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**Political realism and the fantastic romantic  
German liberal discourse and the Sámi in  
Theodor Mügge's novel *Afraja* (1854)**

The novel *Afraja*, written by the German author and liberal Theodor Mügge and published in 1854 provides an opportunity to explore connections between travel writing and adventure stories from the perspective of one of Germany's most popular writers of the nineteenth century. The focus of my discussion in this paper is to explore the implications of the meeting between a fictional Sámi, living in the exotic North and a Danish aristocratic adventurer whose attitudes reflect the discourse of Mügge's politically liberal views. Additionally, Mügge's fiction sketches out different images of the Sámi.

It is necessary to give a short plot outline and introduction to some of the main characters in order to put this discussion into a context. The story is set in northern Norway around 1750. The main character, a Danish aristocrat Johan Marstrand, is forced to leave Copenhagen because of his father's dubious economic affairs and financially wasteful ways at court. Marstrand has to find a new beginning and this leads him to northern Norway. Here he discovers a feudalistic society, where the Norwegian officeholders and Norwegian tradesmen form a powerful elite. They divide the goods between themselves, while the farmers, fishermen and Sámi constitute the common people who are exploited and controlled.

In addition to this vertical conflict the horizontal conflict is just as serious. Here the conflict line is drawn between the sedentary local population and the nomadic way of life. The Sámi people are considered to be social outcasts, a minority who are suppressed and expelled from their hunting areas and forced to live crowded into smaller and smaller spaces. The Sámis who defend their territory with weapons, make it a dangerous adven-

ture for ethnic Norwegians or Kvens<sup>1</sup> to enter the wilderness. In this novel, the Sámi are depicted as the Indians of the North. Afraja is the Sámi chief and sorcerer. He is very wealthy, with huge sums of money, an unknown number of reindeers and access to hidden silver caves in the mountains. He is the religious and political leader in whom the myths of the Sámi and the myths of the Indian are unified. It is easy to see that Mügge is developing within these characters and setting many tensions that will have to be resolved by the novels conclusion.

Since the author is unknown to the most of the contemporary readers, I would also like to introduce him and his political project. Theodor Mügge was born in Berlin in 1802<sup>2</sup> and died in 1861. Today he is more or less forgotten, but he was one of the most popular authors of fiction and travel writing in Germany in the middle of the nineteenth century and *Afraja* made him also well known in the English book market.<sup>3</sup> Despite this popularity very little has been written about him.

Mügge was a passionate liberal. German liberalism was a widespread and powerful political movement in the years from the French revolution until the March revolution in 1848. The periode

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<sup>1</sup> The Kvens or Kven people are a Norwegian ethnic minority descended from Finnish immigrants in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

<sup>2</sup> In the secondary literature the year of birth is variously given as 1802, 1805 and 1806. Cf. <http://www.ablit.de/muegge/muegbio.htm>; *Lexikon der deutschen Dichter und Prosaisten vom Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Gegenwart*. Ed. by Franz Brümmer. 5. vol., Kraus Reprint, Nendeln/Liechtenstein 1975, p. 48-49; Max Ring, *Theodor Mügge* (Nachruf), in: *Die Gartenlaube. Illustriertes Familienblatt*. 1861, p. 293-295.

<sup>3</sup> *Afraja* was translated into English by the American diplomat Edward Joy Morris in the same year as the German edition was published (*Afraja. A Norwegian and Lapland tale. Or Life and Love in Norway* 1854), and to refer to Ernest J. Moyne, "[t]he appearance of Morris's translation in many editions before the end of the nineteenth century indicates a great demand for *Afraja* in the English-speaking world." Ernest J. Moyne, *Raising the Wind. The Legend of Lapland and Finland Wizards in Literature*. Ed. by Wayne R. Kime. Associated University Press, Newark 1981, p. 134.

of the decades before 1848 is in German called Vormärz and is characterized by the striving for a united nation state. German liberals saw the nation state as the only possibility of ending the power of the princes and aristocrats in the different German principalities as well as of reducing the dominance of the authoritarian regime in Prussia. The nation state was considered a vehicle for the achievement of democracy, freedom of speech and civil rights. These were dangerous views to hold and liberal ideas were strictly censored.

Mügge's political beliefs in fact made it very difficult for him. He started his professional career as a merchant, an occupation he was not at all cut out for. Then he joined the army, but quit for ideological reasons. In 1825 he tried to travel to Peru to join Simon Bolivar's liberation war against the Spanish regime there. However, while en route and in London, the news reached Mügge that the battle was over. He went back to Berlin where he began to study natural science, history and philosophy at the university, intending to have an academic career as a university teacher. But his criticism of censorship<sup>1</sup> and oppression in Prussia made it impossible for him to even think of a career in a governmental institution.

Consequently, he had to live off his writing. He wrote novels, short stories and travel narratives, and worked for different newspapers and magazines as an editor and journalist. By 1848 he was participating in the establishment of the liberal newspaper National-Zeitung in Berlin. Nevertheless, his economic situation forced him to produce a great number of texts at high speed. His strategy was to reprint the same book several times with different titles. He also used the same material, that is to say the same themes, characters and descriptions over again. There are, for instance, long passages in his novel *Afraja* about the fishing industry, political systems, as well as descriptions of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Theodor Mügge, Die Censurverhältnisse in Preußen. Denkschrift mit Bezug auf die beigefügte Petition den Mitgliedern des 9. Provinzial-Landestages der Mark Brandenburg und der Nieder-Lausitz. Leipzig 1845. (<http://dlib-pr.mpiet.mpg.de/m/kleioc/0010/exec/wrapbooks/%22175487%22>)

landscape, which we also find in his travelogue *Skizzen aus dem Norden. Reise durch Skandinavien*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1844, ten years earlier. His texts indeed cross the boundaries between genres. Mügge also sometimes relied on texts – his own and others’ – to a degree that goes beyond what we normally would understand as intertextuality. In other words, he copies – a typical characteristic of popular literature and for an author like Mügge probably a kind of necessity.

His literary work can be situated somewhere between colportage<sup>2</sup> and modern consumption industry. His production follows the rules of the nineteenth century book market. Mügge wrote to meet the demand of the readers who delighted in adventure stories with exotic settings and characters, especially Indians from North America. From the late eighteenth century onwards, texts from and about America had an enormous influence on German literature. The popular journals and magazines of this period published many stories, tales, reports, travel descriptions and sketches about American-Indian life and culture. Not very surprisingly James Fennimore Cooper’s books were a success in the German book market. In 1824 *The Pioneers* was translated into German and inspired an enormous interest in literary depictions of Indians.<sup>3</sup>

The most important German author of Indian novels, was the Austrian Charles Sealsfield, whose real name was Karl Postl. Sealsfield, like Mügge a political liberal, visited North America

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<sup>1</sup> Theodor Mügge, *Skizzen aus dem Norden. Reise durch Skandinavien*. 2 vols, Hannover 1844.

<sup>2</sup> Colportage here means the door-to-door distribution of sensational books. In German ‘Kolportage’ is also used as a term on the texts, that were distributed in this way, for instance ‘colportage novel’. Cf. *Kolportage*, in: *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*. Vol. II, H-O. Ed. by Klaus Weimar. Berlin New York 2000, p. 286-289; Rudolf Schenda, *Volk ohne Buch. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der populären Lesestoffe 1770-1910*. Frankfurt am Main 1977, p. 228-270.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Preston A. Barba, *The American Indian in German Fiction*. In: *German American Annals*, Band 15 (May-August 1913), p. 143-179, p. 148.

several times. However, it is not likely that Sealsfield ever had the opportunity to study Indian life and culture first-hand. Be that as it may, Cooper's and Sealsfield's work did create "an unusual taste for exotic fiction among the German reading public".<sup>1</sup> Mügge would certainly have understood that anything he wrote with similar exotic themes would be certain to make profit. Thus, by placing the setting of *Afraja* in the far North and stressing the exotic elements, he met the demands of the contemporary German reader.

Travel narratives also play a major role in the literature in the Vormärz. Since the beginning of the eighteenth century travel literature had achieved a dominant position in the German book market.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand travel literature was considered better than fiction, because it did not only entertain the reader. For the educated middle class the aspect of education and cultivation was also of great importance.<sup>3</sup> Travel literature did both: it entertained and gave information about other countries, societies, cultures. Nearly every author in the early and the middle of the nineteenth century did in one way or the other reflect about travelling, they went on journeys and they wrote about their experience.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 152. As to the relation between Mügge and Sealsfield in general, cf. Bernd Steinbrink, *Abenteuerliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland. Studien zu einer vernachlässigten Gattung*. Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen 1983 and the website <http://www.ablit.de/muegge/muegbio.htm#seal>

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Uwe Hentschel, *Die Reiseliteratur am Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts. Vom gelehrten Bericht zur literarischen Beschreibung*. In: *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*. Vol. 16, issue 2 (1991), p. 51-83.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Rainer S. Elkar, *Reisen bildet. Überlegungen zur Sozial- und Bildungsgeschichte des Reisens während des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*. In: *Reisen und Reisebeschreibungen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert als Quellen der Kulturbeziehungsforschung*. Ed. by B. I. Krasnobaev, Gert Robel and Herbert Zeman. Berlin 1980, p. 51-82.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Gert Sautermeister, *Reiseliteratur als Ausdruck der Epoche*. In: *Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. Vol. 5. *Zwischen Restauration und Revolution 1815-*

The preferred destinations in Europe were Switzerland<sup>1</sup>, Italy, France, and England. Scandinavia was considered to be a tourist's "no man's land"<sup>2</sup>, an area to avoid, because of the lack of infrastructure and bad facilities in general. As Mügge writes in his foreword to *Skizzen aus dem Norden*, travellers to the areas in the North before him were scientists on scientific expeditions.<sup>3</sup> In particular he refers to Leopold von Buch (1774–1853), the German geologist and paleontologist, who travelled through Norway in the years 1806–08 for scientific purposes.<sup>4</sup> Mügge was in fact one of the early tourists to have travelled by steamboat along the Norwegian coast from Trondheim to Hammerfest, and he begins the transition from travelling for scientific purposes to simply tourism.

However, for the German oppositional intelligentsia between 1789 and 1848 travel writing had a political appeal as well. To write about other countries, and especially those that were democratic and had democratic constitutions, was a way of camouflaging political criticism and thus avoiding censorship. By praising the political situation in and the constitutions of England, America or Norway, they simultaneously said something about the situation in Germany and their own political opinion. That is political criticism in the disguise of travel writing, which is the case of Mügge as well.

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1848. Ed. by Gert Sautermeister and Ulrich Schmid. München 1998, p. 116-150.

<sup>1</sup> Mügge as well travelled to Switzerland and wrote about this journey in *Die Schweiz und ihre Zustände. Reiseerinnerungen*. 3 vols, 1847.

<sup>2</sup> "Touristisches Niemandsland". Gert Rodel, *Reisen und Kulturbeziehungen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*. In: *Reisen und Reisebeschreibungen*, op.cit., p. 19-37, p. 19. Cf. also Elkar, *Reisen bildet*, op.cit., p. 61. Mügge wrote two other travel descriptions from his travels in Skandinauia: *Schweden im Jahre 1843*. 2 vols (1844) and *Nordisches Bilderbuch. Reisebilder* (1857).

<sup>3</sup> Mügge, *Skizzen aus dem Norden*. Vol. I, p. VI.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Leopold von Buch, *Reise durch Norwegen und Lappland*. 2 vols, Berlin 1810.

This common feature of works by German liberal authors, who used descriptions of the political situation in other countries for their own political objectives, also leaves its traces in their fiction. The general theme of all of Mügges work is the struggle for freedom against injustice and political oppression. His stories are about freedom fighters, oppositionals, revolts of minorities against colonial powers or authoritarian regimes. As in Sealsfield's novels, where America stands as a mirror and shield for political criticism, the author's sympathy always lies with the struggling minority. Without ever having been there, Mügge wrote two novels about the conflict between blacks and whites at Haiti, *Der Chevalier* (1835) and *Toussaint* (1840). He also wrote an historical novel about the Russian conquest of Finland in 1808, *Erich Randal* (1850), where the main character Erich Randal is a Finnish hero and freedom fighter.

The narrative structure of *Afraja* is based on the model of classical Indian novels in the tradition from Cooper and Sealsfield, as well as of traditional adventure stories, evident, for instance, in the initiation of the hero, love stories and in motifs like the exchanged child, forbidden love, the bear fight and hidden treasures.<sup>1</sup> The setting of the story is the multicultural regions of Lyngen, Malangen and Tromsø. By emphasizing the Nordic aspects, the exotic elements and the danger are intensified. When it is referred to as the "outermost Thule",<sup>2</sup> the setting is located

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Steinbrink, *Abenteuerliteratur*, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup> Theodor Mügge, *Afraja*. Roman. Frankfurt am Main 1854, p. 107. All the translations from German into English are mine. The greek historian, geographer and philosopher Strabo (63/64BC-ca. AD24) places in his encyclopedia *Geographica* Thule outside and north of the habitable world. Cf. Strabo, *The Geography*. In eight volumes. Vol. I. Havard University Press, London 1969, p. 233, 235, 237. But the first traveller to the North who wrote about the iceland Thule and the North Pole was the greek philosopher and geographer Pytheas (400 BC), cf. Lutz Käppel, *Bilder des Nordens im frühen antiken Griechenland*. In: *Ultima Thule. Bilder des Nordens von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*. Ed. by Annelore Engel-Braunschmidt, Gerhard Fouquet, Wiebke von Hinden and Inken Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main 2001, p. 11-27.



beyond the border of the known world. With Daniel Chartier one might say that the text 'northifies' the location.<sup>1</sup> When the main character, Marstrand, is on his way from Trondheim to Lofoten, he has to go through many awful days on the "wilde Polarsee".<sup>2</sup> The fjords are filled with lumps of ice.<sup>3</sup> He refers to Lyngen as "the Polarzone",<sup>4</sup> the country is described as "full of ice and mountains",<sup>5</sup> as "a wilderness of ice",<sup>6</sup> but also as "a desert".<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, the narrator creates the North as a Promised Land. Here the men from the South, who have lost position and property at home, can come to get a new start or to make a fortune. Northern Norway is then described as rich and prosperous. The narrator also alludes to the ancient myth of an arctic paradise, to a hidden ideal world in the middle of the ice and frosty desert.<sup>8</sup> In *Afraja* this paradise exists in the Sámi alps, where eternal green and fertile valleys can be found.

In this exotic setting in the North, Marstrand undergoes a metamorphosis from Danish decadent nobleman to a hard-working northern man. After just some months he proclaims proudly: "I left the baron in Copenhagen as I took of my embroidered jacket, here in my new native country my name is Johann Marstrand, I am the tradesman from Balsefgaard [...]"<sup>9</sup>

Marstrand sympathizes with the Sámi – at first on the basis of principles. Early in the book, before he knows anything about the Sámi and their situation, or even has seen one of them, he

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Chartier, *Towards a Grammar of the Idea of North: Nordicity, Winterity*. In: *Nordlit*, issue 22, Autum 2007, p. 35-47.

<sup>2</sup> Mügge, *Afraja*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 67-69.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15. In representations of the North we often find comparisons with the desert, cf. Chartier, *Towards a Grammar*, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> From antiquity until today the North is the place of extremes and ambiguities. It means evil, danger, coldness and death but also freedom, peace and happiness at the same time, cf. Peter Davidson, *The Idea of North*. Reaktion Books, London 2005, p. 24ff, 59ff.

<sup>9</sup> Mügge, *Afraja*, p. 248.

promises the pro-Sámi Norwegian priest,<sup>1</sup> that he will always be willing to protect the hunted Sámi from their persecutors, the Norwegians and the Kvens, and to act as an intermediary between the suppressed minority and their oppressors. This promise he can give easily because, as he says: “I hate injustice”.<sup>2</sup> Also in the novel’s many complex love affairs, Marstrand operates as an intermediary.

Marstrand allies himself with the Sámi chief Afraja. But in the end, when Afraja needs his military experience for the armed attack that he plans against the Norwegians, Marstrand opposes the use of violence, wanting instead to negotiate and conciliate. It is too late, however, because at the same time the Norwegians and Kvens want to destroy the Sámi chief and leader Afraja once and for all. They track him down in the mountains and ask him for good sailing wind.<sup>3</sup> Their plan is to use this to accuse him of witch witch craft. Then they kidnap his daughter Gula, whom Bjørnare, the cruel trademan’s son, loves. Mortuno, the Sámi heir and initially Afraja’s son in law, who is supposed to lead the Sámi revolt, is then killed by the vicious Kven Olaf, Bjørnare and the Chief magistrate Petersen, when he tries to save Gula.

Afraja on his part makes a storm instead of a good sailing wind, and Bjørnare, Olaf the Kven and his daughter, Gula, all drown. The climax of the novel is in fact a trial in which Afraja is accused of sorcery.<sup>4</sup> The public hearing takes place in Tromsø. It

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<sup>1</sup> The model for this character is the historical person Nils Christina Vibe Stockfleth (1787-1866), a Norwegian priest and missionary in Finnmark, who also wrote a grammar and dictionary about the Sámi language. Cf. Berg, Per R. M.: *Nils Chr. Vibe Stockfleth. Liv og misjon blant Finnmarks samer*. Forlaget Sámi Varas, Trondheim 1989. In Mügge’s short story (criminal story) *Am Malanger Fjord* (1851), which takes place in the same areas in northern Norway, Stockfleth’s name and biography is used.

<sup>2</sup> Mügge, *Afraja*, p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> About the legend of the Sámi wizards raising winds and storms, cf. Moyne, *Raising the Wind*, op.cit. On page 134-138 (ibid.) Moyne comments on this episode in *Afraja* in particular.

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the Sámi and witch trials in Norway, cf. Rune Blix Hagen, *Samer er trollmenn i norsk historie. Trolldomsforfølgelsene av samer*.

is described as a great event, with people coming from everywhere to witness the trial. The court is accordingly strong in numbers, it consists of the bailiff, some deputy bailiffs, the chief magistrate and jury foreman, local jury members who all are tradesmen and some other officials. In the hearing Afraja admits that he is a sorcerer, that he has special contacts with his heathen gods, and that he can call on the powers of the wind.

But the main interest at this point in the novel's narrative is not actually the issue of supernatural powers. Instead the novel focuses on the motif of ethnic-political revenge. When the chief magistrate Paul Petersen asks Afraja why he killed innocent people, Afraja answers with the following rhetorical questions:

Who is innocent among you? [...] Aren't you all robbers who have stolen from us what we had? Don't you all hate us? Don't you torment us? Don't you all despise us, as if we were snakes and poisonous creeps? Aren't violence and injustice the only thing you people do? And even you, you blood-thirsty, deceitful man, didn't you break in to my 'gamme' like a thief, and have your uncle, your grandfather and all your relatives ever done anything else?<sup>1</sup>

The hearing takes the narrative in another direction altogether. The case is no longer about a Sámi sorcerer, rather it is about a complicated political conflict between two ethnic groups, who try to exterminate one another:

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Karasjok 2005. In *Skizzen* Mügge claims, that the chief magistrate in Tromsø – Mügge spells his name Lee, correct is Lie (Mons Lie 1803-1881) – told him, that he (Lie) recently had observed such a witch trial, where the accused Sámi on the question, whether he could make wind and storm, answered in convincingly affirmative, cf. Mügge, *Skizzen aus dem Norden*. Vol. II, p. 342. That Lie could have observed a witch trial in the 1840s is not possible. The last witch trial in northern Norway took place in Vadsø, Finnmark in 1692, cf. Rune Blix Hagen, *The Shaman of Alta. The 1627 Witch Trial of Quíwe Baarsen*. Website <http://ansatte.uit.no/rha003/shaman.html>

<sup>1</sup> Mügge, *Afraja*, p. 537.

You admit that you wanted to attack the Norwegian population in Finnmark with murder and fire? the chief magistrate asks. Like the wolf is being chased, when he attacks our herds, I wanted to chase you, the old Sámi chief replies.<sup>1</sup>

The conflict is, of course, too serious for a popular novel to solve. The solution is then to get rid of the disturbing characters who are left. Petersen dies of the bullet wound from Mortuno's shotgun. The sly and powerful tradesman is unable to cope with the death of his son Bjørnare, has a breakdown and becomes mentally deranged.

The court sentences Afraja to be burned at the stake, which then happens. Marstrand is expelled from the North, but is saved in the last minute by his friend Henrik Dalen, an officer in the navy who arrives like a *deus ex machina* with two war ships to weed out the bad guys and bring the situation to order. With all the serious problems resolved, the novel can return to the topic of love and its happy ending. The young couples, who were kept apart because of their fathers' hostility, now come together. The rest of the Sámi population withdraw with their herds deep into the interior of the North and to Sweden. Finally, neither Afraja's treasures, reindeer herds nor 'gamme' are ever found.

These dramatic events of course follow the rules of popular fiction, but as the reception history shows, contemporary readers attached far more importance to the political aspects than the readers at the end of the nineteenth century, in any case after 1871, when Germany became a nation state. In an obituary to Mügge in the most popular journal in Germany in the 1860s, *Die Gartenlaube*, there are, for instance, no such terms as adventure literature or popular literature. The author of the obituary, Max Ring, praises Mügge's political convictions, his narrative talent – and he describes his literary work as realistic and true.<sup>2</sup> Also the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 537-538.

<sup>2</sup> Ring, *Theodor Mügge*, op.cit. Also available at: <http://www.ablit.de/muegge/muegbio.htm#nachruf>.

titles of the further editions of the novel reflect a change in its reception. When the first original German version came out, it was called just *Afraja*. The next editions, however, emphasize its Nordic, exotic aspects, like *Afraja. Ein nordischer Roman* (1918); *Afraja oder der Zauberfürst von Tromsö. Romantische Erzählung aus dem hohen Norden* (1920); *Verrat am Lyngenfjord. Eine Geschichte um Afraja, den Fürsten der Lappen* (1957) and *Afraja – König von Lappland* (1979). A glance into the contemporary histories of literature shows that Mügge is either not present at all or classified as an author of popular adventure literature.

Even the more subtle political liberal discourse, which very likely was immediately understood by the well-educated middle class of the 1850s and 1860s, is to-day no longer obvious. This subtext concerns the Danish-German conflict regarding Schleswig and Holstein, that belonged to the Danish crown, but where the German population formed the majority. The political discourse from the revolution year 1848 and the second and last Danish-German war in 1864 was dominated by the German resistance to the Danish supremacy in these two counties. Ever since the Romantic period there had been an anti-Danish atmosphere in the public press. In particular the liberalists, who saw Schleswig and Holstein as a part of an ideal democratic liberal German nation, demanded a political and military act from the German Confederation (Deutscher Bund). The German Confederation, however, hesitated; they did not want to break with the peace policy of the other European kingdoms and principalities. In order to reveal this palimpsest-like textual layer of political meaning of Mügge's novel, a critical discourse analysis would be needed.

Another question is of course how we should understand the function of the Sámi in the novel. First of all, Mügge knew little about the Sámi, and his information came mainly from some few written sources. In *Skizzen* he claims that his description of the Sámi is based on what he had heard from Søren von Krogh Zetlitz, whom he supposedly had met on the steamboat from Trondheim to

Hammerfest.<sup>1</sup> But this information is not quite true, as his depiction in *Skizzen* is to a great extent copied from Gustav Peter Blom's *Das Königreich Norwegen*<sup>2</sup> – and Blom for his part relies on the travel writing of Johan Wilhelm Zetterstedt.<sup>3</sup> Mügge's travel narrative is therefore influenced by the usual stereotypes of the Sámi as a mendacious people, thievish, hypocritical and with the disposition to sneaking murder.<sup>4</sup>

Just once Mügge had the opportunity to actually observe some Sámi. This episode, which is described in *Skizzen*, took place in Kåfjord. Three Sámi are sitting among some dogs and reindeers, eating fish, and the whole situation obviously disgusts the author. In his opinion, the fish is half-raw, the Sámi are tearing it apart, mixing a sauce from cod liver oil and tobacco, and putting bits of fish into this sauce. One of them also spits tobacco on the fish before eating it: "I had seen enough and made myself on the way, pitiful affected and full of distaste for these Lappish delicacy," he writes.<sup>5</sup> Most likely the three Sámi at the seaside of Kåfjord spat fishbones, not tobacco, and most likely they ate

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<sup>1</sup> Mügge, *Skizzen aus dem Norden*. Vol II, p. 289, 335. Zetlitz (1761-1821) was clergyman in Kautokeino in Finnmark from 1836 until 1851.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gustav Peter Blom, *Das Königreich Norwegen. Statistisch beschrieben*. 2 vols, Leipzig 1843, vol. II, p. 181-205. The book was written in German for the German bookmarket. Blom (1785-1839) was a Norwegian politician and member of the national assembly at Eidsvoll that passed the Norwegian Constitution in 1814, and he was the count minister in Buskerud. In 1827 Blom had made a trip to northern Norway, and in 1830 he published his travel narrative *Bemærkninger paa en Reise i Nordlandene og igjennem Lapland til Stockholm*. The chapter about the Sámi in *Das Königreich Norwegen* is more or less a translation from the chapter *Lapperne* in *Bemærkninger paa en Reise*, cf. *ibid.*, p. 177-213. Mügge's other main sources were the classics *Reise durch Norwegen und Lappland* by Leopold von Buch and Samuel Laing's *Journal of a Residence in Norway during the years 1834, 1835 & 1836* (1851).

<sup>3</sup> Zetterstedt was a Swedish naturalist, who among other topics studied insects in Lappland. In 1822 he published his book *Resa genom Sweriges och Norrignes Lappmarker*.

<sup>4</sup> Mügge, *Skizzen aus dem Norden*. Vol. II, p. 345.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 388.

boiled fish straight from the pot, a well-known practice, at least for an inhabitant of northern Norway. But Mügge – with a tourist’s eye – interpreted the situation in accordance with a prejudiced image of the Sámi as an uncivilized primitive people, eating like animals.

However, in Mügge’s fiction published ten years later, the image of the Sámi is much more interesting though not less problematic. It is actually quite contradictory: The Sámi are both a dying people and a strong nation, they may be seen as real aristocrats, while they also act as obsequious servants. They often refer to themselves as the poor and forsaken people, but at the same time their sense of pride in who they are is very strong. On the one hand, their nomadic way of life is presented as if the Sámi were condemned to live in this manner. As Afraja tells Marstrand in a summarizing monologue at the end of the novel:

Many legends are still told about how we once lived in beautiful, pleasant valleys, where fruit trees and grains flourished. Violence drove us away, we were hunted and persecuted, until nothing else was left for us, than the desolate desert [...].”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the novel suggests that not only is a sedentary way of life the measurement or the ideal for the Sámi population, but also that they would prefer to live in a more temperate climate in the south. On the other hand, the novel emphasizes their love for their reindeer, their freedom in the mountains, and their strong attachment to their homeland in the Sámi alps.

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<sup>1</sup> Mügge, *Afraja*, p. 410. This view can be traced back to Immanuel Kant’s treaty *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795), where he argues that war is the natural human condition, and thus it was war far that drove the ”Finnen [...] Lappen gennant” into the arctic area. Kant certainly cannot imagine that anybody of their own free will would go so far north. Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf*, in: *Kants Werke*, Akademie-Textausgabe. Vol. VIII, *Abhandlungen nach 1781*. Berlin 1968, p. 341-386, p. 364.

It is interesting to note what happens when the Sámi are politized as in this novel. The political instrumentalization results in an apparently positive and sympathetic image. However, the question that inevitably emerges is to what extent this in fact is about the Sámi as an actual ethnic group. Mügge seems not at all interested in details about their way of life. Since there was a relatively rich literature about the Sámi in German, Mügge would not have had to put much effort into researching Sámi life and culture. Instead he uses the same well-known exotic elements that none of the description of the Sámi seem to lack (their magical skills, their hidden treasures in the mountains, their drinking) in order to create an exciting story based on the narrative schema of the adventure novel, on the opposition between good and bad as well as the more political minority-majority conflict model. Mügge follows the same trivial narrative pattern,<sup>1</sup> whether he is writing about the Sámi against the Norwegians in northern Norway or the slaves in Haiti against the white slave traders. It was, however, a common feature in the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – in fiction as well as in travel literature – that people living isolated and far away from the cultural centre were used as a mirror in the criticism of and reflections on one own's society. This is the context in which the Rousseauian cultural criticism as well as the construction of the 'noble savage' belong.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, Mügge's novel, by using an international conflict model such as that of a colonial power against a colonized indigenous population, picks out some central issues, like discrimination, injustice and suppression, that in fact were a part of the ethnic-political situation in the northern Norway of that period. The revolt at the end of the novel, for instance, can be

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Trivilliteratur*, in: *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*. Vol. III. Ed. by Klaus Weimar. Berlin New York 2000, p. 691-695.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ivar Sagmo, *Präformation und Wirklichkeit: Berichte von Reisen nach Norwegen zwischen 1770 und 1850*. In: *Imagologie des Nordens. Kulturelle Konstruktionen von Nördlichkeit in interdisziplinärer Perspektive*. Ed. by Astrid Arndt, Andreas Blödorn, David Fraesdorff, Annette Weisner, Thomas Winkelmann, Frankfurt am Main 2004, p. 157-175.



read as a parallel to the Kautokeino revolt, although the reasons and historical facts do not correspond.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, interesting to note that an adventure novel from 1850 written by a German author discusses issues – like colonization – that were concealed in the Norwegian public domain until recently.

Despite the disappearance of the Sámi at the end of the novel and the fact that the Danish aristocrat Marstrand is its true moral hero, it gives the Sámi their own voice. They are recognized as agents in their own life, inhabiting a distinct region, not simply objects, like decor in an exotic tableau or ornamental figures in the landscape, which is the case in the many so-called 'true descriptions' of the period. The novel deconstructs the stereotypical picture and challenges prejudiced clichés of the Sámi. They are romantic objects for Mügge, but at the same time they are politicalized, and this emphatic feature makes Mügge's image of the Sámi one of the most positive in the fiction of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> About the Kautokeino revolt, cf. Nallejet Zorgdrager, *De rettferdige strid. Kautokeino 1852. Samisk motstand mot norsk kolonialisme*. Nesbru Oslo 1997. Original titel: *De strijd der rechtvaardigen, Kautokeino 1852. Religieus verzet van Samen tegen intern Noors kolonialisme* (1989).