sea-faring habiliment. (54)

Peel notes that she does not wear furs and that the Russian officers, 'suggested that my attire was far better adapted for the soft summer breezes of the Mediterranean' (54-5). The account of her appearance reassures readers that unlike many of her male contemporaries, she has not adopted local dress, but has kept to the norms of feminine dress. The traditional polar narrative, as Heidi Hansson argues, sets the masculine hero-figure in the primitive situation and frequently in native clothing. Hansson cites the example of Robert Peary parading in fur and skins so that he can,

at least for a limited period of time, exhibit a primitive masculinity to counter what were prevalent concerns of 'over-civilisation' in modern societies (Hansson 2006, 114).¹³ This is illustrated in Peel's account of sledging with the Russian merchantman mentioned earlier, where there is a sharp contrast drawn between Peel and the Russian who has adopted 'Samoyede dress, with a cap of reindeer skin' (49). The fact that, unlike some of her male contemporaries, Peel does not attempt to dress like the natives was appreciated by Garden, who, in his review writes, 'So excited was she by the prospect of her journey that she forgot to provide fur dresses appropriate to the Arctic regions; but, after all, the cold did not harass her' (Garden 1896, 66). Lord Dufferin's introduction to Peel's text also foregrounds the author's femininity with reference to her clothing. Asserting her difference from Virgil setting off on his travels in Horace's Ode III, Dufferin writes,

Moreover, so far from her corsage consisting of "oak and three-fold brass," as the ingenuous Horace imagined, our authoress seems to have left her sealskin jacket behind her, and to have graced the Arctic Circle in a frock of Cowes serge. (xii)

Dufferin's account of Peel's clothing, like Garden's, notes that Peel adopts neither the dress of the 'adventurer' nor the native; instead her dress indicates both her class and gender status.

In *A Winter Jaunt*, Tweedie's description of her clothing acts differently to that of Peel's in *Polar Gleams*. Although she includes a significant level of detail, it is not as overwhelmingly feminine, as Peel's. In her description of her attire for the expedition to the mountain saeter, Tweedie notes,

One word as to our costumes. Very short skirts, reaching but little below the knee, with large front pockets, made with flaps to keep the snow from entering, very thickly lined black knickerbockers, and no petticoats, scarlet jersey bodices, quite loose and elastic, fastened with a belt; ordinary gray ski caps, something like bicycling caps, but with the brim turned right down over the ears; ski gloves, with a thumb and no fingers, like a baby's, knitted of gray wool and long enough to pull over the sleeve up to the elbow, so that snow could not get up the sleeve either; very warm woollen Shetland under clothing, warmth and lightness being absolutely indispensable for such exertion. On our feet we wore two or three pairs of thick stockings, and the huge knitted goat-hair hose of the peasant very warm but with no shape or form; while outside these my sister had her fin-sko, the peasant reindeer boots, with only fur soles, so that the foot had full play. (158)

This lengthy account lists various disparate items, which would seem to challenge conventions of the period for female dress, including immodest skirt length and 'no petticoats.' Furthermore Tweedie and her sister adopt the dress of the natives; Tweedie notes on the following page, 'Moral: Put up with anything recommended by the peasants, who know exactly what is most suitable for their own country and climate' (159). However, according to Ryall, Tweedie's travelogues were not

perceived as unacceptably challenging to the acceptable boundaries of feminine behaviour because by the 1890s 'the notion of a sporty lady was no longer seen as a contradiction in terms' and that 'all Tweedie's northern tours exemplify this development in their simultaneous emphasis on respectable femininity and adventurous athleticism' (Ryall 2009, 277).¹⁴ Although Tweedie's emphasis in her account of her clothing is contrasting to Peel's, the fact that she includes this level of detail is itself indicative of the particularities noted in travel writing by women.

Conclusions

Whilst Arctic travel has largely been figured as a masculine pursuit, in the context of British imperialism, the analysis of northern travelogues by female travellers draws attention to the way in which these tropes are reworked in writing by women. However, as a consideration of Tweedie's *A Winter Jaunt* and Peel's *Polar Gleams* indicates, such a reworking is not always straightforwardly to recast the traveller in purely feminine terms. Although Peel and Tweedie pay attention to Victorian conventions of middle and upper-class femininity and their texts were well-received, both narrators do challenge expectation by paralleling their own journeys with that of Nansen and constructing themselves as 'adventurers.' The allusions to Nansen and his Polar expedition were commercially advantageous in terms of the public interest in the explorer, but also enabled Peel and Tweedie to differentiate their texts from other northern travelogues.

Of the strategies for ensuring the apparent propriety of their text, the references to clothing are highly significant on several levels. Not only could Peel and Tweedie show their adherence (or not) to conventional feminine dress through their descriptions of their clothing, they could also illustrate their relationship to other travellers and the Norwegians they encountered. Thus the 'petticoat encumbrances' have a double function in the text. Symbolic of Victorian conventions of femininity and their limitations on women, the adherence to sartorial norms at least indicated to readers and critics of the woman traveller's compliance with gender conventions. This achieved, the woman travel writer had more scope to embark on her remarkable journey and to write about its potential adventures with enthusiasm as a 'female adventurer' and still remain within the acceptable boundaries of late-Victorian femininity.

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¹ see also Anka Ryall, Johan Schimanski and Henning Howlid Wærp, *Arctic Discourses*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), p. x

² For work on the gendering of Arctic travel, see: Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) Hansson's 'Bayard Taylor's *Northern Travel* and the Genders of the North, in *EDDA*, Vol. 106, (2006), pp. 18-33; Heidi Hansson 'The gentleman's north: Lord Dufferin and the beginnings of Arctic Tourism' in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 13, No. 1, February 2009, pp. 61-73 and for an account of how Henrietta Kent portrays Arctic Norway as 'safe' with 'the somewhat surprising lack of stress on adventures' see Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, 'Exotic Norths? Representations of Northern Scandinavia in S.H. Kent's *Within the Arctic Circle* and Bayard Taylor's *Northern Travel*' in *Nordlitt* 26, 2010, pp. 1-14, p. 8

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⁴ This received popular attention when Dickens staged a debate with Rae in *Household Words* in the winter of 1854-55. See Jen Hill, *White Horizon; the Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), pp. 114-5

⁵ Nansen and Johansen left the ship to make the attempt on foot in March 1895, before being beaten back and spending the following winter in Franz Joseph Land.

⁶ The technique of paralleling one's Northern journey with that of a more famous explorer was used by other nineteenth-century women writers such as Lady Diana de Vere Beauclerk, who notes that friends have confused her trip with, 'an expedition to the North Pole, with a Sir J. Franklin discovery in the distance.' Lady Diana De Vere Beauclerk, *A Summer and Winter in Norway* (London: John Murray, 1868), p.3. Also In Mrs. Lizzie Le Blonde's *Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun* connections are made between the accomplishments of the author and those of Polar explorers, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), pp. 24, 381.

⁷ 'New Books and Reprints,' *The Saturday Review* June 9th, 1894, p. 623 refers to Peel's book as 'this cheerful volume' (623);

⁸ In 'The Wares of Autolykus' in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 9th February, 1894; Issue 9012, *A Winter Jaunt* described as 'a delightful story'; *The Glasgow Herald*, Thursday 1st February, 1894, issue 28 notes that the 'mid-winter excursions by sledge and ski were numerous and delightful;' in 'Strange Associates in Toil' in *The Ladies' Treasury: A Household Magazine* October 1, 1894, *Polar Gleams* is referred to as 'her delightful book' (579)

⁹ Peel was engaged to German businessman, Daniel Von der Heyddt of Hochdahl in November 1894, 'Town and Country Gossip' in *Horse and Hound: a Journal of Sport and Agriculture*, November 10th, 1894, p. 705. See also John Theakstone, *Victorian and Edwardian Women Travellers* (Mansfield Centre CT: Martino, 2006), p. 210

¹⁰ See also Lila Marz Harper, *Solitary Travelers; Nineteenth-Century Women's Travel Narratives and the Scientific Vocation* (London: Associated University Press, 2001), p. 156

¹¹ Susan Bassnett, 'Travel Writing and Gender' pp. 225-242 in Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 239

¹² For accounts of the significance of women travellers' dress see *An Anthology of Women's Travel Writing* (eds) Shirley Foster, Sara Mills (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002) pp. 16-17, 173; Bassnett in Hulme and Youngs (eds) (2002), p. 239; Monica Anderson, *Women and the Politics of Travel 1870-1914* (Cranbury NJ: Rosemont, 2002), pp.210-212

¹³ See also Michael F. Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible; Arctic Exploration and American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006)

¹⁴ For an account of women and sport in fiction of the period, see also Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p.34