

Lapland under French eyes: the second *La Recherche* expedition (1838-1839) narrated by Xavier Marmier

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Abstract

This article is dedicated to the second French *La Recherche* expedition to Lapland and Spitzbergen in the years 1838-1839, sponsored by French King Louis Philippe who had himself travelled through the Northern parts of Fennoscandia incognito in the late 18th century. Focusing on the expedition's official account written by prolific French writer Xavier Marmier and unpublished source material from the French diplomatic archives as well as writings by Lars Lévi Laestadius, the Swedish Lutheran minister of partly Sami origin who was the expedition's guide in Lapland, the article discusses Marmier's representation of the European Far North in his official narrative in relation to his own notes and Laestadius' observations. Marmier's remarks are also studied in a wider political context of French rivalry with British ambition in the Arctic and diplomatic perception of *La Recherche*.

Key words

Arctic, Lapland, Marmier, travel literature, representation

On June 13, 1838, at 1pm, the corvette *La Recherche* was towed out of the port of Le Havre to set sail to the European Arctic under the command of Lieutenant Fabvre¹. The boat was to carry Dr Paul Gaimard, President of the French Scientific Commission of the North and leader of the second so-called *La Recherche* expedition (1838-9), as well as five members of the team to Norway where they were to join up with the other members of the group in order to explore Spitsbergen and Lapland. The first expedition had been organized in 1836 to go in search of the brig *La Lilloise* that had vanished off the coast of Eastern Greenland in 1833, and to explore Iceland. Paul

¹ A chronological account of the expedition is to be found in the richly illustrated Franco-Norwegian album *La Recherche: En Expedition mot Nord/Une expedition vers le Nord* by Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, published by Angelica Forlag AS, Tromsø, in 2002.

Gaimard had been part of the search party, leaving the writer and poet Xavier Marmier to observe Icelandic life and manners. Marmier managed to publish his account *Letters from Iceland*² already the following year, a feat that recommended him to Gaimard as the official chronicler of the second, still more ambitious expedition which Gaimard started to plan upon his return to France. By March 1837, official approval for a second journey had been secured³. Marmier was to spend several months in Denmark and Sweden in order to prepare himself for the exploration of Lapland by studying the cultures of the North well in advance of this major enterprise of international scientific cooperation under French leadership that was designed to lead to a number of important, or, as we would say today, cutting-edge discoveries.

In a letter addressed to Baron Jöns Jacob Berzelius, one of the founders of modern chemistry and for many years Perpetual Secretary of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Paul Gaimard outlines the planned itinerary and research programme of this expedition which was to associate French, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian scientists, officers and artists:

“Paris, March 29, 1838

Monsieur le Baron,

The observations we are proposing to make during the voyage to Lapland and Spitsbergen being largely dependent on unforeseen circumstances concerning routes and weather, etc., we thought it fit not to adopt a frame fixed well in advance, but a plan adaptable according to necessity, with the possibility to modify it once out there in order to prefer this or that option to another.

Leaving Le Havre around May 1 on the corvette *La Recherche*, which will have been fitted out in the port of Brest previously, we are projecting to head for Christiania where we are hoping to meet up with our scientific compatriots; from there, we will sail to Trondheim, and from Trondheim to Hammerfest, where we will pick up pilots to take us to Spitsbergen. Time to be spent in these towns depends on the more or less advanced

² Xavier Marmier, *Lettres sur l'Islande*, Paris: Bonnaire, 1837. For a chronology of Marmier's life and his published works see Wendy S. Mercer's very thorough biography *The Life and Travels of Xavier Marmier (1808-1892): Bringing World Literature to France*, Oxford, Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2007.

³ Wendy S. Mercer, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

state of the season, but it is planned to arrive at Spitsbergen on July 1 if possible⁴.”

As mentioned above, the corvette finally left France in June only, some six weeks after the scheduled departure, due to the late arrival of the boat that had required some repair work after a voyage to the Caribbean before it could be prepared for the expedition⁵. This meant that Spitsbergen was reached too late in the season to realize all of the scientific work that had been planned. A second voyage to Spitsbergen was therefore organized in 1839 that occasioned also a second crossing of Lapland in which the painter François-Auguste Biard and his later wife Léonie d'Aunet participated and that will be discussed later in the article. For the time being, let us return to Gaimard's letter to read about the scientific objectives of the 1838 expedition:

“Here are the observations projected for the first part of the voyage. From North Cape to Spitsbergen, to study the currents of these parts, and to take a series of measures of maritime water temperatures; collect deep sea water. (...) From Spitsbergen, we will return to Hammerfest: a new series of physical observations will start here for five members of our Commission who are to spend the winter in this small town. There, we will set up observatories for magnetic and astronomical observations to be made during the whole winter. Our physicists intend to observe very carefully aurora borealis.

⁴ Letter dated 29 March 1838 and sent from Paris by Paul Gaimard to Berzelius, published under the title *LETTRE sur le Voyage ordonné par le Roi en Scandinavie, en Laponie et au Spitzberg, adressé à M. le Baron Berzelius, associé étranger de l'Institut de France, etc., à Stockholm par M. Paul Gaimard, Président de la Commission scientifique d'Islande et du Groenland*, Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1838, p. iii: “Paris, le 29 mars 1838/Monsieur le Baron,/Les observations que nous proposons de faire dans le voyage en Laponie et au Spitzberg, étant soumises, en grande partie, aux circonstances imprévues de route, du temps, etc., nous n'avons pas cru devoir adopter un cadre invariable et prévu d'avance, mais bien un plan susceptible de se plier à ces diverses exigences, en nous laissant la faculté de le modifier sur les lieux, et de pouvoir favoriser telle ou telle partie de préférence à telle ou telle autre.

Partant du Havre, vers le 1er mai, sur la corvette *La Recherche*, qui aura été armée au port de Brest, notre projet est de nous diriger vers Christiania, où nous espérons nous joindre à nos savants compatriotes; de là à Drontheim, et de Drontheim à Hammerfest, où nous prendrons des pilotes pour le Spitzberg. Le temps passé dans ces villes sera proportionné à l'état plus ou moins avancé de la saison, et de manière à arriver, s'il est possible, au Spitzberg, vers le 1er juillet.”

⁵ Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

To do so, one of the observers will settle in Boscop for some time, or in Altengaard⁶ (...).”

Last but not least, man was to be focused on as a part of natural history: “The Commission will take special care to study physical man in his relations to the knowledge about moral man, to collect all natural history samples of these regions and, above all, the less well-known productions of the sea at various depths. (...) The Commission members who are not due to spend the winter in Hammerfest will explore Lapland, returning thereafter via Torneå, Umeå and Stockholm⁷.”

The scientists who finally spent a winter in Finmark set up camp in Boscop, the village near Alta which seemed to offer more clear skies required for astronomic observation than Hammerfest⁸. As to what turned out to be two Lapland crossings, they will occupy us at some length, but before we turn to this part of the voyage, it is time to reflect on the historical context of this expedition, the motivation of decision makers and the image French people had of the European Far North before the *La Recherche* expedition set sail.

French views of Scandinavia and Lapland

French interest in the European Arctic and Spitsbergen dates back to the 17th century when the French went whale hunting off the shores of this island⁹. In 1681, just a few years after the publication of Johannes Scheffer’s seminal *History of Lapland* in 1673, which came out in French in 1678¹⁰, Jean-François Regnard, the best-known French playwright of the generation after

⁶Letter dated 29 March 1838 and sent from Paris by Paul Gaimard to Berzelius (*op.cit.*), pp. iv-vi: “Voici les observations projetées pour cette première partie du voyage. Du cap Nord au Spitzberg, étudier les courants de ces parages, et faire quelques épreuves de températures sous-marines; recueillir de l’eau à des grandes profondeurs. (...) Du Spitzberg, nous reviendrons à Hammerfest: une nouvelle série d’observations physiques y commencera pour cinq membres de notre Commission, qui doivent passer l’hiver dans cette petite ville. Là, nous construirons des observatoires pour les observations magnétiques et astronomiques, qui seront continuées pendant tout l’hiver. Nos physiciens ont le projet d’examiner avec beaucoup de soin les aurores boréales. Pour cela, un des observateurs ira s’établir quelque temps à Boscop, ou à Altengaard (...).”

⁷*Ibid.*, p. ix.

⁸Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰ Johannes Scheffer, *Histoire de la Laponie* (tr. Auguste Lubin), Paris: chez la veuve O. de Varenne, 1678.

Molière, travelled Lapland thanks to the support of King Charles XI. Regnard's narrative was later published posthumously and reedited several times, notably in 1731¹¹, not long before Pierre Moreau Louis de Maupertuis set out to Lapland in 1736 to confirm Newton's theory about the earth being flattened at the poles. Maupertuis's journey was the first major scientific expedition after "centuries of more or less fantasizing reveries about Lapland", as Osmo Pekonen puts it¹². Still, French views of life up in the North were to remain fairly obscure for decades until Mme de Staël's famous essay *De l'Allemagne* (1810) and Xavier Marmier's own writings raised renewed interest in German culture and the European North¹³. Marmier's official account of the *La Recherche* expedition was to offer a wealth of observations about life in Lapland.

French official interest in Scandinavian life was manifest by this stage. On March 5 and 12, 1837, Marmier was received by François Guizot, at that point Minister of Public Instruction (1832-7), before he became Louis-Philippe's Foreign Secretary in 1840 and later the leading minister of the King's government¹⁴. Guizot granted Marmier's request for a paid research tour of Scandinavia, specifying that he "was to undertake a comparative study of the education systems in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, from primary to higher education. He was also to investigate the relationship between education and the Church there¹⁵." Not enough reliable first-hand information about the European North seemed to be available to French authorities despite the reports regularly sent by French diplomats that are

¹¹Jean-François Regnard, *Les Œuvres de Mr. Regnard. Nouvelle édition. Revuë, corrigée & augmentée. TOME I. Contenant ses Voyages de Flandres, d'Hollande, Suède, Dannemark, la Laponie, la Pologne & l'Allemagne*, Paris: Chez Pierre-Jacques Ribou, 1731.

¹²Osmo Pekonen, *La Rencontre des religions autour du voyage de l'abbé Réginald Outhier en Suède en 1736-1737*, Rovaniemi: Lapin Yliopistokustannus, 2010, p. 14.

¹³The text had not passed Napoleonic censorship in 1810 but then appeared in Sweden: Germaine de Staël-Holstein, *De l'Allemagne*, Uppsala: chez E. Bruzelius, 1814. It was reedited in 1839, with a preface by Xavier Marmier (Paris: Charpentier). Marmier had previously published a volume of essays on Goethe (*Étude sur Goethe*, Paris and Strasbourg: Levrault, 1835), before the Icelandic letters mentioned above and a history of Danish and Swedish literature (*Histoire de la littérature en Danemark et en Suède*, Paris: Bonnaire, 1839). Articles by Marmier on Danish and Swedish literature had already appeared in the influential *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the *Revue de Paris* in 1837 and 1838 (for details see Wendy S. Mercer, *op. cit.*, p. 80, n.12 and p. 112, n. 46.).

¹⁴See Laurent Theis' excellent biography *François Guizot* (Paris: Fayard, 2008) for an intellectual portrait of this outstanding figure.

¹⁵Wendy S. Mercer, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

now kept in the diplomatic archives of the French Foreign Ministry at La Courneuve, outside Paris. Here is a comparative view of Scandinavia sent by the *chargé d'affaires* Roux de la Rochelle from Copenhagen to the French Foreign Secretary and President of the Council of Ministers, Count Louis-Mathieu Molé:

“Copenhagen, October 18, 1838

Monsieur le Comte,

(...)

If we compare Denmark to Sweden and Norway, we find her in a more enviable geographical position than the latter two. In countries which are even poorer, we find even an even smaller population which is the more to be pitied for it, but if we compare her to more southern countries, it will not take us long to persuade ourselves that the strength of body and mind suffers from a stormy climate, and that all those generations which had to uphold a permanent struggle against the natural elements tend to get weaker rather than stronger, degenerating instead of building up courage¹⁶.”

Roux de la Rochelle was in fact trying to answer a query from Paris concerning Danish demography. He is very clearly applying the theory of the climate, as Montesquieu would have done, to account for Northern otherness, preferring a conceptual view to first-hand observation and historical knowledge about the Vikings and Danish colonialism that could hardly be drawn on to support such interpretations.

We do not know how this particular piece was received in Paris but it does not seem surprising that some of the leading minds of the day were actively supporting the *La Recherche* project as the need for more ample and reliable

¹⁶Letter from Roux de la Rochelle to Molé sent from Copenhagen, dated 18 October 1838, Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Political Correspondence, Denmark, Folder N° 203, f. 28 and f. 30 (N.B.: the original spelling has been preserved throughout for all quotes from French sources in this chapter): “Copenhague, le 18 octobre 1838/Monsieur le Comte,(...)/ Si nous comparons le Danemark à la Suède et à la Norvège, nous le trouvons dans une situation géographique enviable pour ces deux Royaumes. Dans des Pays encore plus pauvres, nous voyons une population encore plus rare et plus à plaindre, mais si nous le comparons avec des Pays plus méridionaux, nous ne tardons pas à nous convaincre que les forces du corps et de l'esprit souffrent de l'intempérie des climats, et que les générations successives qui ont à soutenir contre les éléments des luttes continuelles s'affaiblissent au lieu de se fortifier, dégénèrent au lieu de croître en courage.”

information in France about Europe's North was apparent. This is what the subscription brochure for the series of official publications of the expedition suggests. It was no doubt authored by Marmier as it was published together with his official account of the expedition:

“France had explored the remotest parts of the Southern Seas. She had entrusted vast enterprises to her navigators, published magnificent volumes on Asia, America and Oceania; she had penetrated into interior Africa after the glorious conquest of Algiers, but the North was only known to us through the accounts of the English, Dutch and Germans. There was thus a part lacking in the history of our voyages, a void to be filled in the circle of our studies. This is when Mr. Gaimard presented to Admiral Rosamel, Minister of the Navy, a project of exploration destined to complete the general view of the boreal regions, a overview that had been started by the *Voyage to Iceland and Greenland*. This project received the approval of the Minister and was met with the King's assent who kindly took an interest in the details of this new expedition and who deigned to honour M. Gaimard in giving him his personal instructions by indicating the places and studies that should draw his attention. The government ordered a large-scale, very difficult and expensive expedition that it was solely in a position to undertake with dignity¹⁷.”

But the Arctic was also a matter of considerable geopolitical interest. The British Empire was actively engaged in the search for the North-West Passage, sending Sir John Ross and Sir Edward Parry to the Arctic several

¹⁷Brochure published together with Marmier's official narrative by Arthus Bertrand, Paris, 1844, 27p., pp. 13-4: “La France avait exploré les contrées les plus reculées des mers du Sud. Elle avait confié à ses marins de vastes missions, publié de magnifiques ouvrages sur l'Asie, sur l'Amérique, sur l'Océanie ; elle pénétrait après la glorieuse conquête d'Alger dans l'intérieur de l'Afrique, et le nord ne nous était guère reconnu que par les relations des Anglais, des Hollandais, des Allemands. Il y a là une lacune dans le cours de nos voyages, un vide dans le cercle de nos études. C'est alors que M. Gaimard présent a à M. l'amiral de Rosamel, ministre de la marine, un projet d'exploration destiné à compléter le tableau des régions boréales, tableau déjà commencé par la publication du *Voyage en Islande et au Groenland*. Ce projet fut agréé par le Ministre et approuvé par le Roi qui voulut bien s'occuper lui-même des détails de cette nouvelle expédition, et daigna honorer M. Gaimard de ses instructions particulières, en lui indiquant les lieux et les recherches qui devaient plus spécialement fixer son attention. Le gouvernement ordonna, sur une grande échelle, cette exploration difficile, coûteuse, qui lui seul pouvait entreprendre dignement.”

times after the end of the Napoleonic wars which liberated a lot of manpower and war ships in the British Navy, to be later followed by the ill-fated Franklin saga and the many expeditions sent in search of him. According to Einar-Arne Drivenes, France was also keen on extending her influence into the Arctic, an ambition that depended on reliable intelligence in the first place, hence no doubt also the enthusiastic support for *La Recherche* by Louis-Philippe, any nostalgia about visiting North Cape in his younger days notwithstanding: “In the statements of the ministries, the political motivation of the expedition is not mentioned. Neither is anything said about the Northern territories or the Arctic. However, there is every reason to believe that the Ministers of the Navy Duperré and Rosamel considered the expedition to Iceland and the northern countries as France’s reply to Britain’s active exploration of the territories of the North¹⁸.”

France obviously wanted to uphold her prestige as one of the leading nations as far as scientific progress is concerned, but her diplomats were also instructed to pay special attention to the political situation in Sweden, one of the immediate neighbours of the Russian Empire, during the last years of King Karl Johan, né Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte. In this context, an international scientific expedition under French leadership to the European Far North was an eminently political affair. At least Count Charles de Mornay, France’s Ambassador to Sweden in the 1830s clearly acted accordingly since he mentioned the arrival of Gaimard in Stockholm in 1837 to Molé in his political correspondence:

“Stockholm, Octobre 20, 1837

Monsieur le Comte,

(...)

Two Frenchmen of the scientific Commission sent to Iceland and northern Europe by the Minister of the Navy have arrived in town. I hastened to put them in touch with scholars and professors of the Academy of Science. Our compatriots were welcomed in most the distinguished way; having been present at one of the sessions of the Academy, its President made a most amiable speech to them during which a very warm message was addressed to Our King in honour of his Majesty’s

¹⁸Einar-Arne Drivenes, “Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord, en Scandinavie, en Laponie, au Spitsberg et aux Feroë, pendant les années 1838, 1839 and 1840”, article first published in *Inter-Nord*, no. 20, 2002, available at http://transpolair.free.fr/routes_polaires/recherche/htm, (last accessed 11/01/2013, 09:50).

so constant support of the progress of the Enlightenment and science. – I was told by the Great Governor of Stockholm that before King Charles John had left his capital, on hearing of the close arrival of our French scholars, had ordained all of the public and scientific institutions of the city to be at the disposal of these gentlemen. – If I am going into such small details, it is only to make Your Excellency acquainted with the kindness that any French name is met with in this country today and the many tokens of sympathy it is likely to receive¹⁹.”

It may have appeared a mere trifle, but Mornay thought it fit to mention these details, no doubt to please the interest of the government and the King who evidently considered this expedition to be a matter of considerable importance, just like the King of Sweden did, as another letter from Mornay to Molé shows:

“Stockholm, May 18, 1838

Monsieur le Comte,

(...)

King Charles John having learnt that a scientific commission had been sent by the French government to visit the northern provinces of his Kingdom and that the intentions of His Majesty were to permit that Swedish and Norwegian scholars would be admitted to be associated to the work of our compatriots hastened to designate the Professors who are to

¹⁹Letter from Charles de Mornay to Molé sent from Stockholm, dated 20 October 1837, Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Political Correspondence, Sweden, 123CP + 124CP, no. 318, f. 101 + 104 (microfilm P07100): “Stockholm le 20 octobre 1837/Monsieur le Comte,(...)/ Deux Français de la commission scientifique envoyée en Islande et dans le Nord de l’Europe par le Ministre de la Marine, sont arrivés dans cette ville. Je me suis empressé de les mettre en rapport avec les savans et les professeurs de l’académie des sciences. Nos compatriotes ont été accueillis avec une grande distinction, car s’étant trouvés présens à une des séances de l’academie, le Président leur a fait une allocution très aimable, dans la quelle se trouvait une phrase fort chaleureuse qui s’adressait à Notre Roi pour l’appui si constant donné par sa Majesté aux progrès des lumières et de la science – J’ai su par le Grand Gouverneur de Stockholm qu’avant de quitter sa capitale le Roi Charles-Jean, ayant appris la prochaine arrivée de nos savans Français, avait ordonné de mettre à la disposition de ces Messieurs tous les établissemens publics et scientifiques de la ville. – Si j’entre dans des détails si minutieuses vis à vis de Votre Excellence, c’est pour Lui faire connaître avec quelle bienveillance le nom Français a été accueilli aujourd’hui dans ce pays et la sympathie qu’on lui témoigne.”

join the French expeditions. Two officers of the General Staff, one a Swede, the other Norwegian, have been sent to serve as protectors of the expedition members. Orders have been sent to all the authorities of the provinces that will be explored to welcome these gentlemen with due respect and all possible consideration. Orders have even been issued for a Norwegian war corvette to accompany the French ship to indicate all the dangerous passages along the coast. It seems impossible to pay more speedy heed and to show such goodwill as his Swedish Majesty has done in these circumstances²⁰.”

The two officers mentioned above were no doubt Carl Bertil Liliehök, Swedish naval officer and physicist, as well as the Norwegian Captain Emmanuel Grave Meyer. The expedition also counted another Swedish officer, the nobleman Ulric Wilhelm Gyldenstolpe, who served as interpreter and facilitator, while producing some fine art work²¹, as well as a number of scientists of solid reputation. The French group included Eugène Robert, geologist and mineralogist who had already partaken in the voyage to Iceland; Victor Lottin, astronomer and physicist who was also Lieutenant

²⁰Letter from Charles de Mornay to Molé sent from Stockholm, dated 18 May 1838, Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Political Correspondence, Sweden, 123CP + 124CP, No 318, f. 170-2 (microfilm P07100): “Stockholm, 18 mai 1838/Monsieur le Comte/(...)/Le Roi Charles Jean avant appris qu’une commission scientifique était envoyée par le gouvernement français pour visiter les provinces septentrionales des son Royaume et que les intentions de Sa Majesté étaient de permettre que des savans Suédois et Norvégiens fussent admis à s’associer aux travaux de nos compatriotes, s’est empressé de désigner les Professeurs qui doivent se réunir à l’expédition française. Deux officiers de l’Etat Major=Général, l’un Suédois, l’autre Norvégien sont envoyés pour servir en quelques lieux de sauve-gardeaux membres de l’expédition. Déjà des ordres ont été données à toutes les autorités des Provinces qui sont explorées pour que ces Messieurs soient accueillis avec tous les égards de toutes les prévenances possibles. Il a même été ordonné à une Corvette de Guerre Norvégienne, de convoyer le bâtiment Français pour lui indiquer tous les passages dangereux du littoral. Il est impossible de mettre plus d’empressement et de bonnegrâce que Sa Majesté Suédoise n’en a déployé dans cette circonstance.” N.B. the first page of the letter (f. 171) up until the passage “l’autre Norvégien sont” (“the other Norwegian, have”), was sent as a coded message, deciphered and transcribed in Paris, the second part was not coded (f. 172). This is probably to be explained by the fact that the first part of the letter contains other information on the same sheet that may well have been considered highly confidential by Mornay.

²¹See Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, *op. cit.*, p. 126. The album features also some of his drawings p. 58, p. 60 and p. 70.

in the Navy, Auguste Bravais, astronomer and physicist, also a naval officer, and Charles Frédéric Martins, originally a physician who had turned to botany. The fifth person to have sailed from Le Havre with Gaimard was the draughtsman Louis Bevalet. The two Danish members of the expedition were the botanist Jens Mostue Vahl and the zoologist Henrik Krøyer whose account of the voyage was published in his *Memoirs* in 1870²². They both arrived in Trondheim on June 8, 1838. The following day, the Swedish zoologist Carl Jacob Sundevall arrived there, accompanied by the Norwegian zoologist and geologist Christian Peter Bianco Boeck and Captain Meyer, to be followed on June 11 by Carl Bertil Liliehök and the Swedish physicist Per Adam Siljeström²³. Xavier Marmier arrived together with Ulrik Vilhelm Gyldenstolpe, the French painter Auguste Mayer and the young aristocrat Raoul Anglès on June 14²⁴. *La Recherche* was then sighted near Trondheim June 26²⁵. The last two members of the expedition, Swedish pastor and botanist Lars Levi Laestadius, and Norwegian naval officer Due who was engaged in some hydrographical work in Finmark²⁶, were to join them at Hammerfest. The 1838 expedition therefore assembled scientists and military men as well as artists, suggesting not only an interest in scientific matter not only to be written up, but also to be richly illustrated in view of drawing wider public attention to the expedition and its publications, while the military staff was there to give assistance in matters of security, logistics and language.

At Trondheim, the members of the expedition were welcomed in most generous terms. Krøyer mentions two dinner parties held by the governor of the province in honour of the expedition²⁷, not to mention other festivities. The French Consul in Norway de la Roquette then reciprocated with a dinner and other parties were to follow. A letter by the Consul to Molésent from Trondheim indicates that Russian agents were keen to gather intelligence on the expedition, suggesting the strategic significance of this international scientific project operating on an unprecedented scale in these northern latitudes:

²²Henrik Krøyer, *Erindringer af Henrik Krøyers liv 1821-1838*, Copenhagen: F. Hegel, 1870.

²³See Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-8.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁵Wendy S. Mercer, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

²⁶According to the subscription brochure (see note 17).

²⁷Krøyer cité par Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

“French Consulate in Norway, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Political section

Tronhjem, July 11, 1838

Monsieur le Comte

I have the honour of announcing to Your Excellency my departure from Christiania and arrival in Trondhjem (...) and to send you as well as to the Minister of the Navy all the information I esteemed necessary on the stay of the corvette *La Recherche* in this port which it left in the evening of the third of this month (...)

Monsieur le Comte, I must not let you ignore the fact that the Russian government seems to have conceived of the most serious worries to be had about the aim of our expedition, worries that their agents let us perceive in the clumsiest way. They suppose or pretend to suppose that it is not only in order to extend the domain of science that our scholars have been joined by scholars from the three northern nations to explore the Polar region next to the Russian Empire. The Emperor’s Minister in Stockholm, just like his consul in Christiania have kept on troubling with the pettiest of questions all of the members of the commission they managed to meet and I have not been spared either. (...). Informed naturally by M. Garmann²⁸ about the kind of intelligence that is asked of him, I have authorized him to communicate not only any that may have come his way, but I furnished him with the means to render it even more complete. I desire my conduct in this circumstance to receive Your Excellency’s approval (...)²⁹.”

²⁸A tradesman and diplomat. See the index to Wendy S. Mercer, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

²⁹Letter from de la Roquette to Molé sent from Trondheim, dated 11 July 1838, Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Political Correspondence, Sweden, 123CP + 124CP, No 318 (microfilm P07100), f. 202: “Consulat de France en Norvège, Ministère Affaires Etrangères, Direction politique/Tronhjem le 11 juillet 1838/Monsieur le Comte/ J’ai l’honneur d’annoncer à Votre Excellence mon départ de Christiania et mon arrivée à Trondhjem, sous le timbre de la Direction commerciale, et de lui donner aussiqu’à M. le Ministre de la Marine les informations qui m’ont paru nécessaires sur le séjour de la Corvette la Recherche dans ce port qu’elle a quitté dans la soirée du 3 de ce mois (...).

Je ne dois pas vous laisser ignorer, Monsieur le Comte, que le gouvernement russe paraît avoir conçu une vive inquiétude sur le but de notre expédition, inquiétude, que des agents du moins laissent percer de maniere la plus maladroite. Ils supposent ou feignent de supposer que ce n’est pas seulement pour étendre le domaine des sciences que nos savants réunis à des

The Russian neighbour visibly needed to be reassured about this enterprise that would include a trip down the Muonio and Tornio rivers, along the Swedish-Russian frontier, with a part of the journey to be undertaken on the Finnish side that Sweden had ceded to the Russian Empire in 1809.

But before we pick up the expedition's trail in Lapland, let us return to the voyage up North. While the corvette *La Recherche* sailed from Trondheim to Hammerfest, Gaimard had allowed Marmier, Anglès, Martins and Mayer to go by steamboat from Trondheim to Hammerfest, "since the service stopped two days at Tromsø, which would allow supplementary research to be carried out there³⁰." The steamer *Prince Gustave* had just taken up service that very summer³¹. Meeting up in Hammerfest, it was decided that Marmier should stay in Finnmark for his research on the local populations while the corvette sailed on to Spitsbergen, leaving Hammerfest on July 14 after another one of those lavish feasts that the members of the expedition were treated to time and again on their way up North and upon their return.

*Across "sad and savage Lapland"*³²

On the way to Hammerfest, Marmier met with a Sami family for the first time, a memorable encounter which took place near the Kåfjord mine, close to Alta, and which he recorded in some detail in the official account³³. The arrival of four foreigners at 2am amongst this family apparently caused "neither surprise, nor emotion³⁴" among them. The travellers did not speak Sami. Communication therefore remained basic. After some time, one of

savants des trois nations septentrionales vont explorer les regions polaires voisines de l'Empire russe. Le Ministre de l'Empereur à Stockholm, comme son consul à Christiania n'ont pas cessé d'accabler des questions les plus minutieuses tous les membres de la commission qu'il sont pur rencontrer, et moi-même je n'ai pas été épargné. (...) Instruit naturellement par M. Garmann des renseignements qu'on désire de lui, je l'ai autorisé à donner non seule ment ceux qui sont parvenus à sa connaissance, mais je lui ai fourni moi même les moyens de les rendre plus complets. Je désire que ma conduite dans cette circonstance obtienne l'approbation de Votre Excellence (...)"

³⁰Wendy S. Mercer, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

³¹Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

³²Expression taken from the subscription brochure of 1844, p. 2: "la triste et sauvage Laponie".

³³ Xavier Marmier, *Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord, en Scandinavie, en Laponie, au Spitzberg et aux Féroë, pendant les années 1838, 1839 et 1840 sur la corvette La Recherche commandée par M. Fabvre, Lieutenant de Vaisseau; publiés par ordre du Roi sous la direction de M. Paul Gaimard, Président de la Commission scientifique du Nord. Relation du Voyage par M. Xavier Marmier*. Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1844, vol. I, 374p., pp. 167-8.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 168.

the Frenchmen pulled out a pouch of tobacco. The old Sami woman and a young Sami girl present showed eager signs of interest. Having received some, they smoked a pipe with relish and stowed away the rest. A gift of Norwegian money does not seem to have interested the family as much as the tobacco did judging how they thanked the man who had offered the tobacco when the French visitors left. Whatever the case may have been, it is worth pointing out that Marmier's spirit of observation made him take notes on anything that seemed worth recording. This concerns notably the life stories of modest people that he willingly recorded and retold. As Wendy Mercer has remarked about another scene in the narrative, "it is a significant feature of Marmier's narrative that he accords as much space and respect to the biography of this woman (*an innkeeper in Hjerkind, Norway*) and other of similar or lesser social rank as he does to some of the major personalities of the day³⁵."

What had he actually set out to do in his official narrative and how does it relate to his field notes? In the preface to the first volume of the 1844 account, Marmier outlines what he considered to have been his task:

"My duty in writing this account consisted in tracing an exact itinerary of the two *La Recherche* expeditions in the Scandinavian regions, to state simply and faithfully what we had seen and observed along the way, to indicate the principal resources, as well as the character and manners of the various populations we visited. This is what I tried to do being helped in this both by my travel notes and some special books in which I found useful and authentic ideas³⁶."

In doing so, Marmier was hoping to contribute to the knowledge about these "grand and attractive regions of the North which are still so little known and so worthy of being known, to be sought after and cherished³⁷." Such engaging words obviously set the tone for what then follows even though Marmier's personal feelings about his experience in the North are more complex, depending, as one would expect them to do, on the circumstances of a particular situation. Still, he very obviously took a real liking to what he saw, or rather, he could often relate to what people were

³⁵Wendy S. Mercer, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

³⁶Xavier Marmier, preface to *Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord (...) Relation du voyage* (*op. cit.*), vol. I, p. vi.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. vii.

telling him while indulging repeatedly in romantic reveries about Northern space, according to French taste of the day. In any case, his overall view of the Sami voiced in the official account betrays feelings of compassion:

“In general, the poor Lapps have been harshly dealt with. The travellers who only sought to look at their dark dwellings at some distance, have lent them all sorts of vices most of which at least they are innocent of. It is enough to remain some time amongst them, to talk to them, to follow them in various life situations to be struck by all that is good, simple and honest in their nature. I have often questioned those about it who are mostly in touch with them, pastors, tradesmen, fishermen. All of them praised their kind nature and hospitality³⁸.”

Marmier does not try to avoid problematic issues, as he then addresses the question of poverty and the consumption of alcohol, but as far as general statements are concerned, he very evidently tries to contribute to the dissemination of a more subtly accurate picture of Sami life, even if his tone may come across at times as a little patronizing, if not paternalistic. His expression “the poor Lapps” might suggest this to some, even though the phrase could also be read as voicing compassion, and, in some circumstances, admiration³⁹. Be that as it may, the official account was expected to be more elaborate and balanced or neutral, while field notes could obviously be more elliptical and personal in tone.

The journal that Marmier kept during his two crossings of Lapland has survived. It is now held in the northern collections of the Bibliothèque Saint-Geneviève that he became general administrator of in 1840⁴⁰. Comparing the manuscript with the written-up texts, one is immediately struck by the brevity of the notes in comparison to the official full-length narrative and its popular version *Lettres sur le Nord*, published as early as 1840 in two volumes,

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 191.

³⁹For comments on this passage see also Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, *op. cit.*, p. 81 + p. 83, and Wendy S. Mercer, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-3.

⁴⁰Bibliothèque Saint-Geneviève, Ms 3898, f. 84 (kept at the Bibliothèque nordique): “Quand nous passons le long de la route, tous les habitants de la ville sont réunis sur la rive (...) ils agitent des mouchoirs. C’est un adieu cordial dont nous sommes vivement émus. Il est bien difficile de quitter un pays sil’on (y) a passé quelques semaines sans y laisser un souvenir, une pensée d’affection et quand on y a trouvé des gens si simples et si bons comme ceux que nous avons vu d’ici, l’heure du départ est triste. Arrivée à 6h du soir à Kaafiord. (...) Reçudans la nouvelle maison de M. Crowe. Dormi de bon cœur.”

with three more editions to follow until the 5th one-volume edition of 1857⁴¹. Marmier obviously drew on his memory and embellished the information recorded in the field. Here is a sample where one can still note a fair degree of correspondence between the two. It concerns the leave-taking in Hammerfest on Tuesday, August 22, 1838, after a lavish French feast⁴², of one group of expedition members who were to spend the winter in Bossekop, and another set to cross Lapland on horseback, by foot and boat, while the others were returning to France on board the *La Recherche*. Let us look at the journal first:

“When we came down along the way, all of the town’s inhabitants were gathered at the waterfront (...) waving their handkerchiefs. It was a cordial leave-taking that moved us intensely. It is really difficult to leave a country if one has spent some weeks there without leaving a souvenir, an affectionate thought and when one has found there people who are as simple and good as those we have seen here, the hour of departure is a sad one. Arrived at Kaafiord at 6 in the evening (...). We were put up in M. Crowe’s new house. Slept heartily⁴³.”

In the official account, the scene reads like this:

“(...) the inhabitants of Hammerfest standing along the quayside waved to us as our boat was passing through the harbour, and we, having turned to them, addressed one of these really heartfelt farewells to them, one of these farewells

⁴¹Xavier Marmier, *Lettres sur le Nord*, 5th edition. Paris: Hachette, 1857.

⁴²Marmier’s official account contains an anecdote about some of the guests not feeling inclined to taste French truffles, several pushing them off their plate as “vile pieces of coal” (*Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord (...) Relation du voyage (op. cit.)*, vol. I, pp. 283), which was obviously sheer sacrilege for any Frenchman present or reading the account. Interestingly enough, this story is not included in the 5th edition of *Lettres sur le Nord*, perhaps for lack of space or possibly because it may have seemed a trifle too jibing about Marmier’s Scandinavian friends in afterthought? Whatever the case may be, another description of this dinner is to be found in Laestadius’ journal, summed up by Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti in *op. cit.*, pp. 107-8. Laestadius noted that most of his colleagues awoke with quite a hangover but recovered during the crossing over to Alta.

⁴³*Ibid.* The Englishman John Rice Crowe started the copper works at Kåfjord in 1826 and was one of the principal shareholders of the so-called “Alten Copper Mines”. See the web site of Alta museum: www.alta.museum.no/sider/fil.asp?id=430 (last accessed 05/06/2014; 11:11).

made of memories of the past and both ardent and worrying wishes for the future. We left behind us some good people who were going to be separated from us by a great distance. We left two good friends there, Mayer and Anglès. Which witch of the North could have told us when we were going to see them again?

In the evening, we arrived at Kaafiord, where M. Crowe and M. Woodfall, his worthy associate, received us with that affectionate kindness that we had already experienced (...)”⁴⁴.

In the journal, there is no particular mention of the two members of the expedition left behind. Apart from that, the sentences express similar ideas, though the wording has changed. The notebook mentions very little about the evening spent at M. Crowe’s, other than Marmier ending up getting a good night’s sleep. The travellers had been entertained with a generous dinner, though, if one follows the official account:

“In the evening, we arrived at Kaafiord, where M. Crowe and M. Woodfall, his worthy associate, received us with that affectionate kindness that we had already experienced, and some hours later we were sitting at the same table in this house in Norway, facing a piece of beef of truly Homeric size, next to the directors of the factory who were English by birth, a German engineer, M. Ihle, who had just recently graduated from the mining school in Freyberg, an Irishman, M. Thomas, employed by the establishment as bursar, a pastor from Finnmark who was travelling, a Lappish pastor whom the King of Sweden was so kind to send us to serve as our guide, a young Russian nobleman on his way to North Cape, four Swedish and Norwegian travellers and us who were representing our

⁴⁴ Xavier Marmier, *Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord (...) Relation du voyage (op. cit.)*, vol. I, pp. 283-4: “(...) les habitants de Hammerfest rangés au bord du débarcadère nous saluaient à la fois au moment où notre bateau traversait la rade, et nous, les yeux tournés de leur côté, nous leur adressons un de ces vrais adieux du cœur, un de ces adieux où les souvenirs du passé s’unissent à des vœux ardents et inquiets pour l’avenir. Nous laissons là de braves gens qui bien totallaient être séparés de nous par une grande distance. Nous laissons là nos deux bons amis, Mayer et Anglès. Quelle sorcière du Nord eût pu nous dire quand nous les reverrions?

Le soir, nous arrivions à Kaafiord, où M. Crowe et M. Woodfall, son digne associé, nous reçurent avec cette affectueuse bonté que nous avons déjà éprouvée (...)”

dear country France amidst this cosmopolitan assembly. Thanks to the cordial urban manners of the house's masters, all these foreign guests were able to make themselves kindly and quietly at home, full of trust in each other, gladly sharing the same fate in the same spirit of scholarship and peregrination with an interest in all or scientific exploration⁴⁵.

Judging by this international crowd, Finnmark did not seem to be such a deserted place after all from a foreign point-of-view, at least not at this time of the year, now that a steamer could take one there more speedily and more comfortably. Apart from the praise for English hospitality, M. Crow and M. Woodfall inviting their guest to a banquet of sheer epic dimension, Marmier's introduction of Lars Levi Laestadius without naming him is obviously noteworthy though we will only turn to him in a while as there is still the version of the same scenes in *Lettres sur le Nord* to be taken into consideration:

“(…) to see this population crowded along the edge of water, and those signs of farewell, those handkerchiefs they were waving in the air, those cries coming straight from the heart was moving indeed. Wet eyebrows and a shed tear could be seen on more than one face. At this moment, we were leaving this extreme end of the North, and two of our compatriots who we would perhaps not see again for a long time, as well as foreigners who we had made friends with and whom we would maybe never see again.

In the evening, we arrived in Kaafiord. M. Crowe, the director of the mine, received us with in his usual cordial way.

⁴⁵*Id.*: Le soir, nous arrivions à Kaafiord, où M. Crowe et M. Woodfall, son digne associé, nous reçurent avec cette affectueuse bonté que nous avions déjà éprouvée, et quelques heures après, dans cette maison de Norvège, on voyait s'asseoir à la même table, en face d'un quartier de bœuf vraiment homérique, à côté des directeurs de l'usine, Anglais de naissance, un ingénieur allemand, M. Ihle, sorti tout récemment de l'école des mines de Freyberg, un Irlandais, M. Thomas, attaché comme surintendant au service de l'établissement, un prêtre de Finnmark entournée, un prêtre Lapon que le roi de Suède avait eu la bonté de nous envoyer pour nous servir de guide, un jeune gentilhomme russe qui s'en allait voir le cap Nord ; quatre voyageurs suédois et norvégiens, et nous qui représentions, au milieu de cette cosmopolite assemblée, notre cher pays de France. Grâce à la cordiale urbanité des maîtres de la maison, tous ces hôtes étrangers se trouvaient là doucement et paisiblement installés, pleins de confiance l'un en vers l'autre, partageant avec bonheur le même sort, dans une même pensée d'étude, de peregrination curieuse ou d'exploration scientifique.”

The sudden arrival of 12 people did not perturb him at all. His table was extended and his bedrooms fitted out with spare beds at leisure⁴⁶.”

It is as though Marmier were rewriting the scene from memory, illustrating a sentimental scene the emotional degree of which is enhanced in this version compared to the 1844 account. The dinner party at M. Crowe’s did not make it into the 5th edition, nor did M. Woodfall; whether for better or worse is of no avail, as the purpose of this comparison consists solely in showing that different versions of the same experience are available and therefore need to be reckoned with for anyone interested in obtaining as comprehensive a view as possible of this complex expedition. The fact that Marmier was writing certain passages of his official account and the shorter, more popular version thereof from memory, a number of years after the event, is also to be born in mind. As to the accuracy of his ethnographic observations, it is to be remembered that he could rely on the expertise of Laestadius who was chosen as a member of the expedition “on the basis of recommendations from Stockholm, not only a a botanist, but also as a ‘Lapp’,” Juha Pentikäinen notes in his introduction to the English edition of Laestadius’ *Fragments of Lappish Mythology*, a text which was first published over 130 years after Laestadius’ death in 1861⁴⁷. “Laestadius was undoubtedly a good choice for the expedition,” Juha Pentikäinen comments, his’ later critical remarks “about the efficiency and *modi operandi*” of the expedition which Laestadius published in a newspaper article notwithstanding⁴⁸.

⁴⁶Xavier Marmier, *Lettres sur le Nord* (*op. cit.*), p. 348:“(…) l’aspect de cette population qui se pressait au bord du rivage, et ces signes d’adieu, ces mouchoirs agités dans l’air, ces crispations du cœur, avaient quelque chose de saisissant. Plus d’une paupière alors de vint humide, plus d’un regard fut voilé par une larme. Dans ce moment, nous quittions, à l’extrémité du Nord, nos compatriotes que nous ne reverrions peut-être pas de longtemps, et des étrangers dont nous étions devenus les amis et que nous ne reverrions peut-être jamais.

Le soir, nous arrivâmes à Kaafjord. Le directeur des mines, M. Crowe, nous reçut avec sa cordialité habituelle. L’arrivée subite de douze personnes ne l’effraya point. Sa table s’allongea, et ses chambres se garnirent de lits à volonté.”

⁴⁷Juha Pentikäinen in Lars Levi Laestadius, *Fragments of Lappish Mythology* (ed. Juha Pentikäinen, tr. Börje Vähämäki), Beaverton:Aspasia Books, 2002, p. 38.

⁴⁸*Id.* Laestadius’ article which had appeared in a Norwegian translation was translated orally by Lillehöök to Victor Lottin who then commented on it in a letter to Gaimard dated 23 February 1839 and reproduced by Pentikäinen in his introduction, pp. 38-9. It refers to the dinner at Mr. Crowe’s place mentioned above which the guests did not like according to Laestadius, washing it down abundantly with wine brought by the travellers. Marmier was possibly aware of this as well, which might be another reason why the anecdote of Mr Crowe’s dinner party was skipped in the 5th edition. Another issue Laestadius had been critical of was

Time has come to follow in the footsteps of Marmier and Laestadius, as well as their companions, as they struggled across the fells in late August and the early days of September. They were led by a Sami guide whose name is rendered as Mickel Johannsson both in the 1844 official account and the 1857 edition of the *Lettres* which contain identical descriptions of this “robust” and “intelligent” man as Marmier puts it.⁴⁹ Marmier’s notebook has some extra information on him: “Our guide is called Michel Johansson Kemi. His ancestors were Finnish. They lived in Kemi Lapland. That is why he has this name⁵⁰. “Marmier’s portrait of him betrays his admiration for this man who remains up front, leading them all the way to Kautokeino, no matter how harsh the conditions were. At the top of the first fell, Marmier turns round to look back one more time: “From the top of this mountain, the view of the valley covered in trees through which the river runs, at the back of the gulf, the smoke of the Kaafiord mine. Picturesque view⁵¹.” The note allows insight into Marmier’s method of writing. The journal serves as a kind of *aide-mémoire* to help him reminder later what he saw and experienced in the field, to be expanded into a more elaborate account at a later stage. Here is the picturesque view as it appeared in the official narrative: “From there, we oversaw a vast space. Before us unfolded the plain of Kaafiord, with and the dense forest it was covered in and river running through. Further away the smoke of the mine was to be seen, as well as the gulf of Alten and the mountains of Bossekop. We could still make out the places where our friends were going to stay in order to bid them a last farewell⁵².”

the amount of at least 100 Norwegian Kroner allegedly spent on the ball organized in Hammerfest before *La Recherche* left. Whatever the case may have been, Lottin mentions the fact that the French decided not make a big fuss about the article, which came somewhat as a surprise to them from “a serious man like M. Laestadius”, preferring to let it stay “hidden in a paper nobody reads.”

⁴⁹See Xavier Marmier, *Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord (...) Relation du voyage (op. cit.)*, vol. I, pp. 347-8 and *Lettres sur le Nord (op. cit.)*, pp. 356-7.

⁵⁰Bibliothèque Saint-Geneviève, Ms 3898, f. 85: “Notre guide s’appelle Michel Johansson Kemi. Ses ancêtres étaient finlandais, ils habitaient dans la Laponie de Kemi. Voilà pourquoi il porte ce nom.”

⁵¹Bibliothèque Saint-Geneviève, Ms 3898, f. 86: “Du haut de cette montagne l’aspect de la vallée peuplée d’arbres, sillonnée par la rivière, au fond du golfe, la fumée des mines de Kaafiord. Aspect pittoresque.”

⁵²See Xavier Marmier, *Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord (...) Relation du voyage (op. cit.)*, vol. I, pp. 347-8: “De là, nos regards planaient sur un vaste espace. Nous voyions se dérouler devant nous la plaine de Kaafiord, avec les boisés pais qui l’inondent et la rivière qui la sillonne. Plus loin apercevait la fumée des mines, le golfe d’Alten, les montagnes de Bossekop. Nous

From there on, the going got worse, but some excitement at least was to be got from the Stallo stories that Laestadius told one night, a scene that represents one of the highlights of Marmier's accounts. Here are the travel notes: "On the other side of the mountain wet terrain, morbid marshland. No path. Birch forest. Our tent in the middle of it. The men pitch their tent next to us. We light a fire. (...) Faces lit up by the flames. (...) All of us around the fireside. Laestadius is lying down on a reindeer skin, his pipe in his mouth, telling us Lappish stories (...) ⁵³." The official report is similar though slightly embellished. Marmier then relates the Stallo tales told by Laestadius, a moment of intense emotion that he ends up referring to as their most enjoyable stop on the way ⁵⁴. They awoke to rain, only to enter into a new type of terrain that Marmier describes in the journal as follows: "Friday 31st. Left at 6 in the morning. Complete change of nature, no more forests, spongy terrain – bogs exactly like in Iceland. (...). Total desert. No song, nor sound ⁵⁵." In the official account and the *Lettres*, these notes are written up into a well-orchestrated scene drawing on contrasts to stir the reader's emotion: "On the following day, we got up in rain; the uninhabited fields of Lapland unfolded in front of us. From this time on, we had to say farewell to the gay enclosures of verdure that we had still seen close to Kaafiord. (...) We are now in the mountain desert. There is not any trace of human life here, no path nor any habitation ⁵⁶." Still, Marmier then goes on to depict a Lappish landscape that does include the raucous cry of a wild duck and some other dramatic effects such as the horizon covered in black

pouvions distinguer encore les lieux où nos amis allaient séjourner, et leur adresser un dernier adieu." The passage is identical in *Lettres sur le Nord* (*op. cit.*), p. 360.

⁵³Bibliothèque Saint-Geneviève, Ms 3898, f. 86: "Au versement de la montagne terrain humide, marécageux morbide. Point de chemin. Bois de bouleaux. Notre tente au milieu. Les hommes élevent la leur tente à côté. Nous allumons du feu. (...) La figure éclairée par les flammes. (...) Nous tous au tour d'un foyer. Laestadius couché sur une peau de renne, sa pipe à la bouche, nous raconte des histoires laponnes (...)."

⁵⁴See Xavier Marmier, *Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord (...) Relation du voyage* (*op. cit.*), vol. I., p. 359: "Cefutlànotre plus belle halte."

⁵⁵Bibliothèque Saint-Geneviève, Ms 3898, f. 87: "Vendredi 31. Parti à 6h du matin. Changement complet de nature, plus de forêts, plus d'arbres. terrain fangeux – tourbières pareilles à celles d'Islande. (...) Désert complet. Point de chant et point de bruit."

⁵⁶Xavier Marmier, *Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord (...) Relation du voyage* (*op. cit.*), vol. I., p. 359 "Le lendemain nous reveillâmes avec la pluie; les champs inhabités de la Laponie s'ouvraient devant nous. Dès ce moment, il fallait dire adieu aux riants enclos de verdure que nous avions retrouvés encoré près de Kaafiord (...) Nous voicidans le désert des montagnes. Ici l'on ne trouve aucune trace de vie humaine, nul chemin et nulle habitation."

fog. After several days of painstaking progress across this wetland, they met with a Sami family whose life Marmier presents at some length, mentioning in particular an orphan girl they had been charitable enough to take care of that he describes in his notes as “a pretty little girl with a fine and intelligent face⁵⁷.” Another memorable moment is the arrival at Kautokeino, “which judging by its small, monotonous houses looks like a substantial village⁵⁸” and where he finally counted a total of eight peasant habitations and some fifty wooden storehouses⁵⁹.

In the second volume of the official report, the first chapter then deals with the itinerary from Karesuando, where the travellers were staying at Laestadius’ house, to Tornio, Haparanda and the return down south via Umeå. Laestadius “had gone ahead of time to prepare to celebrate their arrival with a feast⁶⁰,” Juha Pentikäinen explains. The frugality of Laestadius’ home and life appeared to the travellers as a certain measure of comfort after the “long and tiresome” crossing of the fells and wetlands⁶¹, thanks to Laestadius’ “good will” and his wife’s “eagerness to busy herself” about them⁶². A year later, Léonied’Aunet was going to be far less impressed by Laestadius. The portrait she presents of him in her travelogue *Voyage d’une femme au Spitzberg*, published well after her Lapland experience in 1854, betrays her disappointment about seemingly not having been received by him as she had expected: “Despite our letters of recommendation, despite all that should have moved him, the poor state that those long days of bivouacking had put us in, he welcomed us with the arrogant ways of an important man whom we had intruded upon. With his cap on his head and a pipe in the mouth, he gave us unwillingly a room and did not take care of us after that. (...) As much as I feel respect and admiration for these venerable priests I told you about, as much did I feel distant from the false

⁵⁷Bibliothèque Saint-Geneviève, Ms 3898, f. 88: “une jolie petite fille à la figure fine et intelligente.”

⁵⁸Bibliothèque Saint-Geneviève, Ms 3898, f. 89: “qui à voir en petites maison monotones ressemble à un village considérable.”

⁵⁹Xavier Marmier, *Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord (...) Relation du voyage (op. cit.)*, vol. I, p. 364.

⁶⁰Juha Pentikäinen in Lars Levi Laestadius, *Fragments of Lappish Mythology (op. cit.)*, p. 43. Pentikäinen draws on Marmier’s own remarks in his report.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 1: “le long et pénible trajet”.

⁶²*Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 7: “sa bonne Bolonté et auzé le empressé de sa femme”

dignity of this untidy bear⁶³.” Enough of these harsh words that do not really do justice to Léonied’Aunet’s gifts of observation. One of the reasons for this rather reserved attitude may have been Laestadius’ criticism about *La Recherche*⁶⁴, Juha Pentikäinen suggests.⁶⁵ It is to be noted that Gaimard and Marmier finally do not appear to have travelled together with Biard and Léonie through Lapland, but separately⁶⁶. The former two were welcomed “warmly” by Laestadius according to a note in Gaimard’s papers, even though their second visit was to be only very brief⁶⁷.

But let us return to 1838. From Karesuando, the travellers descended the Muonio and Tornio rivers to Happaranda, stopping sometimes on the Swedish, and at others on the Finnish side. Marmier uses this part of the narrative to draw a portrait of the Finnish peasantry in Northern Bothnia that is far from being devoid of admiration:

“I was very much interested in this Finnish race which I saw for the first time in its own country. I was fond of studying its physiognomy and to follow it in its customs of daily life. The women are white, fresh and well built. We saw one at Kilangi who could have counted as a remarkable beauty. When she was a young girl, she had often drawn the looks of travellers, and many rich foreigners had tried to seduce her, our guide told us; but neither tender words nor bright prospects could move her: she staid in the humble house in which she was born and became the good and happy wife of a peasant.

The men are generally tall and strong. On their pale face and in their blue eyes one can see a calm expression that resembles at times melancholy. But the kind of passive resignation that they usually resign themselves to only hides the energetic nature of their character. They are firm and tenacious in their

⁶³Léonied’Aunet, *Voyage d’une femme au Spitzberg*, Paris: Hachette, 1854, p. 270.

⁶⁴See note 48 above.

⁶⁵Juha Pentikäinen, introduction in Lars Levi Laestadius, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁶⁶Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, *op. cit.*, p. 192. Biard seems to have been a rather jealous man, as his drastic action against his future wife and mistress of Victor Hugo goes to show. This may have been the main reason for the two voyaging separately, though the hypothesis of a possible *liaison* up North between Léonie and Marmier (who certainly was far from being insensible to the charms of ladies) has been quite convincingly refuted by Wendy Mercer in *op. cit.*, pp. 157-60.

⁶⁷Gaimard quoted by Juha Pentikäinen in Lars Levi Laestadius, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

resolutions, inflexible about their feelings of hate and admirable as far as their sense of dedication is concerned⁶⁸.”

There is more praise to follow, but we assume that these pages are fairly familiar. In any case, Marmier visibly appreciated the peasantry’s orderly lifestyle, describing at length Finnish farmsteads he considered “remarkable for their adroit distribution and cleanliness⁶⁹.” Among the places mentioned in particular, the “Eyanpaïka” (Äijäkoski) rapids are of particular interest since Louis-Philippe had once descended them, only to have Biard immortalize the scene many years after the experience, a story dealt with in another chapter of the present volume. Having apparently been told about two Englishmen who, on seeing the rapids, had lost the courage to descend them, Marmier and Gaimard could not refrain from rising to this excellent occasion of displaying superior French courage to the British – *si non e vero e ben trovato!* Whatever the case may have been, Marmier and Gaimard evidently felt great emotion descending the rapids, as the former dedicates several pages to the description of this exceptional site⁷⁰. The other famous place that Marmier lingers on for some time is the hill of “Avasaxa” (Aavasaksa), well-known to his French readers thanks to “good old”⁷¹ Abbé Outhier’s account of Maupertuis’ expedition to Lapland. Here is Marmier’s view from the top of the hill: “Having reached the goal of our excursion, we could see unfold around us immense plains that were traversed by the large stream of the Torneå and littered with quiet, lifeless habitations that were nonetheless impressive in their silence, like a powerful thought collected in solitude far away from the sound and fury of this world, under God’s eye⁷².” The divine effect is somewhat undone immediately by Marmier giving the height of this hill – “500 foot” (794 Engl. ft. or 242m) and the author mocking foreign visitors eager to experience a single day of midnight sun on June 25 whereas the members of the French expedition had just spent the whole summer in polar regions. This appears to be a rather early example of the tourist versus

⁶⁸Xavier Marmier, *Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord (...) Relation du voyage (op. cit.)*, vol. II, p. 18.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 19.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 21-4.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 36: “le bon abbé Outhier”.

⁷²*Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 36-7: “Arrivés au terme de notre excursion, nous voyons se dérouler autour de nous des plaines immenses traversées par les larges flots du Torneå, parsemées d’habitations silencieuses, inanimées, mais imposantes dans leur silence, comme une grande pensée qui se recueille solitairement, loin des bruits du monde, sous le regard de Dieu.”

traveller theme that one can frequently come across in travelogues. In the *Lettres*, this anecdote was adapted to accommodate for a version involving an Englishman who is supposed to have committed suicide after having reached the hilltop on an initially bright day that ended up being covered over⁷³. An interesting story is manifestly always good to tell, especially if it involves an English character and a French narrator (or the other way around, remember Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*). The travellers arrived in Haparanda in mid-September and left the town on the 17th, heading for Umeå and then Stockholm. As they left, "the weather was very mild and the road superb⁷⁴."

La Recherche revisited

The return to Stockholm was a triumph. French Ambassador de Mornay reported to Molé about his own initiatives in this respect and the festivities held on the occasion:

"Stockholm, October 2, 1838

Monsieur le Comte,

I have the honour of announcing to Your Excellency the return of the members of the scientific commission sent by the Government to Spitsbergen and Lapland. As the other members of the expedition still have not finished their work, they have settled in the North of Norway where they are going to spend the winter, busily working on the tasks they have been trusted with. I have every reason to hope that the work of this commission that is so popular in the North will result in precious information for the Academy of Science. No sooner had M. Gaimard, President of the commission and Mess. Marmier and Robert, his collaborators, arrived than I hastened to request of King Charles John and Prince Oscar the honour to present them my learned compatriots. This favour was not long in being granted. (...) On the day after the request, the Royal Prince honoured us by inviting us for dinner at the castle of Drottningholm. King Charles John was at the Prince's. This is where he allowed me (...) to present these gentlemen to him. His Swedish Majesty welcomed them with great kindness and

⁷³Xavier Marmier, *Lettres sur le Nord* (*op. cit.*), p. 397.

⁷⁴Xavier Marmier, *Voyages de la Commission scientifique du Nord (...) Relation du voyage* (*op. cit.*), vol. II, p. 40.

during particular conversations with each of them (...) he showed his keen interest in the work that they had been asked to accomplish. The King honoured me by affirming several times how moved he had been by the very kind and generous way in which the Swedish and Norwegian colleagues had been treated by the members of the French commission and by asking me to send the King his expressions of gratitude⁷⁵.”

As everyone knows, gastronomy plays a non-negligible role in diplomatic strategy, hence no doubt the renewed efforts made by the French, as well as the Swedish and Norwegian authorities, in honour of the expedition, that appeared somewhat excessive to Laestadius. De Mornay’s remarks are interesting in several respects. Not only do they illustrate once again that the expedition was an outstanding endeavour of scientific cooperation inspired by the Enlightenment, but also a matter of state supported by the highest political authorities and followed attentively by their representatives. The expedition did seem to be appreciated by the local populations encountered in the North though whether it was really as popular as de Mornay makes it out to be is another matter. There is not only

⁷⁵Letter from Charles de Mornay to Molé sent from Stockholm, dated 18 May 1838, Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Political Correspondence, Sweden, 123CP + 124CP, No 318, f. 241-2 (microfilm P07100):“Stockholm le 2 octobre 1838/Monsieur le Comte,/J’a l’honneur d’annoncer à Votre Excellence le retour des membres de la commission scientifique envoyée par le Gouvernement au Spitzberg et en Laponie. Les autres membres de cette expédition n’ayant pas encore pu terminer leurs travaux, se sont établis dans le nord de la Norvège, où ils passeront l’hiver, occupés à compiler les recherches qui leurs ont confiées. J’ai tout bien d’espérer que les travaux de cette commission si populaire dans le nord, auront pour résultat d’avoir obtenu de précieux renseignements pour l’Académie des Sciences. Aussitôt l’arrivée de M. Gaynard, Président de la commission et de Messrs. Marmier et Robert, ses collaborateurs, je me suis empressé de solliciter du Roi Charles Jean et du Prince Oscar, l’honneur de leur présenter mes savants compatriotes. La faveur n’est pas fait longtemps attendre. (...) le lendemain de la demande le Prince Royal nous a fait l’honneur de nous inviter à dîner au Château de Drottningholm. Le Roi Charles Jean se trouvait chez le Prince, c’est là qu’il m’a ... permis de lui présenter ces Messieurs. Sa Majesté Suédoise les a accueillis avec une grande bienveillance et dans sa conversation particulière avec chacun ... leur a témoigné son vif intérêt pour les travaux qu’il savait être chargés d’accomplir. A plusieurs reprises, le Roi Charles Jean m’a fait l’honneur de me dire combien il avait été touché de la manière si bienveillante et si généreuse (f.242) avec laquelle les savants Suédois et Norvégien avaient été traités par les membres de la commission Française, ce qu’il me priait de faire parvenir au Roi l’expression ses remerciemens.”

Laestadius' voice to have toned down such unreserved enthusiasm that the Count manifestly felt eager to share with his French correspondent. On October 16, the Oslo newspaper *Morgenbladet* announced that Gaimard and Marmier had received the Order of the North Star, while Robert had been awarded the Vasa Order, followed by some critical comments reprinted from the Swedish Press about the former two having received these distinctions unduly since they were supposedly perfectly unknown in the French world of science⁷⁶. But let us not spoil the feast with such slander that is often caused by envy. Official thanks were due and generously given by a King who was, once more, a Frenchman himself.

A year later, Biard and Léonid'Aunet were also honoured by the King and his son, as the *chargé d'affaires* de la Cour relates in a letter addressed to Marshal Jean-de-Dieu Soult, Foreign Secretary and Head of the French government by then, giving news of the expedition's second voyage to Spitsbergen and Lapland:

“Stockholm, October 29, 1839.

Monsieur le Maréchal,

(...)

Mess. Marmier, Bravais and Martins, members of the scientific Commission which explored the coasts of Spitsbergen this summer, have just arrived in Stockholm. The latter two intend to return to France immediately. M. Gaimard and the other members of the expedition have gone on an expedition to Finland; I do not know if they will return via Stockholm since M. Gaimard was hoping to receive an invitation to go to Russia.

M. Biard, the painter who had joined the expedition, has also returned via Stockholm from his journey to Lapland. – (...) having had the honour of being presented to the King and to Prince Oscar, M. Biard was welcomed by H.M. in the most flattering way. The royal Prince who had expressed the wish to see him a second time to look at his portfolio of sketches that he had brought back from his journey, gave him every assurance of his admiration for his talent.

⁷⁶Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, *op. cit.*, p. 127-8.

Among the public, a warm hearted interest attached itself to the artist's young lady who had not refrained from exposing herself to the fatigues and privations of such a journey⁷⁷.”

One will note the popularity of Léonied'Aunet whose daring as a lady traveller was manifestly acknowledged before she decided to address the subject of gender herself in her own account as announced by its title.

More honours had already been bestowed on Gaimard in Copenhagen, where he had been awarded the Danebrog order in spring. Judging by a letter from French Ambassador Saint-Priest to Molé, Denmark was also paying close attention to the expedition:

“Copenhagen, February 5, 1839

Monsieur le Comte,

the commission sent by the King to Iceland and Greenland has been a subject of pronounced interest here. Its President, M. Gaimard, was distinguished by the King of Denmark with the Danebrog cross and H.M. admitted him to meetings in which foreigners of the highest rank only had participated so far. During a banquet in honour of M. Gaimard offered by the famous Professor Magnussen in the name of his fatherland, a poem was recited in Icelandic praising France and her King. I

⁷⁷Letter from de la Cour to Maréchal Jean-de-Dieu Soult, Duke of Dalmatia, sent from Stockholm, dated 29 October 1839, Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Political Correspondence, Sweden, 123CP + 124CP, No 319, f. 86 + 88-9 (microfilm P07100): “Stockholm le 29 octobre 1839/Monsieur le Maréchal/(...)/Mes Marmier, Bravais et Martins, membres de la Commission scientifique qui a explore cet été les côtes du Spitzberg, viennent d'arriver à Stockholm : les deux derniers se proposent de retourner

Incessamment en France. M. Gaimard et les autres membres de l'expédition ont tété faire une excursion en Finlande ; j'ignore s'ils reviendront par Stockholm, M. Gaimard espérant recevoir une invitation de se rendre en Russie. M. Biard, Peintre qui s'était joint à cette expédition, est aussi passé par Stockholm au retour du voyage qu'il a fait en Laponie. – ayant ... l'honneur d'être présenté au Roi et au Prince Oscar, M. Biard a été accueilli par S. M. de la manière la plus flatteuse. Le Prince royal qui lui avait manifesté le désir de le voir une seconde fois, pour examiner le Porte feuille d'études qu'il avait rapporté de son voyage, lui a témoigné hautement son admiration pour son talent.

Dans le public, un intérêt plein de bienveillance s'attachait aussi à la jeune femme de cet artiste qui n'avait pas craint de s'exposer aux fatigues et aux privations d'un pareil voyage.”

have the honour of including the original translation in this letter⁷⁸.”

No critical voices were heard this time, it seems. Marmier then also was to receive the Danebrog, in 1842⁷⁹, on return from his journey through Finland, Russia and Poland, the account of which he published the following year⁸⁰. Gaimard was then to preside over the impressive list of the expedition’s official publications that included the narrative by Marmier. The latter then went on a very distinguished career, becoming a member of the *Académie Française* in 1870 while Laestadius did receive the order of the *Légion d’honneur* that features on the well-known lithograph by Émile Lassale of a portrait initially drawn by Charles Giraud⁸¹.

Despite all these honours, though, and the expedition’s distinguished record of both scientific and artistic achievement, illustrated by the series of nineteen volumes in all on the two expeditions, *La Recherche* is hardly what the English call a *household name* today. Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti have tried to give a number of reasons for this while dressing the list of the expedition’s important results, stressing notably the prime importance of the ethnographic material, including the illustrations, for anyone interested in the life and manners of the people of Scandinavia in the first half of the nineteenth century⁸². Indeed, researchers have increasingly focused on diverse aspects of this fascinating collective enterprise in recent years, as this present volume notably shows. In

⁷⁸Letter from Saint-Priest to Molé, sent from Copenhagen, dated 5 February 1839, Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Political Correspondence, Denmark, 31CP+32CP, no. 204, f. 59-60: “Copenhague, ce 5 février 1839/Monsieur le Comte,/La commission envoyée par le Roi en Islande et dans le Groënland, a été ici l’objet d’un intérêt très marqué. Son Président, M. Gaimard, a été honoré par le Roi de Danemark de la croix du Danebrog, et S. M. l’a admis à des réunions où des étrangers du plus haut rang ont seuls accès jusqu’à ce jour. Dans un banquet offert à M. Gaimard par le célèbre professeur Magnussen au nom de l’Islande, sa patrie, une pièce de vers a été récitée en langue Islandaise à la louange de la France et de son Roi. J’ai l’honneur de joindre à cette dépêche l’original de la traduction.”

⁷⁹Wendy S. Mercer, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-7.

⁸⁰Xavier Marmier, *Lettres sur la Russie, la Finlande et la Pologne*, 2 vols, Paris:Delloye, 1843.

⁸¹Portrait notably reproduced by Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti in *op. cit.*, p. 110 and in Juha Pentikäinen’s English edition of Lastadius’ *Fragments* (*op. cit.*, facing the title page).

⁸²Nils M. Knutsen and Per Posti, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-34. The chapter is entitled “An expedition that has fallen into oblivion” (“En Glemte Expedisjon/Une expedition tombée dans l’oubli”).

2013, the French Institute in Helsinki organized a one-day seminar on boreal ethnography entitled “the ‘La Recherche’ expedition revisited”, opened by His Excellency M. Eric Lebédel, French Ambassador in Finland, witnessing renewed institutional and political interest in this excellent example of peaceful international cooperation. Though Marmier is no longer a well-known author in France, unlike Léonied’Aunet whose travelogue has been reedited several times in recent years⁸³, his *Lettres sur le Nord* have been republished very recently in French⁸⁴, while an abridged version came out in Norwegian in 1997 and an abridged Finnish edition of Marmier’s official account in 1999⁸⁵. As to Laestadius’ *Fragments*, an incomplete version of the Swedish original was published in 1959, followed in 1997 by the text “*in extenso*” and the English and Finnish editions, published respectively in 2002 and 2003⁸⁶. The manuscript had originally been commissioned for the official *La Recherche* publications⁸⁷. The reasons for the text not having come out at the time are manifold⁸⁸. They include Laestadius’ own “religious crisis”⁸⁹ and undoubtedly also some criticism sent to France by Swedish members of the expedition reproaching him with a lack of “critical judgment”⁹⁰, a slanderous attack behind his back that seems to have been motivated at least in part by feelings of envy.

Lars Levi Laestadius did receive his *Légion d’honneur*, though. His *Fragments* remain an exceptional testimony to Sami culture. Working “rather on the plane of experience than that of knowledge”, as Juha Pentikäinen has explained elsewhere⁹¹, they represent a “unique

⁸³See for instance Wendy S. Mercer’s edition of the text, published by Le Félin in Paris, 1992.

⁸⁴Xavier Marmier, *Lettres sur le Nord*, Pont-Authou: Héligoland, 2011.

⁸⁵Xavier Marmier, *Bremnordfrå* (ed. Magnhild Svenheim), Ravnetrykk nr. 11, Tromsø, 1977 ; Xavier Marmier, *Polyjoinen maa* (ed. Marjalkkonen-Kaila), Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1999.

⁸⁶For a summary of the text’s complex publishing history see notably Juha Pentikäinen’s introduction to the English edition, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-50.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 51-2.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p.

⁹¹See his entry on Laestadius’ *Fragments* in the cultural encyclopaedia *The Saami* edited by Ulla-Maija Kulonen, Irja Seurujärvi-Kari and Risto Pulkkinen, Vammala: Vammalakitirjapaino Oy, “Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seurantoimituksia 925”, 2005, pp. 125-8; p. 128.

reconstruction”⁹² of Lappish mythology that it is time to add to the distinguished list of *La Recherche* volumes. When will the French edition come out at last?

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⁹²*Id.*