

Constructing and classifying ‘the North’: Linnaeus and Lapland.

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At the ‘Linnédagar’ [Linnaeus Days] symposium organised by *Linnésamfundet Polcirkeln* [The Arctic Circle Linnaean Society] in Jokkmokk, in Swedish Lapland, in 2015, one of the scheduled events was a discussion of ‘all the values of nature and how we can increase these’ [‘naturens alla värden och hur vi kan öka dessa’], led by the economist and social scientist Björn Anders Larsson. The subtitle promised analysis and discussion ‘in a Linnean spirit’ of ‘reindeer herding, forestry, iron-ore, tourism, fishing, hydroelectricity, wind power, hunting’ and their value to ‘an enduring region’.¹ Hence, more than 280 years after the botanist Carl Linnaeus (1707-78) spent May-October 1732 exploring the northern regions of Sweden and Finland – aged only 25, and on his very first expedition – the geological, geographical, natural and cultural value of the region is still being debated and categorised as a long list of treasures and opportunities. Linnaeus, it might be said, wrote the book on how to describe this part of ‘the North’. My purpose, in this essay, is to examine how Linnaeus perceived and, through his writings about the expedition, constructed and disseminated Lapland, and to chart how his constructions were appropriated, continued or extended in order to incorporate this part of ‘the North’ into a Swedish romantic and romantic nationalist agenda.

In this respect, my essay is concerned mostly with cultural exchange arising from what the present volume identifies as ‘North-North’ travel, i.e. travel by northerners within ‘the North’. However, Linnaeus’ expedition to Lapland did also have significant influence on British romantic-period perceptions of this part of ‘the North’. This is because although

¹ A similar discussion had taken place during the 2014 event. See www.linnesamfundetpolcirkeln.se (accessed November 2015).

Linnaeus published the scientific findings of his expedition as *Flora Lapponica* in 1737, he also kept a private journal (partly in Latin) which he titled *Iter Lapponicum*, in which he recorded his impressions of the landscapes through which he travelled and of the Sami people whom he encountered, and which he evidently composed with an eye to possible publication. After the death of Linnaeus's son in 1783, James Edward Smith (1759-1828), the founder of the Linnean Society of London, acquired most of Linnaeus's scientific papers. He translated the still-unpublished *Iter Lapponicum* into English and published it for the first time in 1811, as *Lachesis Lapponica: A Tour in Lapland*. Hence it was in romantic-period Britain that Linnaeus's private account of Lapland first reached the European reading public. Smith's translation is (of course) not always as faithful or complete as more recent English renderings, but because of its cultural and historical significance, and its status as vehicle for Anglo-Nordic cultural exchange, I will, wherever possible, use it as my source text here.

Travelling to Lapland

In his application to the Royal Society of Sciences at Uppsala [*Vetenskaps societeten*], which provided in April 1732 the financial backing for his expedition to Lapland, Linnaeus describes the purpose of his journey as to record 'the Natural History of Lapland as regards rocks, soils, water, plants, trees, grass, mosses, quadrupeds, birds, fish and insects, as well as the diseases, health, diet, customs and daily life of the people'.² As Peter Graves points out in the introduction to his (now the most recent English) translated edition of Linnaeus's *Iter Lapponicum*, Linnaeus' aims were as much theoretical as they were practical. His approach was that of the applied scientist and in that Linnaeus was typical of his age. With the prevailing political philosophy in Sweden being, as Graves notes, mercantilist and utilitarian,

² Quoted from the Latin frontispiece to *Iter Lapponicum*, edited and translated by Peter Graves as *The Lapland Journey. Iter Lapponicum 1732* (Edinburgh: Lockhart Press, 1995), p. 26.

the overriding goal was to develop manufacturing industries and improve agriculture in order to promote exports and reduce imports.³ The support given to Linnaeus by the Royal Society of Sciences underlines the importance of this agenda within the scientific establishment: the desire to explore new territories and resources, cultural ones included, was as significant a national motivation for the expedition to Lapland as the young botanist's personal curiosity and search for adventure.

Linnaeus was not the first Swede to travel to Lapland, nor the first to document the region. Significant earlier accounts include *Lapponia* (1673) by Johannes Schefferus (1621-79) – compiled from secondary sources and without Scheffer ever having gone near Lapland himself – and the journeys made by Olaus Rudbeck (1637-1702) and his son, the botanist Olof Rudbeck (1660-1740), in the late 1690s. Olof Rudbeck did publish in 1701 the first part of an account of his journey to Tornio and Luleå Lappmarks in 1695, but the fire which ravaged Uppsala in 1702 erased both this and, as far as is known, any other notes which he had made. Significantly, however, Linnaeus was taught by Olof Rudbeck at Uppsala before his own journey to Lapland and so it seems reasonable to conclude that the project was influenced by the experiences of his older colleague, even though he makes little direct reference to any such influence in his writing.

While Linnaeus was not the first Swede to visit Lapland, however, his journey was different in conception and consequence from those who had preceded him. The ongoing recognition of this fact was made again apparent at the opening of the 'International Polar Year' in 2007, when Bengt Sevä, a member of the Sami parliament, recounted the history of Jukkasjärvi [Čohkkeras], near Kiruna, in northern Sweden. Noting that 2007 was also the 300th anniversary of the birth of Linnaeus, who had visited Jukkasjärvi on his Lapland

³ Graves (ed.), *Lapland Journey*, p. 18.

journey, Sevä described him as ‘not only an outstanding scientist but also a skilled marketer of myths about Lapland and Lapps’ [‘inte bara en framstående vetenskapsman utan också en skicklig marknadsförare av myten om Lapland och lapparna’] and confirmed that his journey provided ‘a new perspective on the biological plenitude, the land, and the people’ [‘gav en ny dimension av den biologiska mångfalden, landet och människorna’].⁴

Linnaeus was thus a new kind of traveller to Lapland: one who both experienced the region and who returned with detailed observations, some of which were disseminated immediately, some later. These outputs took several forms. The sole publication during Linnaeus’ lifetime was his botanical treatise *Flora Lapponica* (1737). As already noted, his private journal, *Iter Lapponicum*, was not published until 1811, in the English translation of James Edward Smith, founder of the Linnaean Society of London; no Swedish edition was published until 1889.⁵ However, Linnaeus submitted a summarised version to the Royal Society of the Sciences as a report upon his return and, in further works, speeches, and lectures, he also drew upon his Lapland experiences. Finally, we know that Linnaeus liked to recount his Lapland experience privately and the well-known portrait of him in Sami costume by Hendrik Hollander (1823-84) in 1853 [fig. 1], serves to indicate not only his continued association with Lapland but also the extent to which he took on the role of the bearer not just of botanical data also of ‘authentic’ artefacts and narratives from that part of ‘the North’.⁶

⁴ Quoted from www.sametinget.se/1533 (accessed November 2015); my translation.

⁵ Both the first English and the first Swedish editions of *Iter Lapponicum*, and all subsequent editions and translations (with the exception for the latest, critical edition by Kungliga Skytteanska Samfundet, edited by Sigurd Fries and Roger Jacobsson), made choices about what to include and about how to render Linnaeus’ language in detail. The original diary is a handwritten manuscript, partly in Latin, but mostly in the vernacular, with occasional dialectal expressions and consistently appalling spelling. Because Linnaeus composed en route, the handwriting is not always neat and is in some places effectively impossible to decipher. Names of places are sometimes misspelt, sometimes entirely misunderstood or misremembered, which has sometimes misled editors and translators in their turn. Furthermore, as noted, Linnaeus frequently switches to Latin, sometimes for a word or two, sometimes for longer phrases, especially when he embarks on longer scientific descriptions of a plant. Hence, editors have always been faced with choices about both content and language and no edition of the diary has therefore appeared exactly as Linnaeus’ actually wrote it. Linnaeus’ manuscript also includes a variety of drawings, which subsequent editions have mostly omitted or chosen to include only a selection.

⁶ Hollander’s portrait was based on an earlier one, made by Martinus Hoffman in 1737.

Long before the actual publication of his *Iter Lapponicum*, then, Linnaeus's experience of Lapland played a key role in remediating the region for his contemporaries and to the romantic and romantic nationalist movements in Sweden.

Insert Figure 1 here: [Hendrik Hollander, *Carolus Linnaeus in Laponian Costume* (1853).
Reproduced by kind permission of The Linnean Society, London.]

Terrains and tensions

As I have already said, my purpose in this essay is to examine Linnaeus' own constructions of Lapland and the legacy of those constructions to romanticism and romantic nationalism in Sweden, with a view to documenting various forms of cultural exchange within 'the North' between Sweden and Lapland. Tim Edensor's account of the complex, multi-layered relationship between space and national identity, comprising 'borders, symbolic areas, sites, constellations, pathways, and dwelling spaces', can give us a useful point of entry into understanding late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century perceptions of Swedish Lapland, with its conglomerate of natural resources, remote wilderness and indigenous population.⁷ In fact, although Edensor's work is focused on contemporary, urbanised identity, the tropes which he describes encapsulate well the various modes through which Swedish Lapland has been and continues to be engaged. This part of 'the North' has functioned (and arguably continues to function) exactly as what Edensor calls an 'iconic' landscape: in 'the modern construction of separate urban and rural realms', an 'iconic' landscape functions as a 'locale of mythical forebears who battled against, tamed and were nurtured by these natural realms'; its adherent narrative is continually recirculated in [popular] culture, often becoming a focal

⁷ Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), p. 37.

point for tourism, sought out by ‘pilgrims who want to experience [the landscape’s] symbolic power’.⁸

In Edensor’s analysis, such ‘iconic’ or ‘spectacular landscapes’ become valued primarily for their affective, ‘romantic’ associations rather than for any potential material worth or utility.⁹ In the case of late eighteenth-century and romantic-period representations of Swedish Lapland, however, the dominant trope became increasingly one of *tension* between these different kinds of value, cultural and material: between the desire to explore in pursuit of progress and prosperity which motivated Linnaeus and, increasingly as the eighteenth century wore on, the ‘romantic’ desire to experience untouched landscapes and natural communities. In his book *Landscape*, the cultural geographer John Wylie provides a useful framework for thinking about landscape as embedding and encompassing, almost by definition, a range of tensions.¹⁰ Wylie asks, for example, whether we consider landscape from the perspective of an insider or an outsider (Linnaeus, in a way, was both); whether we regard landscapes primarily as aesthetic / cultural or physical entities (Linnaeus’s writings suggest the instability of these categories); and whether our perceptions of landscape are subjective or culturally determined (again, Linnaeus’s work questions this dichotomy). The usefulness of the concept of *tension* becomes apparent when we recognise – as Linnaeus’s response to Lapland makes clear – that it is precisely in the negotiations *between* these perspectives that our engagement with any landscape, both as individuals and as societies, is shaped and takes on substance.

To illustrate this point, it might be useful for us to think of the Swedish Lapland which Linnaeus visited as both an *inhabited place* and a *mediated space*. As an *inhabited place*, Swedish Lapland was the home of the Sami: an historically contingent location and a

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ John Wylie, *Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2007).

geophysical entity which provided the Sami with their livelihood, their place of dwelling, and the environmental conditions which framed their way of living. The Sami had adapted to these conditions and had named in their own language both their surroundings and their acts of living among those surroundings. One of Linnaeus' key observations – one which would have considerable bearing both on his own account of Lapland and its natural communities and on subsequent, romantic adaptations of that account – was the relative harmony which seemed to exist between the Sami and their natural surroundings. As is well known, the eighteenth century came increasingly to value the idea of an harmonious coexistence with nature and Linnaeus's description of the healthy purity of the Sami lifestyle not only provided evidence that such harmony was possible but also forged cultural links between Swedish Lapland and this emerging, 'romantic' sensibility.

All this said, the part of 'the North' which Linnaeus visited was also in the process of being claimed as a quasi-colonial *place*. The central Swedish government had already established a presence in Lapland and begun to assert ownership of the region prior to Linnaeus's visit. A Swedish parliamentary debate about Lapland in 1723, for example, led to the passing of an extensive bill which included decrees that all Swedish priests working in Lapland should learn some of the Sami language in order to travel and preach as widely as possible, and in 1738 funds were made available to establish churches and schools in Lapland, and to enable the translation of the Bible and 'other important texts' into the Sami language.¹¹ The intention was thus clearly to bring Lapland within the Swedish state and Linnaeus's officially-sponsored expedition needs also to be understood as part of that nation-building project.

¹¹ See Olof Bergqvist, 'Lapparnas religion', in Frederick Sevonius and Olof Bergqvist (eds.), *Lapland, det stora svenska framtidslandet* (Stockholm: Lundholm, 1908), pp. 152-3; my translation.

For the Swedish establishment in the middle of the eighteenth century, then, Lapland represented new and unexplored material and cultural resources, a position in marked tension with the Sami perspective on Lapland as ancestral habitat and home. Hence it is not surprising that Linnaeus, in his *Iter Lapponicum* and *Flora Lapponica*, emphasises the new and the exotic and his own personal role as their discoverer. And indeed, while Linnaeus occasionally references the observations and theories of others, he usually only does so in passing, which again has the (intended) effect of foregrounding his role as pioneer. It is therefore possible to see Linnaeus's account not just as a descriptor or repository of previous approaches to Lapland but actually as an attempt – parallel to the system of botanical classification for which he became famous – to establish the categories through which the various elements of Lapland might be described and turned to account, affective and material alike.

It is in this way that Lapland, through the work of Linnaeus and others, becomes a *mediated space* of 'the North', its cultural meaning created out of the interaction between concrete physical experiences and abstract conceptions, as well as the accrued value which the landscape acquires through the subsequent retelling of those already-mediated encounters. For Linnaeus on his journey, Lapland is a fluid space: he moves through it; its physicality and geography a reality which he observes as he travels; its conditions, though felt and necessary to negotiate, temporary. In his *Iter Lapponicum*, he records details of the space itself, but also his own experience of it. His subsequent disseminations of his journey – the anecdotes, the botanical inventories, the artefacts – remediate and make fixed this actual Lapland. The properties of the place are categorised into their most useful cultural and material commodities. Since most of the attempts which Linnaeus later made to cultivate Lapland flora failed, and since the real riches of Lapland's natural resources were not consistently and systematically harnessed until the end of the nineteenth century, this usefulness might be said

to have been of largely symbolic value. But that symbolic value was great as part of the Swedish nation-building process during the 'Age of Freedom', and not least because of the territorial losses which Sweden had suffered during the Great Northern War (with Russia) in the first two decades of the eighteenth century.

This wider political agenda goes some way towards explaining why Linnaeus had official support (and perhaps active encouragement) for his exploration of this remote part of 'the North'. As Gunnar Broberg explains, in Sweden in the 1730s, Lapland was 'envisaged as a new Peru, its resources were praised by Rudbeck the younger, and with the new regime, the area becomes part of a national ideology'.¹² In his application to the Royal Society of Sciences (and, as we have seen, in his *Iter Lapponicum*), Linnaeus provides a detailed list of his proposed areas of study and at one point even claims for his proposed journey a significance comparable to the exploration of Africa. The subjects of Linnaeus' interest comprise almost all conceivable, relevant aspects of the natural kingdoms, but do not stop there: of apparently equal importance was the discovery of as much as possible about the Sami people. In addition to its relevance to the political position of Sweden in the early eighteenth century, then, Linnaeus's expedition to Lapland also typifies an age of exploration, an age before tourism, in which travel was not conducted solely, or even perhaps primarily, for private education or profit so much as for the purpose of mapping and claiming the material and cultural resources of unknown lands. In this respect, Linnaeus' journey can also be seen to partake of a wider, Enlightenment project, which gives to his remediation of Swedish Lapland not just a domestic but also a broader European importance. The global perspective of the eighteenth century, Göran Rydén has argued in *Sweden in the Eighteenth-Century World*, was a 'spatially more encompassing' episteme than those which had

¹² See Gunnar Broberg, 'Varför reser Linné? Varför springer samnen', in Roger Jacobsson (ed.), *Så varför reser Linné? Perspektiv på Iter Lapponicum 1732* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2005), pp. 19-52 (35); my translation.

preceded it: an interconnectedness derived from sharing and exchanging ideas across large geo-cultural areas but also premised upon and furthered by the acquisition by European powers of new territories.¹³ Linnaeus's remediation of the part of 'the North' which he visited both reflects and perpetuates this wider, Enlightenment project of epistemological and territorial acquisition: it not only describes but also constructs Swedish Lapland for eighteenth-century Europe. It is to the terms of that construction of 'the North' that I will now turn.

Lapland constructed

Cultural historians have often described the eighteenth century in Sweden as *naturkänslans århundrade*, the 'century of feeling for nature'. Attitudes towards landscapes transformed – as they were transforming across Europe – from earlier religious and utilitarian perspectives, which favoured cultivated landscapes, towards a more 'romantic' appreciation for wild, untamed vistas.¹⁴ But the eighteenth century, 'the Age of Freedom' in Sweden, also witnessed the rising influence of the 'natural philosopher'. Theological explanations came increasingly to be seen as insufficient to account for natural phenomena and the areas of enquiry which would later become the disciplines of the natural sciences and the humanities began to gain ground. The period 'belonged' to natural philosophers, claims Per-Olov Zennström in his revealingly-entitled book *Linné: Sveriges upptäckare, naturens namngivare* [Linnaeus: Discoverer of Sweden, Namer of Nature].¹⁵

¹³ Göran Rydén, *Sweden in the Eighteenth-Century World: Provincial Cosmopolitans* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 15.

¹⁴ See, for example, Mikael Ahlund, *Landskapets röster: studier i Elias Martins bildvärd* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2003), pp. 17-18.

¹⁵ Per-Olov Zennström, *Linné: Sveriges upptäckare, naturens namngivare* (Stockholm: Arberatrkultur, 1957), p. 13.

The Royal Society of Sciences, which awarded Linnaeus the funding for his expedition to Lapland, had its roots in Sweden's first scientific organisation, the Collegium Curiosum, which had been founded in 1720. The aim of the Collegium was to 'promote exploration of all aspects of the fatherland' ['fädernelandets allsidiga undersökning'].¹⁶ The motivation for such 'exploration' was as much economic and utilitarian as it was the simple gratification of 'curiosity', based in the idea that it was the moral and Christian duty of mankind to master and make use of ('nyttiggöra') the natural world.¹⁷ The pervading view of the nascent discipline of political economy was that a (net) export surplus was the sign of national economic well-being: the less reliant on others, the stronger the state was perceived to be.¹⁸ Following defeat by Russia in the Great Northern War, a central political agenda in Sweden from the 1720s onwards was to re-establish the state as a great power. Since this could no longer reasonably be achieved through military conquest, commercialisation and trade began to be seen as alternative routes, and the promotion of economic growth 'an end to which everything should be geared'.¹⁹

Those Swedes who travelled with official support, then, did so as 'useful travellers' ['nyttiga resenärer']: they set out primarily to collect knowledge or to implement policy, and their travel journals and reports are characterised by an unsentimental, scientific approach, penned by 'sober travellers in the service of matters of usefulness and profit', whose primary aim was to 'objectively observe, map and document'.²⁰ This inventorial and/or bureaucratic agenda often resulted in a very specific approach to and reporting of the areas visited: observations contributed to a visualisation of the landscape, and mapping both enhanced this

¹⁶ Quoted in Tore Frängsmyr, *Linnaeus: the man and his work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 22.

¹⁷ Ahlund, *Landskapets röster*, p. 18

¹⁸ See Lars Magnusson, 'Economics and the Public Interest: The Emergence of Economics as an Academic Subject during the 18th Century', in *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 94 (1992), pp. 249-257 (251).

¹⁹ Magnusson, "Economics and the Public Interest", p. 252.

²⁰ Ahlund, *Landskapets röster*, p. 246; my translation.

visualisation and delineated borders and territories. In the case of Linnaeus's expedition to Lapland, we can trace the emergent view of different areas and regions as part of a greater 'North'.²¹ When Linnaeus observes Lapland, he observes it – and later describes it – as part of Sweden, considered as a whole: with different flora and fauna, yes, but not separate from the rest of the country, only typical of part of the country and of the multitude of regional variations of which the country is made up.

In its annual report for 1931, the Swedish Linnean Society [*Svenska Linnesällskapetets årskrift*] observes that Linnaeus's various travels, with their 'untiring emphasis on all resources and values', could be seen as a 'kind of inventory of the properties and natural resources ['naturmöjligheter'] of the Swedish kingdom'.²² In the specific case of his expedition to Lapland, Linnaeus's documentation and classification of the region can, as I have already suggested, be understood as an epistemological claiming of this part of 'the North', both for Linnaeus himself as its self-styled discoverer, but also for the establishment on whose behalf he travelled. One of Linnaeus' mottos was 'Res ipsas nosce', or 'to know the things themselves':

The first step in wisdom is to know the things themselves. This notion consists in having a true idea of the objects; objects are distinguished and known by classifying them methodically and giving them appropriate names. Therefore, classification and name giving will be the foundation of our science.²³

²¹ This rhetoric would emerge particularly forcefully in the early twentieth century [in Sweden] as various voices quite overtly sought to foster a politically motivated 'love for the fatherland' by detailed mapping of the country as an entity (such as in Selma Lagerlöf's *Nils Holgersson*), and a rhetoric around the local landscape which equated it with, and as part of, that entity. But it is with Linnaeus that it emerges for the first time.

²² Quoted in Uwe Ebel, 'Studien zur Skandinavischen Reisebeschreibung von Linné bis Andersen', *Neohelicon: Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, 11/1 (1984), pp. 301-22 (320); my translation.

²³ Carl Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae* (1735), quoted in Paul Lawrence Farber, *Finding order in nature. The naturalist tradition from Linnaeus to E. O. Wilson* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 8-9.

The quip that ‘God created, Linnaeus classified’ is not usually intended derogatively. But when Linnaeus approaches the land, landscapes and people of Lapland with a method based on classification as the foundation of knowledge, he is undoubtedly making claims to ownership through classification. To name is to define our view and understanding of that which is named, but to name also establishes that, *our*, definition as the dominant interpretation. Hence, when Linnaeus ‘names’ Lapland throughout his journey, he transforms for Sweden (and Europe more generally) this part of ‘the North’ from an unmapped and unexperienced, neutral space, into a named and categorised possession. As I mean to show now, this transformative process is evident throughout Linnaeus’s *Iter Lapponicum*. As Linnaeus takes possession through naming of the landscapes which he traverses, his account is infused with tension between scientific and affective responses, between material and symbolic values, and between the demands of rhetoric and fidelity to physical experience.

Scientific, sensory and symbolic landscape

Linnaeus set out on his journey to Lapland on 12 May 1732. The opening pages of his *Iter Lapponicum* are indicative of his focus on detail as well as of an approach to observing, describing and naming in which the classifier himself is also clearly visible. In his first entry, Linnaeus lists his dress and equipment:

My clothes consisted of a light coat of Westgothland linsey-woolsey cloth without folds, lined with red shalloon, having small cuffs and collar of shag; leather breeches; a round wig; a green leather cap, and a pair of half boots. I carried a small leather bag, half an ell in length, but somewhat less in breadth, furnished on one side with hooks and eyes, so that it could be opened and shut at pleasure. This bag contained one shirt; two pair of false sleeves; two half shirts; an inkstand, pencease, microscope, and

spying-glass; a gauze cap to protect me occasionally from the gnats; a comb; my journal, and a parcel of paper stitched together for drying plants, both in folio; my manuscript Ornithology, *Flora Uplandica*, and *Characteres generici*. I wore a hanger at my side, and carried a small fowling-piece, as well as an octangular stick, graduated for the purpose of measuring.²⁴

Linnaeus's scientific approach is visible here not only in the attention to minute detail but also in the equal attention afforded to each item, without any obvious hierarchy. 'Everything is important, or everything is equally important', as Margit Abenius notes in her essay on the stylistic features of Linnaeus' writing.²⁵ But although Linnaeus takes care to make his descriptions clear and concise, he nevertheless also manages to be evocative, evidence that as he composed *Iter Lapponicum* he at least considered the possibility of future publication. His account is engaging and personal, and although the primary focus of the narrative is always on the things observed, the observer too remains visible in the text through covert subjectivity and overt participation.

Visible too, and highly present, is the landscape through which Linnaeus travels. After his inventory of equipment, Linnaeus looks immediately at his surroundings and responds to the natural world with a mixture of poetic effusion and that scientific eye for detail:

At this season Nature wore her most cheerful and delightful aspect, and Flora celebrated her nuptials with Phœbus.

Omnia vere vigent et veris tempore florent,

Et totus fervet Veneris dulcedine mudus.

²⁴ Quoted from Edward William Smith (ed.), *Lachesis Lapponica: A Tour in Lapland*, 2 vols. (London, 1811), vol. 1, pp. 1-2.

²⁵ Margit Abenius, 'Om Linnés språk och stil', in Margit Abenius, Sixten Belfrage, Sigurd Fries, and Jöran Sahlgren (eds.), *Linnés språk och stil – studier i Linnés svenska författarskap* (Stockholm: Prisma, 1971), p. 56; my translation.

Spring clothes the fields and decks the flowery grove,

And all creation glows with life and love.

Now the winter corn was half a foot in height, and the barley had just shot out its blade. The birch, the elm, and the aspen-tree began to put forth their leaves.²⁶

Striking here is not just the blend of poetic and scientific response, but also the energetic and enthusiastic tone. In Swedish literature, there is something very new about this hybrid mode through which Linnaeus remediates ‘the North’ and one can well see why Linnaeus has, in recent years, come to be seen as one of the first Swedish lyricists of the natural world: his style is imbued with delight at the natural world and its phenomena, particularly when and where it seems to interact directly with the observer, or he with it. This combination of affective and empirical response to the landscape, which the Swedish poet and critic Oscar Levertin has described as the ‘singular poetry in Linnaeus’ travels’, is a sustained feature of the *Iter Lapponicum*.²⁷ So, too, is that lack of hierarchy which we observed in Linnaeus’s opening description of his materiel, supported stylistically, as Margit Abenius notes, by a ‘rhythmical tendency to equalise the stress [...] so that the individual words appear clearly’.²⁸

Another feature evident as Linnaeus sets out on his journey is his awareness that he is going in part where others have gone before, that there is a pre-existent discourse about this part of ‘the North’, a discourse to which he is contributing and which he is himself transforming. Consider as an example the small detour which he makes on his second day out of Uppsala to visit the waterfall at Älvkarleby:

²⁶ Smith, *Tour in Lapland*, vol. 1, pp. 2-3.

²⁷ Oscar Levertin, quoted in Sigurd Fries and Roger Jacobsson (eds.), *Iter Lapponicum*, 3 vols. (Stockholm: Kungl. Skytteanska Samfundet, 2005), vol. 2, p. 78.

²⁸ Abenius, ‘Om Linnés språk och stil’, p. 67; my translation.

Having often been told of the cataract of Elf-Carleby, I thought it worth while to go a little out of my way to see it; especially as I could hear it from the road, and saw the vapour of its foam, rising like the smoke of a chimney.²⁹

Viewing the fall, Linnaeus emphasises its raw, natural power: ‘I perceived the river to be divided into three channels by a huge rock, placed by the hand of Nature in the middle of its course [...] its white foam and spray as thrown as high as two ells into the air’.³⁰ But the natural philosopher in him also laments that ‘it is impossible to examine the nature of the inaccessible black rock over which the water precipitates itself’.³¹ That hybrid approach again. The ‘might as well’ tone with which Linnaeus introduces his visit to the cataract therefore belies the extent to which he is aware of the common cultural value which the area has already accrued. In fact the passage is, as I have suggested, typical of how Linnaeus often subtly registers his awareness that he is travelling through landscapes which have already acquired, or which are in the process of acquiring, in part through his own agency, cultural value. And not just cultural value: Linnaeus concludes his account of Älvkarleby with appreciative mention of the practical use to which the sublime spectacle has been put: an intricately constructed ‘salmon fishery’ below the ‘cataract’.³² Taken as a whole, then, his account emphasises the various forms of value with which this part of ‘the North’ was being literally and symbolically inscribed.

Narrated landscape

As Linnaeus travels up through the country, further and further into ‘the North’, and begins to make his own discoveries, the manner of his recording evolves and the objects of his interest

²⁹ Smith, *Tour in Lapland*, vol. 1, p. 12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

appear in sharper relief. We have already noted the overt presence of Linnaeus-as-narrator at the beginning of *Iter Lapponicum*, anchoring the text at the outset (and throughout) in a personal voice. This subjectivity draws the reader into the narrative while simultaneously seeking to establish the narrative as authentic because as grounded in personal experience. A further device used by Linnaeus to shore up the authenticity of his narrative is his ability to provide the reader with unique information, and, in particular, with unique information which he has gained at first hand. One of the more colourful examples of this strategy is the curious story told by Linnaeus in his entry for 30 May of a woman whom he encountered at Lycksele who was ‘supposed to labour under the misfortune of a brood of frogs in her stomach, owing to her having, in the course of the preceding spring, drunk water which contained the spawn of these animals’.³³ ‘She thought she could feel three of them’, Linnaeus continues, ‘and that herself, as well as persons who sat near her, could hear them croak’.³⁴ Hearing of previous remedies (brandy, salt) which had failed, Linnaeus ‘advised’ the woman to ingest ‘tar’, but that too ‘she had already taken without success, having been obliged to throw it up again’.³⁵ As these are the narrator’s unique experiences no one can counter them, and so they can pass for true. Nor is this element of the fantastic, in itself not untypical of eighteenth-century travel writing, in any way inconsistent with the non-hierarchical cataloguing methodology of the *Iter* – even though Smith, in his edition, felt it necessary to append an embarrassed footnote to the anecdote, in which he observes that ‘Linnaeus writes as if he did not absolutely disbelieve the existence of these frogs, which were as much out of their place as Jonah in the whale’s belly’ and even mentions a comparable incident said to have occurred ‘not many years ago’ in Norwich!³⁶

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-3n.

A more substantial example of how Linnaeus remediates 'the North' through his narrative persona can be seen, however, in the account which he provides of his first, failed attempt to reach the high mountains of northern Sweden, in early June. Since the winter snows had melted and water levels were consequently high, many of the areas which Linnaeus and his Lap guide attempted to traverse which extremely difficult or even impossible to negotiate. His account of their labours, which clearly eschews objective description in favour of subjective interest and dramatic effect, is worth quoting at length:

We had next to pass a marshy tract, almost entirely under water, for the course of a mile, nor is it easy to conceive the difficulties of the undertaking. At every step we were knee-deep in water; and if we thought to find a sure footing on some grassy tuft, it proved treacherous, and only sunk us lower. Sometimes we came to where no bottom was to be felt, and were obliged to measure back our weary steps. Our half-boots were filled with the coldest water, as the frost, in some places, still remained in the ground. Had our sufferings been inflicted as a capital punishment, they would, even in that case, have been cruel, what then had we to complain of? I wished I had never undertaken my journey, for all the elements seemed adverse. It rained and blowed hard upon us. I wondered that I escaped with life, through certainly not without excessive fatigue and loss of strength.

After having thus for a long time gone in pursuit of my new Lapland guide, we reposed ourselves about six o'clock in the morning, wrung the water out of our clothes, and dried our weary limbs, while the cold north wind parched us as much on one side as the fire scorched us on the other, and the gnats kept inflicting their stings. I had now my fill of travelling.

The whole landed property of the Laplander who owns this tract consists chiefly of marshes, here called stygx. A divine could never describe a place of future

punishment more horrible than this country, nor could the Styx of the poets exceed it.

I may therefore boast of having visited the Stygian territories.³⁷

In this undeniably powerful and evocative passage, Linnaeus not only succeeds in inscribing his own experiences upon the landscape – and, in that sense, taking rhetorical possession of it – but also, through the emphasis on his heroic struggles, enhances both the value of his expedition and the authenticity of his narrative by appealing again to lived (or perhaps in this case *survived* experience). He appropriates for himself through such descriptions the role of the explorer of ‘the North’, rhetorically subjugating its landscapes to his experiences. He also situates his exploration of ‘the North’ in relation to the wider, Enlightenment project of exploration. Hence his account of his eventual arrival at the mountains in Gällivare, on 6 July: ‘I seemed entering on a new world [...] I scarcely knew whether I was in Asia or Africa, the soil, situation, and every one of the plant, being equally strange to me’.³⁸ By likening this part of ‘the North’ to places like ‘Asia or Africa’, Linnaeus not only remediates Lapland as equally unknown, exotic, and potentially profitable as these other fields of European exploration, but also situates his exploration of Lapland within a wider, cultural project. Situating the exploration of ‘the North’ in this way allows Linnaeus to assert that Lapland is unknown while simultaneously containing that unknown within familiar discourses.

Particularly unknown and exotic to Linnaeus and his contemporaries (to say nothing at all of his readers in romantic-period Britain) were of course the indigenous inhabitants of Lapland: the Sami, or ‘Lapps’ to use the language of Linnaeus’s day. Linnaeus observes and describes the Sami with the same mixture of astonishment and cataloguing objectivity with which he responds to the landscapes of Lapland, remarking on almost every aspect of their lives which he comes across: how fleet of foot they are; how adept at reindeer herding (‘it

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

was quite amazing to me that they could recognise these animals when they were swarming about like ants on an anthill’); how ingenious their solutions for everything from carrying a boat (which Linnaeus illustrates in an oft-referenced drawing in his diary, in which a man carries a boat upside-down over his head); where their babies sleep; what they eat; how they treat illnesses; and how stoutly and uncomplainingly they endured their poverty and hardships of their lives.³⁹

In short, In Linnaeus’ account, the Sami are healthy and self-sufficient: an exemplary natural community and evidence that man could live in harmony with nature. But this, too, is a remediation of ‘the North’. As Lisbet Koerner makes clear in *Linnaeus: Nature and the Nation*, Linnaeus’ vision of ‘the happy Lapp’ is:

an especially strained variant of primitivism, for in the eighteenth century the Sami were a thoroughly colonized people. They suffered from smallpox, measles and alcoholism; as nomads crossing state borders, they laboured under double and triple taxation; they were conscripted into Lapland’s mines; they were driven from their hunting grounds, fishing creeks and grazing lands; and the Lutheran churches burdened them with tithes, catechism exams, and compulsory church attendance.⁴⁰

The overriding ideological agenda of such representations of the Sami, as Koerner understands it, was to advocate the supposedly natural lifestyle of the Sami – Linnaeus makes a nine-point list of why he thinks they are so healthy and strong, including purity of water, a meat-rich diet, no heavy eating, no alcohol – as a means of reforming the habits of the Swedish peasantry: away from imported and/or smuggled goods and towards living instead on what the land itself could provide.

³⁹ Linnaeus describes the reindeer herding in his entry for July 9 (Smith (ed.), *Tour in Lapland*, vol. 1, p. 314). His account of the boat-carrying comes in his entry for 29 May (Smith (ed.), *Tour in Lapland*, vol. 1, pp. 97-8).

⁴⁰ Lisbet Koerner, *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 73, 75.

In *Iter Lapponicum*, Linnaeus certainly does represent the Sami as an extension of the qualities of the landscapes which they inhabit. ‘Ovid’s description of the silver age’, he suggests in his entry for 2 June, ‘is still applicable to the native inhabitants of Lapland. Their soil is not wounded by the plough, nor is the iron din of arms to be heard; neither has mankind found their way to the bowels of the earth, nor do they engage in wars to define its boundaries’.⁴¹ They ‘live in tents, and follow a pastoral life, just like the patriarchs of old’, and contentment is the result – both for the Sami themselves and for the spectator upon their lifestyle: ‘I witnessed with pleasure’, Linnaeus reports in his entry for 10 July, ‘the supreme tranquillity enjoyed by the inhabitants of this sequestered country’, ‘the reward and proof of their innocent lives’.⁴²

The list of reasons which Linnaeus provides by way of explanation of the health and happiness of the Sami also includes environmental factors, such as the purity of the air and the water (frogspawn excepted), making the physical landscape a condition for the Sami well-being. Adapting to this landscape and learning tranquillity of mind are also crucial, in Linnaeus’ opinion, to Sami society, revealing his conviction that the landscape teaches and develops a special way of being, a special mind-set. This idea in particular, of Sami society as an extension or manifestation of the Lapland environment, which has parallels in, for example, the accounts of the Swiss Alps by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), would feature prominently in an array of subsequent engagements with the mountains of northern Sweden and, indeed, with ‘the North’ more generally. In this context, it finds significant early expression in *Iter Lapponicum*.

The pinnacles of this landscape, literally and symbolically, are of course the mountains [fjällen], ‘the Alps’ in Smith’s translation. They occupy a special place in

⁴¹ Smith (ed.), *Tour in Lapland*, vol. 1, pp. 131-2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 314.

Linnaeus' narrative, and the 'Styx' episode, discussed earlier, indicates the strength of his impatience to reach them. When he finally does so, Linnaeus begins a new section in his diary, headed 'Fjällen', and recounts his first view of the mountains (on 1 July) in lyrical terms, underscoring a strong aesthetic impression and affective engagement:

I was much struck with an opening between the hills to the north-west, through which appeared a range of mountains, from ten to twenty miles distant, as white as the clouds, and seeming not above a mile from the spot where I stood. Their summits reached the clouds, and indeed they resembled a range of white clouds rising from the horizon. They recalled to my mind the frontispiece of Rudbeck's *Lapponia Illustrata*. Mountains upon mountains rose before me in every direction. In a word, I now beheld the Lapland alps.⁴³

Linnaeus's account (and certainly Smith's translation of it) reflects here the burgeoning appreciation during the eighteenth century and romantic period for the natural sublime. It is notable, however, that Linnaeus' response to this sublime landscape is not entirely his own but rather mediated to some extent via an earlier representation: the frontispiece to Olof Rudbeck's twelve-volume *Lapponia Illustrata* (1701), which has at its centre a prospect of mountains visible through and behind a natural, rock archway. It is clear, then, that even so ostensibly objective an explorer as Linnaeus, with all his investment in his role as explorer and discoverer of this part of 'the North', cannot see altogether objectively: 'the North' already exists as a cultural category, mediated through visual and other codes, which Linnaeus reshapes but does not invent.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.267-9 (skipping Fig. 2 on p. 268).

Insert Figure 2 here: [Sketch by Linnaeus of ‘the Lapland Alps’, reproduced in James Edward Smith, ed. and transl. *Lachesis Lapponica: A Tour in Lapland*, 2 vols. (London, 1811), vol. 1, p. 268. Reproduced by kind permission of The Linnean Society, London.]

Later in the evening of 1 July, when Linnaeus had arrived at Tjåmotis [‘Kiomotis’ in Smith’s translation], he noted with appreciation another peculiarity of ‘the North’:

I saw the sun set [i.e. *sitting*] apparently on the summit of a high mountain called Harrevarto [...] This spectacle I considered as not one of the least of Nature’s miracles, for what inhabitants of other countries would not wish to behold it? O Lord, how wonderful are thy works!⁴⁴

Linnaeus’s remediation of ‘the Lapland Alps’ is thus highly affective and shares with many subsequent eighteenth-century and romantic-period responses to the natural sublime a sense that grand landscape evidences the grandeur of its supposed creator. But here, too, the cataloguing mode of *Iter Lapponicum* is evident as Linnaeus also registers the sublime plentitude of the flora:

All the rare plants that I had previously met with, and which had from time to time afforded me so much pleasure, were here as in miniature, and new ones in such profusion, that I was overcome with astonishment, thinking I had found more than I should know what to do with.⁴⁵

Awe and natural philosophy combine in a narrative which simultaneously remediates the affective and the material resources of ‘the North’. The mountains of Lapland are transmitted by Linnaeus’s account as at once landscape – sensuous, narrative and symbolic – and property, of interest to natural philosophy and with potential material value.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 269. Smith’s translation is misleading on this point. Linnaeus’ own phrase ‘*solem inocciduum*’ makes it clear that he is referring to the midnight rather than the setting sun.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

Lapland remediated

Modernisation and colonisation go hand in hand, Gunnar Broberg has suggested, and together they drove the discourse around Lapland in new directions in eighteenth-century Sweden.⁴⁶ Many aspects of the region took on increasing symbolic and material value, and Linnaeus's remediations of them both reflect and shape that process.⁴⁷ The frontispiece to *Flora Lapponica* [fig. 3], the only account of his expedition to Lapland which Linnaeus himself published, indicates how he saw and wished to represent both Lapland itself and his own role in its discovery. Most of this image is a misrepresentation. The mountains in the background are the wrong shape for the 'Lapland Alps', even in view of Linnaeus's own sketch; Linnaeus is holding a sacred Sami drum, which he ought not to have been allowed anywhere near; the leaping deer are but a very distant relative of the Lapland reindeer; and the neatness and domesticity which imbue the scene contrast markedly both with Linnaeus' own experiences as related in *Iter Lapponicum* and with the material reality of the Lapland landscape.

Insert Figure 3 here: ['Frontispiece' to Linnaeus, *Flora Lapponica* (1737). Reproduced by kind permission of The Linnean Society, London.]

As Susan Seymour has argued, all representations of landscape are situated somewhere in discourse: the views have a specific cultural origin.⁴⁸ The values inscribed upon landscapes are culturally determined and representations of landscape are therefore integral to the construction of national or cultural identities. Narratives of and around landscape can

⁴⁶ Broberg, 'Varför reser Linné? Varför springer samén', p. 38.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁸ Susanne Seymour, 'Historical geographies of landscape', in Brian Graham and Catherine Nash (eds.), *Modern Historical Geographies* (London: Longman, 2000), p. 194.

‘masquerade as a historical entity’, and function as a celebration of property, of the unchanged, of the status quo.⁴⁹

From the eighteenth century onwards, attempts in Sweden to forge a sense of national self identity afforded to the landscape a central position and to Lapland, in particular, a special value. In Selma Lagerlöf’s story of Nils Holgersson’s journey around the entirety of Sweden, for example, which was written for school children at the beginning of the twentieth century, the geese observe of Lapland that:

up there are to be found both a large mountain region and a large lake district and a vast forest area and a vast agrarian area and a large archipelago. It is more than most kingdoms can pride themselves on having within their borders.⁵⁰

The use – cultural, scientific, industrial – of the Lapland region came to be seen as essential to the modernity that Sweden sought to construct, and twentieth-century rhetoric echoes the arguments made by Linnaeus in his application to the Royal Society of Sciences, in which he insisted that an area so rich in resources could not be left unexplored. At the same time, however, a significant part of the value attached to the landscapes of this part of ‘the North’ centres on constructions of its remote, pristine character, something which Linnaeus, too, emphasised. Hence, the celebratory ‘Lapland Symphony’ of Wilhelm Peterson-Berger (1867-1942) and the study *Lapland, det stora svenska framtidslandet* (1908) [‘Lapland, the great Swedish country of the future’], by the geologist and cartographer Frederick Sevonius (1852-1928) and the bishop Olof Bergqvist (1862-1940), can be seen as notable twentieth-century inheritors of the remediation of this multivalent Lapland formulated by Linnaeus two centuries before. His was a vision imbued with the emerging ideologies of the eighteenth century every bit as much as it was an objective, scientific study of this part of ‘the North’.

⁴⁹ Edensor, *National Identity*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ Selma Lagerlöf, *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1981 [1905-06]), p. 468; my translation.

Conclusion

‘Den svenska äran bröt sig nya banor/ i tankens obesköta land: Linne/ stod segersäll bland sina blomsterfanor,/ oskyldig, älskvärd, konstlös liksom de’ [‘Swedish honour broke new paths/ in the undiscovered country of thought: Linnaeus/ stood victorious amongst his flower-banners,/ innocent, beloved, artless like them’]. Thus wrote the Swedish academic and divine Esaias Tegnér (1782-1846) in his poem composed to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Swedish Academy in 1836.⁵¹ Tegnér’s description of Linnaeus was no doubt intended as an unequivocal endorsement, but it does beg the question: ‘innocent’ of what?

The fresh abundance of Linnaeus’ description and the ability of his narrative to appear direct and unmediated could easily be misread as signs of a purpose-less text, constructed in passing, recording only the immediacy of experience, and free of ideological agenda. That the *Iter Lapponicum* was never published by Linnaeus – although we cannot know for certain why this was the case – might be taken as evidence to corroborate such a view. However, the fact that Linnaeus’ narrative was not published during his lifetime does not necessarily mean that he never had any intention of publishing it. Conversely, I have identified stylistic features here which suggest that he must have while composing considered the possibility. Hence it may be misleading to consider the *Iter Lapponicum* as solely or even primarily a private document.

The unedited text which survives is, now, the only travel narrative ever written by Linnaeus himself (others were compiled by his students) and so might be thought to give a particular insight into the experiential and ideological contours of his journey, into how he experienced Lapland, and into how he wanted others to experience it. The text reveals, as I

⁵¹ Esaias Tegnér, ‘Vid Svenska Akademiens femtioåriga minneshögtid den 5 April 1836’, ll. 46-9; my translation.

have shown here, that Linnaeus' journey was not only the adventure of a young and curious botanist, but a journey of evident contemporary cultural relevance, a journey which both reflected and shaped engagements with this part of 'the North'.

The English edition of *Iter Lapponicum* published by Smith in 1811 was one of the key means by which Lapland was remediated to the reading public in early nineteenth-century Europe. When the diary was finally published in Sweden at the end of the nineteenth century, it prompted a reassessment of Linnaeus and his work – and his opinions – which fed into a wider discourse about the relationship between Swedish national and cultural identity and various appropriations of the Swedish landscape. That Linnaeus' views and work could in 1836 still be considered as 'innocent' as the flowers signals a deep-rooted unawareness of the strength of his narratives and the level to which they, despite, indeed perhaps on account of their wide-eyed immediacy, must be understood as both classifying and constructing 'the North'.