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He came, He saw and He observed – An Analysis of *Reis door Noord Amerika* by Pehr Kalm

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“On the 30th October we were ready to start our journey as soon as the sun rose. Close to the inn, where we spend the night, we were ferried over a river in a half rotten vessel. This is where the state of New York begins. Most of the people living here were Dutch, or others who settled down here while the Dutch were still in charge. Nowadays they were mixed with English and other Europeans, most of them spoke English. The view of the landscape was very pleasant, the view is not restricted by forests, and we could mostly see cultivated land.” (Kalm, 1772, p. 102-103).

A Swedish scientist in North America

According to Carl Thompson, who teaches on English literature and Travel Culture, travel accounts are a quite popular genre these days. Just think about the television series by Michael Palin and Paul Theroux. Not only contemporary writings (or programmes) are in the centre of attention, but also the ones from the past. It creates curiosity and an illusion that there are still places in the world that are not yet discovered. Also the academic world pays growing attention to travel writings. The main aims for that research is to better understand the colonial and postcolonial times. The accounts show the activities of the travellers and the kind of ideas that were incentives for their journeys. Already at

the beginning of a travel the traveller encounters “otherness” and difference from his own environment. In most writings a distinction between “us & them” can be found. This happens often in the form of stereotypes. As a result the genre of travel accounts has been seen as a morally dubious form of literature (Thompson, 2011, p. 1-9).

The quotation above stems from a travel account, *Reis door Noord Amerika*, written by the Swedish scientist Pehr Kalm. In his journey to North America he steps into a new world and there encounters a totally new world. When he arrives back in Sweden he writes down his travel into three volumes. This paper will discuss his journey, and his depiction of the others and of the New World. The main question of this paper will be: “To what extent does the background of Pieter/Pehr Kalm influence his depiction of the Native Americans and the European Americans in his book *Reis door Noord Amerika*?” This paper will firstly introduce the author Pehr Kalm before it continues with the travel itself. Secondly the translation history of the book is briefly touched upon. After this the paper will look at his depiction of “the others,” both Native Americans and Europeans. The travel account that is being discussed is *Reis door Noord Amerika*, which is an Dutch translation of the original Swedish text ‘*En Resa til Norra America*’ written by Pehr Kalm, sometimes known as Pieter Kalm.

Pehr Kalm (1716-1779)

Pehr Kalm was born in Angermanland, in Sweden, in 1716. His parents had left Finland during the Russian occupation of Finland. His father, a Finnish clergyman, died 6 weeks after Kalm was born (Patterson, Thompson & Bryson, 2008, p. 211). His mother, from Scottish descent, moved back to the Finnish town of Vaasa when Pehr was at the age of five. He grew up in Finland and in 1735 he entered the University of Åbo (nowadays Åbo is the Finnish town of Turku) (Jarell, 2000). Baron Sten Carl Bielke, an associate judge at the High Court of Åbo, took care of Kalm during most of his life and was like a father to him. The baron provided him with financial and emotional support (Patterson, Thompson & Bryson, 2008, p. 212). In 1740 Kalm continued his study at the university of Uppsala. There he befriended the famous botanist Linnaeus, who also took Kalm on as his pupil. Linnaeus, otherwise known as Carl von Linné, is known for his classification system in which he organised plants and animals into a coherent system (Wisconsin Historical Society). Next to this Kalm enjoyed a few lectures by Anders Celsius, who is known for the Celsius temperature scale. In 1744 he joined his friend and protector Bielke on a trip to Saint Petersburg and Moscow in search of new plants. The aim of this journey was to find seeds and plants that would decrease Swedish and Finnish dependency on foreign markets (Patterson, Thompson & Bryson,

2008, p. 212). In 1747 Kalm was appointed professor of natural history and oeconomy at the University of Åbo (Benson, 1969, p. 62). As a professor of oeconomics he had to collect new seeds and plants that would provide Sweden and Finland with a wealthy future (Patterson, Thompson & Bryson, 2008, p. 213).

The same year that he was appointed professor of natural history and oeconomics, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and Linnaeus decided that Kalm was the one to go on a trip to North America. The main aim of this trip was to collect some information regarding useful plants that might be relevant to the Scandinavian economy (Jarell, 2000). The travel was especially focused on finding a mulberry tree that was able to withstand the Swedish climate, so Sweden could have its own silk industry (Benson, 1969, p. 62). The choice for North America as the destination was not clear from the start. Baron Sten Carl Bielke, the one that proposed to organize a trip to collect seeds and plants, favoured Siberia. Linnaeus did not agree with it, and decided that North America might be a better choice (Schiebinger & Swan, 2007, p. 39). Being both nordic territories there was a bigger chance that plants and seeds would survive in the Swedish weather than if the plants or seeds came from another area than North America.

The trip was not only meant to find new species to bring back to Sweden, but also to enhance food production and to learn about cultivation methods, land organization and innovations in the farm equipment. These last goals of the journey were also focused on the economy and agriculture of the United Kingdom, where Kalm would stay a couple of months in the beginning of his journey (Clout, 2004, p. 206). In the introduction of the Dutch translation the main goals of the journey are summarized as to make observations, to collect plants and seeds, to perfect the agriculture, crafts, arts and sciences in Sweden (Kalm, 1772, preface). Before Kalm went on this trip only little scientific information had been gathered in North America and only a few observations had been made. Pehr Kalm was the first notable European scientist of note to study the natural history in these areas of the world (K, 1938, p. 111). The money for the trip came from the three Swedish universities, a society of workmanship and Pehr Kalm himself (probably Bielke paid his share as well, but this is not mentioned in the travel account). People did not have so much money in the 18th century, a journey of this size and costs must have been seen as something so important to make them pull out their wallets. In this time Swedish scientist Hasselquist went on a journey to Little Asia, Palestine and Egypt and another Swedish scientist named Osbeck went to China (Kalm, 1772, preface). The instruments for Kalm's journey were given by the Royal Academy of Sciences, so that Kalm could make observations (Kalm, 1770, p. 15).

After his trip he did supervise some dissertations that were related to this travel (Chinard, 1947, p.55). Kalm continued to teach at the university of Åbo and received several academic honors. Later on he became a Lutheran clergyman, like his father was before him. He died in 1779 (Jarell, 2000).

The travel

The journey started in October 1747 in Uppsala, Sweden. Servant Lars Jungström joined him on this journey. In February 1748 Kalm arrived in London. He stayed in the United Kingdom till August of that same year. By boat he traveled to North America, where he arrived a month later in Philadelphia. During his time there, Pehr stayed with a Swedish family. He visited New York, New Jersey, Montreal, Quebec, Pennsylvania, Albany and the Niagara Waterfalls. Later on this journey will be discussed in more detail when we will talk about his depiction of the “other” (Kalm, 1772, preface). This route was not decided when he was still in Sweden. During his trip Pehr had the company of prominent American scientists. He travelled between the English and French territorium two years after the King George’s war ended. The war was between the United Kingdom and France , both received help from the Indians in their warfare. A few Indians fought on the side of the French and some on the side of the English. Even two years after the war the tensions between the two groups were still high (Cohen, 2002, p. 74-76).

During his journey Kalm send many samples back to Sweden via the United Kingdom. In total he brought back 60 new species that were published for the first time in *The Species Plantarium* by Linnaeus in 1753. The three genera *Gaultheria*, *Lechea* and *Polymnia* in the classification system of Linnaeus were discovered by Kalm on his journey (Juel & Harschberger, 1929, p. 297). The plants that he brought home did not all survive the different environment in Sweden (Scott, 1961, p. 66).

His return to Sweden in February 1751 turned out to be a dangerous journey. But on June the 16th he arrived safely in Stockholm. Upon his return he planted the American plants in his garden in Åbo. His story was published in three different volumes as there were not enough available publishers in Sweden (Kalm, 1772, preface). A last manuscript was never published, it was incinerated in 1827 in the great fire which destroyed parts of the city of Åbo (Juel & Harschberger, 1929, p. 297). Six of his notebooks still remained intact. At the moment of the fire the notebooks were on loan to another professor. The published volumes were warmly received by the European community (Patterson, Thompson & Bryson, 2008, p. 212).

His Reis door Noord Amerika

Kalm prepared for his journey by reading travel literature and accounts of natural history (Patterson, Thompson & Bryson, 2008, p. 212). He referred to some of this literature in his travel account. He mentioned quite some literature written by this friend and teacher Linnaeus: *Hortus Cliffortianus* (Leiden, 1737), *Fauna suecica* (Leiden, 1746) and the *Flora suecica* (Stockholm, 1745). Next to these titles, he also took along some books by the Swedish scientists Johan Gottschalk Wallerius and Peter Artedi. In his account of his travels he used and sometimes mentioned books by colonial governor of state Arthur Dobbs, clergyman John Pointer, Lutheran clergyman Thomas Campanius Holm, John Eliot, historian Anders A. von Stiernman and many others (Hansen, Cormack & Kalm, 2008, p.990-991).

When Kalm arrived back in Sweden, he wrote about his journey and this story has been translated in German, English, Dutch and French. The Swedish original was published between 1753 and 1761. The first translation was in German by the brothers Murray and was called *Beschreibung der Reise die er nach dem nordlichen Amerika auf Befehl gedachter Akademie und offentliche Kosten unternommen hat* (Kalm, 1772, preface). In 1754 and 1757 historian Johann Philip Murray (1726-1776) translated the first two volumes in High German in the city of Göttingen. His brother Johann Andreas Murray (1740-1791) took responsibility for the translation of the third volume in 1764. He studied at the university of Uppsala, where he was a pupil of Linnaeus. Later in life he became a botanist and physician (Kalm, 1754). The German translation is the only one in which the whole travel account has been translated. In 1770/1771 John Reinhold Forster (1729-1798) translated the travel account into English, and named it *Travels into North America*. Not only did he translate the account, but he also added some remarks, maps and illustrations. The part about the United Kingdom and the travel to North America are left out. As a result the English book is one third smaller than the original or the German ones (Kalm, 1772, preface). Foster was born in Germany, probably with Scottish roots. He was an author and a naturalist, and he taught natural history and languages. In 1766 he migrated to England, where he joined the second expedition of explorer James Cook (Iredale, 1966). Johann van Schoonhoven translates the account in 1772 into Dutch with the title *Reis door Noord Amerika*. The publisher, settled in the Dutch city of Utrecht, translated besides this account other travel accounts like the one by Volkman (*Reisboek door Italieën*). The translation is focused mainly on the English translation, and only a little on the German one. Van Schoonhoven included the remarks by Forster in his translation. Next to this he also skipped the part on the United Kingdom and the journey to North America like Foster did before him. In his preface he praises the English and the German translators as being

great scientists. But however he has some remarks on the German translation that did not include a map of the territory. Because of this it is hard for the reader to understand Kalm's travel, according to Johann van Schoonhoven. Engraver Carel Jacob de Huijser made the drawings for the Dutch translations (Kalm, 1772, preface). In 1880 T. Berthiaume translated the account into French, and named it *Voyage de Kalm an Amerique*. This book was published in Montreal, Canada, and was made up out of two volumes (WorldCat, n.d.).

The encounter with 'the Other'

Like stated above, Kalm started his journey in October 1747 in Uppsala, Sweden. From here he traveled to the United Kingdom, where he spend a couple of months, before going to the New World. In both the Dutch translation as well as in the English one, the part about the United Kingdom was left out. The simple reason behind this was that it offered no use for the English readers to read about their own country's habits and nature (according to the Dutch translator). The two volumes in the Dutch translation *Reis door Noord Amerika* start when Kalm reached the coast of North America. In these volumes he discusses the plants and trees, the animals, the habits of the colonizers and the Native Americans, and the local infrastructure (buildings, roads and transport). Because he had a vast range of recommendations, Pehr Kalm did not encounter any problems crossing borders. He could move freely across the region (Schiebinger & Swan, 2007, p. 40). Linnaeus provided him with contacts in the New World. A few of them were John Bartram, Cad Walladar Colden and J. Mitchell. All of them were natural scientists (Patterson, Thompson & Bryson, 2008, p. 212).

The young scientist Kalm traveled by boat together with his servant Jungström to North America. Here he arrived in Philadelphia, New England. Surprised by the great amount of unknown plants and animals he started his journey in North America. The people that lived in New England and Canada were Native Americans, English, French, Dutch, German and Swedish people. In this paper the main distinction will be between the Native Americans and the colonizers. Differences between the different groups of colonizers will also be touched upon. Kalm traveled mainly by horse, boat or canoe through the New World.



Fig. 1: Map of North America in Kalm's *Reis door Noord Amerika*.

The first part of his travels was focused on the coast of the New World. Native Americans were hard to find in these areas as they had all moved land inward. On the coast mainly the 'immigrants' could be found. In the beginning of his travel account one of his first impressions is of the city of Philadelphia. The city was full of residents who were completely different in religion and habits from each other. But everyone who acknowledged God and who did not break the basic rules, was free to settle wherever they wanted and to trade what and where they wanted, no matter whom they were. Because of this a citizen of Philadelphia lived the life of a king and enjoyed a lot of freedom. Every house, even that of renters, was surrounded by an orchard full of apples, cherries, peaches, chestnuts, walnuts, and other fresh fruits. According to Kalm these people were never forced to live here, they were never forced to migrate to the New World. They wanted to live here so badly that they risked their own lives to travel to North America. The products in this region had the same quality as the products in England, although they had no factories (Kalm, 1772, p. 27 + 40). Cities, like New York, had a strong trade. New York was back then a city 1.5 times as big as Gothenburg in Sweden. The air in North America was very healthy (Kalm, 1772, p. 108).

The population grew more quickly in the New World than in any European country. This, explained Kalm, was the result of the marriage arrangements in this region. Every person who reached the legal age for marriage could do so. Reasons like poverty did not exist, as there were many fertile lands. These lands could provide a family with a living. They would not earn a lot, but still enough. Besides they lived in total freedom. But Kalm did not stay positive about the colonizers. Especially later on in his account he wrote some negative paragraphs on them. He remarked for instance that the agriculture in the country was in a really bad shape. If people bought a piece of land, they planted it with the same plants. As a result the ground lost its fertility. Later on, in Volume two, Kalm not only claimed that the methods of the farmers were bad. The farmers were also very lazy and careless about their land (Kalm, 1772, p. 82, 172 + 28). Besides this the colonizers lost their teeth very early in life, especially the women. At an early age of twenty, young girls started losing their teeth. This did not happen to Native Americans, who kept their teeth clean and white. Kalm searched for the explanation in the drinking of very hot tea. Fevers were something that occurred very often, for both Native Americans as the colonizers. Sometimes people were feverish for a very long time (Kalm, 1772, p. 155-156). Kalm was especially negative regarding the impact the colonizers had when they started living in North America. When the Europeans migrated to North America to start a new life there, this had its effects on the environment. Before they arrived in this area there were no buildings and it was full of woods and forests. Now things had changed. As a result the numbers of animals and plants had decreased. Kalm sort of blamed the new inhabitants for this. When only the Native Americans lived in these areas, a small amount of the birds were enough to feed the whole population (Kalm, 1772, p. 125).

When he arrived in the French territory in 1749, he and Lars Jungström were warmly received by the French. He was allowed to travel at the costs of the French king. For instance they offered him a trip from Quebec to Montreal on one of the boats of the King himself. Kalm described in his accounts the differences he noticed between the English and the French. He started by saying that the French had not reach the same quality in arts as their English neighbors. But the women in Canada were dressed up more than they did on the other side of the border. The scientist was surprised by their money. In Canada they only had money made out of paper. Coins were hard to find and the notes were not printed but handwritten. A book publisher was hard to find as well. The government said it was to prevent evil books (against religion, government or morality) being published and spread. Kalm believed the real reason related to the poverty in the country. A publisher would never survive if there was not enough money. Compared to the English, the French ate more chocolate and drank more coffee. They did not drink that much tea. Kalm did

not mention if they had better teeth because of this. They also used napkins. If somebody sneezed you were expect to bow and on the streets you were expect to take of your hat. Besides the lands looked a lot better in Canada than they did in New England. Contrary to the diversity in people on the coast of North America, the French territory only allowed one religion: Roman Catholicism. Lastly the French had a strong trade with the Native Americans (Kalm, 1772, p. 100-208).

Throughout the area of New England many Dutch people found their home as it used to be partly a Dutch colony. Especially the city of Albany was full of them. Kalm compared the merchants in Albany with Chinese people. They loved to do business. They made the Native Americans drunk with brandy, and then they could make a good buy on the products of the Natives. The following morning the natives discovered that the Dutch people had deceived them. But the most important image that came across in the travel account of Pehr Kalm is that the Dutch people in Albany were very stingy. They did not like to spend money on anything. Not many people acted like the Dutch, this was rather characteristic of the Dutch. The hate of the Dutch towards the English was far greater, according to Kalm. The reason behind their hatred is the English occupation of territory that used to be in Dutch hands (Kalm, 1772, p. 52-55).

In the first half of Kalm's travel account little can be found on the original people of North America. The first time he mentions them is on page 45 of the first volume, where he claims to have heard that the natives are kind hearted people as long as they are not mistreated. Nobody keeps their word better than the natives. The children of the natives mature earlier than the children in Europe. He calls them wise children. However when they grow up they will never reach the wisdom of European grown-ups. The natives can become very old. On page 98 he refers to his readers and their expectations. He writes that some readers might think it is strange that there are so few descriptions on natives in the account so far. He explains that the most natives do not live in the coastal area, where he spent his time. During the settlement of the Europeans many of the natives died as a result of European diseases, wars between different tribes and most of all the brandy. Kalm does not mention anything about possible wars between natives and colonizers as a reason.

The many descriptions that are included in his account are stories by others and not his own observations. Words that he used to describe them are *Wilden*, *Inboorlingen des lands*, *heidsche volken*, *oorspronklyke Amerikanen* (wild people, natives of the country, heathens, original Americans). On November 18th 1748 the scientist John Bartram showed him a clay pot that was made by the natives. Kalm thought it well made. Other characteristics of this group were that they use shells instead of money. Gold, money or silver did not mean anything to them. The same goes for iron. Before the Europeans entered North

America, the Native Americans did not use iron at all. Most of the time they make a living on fishing and hunting. Two months a year they lived of the harvest, which included corn. Kalm was surprised about this strange way of living. But he remarked that in the end they get old and healthy, and that they can survive better than other people can. They are always cheerful, content and dance and sing all the time. They do not want to change their lifestyle for any European one. Next to these characteristics, Kalm mentioned that they do not have a religion and that they cannot write or read. So when they have to sign for an agreement they make drawings. In the beginning of the settlement the natives were hard workers, but that changed (Kalm, 1772, p. 45-47, 98, 106, 141, 208-217). While in Canada the people tell him about the Eskimo's, who are totally different in skin color and language than the other Native Americans. They are as white as Europeans, but have much smaller eyes. They live in holes under the ground, or in caves in the mountains or in huts above the ground. They only eat fish, whales or walruses. The Canadian (both the Native Americans as the colonizers) advice Kalm not to go to the areas where the Eskimo's live. These people are treacherous and suspicious. When the Eskimo's notice that they are stronger than you, they will beat you to death without any reason (Kalm, 1772, p. 174-177).

In the second volume, on page 62, Kalm encountered Native Americans for the first time . He describes seeing an Native American woman sitting with a little boy inside a bark boat. This happened on the way from New England to Canada. They decided to go to the village of the natives. He speaks of 'wigwams', which are the original houses of the Native Americans that are made with simple construction. Their beds are deerskins spread on the ground. They never use chairs, but sit on the ground. The women never wear anything on their head and have black hair. Later on in the book he describes how he and his companion are in danger of natives as the Native Americans wanted to take revenge on a Englishmen (Kalm, 1772, p. 62 + 95). The Native Americans did not have any well build cities, houses or towers. There are only wretched huts, open for both winds and rain (Kalm, 1772, p. 127). Kalm gets a Native American tour guide who could help them not only with the way to the village of Lorette but could also tell them how the natives used certain plants. This man was original English. At a young age he was kidnapped by the Native Americans when the English had stolen a Native American child, a sort of a exchange. All these years he had lived with the natives, married a native and spoke their language. He never wanted to return home. This never happened the other way around. When a Native American child grew up in the French or English society they always wanted to return home (Kalm, 1772, p. 140).

Discussion

In the travel account by Pehr Kalm he is both negative as positive about the two groups that live in North America. The colonizers enjoy a great amount of freedom and they always wanted to help him with his research and this travel. But however they lose their teeth at an early age, they get sick very often, and they are lazy about their agriculture. The natives are seen as kind people, but they can be violent in exceptional cases. Their way of living is completely different than the European living style. However they do not want to change their lives. In the end Kalm enjoys his time in North America, but is happy to live in Sweden. Kalm is very explicit in this opinion of North America. On page 25, second volume, of the Dutch translation he outweighs the pros and cons of living in North America by comparing it to the circumstances in Sweden. He mentions that the nights are very dark, the cold is equally as bad and there is little snow. For a Swedish person it is hard to endure these circumstances. The fact that the winters in North America are shorter, is not seen as a benefit. Kalm does not like the weather of this area in general as the weather changes all the time. This causes a lot of sickness among the population. On the other hand the heat in the summer months is sometimes unbearable, which creates a lot of sickness as well. Besides the bad weather conditions, Kalm does not like the houses and the pastures in the region. According to him the Swedish are better. Most of the pastures are badly kept and the harvests are full of worms. He concludes by saying that he prefers Sweden because of all of this (Kalm, 1772, p.25).

In 1747 Pehr Kalm started his journey to North America in the Swedish city of Uppsala in search of new knowledge, and plants and seeds that could be implemented and used in his home country Sweden. This journey did not succeed in bringing back for example a mulberry tree could help the Swedish and Finnish economy, but did succeed in bringing new information of a rather unknown territory. As a scientist he writes a lot on the different plants and animals that you can find in this particular area. In the account you can find next to these descriptions, also paragraphs on habits, housing, lifestyles and characteristics of the peoples that lived in North America. In the way he writes the reader gets a clear image on his travel to the region. His background as a Swedish scientist plays a role in writing the account. His background not only determines the way he describes the plants, surroundings and the climate (for instance using the temperature scale of Celsius and the classification system of Linnaeus). His depiction of the people, their lifestyle and their habits are influenced by it as well. When he travels to North America he stays mainly with Swedish people, who help him to explore the environment. Many times in his travel account Kalm uses a story told by one of his Swedish friends/guides. In general, even if his

background played a role in his writings, it can be said that he was a great scientist. He discovered new species and he described a rather unknown territory. And this story has been read by many.

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